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All the sin of men I esteem as their disease, not their nature.—JOHN RUSKIN.

“The Boycott of Mr. Foote.”

“Anyone who takes a chief part in the game we play, shall and must provoke all fools, knaves, and idiots to think and do their worst.”—Carlo Ammiani in *Vittoria* (vol. i., p. 194) by GEORGE MEREDITH.

THE above quotation is very appropriate in leading off this article, the occasion for which arises out of the publication of my article on “George Meredith: Freethinker” in the March number of the *English Review*, and some excellent paragraphs on the matter from Mr. Cohen’s pen in the *Freethinker* during the severest part of my recent illness. Mr. Cohen’s paragraphs, in reply to an anonymous critic in an obscure orthodox periodical, together with other references to the subject in answers to correspondents, attracted the attention of my distant friend and colleague, Mr. George Macdonald, the editor of the *New York Truthseeker*, who wrote the following leaderette in his paper:—

“The best and best advertised article in the *English Review* for March is entitled ‘George Meredith: Freethinker,’ and is by Mr. G. W. Foote. For many years Mr. Foote has been patiently doing some of the best writing that appears in English print. Had his pen been at the service of a more popular cause than Atheistic Freethought it must have brought him fame, for good writers are scarce. There is a mystery about what the *Freethinker* calls ‘the boycott of Foote,’ just ended by his appearance in the *English Review*. The former monk, Joseph McCabe, now a Rationalist, long since invaded standard publications, where he is accepted with all his heresies, while John M. Robertson has no trouble in achieving print in the most respectable places. Mr. Foote is not less scholarly if less involved in style than Robertson, and there is a “class” to his work that does not distinguish the admirable writings of McCabe. Mr. Foote has what on this side we crudely call the punch, and his restriction to the columns of the *Freethinker* has been a loss to that part of the English public who like trenchant prose but are unacquainted with that paper. We have no mate for him here unless it is Mangasarian, who, however, while unsurpassed for substance, may not always phrase with the same facility as his English compeer and admirer. The art and gift of writing well, or more than well, are shared without jealousy by those who have them; envy is inevitably felt by persons less favored.”

I need not dwell upon the compliment that Mr. Macdonald pays me. I could not omit it without spoiling his leaderette, and I don’t see why I should if I could. I have “suffered so much,” as the phrase goes, from boycotting, misrepresentation, and downright slander and libel, in my already long public career, that I may as well let a compliment fall into the other scale now and then—when it happens to come along. Especially when the compliment is honestly written by a competent expert. For if I have been buried from the British public (just like my fellow-contributors, by the way, in the pages of the *Freethinker*), it is no less true that Mr. Macdonald has been similarly buried in the pages of the *Truthseeker*. I am not saying it for this occasion—I have always said it—that Mr. Macdonald has a very pretty natural gift with the pen and a faculty of sly ironic humor with which he might have coined

(no, no, that won’t do in America—let us say dollar-billed) his pockets and his bank account, if he had served his interests instead of his principles. Persons used to writing may note how well Mr. Macdonald’s leaderette is written. There is terseness in it—honorable cunning, running past artfulness into art—strength and firmness of language—and the last sentence lifts the whole matter into a lofty moral atmosphere, in which the base and sordid perish of asphyxiation.

I had rather not have had to bring the names of other Freethought publicists into this complimenting of myself, but I cannot help that either; and Mr. Macdonald’s last sentence must serve as the anti-septic to any abrasion of literary skin his criticism may have produced.

But to the point. Mr. Macdonald fails to understand why the boycott has been maintained so long against me when Mr. Robertson and Mr. McCabe have enjoyed the hospitality of highly respectable publications. But is this fact not partially explained, at any rate, by the very compliments he pays me? “Trenchant prose” is seldom enjoyed by those whose opinions are attacked—and they are the great majority when it comes to religious controversy in ordinary periodicals. What our American colleague calls “trenchant” they call by more violent adjectives, of which “ungentlemanly” is the mildest, and “vulgar” and “brutal” only half way up the scale. It is so difficult to reply to the editor of the *Freethinker* (and his staff—and his staff) and so easy to call him names and walk away full of “indignation,” that one need not wonder, after all, that this old and effective trick is so constantly patronised. That “punch” too—borrowing Mr. Macdonald’s forcible Americanism—is another explanation. If you have a bad case, and your adversary hits your weak points in every sentence, leaving no room for mental evasion or rhetorical sophistry, you will engage him as seldom as possible. Moreover, the toleration which Mr. Macdonald notes as extended to Mr. Robertson and Mr. McCabe is not what he thinks it. Mr. Robertson is a learned writer, and the critics, for the most part, praise his learning and say as little as possible about all the rest. Mr. McCabe gets a mere mention in the press when he writes a definitely Freethought book. Let him write on *Secular Education*, and the critics wink at each other with closed mouths. It is an expressive “Mum.” Let him run down the Catholic Church, and the Protestant press—including nearly all the Liberal newspapers—applaud him vociferously. No doubt he is doing his own work in a way, but he is doing theirs too, and they know it.

For the forthright implacable style in Freethought—the style of Swift, if I may mention that great name in this connection—there is no more toleration than there ever was in England. “The boycott of Mr. Foote” is not done with because a liberal-minded editor saw that a certain article was desirable and that a certain man was the person to write it. “The boycott of Mr. Foote” is indeed broken down in the case of the *English Review*. But there are not many liberal-minded editors. A single swallow does not make a summer, and a single Mr. Austin Harrison does not make a tolerant English press.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Nemesis of Faith.—II.

(Concluded from p. 275.)

THE full significance of the continuous emergence of Christian sects manifesting some form of sexual extravagance is obscured by the fact of their being relatively small bodies. This, however, is inevitable. The larger the Church, the more it becomes subject to the play of normal social forces, which tend to curb extravagance in all directions. And when a single Church includes the majority of a people, this tendency receives still more complete expression. In such cases the more extravagant developments are prevented. The Church then has to legislate, not for special tendencies and particular individuals, but for general tendencies and for humanity in the mass. The consequence of this is that certain expressions of the religious life can only be found with a few—with those whose perception of special features of religion is much more powerful than the pull of ordinary social life. With the mass of men the tendency is for the interpretation of religion to be determined by social considerations. It is only the few who really and genuinely try to mould society in accordance with the religious idea.

Rightly considered, the remarkable thing is, not that the dominant Church should have repeatedly tried to suppress these curious religio-sexual outbreaks, but that they should so continuously reappear in the history of Christianity, and that they have, moreover, claimed the strongest religious sanction for their existence. How many of these sects have existed it is impossible to say. Many must have disappeared, and left no trace of their existence. That they were very numerous is beyond question. Thus, in the second century we have the Adamites, an offshoot from the Gnostics. Their name was derived from the fact that on entering their place of worship both sexes stripped themselves naked, and went through the service in a state of nudity. The Adamites themselves claimed that the object of this was to familiarise the senses to strict self-control. The more orthodox writers give a vastly different account of the practice.* It is curious, by the way, how strong religious excitement seems to have often led people to avoid clothing. Thus, during the Crusade of 1209 1242, the women Crusaders rushed about the streets in a state of nudity.† During the wars of the League in France, men and women walked naked in processions, headed by the clergy.‡ Other examples of this curious practice might be cited.

Another second century sect, the Nicolaitanes, referred to in the New Testament (Rev. ii. 13-14), was accused of practising religious prostitution.§ So, also, were the Manichæans, a very numerous sect, concerning whom the charges are of a much more detailed character. With them the ceremonial violation of a virgin is said to have formed a part of the regular ritual, and that their meetings frequently ended in an orgy of promiscuous intercourse. As both these acts are found in connection with other religious gatherings, and, as will be seen later, is practised to-day, the story does not sound so incredible as might otherwise appear. The difficulty of deciding definitely is intensified by the fact that the Manichæans, being a very numerous body, were split into a number of sects, and that such charges, while being false concerning some, may have been true concerning others. At any rate, St. Augustine, who had been a Manichæan, says that if all did not lead a licentious life, one portion (the Catharists) abandoned themselves to it, believing they could mortify the flesh only by the practice of all bad instincts and lustful desires, since the flesh proceeded from the Devil.||

* See Garrido and Cayley's *History of Political and Religious Persecutions*, vol. i., p. 106; and Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 5.

† Crutten, *Psychological Christianity*, p. 157.

‡ Sanger, *History of Prostitution*, p. 116.

§ *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 372.

|| See *Dictionary of Sects*, pp. 290 292, and Garrido and Cayley, p. 50.

The Carpocratians, who appear to have been a branch of the Gnostics, are said to have held that, as it was impossible to stain the soul by evil conduct, their leader—

"not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended a vicious course of life as a matter of both obligation and necessity; asserting that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes.....It was the will of God that all things should be possessed in common, the female sex not excepted."*

A little later we have the sect of the Agapetæ also rejecting marriage as an institution, and allowing as a substitute unrestrained intercourse between the sexes, on the ground that "to the pure all things are pure." That some of the charges brought against these and other sects were false there is no doubt. That some were true is fairly certain. The error lies in accusing them, or in thinking of them, as being mere voluptuaries constantly seeking satisfaction for their desires. The truth is that the religious conviction of the propriety of both their teaching and conduct was quite as strong as the religious convictions of those who opposed them. It was this that made their eradication a matter of so great difficulty.

There is no need to go over even the names of all the other sects in the early centuries accused of similar practices to those already described. When suppressed in one form, some of these sects reappeared under another name. Their teachings reappear with the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Taking their stand on St. Paul's "The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death," they claimed freedom from sin no matter what their actions. They carried women about with them, held midnight assemblies, and, according to Mosheim, attended these meetings in a state of nudity. The Ranters, the Molinists, the Spirituels of Geneva, the Berghards, the Flagellants, with many others, were all said to have had abnormal sexual practices connected with their religious rites.

Naturally, the closer we get to our own day, and to a period when religious feeling is controlled by a more developed social sense, manifestations of sexuality become confined to revival outbursts, and are more transient in character. Still, they are always occurring. For reasons that do not concern us here, America has in more recent years been the chief ground for the development of sects of "spiritual free lovers." Our own sect of the Agapemonites, with their Abode of Love, received the original impetus from America. A sympathetic account of many of these sects is given by Hepworth Dixon in his *Spiritual Wives*, as well as of similar movements in Germany and England. In some cases the characteristics of the early Christian sects were imitated, even to the length of young women sharing the bedrooms of their spiritual guides. And all appear to have based themselves, as did the early sects, upon St. Paul. J. H. Noyes, himself a leader in some of these movements, in a letter to the author of *Spiritual Wives*, claims "the right of religious inspiration to shape society and dictate the form of family life," and with probable accuracy says that the origin of all these sects is found in revivals. The course of things, he says, may be thus stated:—

"Revivals lead to religious love; religious love excites the passions; the converts, finding themselves in theocratic liberty, begin to look about for their mates and their Paradise.....Religious love is very near neighbor to sexual love, and they always get mixed in the intimacies and social excitement of Revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found the salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve and his Paradise."

For an almost exact replica of some of the erotic extravagances of some of the early Christian sects one may turn to Russia. Here, amongst the many

* Mosheim, cent. 2, ch. v., sec. 14.

millions of dissenting sects, one meets with the strongest and wildest varieties of sexual teaching and practice. The nature of marriage, or the institution of marriage, forms one of the main causes of division. The Bezpopovtski, for instance, vary between holding marriage as a mere conventional institution and a denunciation of it as altogether sinful. "Between these two extremes," says a well-informed writer,

"there is room for the wildest and most repulsive theories. Carnal sensuality is allied in monstrous union with religious mysticism. Free love, independence of the sexes, possession of women in common, have been preached and practised. Debauchery, as an incidental weakness of human nature, has been advocated as the lesser evil; libertinism as preferable to concubinage, and the latter as preferable to marriage."*

The Klysti, a sect which derives its name from the practice of flagellation, denounce marriage as unclean; but Baron Von Haxthausen, in his *Visit to the Russian Empire* (1856), describes them as practising ceremonies not dissimilar to those related of the Agapæ in its most decadent stages. An offshoot of the Klysti, the "Shakoumi" or "Jumpers," openly teach that the only way to conquer the temptations of the flesh is by unbridled satiety. The "Cupids" were so called from their custom of practising their religious dances completely naked. The "Skopski" take their stand on Matthew xix. 12, and practise emasculation. They say that man should be like the angels—without sex and without desire. With most of these sexes dancing is an important form of the ceremonial. The wild character of these dances remind one forcibly of what one reads of the derishes of the East, and there is no doubt that they are provocative of strong sensual excitement. Heard, describing the dance of the "Shakoumi," after describing the performance of one of the leaders of an assembly, says:—

"The audience, arranged in couples, engaged to each other in advance, imitate his example and join the strain; the bounds and the singing grow faster and louder as it spreads, until, at its height, the elder shouts that he hears the voices of angels; the lights are extinguished, the jumping ceases, and the scene that follows in the darkness defies description. Each one yields to his desires, born of inspiration, and therefore righteous, and to be gratified; all are brethren in Christ, all promptings of the inner spirit are holy; incest, even, is no sin. They repudiate marriage, and justify their abominations by the Biblical legends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like."

I have given but the barest of outlines of a subject that might easily fill a moderately sized volume. The association of these curious sexual aberrations with deep religious feeling is undeniable, and of peculiar significance. For it would be allowing sectarian prejudice to cloud one's understanding to assume that with religion in general, and with Christianity in particular, we are dealing merely with outbursts of crude sensualism. Sensualism may have been associated with these outbursts precisely as the loftiest of causes may gain adherents among those whose motives are of the meanest. But fundamentally they witness to two things. The first is the deep connection between religious and sexual feeling. This, as I have shown in previous articles, begins very early in the life of religion, and persists in a more or less marked manner through all subsequent stages of its history. The second fact is that this particular expression of religious opinion is only held in check as social forces assume control over religious ideas. The religious idea, unregulated, is capable of any extravagance. It is the restraining force of a secularised social consciousness that first of all checks the extravagances of religious belief, and subsequently finds a useful outlet for energies previously expended in its service.

C. COHEN.

Once More, Watchman, What of the Night?

IT is well-known that for many years the Churches of this country have been compelled to report a serious decrease in membership and in attendance at public worship and the Sunday-schools. In some instances the loss has been on an enormous scale, almost imperilling the very existence of the Churches concerned. This arrest of progress, this evident shrinkage, at home is beginning to have its proper effect on the work of the Churches on the foreign fields. The leading missionary societies appear to be in a most parlous condition financially, their deficits for the last year being exceedingly heavy, the Church Missionary Society reporting a deficit of £28,000, the London, £29,000, the Wesleyan, £11,000, and the Baptist, £10,000. The secretaries of these societies offer various explanations of their discouraging reports, but not one of them seems to realise that the real cause of the deficiencies is loss of faith in foreign missions, and that this loss is to be accounted for by a corresponding loss of faith in the value of the Christian religion to the world. To admit this in public would humiliate a Christian worker too much, and so he makes all sorts of vain excuses for the failure of the Gospel to convert the world. Of course, it is alleged, it is not the Gospel's fault. In fact, the Chairman of the Baptist Union has just declared that in the Gospel "we can tolerate no suggestion of change, though it present itself in the specious guise of a restatement, or of an adaptation to this wonderful age." It is "the everlasting Gospel, which we have received to deliver," not to amend, revise, or adapt. Principal Gould, while believing that the Gospel needs no revision, is indeed too sacred to be touched by the adapter's coarse hands, is yet of opinion that the methods of presenting it to the world require a scrupulousness of the most drastic nature. But we maintain that the Churches are declining not because of defective methods of presenting the Gospel, but because a scientific age is finding out that the Gospel itself is essentially false.

Instead of frankly acknowledging that Christianity has had its day, and is being driven out of the field by the growing enlightenment of the people generally, the Baptist Union urged the desirability of adopting improved methods of commending it to a sceptical age. Two years ago it appointed a special committee to consider the spiritual welfare of the Churches, and that committee has just submitted its report, which deals with "the causes of weakness in the Church life itself," and recommends certain measures for the general strengthening of "the body of Christ," but which contains not the least hint or suggestion that the Churches are weak and steadily getting weaker because the Gospel, which they exist to propagate, is itself a lie. And yet to observing minds nothing is more obvious than that the real cause of the weakness of the Churches is the very Christianity which they seek to perpetuate. It was candidly admitted by Dr. Newton Marshall that "the convictions of even their most intelligent young people were distressingly vague and fluid"; but it did not occur to him that the vagueness and fluidity of their convictions naturally resulted from their superior intelligence. Multitudes of people believe because they have not got brains enough to doubt. The most devout Christians are generally to be found among ignorant peasants. This is a fact that cannot honestly be gainsaid. The more intelligent a man is, the fewer are his beliefs, and the less firmly held. Speaking of the most intelligent young people in the Churches, Dr. Marshall said:—

"How little equipped they are for conflict with the anti-Christian notions so readily and indeed confidently held by many of their companions, and expressed as though they were themselves inspired in many modern books. The way to defend our youth from the contagion of unbelief is not to keep them in ignorance, but to feed their minds, to make them understand that the robust intelligence is not the one that capitulates to the

* Heard, *Russian Church and Russian Dissent*, p. 201.

challenge of Scepticism, but rather that which is strong in faith—as the old heroes of knowledge and progress were strong in faith.”

Dr. Marshall would have been wiser had he paid closer attention to his logic. Having admitted that the convictions of their most intelligent young people were extremely vague and fluid, he proceeded to show that the best way to safeguard them against infidel attacks was to “feed their minds”; but it is perfectly clear from the context that, in the reverend gentleman’s estimation, the suitable food for such minds is not natural knowledge, but that pseudo-knowledge which cajoles people into the belief that the highest intelligence is that which is strong in faith. Does not Dr. Marshall know that the overwhelming majority of the most intelligent people in Great Britain to-day are unbelievers in Christianity? Why is it that the bulk of our scientists have neither part nor lot in the Christian Church? Is it because they are lacking in robust intelligence that Professor Schafer and Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, for example, champion the mechanistic conception of life? Is it as a result of his ignorance that Sir Ray Lankester advocates the same view in his famous work, *The Kingdom of Man*? Has Dr. Marshall the temerity to come forward and publicly affirm that the most intelligent people in our land are active members of Baptist and other churches? Surely not, for he has already exclaimed, “Alas, how vague and fluid are the convictions of our most intelligent youth.” Consequently, without fear of well-considered contradiction, we assert that it is the steady growth of intelligence that is so ominously threatening the lives of the Churches.

Principal Gould styled himself a “revolutionary” Chairman of the Baptist Union; but we fail to see where the “revolutionary” element is to be found in his address as published. We are persuaded that, like Dr. Marshall, he gave his case away. Take the following quotation which he makes from Dr. Jefferson:—

“The problem of developing new converts is even more perplexing than that of retaining the allegiance of old ones. It is easier to convert men than it is to educate them. The converts are many, but the developed workers are few. Only a small proportion of those who start the Christian life ever reach spiritual maturity.”

The undeniable truth of that extract carries with it the equally incontrovertible disproof of the truth of Christianity. Converts are so easily made because they are made in childhood and youth. Principal Gould says:—

“It is a matter of notoriety that our Churches are recruited almost exclusively from the young. Particular and exact inquiry invariably confirms the vague impression that so it is. Take such results as those which Mr. Carey Bonner tabulates in his volume of Ridley Lectures. He tells us that of 800 ministers who were asked to state at what period they made the great decision, 270 answered that it was before they were eighteen years of age. When the same 800 ministers were asked: ‘What, in your experience, is the general age for religious decision?’ 212 definitely gave the age as under twenty. A wider inquiry addressed to 3,500 professing Christians yielded this notable result, that 75 per cent. of the males and 85 per cent. of the females assigned their decision to years between ten and eighteen.”

No wonder that “it is easier to convert men than it is to educate them.” But the whole truth on the subject of conversion is not told in the above extract. By “conversion” is meant of making of a public profession of faith in Christ. As a rule the children who get converted between ten and eighteen are believers in Christ almost from infancy. Almost as soon as they acquire the art of talking they are taught to sing,—

“Jesus loves me. This I know,
For the Bible tells me so,”

—and to say prayers in which they beseech “Jesus, meek and mild,” to “look upon a little child.” Their conversion is, therefore, merely the giving outward expression to the faith mechanically instilled into

them before they could think at all. This is true of practically all conversions, even of those so-called conversions which take place in mature years at revival meetings. Almost without a single exception converts are believers prior to their conversion. Now, who is the alleged author of conversion? When the definite decision for Christ is made, what, according to Christian teaching, is supposed to happen? If the conversion is genuine God is its author, and he brings it about in order that his Spirit may enter the convert’s heart and sanctify it, making it his home, his temple wherein ever to dwell. Do you not now see how utterly absurd the saying is that “it is easier to convert men than it is to educate them”? If the Gospel is true all converts are pupils of the Holy Ghost. They have received a new, Divine nature, a nature full of docility, even eager to be led by the indwelling Spirit. What need can they have of human educators, or, in any case, how can it be difficult to educate God’s own children who have undergone two distinct births? Does it never occur to the men of God that they are guilty of high treason against the Savior of the world when they say that “only a small proportion of those who start the Christian life ever reach spiritual maturity”? It is *he*, the Eternal Christ, the Spirit of all grace, who is at once the Savior and Sanctifier of his people; it is *he* who is responsible for the failure of most of his own converts to reach spiritual maturity. And to say this is equivalent to affirming that Christianity is the most gigantic fraud in history. Indeed, such it is on Principal Gould’s own showing. *The failure of conversion is God’s failure.* A dying Church is a veritable witness to a dead Deity; and men and women are abandoning the former because her whole history bears such eloquent testimony to the latter.

After all, it is neither Freethought nor Science, but the Church that is killing Christianity. It is not Freethinking lectures, but the discourses of representative Christian teachers, that are bringing about the downfall of the Christian Church. The deadliest enemies of Christianity are professing Christians. Ministers of the Gospel constitute the strongest and most unanswerable argument against its truth. Churches are declining in the exact proportion in which people are finding this out. The consequence is that unbelief is in the air and must prevail. Our comfort lies in the undoubted fact that in the ratio in which faith in God and the Church goes out faith in man and his kingdom comes in. J. T. LLOYD.

The Irony of So-Called Revelations.—III.

(Continued from p. 278.)

It is certainly of some concern to us to know the meaning of “theocracy” in action, when the Romish Church strains, at the present moment, every sinew in its mammoth body to regain its hold upon political power—to become once again a “holy theocracy,” a true “kingdom of God”; and woe to humanity if it ever succeeds; it will be the signal for rekindling the fires of Smithfield and for recalling the rack and thumbscrew from their long exile and make them resume their divine duties upon the bodies of sentient beings, for the special gratification and glory of the supreme God of the universe. Of all the bad governments set up by man to rule his fellows, that established by the priesthood, in the name of its God, was the most execrable.

Religion, however, has another representative on earth beside the priest in the person of the prophet, and I wish, before I conclude this section, to bring my modicum of “gold, frankincense, and myrrh,” and lay it as a devout offering at his feet. For the prophet, especially for the Hebrew prophet, I have an esteem that approaches to reverence. Words cannot convey my unbounded admiration of his lofty morality, spiritual fervor, and righteous indignation. He, also, spoke in the name of his God; whether it

be from a customary mode of expression, a desire to secure for his arrows and shafts a divine impulse to speed them on their flight—or was it sincere self-deception as the result of transports of delirium as is ordinarily experienced by epileptic and neurotic subjects?—which it be I care not, I reverence him still. It is also true that the prophet, like the priest, is in the service of religion—a medium of divine revelation—but there is a fact which separates them as widely as the poles asunder; the priest is always on the side of the gods, the despots, the exploiters, and *against man*. Whereas the prophet is invariably on the side of humanity, of right, of justice, and of mercy. He pleads for the wronged, the weak, the widow, and the downtrodden.

It is the voice of the prophet that I hear ring out so silvery from the pulpit of the New Theology, and which compels me to wish it god-speed; for it is a voice often raised on behalf of afflicted humanity and against the gilded, the glorified, and worshiped molochs—the vampires which drain the very life-blood of the modern world.

PART II.

1. Let us now leave the body, with its physical and social needs, and turn to those which belong more strictly to the mind. As man's intellect developed, and as the resources of civilisation multiplied, there awoke within the mind new voids, gnawing, irritating, and painful. Man was seized with the passion to *know*. Not now, as means to relieve his physical wants, but to know for knowing's sake. Events and phenomena puzzled and annoyed him. He craved for explanations; he demanded to know the *How*, the *Why*, and the *What* of every experience. It was emphatically a human want; no animal had ever felt its bite. Man had partaken of the forbidden fruit, and the fatal apple had opened his eyes to a self-conscious existence. This had flung open the portals of his mind, through which were admitted the germs of a new disease. The microbes of knowledge entered his soul and filled it with a new anguish which nothing on earth could immediately satisfy. Superior and omniscient intelligences, however, could have relieved him at once. What an opportunity for the gods! Did they ever avail themselves of it? Search the history of human knowledge for a record and I venture to predict that you will search in vain.

Every page of its annals will bear indisputable evidence that, in whatever direction he moved, man had to hew his way, alone and unaided, out of the jungles and thickets of ignorance before ever a gleam flashed the Eastern sky with the faint first promise of either day or of dawn.

If we examine the entire field of civilised knowledge, we shall find that in every department of science, theoretic or applied, man had to clear out a path through the dense thickets of ignorance with the axe of his own reason. Nowhere can we find any trace of assistance or of a ray of light ever vouchsafed to him from on high. What inspired Bible contains a statement of the fundamental generalisations of science? In which can we find embodied the principle of universal causation, of the uniformity of nature, of the correlation of forces, of the indestructibility of matter, or of the conservation of energy? These are the foundation and pillars of the temple of knowledge, and yet revelation has never made the remotest allusion to their existence. Nor, indeed, is this rigid silence in respect to essential knowledge the worst part of the indictment against it. The irony of it all is seen in the bogus instruction offered to appease this craving for knowledge. In place of facts to explain the *How*, the *Why*, and the *What*, revelation supplies us with legend and with myth.

And yet we have not sounded the bottom of its guilt; for revelation tells us that the direct opposite—the very antipodals—of the foregoing principles obtained in nature, viz., that caprice is more characteristic of her method than uniformity, that magic is a principle of causation, and that all events were

explained by regarding them as the doings of spirits, either friendly or hostile.

2. Lastly, let us inquire what light has come to us from the supernatural in regard to itself. What positive knowledge has man ever received about matters alleged to exist beyond the pale of phenomena? Nothing could be more appropriate than for the unseen world to divulge some of its own secrets, especially since man was declared to have vital interest in them. Besides, man's craving for knowledge has never been confined to phenomena; for millenniums he has been burning to know what is beyond the veil—what is the ultimate reality. His plight, however, in this case, is more pitiable than in respect to any of the others, for it is beyond his power ever to satisfy this yearning by his own resources. He has found out means to appease, more or less effectually, all his other longings; but at the confines of phenomena he has reached the length of his tether. Just as the eagle cannot soar above and beyond the atmosphere which supports and buoys it upwards, so the human intellect cannot transcend phenomena—the vital element in which it lives and floats. Man can extend his vision with the microscope to any extent he likes and then speed away on the wings of his imagination to any further extent, and yet he has not crossed the frontier—he is still in the realm of phenomena. Nevertheless, he has always yearned to know what is beyond them, and his ravenous impatience drove him to guess, and guessing he has been ever since. But there is no intrinsic harm in guessings; they serve their due season as balls for a mental game, and so soon as they burst they vanish, to give place to others apparently as lasting but equally as perishable and hollow. The mental exercise tends to keep the human mind vigorous and healthy. It verges on the harmful only when, like cricket and football, the game is adopted as a professional vocation.

But when speculation is taken under the ægis of religion then guessing becomes a positive evil, for theology instantly petrifies the guess into a "revealed truth," which acts thenceforth as a sprag amid the pinions of the intellect and locks the free motion of its wheels. It is when the guess is stereotyped as an eternal verity that it arrests all mental growth by acting as a barrier to the origination and flow of ideas. But what adds irony to it all is the fact that the sanity of guessings even bears a direct relation to man's degree of intelligence and culture, that is, to the stage of his mental development and civilisation. The guessings of primitive man were accordingly barbaric and grotesque, and yet it is these which we find incorporated in sacred books as divine revelations of eternal truths. Let us then see what are the cardinal tenets among these petrified speculations.

(a) The premier article of faith in all religious creeds is God as a revealed existence. It is the fundamental assumption of all religions. But the mental and moral contents of this notion are as diversified as the landscape of the earth from the pole to the equator. Only to a wholly imaginary conception could the same word be applied to so heterogeneous a crowd. The common elements which string them together are nebulous, elusive, and fleeting. They would instantly fall to pieces but for the class word, "God." That alone keeps together, in the semblance of unity, the multitudinous forms of a conception which is ever changing like the forms of a cloud, and has been doing so from that early dawn when man's fear first projected it, huge and threatening, on the vast screen of his ignorance.

Now, what is important to observe is that the types of God revealed in the Bible are not in the least possible degree any exception to this universal law. They are neither unique nor constant. Nothing could be more false or ludicrous than to imagine that the Bible, because it denounces Polytheism, is itself monotheistic. We are presented with at least two types of God differing essentially from one another. In the earlier portions of the Bible we get revealed to us a fully anthropomorphic Deity, one with an

individual name like all the other gods. Later on this turns into a metaphysical one, retaining of its human model only man's faculties and affections. Jahveh, as you know, was man-like in all essential features. He walked in the Garden of Eden, he talked with Adam and Eve, with the serpent, and with the patriarchs. He differed from the Hebrews themselves only by being a more powerful magician than they were. In intelligence, in knowledge, and in moral qualities he was exactly on a par with the semi-barbarians who presumed to reveal him.

When the Hebrew people, however, had developed the resources of their language so as to include a wealth of abstract terms, the God Jahveh entered the chrysalis state and underwent a complete metamorphosis. His various attributes, mental and moral, stood out as separate existences which the vivid Hebrew imagination soon endowed with personalities, and lo presto! out of the pupa case emerged the metaphysical Trinity.

I wish, however, in passing to make a comment or two upon these different conceptions of God. Firstly, that they are absolutely incongruous with each other as well as with the knowledge and conscience of the twentieth century. For fully nineteen centuries have the talent and genius of Christendom incessantly toiled at the impossible task of trying to fuse incompatibles—the finite and the infinite, the wise and the ignorant, the cruel and the merciful, and the malicious and the loving—into unity and harmony. This attempt led to opening the sluices and floodgates to all kinds of subtleties in thought and speech; so much so that it threatened to overwhelm the human intellect and swamp it in a deluge of metaphysics—a catastrophe only narrowly averted through the intervention of a few valiant heretical pilots who braved the surging flood, though in battered arks.

No less remarkable is the fact that, notwithstanding the palpable incongruity between the images of Jahveh and the Trinity-God, they are both alike products of the human mind—every item in both has been quarried in human experience. The only difference is this—that in one the stones are left in their naked crudity and ruggedness, while in the other they are metaphysically chiselled and trimmed. Neither conception possesses a single attribute, power, faculty, or affection which is not originally human; and this is tantamount to saying that they are no revelations at all.

But what touches the hollow claim with bitter irony is not its falsity or its arrogance, but the fact that the modern apologist is literally ashamed of his revealed God, either anthropomorphic or metaphysical. To the New Theologian the moral attributes of either Jahveh or the Trinity are as abhorrent as their mental qualities and powers are unworthy. He does his level best to empty the word of its revealed contents and to refill it with the products of reason! Can there be anything more humiliating to God-given revelation than to empty the very word of its revealed and original meanings and then to try and replace them with avowedly human conceptions? I can think of none.

KERIDON.

(To be concluded.)

PANAMA.

"The San Blas Indians are a remarkable people. They live close to the works of the Panama Canal, occupying a narrow strip of territory along the shores of the Caribbean Sea.....They know that the white man would come into their country only to exploit them, and they therefore keep him out.....From early days, they have been able to keep their women free from contamination with white men, and to-day they will not permit a white man to sleep in their country if they can readily get him out of it by sunset..... At various periods missionaries have attempted to evangelise in the San Blas territory, but few Indians would listen to them. Apparently, they object to save their souls at the cost of their lands."—*Chambers's Journal*, May, 1913.

What a significant condemnation of Christians! Evidently the San Blas Indians diagnose character better than the Chinese officials who ask the Christian Churches to pray for them.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily Mirror*, of April 18, devoted half a column, with a portrait, to the case of Helena Gunning, a learned housemaid, who has been for some eight years in the service of Mrs. Walter Wright, 8 Henderson-road, Wandsworth. Her "cooking, sweeping, and dusting" are none the worse for her attention to serious studies. The reporter sings the young lady's praises from all points of view. He even mentions some learned sceptical works that he saw upon the shelves in her "orderly little room," one being Thomas Paine's masterpiece and another Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*. Miss Gunning's name was not unknown to us. We have several times heard from her as a reader of the *Freethinker*. We are not surprised, therefore, that amongst the letters the *Daily Mirror* notice has brought her is one from a Christian bigot of the first water. Miss Gunning sends it to us to do what we like with; and we extend the privilege to our readers. Here is the body of the letter:—

"If we are to judge you by the rags you read I take it that you are a follower of the ex-convict Foote. Well, follow him to hell if you like, but, if you take the advice of one who has found Christ you will stop reading such blasphemous books, which should not be put on the market, and study God's word. What does a babe like you want to know about paganism and evolution? Study your household duties and leave such things to the blaspheming infidels. Stop before it is too late."

The writer of this letter is a man; we mean that he is of the male sex; witness his insolence about the young lady's "household duties"—which, by the way, she performs to her employer's satisfaction. Another thing about this writer is that he has forgotten his manners, if he ever had any. He has also forgotten his name and address; which is a pity, for we would have immortalised him without charging for the advertisement. But this sort of correspondent generally does forget his name and address, especially when he not only indulges in rudeness towards the person he addresses, but also in libels on other objects of his spite. Mr. Foote, of course, is not an "ex-convict." "Blasphemy" is only a misdemeanor—and a convict is one sentenced to penal servitude for felony.

This insulter of Miss Gunning and libeller of Mr. Foote states that he has found Christ. What we should like to know is, whether Christ has "found him"? We hope not. It would be a poor compliment to Christ.

"Western Christendom," says the *Christian World*, "responded with fine unanimity to the appeal of the Chinese Cabinet for the prayers of Christian people on behalf of the new Government." So this particular lie has passed into history—Christian history, that is, and it will be circulated along with the other pious "yarn" about Queen Victoria delivering a Bible to a colored chief, and declaring it to be the source of England's greatness. The Chinese Cabinet made no appeal for the prayers of Christians. It merely fixed a day for prayer, and invited Christians to join in the scramble. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that since the prayers were offered the condition of things has grown worse in China. Some provinces, dissatisfied with the proceedings of the Cabinet, have threatened revolt and asserted their intention to set up an autonomous Government. There is evidently a story to be told about the invitation to the Chinese Christians to pray for the welfare of the Cabinet. We do not know what this story is, although we have a strong suspicion as to its character. All we do know is that British Christians have not missed the opportunity for self-advertisement and some pretty tall lying.

Amidst all the hypocritical blather in England over the Chinese "day of prayer"—as if it were got up solely for the Christians, instead of being extended to them as an act of politeness—a word of sense and honesty came from the lips of the Rev. Cyril Bardsley, honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Being interviewed by a *Daily Chronicle* representative, this gentleman expressed the view that Christianity had a fine prospect of success in China. But there was a serious danger which could not be ignored. It is the one "already experienced in Japan—the educated may easily become Atheists." That is more than a danger in every "heathen" country that feels the ferment of Western ideas. It is quite evident to people of the intellectual calibre of Japs and Chinamen that the Christianity of the Western nations is all humbug. They boast of it, they spend vast sums of money on missionaries to spread it over the globe, but they do not believe in it for they make no attempt to practise it—at least as it is set forth in the New Testament. It is not Christianity that gives Great

Britain, for instance, its world-wide power; no, it is material wealth and naval and military strength,—the very things, in fact, which the New Testament most severely condemns. Intelligent "heathen" see the real "secret of England's greatness" and are acute enough to practise her example rather than her teaching. Japan is herself a world-power now, and has not only beaten Russia in a stand-up fight but has shown that she does not mean to stand insults even from the United States. And how did she reach that position? Was it by accepting Christianity? No. She tested it and found it wanting. She accepted Western science, but not Western religion. She saw that Christian nations paid no respect to the law of right unless they had more to lose than to gain by doing so. The law of might was the guide of every Christian nation, not only in its dealings with "heathen" countries, but even in its dealings with fellow Christians. Japan recognised that the respect of Christian nations was not to be gained by *honor* but by *strength*. So she made herself strong in what that great Christian statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, called "the resources of civilisation." She raised and trained large armies, she provided herself with the most powerful, up-to-date battleships, she studied the art of war, she prepared herself for a struggle against a Christian adversary ever so many times bigger than herself; and when the hour struck she defeated that gigantic braggart on land and sea. That is how Japan won the respect of the Christian world. Her art, her literature, her social discipline, all the things that make a nation intrinsically great, counted for nothing; her power to kill her enemies with A 1 rapidity was her passport to the comity of nations. And that fact alone is decisive as to the real influence of Christianity upon the world.

We understand that there are three thousand Christian missionaries now working—perhaps we should say operating—in China. But this shows the weakness rather than the strength of Christianity. If its boasts were true, if it were a divine religion, founded by God himself and upheld and promoted by God ever since, it would not need three thousand missionaries, nor three hundred, in China. God would convert the Chinese in his own good time. He would not need the help and encouragement of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Robert Cecil. We suggest that he might even dispense with the help and encouragement of the Rev. Dr. Clifford and the Rev. F. B. Meyer.

We invite these pious gentlemen who have been contributing their prayers (and deuced little else, we guess) to the progress of China, to tell us what good their prayers have ever done for England. Certainly the Chinese do not need to borrow anything from us in the way of morality. They would be doing nothing *outré* if they sent some of their own missionaries over here. They might teach Englishmen politeness, voracity, and honesty. These virtues may not be as necessary to salvation in the next world as belief in the Trinity, in the inspiration of the Bible, and in Heaven and Hell. But they are necessary to salvation in this world. They are very useful and pleasant *here*, whatever they may do for us *hereafter*.

"Father" Stanton is said to have taken no salary for his services at St. Alban's, Holborn. His estate has been valued at £26,186. It was easy to do without a salary on a fortune like that.

Rev. R. E. St. Aubyn Arkwright, vicar of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, inflicted dreadful wounds upon his neck with a razor, and was found dead in his bedroom. He had suffered severely from insomnia. One is sorry to hear it. But how is it that Christians find these troubles as hard to bear as Atheists do? Where does the "consolation" of religion come in?

Fifteen hundred young men, members of the Drexel Biddle Bible Classes, assembled at the First Methodist Church, Camden, New Jersey (Walt Whitman's old residence) to hear Mr. E. P. Stotesbury, the wealthy Philadelphia partner in Piorpont Morgan and Company, deliver an address designed "to awaken in the audience a desire to save money" by "exhibiting to them several hundred thousands' worth of gold bonds." Jesus Christ never had a chance of illustrating his Sermon on the Mount in that way. He probably never saw a gold coin, he certainly had no bonds, and his price, when Judas "sold" him, was thirty pieces of silver (shekels)—about £3 15s. Mr. Stotesbury's economies are no less peculiar than his piety. He preaches the virtue of "saving" and he spent £25,000 on a dinner and dance. He also confuses saving with acquisition. Saving is the surplus of what a man earns over what he spends. Acquisition is diverting other

people's savings (or earnings) into your own pockets or somewhere under your own control. Millionaires like Mr. Stotesbury are not savers but acquirers. And the virtue of saving easily becomes a vice. Trade depends on spending, not on saving. This is true both in production and distribution. A little money put by for an emergency is a very good thing; but the emergencies that are certain, such as death, or nearly certain, such as illness, accident, and want of employment, should be provided against by insurance, and not by miserly habits of life. Uadue saving makes capital too cheap to the millionaires, and at the same time lowers wages for the workers. Mr. Stotesbury may feel this if he does not know it, and his preaching is on the line of his interests.

The Philadelphia millionaire was good enough to tell his audience that he started making his fortune with £10. No doubt he thought that was a bedrock minimum. But there was one person who began with less. He started with nothing, he made everything, and his name is "God." This is not our own announcement. It is what Mr. Stotesbury teaches himself. We remind him of it charitably—to save his head from bursting.

Walter Thomas Young, a youthful Englishman, who has been arrested at New York, was an insurance solicitor six days a week and a Sunday-school teacher on the seventh day—and a burglar every night. He also attended a fashionable Brooklyn church. He is now paying his devotions in the prison chapel.

The Bishop of Southwark has found a boy who recognises "sense" in the episcopal outfit, including the gaiters and the apron. Had the right reverend father in God caught the boy a bit younger he might have recognised "sense" in bishops. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" one has been told to expect praise of ridiculous things.

The Bishop of Oxford declares that the principle of Trades Unionism is thoroughly Christian. Organists and vergers of parish churches will read this statement with pleasure.

Rev. W. H. Bridges, of Edinburgh, writes to the *Guardian* that "the call of China for the prayers of the Christian Church inevitably arouses a sense of wonder.....A so-called heathen nation has taken us at our word. We said we believed in prayer, and they have believed us." And now Mr. Bridges asks, very pertinently, why not use the instrument of prayer concerning questions of national defence? Mr. Bridges must really be very simple if he seriously thinks the Chinese believe that we are likely to depend on prayer in any genuine emergency. The Chinese have had too many bitter experiences of Christian dealing to harbor any such stupidity. Of course, if we really placed any dependence on prayer, there is no reason why we should not make the question of national defence a subject of prayer. But what effect would it have? Would it be likely to affect votes in the House of Commons? Would it stop Churches playing the part of recruiting sergeants? Or does Mr. Bridges mean that the form of national attack and defence is to be that of an army of parsons, on either side, praying against each other? That would certainly provide a use for the clergy, and if out of earshot of the rest of the population the suggestion might be worth considering.

It is part of a carefully fostered superstition that those who write on behalf of militant Freethought are ignorant, illiterate, and may be profitably ignored. Many of the religious writers who are busy circulating this legend must know how untrue it is, although they receive a certain countenance from those timid Freethinkers who long for the heaven of respectability, and seek to get there by assisting this slander on their more mentally robust fellow heretics. To say that an opponent is ignorant is a very easy retort; it gives those who use it an air of authority, and it "warns off" that large class who are only too ready to take their opinions at second hand. We were not at all surprised, therefore, to find a reviewer in the *Manchester Guardian* describing Sir Hiram Maxim's book, *Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book*, as exhibiting "great ignorance," "violence of language," etc., and that the result is "painful." We do not doubt the last part. Whether a thing is painful or pleasant is a quite personal matter. It entirely depends upon what it is that is affected. No one will deny that to clear out a nest of vermin, for instance, is very painful—to the vermin.

The curious thing is that Sir Hiram's book does not claim to be more than a compilation. And it represents a thorough-going attack on Christian belief and practices, with special reference to the foreign missionary movement. This attack

is conducted, in the main, by a series of quotations from writers mostly of admitted standing and authority. Consequently, the charge of ignorance really lies against *them*, and not against the compiler and editor. It is true that the reviewer says that Sir Hiram does not know how to use his material, but that only means that he does not use it in a way that suits the reviewer. Had he quoted writers of similar calibre in favor of Christianity, it would have been well done. As it is quoted against Christianity, it is ill done. That is all there is in the matter. We cannot retort that the reviewer betrays *his* ignorance, as his review is too petty to need so powerful a word. But it does betray both his temper and his partisanship, and those who can read between the lines of his review will take his disparagement of the work as an incentive to purchase.

The reviewer seems particularly annoyed with Sir Hiram's confession that he found himself able, at the age of thirty, to discomfort a roomful of parsons, and "After this occurrence I made a point of going very thoroughly into history, philosophy, and religion, especially the religion of the East. I read everything I could find, fully determined to make myself able to meet all comers; and I think I have succeeded." It doubtless seems very monstrous to an orthodox reviewer that a single Freethinker should discomfort a roomful of parsons, or that he should be able to meet all comers on Christian claims; but is this such a colossal feat, after all? For our part, we confess that we should not be stricken with astonishment at the ability of a Freethinker who was able to silence orthodox Christians, but we should feel a little disgusted if he failed at the task. The "trickiness" of Christian disputants in riding away on false issues might call for a display of greater mental agility on the part of the Freethinker; but the disproof of Christian claims is child's play to a man of fair knowledge and ordinary ability. The substantial doctrines of religion are very few, very simple, and very ridiculous. They are on precisely the same level as a host of universally discredited religious beliefs; and if the *Manchester Guardian* reviewer is not aware of this, it is only because he does not really understand religion, and exercises his paid impertinence on those who do.

The German papers state that the Kaiser has opened a factory for the manufacture of margarine. We are not surprised, for, as an amateur preacher, His Imperial Majesty has already churned out a lot of oleaginous stuff.

According to a wealthy contemporary, the King has twenty-five morning suits, about twenty shooting outfits, besides uniforms and evening dress. Well, well! "The King of Kings" only wore a mackintosh and a halo.

Recently a provincial Methodist preacher was summoned for stealing gas by tapping the main. We never heard of parsons stealing gas before. It is an article in which they are generally well provided.

A young girl was recently convicted for stealing handbags from worshippers at Church. The deterrent effects of religion are not very marked in this instance. We remember a story of a churchwarden, on a rainy Sunday, stalking down the aisle with three umbrellas under his arm, for the use of his friends. At the door a stranger remarked, "Had a good day, I see."

The Rev. Lord William Gascoyne Cecil is evidently a Christian fanatic. In an article in the *Daily Mail* for May 5, he says that "non-Christian races are treacherous." Does not the noble Lord know that treachery is a *human*, not a *Heathen*, weakness? Is he not aware that the Great European Powers have been guilty of treachery in their recent treatment of Turkey? Has not the British Empire been treacherous in its subjection and government of aboriginal races in India and Africa? Are we in Christendom strangers to "the treacherous smile, a mask for secret hate"? Why should the reverend lord go out of his way to insolently slander non-Christian races?

Lord William falls into other deplorable errors. He speaks of "the absolute failure of the native religions" of China. As a matter of fact, Confucianism and Buddhism have conferred moral greatness upon the Chinese people, and there is no sign whatever that they are now disowning and abandoning the sources of their strength. Lord William has visited China and imagines that he knows both it and its inhabitants; but we much prefer to listen to the testimony of such high authorities as Professor H. A. Giles, Mr. Chester Holcome, and M. Eugene Simon, who, having spent years in China, give the direct lie to Lord William's estimate of the

non-Christian Chinese character. His lordship is equally wide of the truth in the statement that China "is becoming Christian." The native Christians are but a handful, and, with very few exceptions, belong to the most ignorant classes. China will doubtless adopt Western science; but she is surely too wise to take over the religion which has been and is such a stupendous failure in the West.

Believing that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, Christians are resolved to do everything within their power to convert the rest of the world to their way of thinking on every subject. In particular they persist in vigorous though futile attempts to force their own religion upon all Heathen nations. In Buddhist countries such attempts are good-naturedly tolerated, but scarcely ever prove successful. In picturesque Ceylon, for example, Catholic and Protestant missionaries experience no opposition on the part of either Buddhist priests or the laity; but all the Christians on the resplendent isle number only 360,000, in spite of the fact that 10,000 of the inhabitants are Europeans, and 23,000 Eurasians (descendants of Europeans and Singhalese). For the lack of Christian progress the missionaries blame the Portuguese and Dutch Governments, and partly the British authorities; but the truth is that the people value their own system far too much to exchange it for an inferior one. Lately there has been a great revival of Buddhism throughout the island, and numerous schools have been opened after Western models. Why cannot Christians stay at home, where there is much more of immorality, degradation, and misery than in beautiful Ceylon?

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, is an evolutionist, and, being a supernaturalist as well, imagines he can see the next step in evolution. The last step was from animal to human, but the next will be from human to divine. This is a highly interesting item of information; but will "J. B." be good enough to tell us where, when, and how he acquired it? Did the animal that became man know what the next step would be before it was taken? It is self-evident that "J. B." is as yet only human—how on earth does he know that he is going to step into divinity, or what divinity is? He does not know, any more than he knows that "big as the physical universe is, the spiritual one is vastly bigger." Only a theologian would venture to talk such arrant nonsense.

Lord Morley, in his *Life of Gladstone*, plainly says that the Education Question in England has been from the very first a quarrel between "Church" and "Chapel." It is evidently nothing more now. Witness the letter recently addressed to the Prime Minister by the National Free Church Council and the Nonconformist members of Parliament. What they demand in the projected new Education Bill is a remedy of "the injustice to Nonconformists." Injustice to *them*, forsooth! At present they control the religion taught in half the elementary schools, and the "injustice" they complain of is that they are not allowed to control the religious teaching in the other half,—which is controlled by the Church of England. The truth is that both these religious bodies should be turned out of the schools. No one has any right in the public schools as an Anglican, a Nonconformist, a Catholic, or a Jew. He has a right there only as a citizen. That is really the whole case for Secular Education in a nutshell.

Lamentation fills the offices of the leading missionary societies, instead of the customary hallelujahs, because the public no longer subscribes for the propagation of pious tarradiddles in foreign places. The London Missionary Society has a deficit of £29,000, while the Church Missionary Society has a shortage of £28,000. Yet they are sure of converting China.

The newspapers have been making a fuss over two aged persons, a brother and sister, who lived on only one old-age pension. What would the journalists have said had they been present when Elijah was fed by a raven, or when five thousand persons were surfeited with three sardines and two buns?

The Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Wakefield, recently descended a coal pit, provided with a miner's coat and lamp, and spending about an hour in the mine. Was his lordship trying to emulate the poor founder of his religion, who worked at a carpenter's bench with a jackplane?

"Christ and Patriotism," runs the title of a letter in a recent issue of the *Labor Leader*. Surely "God" should be a cosmopolitan rather than a patriot; but so many people from Palestine are "patriots" nowadays.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £123 18s. 5d. Received since:—Mr. Harrison (per H. Saill), 2s. 6d.; Three Birmingham Saints (per H. Saill), 17s. 6d.; C. J., £3; Mrs. Alice Lee, 4s; C. H. Shepherd, 10s.; Wm. Broadbent, 10s.; J. Tomkins, 2s. 6d.; A. Vickers, £1; J. E. Stapleton, 2s. 6d.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for batch of cuttings.

J. B.—You will let us hear further if you have fresh news of the Comte article you mention. Thanks for your letter. Mr. Foote is making steady and sure progress.

E. B.—Your cuttings are useful and welcome.

J. C. MAAGARD.—Surely you don't imagine that the writer of the paragraph meant what you ascribe to him. The first half of the paragraph negatives the idea. Perhaps you are joking. Eleven o'clock at night is a suspicious hour for finding Christ.

J. TOMKINS.—Thanks for cuttings, subscription, and good wishes. The cuttings are interesting, and may be useful later, but are crowded out this week.

(MRS.) A. LEE.—P.O. allocated as desired. We, too, are proud to learn that the daughter of an ardent Freethinker is not only treading in her father's footsteps, but bringing her children up to march along the same road. It is the adherence of such as yourself that makes the work easier for the next generation. Sorry you cannot get to the Conference on Sunday. Another year, perhaps.

D. MAPF.—We sympathise fully with the spirit of your resolution, but notices of motion for the Conference must appear on the printed Agenda.

BERTHA WORRELL.—Save for accidents—against which none are secure—there is no doubt that Mr. Foote will be present at the Conference meetings on Whit-Sunday. Great truths find strong men, and they become still stronger by expressing them. Mr. Foote will doubtless feel flattered at your very high opinion of his work, and we can say on his behalf that the approval of those who are with him in his life's work is the only approval he desires. He will be pleased to learn that his lectures and writings have been "a very great help" to you in your pilgrimage from falsehood to truth.

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.

This notice will be just in time to remind some of those who have decided to attend the Annual Conference of the arrangements already made. The two meetings in Clavier Hall, Prince's-street, Regent-street—morning and afternoon are business meetings, and for N. S. S. members only. The evening meeting in Queen's (Minor) Hall, at 7, is open to the public, and we hope that Freethinkers will see that the hall is well filled. All the leading speakers of the N. S. S. will be present, with the President in the chair. Moreover, admission is free, and this gives an extra opportunity for London Freethinkers to do a little propaganda work by bringing along their more orthodox friends. Freethinkers who arrive in London from the provinces on Saturday evening will find the Secretary and members of the Executive ready to receive them at the Bay Malton Hotel, 160 Great Portland-street, W.

"Literary Gossip" will be resumed in the *Freethinker* shortly. Meanwhile we call attention in this column to the *English Review* for May. Its contents are as varied and interesting as usual. Poetry is represented by ten sonnets by different writers. We hesitate to award the palm where

the themes and treatment are so diverse. Mr. Bernard Shaw's "Overruled: a Dramatic Story" is clever, like all his work, but it has little substance: it is, indeed, a farce, and reads a good deal like a satire on Mr. Shaw's weaknesses and limitations. Henri Fabre's "The Pond" and Walter Raleigh's "Boccaccio" are perhaps the best things in the present number. Mr. Normon Douglas's "Blind Guides," dealing mainly with Nelson from an adverse point of view, is strongly written and has some vivid ironical flashes at the expense of religion. There is much suggestion (we are not punning) in the anonymous article on "Synthetic Man." "Be Hard, my Friends" is the title of several pages of stimulating paragraphs by the editor, Mr. Austin Harrison. The concluding sentence is worth pondering: "To be strong it is necessary to be hard—to oneself first and always." We should add that the book-reviews fill many pages, and are well written in a liberal spirit. Altogether the *English Review* may be recommended to men and women who want to face facts and find the truth.

Chicago seems to be a flourishing centre of Freethought activity. Mr. Mangasarian, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. H. Percy Ward (late of Liverpool) discourse there to large and different audiences every Sunday. We have just received a letter from the last of these propagandists:—

"1209 Ashland Block, Chicago,

April 21, 1913.

Dear Mr. Foote,—

I am very sorry to read in the *Freethinker* of your serious illness. I trust that you are now well on the way to complete recovery; and I hope that for many years to come you will be able to fight the good fight of Freedom.

I am, with best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

H. PERCY WARD."

Many in America will share Mr. Ward's hope.

The Bethnal Green Branch was wrongly announced in our last issue as starting its open-air lectures in Victoria Park on May 4. The Branch's outdoor propaganda does not start till May 18, when Mr. Davidson lectures in the afternoon and Miss Kough in the evening.

A meeting to consider the formation of a Wolverhampton Branch of the N. S. S. will be held in the I. L. P. Rooms, Dudley-street, Wolverhampton, to-day (May 11), at 8 o'clock. Local Freethinkers are earnestly invited to be present.

The *Humanitarian* (organ of the Humanitarian League) for May gives on its front page two notices of Mr. H. S. Salt's new pamphlet, *Fallacies of Flagellants*. One is from the *Freethinker* the other from "a certain Recorder," who calls the Humanitarian League's publications "irritating trash." The juxtaposition of the two notices is rough on the Recorder. Feeling, sense, and style are on the heretical side this time.

We don't wish to join in any local dispute between the Rev. Forbes Phillips, of Gorleston, and his adversaries. But we are sorry that trouble is made over our recent reference to him in the *Freethinker*. He was unconventional enough to hope that Mr. Foote would soon recover from his recent severe illness. There doesn't seem much harm in that—unless those who think there is believe that it would show a better heart and better manners to hope that Mr. Foote would not recover. It appears, however, that he has been taken to task for his simple act of courtesy. Mr. Phillips hits out as follows in last week's *Yarmouth Mercury*:—

"Mr. Microbe waxes furious over the fact that I had ventured to write to express my sympathy with Mr. Foote in his recent illness. I always admire honest thinkers, and Mr. Foote is one, and I have merely contempt for the trickster who is hicoughing blatant blasphemy one day and shedding salt tears on the penitent form next day—who sniffles with piety while selling a cheap-jack watch, and the same night in his club makes gibes about sacred things. Give me the honest Atheist before the sloppy Christian, even when he has a score of conversions to his credit or discredit."

Mr. Phillips doesn't want our aid in such a matter as this, nor do we proffer it, for he is well able to take care of himself. All we do is to note that he is not to be frightened out of his tolerance of difference of opinion on the part of those who want to find the truth.

O Mundo of April 27 publishes as a leader Mr. Heaford's article entitled "The Clamor Against Portugal." The *Freethinker* is duly acknowledged as "the splendid Freethought review which is published in London," and Mr. Heaford is greeted as "a great friend of Portugal."

Portugal and Its Traducers.

THE *Daily Mail* editorial of April 23 pins its faith to the statement that "the prisons [in Portugal] are worthy of the Middle Ages." On that point I might content myself with the statement that the imaginative editor has evidently not made himself acquainted with the Christian cruelties which abounded in the prisons of the Portuguese Inquisition, with the smiling approval of kings, priests, duchesses, and literary "gents." But there is no need for the editor of the *Daily Mail* to transport himself into the dead past towards which the priests, his protégés, look back with longing eyes. The *Daily Mail's* special correspondent at Lisbon might have told him of the report published in *O Mundo* of April 15, of Mr. Swinny's visit to the Penitentiary, at Lisbon, where many of the political prisoners are lodged over whose lot the Duchess of Bedford shed such eloquent but ineffectual tears. Mr. Swinny, as our readers are aware, is the learned and respected president of the London Positivist Society, and his stay in Lisbon synchronised with the publication of the sensational emanations of the Duchess's pen. On his visit to the Penitentiary, he was received by the director, Dr. Caldeira Queiroz, and inspected all the dependencies of the prison—the cells, the offices, the hospital, the pharmacy, the cuisine, etc. He found that corporal punishment was unknown. Mr. Swinny also ascertained that the prisoners are engaged in associated labor; that they enjoy the privilege of conversation during their labor; and that they are permitted to receive visits once a week (think of it, ye English prisoners for blasphemy, and all ye tribes of Suffragettes!) Mr. Swinny was surprised to find that the prisoners are permitted to write to their families and friends at will, and to receive presents of food, etc., from outside. *O Mundo* concludes its report (of which the foregoing is only a brief abstract) by stating that Mr. Swinny was much impressed by the humane system of treatment in the prison, and that, before leaving, he inscribed these words in the visitor's book:—

"I find the installation and functioning in this prison are excellent. From many points of view the prisoners are better treated here than in similar institutions in England."

Since the publication of Mr. Swinny's report in *O Mundo*, Dr. Caldeira Queiroz has himself replied to the calumnious statements which have been published in this country as to the way in which political prisoners in Portugal are treated. According to the *Star* of April 23, Dr. Queiroz's statement is as under:—

"Political prisoners work as skilled laborers, or as clerks, librarians, assistant chemists, and so on. They receive visitors every week, and, moreover, they are authorised to receive now and then persons who call on them.

"They have the right to use their private linen from home. They receive books, reviews, flowers, fruits, sweets, etc. They may have a safety razor and a spirit lamp, which are kept by the warders at their disposal.

"The prisoners may thus have boiling water, or hot milk and tea. Meals may come from outside twice a day in the quantities they like, and what they please. They can write and receive letters, they can bathe every day if they like, and they are treated with attention and consideration, as are all other prisoners. They are granted all possible concessions within the boundaries of discipline and order.

"None of the political prisoners has yet been punished. It is true that they behave very correctly and express their satisfaction towards the personnel and the way they are treated. They are the first to protest against the accusations relative to the treatment of the prisoners in this prison.

"It must be added that all prisoners are allowed to submit any claims they have to the director, who attends to them whenever he can."

This statement, combined with the independent testimony of Mr. Swinny and the authoritative denials and counter declarations of Dr. Affonso

Costa (the Portuguese Premier) in *O Mundo* of April 19, and the detailed reply in *O Seculo* of April 22, must for ever resolve into myth and fancy the *prima facie* absurdities and far-fetched exaggerations of the ducal diatribes, which seem to be inspired by the pious and reactionary enemies of a Freethought Republic.

Happily, on two crucial and typical matters in this dispute the veracity of the *Daily Mail* asseverations can be checked and very seriously called in question. First, as to the Duchess's "awful" disclosures. *O Mundo* of April 19 reports a speech of Dr. Affonso Costa in the Chamber of Deputies in which, after referring to the campaign of calumny which the Monarchists organised against the Republican regime, the Premier stated:—

"To-day, the campaign revived with the visit of the Duchess of Bedford to the prisons of Lisbon. This lady was received with every deference, and after having stated here that she found everything in order, she went home to her own country and stated the contrary."

Perhaps the Duchess sees visions, like the prophets of old, and, like them, being of a literary turn of mind, converts them into narratives. At any rate, she evidently has a wondrous gift of seeing the thing that is not, or divorcing the reality from its context. This fact is clear from the second item of her Æolian Hall impeachment, with its extraordinary declaration that "the Portuguese Minister, in an interview, asked 'What is a Carbonario?' and answered himself by saying 'There is no such thing!'" Like all these ducal utterances, no references enabling one to check or verify the statement are given, but apart from the self-evident absurdity of the citation, with its gratuitous addendum later on, suggesting that the Prime Minister "may be" a Carbonario himself, Senhor Affonso Costa, the devoted Freethinker on whose head the vials of the ducal wrath are poured forth, supplied in anticipation the refutation of these extravagances when he stated a few days before, in the Chamber of Deputies (*O Mundo*, April 19), first, that he never belonged to the Carbonario; and, secondly, when, so far from regarding the Carbonarios as non-existent, he avowed that—

"Although I am of opinion that the Society should have disappeared with the advent of the new regime, I do not cease to consider the Carbonarios as the finest type of Republicans and excellent Portuguese citizens."

The ultimate object of this campaign of calumny is the restoration of the Monarchy, the re-establishment of the Church, the disruption of the elements of social reform on the basis of scientific Rationalism, and the return of the community into the fold of the faith. With this ulterior program in view, the cry is made for the amnesty both of the prisoners within and the exiled and defeated bandits across the frontier. In a general way, amnesty is the right thing to plead for and the generous thing to concede in all cases of domestic discord, but a policy of amnesty dictated from Æolian Hall platforms to the sweet accompaniment of international intervention, is one which the Portuguese Prime Minister will, I hope, resist to the uttermost. I am convinced from a fairly wide reading of the facts—partly of those distorted in the present campaign, and partly of those carefully excluded from the organs of ducal publicity in this country—that the prisons in Portugal are, at least, no worse than our own; that the treatment of the prisoners there is more generous than that which our own politicals have immemorably received, with the sublime approval of the monarchical and religious censors of Republican and Rationalist Portugal, and that no English Ministry, in similar circumstances, would yield to threats organised in the Portuguese press. And while this campaign of threat and vilification goes on, my advice to the Republican party in Portugal will be to keep the prisoners safe and comfortable behind bolt and bar, and wipe the word "amnesty" for the time being off the political slate.

The mode of trial of existing political prisoners has formed one of the counts in the ducal fulmina-

tions. The sure and certain conviction of the prisoners was asserted, but the many acquittals that have taken place reduce that absurdity into pulp. In this connection it may be useful to quote the crushing statement of *O Seculo* (April 22):—

"The form of trial [of political prisoners] does not differ from that under which the Republicans engaged in the revolt of January 21, 1891, were tried by Council of War and under worse conditions of defence."

Of course, two wrongs do not make a right, but the hypothetical wrongs of to-day are not proper to be redressed by the aristocratic hands that were never upheld to defend Freethinkers and Republicans who suffered under the odious regime of the lamented Carlos.

One of the items of complaint against the Republic is the alleged banishment of God and religion from the schools. On this point my friend Vieira, one of the most distinguished writers on *O Mundo*, and a leader of Portuguese Freethought, triumphantly points out, in his article of April 15, that—

"The schools are without God and without religion because they are not for, or against, any kind of God, nor for, or against, any kind of religion. No one has been sent to tear down the crosses in the cemeteries, as the Duchess pretends. The crosses are there still in all the cemeteries; they have only been withdrawn from the establishments that were chapels, but which ought not to be so, because as they belonged to all, Catholics or non-Catholics, in no form or guise should they be employed exclusively by citizens of a particular belief. We believe that nothing was ever more just than this."

I heartily agree with the distinguished writer above cited, and I think, too, that the policy of the Republic in depriving the Catholics of the exclusive use of the cemetery chapel, and opening to Catholics the doors of these sad vestibules to the tomb on a footing of absolute equality with Protestants, Freethinkers, Jews, or Spiritualists, is a sound policy of justice and common sense. In monarchical Portugal, as in monarchical England, the hall of Death, the great leveller and democrat, was made the camping-ground of religious privilege, and the last solemn, consoling words of commemoration and parting had to be made not under the dome of some neutral undenominational building, but, if at all, at the open grave, with all its distressing and non-hygienic associations. In this reform, Portugal sets England a salutary lesson. The cross stuck on the cemetery chapels is a theological battle-sign, and should be buried in the dust of oblivion; and the cemetery chapels, in having a common, unrestricted use by men of all persuasions, should serve to unite the living with the bonds of a generous sympathy and toleration.

The Portuguese papers are naturally a little sarcastic in their references to the ducal campaigner. *O Mundo*, in its leader of April 17, very neatly turns the tables on the perfervid enemy of the Republic:—

"When the widow of the Duke of Bedford appeared in Lisbon [I translate from our esteemed contemporary], the journals were informed that this lady came here with the intention of visiting our prisons. The public asked: 'But what has the Duchess got to do with this? Why does she not spend her time in investigating the things that take place in the prisons of her own country?' The Portuguese public were quite right. In truth, the prisons, the disciplinary and penal regime of our country are, as every properly cultivated person knows, an open sky as compared with the prisons or the disciplinary and penal regime prevailing in England."

The writer goes on to say that in Portugal the dungeon fetters and the hard labor and other penitential afflictions characteristic of English penology do not exist. The actual treatment of the convicts is, as far as possible, good, and generally their treatment is much better than that of common prisoners, many of whom are in "durance vile" for offences involving less social evil and less moral turpitude than the marauding reactionaries who have fallen under the protecting wing of the *Daily Mail*. It is important to remember, as *O Seculo* says in its address to the English people (fourteen

columns of reply to the Duchess, in Portuguese and English, published April 22) that the prisons complained of are "the prisons that we inherited from the monarchy, the very prisons in which the Republican propagators were detained at various times!" The *Daily Mail* dismisses *O Seculo's* refutation of its romantic flights of fancy in about fourteen lines! This may be wisdom, but it is not fair journalism. The reproduction of *O Seculo's* smashing reply would have crushed the mountain of calumnies in the dust and destroyed the credit of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's pious impeachment of the Republic. Saul amongst the prophets was not a more affecting spectacle than that of Campbell among the duchesses. At the Æolian Hall meeting he moved a resolution of "strong and indignant protest," but one doubts whether its "strength" was fortified with an adequate knowledge of the facts. Probably the "indignation" of the emotional mystic of the City Temple will sweep him past the evidence in favor of the Republic which he assails.

I hope that the readers of the *Freethinker* and the friends of fairplay to the Republic will get *O Seculo* and read and circulate it. To Freethinkers, too, in the States I make a special appeal to spread the light. The pictures given of the saloons occupied by the Visconde de Ervideira, one of the maltreated politicals, and of the rooms of some of the other prisoners, which are samples of the rest, are enough to make the mouths of the Suffragettes water with envy. The treatment of the politicals, as here disclosed, places the penal system of Portugal on a high level of humanity and generous consideration for the prisoners who have fallen into the Republic's hands as the legitimate spoils of a desperate war of self-defence waged by the new regime of liberty against the cruel and unscrupulous enemies of social reform and political and intellectual freedom. I do not pretend that even in Portugal the existing prison system fulfils the highest ideal of an enlightened penology (what can a Republic fighting for its life against enemies within and without do in three years?) but I am convinced, after an ample survey of the ground of attack and defence, that the present campaign of calumny has hatred of Freethought and a malevolent desire to crush the nascent Republic as its mainspring.

I am glad that the advice which I tendered to my friend Vieira in my long letter of appeal, dated April 19 (since reproduced in *O Mundo* of April 28) has been taken seriously to heart, and that he was able to prevail upon *O Seculo* to undertake its splendid and convincing vindication of the Republic. It is to be hoped that the titular representatives of the Republic will take care that the widest publicity be given in the press of this country to the true statement of facts as affecting the aristocratic crusade against the fair fame of an honored and chivalrous race nobly struggling to be free from the twin tyrants of throne and altar.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

A Laughing Philosopher.

"Rabelais laughing in his easy chair."—POPE.

"I class Rabelais with the great creative minds of the world."—COLERIDGE.

"Le rire c'est le propre de l'homme."—RABELAIS.

IN a recent trial, the details of which were sufficiently Rabelaisian to satisfy the most exacting, the learned judge complained that to read Rabelais was a cause of boredom. That is not the general view, and the popular idea of Rabelais coincides with Pope's famous line. He is pictured as one who laughs and mocks at all things; a hog for appetite, a monkey for tricks. His genius had many facets, and he has been described as a great moral teacher, a grossly obscene writer, a reckless buffoon, a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Freethinker. To paint him as an ethical teacher alone is to ignore the innate drollery of his character. To set him up a mere

mountebank is to forget the stern reality which underlies his writing. Other unconscious ironists would turn the first of French humorists into an ecclesiastical historian.

To treat Rabelais as destitute of all serious purpose in art or life is even a greater error. Whatever Rabelais may have been, he was not a trifler. He had seen ecclesiastical life from the inside, and he hated priests with every drop of his blood. He studied Greek when it was a forbidden language, and he was an enthusiastic disciple of the new learning when scholars carried their lives in their hands. His zeal for intellectual freedom, untrammelled by priestcraft, entitles him to rank with Erasmus and Von Hutten as an apostle of humanism.

Of middle-class parentage, Francois Rabelais was born in 1483 near the lovely little city of Chinon, on the Vienne, where Henry II. cursed his sons and died. He always regarded Touraine, its cities, rivers, and vineyards, with affectionate admiration. "Noble, ancient, the first in the world," so he called it in the fullness of his heart. His father, an innkeeper, wished to make him a priest. Accordingly, little Francois was sent at nine years of age to the Benedictine monks of Scully, so young that the white shirt was put over the child's frock. Later, he was removed to the Franciscan Monastery of Fontenoy le Comte. The Franciscan vows included ignorance as well as celibacy and poverty. For fifteen years he remained there, taking priest's orders in 1511, at the age of twenty-eight. Always inquisitive, he amassed that encyclopædic knowledge which he put to so good a use in his immortal book, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. It is to this long period spent among the bigoted, narrow, intolerant sons of the great lying Catholic Church that we owe his undying hatred of priestcraft. It breaks out in nearly every page of his writings, here passionately, there sorrowfully, with a cry of rage, a sob of pain, or a mocking laugh of "sanglante derision." He hated the "monk-birds" more bitterly than even Erasmus, for his nature was stronger.

At the age of forty he came into the world a free man, at liberty to follow his studies, burning with a pathetic enthusiasm for the new learning. He threw aside the loathed monastic garb, and became secretary to the Bishop of Maillezais. About 1530 he went to the University of Montpellier with the intention of getting a medical degree. When he attended the lectures he was within sight of his fiftieth year, and he sat by the side of men young enough to be his sons. Two years later he went to Lyons, where he held an appointment as physician to the hospital. His friend, Etienne Dolet, was already established as a printer in the place.

Rabelais's connection with the first reformers of France is certain; the extent difficult to determine. He had no desire for the martyr's crown, and he never contemplated following Calvin into exile, or Berquin to the stake. As he humorously explained, he was "too thirsty to like fire." His sympathies, too, were antagonistic to all dogmas. Luther and Calvin were as abhorrent to him as the priests. The society of Des Perriers, Dolet, and the Lyonnais Freethinkers was more congenial to his habits of thought. Moreover, he had an inside knowledge of the power of the Church and of the malignity of her hired assassins.

Heretics were then handed over to the secular arm to be burnt for the good of their souls and the greater glory of God; and Rabelais did not intend, if he could help it, to be butchered to make a Roman holiday. When he was denounced as a heretic, he challenged his enemies to produce a heretical proposition from his writing. They were unequal to the task; but, none the less, they were there. Rabelais's caution was necessary if he wished to live. Some of his contemporaries suffered for heresy. Dolet was burnt, Des Perriers was driven to suicide, Marot was a half-starved wanderer in Piedmont. Giordano Bruno, whom he had met in Rome, was also done to death. Rabelais may be excused for not wishing to be "eaved by fire."

His writings, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which have immortalised his name, were commenced at Lyons and finished when he was curé of Meudon. They form a series of satires in a vein of riotous and uproarious mirth on monks, priests, pedants, and all the solecisms of his time, yet with all their licentiousness revealing a heart aflame with love for mankind, and a passionate desire for the triumph of truth and justice.

It has been said that Rabelais despised women. He did not write till an age when the passion of youth had consumed itself to ashes. Love was killed in Rabelais by that hateful system of monkery which has filled Christendom with unspeakable horrors. Poor Rabelais! Half of humanity absent from his mind. Love, the central fire of the universe, the source of all human joys and sympathies, the bond of society, appears in the accursed monastic system in which he was trained as corruption and depravity. The damnable discipline surrounded Rabelais from the time he wore a child's frock till he was a man of forty, and the best side of his nature was strangled. He never loved; never even thought of loving. He had no more respect for women than a eunuch in an Eastern seraglio. Nay, more, there had even been crushed out of him that love for his mother which characterises every Frenchman worthy of the name. Alone among French writers he has no filial piety. As the old galley slave used to be known by the dragging foot, on which was once the heavy fetter, so when the unlovely years had eaten away manhood, imprisoned with its blind instincts and objectless passions, the ex-monk is known by his sexless mind. Thrice poor Rabelais! the monkish devils spoiled his life. The robe he wore was to him like a bodily deformity, narrowing his view, corrupting his mind. Originally, his nature must have been lofty and beautiful; witness those exquisite chapters in which he describes the monks of Thelema, whose motto was "Liberty."

Tradition has it that he died saying, "I go to seek the great perhaps." We may picture the rage of the Christians when their old enemy slipped quietly out of their eager clutches. The Catholic Church never forgets and priests never forgive. It was well for the old man that his life was not prolonged. Rabelais went further than contempt for the trappings of Christianity, and he rejected it altogether. He hoped to cure the evil of religion by spreading knowledge, by bringing priestcraft into contempt, by widening the boundaries of thought. It was his desire that his writings should be read. To read rationalistic thought is to think rationally, and is the first step towards Freethought. He knew as much as any man of his time; but he carried his weight of learning with a smile. He was acquainted with the book of the world, and not merely with the world of books. Liberty was Rabelais's sovereign specific for the ills of his time. Finding his contemporaries bound with chains of their own manufacture, it was his life purpose to break the fetters and set them free.

MIMNERMUS.

Worship and Finance.

THE Church Treasurer was standing outside his shop, with both hands in his pockets and his back to the street, evidently in a contemplative mood. I had heard that the pastor of his church was leaving, and I had not yet had an opportunity of expressing my regrets to him. I decided to do so now.

"So your pastor is leaving," I said, after we had exchanged the customary civilities.

"Um—yes," he replied, hesitatingly.

"You will miss him," I said. "He has served you many years."

The Treasurer made no reply, so I asked, "How are you faring in your search for a successor?"

"I might as well tell you straight," said the Treasurer, with an air of abandon. "Fact is, I don't go to 'is church now. Ain't bin there for months."

I was genuinely surprised, though my previous experiences of the domestic storms which sweep across the tabernacles of the faithful ought to have prepared me for this sort of division. Peace, among Nonconformists, I ought to have known, usually exists only as a theoretical hypothesis and seldom as a present experience. I told the Treasurer I was sorry to hear of the separation, especially as he was an office-bearer in the church, and I asked him to tell me the cause of it.

"Can't keep on lendin' 'em money," he said. "I've financed 'em for years, and I thought 'twas about time I 'ad some o' me money back."

"Yes," I said. "I understand that you have been rather generous to the church. But were they really in a position to pay you back any of your loans?"

"Could if they wanted to," said the Treasurer, with a suggestion of a snap in his manner. "We 'ad a sale of work and raised about £40, and I asked for some of it. We called a church meetin' to settle what should be done with the proceeds, and it was agreed to give me £20. But the pastor wanted it for new Sunday-school 'ymn-books and organ repairs, so 'e persuaded some of 'is pet lambs to call another church meetin', and it was then decided to do as the pastor said. Talked 'em round 'andsome, 'e did."

I knew the Treasurer was a hard-working man. The premises outside which we were now standing consisted of a small butcher's establishment, and the street upon which the "best" of two bedrooms above looked out was a frousy business thoroughfare. The Church Treasurer, assisted by his wife as cashier, and an errand boy under the age for insurance, slew and sold animals for bread, and doubtless not an ox fell under his axe without his Heavenly Father's knowledge. He was by no means rich, and probably could ill afford the numerous advances he had made to the church, upon whose accounts Providence continually permitted tiresome deficits to arise. I could not but sympathise with his request for repayment, and I told him so.

"Business is pressin' nowadays," he said. "Gets 'arder and 'arder to make a livin'."

"Exactly," said I. "And 'tis the same with the churches. Gets harder and harder to make a congregation."

But the Treasurer was out for narrative, and not for argument. Having got well started, he wasn't to be switched off.

"I couldn't feel comfortable," he continued, "at the Baptist church after that. I told 'em straight that they'd lose one family through it, and me and me wife and children changed over to the Wesleys. You can't get no good from a man who tells you not to do a thing 'e's doin' 'isself, can you?"

"What are you referring to?" I asked.

"Why," said the Treasurer, "wasn't 'e lookin' out for a bigger church all the time 'e was tellin' me not to ask for me money back? I couldn't get no good from 'im after that. 'E didn't 'elp me spiritual life.' After a pause he added, sadly: "I know I didn't ought to look to *man* for 'elp in me worship. I ought to look 'igher, I know. But some'ow I didn't feel meself, if you can understand. I wasn't comfortable, and sich things didn't ought to be in a church. So I thought it best to leave."

The vacating pastor had undoubtedly done his best to satisfy the Almighty in at least one respect, for, in obedience to the divine command, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth," he had filled his quiver with a baker's dozen of youngsters. I could not justly criticise his desire to obtain what he described as a larger "sphere," knowing quite well that by "sphere" he meant something else. When a "call" from heaven is accompanied by a prospective increase of £50 a year in salary, thirteen children are apt to bias a man's decision.

I said as much to the Treasurer, but just then a female entered his shop with the evident intention of making a purchase. She delivered her order to the butcher's wife (sitting in the cash desk), who

transferred it to her husband through the open window in the words, "Forward for sossidges." The Treasurer skipped into the shop, and I lifted my hat to the cashier and passed on down the street, musing upon the wondrous power of Christianity to allay petty bickerings and to unite men in the pursuit of one grand and noble purpose.

R. NORTH.

The Life Beyond.

THERE is a land, though none knows where,
But all may go who pay their fare.
The boat which takes you, so 'tis said,
Is timed to do so—when you're dead.
The agents for this happy land
Describe the place as simply grand.
No work is done there all day long,
But all sing one eternal song;
A million million voices blend
To sing this song, which cannot end,
Which has no chorus, verse, or rhyme,
But just one sentence all the time.
A pleasant program, is it not?
And pious folk, who know what's what,
Will book their places in advance,
While fools and sinners miss their chance.
The streets, they say, are paved with pearls
(A detail which will please the girls).
The company is quite select,
And strictly choice and circumspect.
There good old Adam will be found
And other folk long underground.
There Moses and his rod will be
(An entertaining sight to see).
Saints by the ton will swell the fun,
And kings and emperors, many a one,
Who've made fair lands a dreary waste,
The pleasures of this land will taste.
Converted murderers, whom the cord
Has jerked to see their own dear Lord,
Inquisitors who plied the rack,
And loved their victims' bones to crack.
John Calvin, who betrayed his friend,
Eternity in bliss will spend.
Good old King Hall, for his defence
Of Christian faith, his recompense
In this fair region will enjoy;
While with his golden harp will toy
King David, who seduced the wife
And took, by treachery, the life
Of one he counted as his friend.
And there, in holy joy, will spend
Eternity, the sacred shade
Of Rahab, she who once betrayed
Her city to the Hebrew band,
The devastators of her land.
This whore, for treachery renowned,
Among the angels will be found,
If Dante's verse describes aright
The land above so fair and bright.

What say you, Sir; you'd rather go
Among the damned in hell below,
For ever there to boil and fry?
Well, now you say so, so would I!

HERBERT W. THURLOW.

Obituary.

We regret to hear, just as we are going to press, of the death of Professor Thaddeus Burr Wakeman, a distinguished American Freethinker, whose personal acquaintance we had the honor and pleasure of making when we were at New York in 1896. Professor Wakeman was seventy-eight years old. He died of heart failure on April 23, without an hour of sickness or a moment's pain. The remains were cremated on the following Saturday. A memorial meeting was to take place later. We shall probably see it reported in the *Truthseeker*. We owe the present announcement to Mr. Theodore Schroeder, secretary of the Free Speech League.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.
INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): Annual Conference. Public Meeting at 7. Speakers: Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, F. A. Davies, and Miss Kough.

OUTDOOR.

London Branches' Outdoor Lectures suspended in consequence of the N. S. S. Annual Conference.

COUNTRY.
OUTDOOR.

WOLVERHAMPTON (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—May 8, at 8, "Clerical Popinjays"; 9, at 8, "The 'Pavilions' of God"; 11, at 7.15, "Christ: Man, Messiah, or Myth?"

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* by G. W. Foote. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 New-castle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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