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We cannot make true things false, or false things true, by choosing to think them so.—J. A. FROUDE.

Religious Epidemics.

IMITATION and suggestion represent two of the most powerful forces in the associated life of man. Both are forces that are essential to an orderly, and even a progressive, social life; but they may as easily become the cause of movements that are retrogressive, and even anti-social in character. Given a favorable environment, and there is hardly an idea that is too outrageous to become the immediately impelling power of masses of people. Under certain circumstances a crowd of people manifest all the characteristic features of a psychological entity. As Le Bon has pointed out, a crowd will do collectively what none of its constituent individuals would ever dream of doing singly.* It becomes capable of deeds of heroism or of savage cruelty. It will sacrifice itself or others with absolute indifference. Above all, the mere fact of moving in a mass gives the individual a power, a certainty of being in the right, that he can—so far as the mass of people are concerned—never acquire by himself. The intellect is subdued, the instincts are given a freer play, and their movement is determined in turn by suggestions not unlike those with which a trained hypnotist operates on his subject.

In all contagious phenomena mere words or symbols play a powerful part. They serve as a rallying cry for the emotions of the crowd. These words or symbols may be wholly incongruous when taken in connection with the real needs of a people; but, provided they are sufficiently familiar, they serve their purpose. And the more primitive the type of mind represented by the mass of the people, the more powerfully these symbols operate. Shakespeare's portrayal of the crowd in *Julius Cæsar* is eternally true. The skilled orator, playing on old feelings, using familiar terms, and invoking familiar ideas, finds a crowd quite plastic to his hands. It is for these reasons, often perhaps unconsciously, that there is such a keen struggle for a monopoly of good rallying cries by political and social parties, and a readiness to affix certain objectionable names to their opponents. Patriotism, The Church in Danger, Godless Education, Little Englander, are all so many causes that are materially helped or hindered, not by their essential justice or reasonableness, but by the mere verbal images with which they become associated.

In some cases epidemics may be called normal in character—that is, they depend for their existence upon factors that are always operative in society, and utilise that power of suggestion and imitation which is an essential part of the social structure. In other instances they depend upon the workings of obscure mental diseases, and are of a pathological character. In yet other instances they represent a mixture of both. In such cases, for instance, as the mediæval Flagellants, or the Dancing Mania, the presence of pathological elements is unmistakable. Yet they could never

have spread as they did unless they had called into operation those principles of crowd psychology to which science has only within recent years turned its attention, and which are normal factors in every human society. At present I am concerned only with epidemics as they occur in connection with religion, and in showing how, in spite of their admittedly pathologic or undesirable character, they have yet served to keep religious belief alive and active. The two epidemics above mentioned furnish good examples of what has been said.

We may start with the once numerous sect of the Flagellants. Commencing in Italy about the middle of the thirteenth century, this sect continued in existence for at least 150 years; it maintained itself in various parts of Europe, England and Scotland appearing to be the only countries in which the sect failed to establish itself. As a religious penance, whipping antedates the outbreak of the flagellation mania, as it has survived its disappearance. In Spain, until quite recently, there existed a religious order, the "Brotherhood of the Cave," which established itself in cellars, where the faithful resorted to have themselves whipped. Flogging has also formed an important part in both conventual and monastic discipline. The pathological aspect of the subject is too unsavory to enter into at any length; it is enough to say that the connection between the whipping of certain parts of the body, and the production of intense sexual pleasure, is now an established fact, and it is clear that the anti-social life of monks and nuns would easily lend itself to the development of the practice. On the other hand, when this practice assumed an epidemic form, mere imitation, combined with intense religious faith, would act as a potent cause for its extension.

The pictures of the flagellants in all countries were very similar. They marched from town to town, men and women, and even children, stripped to the waist—sometimes entirely naked, praying, and whipping each other incessantly. "Not only during the day, but even by night, and in the severest winter, they traversed the cities with torches and banners, in thousands and ten of thousands, headed by their priests, and prostrated themselves before the altars." At other times they proceeded to the market-place, arranged themselves on the ground in large circles, taking up various positions in accordance with their real or supposed crimes. After each had been whipped, a letter was read, which it was said an angel had brought to St. Peter's Church, at Jerusalem, stating that Christ had granted, at the intercession of the saints and of the Virgin, pardon for all who should wander about for thirty-four days and scourge themselves. A large number of women joined these flagellants. It is said that 25,000 marched from Modena and over 20,000 from Florence. In Germany, also, the crowds assumed large dimensions. In the end the Church and the secular powers joined forces for their suppression.

Of much greater significance in the history of religion is the Dancing Mania, which broke out as the craze for flagellation was subsiding. I have pointed out in previous articles the significance of the practice of dancing in the early history of religion. In primitive religion dancing is one of the commonest means adopted to produce ecstasy, usually helped by the taking of some vegetable drug. In

* See *The Psychology of Peoples and The Crowd*, by Gustave Le Bon.
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more civilised times the phenomena takes on more of a hypnotic character, and it is easy to see the play of suggestion when dealing with the various dancing manias of the Christian period. A people subject to the social disorganisations of the mediæval period, and living in an environment saturated with supernaturalism, are peculiarly susceptible to such an influence as that which expressed itself in the Dancing Mania of the fourteenth century. Hecker, who gives a very elaborate account of the epidemic as it appeared in different countries,* describes it thus:—

"They formed circles, hand in hand, and, appearing to have lost control over their senses, continued dancing, regardless of all bystanders, for hours together, in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion.....While dancing they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring up spirits whose names they shrieked out; and some of them afterwards asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood, which obliged them to leap so high. Others, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open and the Savior enthroned with the Virgin Mary."

At Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, and Metz, says the same writer:—

"Peasants left their ploughs, mechanics their workshops, housewives their domestic duties, to join the wild revels. Secret desires were excited, and but too often found opportunities for wild enjoyment; and numerous beggars, stimulated by vice and misery, availed themselves of this new complaint to gain a temporary livelihood. Girls and boys quitted their parents, and servants their masters, to amuse themselves at the dances of those possessed, and greedily imbibed the poison of mental infection. Above a hundred unmarried women were seen raving about in consecrated and unconsecrated places, and the consequences were soon perceived."

Hecker rightly says that the influence of the Roman Catholic religion, connected as it was with processions, public penances, and other practices likely to excite the mind of an excited populace, reduced the mind to a very favorable state for the outbreak of a nervous disorder. It is significant to note in this connection that one of these outbreaks occurred immediately after the revels of St. John's Day, a Christianised Pagan festival, and that the name of St. John was frequently in the mouths of the dancers. Once attacked, the hypnotic character of the complaint showed itself by its annual recurrence. To again cite Hecker:—

"Most of those affected were only annually visited by attacks; and the occasion of them was so manifestly referable to the prevailing notions of that period that, if the unqualified belief in the agency of saints could have been abolished, they would not have had any return of the complaint. Throughout the whole of June, prior to the festival of St. John, patients felt a disquietude and restlessness which they were unable to overcome. They were dejected, timid, and anxious; wandered about in an unsettled state, being tormented with twitching pains, which seized them suddenly in different parts, and eagerly expected the eve of St. John's Day, in the confident hope that by dancing at the altars of this saint they would be freed from all their sufferings. This hope was not disappointed; and they remained, for the rest of the year, exempt from any further attack."

The connection of St. Vitus with the Dancing Mania is accounted for by the legend that St. Vitus, said to have been martyred in 808, just before his death prayed that he might protect from the Dancing Mania all who solemnised his death, and that a voice from heaven was heard to say, "Vitus, thy prayer is accepted." The fact that the prayer was offered over a thousand years before the disease appeared, and that there is no proof that St. Vitus ever existed, are difficulties too microscopical for the eye of faith to discern.

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

The Maligned Non-Believer.

SEVERAL years ago the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon went to Manchester to deliver a lecture on "Atheism and Faith," which was afterwards published. In that lecture the reverend gentleman made a peculiar statement, namely, that "religion resting upon reason is a house founded upon sand." As a matter of fact, no religion does rest, no religion ever did rest, upon reason, simply because every religion is contrary to reason. The only exception is Buddhism, which in the usual acceptation of the word is not a religion at all. What Mr. Gibbon meant to convey by the statement was the false notion that religion is not contrary to, but above reason, for in the same discourse he nicknamed reason "a farthing guttering candle." Mr. Gibbon is the present Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, the Spring meeting of which has just been held in London. In his address from the chair Mr. Gibbon returned to the subject of his Manchester lecture, and talked at length, in a superficial, flippant, and misleading manner, about "the non-believer of our time." He was candid enough to place this wicked character "prominent in the forefront," and to allow that he is a messenger of God to this generation. He is "a significant and somewhat ominous figure," challenging "whatever of human worth and Christian faith survives among us." We wonder how many of our readers will be able to recognise him from the following description:—

"I see a youth, English, Welsh, Irish, or Scotch, of decent upbringing, of average education, with good, not brilliant faculties, of naturally clean instincts and wholesome habits, interested in sport, not deeply interested in anything of an ideal order, rather bored by business, keen on his own pet hobby, football, cycling, photography, and such-like, while as for religion, he has just let it go. That's all. Once it was in his bag, but it fell out and he never troubled about it any more; he went on without it, and has never felt the loss of it."

With all due deference to so exalted a functionary, we pronounce the above a miserable caricature. In reality, it is an accurate portrait of multitudes of people who, though utterly uninterested in churches and chapels and unintelligently sceptical as to many things in the Bible, are yet at heart believers in God and a future life. We have met hundreds, if not thousands, of them ourselves, and know the breed quite well. They are not the typical unbelievers of our time at all, but rather the indifferentists or nothingarians, over whom neither Freethought nor the Christian faith can exert any moulding influence.

Possibly Mr. Gibbon has never met a genuine non-believer; indeed, from his description one naturally infers that he has not. If he had ever come into direct contact with a veritable Atheist he would have been absolutely incapable of delivering the greater part of his address. The Atheist is a person profoundly interested in all the things that matter, and distinguished for his close, hard, logical thinking. He has the courage to face the facts and to reject conventional explanations. Mr. Gibbon made feeling allusions to social problems; to "the underworld of poverty, and all that goes on there"; to the girl who is "forced to sell her labor for a living," whose innocence, youth, and fairness "are all bait to the enemy"; but the Atheist knows that if Christianity were true such distressing problems would not exist. Indeed, Mr. Gibbons cannot but be aware that for the existing state of things the Churches themselves are very largely responsible. The Churches are mainly supported by the middle class, and in *Widowers' Houses* Mr. Bernard Shaw describes "middle-class respectability and younger-son gentility as fattening on the poverty of the slum as flies fatten on filth." Mr. Gibbon says that "Atheism unites all our creeds"; but, unfortunately, it unites them only for the heartless persecution of Atheists. Is it conceivable that God raises the Atheist on purpose to challenge the Churches to prove their piety by putting the wretch to death, or clapping him into prison?

* *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, Sydenham Society, 1844.

According to Mr. Gibbon the non-believer is one who has consciously or otherwise "absorbed the negative results of modern criticism":—

"His common sense always strained at Balaam and Jonah, and his moral sense, sharpened by his love of sport, which serves him as a conscience, stuck at many things said of God—and so, not being deeply interested, he let the whole thing go.....So there he is, millions of him. According to the old logic, he ought to be an exceedingly bad man; but not a week, scarcely a day, passes without some heroic deed flashing out of the mass of life about us, showing what fine metal men are made of; God being with them, though they know him not."

If Atheists are good it is a sign that God is with them without their knowing it. That is to say, nobody can be good unless God makes him so. Such is Mr. Gibbon's teaching; but does he not see what dreadful implications it contains? Here, for example, is an extremely awkward question which we are obliged to put to the Chairman of the Congregational Union. If God is infinitely powerful, good, and loving, how is it that there are any wicked people in the world? In other words, why is God with some Atheists, inspiring them to deeds of heroic excellence, and absent from many Theists, who, in consequence, grow rich by grinding the faces of the poor and devouring widows' houses? We exhort Mr. Gibbon to pay serious heed to this question, and answer it if he can. We honestly confess that we regard it as of much greater importance than any of the matters discussed by him in his long address. The God he believes in is, on his own showing, guilty of the cruellest partiality and injustice. All the awful evils so rightly deplored in the address thrive simply because God is not with all people alike, because he is a despicable respecter of persons. If he can be with some people who disown him and cause them to appear as great luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, why does he not dwell with all alike, and so make "a crooked and perverse generation" an impossibility?

Mr. Gibbon wants to know how the non-believers can be reached by the Churches. We beg to inform him that thousands of those whom he looks upon as non-believers could easily be reached and won back by scientifically planned revivals conducted by specially qualified evangelists. Why, Gipsy Smith is reaching and winning back such people by the thousand wherever he goes; only they backslide again almost as soon as the artificial excitement dies down. But the genuine non-believers are beyond the reach of the Churches altogether. The following is what Mr. Gibbon thinks on the point:—

"Such a dogged attempt to deal with the social question as would give religion an edge and the semblance of a real fight would reach great multitudes of them. They have no use for a disguised Buddhism that in hymn and prayer offers rest to people who are not tired, but they would flock to the colors if there was a declaration of war against the Devil and his angels."

We absolutely dissent from the reverend Chairman's opinion. Conscientious unbelievers are convinced that all Churches are, consciously or unconsciously, fraudulent institutions. Our opposition to them is not based upon their inefficiency, but upon their falseness. We have turned our backs upon them not because their accomplishments are few and ineffective, but because their claims are baseless; not because they sail so unskilfully, but because they sail under false colors. In other words, the supreme fault we find with them is that they pretend to be what they are not, and to do what is impossible. They pretend to be Divine institutions, indwelt by the infinite and almighty God who is justice and love, to constitute the body of which the Eternal Christ is the head, or to form the temple which the Holy Ghost fills with his glory; but they have never furnished the least verification of such august pretensions. Throughout their whole history they have given innumerable demonstrations of their exclusively human origin and character. Their differences, their bitter wrangles, their cruel persecution of one

another and of all outsiders, bear ample witness to their non-Divine connections. But the absurdness of all their claims is that they can actually limit the activity of the Supreme Being, or that the Savior of the world has seen fit to do his saving work through them, and through them alone, and through them only within the bounds of their own capacities. And yet they wonder why we do not believe in such a God, who can do nothing for China or Japan except through Christian missionaries specially sent out from Christendom, and scarcely anything even through them. We have the testimony of such unquestioned authorities as Dr. H. A. Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge, Mr. Chester Holcombe, and Mr. Eugene Simon, who have spent many years in China, that the Chinese compare most favorably with the best Christian nation. Mr. Gibbon has never lived in China or Japan, and yet he has the audacity to apply the following language to all Heathen people alike:—

"They are souls in exile. They are earth's disinherited. In them the human spirit is humiliated. They have no share in the things that belong to man's life,.....no place in the work of civilisation."

He calls them all "these entombed races." This is blind prejudice in its full, irresponsible swing. And yet a man who can talk such lying nonsense imagines that if the Churches were on fire with such irrational zeal Atheists would flock to their colors in their thousands. It was empty twaddle of that sort that first drove them to Atheism, and certainly such egotistical attitude and activity on the part of the Churches as Mr. Gibbon recommends is not likely to decoy them back to Theism. The Chairman of the Union says that they have no use for "a disguised Buddhism." True; but they have very considerable use for the real Buddhist system, because it is practically identical with their own. Buddhism does not offer rest to people who are not tired, but it does promise deliverance from suffering and sorrow to people who are prepared to follow the path pointed out by Nature, a deliverance which will not be possible in Christendom until Christianity has died out of it.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Irony of So-Called Revelations.—IV.

(Concluded from p. 294.)

(b) According to revelation, however, the unseen world is tenanted not only by Gods, but by legions of angels, good and bad. But I am not going to waste your time with a dissection of the anatomy of these crude hybrid creations of primitive man. They are not worthy of any attention save to remark that, according to revelation, they are all, bad and good, true existences. The treatment, however, that is now generally accorded to his Seraphic Majesty—the supreme head of the legions of darkness—puts the religionists in a sad dilemma. The Bible, as you well know, reveals a Satan as well as a God. Its sacred pages are as replete with his unwearied attentions to mankind as they are with those of God. The Devil and his host play not only a very conspicuous rôle, but a most fundamental one, in the revealed scheme of salvation. The effect of their doings, in fact, forms the very foil in which the deeds of God and his angels are set. By every canon of reason and logic, Satan is as veritable an object of revelation as God is.

But oh! what revenges time had in store for revealed supernatural secrets. For now good theologians and devout religionists are actually ashamed of him, and even take pleasure in ignoring his very existence, despite his immortal nature! Some go to the extent of writing books which openly repudiate his ancient claim to a suzerainty over our lives. He is actually exiled from the halls of learning and culture, and is obliged to take refuge in Salvation Army barracks, Gospel halls, and revival meetings.

All this is done in apparent oblivion of the ludicrous predicament they put themselves into. If you accept the Bible as an inspired revelation, you have to accept both God and Satan as real existences. If you deny the reality of one, you cast your revelation to the four winds. You are bound to retain both, or let go your authority. Satan and God must stand together, or foreswear your Bible. There is no escape from this dilemma.

(c) The inspired Bible makes a further disclosure in respect to the inhabitants of that far country—that it is also inhabited by another spiritual genus, the souls of *home sapiens*, or the spirits of men; and further, that at a future date it will be tenanted by their bodies as well. That is to say, that man is immortal both in soul and in body.

The dogma that man has an immortal soul is common to practically all religions. But the announcement of a day of resurrection on which the body will return from the grave in an immortal form is a revelation which Christianity can practically claim as its own. But how cruelly fate deals with revelations! This special tenet of the New Testament was about the first to partake of the fate of Jonah and to go by the board to save the Christian vessel, with its cargo of creed, from being irretrievably lost. To attract, however, no attention to its fate, it has been lowered with deathlike silence; and it is a sad calamity that the missionary enterprise should play the part of the whale and bear it to distant shores to disturb anew the peaceful Ninevehs of Pagan lands.

Nor can even the immortal soul put in any legitimate claim to belong to the spiritual world. It is a crude semi-material ghost, which, but for recent sublimations, would have had to follow the "immortal" body over bulwarks to save the good ship from sinking.

(d) We are favored, moreover, not only with revealed information about the inhabitants of that elusive country, but also with a blurred summary sketch of its physical geography. Briefly, it is divided into two great regions, heaven and hell. Neither of them, however, has a particle of a claim to be called spiritual.

Its hell was a lake of fire, in which the souls and the bodies of men burned for ever without being consumed. The only revelation here is that of the crassest ignorance as to the nature of the process of burning. This revealed "spiritual" hell is virtually as material as the stones and the mortar with which our houses are built. It is no wonder, therefore, that it has disappeared from the map of the spiritual world of the twentieth century—its "everlasting fires" were altogether too revolting for the more refined and humanised conscience of the last fifty years.

But heaven's title deeds are no sounder than are those of Gehenna. The logic and the reason that would demolish the gates and the bastions of the one would have precisely the same effect upon the thrones and the harps of the other. But, as I have just said, the portals of hell were closed by our emotions and not the hydraulic machinery of our logic. The doors of heaven are left open simply because the visions within are not abhorrent to our nobler feelings and humanity. It was our awakened conscience and not our enlightened reason that put out the "unquenchable fires." Moreover, the heaven now standing is not at all the paradise of revelation, but a delocalised sublimed abstraction of the human intellect—a kind of Nirvana from which the harps, the thrones, and streets of gold have all been dissolved away in the vat of human reason.

We have now traversed the whole domain of human wants and desires—bodily, mental, moral, and speculative—and we have seen that at every plane of his nature the priest answered man's cry for bread by giving him a stone. Man groaned for light, and the priest, in the name of his gods, mocked him with a "will-o'-the-wisp." In brief, we may say that it is impossible to conceive of a being in a more direful need of a revelation than man; nor is it possible to imagine one who has been more tragically left without any.

It is no wonder, then, that divines and apologists, on realising that revelation is a house built on the quicksands, and is in danger of collapsing when assaulted by the batteries of reason, take alarm, and seek to wall it up and prevent it from coming down with a crash.

The most ingenious, and probably the most disingenuous also, of the sophistic buttresses reared to prop up its tottering walls is that known as "progressive revelation." It is an attempt to save the situation by admitting the fact that it is no revelation at all. In effect it says, "I admit that all you say is true; that man has slowly, laboriously, and tragically acquired by his own efforts every particle of the knowledge and wisdom he now possesses; I know, moreover, that he succeeded only after infinite stumblings, failures, and mistakes. I admit all that; but let me call it 'revelation.' Then I need not close my shop or change the name and sign of my establishment."

When, however, the speaker is fully conscious of the sophistic nature of the quibble, it is a modern form of the ancient ruse of "pious fraud" so much practised by the early Christian Fathers. For in itself it is a piece of imbecility on a par with contending that the image in a mirror is not a reflection due to the rays of light falling on it, but a supernatural revelation manifesting itself behind the glass. Primitive people and savages have always reasoned in that very manner; and it was certainly less irrational of them than it is of modern apologists. For surely, if a God of all wisdom and goodness desired to reveal himself to ignorant, credulous, and helpless humanity, he would not do so by means of such frightful and repulsive caricatures of himself as we have in sacred books and revealed religions. Nor would he falsely picture the workings of his universe and represent the world as if it were a stage for magicians to perform their antics upon.

It is a strange use of language to call what you have found out yourself with difficulty a revelation. If anyone used similar reasoning in the ordinary affairs of life he would be considered dishonest or demented. Let us take an example. Suppose a person was bent upon solving a new problem—one of a practical kind, say, in industrial chemistry. For months, and perhaps for years, he devotes all his time and energy to an apparently fruitless task—reasoning and experimenting, experimenting and reasoning; often thinking he has found a clue, and eagerly following it up, until repeated trials prove it to be a "will-o'-the-wisp." But, nothing daunted, he tries and tries again, until, after scores of failures, he at last succeeds; and away he runs to a friend and shouts, "Eureka, eureka! I have found it, I have found it." "What have you found?" coolly queries the friend. "What a question from you, who know all about my long, painful struggle. Why, it is how to manufacture synthetically that new dye you know I was working for years and years upon, and which you also know has cost me the use of my arm and of my eye, and which has undermined my health." "Oh, you say you have found it," says the friend. "My dear fellow, how blind and conceited you are; you did not find it—it was only 'progressively revealed' to you, that is all!" Such is literally the story of humanity in respect to all it knows, and such are the delightful methods of reasoning espoused by the advocates of revelation. Revelation has invariably belied its professed function. It professes to bring us light, but what it has invariably done is to intercept the light. From first to last, religion has enclosed our one source of light—the human intellect—in a vitreous globe of superstition, which, by being so opaque and colored, has always dimmed, deflected, or tinted the few rays that have struggled through it from time to time. In all the intellectual effulgence which now illumines our civilised world, there is not one single ray but which can be traced directly to its one fountain head in intelligence and the reason of man.

A Daydream.

DREAMS are quite unknown to me during the hours of sleep. Perhaps that is why my mind, thinking it misses something, takes temporary leave of absence when the circumstances are suitable enough and goes wandering away along paths that, often, have neither beginning nor end. My book slips to my knees; my pipe goes out; and, hey, presto! I become a dweller in dreamland.

In this manner of transit I discovered myself in a room. Although but a second before I had been sitting under the budding branches of a lithe young beech, and watching the swinging fingers form themselves into fantastic, kaleidoscopic pictures, I was not in the least surprised at my change of environment. Although but the quiver of an eyelid before, so to say, I had been breathing deep breaths of an atmosphere scented by lily perfume, I experienced no astonishment at the "closeness" of the air in which I now found myself. It seemed natural enough.

The room was destitute of any furniture. In the centre, directly under a stained-glass dome, stood a solid plinth-like mass of cunningly carved wood, similar in appearance to the resting-places of the sculptured likenesses of departed murderers and other heroic men. Upon its cushioned surface lay a woman, clothed in a long, loose white robe, her dark brown hair lying thickly around her shoulders. The face was turned from me; but the beauty and grace and delicacy that seemed to be exhaled from the figure were so exquisite that I marvelled at my own calmness, at my lack of appreciation.

The walls of the room were of mahogany panels, every alternate panel forming a frame for a picture, painted in vivid colors, each representative of a certain phase of woman's life. These pictures were suggestive rather than deliberately instructive. They might embody a particular mental attitude to certain questions, leaving the onlooker to agree or disagree as he felt inclined. To me they presented, in pictorial art, many thoughts that had long been hung in the gallery of my mind. Astonishment at seeing them realised in form and color did not dawn upon me. This, too, seemed natural enough.

Directly opposite me, in the dark frame that gave it such peculiar effect, I saw a picture of a kitchen, flooded with brilliant sunrays. The mother had sunk listless, weary, into an old leather armchair; and six children were playing pranks with the results of her morning's work. Their mother, too tired to trouble, seemed to be dreaming. Before her eyes was a visioned bookcase. Her whole desire yearned for it. But the front of the case was of glass fitted into the sides: there was no entrance to the books.

Children, I thought, may be the crystallisation of a woman's duty; but, if they mean more pain and more unhappiness for her than pleasure, then the fewer children the better. There are greater duties than that of bringing children into the world; and one of them is the recognition by man that happiness is as much a woman's right as his.

Alongside, perhaps meant to precede the other, the panel showed a woman in the midst of a mental conflict. One hand shaded her brow and eyes; but not so much as to hide that sad beseechment, so full of knowledge of its feebleness, that makes the strong heart quail, and feel criminal. With the other hand she gently pushed away from her a child. Before her, in the dimness of the picture, stood the outline of a man. His eyes were observant, interested even; but a hateful smile of superiority hung around his lips. I could nearly hear him sarcastically saying, "Instinct, madam, the strongest instinct we, you and I, possess! And you fight, or would fight, against it. H'm!"

On the other side was depicted a moonlight scene. Into a dense forest of fir twined a pathway. My eyes seemed to follow it in its pilgrimage among the trees. No sensitive mind could have resisted its loveliness, you would have thought; and yet, one of

the two girls who stood in the foreground was afraid. Notwithstanding the other's courage, she would not go. She was afraid.

Another picture showed a thin, white-faced woman, sick unto death, gazing with startled eyes at an infant lying upon her breast. In the little hands was a wreath with the inscription, "From Baby."

All the panel pictures facing me dealt with the question of sex, as if the artist had considered that here, if anywhere, could be found the key to the problems of the rights and wrongs of women.

I had begun to ask myself if a woman's intellect, her mind, were not of more importance than her genitive powers, if her desires should not constitute duties to man, where this was concerned, when the figure on the plinth moved uneasily, and then struggled. Her breath soon came in convulsive gasps, and her whole body seemed to be toiling against some form of restriction. Her robe opened at the foot; and I noticed her limbs were tied with soft, silky material to the couch.

She turned her head towards me, revealing a face whose features were set in determination. As the struggle became more and more intensified, her robe became more and more disarrayed, and I saw she was bound from feet to neck by innumerable strands of the same silky material.

Unaccountably, I was utterly unable to help; nor did she seem to wish assistance; she did not seem to be aware of my presence.

The face hardened without relinquishment of its beauty. The muscles worked nervously, but without cessation. "Freedom or Death," the closely pressed, motionless lips had carved upon them. In the eyes shone the look that quails at nought, the look that puts the cowards of weakness to flight.

One by one the silken bands were all rent, and the robe torn off. She leapt from her resting-place of centuries, and quickly she turned round, searching for a door. There was none. A window? None, but the stained glass roof, with its scriptural representations of woman's duties.

Strength, courage, hope, dissolved in the tears of disappointment; and she leaned against the wall, burying her face in her arms. Her labors had been expended in vain. She had toiled for freedom, and its breath was poisoned. This was her reward.

My eyes searched the room for an opening: I felt my first strong twinge of human sympathy; and I observed that, on one side of the room, there were four alternate panels blank. I walked up to them, and discovered that they had, at one time, been pictures; but, obviously, a process of erosion had taken place.

"Blank picture the first," I said to myself, "woman's natural periodic weakness, entailing cave-residence while man hunted. Blank the second, woman the keeper of the hut of the gods, while man eased his mind from them while hunting, etc. Blank the third, phallus worship by the woman, while the men battled with and killed each other. Blank the fourth, an assemblage of gods, from a chunk of clay smeared with blood to the interrogation mark of the modern Christian; a bevy of priests, from the incarnardined devil of the dead days, who was on familiar terms with the awesome occupant of the holy hut, to the modern portly and saintly collector of pew-rents; and a crowd of women in the foreground."

Suddenly there was a harsh grating noise; and blank panel the third moved up. The woman eagerly darted to the aperture; but before reaching the apparent way of escape there issued from it a black, loathesome snake, that drew itself slowly over the polished floor. Repulsive, with eyes glinting greenly even in the subdued light of the room, its long sinuous, detestable body covered with a moisture that impregnated the close air with mustiness, like mildew, the creature awakened within me all my hatred of the ugly. My human emotions were thoroughly aroused at last.

And the woman? Did she feel as I felt? She was bending down caressing the ugly brute, and whispering to it. Then she stood erect, while it

slowly circled her limbs, her waist, her shoulders, imprisoning her in its folds. She stroked the ugly hooded head nestling on her bosom. She spoke lovingly to it; and I shivered.

That was all. I picked up my book; inhaled some big breaths of the fresh, sweetly perfumed air; relit my pipe; and found myself saying silently, "Women still worship two men and a splash of formless masculinity above the bright blue skies. They object to man-made laws, man-made restrictions of many kinds. They are fighting against some of the deepest rooted prejudices of the male mind. If it be not a sex war, it is perilously like it. And yet they still *worship* these, to them, real men, whose masculine characteristics they attempt to smother in Godism. Let woman continue to bow down even before a dream picture of man, and she will never achieve the freedom for which she longs; for worship means slavery of body and mind. When she shatters that dream picture the snake encircling her mind will uncoil itself, and fall dead. Only then will she be free from the insidiously base influence of that which has, more than anything else, in the past, kept her enslaved—Religion."

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops.

A correspondent of the *Daily Citizen* lately put in a plea for the Bishops. He said that they must not be supposed to spend all their salaries upon themselves. They have to keep motor-cars, they have to give subscriptions to this, that, and the other cause. Quite true. But these expenses have to be met by laymen with similar incomes. We all know, without being told, that Bishops cannot spend four, five, or ten thousand a year on eating, drinking, and clothes—even including gaiters and shovel hats. Millionaires cannot spend their money in that way either. The navy who said he had a bigger belly than the then Duke of Marlborough was not such a fool, after all; he was thinking of *actual* consumption—the consumption of *food*—at which game he could beat his lordship hollow. It is not even the luxuries of life that run away with big incomes; it is the *conventions* of life that do it. In a certain position you are expected to live in a certain way—and "there you are, don't you know."

That correspondent's letter in the *Daily Citizen* reminds us of a case that came before a Royal Commission some seventy years ago. A parson well known to have fat livings returned his income as £150 a year. Being asked to explain this, he replied that his income was nominally £1,500 a year; but his two livings were far apart, and he was obliged to keep a horse to travel to and fro; then his wife had very delicate health, and was unable to walk much, so she required a carriage and pair; besides, he had a large family, all sons, who went to college and received an expensive education; and by the time he had paid for these and other expenses, he had only £150 a year left for himself! By which method of calculation wealthy men might show a small return to the Income Tax Commissioners. The reverend gentleman, indeed, was not returning his income but his pocket money.

Mrs. Besant had a boy that she was training for "the spiritual leadership of the world." The boy's father, by the aid of the law, took his son back out of Mrs. Besant's hands. What is to become of the spiritual leadership of the world now? Fancy one Hindu parent being able to upset such a great and glorious arrangement. The person really responsible for this unhappy miscarriage is a well-known Theosophist called Leadbeater. Mrs. Besant regards this gentleman as "a man on the threshold of divinity," and he alleges of himself that he stood face to face with "the Supreme Director of Evolution." Mr. Justice Bakewell, however, held that "Mr. Leadbeater was certainly an immoral person, and was highly unfit to be in charge of boys." But the holy men of all religions are so liable to slander!

Some of the newspaper reviewers were annoyed because Sir Hiram Maxim said that missionaries were the greatest liars in the world. But what is one to make of the following. One of the speakers at the annual meeting of the London Missionary Society, the Rev. Edgar Dewstoe, of South China, said that the trouble in China was that the

people had no ethics. A prominent Chinese had said to him, "Unless we can get some ethics there would be terrible trouble." This, doubtless, impressed many of those present, for a great number of Christians have so little knowledge of ethics that they seriously believe that morality is a Christian invention and a Christian monopoly. But imagine talking of a nation which contains millions upon millions of people who are Confucians and Buddhists as having no ethics! There is no need to give Mr. Dewstoe's statement a name—everyone will be able to give it a suitable one. The surprising thing is that anyone should have the impertinence to make such a statement, or that others should be found ignorant enough to believe it.

Mr. R. J. Campbell has been complaining that the "soul of man" is being crushed by Materialism. Millions of people exhibit no interest in anything "outside material categories." They are being whirled along by the momentum of their Materialism, and there is no prospect of a slackening of the pace—with much more to the same end. All of which is true enough, although it is intended to convey a lesson that is the very opposite of the truth. The moral intended to be drawn is that this state of things is due to neglect of Christianity, and that a cure is to be found in a return to its teachings. And that is simply untrue. Historically, Christianity has not only shown itself powerless to arrest the growth of ethical Materialism, it has always flourished most where Christianity is strongest. There are no two countries in the world where the craze for material possessions is greater, or the worship of mere wealth stronger, than in England and America—two countries which ostentatiously flaunt their Christianity in the face of the world. England and America set the pace of the world in money-making, and measure other nations' greatness by this single test. England and America are mainly instrumental in impressing upon other nations the need for economic and industrial development. They decline to even recognise them as civilised until they have done this—this and one other thing.

The other thing is the power to wield brute force over a physically weaker people. It is a mere truism to say that the peace of the world is threatened by Christian nations only. Non-Christian nations—Turkey, China, Japan—are powerless to do this, even were they so inclined. Moreover, these nations are being forced into courses of military development in order to protect themselves against the brigandage of Christian nations. Japan has already made itself a military Power. China will be forced to follow suit. And recent events in the Near East have shown Turkey that if it is to live as a nation it must be strong enough, in a military sense, to hold Christian cupidity at bay. In this country it is Christians that laugh loudest when it is said that reason and not rifles should settle differences of opinion between nations. They say that other nations—Christian, like themselves—will be guided solely by considerations of material self-interest. If we have anything worth taking, they will take it, given the strength and opportunity. Other nations say the same of us. Money and muscle are the two things which, on their own confessions, the Christian nations of the world are ready to respect.

Mr. Dan Crawford is an African missionary, and has just published a book on Central Africa, entitled *Thinking Black*. In it occurs the following passage:—

"Christ's cause in Africa is often wounded in the house of its friends, but never so grievously or gratuitously as when a missionary of the Cross beats all his fellow-Europeans in the matter of first-class get-up. The best houses, best furniture, best eating, all at 'The Mission.'"

Other missionaries express their resentment in long and angry letters to religious journals.

During an amateur performance at a provincial theatre recently the public was absent from the gallery. A young lady sitting in the stalls remarked, "No gods! Even the theatres are atheistic, nowadays."

A doctor has discovered no less than 9 000 microbes on a razor taken from a barber's shop. We commend this to the attention of the Christian Evidence Society—or what is left of it—as a fine illustration of the Design Argument.

The New York papers tell us that a Harlem firm is making one of the largest candles, which will be lighted to the memory of the late Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. The candle, which is sixteen feet in height, cost £300, and will burn for nine years. It would burn a lot quicker at Mr. Morgan's present address.

Many months ago that peripatetic parson, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, assured a Newcastle audience that we were on the eve of the mightiest revival of religion ever witnessed, that very soon churches and chapels would be thronged with people convicted of sin and crying out for salvation, and that the Gospel nets would be so crowded with human fish that they would actually burst. The reverend gentleman *knew* that the glorious time was close at hand; but after nearly six months the predicted revival is apparently as far off as ever. The Baptist Union has just reported a decrease of 2,231 members and of 4,924 Sunday-school scholars during 1912. Even the Presbyterian Church of England, for the first time in its history, mourns the loss of 65 members and 2,252 Sunday-school scholars. A revival of religion is doubtless a *possibility*, but at present it is anything but a *probability*. At any rate, Mr. Meyer is certainly a false prophet.

Is there any greater simpleton in England than the Bishop of London? What better-informed and more sensible members of his profession keep as quiet about as possible he delights in pressing upon public attention. All the exploded blunders and follies of the Bible and Christianity he rejoices in holding up to public derision. The poor creature doesn't recognise what a spectacle he is making of himself. He doesn't see, for instance, that the doctrine of Providence—the *honest* doctrine of Providence—the doctrine of *special* Providence—is already on its last legs. Clergymen with brains in their heads fight shy of it; they leave it, as far as they are concerned, on its sick bed; but the Bishop of London takes it out for a walk, stands it up on its tottering legs, dresses its shrunken figure in its ample old clothes, and is positively proud to see himself parading arm in arm with it in places of public resort. On the evening of the day when the Suffragette bomb was cut short in its destructive career in St. Paul's Cathedral, Dr. Ingram was the chief performer at a Church Army service there, and he took the opportunity (of course!) of putting Providence in a corner before the whole world. This is how he was reported in the *Daily News* :—

"It would be sheer want of gratitude, he said, if they did not first stand up and utter their thanks to God for taking care of his own Cathedral—(loud cries of 'Amen')—against the machinations of the miscreant who tried to wreck it.

"We say in our way, in the human way, that it was only an accident that the lever was turned by mistake to the right instead of to the left, or the chancel would have been wrecked to-day, and therefore we know that those who set themselves to do the Devil's work often even cannot do that right.

"But we ought to look away from that, to leave that to the judgment of God, and render thanks to him for his overruling Providence in saving the Cathedral and preventing, perhaps, many innocent lives being sacrificed.

"Band, strike up, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' said the Bishop in conclusion. Without giving the band time to respond to the Bishop's call, the men and women comprising the huge congregation sprang to their feet and sang the Doxology with overwhelming depth of feeling."

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Indeed! Then who is responsible for the "flow" of events that are not "blessings"? In answering this question Dr. Ingram would in all probability introduce that comical figure Old Nick. What else *could* he do? In his theology it is a case of pull Devil pull baker—with "God" as the baker; with the Devil mostly getting the "pull" his way, and "God" getting only an occasional advantage. "God" must have exerted himself in a very special manner to overmatch the Devil by saving "his own Cathedral." Other churches have been burnt down without any successful providential interference. The Suffragettes managed to burn down a London church only a few days before their abortive attack on St. Paul's. "God" could not or did not prevent *that* conflagration. Why should he save one church and not another? Are they not all "his own" houses? The only answer we can see is that "God" saved St. Paul's by way of compliment to that great and good man, the Bishop of London. In which case we suppose we ought to congratulate the Bishop. But we would rather not say all that this would justify us in saying of his "God."

"Many innocent lives" were saved by the act of Providence at St. Paul's. It must be equally true that "many innocent lives" are lost elsewhere by the want of an act of Providence. Is it conceivable that any "God," not fit for a prison or a lunatic asylum, would follow such a partial and cruel policy? And if such a Being is entitled to an overwhelming hymn of "praise" and "thanks," is he not also entitled to a still more overwhelming hymn of dispraise and denunciation? If saving a few is put to his credit, should not the other side of his moral account be relatively increased when he leaves crowds to perish?

God does everything or nothing. There is no escape from that logic. And if the Bishop of London cannot see it, it only shows what a shallow and feeble intelligence may sit on an episcopal bench. But that is not fresh news.

A tussle between two tiny children at Gillingham, Kent, led to one being scalded to death in a bowl of hot water. Apparently, Providence was too busy watching over the Bishop of London's joss-house to trouble about the fate of helpless "little ones" of the human race.

The Victoria Institute is a favorite place for scientific men to talk nonsense in the name of science. Professor Sims Woodhead cheered a religious audience there the other day by remarking, "My experience leads me to think that however life came into the world, however life and matter came to be associated, there must be a great Cause, a great Ruler, a great Regulator." Capital letters turn nonsense into sense for many people, but others recognise it as nonsense all the same. Professor Woodhead's "experience" cannot possibly give him any greater right to dogmatise on the matter than the experience of the man in the street. He might as reasonably talk about his experience of what exists on the other side of the moon. Lord Halsbury, who presided, summed up the matter very well by saying, "I am not certain that I understood the subject before I came here, and I am not certain that I am in a better position now." Quite a compliment to the lecturer.

The sex of the third member of the trinity has always been a matter of doubt. There was no trouble about God the Father and God the Son. They were males, sure enough. But what of the Holy Ghost? The matter has been cleared up by the Rev. David Smith. He preached the other day to a City Temple audience on "The Motherhood of God." In the course of his sermon, he said that the motherhood of God "provided the explanation of the Trinity." So the Holy Ghost is, after all, a woman. Father, Mother, and Son; the family is complete. May we also take this as a vindication of the character of Mary.

A venerable "chestnut" is doing the grand tour in clerical circles. Some time ago a Bishop laid claim to it. He was asked (so he said) whether Jonah was really swallowed by the whale, and he replied that he would put the question to Jonah when he met him in heaven. "But suppose you don't find him in heaven?" the sceptic queried. "Why then," the Bishop retorted, "you can ask him yourself." This ancient story, and all its variants, probably grow out of the words passed between Hamlet and his uncle over the dead body of Polonius. According to the Rev. A. J. Waldron, as reported in one of Monday's newspapers, the incident only happened the other day, and the credit of the witticism belonged to a Salvation lass. We should not be surprised if Mr. Waldron eventually takes the credit of it himself. We know of no one with a more imaginative memory.

Rev. Canon Joyce says that "the mere scientist found nothing in miracle but a fact which he found it impossible to fit into his scheme of cause and effect." The "mere scientist" is in no such predicament. The miracles of religion fit well enough into his scheme of things, and he is at no loss to explain them. It is not at all a question of harmonising them with the world of physical phenomena, but simply one of explaining the psychological conditions that originate them. The question of miracle is wholly a psychological one. As psychological facts every scientist accepts miracles; as physical occurrences they are so palpably ridiculous that none but a congress of clergymen would waste time over their discussion. And their acceptance as psychological facts only means that in its immature state the mind sees supernatural happenings where none really exist.

That after death ghosts of people try to play tennis, if they were interested in it during life, was the assertion made recently by Mr. Henry Hotchner, a Yankee Theosophist, at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society. If people cannot play tennis properly after two lifetimes of preparation, they had better give the game up.

Is *Truth* accurate in stating that children in Portugal going to school are compelled to wear a badge with "No God; no religion"? Our contemporary is a very alert paper, but we believe somebody has been pulling its leg on this occasion.

A well-advertised meeting of the Todmorden Branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society consisted of the chairman, the speaker, a reporter, and one other person. The chairman took the chair, the speaker delivered the address, the one other person formed the audience, and the reporter did his share of the business with professional equanimity. We congratulate the lecturer. He is a hero. Jesus Christ said that where two or three were gathered together he was in the midst of them to bless them, but he never said he would preach to them. The lecturer sighed his sorrow at such a small attendance, but then "the attendance at meetings at Todmorden had never been good."

Rev. Dr. Cairns says it is a fact that "in Japan the educated classes are already, in the main, Agnostic. The kind of thing that has been happening in Japan is the kind of thing that is going to happen in China, unless the Christian Church intervenes." But how is the Christian Church going to intervene in China? And what prevented their succeeding in Japan? There are plenty of missionaries among the Japanese. The Government places no obstacle to their progress. They have a fair field, and the result is, as Dr. Cairns confesses, the educated classes are mainly Free-thinkers. What different result does any person of judgment expect in China? The Chinese are not less intelligent than the Japanese, and is it likely that educated Chinamen are going to accept a creed that educated Japanese have rejected? The Chinese will act exactly as the Japanese have acted—they will take from the Western world anything it has to offer in the shape of scientific knowledge, and hand back its superstitions with a polite reminder that they have as much of that kind of article, home-made, as they need.

Lord Mayors talk a lot of nonsense in the course of a year. The Lord Mayor of London, the other day, speaking as chairman at a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association, Tottenham-court-road, said that "he noticed that no less than twenty-one nationalities were represented at their tea-table one Sunday afternoon. Their work was, therefore, Imperial in character." We did not know that Imperialism meant the co-operation of twenty different nationalities. But one lives and learns.

Those clergymen who are always girding at science would do well to ponder some of the facts given in Sir E. Ray Lankester's recent book, *Science from an Easy Chair*. It is stated that science has reduced the death-rate of our great cities in fifty years by more than one-third. It has also conquered small-pox, typhus, and yellow fever, and has also reduced the deaths under operations from 1 in 3 to 1 in 30.

The Nonconformist Churches, according to Dr. Clifford, were never richer than they are now. In this respect the fancy religionists pay the Government theologians the sincere flattery of imitation.

In a recent literary supplement of the *Times* appeared a malicious attack on Auguste Comte, in which that great man was accused of very many shortcomings. No one will attack or defend the memory of the *Times*' scribe half a century after his death.

An illiterate East London shopkeeper has a notice in his window, "Competition deified." This is not the only place where "God" and "Mammon" are interchangeable terms.

A ghost has been seen at a house at Whitehead's-grove, Chelsea. According to a person in the house, it appeared like a dark face and neck hanging from the ceiling. Perhaps it was a cherub soiled with the London smoke.

The Kaiser's son seems to be as impulsive as his royal papa. In his book, *Germany in Arms*, just published, he asks the German people to give their lives joyfully for the Fatherland, "though the world be full of devils." We thought it was the function of the Black Army to fight "devils"; real soldiers never waste their time attacking phantoms.

The word "Atheist" seems to act on some intellectual innocents much as a red rag does on a bull. Recently, the Bishop of Peterborough, preaching at Westminster Abbey, referred to "Atheistic Socialism," and Mr. Keir Hardie replied in an open letter, published in the *Labor Leader*, saying that the system of society upheld by the Bishop was "atheistic and unchristian, and an outrage upon the teachings of Jesus." Real Atheists need not worry about simple

opponents whose whose only idea of the "retort discourteous" is to say, "You're another!"

The Rev. R. W. Thompson, M.A., B.D., has undertaken, in the columns of the *British Congregationalist*, the task of guiding doubting minds into a state of religious certainty. In the issue for May 8, a correspondent declares that he has never read in a book nor "heard in any sermon a convincing statement of the necessity of the death of our Lord as atonement for the sins of the race." Mr. Thompson expresses his great desire to help this anxious inquirer; but the assistance he actually offers is of a most extraordinary character. "Sin," he says, "is personal self-assertion against God." This "personal self-assertion" on man's part is offensive to God, and produces a reaction in him. This reaction, however, God wants to check, and in checking it he repudiates himself. Now, that is what God did in the death of his son—check his reaction against sin, repudiate himself, in the most dramatic manner possible. Such is the atonement, according to this man of God; and we are not at all surprised that thoughtful people cannot believe in it. A God who repudiates himself, and in doing so murders his only begotten Son, richly deserves to be utterly and finally repudiated by all sensible, self-respecting people. Mr. Thompson's theology is the silliest we have ever come across.

The Nottingham District of the Primitive Methodist Church, with its 264 churches, 59 ministers, 938 local preachers, and 41,000 members, was obliged to report, at its annual Synod held a fortnight ago, a loss during last year of 900 members. This is one more proof, added to innumerable others, that Christianity is visibly passing, in spite of the frantic declaration made by its representatives that it is really coming. It is a method of coming that we thoroughly enjoy.

Sixty-nine nationalities were represented in the 42,000 visitors, who, according to a return made recently, visited Shakespeare's birthplace last year. Gentle Shakespeare's influence is more humane than that of "Gentle" Jesus, for soldiers are not required to keep the visitors at Stratford from murdering each other, as is the case in the Holy Land.

Rev. J. F. Roberts, of Manchester, has discovered that "the years that follow marriage are the happy hunting-ground of the spirit of indifference." In other words, a man thinks more of a living Englishwoman than of a dead Jew; which, after all, seems natural.

After a long appeal for funds, the editor of a Christian paper, having to insert a two-line fill-up at the bottom of the column, worked in the following:—"If we got everything we prayed for, even God himself couldn't satisfy us."

"Bill to choke the Smoke Fiend," read a headline in a daily paper recently. This did not relate to Satan, who has been called the fourth person of the Deity, but to the reduction of smoke from fires and furnaces.

A tract, written by a person innocent of humor, bears the title, "Shall I go to Hell?" If an answer is wanted, we give it cheerfully in the affirmative.

ANECDOTE.

My little nephew, aged four, was saying his prayers, kneeling on his bed, and resting against his nurse. Suddenly he stopped.

Nurse: "Go on, dear."

Small Boy: "I can't."

Nurse: "Go on, dear."

Small Boy: "I'm switched off, Dod's talking to someone else."

Naturally, nurse's breath was somewhat taken away, and she did not know what to answer, when suddenly reassurance came from the small boy. "It is all right. We are connected again now," and he began again.—Mrs. Alec Tweedie, "Thirteen Years of a Busy Woman's Life."

"Don't you threaten me, or I'll have the law of you," answered the old man..... "And it don't make it no better, but a damned sight worse, that you do it in the name of the Lord. You'm a lot too fond of dragging in the name of the Lord, and you may find some day that your fine friendship with the Lord be all o' one side, and He ain't got so much use for you as you fancy."—Eden Phillpotts "Widcombe Fair."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £130 7s. 5d. Received since:—R. Stirton and Friends (Dundee), £1 5s.; J. Brodie, 3s.; "Henchman Mac," 10s.; J. G. Dobson, 5s.; "Ernest," 5s.; D. Mapp, 2s. 6d. Per F. Rose (Bloemfontein): A. S., 10s.; L. L., 5s.

INGERSOLLITE.—We agree with you. The "Higher Critics" are very well in their way, but they only go safely, leisurely, and learnedly over the ground that Freethought pioneer critics traversed more or less hastily in the midst of grave dangers and the exacting labors of a popular propaganda, and with no means of livelihood except what they could "make" as they went along. There is nothing new in smashing the authority of the Christ passages in Josephus and Tacitus, for instance. The former, at any rate, was settled by the semi-orthodox Lardner in the eighteenth century, and the latter was done—not tediously, but briefly and effectively—by Robert Taylor in 1828, when he wrote his *Diegesis* in Oakham Gaol, where he was suffering imprisonment for "blasphemy." Dr. W. B. Smith's is a very able book, but the really original work of both Old and New Testament criticism was, in its main features, done long ago.

E. RAGGETT.—The idea of *Freethinker* postcards has been mooted before. We may take it up one of these days. Pleased to hear of your letters in the local press. They cannot fail to do good if they bring replies and lead to public controversy.

J. HEWITT.—See paragraph. Thanks. It was outside our province to say anything about the reporter.

C. F. BUDGE.—The *Herald* and the *Freethinker* don't cover the same ground. What good would be done if they did amalgamate, according to your suggestion?

J. H. LANGFORD.—We don't suppose you will get any reply from the Bishop of London. We had already dealt with the matter in "Acid Drops."

J. E. LING (Canada).—Pleased to hear from you, and hope to hear again.

AVON DALE.—We are not surprised at the course of events. But don't be weak enough to let yourself be made miserable by bigots.

A. H. TARRUM.—We have printed "Meredith's last letter" to us. You can print yours—if it concerns anything of importance. You say it was not written by Meredith himself, but for him. Ours was written entirely by himself, letter, address, and all; and it showed him to be a supporter of the *Freethinker*. What does your letter show? Or does it show anything?

HELENA GUNNING.—We don't think we confused you with your sister. We are glad there are two of you. So you have had other letters from vulgar Christians! Well, it is only what you might expect. Mr. Foote is recovering his old form, but is not quite up to concert pitch yet.

R. STIRTON.—Acknowledged, as you will see. In such matters we take the will for the deed, although for the sake of your friends we wish their desire could have been realised. It is the nature of a journal like the *Freethinker* to set up relations of a personal kind between the editor and his readers. This does not arise in the course of an ordinary newspaper, where the relations are of a more commercial character. But the *Freethinker* is not run for commercial purposes, and does not appeal to the commercial instinct in its readers.

W. W. HANCOCK.—We were under the impression that people had ceased to trouble about this particular person. The only distinguished thing about him is the name, and that was made so by his Atheist brother. Certainly Mr. Foote holds that a man who believes government to be an evil has a right to be heard. And all reasonable people would take up the same attitude as Mr. Foote. But to claim the right for an opinion to be heard is not in itself an expression of either approval or disapproval of the opinion held.

R. STEVENSON.—Your letter is interesting, but not surprising. Mr. J. M. Robertson's Atheism is, we think, too well known to need any verification. He has taken no pains to hide it, and you should refer your friend to Mr. Robertson himself.

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.

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Personal.

I AM sorry that my voice failed me on Sunday night. I knew there was a risk of that, but I had determined to go through as far as possible with my duty. Some men might have been deterred by personal considerations; by the feeling, for instance, that no one should see them in public except in their best form. But I am not built in that way, and I hope I have done enough platform work in my time to sustain any reputation I might desire in that direction. Anyhow, I care very little for "reputation"; I have always tried to do my duty first and last. The cause is great—the cause is all; what are you or I in comparison? Had I cared for anything but the cause I should have reserved all my energy, such as it was after my recent severe illness, for the evening meeting. I could have got through that all right with perfect *éclat*, and my mere selfhood would have been gratified. But my presence was indispensable in the presidential chair at the Conference. I saw special reasons for that, though I don't want to discuss them now. So I took both Conference meetings, lasting altogether nearly five hours; and as I was not only Chairman of the Conference, but also President of the National Secular Society, I had a great deal of quite unavoidable talking to do. The result was that I was unable to finish the speech I meant to give as Chairman of the Queen's Hall evening public meeting,—which, by the way, was worth seeing. I sat for two hours listening to my colleagues, and enjoying their speeches, for I am happy to say they were all in their best forms. I arrived home at a quarter to twelve, I left home at nine in the morning; I had been more or less on the stretch all the time; and those who know what such work is will also know that it was a pretty good record for a man who had so recently been in the doctor's hands, with only strength enough left to hope for the best.

My friends need not be alarmed. I am going on all right. Sunday's work did me no harm. I think it rather did me good. And my throat is in really good condition again.

But I am not going to the *Freethinker* office to-day (Tuesday). Mr. Cohen is still there, doing the official part of the work for me, and I have to thank him once more.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

With the one great drawback of the President's ill-health, everything went off quite satisfactorily at the Annual Conference last Sunday. Mr. Foote took the chair at both the business meetings and again at the evening meeting in the Queen's Hall, but it was quite plain that his doing so involved no small amount of courage and resolution. As readers of the *Freethinker* are aware, his illness has been a severe one, and to spend some seven hours in the chair in the course of a single day is not at all an easy task. If anything can compensate for the strain, we feel sure it will be the warm feeling of personal attachment displayed by those present. Mr. Foote's re-election to the Presidency was, in one sense, a mere formality. It was more in the nature of a vote of confidence in one who has steered the party well for so long and often over some very troubled waters.

The Conference Agenda gave rise to a deal of animated and interesting discussion, as was anticipated. But Freethinkers know at least how to differ, and a difference of opinion on certain motions left those present none the less united on the Society's work. One resolution, carried with a slight and unimportant verbal alteration, arranged for the institution of a Bradlaugh Sunday, and it has since been suggested that the Sunday nearest to Bradlaugh's birthday would be the most suitable. If that suggestion is adopted by the Executive, the date this year would be September 28. Amongst the provincial members present, apart from delegates, we noticed Mr. S. M. Peacock (South Shields), Mrs. Bolt and Miss Underwood (Birmingham), Messrs. W.

Dodd and J. Williams (Cannock), Mr. J. Ross and daughter (Liverpool), and Mr. and Mrs. Sanders (Manchester). The absence of Mr. Johnson, a very welcome and familiar figure on these occasions, was noticed and commented on, but he had written a letter expressing his sorrow at an enforced absence owing to ill-health. He appeared, however, to have bequeathed the mantle of his amiability to another well-known Manchester Freethinker who was present, Mr. W. Bailey.

The Annual Report of the Society, together with an account of the Conference proceedings will appear next week. We had arranged for a report of the evening speeches at the Queen's Hall meeting this week, but the transcription of the shorthand reporter's notes has not reached us in time for publication; in fact, it has not reached us at all. We do not know who is to blame—the reporter or the postal authorities. All we know is that it is not to hand. So, for the present, we content ourselves with saying that the public meeting was a good one from all points of view. The Hall was well filled, and the speeches of the President, Miss Kough, and Messrs. Cohen, Heaford, Moss, Davies, and Lloyd were thoroughly enjoyed by the audience—that is, if close attention and unstinted applause are safe guides.

On Monday the delegates—divided into two parties, one under the guidance of Mr. Victor Roger, the other in the care of Mr. Harry Jones—spent the day visiting places of interest in and around London. Both gentlemen proved themselves very efficient guides, and the delegates fully appreciated their freely given services. Unfortunately, some places of interest were closed owing to Suffragette activity, but more than enough remained open. In the evening the two parties gathered at the Bay Malton Hotel, with Miss Vance and a number of the members of the Executive. Singing, conversation, and a little dancing filled up the remainder of the evening until such time as some delegates left to catch their trains home and others returned to their respective hotels. The only drawback to the day was the weather—and for that, of course, the National Secular Society disclaims all responsibility.

The long-talked-of new Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws has been introduced in the House of Commons, and is by the usual order of the House printed—at a cost of one halfpenny to the purchaser. Mr. Foote will give it special attention in our next issue.

Why Be Good? is the title given by the late Dr. E. B. Foote, of New York, to a piece of writing by Mr. G. W. Foote, which came from his pen some thirty-five years ago. Under this popular title it started the publications of the American Freethought Society, of which Dr. Foote was treasurer. Two issues of this tract have been printed in three years, we think; one issue comprising 30,000 copies. The *Truthseeker* does not state the number of the other issue.

"Mr. Foote may be gratified to know," the *Truthseeker* says, "that a half-column selection from his *English Review* article on 'George Meredith: Freethinker,' has appeared in the *Evening Sun*, one of New York's stablest and most widely circulated newspapers."

One of our French subscribers, living at Paris, sending a new year's subscription, writes: "I enjoy its [the *Freethinker's*] courageous and clever articles immensely. They contain many interesting ideas and good documents which may be of great use in debating religious questions, and strong weapons for the struggle against the bigotry, the falsehood, the hypocrisy and the bad faith of all religions, and especially of the Christian one."

The General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, reports a very successful meeting on Wednesday last at Wood Green. A new secretary, Mr. G. Wraight, 109 Kimberley-road, Edmonton, was appointed. The young bloods of the Edmonton Branch have joined hands with the Wood Green Branch, and there is every promise of a successful outdoor season. Literature will be on sale at all meetings, and local Freethinkers are invited to join the Branch. Mr. W. Davidson opens the campaign this (Sunday) evening at 7.30.

A CONUNDRUM.

Who is one of the most immoral men in England to-day?
The celibate Rector who has a large family living.

Christianity and the Chinese.

"In China, after centuries of missions, the very name of Christianity is detested,—and not without cause, since no small number of aggressions upon China have been made in the name of Western religion. Nearer home, we have made even less progress in our efforts to convert Oriental races. There is not a ghost of a hope for the conversion of the Turks, the Arabs, the Moors, or of any Islamic people; and the memory of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews only serves to create a smile. But, even leaving the Oriental races out of the question, we have no conversions whatever to boast of. Never within modern history has Christendom been able to force the acceptance of its dogmas upon a people able to maintain any hope of national existence. The nominal success of missions among a few savage tribes, or the vanishing Maori races, only proves the rule; and unless we accept the rather sinister declaration of Napoleon that missionaries may have great political usefulness, it is not easy to escape the conclusion that the whole work of the foreign mission societies has been little more than a vast expenditure of energy, time, and money, to no real purpose."

—LAFCADIO HEARN, *Out of the East*, pp. 205-6.

"Moreover, when firmly established, and after having obtained considerable prestige and powers through his influence with the kings and chiefs, by methods the righteousness of which has been very often open to grave suspicion, the missionary then, in accordance with the frailties of human nature, has become intolerant, and instead of looking upon himself, as formerly he did, as a Divine instrument with a Divine mission to advance the native materially, morally, and spiritually, and, seeing and deeming himself superior in every respect to his charge, considers that he is entitled to live a life of ease, at the expense of the native, and of the mission funds in Europe and America, the contributors to the latter being kept in a state of felicitous delusion as to the real conditions by the circulation through the medium of the Religious Press of unverified and highly tinged reports."

—FRANK BORNETT, *Through Tropic Seas*; 1910; p. 163.

THE reformed Chinese Government telegraphed to all the provincial governments in China that April 27 was to be observed as a day of prayer for the nation, and they were also requested to notify the fact to all Christian Churches in their provinces. This message has set the Christian world agog; it already—in its mind's eye—sees China at the foot of the Cross. The *Daily Chronicle* (April 18), in announcing the news, says "it has given extraordinary satisfaction to the Christian communities" in China. On the following day, under the heading "Christianity in China—Spread of the Faith in Recent Years," we are told that "During the last six years Christianity has made enormous strides in China, more especially among the official and influential classes"; and further it cited the testimony of a prominent missionary official that—

"The majority of intellectual Chinese incline to-day either towards Christianity or Freethought..... Many members of the newly elected National Assembly, both in the Senate and House of Representatives, are Christians, and there is every indication that Christianity will spread still more rapidly when the new Government has got its educational and social projects into working order."

It is a rosy picture, from the Christian point of view; but let us examine it a little closer. To begin with, we are told that the "intellectual Chinese incline to-day either towards Christianity or Freethought." It would be more accurate to say that the intellectual Chinese who has made acquaintance with Western science generally discards religion altogether. It is, in the great majority of cases, not a choice between Christianity and Freethought, but between the religion he has been trained to believe in and Freethought. Why should an educated Chinese discard his native superstitions to assume worse ones of foreign manufacture?

The truth appears to be that the recognition of the existence of Christian Churches in China thus made by the Chinese Government is merely a move to ingratiate themselves with the Christian Powers until the new Government becomes firmly established. We had strong doubts, in spite of the statement in the *Chronicle* to the contrary, as to this day of prayer emanating from the reform party in China, and our doubts were amply justified; for we read in the *Daily Chronicle* of May 3 a long and impassioned letter from Dr. Sun Yet Sen, the leader of the reformers, denouncing the new Government for "its

wicked betrayal of the trust reposed in it," and declaring "the fury of the people is worked up to white heat, and a terrible convulsion appears almost inevitable."

In considering the probability of the Christianisation of China in the immediate future, it should be remembered that twice during its history China has been within measurable distance of Christianisation—once by the Jesuits, under the patronage of the Chinese Emperor, and again during the terrible Tai-ping rebellion, a Christian movement, which was crushed, after enormous bloodshed, by that good Christian, General Gordon.

With these two movements we shall deal later, for the present merely expressing our belief that the conditions under which these movements arose are not likely to occur again. In fact, the golden opportunity of the Jesuits will never occur again.

Now, let us consider some of the difficulties the missionaries have to contend with in their attempts to Christianise the Chinese.

To begin with, it has been justly observed that—

"Bringing the beauties of Christianity to the heart of a Chinese is a vastly different matter from bringing the same to, let us say, a South Sea Islander. In the one instance you have a gross and idolatrous savage, who more often than not has a feeling of admiration for a white man, provided he is not a trader; when you have gained that savage's goodwill, half the battle for Christianity has been won. In China you have a people whose settled conviction it is that the ultimate purpose of your presence there is to kill them off and confiscate their property."*

Similarly, Mr. George Lynch remarks:—

"Chinese civilisation is such a mass of complicated and intricate manners, customs, and prejudices that the average man is really like a bull in an intellectual china shop with regard to them. The most intellectual and cultivated missionaries commit many mistakes in this direction; but a large number of doubtless well-intentioned people, men and women, go out who are neither intellectual nor cultivated. It cannot be too often insisted upon, and must be constantly borne in mind, that the Chinese are not savages. They cannot be dealt with as we would deal with the South African natives. However we may trample on and disregard their feelings in dealing with them politically, as the heavy boot of a soldier might tread down the complicated structure of an ant-hill, yet in missionary work their sentiments must be treated with consideration if any progress is to be made."†

Mr. Lynch points out that native Chinese missionaries, sufficiently educated and intellectual, would be more in touch with native feelings and prejudices. But, as he further observes:—

"It is a curious commentary on the actual success of missionary labor in China that so few native Chinese have been ordained into the priesthood of any of the various forms of Christianity which for so long have been preached to them. Socially and intellectually it seems to be only the lowest classes of the adult community that, apart from children, become converts to Christianity" (p. 260).

And of the children brought up by the missionaries in the Christian faith, "they have only succeeded in very few cases in educating them up to the standard of fitness for ordination."

But there is one drawback inseparable to the employment of native missionaries, as Dr. Morrison has pointed out, for, after observing that "the Chinaman is as difficult to lead into the true pathway as any Jew," he goes on to point out that:—

"A native preacher can never be so successful as the foreign missionary. The Chinese listen to him with complacency. 'You eat Jesus's rice and, of course, you speak his words,' they say. The attitude of the Chinese in Tongchuan towards the Christian missionary is one of perfect friendliness towards the missionary, combined with perfect apathy towards his religion. Like any other trader, the missionary has a perfect right to offer his goods, but he must not be surprised, the Chinese thinks, if he finds difficulty in securing a purchaser for his wares as much inferior to the home production as is

the foreign barbarian to the subject of the Son of Heaven."*

Then, again, the average Chinese convert expects to make a living by his change of faith. Dr. Morrison tells us that at the Inland Mission at Wanhsien, which had been established since 1887, there were no converts, but there were three hopeful "inquirers," whose conversion would be more speedy the more likely they were to obtain employment afterwards. Dr. Morrison says:—

"They argue in this way; they say, to quote the words used by the Rev. G. L. Mason at the Shanghai Missionary Conference of 1890, 'If the foreign teacher will take care of our bodies, we will do him the favor to seek the salvation of our souls' This question of the employment of converts is one of the chief difficulties of the missionary in China. 'The idea (derived from Buddhism) is universally prevalent in China,' says the Rev. C. W. Mateer, 'that everyone who enters any sect should live by it.....When a Chinaman becomes a Christian he expects to live by his Christianity'" (p. 28).

Then there is the difficulty of making the Chinese realise their need of religion, as we understand it. The Rev. E. J. Hardy—for some years chaplain to our forces at Hong Kong—says:—

"And in proportion to the need in which China stands of the Gospel is the difficulty of making her comprehend and appreciate its message. To the Greeks of old the sublime self-sacrifice of the Cross of Christ seemed foolishness, and to the Chinese now it has, when first they hear it, the same appearance. To a missionary who had described the death of our Savior, a Chinese remarked, 'That Jesus Christ plenty big fool.'"†

The same writer observes:—

"These two sayings are current amongst the Chinese: 'Worship the gods as if they came, and if you don't it is all the same.' 'Worship the gods as if they were there, but if you worship not the gods don't care.' People so indifferent to their own religion are not likely to be much prejudiced against another one. On the subject of religion China is perfectly tolerant. Missionaries are not disliked because they preach Christianity, but because they are foreigners or suspected of being political agents. The people often say 'We have no objection to Jesus; doubtless he was good. Make an image of Him and put it by the side of our god's, and we will knock our heads before Him as well as before them. Some advantage may come from so doing'" (p. 318).

The Catholic priest at Chaotung told Dr. Morrison: "Talk to the Chinese of a God, of Heaven or Hell, and they yawn; speak to them of business, and they are all attention"‡ And, as the Rev. E. J. Hardy further remarks:—

"That a missionary should come so far for no other reason than to teach a new religion is unintelligible to them. Surely, they think, behind what seems only a harmless craze there lurks a sinister design. To many, a Chinese missionary appears as an advance agent of the gunboat. Missionaries come, territory goes, and it is little wonder if the Cross has come to be thought of as the pioneer of the sword" (p. 315-6).

These are only a few of the difficulties the missionary in China has to contend with. There are many others, as we shall see.

W. MANN.

(To be continued)

Allan Ramsay and the "Unco' Guid."

WE are now in the days of Stage Guilds and Actors' Church Unions, when special services are held for "the profession," and pastoral letters are sent them; when sermons are preached upon the moral influence of the stage, and the player and cleric may be found *tête-a-tête*. Yet it was not ever thus. Once upon a time it brought *anathema* from the Church to all and sundry who followed the calling of player and minstrel. Once upon a time they were denied the rites of the Church and the law of the land. The Church called them "heretics," and banned them

* "Missionaries in China," *Macmillan's Magazine*, November, 1895.

† G. Lynch, *The War of the Civilisations*; 1910; p. 259.

* Dr. G. E. Morrison, *An Australian in China*; 1902; p. 122.

† E. J. Hardy, *John Chinaman at Home*; 1905; p. 111.

‡ G. E. Morrison, *An Australian in China*, p. 105.

even from its precincts; whilst the State classed them with "rogues and vagabonds," and refused them the common law of the land.

And why did all this come to pass in "Once upon a time"? Because the "player" and the "minstrel" taught the people the joys and pleasures of life. "Look you!" cried the player, "I have jokes to humor you, riddles to puzzle you, and antics to amaze you!" "Listen, too," cried the minstrel, "here is a drink-song for the lads, and a love-ditty for the lasses, and a jig-time for both!" And the people laughed, and sang, and danced, and were merry. But men in sober habit, and long visages, watched these gaily attired and merry-faced bohemians, and frowned. "Jokes, antics, songs, jigs. *Sancta Maria!* Had not the Holy Church forbade such things; had it not enjoined all to prepare themselves in prayer, penance, and humility during this life that they might be worthy for the life to come?"

And in those days of "Once upon a time," the men in sober habit had power in the land, and they said to the men in gay attire, "Upon you and all your class we pronounce *anathema!*"

Generations were born and died, but the world had moved but slowly. For it seems that even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which was many centuries after "Once upon a time," there lived a certain Allan Ramsay, poet and bookseller, of Edinburgh, who wondered why such excellent people as "players" and "minstrels" had no place in his city where they might follow their vocation. He determined to build a *theatre* for such as these; but alas! he had reckoned without the men in sober habit. They, too, like the men in sober habit in "Once upon a time," said such things were contrary to the Church. But first let me tell you something about Allan Ramsay.

Allan Ramsay is, perhaps, the best known among the poets of Scotland after Robert Burns. Yet few are really so conversant with his life-work as with his name. Ramsay lived at a time (1686-1768) when the rule of the men in sober habit was still powerful. Logie Robertson gives us a glimpse of their rule and power in the Edinburgh of Ramsay's day. He says:—

"There was no theatre or place of amusement anywhere in the town. Dancing was immoral, and an institution of the devil—or at least of Herodias, and was therefore to be put down. We are told of an organised attack with red-hot spits being made upon the door of a room in which dancing was being peacefully practised, to the great terror and danger of the dancers.....The Sunday, or the Sabbath as it was quite appropriately called, was kept in the letter of the Mosaic law. There were pious prowlers to scout the streets and pounce upon breakers of their version of the fourth Command. Their records tell of the rigidity of their righteousness. On one occasion.....they silenced a whistling bird in a cage; on another they confiscated a hot roast to which they were nose-led from the street!"

Into such a world came "the joyous Ramsay," as Sir Walter Scott calls him; but he had little sympathy with this narrow and bigoted rule of the men in sober habit, who are known in the North Country as the "Unco' Guid." In truth, he was somewhat of a Freethinker. At least, he avows himself "not tether'd to connection," as he says to James Arbuckle:—

"Pray tak heed,
Ye's get a short swatch o' my creed:
Weel then, I'm nowther Whig nor Tory,
Nor credit gie to purgatory;
Neist Anti-Toland, Blunt, or Whiston,
Know positively, I'm a Christian
Believing truths an' thinking free,
Wishing thravn parties wad agree."

But he had little of Orthodox Christianity in him, as we shall see.

Even in his delightful pastoral, *The Gentle Shepherd*, we see something of his "thinking free." Here Ramsay makes the "larn'd gentry" reprove the ignorant shepherd folk for their superstitions. To give credence to dreams rouses Pattie's laughter,

whilst the good Sir William says of witches, ghosts, and devils,—

"What silly notions crowd the clouded mind,
That is, thro' want of education, blind?"

Ramsay was certainly against the Kirk, as he says in his versified epistle to James Clerk:—

"I have it even within my power
The very Kirk itself to scower—
And that you'll say's a brag richt bauld;
But did'na Lindsay this of auld?
Sir David's satires helped our nation
To carry on the Reformation,
And gave the scarlet dame a box
Mair snell than all the pelts of Knox."

Although he did not attempt the Kirk-scouring process with any such power as Burns did later, yet he gave a goodly hand in the work. Save for an occasional satire, Ramsay preferred *ignoring* the Kirk to attacking it, certainly a much safer course in those days.

In a religion of happiness in *this* life, he asked the people to believe, assuring them that—

"a sour face
Is not the truest mark of grace."

This life was the one Ramsay was sure of, and knew most about:—

"That ill-bred death has nae regard
To king, or cottar, or a laird;
As soon a castle he'll attack,
As wa's o' divots roof'd wi' thack,
Immediately we'll a' tak flight
Unto the mirky realms o' night,
As *stories gang*, wi' ghaists to roam
In glomie Pluto's gousty dome."

—*Imit. Hor.*

His creed was: "Here and Now":—

"Leave to the Gods your ilka care;
If that they think us worth their while,
They can a rowth o' blessings spare
Which will our fashious fears beguile.

For what they hae a mind to do,
That will they do, shou'd we gang wud
If they command the storms to blaw,
Then upo' sight the hailstones thud.

Let neist day come as it thinks fit,
The present minutes' only ours;
On pleasure let's employ our wit,
An' laugh at fortune's feckless pow'rs.

Be sure ye dinna great the grip
O' ilka joy whan ye are young,
Before auld age your vitals nip,
An' lay ye twafold o'er a rung.

These bennisons, I'm very sure,
Are o' the God's indulgent grant;
Then, surly carles, whisht, forbear
To plague us wi' your whining cant."

—*Imit. Hor.*

Ramsay failed to see any sin in "wine, woman, and song":—

"As lang as reason guides the wheel
Desires, tho' ardent, are nae crime,
When they harmoniously keep time;
But when they sprang o'er reason's fence,
We smart for 't at our ain expense."

Epist. to Rob. Yarde.

This is Secularist teaching every line. He also clearly saw how the Church had "hedged" in the joys and pleasures of life for its own purpose:—

"Lang syne, when love an' innocence
Were human nature's best defence,
Ere party jars made lawteth less
By cloathing 't in a monkish dress."

—*Epist. to Rob. Yarde.*

At such *revolté* verses as these the "unco' guid" were alarmed, and quite a bitter faction arose against Ramsay in the country, and he began to be looked upon as a sort of Antichrist. Yet the Epicurean and Rationalist trend of his verses was not the only offence to the "unco' guid," for it appears that the poet, wanting the people to read and take delight in art and literature as he did, instituted a circulating library, in connection with the book-selling business, which I believe was one of the first of its kind. The "unco' guid" were in rampant fury at this innovation, and openly charged him with "debauching the faculties of the soul with lewd books." But these angry cries and menaces scarcely

disturbed Ramsay for a moment; he simply smiled, took up his pen again, and went on

"Sousing sonnets on the lasses,
Hounding satires at the asses."

It was fortunate for the poet that he was successful in business, as it enabled him to sustain himself against the onslaughts of his enemies. Only once did they gain a victory over him, and it cost him a considerable part of his fortune. As we remarked at the outset, Ramsay had decided to build a theatre for his city, which he considered "a maist rational diversion." The place was erected, and everything was ready for the opening; but the "unco' guid" had been at work, and the "authorities" refused him a licence. Ramsay fought hard against their ruling, and the Lord President of the Supreme Court was petitioned, but to no avail; the "unco' guid" had triumphed. The poet went sadly back to his book-store to retrieve his fortune, that it might also help him to retrieve his defeat. But, although the former he accomplished in full, the latter was denied him.

Yet the whirligig of time brings its own revenge. To-day, Ramsay's city boasts four large and prosperous theatres, and recently the writer of this article had the honor of appearing at one of them before crowded audiences. He also happened to make one of a very sparse congregation in a kirk—the tabernacle of the "unco' guid." Then he saw and understood that Allan Ramsay had retrieved his defeat after all.

And now, why is it that the Church to-day is so amicably inclined towards the stage? To tell the truth, there is much common ground between them, as Sarah Bernhardt once pointedly remarked to an insolent cleric who had reproved her, that "people in the same line of business should never fall out." In short, the time has come when the Church knows full well that the curtain is about to be rung down upon its miserable *scena* of humanity's tears and weaknesses, to make room for a nobler and healthier art where humanity's smiles and strength are given full rein. And so the actors of the old *scena*, anxious to keep the curtain up a little while longer, extend the fraternal hand (so long withheld) to the actors of the new *scena*. But we of the latter must not forget the past. We must not forget how long they have kept the curtain up and had the stage to themselves. And finally, we must not forget those who have rung down the curtain upon them, especially "the joyous Allan Ramsay."

H. GEORGE FARMER.

Lester F. Ward.

OBITUARY.

In the death of Lester Frank Ward, on April 18, at the age of 72, the United States has lost one of the most—if not the most—comprehensive thinkers it has produced, and the world one of its most ardent scientific reformers. It is characteristic of the quality of the English Press that while devoting much space to the death of men like Pierpont Morgan, who contributed nothing whatever to the world's development, the death of Professor Ward passed quite unnoticed. It is only from a paragraph in the *New York Truthseeker* that we became acquainted with the fact. This silence is not, perhaps, due to conscious neglect; it is more likely the result of sheer lack of interest on the part of the English newspapers in the higher branches of intellectual life. Had Professor Ward been a noisy American politician, or one of the group of "Dollar Kings," his death would, without doubt, have received wide publicity in the British Press.

As a young man, Lester Ward served through the Civil War, afterwards graduating at Columbia University. In 1879, after contributing to various magazines, he published *Haeckel's Genesis of Man*, in which the evolutionary account of man's origin is fully accepted. As Assistant Geologist to the United States Geological Survey, his publications included, the *Flora of Washington*, *Flora of the Lamaric Group*, *Geographical Distribution of Fossil Plants*, etc., etc. His great work, however, was *Dynamic Sociology*, in two volumes, covering over 13,000 pages, and published in 1883. This work is nothing less than a complete system of social

science in the most comprehensive sense of that expression. This work had the honor of being condemned by the Russian Government, and an edition of 1,200 copies ordered to be burnt. Apart from other things, the Russian censor appeared to have feared from the title that the work was an encouragement to Socialism and Dynamite. Since 1883, other editions of the work have been called for in America, and it has been translated into several European languages.

It must be confessed that the title, *Dynamic Sociology*, is rather a forbidding one, but it exactly expresses the spirit of the work. Although availing himself of the labors of Spencer, and paying generous acknowledgment to him, Ward's work is really more in the line of Comte—a fact not to be obscured by the statement that, along with fundamental truths, Comte's work expressed "the greatest possible number of only less fundamental errors." Had Spencer not taken up a negative attitude toward social organisation, the relation of Ward to Spencer might have been different. As it is, Spencer's attitude is completely expressed in the title of one of his earliest books, *Social Statics*, just as Ward's attitude was expressed in the title of *Dynamic Sociology*. Those who desire a brief summary of the relations between Spencer and Ward on this point should read an article by the latter in the *American Academy of Social and Political Science* for January, 1894, a journal to which Ward was a frequent contributor. More clearly than either Comte or Spencer, Ward saw, both in the *Dynamic Sociology* and in *Psychic Factors of Civilisation* (written to specially emphasise this point) as well as in the *Outlines of Sociology*, and other writings, the importance of the active operation of mind in shaping human society. And unquestionably the growing recognition amongst scientific sociologists of the nature of the true social force as a psychic force is largely due to the work of Lester Ward.

If there is one fault in Professor Ward's writings it is a fondness for detailed classification—a probable result of his early scientific work. Apart from this, his writings have the advantages for the general reader of being clear from the intricacy of Comte and the technicalities of Spencer. No reader of average intelligence and education can fail to understand Professor Ward's meaning. And, more important still, he never appears to have lacked courage in dealing with religion. The naturalistic attitude is fully accepted in the *Dynamic Sociology*, and the author neither insults his readers nor degrades himself by inventing apologies for religion or for Christianity among civilised people. "Religion," he says, "is joined to error at its trunk, and none but errors grew out of it." This is a genuine scientific position, and stands out well from the absurdity of those who admit that religion began in error, but claim that in some miraculous way the elaboration of this error developed truth. Nothing is left, he also says, "but to regard the advent of Christianity as a calamity." Even the belief in immortality, he claims, has exerted a demoralising influence, and properly distinguishes between the moral elements which are associated with religion and religion itself. "They exist independently of religion, and their connection with religion is only apparent."

One would like to quote at length from Professor Ward's works, but space forbids. I have written the above as a slight mark of admiration and gratitude to one who was a great humanist, a capable and comprehensive thinker, and a great sociologist. Above all, he was a great Freethinker, and it may easily be that his greatness in other directions owed not a little to his possessing a mind in which superstition had no place.—C.

The Breakers.

To George William Foote and all his Fellow-Workers
for Secularism.

As the wave in thunder rages
'Gainst the hard and sullen rock,
While throughout eternal ages
Futile seems its ceaseless shock;
So the mighty waves of Reason
Seem to smite the callous soul,
So, from season unto season,
Spurned, the living waters roll.

Yet the task an end is making;
Every billow dashed to spray—
Every surge, in splendor breaking,
Sweeps some tiny grain away;
So, 'neath Reason's sure attrition,
Working on through ages vast,
Densest rocks of superstition
Shall be worn away at last.

A. E. MADDOCK.

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.

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OUTDOOR.

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

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CROYDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Katharine street, near Town Hall) : 6.30, Mr. Gallagher, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green) : 7.45, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road) : J. W. Marshall, 11.30, "The God Myth"; 7.30, "The Coming of the Lord."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields) : 3.15, C. Ratcliffe, "Replies to Christian Critics." Finsbury Park : 6.30, M. Hope, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.) : 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

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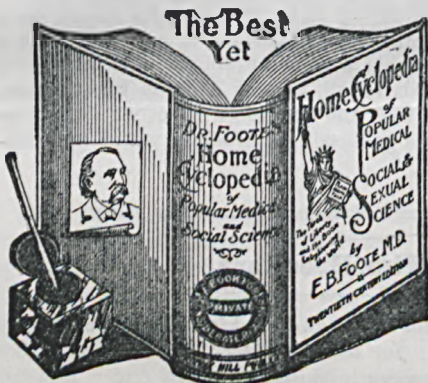


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