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Those who speak of the profit of wisdom are never so wise as when they admit, without pride or heart-burning, that wisdom grants scarcely a boon to her faithful that the foolish or wicked would prize.—MAETERLINCK.

The Death of Prayer.

WE wrote several articles formerly on cases of Peculiar People who had to appear at coroners' inquests on the dead bodies of their children. The father of one of these deceased children was committed for trial on the extremely serious charge of manslaughter. Another was severely censured, after the style of the old magistrate whose judgment was "Not guilty; but don't do it again." A further case occurred. That time a jurymen wanted to have a Biblical discussion with the Peculiar father, but was checked by the coroner, who did not care to have his court turned into an arena of theological debate.

Another fact which we desire to notice is this. The medical witness in the last instance was asked whether a doctor would have prolonged the child's life, and he was unable to answer the question. It was an ordinary case of pneumonia, yet it was impossible to say whether a doctor would have done any good or not. Could there be a more striking illustration of the empirical character of the "art of healing"? Does it not warrant a strong opposition to the overweening pretensions of the medical profession? Does it not justify us in refusing to be ruled by so-called experts? Does it not warrant us in declining to invest their nostrums with any sort of privilege. The medical art is in many ways a noble one. Its object is, or should be, the alleviation of human suffering, and the prolongation of human life. But when the doctor seeks to invade our homes with compulsory powers we have a right to investigate his scientific credentials; and when we find that doctors are very much at variance with each other, that fundamental points of treatment are still in dispute, and that a medical dogma like vaccination is easily riddled by evidence, and especially by statistics, we have a clear right to ask these gentlemen to be more modest, and to fall into a line with the general body of their fellow citizens.

The point, however, is collateral. Our primary object is to deal with the doctrine of prayer. And we venture to assert that this doctrine is practically dead. It has a semblance of life, but no reality; and the committal of those Peculiar People on a charge of manslaughter was the stroke of the bell at its funeral.

For a long time the clergy who come into contact with thinking people, and have to face an educated opinion, have been very chary about pressing the doctrine of prayer in the good old-fashioned style. When the late Professor Tyndall suggested that the efficacy of prayer should be submitted to a scientific test, a wily clergyman replied that it was absurd to expect God Almighty to let himself be made the

subject of an experiment. And when Mr. Galton investigated backwards, in the region of the unalterable past, and proved by statistics that the efficacy of prayer was absolutely imperceptible, the clergy took shelter behind a dignified silence. We know of ministers like the late Mr. Price Hughes successfully praying for the exact sum of one thousand pounds; and Muller's orphanage is still supported by the wide and constant advertisement that it relies entirely upon the Lord. But every man of the world smiles at such equivocal simplicities. They are relics of a bygone age of credulity. The general tendency of the age is to ignore prayer altogether, except in the perfunctory rites of "divine worship." Insurance companies treat it with quiet disdain. Christians have to pay the same life-policy premiums as infidels, and churches have to be protected by lightning conductors. Underwriters never trouble themselves about the religious or irreligious habits of the captain of a ship, or whether his list of passengers is hallowed by the presence of a bishop or damnified by the presence of an Atheist lecturer. The rate of insurance depends entirely upon secular considerations. When a town is visited by an epidemic fever, the citizens know very well that the remedy must be found in improved sanitation, and they look upon church prayers as a harmless ceremony of the time-honored clerical profession. The town councillor who proposed a religious procession, and general supplication to God, would be laughed at as an old fogey. That sort of thing has been impossible ever since Lord Palmerston told the Town Council of Edinburgh to try whitewash instead of prayer against the cholera.

The Church of England has forms of prayer for rain and fine weather, but it rarely uses them, and some day or other they will be dropped out of the Prayer Book. The most thick-headed farmer, in these days of scientific agriculture, and international competition in the food market, is quite aware that it is no use relying upon the parson. Thanksgiving services are still held; but they are regarded as routine ceremonies, without any real relation of the character of the harvest.

The scientific spirit is gradually but surely permeating the public mind; and science knows nothing of miracle, and every answer to prayer is a miracle.

The clergy who try to reconcile science with miracle only do so metaphysically. All they urge at bottom is this, that if there be a God he can work miracles if he chooses. No one denies this hypothetical proposition. The only practical question is this: If there be a God, *does* he work miracles? In other words, do miracles occur? That question is to be settled by evidence, and all the evidence we have points to the negative. Every man of science believes in natural causation and the unbroken order of nature.

Prayer is now generally recommended as a pious exercise. But whoever prays to God without expecting an answer is, as Coleridge said, indulging in a species of self-magnetism. It is like any other kind of dram or drug. A Christian soldier might fight better after a prayer, but so he might after a glass of brandy. It may be said that prayer is at least a conscious communion with one's ideal, but that is possible without simulation and self-deception.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religious Epidemics.—II.

(Continued from p. 306.)

THE only direct survival of the Dancing Mania of the fourteenth century appears to be the "Jumping Dance of Echternach," in Luxembourg. This is an annual Whit-Tuesday festival, and existed as late as twenty years ago; but I am not certain whether it has by now disappeared or not. Some thousands of persons take part in this procession, the method being that of gaining the church by a series of jumps, forward and backward, when all who have taken part in it fall on their faces and pray. High Mass is at once celebrated. There is no indication that this is epidemic in character; it seems rather the celebration of a past epidemic.

In modern times epidemics of dancing have been more local and less persistent than was the case in the Middle Ages, but whenever they have occurred it has always been in connection with religion. In most cases the dancing has tended more to resemble "jumping," and—although this may be due to more careful observation—has been accompanied by convulsive actions of a clearly epileptoid nature. One of the most famous of these instances was that of the French Convulsionnaires, from 1727 to the period of the Revolution. A well-known but not very famous preacher, Deacon Paris, died in that year. Very shortly after his death it was declared that miracles took place at his grave in the cemetery of St. Medard. So large a number of people gathered round the grave in expectation of the reported miracles, that eventually Louis XV. ordered the cemetery to be closed. But by this the work had been done. As usual, the expected miracle occurred. The very earth from the grave, when sent to persons at a distance, produced the anticipated miraculous results. Sometimes, we are told, those seized

"bounded from the ground like fish out of water; and this was so frequently imitated at a later period that the women and girls, when they expected such violent contortions, not wishing to appear indecent, put on gowns made like sacks, closed at the feet. If they received any bruises by falling down, they were healed with earth from the grave of the uncanonised saint. They usually, however, showed great agility in this respect; and it is scarcely necessary to remark that the female sex especially was distinguished by all kinds of leaping, and almost inconceivable contortions of body. Some spun round on their feet with incredible rapidity, as is related of the dervishes. Others ran with their heads against walls, or curved their bodies like rope-dancers, so that their heels touched their shoulders."

As usual, women played a large part in this movement; while many of the phenomena described, such as the insensibility to pain inflicted in the course of these religious seizures, reminds one of more recent hypnotic phenomena. The way in which suggestion operates among people has been illustrated over and over again in the history of Methodism. Soon after the introduction of Methodism into Wales, for example, there arose the sect of the "Jumpers." The chief peculiarity of this sect was expressed in the name, and consisted in wild dances and convulsive leaps in the air until the performers fell down exhausted. The various epidemics of religious dancing in America appear to have originated from the Welsh outbreak, although assuming even more extravagant forms, and, when connected with "camp meetings," leading to a great amount of immorality. The dancing sects of Russia have already been described; and in such movements as the "Pentecostal Dancers" and the half-insane proceedings of revivals in recent years we have little more than the shadow of those mediæval movements from which they descend.

Another epidemic of the Christian period of European history, far more important than any yet noticed because of its indirect consequences, was monasticism. It cannot, of course, be claimed that Christianity originated monasticism; but it has been one of the characteristics of Christianity to take

certain repellent features of religion in general and give them a still more virulent expression. This was notably so in this case. In the East the figure of the monk had been a familiar sight long before Christianity, but the main current of social life flowed on with the minimum of disturbance from it. The social and domestic virtues received adequate, if not full, recognition from the upholders of the monastic life. It was left for the Christian Church to give monasticism the character of an epidemic, to denounce purely social and domestic virtues as a positive hindrance to the religious life, and to thus come perilously near destroying civilisation altogether.

It was argued by Bingham, a learned seventeenth century ecclesiastical historian, that although asceticism was known in the earliest period of Christian history, monasticism did not originate within the Church until the fourth century. It is not a matter of great importance whether this be so or not; it is, however, certain that with no other religion has monasticism ever created such a vogue, or proved itself so grave a social danger. The mere number of monks and nuns was enough to threaten social security. Allowing for what Lecky calls the "glaring mendacity" of the Lives of the Saints, a description that applies to all ecclesiastical writings to a greater or smaller extent, it is evident that their number must have been very great. It is said that St. Pachomius had 7,000 monks under his direct rule; that in the time of Jerome 50,000 monks gathered together at the Easter festival; that one Egyptian city mustered 20,000 nuns and 10,000 monks, and that the monastic population of Egypt at one time equalled the rest of the population. In less than fifty years after the foundation of the Franciscan Order it possessed 8,000 houses, with 200,000 members. In the twelfth century the Cluniacs had 2,000 monasteries in France. In England, as late as 1546, Hooper, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, declared that there were no less than 10,000 nuns in England. Every country in Christendom possessed a huge army of men and women whose ideals involved a more or less complete negation of all that makes a people sanely happy and progressive.

The character of the monk during the height of the monastic epidemic has been well sketched by Lecky. Its presentation here will save a more lengthy description* :—

"A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato. For about two centuries, the hideous maceration of the body was regarded as the highest proof of excellence. St. Jerome declares, with a thrill of admiration, how he had seen a monk, who for thirty years had lived exclusively on a small portion of barley bread and muddy water; another who lived in a hole and never ate more than five figs for his daily repast; a third who cut his hair only on Easter Sunday, who never washed his clothes, who never changed his tunic till it fell to pieces, who starved himself till his eyes grew dim, and his skin like a pumice stone.....Some saints, like St. Marcian, restricted themselves to one meal a day, so small that they continually suffered the pangs of hunger.....Some of the hermits lived in deserted dens of wild beasts, others in dried-up wells, while others found a congenial resting-place among the tombs. Some disdained all clothes, and crawled about like wild beasts, covered only by their matted hair.....The cleanliness of the body was regarded as a pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired were one mass of clotted filth. St. Athanasius relates with enthusiasm how St. Anthony, the patriarch of monarchism, had never, to extreme old age, been guilty of

* *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 107-10. For a careful description of the monastic discipline, in its more normal aspects, see Bingham's *Works*, vol. ii., bk. 7. Gibbon gives his usual brilliant summary of the movement in ch. 37 of the *Decline and Fall*; Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* gives the classical and authoritative account of the consequence to morals of the monastic practice of celibacy.

washing his feet.....St. Abraham, the hermit, who lived for fifty years after his conversion, rigidly refused from that date to wash either his face or his feet.....St. Eupraxia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns, who never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath."

It is apart from my present purpose to give anything like a full description of the monastic life; but the consequences of this epidemic on general social life, and on the life of religion, are too important to pass without observation. And, first, in relation to religion itself. That it served to strengthen and perpetuate the life of religion there can be little doubt. However much some people may have revolted against the monastic ideal, it nevertheless strengthened immensely the religious idea. The sight of monarch and noble yielding homage to the monk, acknowledging his supremacy in what was declared to be the supreme interest in life, the interference of the monk in every department of life, saturated society, so to speak, with religion; and although at a later period the growing rapacity, tyranny, and dissoluteness of the monkish orders led to a revolt against their rule, the imagination of all must by that time have been thoroughly impressed with the power and importance of religion. Most people fear ghosts long after they have ceased to believe in them; they pay homage to a crown long after intellectual development has robbed that symbol of all its original significance, and there is little doubt that even after the arrest of the epidemic, the virus of the disease still made itself felt. In spite of their absurd ideals and disgusting penances, later generations have not failed to hold up the saints of the Church as ideals of the religious life. They have been used to impress the imagination of their successors as they were used to impress the imagination of their contemporaries. The picture of Thomas à Beckett, with a hair shirt running with vermin may disgust, but this has not served to prevent his being held up as an example of the uplifting power of religion.

This, then, was one great consequence of the ascetic epidemic. It kept religion alive, it held at bay those social forces that normally make for its disintegration, it saturated society with the feeling for religion, and made it less able to resist religion in after generations. For religion does not, if one may use the language of medical science, deposit an anti-toxin that protects against further attacks; it belongs to that class which, once a successful assault has been made, prepares the way for still further onslaughts.

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

"The Observance of the Lord's Day."

READERS of this journal may remember that the Gravesend Sabbatarians recently suffered a signal defeat. They made a vigorous attempt to induce the Town Council to refuse a seven days' license to the picture palaces, but the Council turned a deaf ear to their petition and granted the license by the handsome majority of fourteen votes to four. Naturally the local clergy and their followers angrily resent this strong rebuff, and the churches and chapels resound with bitter denunciations of the powerful anti-Sabbatarian spirit rampant in the community. The *Reporter* for May 10 contains a remarkable sermon, with the heading of this article for its title, by the Rev. S. J. Poole, M.A., Vicar of St. James's Church. Because of certain serious allegations which it makes, this discourse calls, in the interest of truth and justice, for a careful and critical examination. Now, there are a few points on which we are glad to find ourselves in agreement with Mr. Poole. He quotes two eminent statesmen, Beaconsfield and Gladstone; and we are at one with the latter in the statement that "the religious observance of Sunday is a main prop of the religious character of the country," and with the former in

the assertion that a day of rest is a prime necessity of mankind. We almost approve of Mr. Poole's following remark:—

"'The Sabbath was made for man,' that is, for man in the whole of his make, body, mind, and spirit—and man in the whole of his range, for mankind, for every man, no matter what part of the globe he inhabits. And hence its observance dates back as far as history takes us in the development of man. It is coeval with man. From the very dawn of history we note the Sabbath, one day's rest after six days' labor, has been the charta of spiritual, mental, and bodily refreshment."

But the mischief with Mr. Poole is that to him a day of rest means a day of worship; not a day of physical recreation, but of spiritual renewal; a day on which he opens his shop and exhibits his wares; not a holiday, but a holy day. He tells us plainly that he wants to preserve Sunday as a day of worship in order to safeguard Christianity. It is not Sunday, as such, that he is so profoundly concerned about, but Sunday as the Lord's Day. Without Sunday and without Christianity there would be no use for parsons.

Such, in a nutshell, is Mr. Poole's case, though he does not put it that way. Indeed, he puts it in an entirely different way. Instead of saying that in the absence of Sunday and Christianity there would be no clergymen, he declares that the loss of the former two would result in the disappearance of morality. He says:—

"When we speak of safeguarding Christianity we speak, *ipso facto*, of safeguarding the highest code of morals. For a really high code of morals does not exist outside Judaism and Christianity. We hear of the high morality of other religions. We admit there are precepts of great value in them. But there are so many foul accretions connected with all these religions, such a cargo of dross and base metal, that we may not for one moment compare them with Christianity as the model and lever for high moral living. Nay! outside Christianity you are on a quicksand when trying to walk steadily in search of a safe code of moral living."

A man who can talk like that is the victim of one or more of three things—abysmal ignorance, stone-blind prejudice, or professional mendacity. Can Mr. Poole conscientiously characterise the Chinese, Japanese, or the Burmese as morally our inferiors? Has he really read the Buddhist Scriptures, which are about four times as long as the Bible, and which contain a system of morality which, in the opinion of many competent judges, is second to none in the world? The reverend gentleman alludes to Portugal as a most distracted and unhappy country, but he forgets that less than five years ago Christianity was supreme there, and that its yoke was so galling that the people, unable to endure it any longer, resolved to fling it off, which they did with magnificent success; and the present troubles of the country are almost exclusively the outcome of the devilish but so far futile machinations of the fallen monarchy and priesthood, which are hand and glove. The truth is that Portugal is releasing herself from the cruel shackles of her superstitious, priest-ridden, and king-devoured past, and that the process would be much smoother and swifter if her Christian enemies would only give her simple justice and fair play. Mr. Poole also refers to the increase of juvenile crime in France under secular education. But if he had taken the trouble to consult the latest official statistics before speaking he would have seen how contrary to the truth his information was. For the last twenty-four years crime of all kinds in the French Republic has been steadily on the decrease.

Happily, our opposition to Mr. Poole ends just here. He either ignorantly or deliberately lies when he exclaims, "Kill Christianity, and you will kill morality." Millions of the most moral people on the planet to-day are non-Christians and non-Theists. We challenge him to cite unquestioned facts in disproof of this statement. But he is quite right when he cries, "Kill the Sunday, and you will kill Christianity." Christianity has subsisted on its Book and its Day; deprived of them it would speedily die. In theory man is described as being by nature

religious, as having within him an instinctive hunger for God, which God alone can allay. Again and again are we told that it is quite impossible to rob him of religion, or to prevent him from seeking food for his spiritual nature. In practice, however, the flattest contradiction is given to that theoretical teaching. The whole argument against secular education hinges upon the positive assurance that if the Bible were excluded from the day-schools religion would be doomed. Catholics, Anglicans, and Nonconformists are all agreed on this point. Those three main divisions of the Christian Church unchurch one another with marvellous celerity, and they cannot meet one another on any point. Hence the never-ceasing warfare between them over religious education; but there is no division among them on the fatal character of the secular solution. Listen to Mr. Poole:—

"I have in my mind a certain grammar school of great repute as a public school. At that school religious instruction is given one solitary half-hour each week. Most of the boys come from homes where the Sunday is little revered, and Christianity little taught. When these boys grow up, what will they be? *Baptised Heathens!*—little more." (The italics are our own.)

Quite right, Mr. Poole. The secular principle alone is fair and just, but it will certainly breed Free-thinkers by the thousand. A half-hour dose of religion per week is not enough, and fails to keep the spiritual instinct alive. Listen once more:—

"And so we come, step by step, to this staggering truth, uttered by one of the world's greatest Sceptics, Voltaire: 'Kill the Sunday, and you will kill Christianity.' This is said to have been his answer when asked how to stamp out Christianity in France. And his words are tragically, fearfully true. Unless there is a day specially set apart for the Church to do her work, the principles and morals of Christianity simply cannot be taught."

What a complete surrender of the case for Christianity. Here, again, theoretically, the future of the Cross is absolutely secure. The Gospel Jesus proudly predicts that against his Church not even the gates of hell can ever prevail. You remember the martial strains of the famous hymn:—

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A Kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar!
Who follows in his train?"

In theology, both of the New Testament and the Church Christ is a king who "must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." He is the irresistible, all-conquering Redeemer, endowed with all power in heaven and on earth, concerning whom great voices in heaven were heard saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." And yet Mr. Poole tells us that we can steal the Sunday from this mighty monarch by opening theatres and picture palaces and absenting ourselves from church and chapel, and that if we do rob him of his own field day, we shall thereby hurl him headlong from his throne down to the bottomless pit of eternal oblivion. What a compliment is this that a servant pays to his own Master whom in theory he holds to be absolutely invincible! What a puerile giving away of the Christian case is this whole sermon which is ostensibly in defence of Christ and his Day!

Yes, Christianity is a house founded upon the sand, destined to fall when the winds of criticism begin to blow; but it is not every day that an apologist of that religion tells you so with his own lips, as Mr. Poole does in this amazing discourse. The truth is not that the kingdoms of this world are likely ever to become the kingdoms of "our Lord, and of his Christ," but that the imaginary kingdom of "our Lord, and of his Christ" is gradually making room for the real kingdom of man, in which he shall reign to the end of days.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity and the Chinese.—II.

(Continued from p. 315.)

"From their [the Chinese] point of view it goes without saying that all foreigners are enormously rich, and that there are no poor in our favored lands, or we should not have money to spend in maintaining corps of missionaries nearly as numerous as our merchants, and in subsidising outcast Chinese to forsake the family altars to 'feng chiao,' or be 'sealed' to a doctrine strange and incredible."—ARCHIBALD LITTLE, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges*, p. 256.

"From old time these attacks upon the domestic faith of docile and peaceful communities have provoked massacres, and if persisted in they will continue to provoke massacres while the people have strength left to strike. How foreign religious aggression is answered by native religious aggression, and how Christian military power avenges the foreign victims with tenfold slaughter and strong robbery, need not be here recorded. It has not been in these years only that ancestor-worshiping peoples have been slaughtered, impoverished, or subjugated in revenge for the uprisings that missionary intolerance provokes."—LAFRANCESCO HEARN, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, p. 519.

ANOTHER great obstacle the missionary to the Chinese has to surmount is that of the language. Mr. Chester Holcombe, in his valuable work *The Real Chinaman* (p. 49), says "a barrier far more serious than the Great Wall to any intimate acquaintance with the Chinese is found in their language." The Chinese language has no alphabet. Each character represents in itself a complete idea, and practically corresponds to a syllable in our language.

"The lack of any alphabet and the enormous number of characters make the labor of learning to read Chinese burdensome in the extreme. Each character must be learned by itself; and when the student has mastered a thousand or five thousand, the succeeding thousands must be learned in the same way" (p. 53).

Such are the difficulties of learning Chinese. Miss C. F. Gordon Cumming, after observing that forty thousand different characters are used in the classics of Confucius, says:—

"Happily a knowledge of four thousand suffices to enable a student to read such a book as our Bible; but to acquire even these takes an average student about six years, and even when he has attained some skill in reading he has not begun to learn to write."*

Which requires a rare proficiency and skill in drawing.

These difficulties, great as they are, dwindle into comparative insignificance before the obstacles in the way of learning to speak Chinese. Mr. Chester Holcombe, who was for many years interpreter to the United States Legation at Peking, says that the really serious difficulties inherent in learning to speak Chinese render it an almost insurmountable barrier to any thorough knowledge of the people. He tells us:—

"No amount of book study will enable a person to speak it. It must be learned from the lips of a living teacher. With any amount of drill it requires a quick ear and great flexibility of the vocal organs to acquire accurate pronunciation. So serious is the difficulty, that it may be accepted as a rule that no person over thirty years of age can learn to speak Chinese correctly, as the vocal organs, after that period, appear to have lost a portion of their flexibility. Many persons under that age fail to acquire a command of the language, even with the most faithful effort. Not one foreign speaker of Chinese in ten can make the ordinary Chinese cat-call. Although I accomplished this feat, I failed, after seventeen years of patient effort, to produce a certain sound with which the donkey-driver urges his long-eared beast about the streets of Peking. My only consolation in the failure is that no other foreigner has been known to master it."†

The same writer further tells us that the most expert foreign authorities disagree as to the best representation in any European language of many of these sounds. For instance, he observes:—

"It probably will never be settled whether the Chinese word for 'man' should begin with *j* or *r*; the fact being that the exact sound is an intermediate one, almost impossible to any foreigner, between the two."

* C. F. Gordon Cumming, *Memories*; 1904; p. 352.

† Chester Holcombe, *The Real Chinaman*; 1895; pp. 62-63.

Mr. Holcombe once asked several American and European scholars learned in the Chinese language, who were guests at his table, how the Chinese word for "porridge" should be represented in English. He received seven different combinations of letters.

Another peculiarity of the Chinese language, and one which is responsible for more blunders than all the others put together, is that the tone in which a word is uttered changes the meaning of the word itself. For instance, in English a word conveys a single idea to the person to whom it is spoken. Thus the word "man" always means a man in our language, although the word may be uttered in a tone to indicate inquiry, contempt, sarcasm, surprise, anger, or any other emotion. In Chinese this is all changed; the tone in which a word is uttered affects the meaning of the word as much as the sound does. Thus, says Mr. Holcombe, "In Chinese a man ceases to be a man the instant you change the tone of your voice in uttering the word. He may be a disease, a nightingale, or a carrot, but he can be a man in only one tone of voice." And, as he further remarks—

"It is no easy matter to speak a single word of Chinese correctly. A long and steady drill of the vocal organs is necessary to the accurate and ready pronunciation of each separate character. At the outset of his Chinese studies the author devoted four hours each day for eight weary months to a drill on the tone table" (pp. 66-7-8).

Chinese, as the same writer remarks, is undoubtedly the most difficult language on earth to master. He says a volume might be filled with the most annoying blunders committed by foreign students of Chinese. For instance:—

"A missionary once informed his audience that the Savior, when on earth, 'went about eating cake.' He intended to say 'healing the sick'; but an aspirate wrongly placed changed healing into eating, while an error in tone made cakes out of those who were ill" (pp. 68-9).

On another occasion—

"The writer once heard a venerable missionary address the Deity in prayer, before a crowded Chinese audience, as 'O Thou Omniverous God.' He meant to say 'omniscient,' but used an aspirated *ch* when the other would have better served his purpose. On another occasion a missionary saw with astonishment an audience hurriedly leave his chapel in response to what he supposed was a courteous invitation from his lips to be seated. In point of fact, however, he was not giving them a welcome, but assuring them that they had made a mistake in entering. An aspirated *t* caused all the misunderstanding."*

The Rev. Wm. Milne, the colleague of the missionary, Dr. Morrison, declared that "To acquire Chinese is a work for men with bodies of brass, lungs of steel, heads of oak, hands of spring steel, eyes of eagles, hearts of apostles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah."†

Even when the foreigner, after herculean struggles during a series of years, has learned to read and speak Chinese, he will still be unable to make himself understood. He will now have to cope with what that great authority on things Chinese, Mr. Arthur H. Smith—who spent twenty-two years in China as a missionary—calls the Chinese "talent for misunderstanding." This arises through their different mode of thought. We pride ourselves on going directly to the marrow of the subject, and, having reached it, saying exactly what we mean; but, says Mr. Arthur Smith, "The whole Chinese system of thinking is based on a line of assumptions different from those to which we are accustomed." In fact, our modes of thought and the Chinese are at opposite poles. It has been said that we think in straight lines, but the Oriental thinks in curves; and however proficient the foreigner may become in the language, so that he could write down every character spoken by a Chinese, yet, says Mr. Smith, it would still be "impossible, from merely hearing what

a Chinese says, to tell what he means"; and he declares that anyone who can read a copy of the *Pekin Gazette*, and form a correct notion as to what is behind it, "knows more of China than can be learned from all the works on this Empire that ever were written." And he adds: "Is there not reason to fear that by the time any outside barbarian shall have reached such a pitch of comprehension as this implies, we shall be as much at a loss to know what he meant by what he said as if he were really Chinese."

So the student of Chinese, having, as he thinks, mastered the language, finds, to his pained surprise, that he is not understood. He therefore, says Mr. Smith, "returns to his studies with augmented diligence, and at the end of a series of years is able to venture with confidence to accost the public, or any individual thereof, on miscellaneous subjects." But with no better results.

"The speaker will have opportunity for the same pained surprise as when he made his maiden speech in this tongue. The auditor evidently does not understand. He as evidently does not expect to understand. He visibly pays no attention to what is said, makes no effort whatever to follow it, but simply interrupts you to observe, 'When you speak we do not understand.' He has a smile of superiority, as of one contemplating the struggles of a deaf-mute to utter articulate speech, and as if he would say, 'Who supposed that you could be understood? It may be your misfortune and not your fault that you were not born with a Chinese tongue, but you should bear your disabilities, and not worry us with them, for when you speak we do not understand you.' It is impossible to retain at all times an unruffled serenity in situations like this, and it is natural to turn fiercely on your adversary, and inquire, 'Do you understand what I am saying at this moment?' 'No,' he replies, 'I do not understand you.'"

Bearing these facts in mind, we can appreciate the miraculous character of some of the conversions recorded in the missionary magazines. For instance, Mr. Stanley P. Smith

"had been only seven months in China when he performed that wonderful conversion, so applauded at the Missionary Conference of 1888, of 'a young Chinaman, a learned man, a B.A. of his University, who had heard Mr. Smith speak in the Chinese that can be acquired in seven months, and accepted Him there and then (*Records of the Missionary Conference*; 1888; i., p. 46). Indeed, the earlier the new missionaries in China begin to preach, the more rapid are the conversions they make."‡

Dr. Morrison—the Australian medical man who travelled in China, not Dr. Morrison the missionary—the author of the last quotation, also sarcastically remarks:—

"The Chinaman is rarely carried away by his feelings at the theatre; indeed it may be questioned if strong emotion is ever aroused in his breast, except by the first addresses of the junior members of the China Inland Mission, the thrilling effects of whose Chinese exhortations is recorded every month in [the missionary magazine] *China's Millions*."‡

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

GOD AND THE WHITE SLAVES.

Poisonous paint on us, under the gas
Smiling like spectres, we gather bereaven,
Leprosy's taint on us, ghost-like we pass,
Watched by the eyes of yon pitiless heaven!
Let the stars stare at us! God, too, may glare at us
Out of the void where he hideth so well.
Sisters of midnight, he damned us in making us,
Cast us like carrion to men, then forsaking us,
Smiles from his throne on these markets of hell

—Robert Buchanan.

If Pierce weren't a fool, he'd help on the spirit of the night and put everybody in a state to seek his public-house after the concert be done. Who wants "The Keys of Heaven" except of a Sunday. The keys of the beer barrel be more like it.—Eden Phillpotts, "Widcombe Fair."

* Holcombe, *The Real Chinaman*, pp. 64-5.

† Marshall Broomhall, *The Chinese Empire*, p. 371.

* A. H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*; 1906; p. 59.

† Dr. G. E. Morrison, *An Australian in China*; 1902; p. 179.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

THE business meetings of the Conference were held in Clavier Hall, Princes-street, Regent-street, London, on Whit Sunday, May 11.

The following Vice-Presidents attended:—Messrs. J. Barry, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, H. Cowell, C. Cohen, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, W. Heaford, J. T. Lloyd, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neat, R. T. Nichols, S. M. Peacock, J. Ross, G. Roleffs, V. Roger, F. Schindle, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, T. J. Thurlow, F. Wood, and Miss Stanley.

The delegates from Branches were as follows:—J. Lazar-nick, W. R. Brooks (Bethnal Green); E. Clifford Williams, J. W. Hackett (Birmingham); J. W. Gott (Bolton); H. R. Clifton, S. Soddy (Croydon); W. Davidson, J. Hecht (Edmonton); C. Cohen (Glasgow); A. S. Collinson, Miss How (Islington); E. Bellamy, S. B. Savill (Kingsland); J. G. Dobson (Manchester); D. Mapp, M. J. Charter, T. H. Elstob (Newcastle-on-Tyne); W. J. Lloyd, Miss Kough, Miss Stanley (North London); R. Chapman, J. T. Horsman, T. Fothergill (South Shields); R. H. Rosetti, Miss Pankhurst (West Ham).

The Minutes of last Conference were taken as read.

The Executive's Annual Report was submitted orally by the President, who was very warmly welcomed after his long and severe illness.

The Financial Report was unanimously adopted.

Election of President: During this function the chair was occupied by Mr. C. Cohen. On the motion of the Bethnal Green and Kingsland Branches, Mr. G. W. Foote was unanimously and enthusiastically re-elected. On resuming the chair the President acknowledged the honor that had been paid him once more by the Conference. He knew that, as their leader, he possessed their confidence, and this he fully appreciated. He coveted no higher, and there could be no more honorable position. Had he wished it, no doubt he might have entered Parliament; but he considered it a much greater honor to be President of the National Secular Society. The Press had always boycotted him most assiduously. When it became his turn to speak at a public meeting the reporters either went out in a body or closed their notebooks. It was no egotism to say he could write; but the prizes of literature never fell to his lot. He did not complain. His one business in life was to carry on the fight for Free-thought—the grandest of all causes. His remarks were received with great applause.

Election of Vice-Presidents.—On the nomination of the Executive the following were re-elected:—J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, E. A. Charlton, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Léon Fernémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, Eugene Hins, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. T. Ross, Miss Mary Ross, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Miss Alma Stanley, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, F. E. Willis, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, G. White.

Mr. T. H. Elstob and Mr. W. Dodd were also elected Vice-Presidents, both being well-known as zealous and able workers of long standing in the Free-thought movement.

Mr. Harry Jones and Mr. S. B. Savill were elected auditors.

Mr. Clifford Williams (Birmingham) moved: "That one Sunday in the year be called the Charles Bradlaugh Sunday, and that all Branches be requested to arrange for lectures or readings to be given bearing on the life and teachings of Charles Bradlaugh, thus perpetuating the memory of our late great leader." Mr. Williams dwelt, with suitable emphasis, upon the desirability of frequently recalling the splendid services which Mr. Bradlaugh had rendered to the world as founder and first President of the National Secular Society. He alluded to the great man's magnetic, dominating personality. Mr. Hackett seconded, speaking in glowing terms of the magic influence that lies in Charles Bradlaugh's name. He stated that the Birmingham Branch wished to suggest to the President that the Bradlaugh Sunday should be followed by a special number of the *Freethinker*, containing, on the front page, a portrait of Bradlaugh, with an article by the Editor on some feature of his life and work, or a summary of the lectures delivered. He felt confident that of such a number of the journal they would be able, at Birmingham, to sell from 200 to 500 extra copies. Messrs. Peacock, Chapman, Hecht, Davidson, and Thurlow spoke against the motion, their chief objection to it being that the

setting apart of a day for the perpetuation of the memory of anyone, however great, would or might engender a species of fetishism; but Messrs. Silverstein, Heaford, Ross, and the President saw no such danger in the proposal. The President recommended the striking out of the words "thus perpetuating the memory of," which the mover and seconder readily consented to do; and thus amended the motion was carried.

There was another motion from Birmingham, moved and seconded by the same gentlemen, namely, "That all motions carried at a Conference shall be dealt with in the course of the three months following the Conference, and a report stating the progress made be sent to the Branch responsible for the motion." After considerable discussion, and the substitution of "as soon as possible" for "in the course of three months," the motion was carried.

The following motion was formally moved, seconded, and carried: "This Conference protests against the London County Council's deliberate and continuous effort to cripple, and if possible to destroy, the traditional right of public speech and discussion in all parts of the metropolis under its control; and the Conference protests especially against the mean attempt to injure advanced bodies generally by a perfectly uncalled-for attempt to deprive them of the immemorial right to make collections for their funds within the limits—and only within the limits—of their permitted meetings." The hope was expressed that the newly elected Council would see the wisdom of pursuing a more liberal and rational policy.

Mr. Cohen moved that: "This Conference deeply deploras the growing activity of the military spirit in Europe, and the ever-increasing expenditure on preparations for war, and calls upon Freethinkers everywhere—since the Christian Churches are so impotent in the cause of peace—to do all in their power to stem the tide of international envy, hatred, and malice, which is driving the so-called civilised nations on the abyss of mutual destruction." The mover called attention to the fact that the Christian Churches had never been hostile to war, but have often instigated wars and taken an active part in them. With the exception of the Quakers, Christians generally have approved of war. Freethinkers are almost the only people who are, on principle, advocates of peace. Mr. Moss, who seconded, denounced the boy and girl scouts movement as calculated to develop a warlike disposition in the young. The motion was unanimously carried.

The President moved: "This Conference calls upon the Liberal Government to countenance no more prosecutions for 'blasphemy' or 'profanity' (which are only persecutions of weak or friendless Freethinkers for the gratification of Christian bigotry), but to introduce, or allow time for, a short Bill abolishing the odious laws under which such proceedings are still possible in a country that boasts of its religious freedom." The President rejoiced that now at last a Bill for the repeal of those inhuman enactments had been introduced in the House of Commons, and that every possible influence should be brought to bear upon the members to secure their support to such a Bill. He referred to the work of the Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and to the splendid public meeting held under its auspices at the Essex Hall. It was agreed to delete the words "introduce or," so that the motion reads, after "bigotry," "but to allow time for the short Bill before the House abolishing," etc.; and with that alteration it was carried.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd moved for the Executive the following: "The Liberal Government having declared its intention to deal with the Education question again in the early future, this Conference warns it that it has already failed three times in trying to settle the problem on Nonconformist rather than Church lines, and trusts that its next attempt will rise above all sectarian lines by proceeding upon the principle which is fair and just to all—the principle of Secular Education." This was seconded by Mr. A. B. Moss. Upon this subject the Conference was of one mind, and the motion was carried unanimously.

It was heartily agreed: "That the N. S. S. be represented as far as possible at the forthcoming International Free-thought Congress at Lisbon, partly as an encouragement to the Portuguese Freethinkers who have taken such a great part in the recent work of progress in Portugal, and also as a protest against the malicious falsehoods so industriously circulated to their detriment by religious bigots and political schemers in England."

Miss H. Pankhurst moved the following motion from the West Ham Branch: "That, in pursuance of the declaration made in the Society's 'Immediate Practical Objects,' namely, 'The Equalisation of the legal status of men and women,' so that all rights may be independent of sexual distinction, this Conference recognises universal adult suffrage as the most effective method of abolishing sex disqualification and of placing all citizens on an equal footing at the poll. It

(Continued on p. 330.)

Acid Drops.

We believe in the freedom of the press as much as anybody, and we have given pledges of our attachment to that policy. We feel towards it like the good lad in Meredith's *Egoist* felt towards his dear Miss Middleton; he did not mind how many loved her,—he only objected to anybody's wanting to hurt her. In the same way, we extend the hand of welcome to any person who is really fighting for freedom. We were delighted to see that Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, on behalf of the Labor Party and the National Labor Press, had offered to publish the *Suffragette*, which the Government is trying to suppress. It is both against English law and English tradition that a periodical should be suppressed before it is published. Next week's *Suffragette* is not yet in existence, and to say that it shall not appear is tyranny of the worst description. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald would do a chivalrous thing if he opposed this Government despotism. But what he offered to do, if you look into it closely, does not amount to much. Nothing that could possibly be prosecuted with success is to be allowed to go into the paper. It is to be rigorously censored and absolutely harmless. Hadn't the women better look after their own paper? It may be ungracious, but it is generally advisable, to look a gift horse in the mouth.

The militant suffragettes seem well supplied with piety. The extracts read by Detective Beazley from speeches by Miss Barrett included this one:—"When we hear of a bomb being thrown, we say, 'Thank God for that!'"

When the Christian Bulgarians and the Christian Greeks took to fighting each other it was time to reckon up the cost of the Balkan war. The Bulgarian returns are available already. The number of officers killed is 330, and the number of men 29,711. The number of officers wounded is 950, and the number of men 52,550. The number of missing is 3,193. Making a grand total of 86,734. All this price of blood and wounds is paid for what? For a crusade of the Cross against the Crescent, as King Ferdinand was indiscreet enough to call it at the outset of the war.

Those dear good Christians, the Bulgars and the Greeks, took to fighting each other over the possession of places that did not belong to either of them. A neutral zone had to be established to prevent further fighting. "How they love one another!"

From the report of a public meeting, held in the Council Chamber, Kimberley, in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* for April 18, we see that the question of religious instruction in the public schools there is following much the same course as at home. A movement is on foot to introduce dogmatic religious instruction in the schools, and the meeting was called to protest against this being done. At present the law allows for the usual Bible reading and the Lord's Prayer. It is also competent for ministers of religion to utilise the half-hour allowed for Biblical instruction by giving dogmatic religious lessons. But this means, of course, the clergy themselves have to do the work, and that is not at all to their taste. The mover of the resolution of protest, and in favor of the *status quo*, said this power had been in the hands of the clergy for many years, but so few had availed themselves of it that it had been allowed to lapse. So much for right of entry. In itself, it is a vicious principle, and one fatal to school discipline and development; but it will never work, because, as a late Bishop of London said, the best of the clergy are too busy, and the rest are too lazy. Their desire is to use State-paid teachers to do their work for them.

In this connection, we were glad to see that a letter was received from the Diamond Fields Teachers' Association stating that it "had on two occasions protested against teachers being employed to instruct in religious subjects." This is the right kind of spirit, and we should wish to see the same temper amongst teachers in this country. A very large section of them are in favor of the abolition of religious instruction in State schools, but it is almost impossible to get any number of them to publicly say so. And yet, in the present state of English public opinion, an open expression on the part of the teacher might well become a decisive factor in settling the question. The reason given, privately, of course, for their silence, is that open speech would lead to their victimisation, and would in any case hinder their promotion—a plea which shows that whether we are dealing with Churchmen or Dissenters, religious government means tyranny on the one side and hypocrisy on the other.

It was a good omen that the principle of Secular Education was not left without its spokesman at this meeting. Mr. Zeiss moved an amendment to the effect that all religious instruction, including special Bible reading, should be discontinued in public schools. The amendment was lost, but its being moved gave an opportunity for the expression of some home-truths, and, judging from the report, evoked a fair amount of sympathy. It was also remarkable in drawing from a clerical speaker, named Lillie, the statement that, having lived for some years in England, he repudiated the suggestion that the religious question gave rise to any bitterness there. He had, he said, heard no murmurs there. Mr. Lillie must have a remarkable power of non-observation. With passive resisters declining to pay rates and going to prison, Nonconformists threatening to turn out the Government unless their "grievances" are remedied, and Churchmen clamoring for more dogmatic instruction, we congratulate Mr. Lillie on possessing a serenity of disposition that prevented him hearing even "murmurs" on the question of religious instruction in public schools.

The *Christian World* notes the issue of a new manifesto by the Secular Education League, and curtly adds, "that solution will be the policy of despair." It may be, so far as some people are concerned; but we fancy many a highwayman must have forsaken his profession in "despair" at safely pursuing it longer. Some people act justly because they prefer it; others because they are prevented acting otherwise. That is all there is in the matter; and we are quite prepared to admit that the bulk of religionists will not act justly in this matter until they are forced.

The Rev. R. S. King, Rector of Leigh-on-Sea, has a protest in this month's local *Parish Magazine* against the "spread of anti-religious teaching." He adds that "It is not we older ones, perhaps, who will be much disturbed by such frothy teaching, but we must remember that it is our children who will have to bear the brunt of it." We can assure the rector that Freethought audiences are not so largely composed of children under the age of eleven as the congregations he is accustomed to.

Baron Paterno, the cavalry lieutenant, who murdered the Countess Trigona, a lady-in-waiting to the Queen of Italy, was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, beginning with six years' solitary confinement—which appears to be driving him mad. He has made several attempts at suicide, and he has been placed in a padded cell and securely bound in a strait-jacket. He is also watched day and night. What, we ask, could be more horrible? If this is the alternative to capital punishment, we prefer capital punishment. To kill a man is merciful compared with torturing him as long as nature holds out against death.

Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon has been trying to describe what Christian Churches will be like 250 years hence. But will there be any Christian Churches left by that time? No doubt Dr. Gibbon is sure of it. We are not. And our anticipation may be quite as good as his.

There is a professional servant of Christ called Stanley Parker—once, we believe, of Woolwich, then of Brighton, afterwards of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and now of York—who has lately been "going for" Spiritualism in a local newspaper. In one of his letters he describes himself as an old debater, having "debated with Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. Percy Ward." We are asked if this is true. Mr. James Lawrence, who is connected with the Spiritualist movement at Newcastle-on-Tyne, put the question to us in a letter on the subject. Our reply is that we never debated with Mr. Stanley Parker—or any other Parker. We are not aware that we ever saw him. He may, of course, have got up after one of our lectures—in the open discussion which is always invited—and asked a question or offered criticism; but even if this be true, it is far-fetched to call it debating with Mr. Foote. With regard to Mr. Percy Ward we can say nothing. He has been out of England for some time, and is now stationed at Chicago. We admit that Mr. Stanley Parker has been referred to several times in the *Freethinker* on account of fantastic statements of his reported utterances in the public press. We have always found him a person of romantic memory, and he seems to retain that characteristic unimpaired.

John Carrington, a Sunday-school teacher and local preacher, died suddenly during a service at Eld-lane Baptist Chapel, Colchester. There is no moral. Had it been the case of a Freethought lecturer dying at a Secular meeting the moral would have been a mile long.

At the annual meeting of the Chief Constables' Association held at the Westminster Palace Hotel recently, the Bishop of Wakefield greeted the chief constables as "brother bishops." It is not often that an ecclesiastic is so frank concerning the real duties of the "Black Army."

A pilgrimage of members of Suffrage Societies from all parts of the country to London is being arranged for July, and Mrs. Fawcett has expressed the hope that the processionists will attend a service at St. Paul's Cathedral. Had not the passive Suffragettes better ascertain the intentions of their active sisters with regard to this building?

The Rev. D. Ewart James, of Southend, compares the Christian Church to a sailing ship; but, for some reason or other, she has stopped. She has got organisation, men, money, learning, and machinery, but she has been in the doldrums for some time now. The curious thing is that the wind of God is always blowing, and it is always an entirely favorable wind; but the vessel refuses to go. Nay, she moves backwards, right against God's wind, which is certainly a great miracle. Who ever heard of a sailing ship travelling against the wind? The truth is that the wind of God is purely imaginary, while the wind of science is a stupendous reality, and is driving the Church on the rocks. We rejoice to know that in proportion as the wind of knowledge increases in strength the wind of superstition dies down.

Bishop Weldon, Dean of Manchester, has just been saying that "a Democratic Government is the only possible government to-day, and the only one that is in keeping with the will of God." Poor God! He is very rarely able to get his will carried out in this world. Democratic Government has only existed occasionally, and within small limits, in the history of mankind. That is how "thy will be done on earth" has been fulfilled. In the same way, the Christians amongst the Land Nationalisers assert that God intended the land for the people, but the landlords got in front of him and "collared the blooming lot." And he can't shift them.

The Protestant ministers of Indianapolis have refused to have any dealings with Billy Sunday, the converted prize-fighter and evangelist, on account of his vulgarity and crude methods. Meanwhile Sunday goes on drawing the "gate money," which he probably finds pays better than pugilism. He is said to be making £12,000 a year.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the well-known dramatist, says that "the crying defect of Dissenters to-day is an inability to discern when their leaders and pastors are talking solemn nonsense." The justice of the statement cannot be denied; but it applies to a much larger class than the Nonconformists. It is true of all religious leaders. Solemn nonsense is the principle thing with which they deal, which is one of the reasons why they object to ridicule, or to what they please to call irreverence. Could there be a finer example of "solemn nonsense" than a congress of mature individuals—physically mature, that is—discussing such absurd questions as the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection? It is only because there is a kind of hereditary solemnity around these topics that people can discuss them with a straight face. What is called the cultivation of a reverential attitude towards religion means no more than a training that will enable one to treat ridiculous things seriously. History shows that nothing is too absurd to be religious, and nothing should be too religious to be recognised as absurd.

Christian prayers did no more good than other prayers for the benefit of China. The political situation has been more strained ever since they were offered up. Another day's prayer might shatter the Chinese Republic to pieces.

The Church in Essex is deteriorating in culture. In the *Southend Church Chronicle* there is a vulgar request asking the readers to "buck up and take all the tickets" for an entertainment, whilst in the *Leigh Parish Magazine* a note on a garden party reads: "We are unable either to supply any information or to do our bit in booming the fête." A Salvation Army officer could do no worse.

On Sunday, May 11, a severe thunderstorm visited Ware, and damaged Christ Church in that town. Hunsdon Church, about nine miles from Ware, was also struck by lightning while the celebration of Holy Communion was in progress. Fortunately, no one was injured, but the church was so filled with fragments from the tower that the service had to be stopped and the evening service could not be held. This

church was not fitted with a lightning conductor. This is only yet one more case going to prove that the Almighty takes no more care of his holy buildings than he does of a public-house when neither is protected by science.

"Owe no man anything," the New Testament says. How far Christians have heeded this text may be seen by the announcement that there is £16,000 owing on Primitive Methodist chapels in East Lancashire. There is to be a three years' campaign to clear off this indebtedness—starting with the aid of Sir W. P. Hartley, whom the Methodists find "real jam."

Sir A. Conan Doyle has made a very feeble reply to Mr. S. H. Swinny with respect to the treatment of the "politicals," that is "royalists," in the Portuguese prisons. Sir Conan actually urged the withdrawal of the British Minister from Lisbon by way of protest. Mr. Swinny has been to Lisbon, and seen the prisons and prisoners for himself, and he reports that there is nothing special to complain about. One prison, which was said to be infested with vermin, he found "appallingly clean." Prisons, of course, are prisons; and it is idle to expect that the Portuguese Republic is suddenly going to turn them into Carlton Hotels for the sake of the Duchess of Bedford and her royalist friends, who insist on attempting petty revolutions and wailing over the consequences. Sir Conan Doyle knows nothing personally of the subject he writes so dogmatically upon. Mr. Swinny is a first-hand witness, and his competence is beyond challenge. On the whole, it seems that the noise made over the Portuguese prisons is due to two causes; first, because the country is small and can therefore be bullied with impunity,—second, because the upper-class people are the principal sufferers.

Father Bernard Vaughan, the celibate gentleman who is perpetually preaching the gospel of large families, has been telling a Liverpool meeting of Catholic young men that the Separation Law in France has proved the greatest of blessings to the Church. It had freed her from her thralldom to the State, and she had increased in strength and prosperity ever since. Supposing that this is true—and we dare say there is some truth in it, as we predicted at the time—it seems fair to ask Father Vaughan to explain why the Catholic Church, with the Pope at its head, fought tooth and nail against the Separation which was a blessing in disguise. The infallible Church turned out to be utterly wrong—God's vicegerent on earth showed a want of common sagacity. What becomes of the Papal claims after such wretched blundering?

After all, it appears that what religion has gained in France during the last ten years has been lost in England. Father Vaughan, in that same speech, said: "There seems to be almost a revolt here against the supernatural. Instead of churches filling, I find them emptying. Some have been converted into mansions for the rich, while not a few chapels have been changed into theatres or music-halls." So *that's* all right.

The Dean of Worcester, the Very Rev. Moore Ede, told the Congregational Union, the other day, that one of the most pithy and effective sermons he ever read was as follows:—

"The world is wrong-side up. The world must be put right-side up. We are the men to do it." That sermon may be pithy and in a certain sense effective; but it is not true. Christians have been trying to set the world right for nigh two thousand years, and they are as far from doing so now as they were at the beginning.

American society is polo crazy, says the *Evening News*. In the old country some are cracked on religion.

The *Daily Mirror* recently had a picture of an open-air preacher with an audience composed entirely of children. Has it come to this? A little time ago preachers used to count women among their auditors.

The Rev. A. J. Waldron, Vicar of St. Matthew's Church, Brixton, is announced to speak at the forthcoming annual meeting in connection with the Preventive and Rescue Shelter for Fallen Women at Southend-on-Sea. Is the reverend gentleman an authority on the subject?

"Smoked before Suicide"! ran the headline in a daily paper. Pious people think this is done afterwards.

A minister was saying his prayers aloud when his wife entered the room. "You get out," said the parson; "this is a monologue, not a catalogue!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1918.—Previously acknowledged, £133 12s. 11d. Received since:—Mrs. Brooks, 2s. 6d.; Miss Brooks, 2s. 6d.; Maurice Abrahams, 3s.; G. F. Dixon (West Africa), £2; John Scott, 2s. 6d.; E. V. G., 10s.

CONNIE BROOKS.—We note that you are looking forward to the resumption of "Literary Gossip," and that you like our articles on literature so much that you wish we would "let us have as much as you can of them." Pleased you thought the Meredith article "splendid."

T. H. HOW.—We can't see any harm in it. If the late King Edward told the chauffeur, and peremptorily too, to take a turning that proved to be the wrong one, and called himself "a damned fool" for interfering—it was a gentlemanly action on his part, and in a sense the swearing only made it more so.

R. SPIERS.—Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence is a wealthy man, and is able to force his nonsense on the public. Only the ignorant could be impressed by his ridiculous statements and foolish reasoning. To answer him is like refuting the contention that the moon is made of green cheese.

A. WYCHERLEY.—Your letter in the local press is anything but "uninteresting." Such contributions do good in many ways, and we wish that all Freethinkers would, whenever possible, avail themselves of this channel of publicity.

A. PHILLIPS (S. Africa).—We have regular readers in all parts of the world.

T. HOPKINS.—Actions can only be immoral as far as they affect others. Robinson Crusoe, alone upon his island, could not act immorally (except to lower animals). Excess in eating and drinking, in such circumstances, could be only a matter of taste. But the moment Man Friday appeared upon the scene moral relationships commenced. Of course it may be urged that Robinson Crusoe was bound not to injure or make a beast of himself, if he had any hope of being rescued and returning to human society. But that is only another proof that it is human society that gives the word "morality" all its meaning.

—We will notice the other matter in your letter next week. In the meanwhile, will you try to obtain further particulars, such as the lecturer's name? And do you know anyone who could corroborate your statements? Not that we doubt them in any way.

R. STEVENSON.—The oath of allegiance to the Crown does not appear to have been touched by Bradlaugh's Oaths Act. Presumably, therefore, Ministers of the Crown have to take that oath still. We do not make any reference, as you do, to particular persons. Bradlaugh took the oath himself. That is how he entered the House of Commons under the ruling of Mr. Speaker Peel. It was part of the Christian misrepresentation of Bradlaugh that he had refused the oath at first, and afterwards wanted to take it. He never did anything of the kind. He kept on saying so, but he couldn't kill the falsehood.

H. MONTGOMERY.—We do not undertake to answer such letters by post, but we have strained a point in your case. For the sake of others, we may repeat here that marriage before a registrar is perfectly secular. No religious words of any kind are used. Glad to hear that you and your fiancée are both Freethinkers now, in spite of your religious training, and that you read this journal "greedily" every Thursday.

G. F. DIXON.—We shall be printing a photograph of Mr. Foote in the *Freethinker* shortly. We cannot say anything at the moment about special copies for sale in the ordinary way. You are right about our editor being "not over keen to face the camera." He would as soon face a battery of guns. We have sent you the publication you want.

V. SPRAGUE (U. S. A.).—We answer No to all your questions but one. Such statements about Huxley, Darwin, etc., are pure (that is, impure) Christian inventions—with the exception of the last. Mrs. Huxley's verse was cut upon Huxley's tombstone, but he was dead when it was done, and it is difficult to see how he is committed by it.

JOHN SCOTT.—Yours is a touching letter. One is glad, however, that your Atheist wife bore herself so bravely at the last in presence of the pious harpies who beset her deathbed.

JOHN CLARK.—The matter shall be seen to. Accept our sympathy.

A. H. TARRUM.—Please try an orthodox journal. That seems a more suitable medium for your communication. Mr. Foote is quite prepared to defend his own statements concerning Meredith's relation to Freethought; he is not bound to prove or disprove statements made by others.

T. J.—The first of your quotations is from Swinburne. We do not identify the others. We are not quite sure how long ago it is since Freethought lectures have been delivered in Cardiff, but there was at one time a fair amount of activity in that city. Mr. Foote debated there with Mr. W. T. Lee, and Mr. Cohen and others have lectured there. We see no reason why there should not be more work in the near future.

J. P. (Newtown).—We do not think your edition of Bayle has any particular market value—probably not more than 10s. It

is more useful than valuable in a commercial sense. It had a great influence in its day, and is still of use to students. We appreciate the good wishes of yourself and wife, and your opinion of what you are good enough to call our "great work."

C. A. TURNER.—Thanks for your letter *re* Mr. Tabrum's "Meredith letter." It seems a mare's-nest.

R. S. P.—The matter was dealt with in the Preface to our *Jewish Life of Christ*. Thanks, all the same; and the cutting may yet be useful.

J. B.—Such letters to the local newspapers must do a great deal of good. Your pious adviser was wrong. Shelley did not write *Frankenstein*. His wife (Mary) wrote it.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—We don't think Bradlaugh's *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* is in print now, but you might inquire of Bonner & Co., 38 Cursitor-street, London, E.C. We will look at the Sabbatarian Bill you mention. It is, of course, absurd to suppose that all workers must rest on the same day. They couldn't do it. Preachers couldn't rest on Sunday, anyhow, to begin with.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

Sugar Plums.

The present issue of the *Freethinker* is almost a Conference number. The majority of our readers will, we think, appreciate even a summarised report of the proceedings of the Conference, since, thanks to the way in which our glorious English press is conducted, there is no other medium in which this can appear. We also give a lengthy, although not a verbatim, report of the speeches delivered at the public meeting in the Queen's Hall. Here, again, many of our readers will be brought into touch with many of our speakers whom they have little or no opportunity of meeting otherwise. Those who do have opportunities of hearing them on the platform will doubtless be glad of reading their speeches. It is not every group of speakers who are worth reading. Speeches may sound well, but read badly. In this respect the N. S. S. has a certain tradition to maintain, and on this occasion it has been done. Space prevents our publishing this week the (official) Annual Report. That will appear next week.

What we have done in keeping the *Freethinker* alive for so many years, without capital save our own earnings from other sources, and without any kind of subvention, will be understood by those acquainted with such matters. But they are very few. The bulk of our readers may form some idea from the disclosures in connection with the prosecution of the leaders of the Women's Political and Social Union. It appears that over £4,000 was lost on their paper, the *Suffragette*, in a period of fourteen months. Yet the paper represented what seemed to be a very considerable movement, it was sold by women at meetings all over the country, and one time it enjoyed a good circulation. Yet the £4,000 went. There never was any £4,000 to drop on the *Freethinker*. It has had to be sustained by our own exertions—for thirty-two years.

Perhaps the foregoing statement will prompt our friends to a greater activity in pushing the circulation of this journal. The great thing is to get it into fresh hands. We beg our friends to introduce it to *their* friends or acquaintances. A little missionary work in this way is easily done and is sure to be effectual. Many people who would become regular readers of the *Freethinker* if they knew of it have never seen a copy of it; others have never even heard of it. Here is an excellent chance for our readers to help us in a way that is not costly, and involves very little trouble. We shall also be glad to send a post-free gratuitous copy for six consecutive weeks to any name and address forwarded to us

as that of a person likely to become a regular subscriber. We have gained many new readers in this way.

The *Observer* of May 11 reproduced a paragraph from its issue of Wednesday, May 5, 1813. Here it is:—

“HOUSE OF COMMONS.

RELIEF TO PERSONS DENYING THE TRINITY.

“Mr. W. Smith moved for leave to bring in a Bill to exempt from certain penalties persons not acknowledging the doctrine of the Trinity.—Leave was given in a Committee, which sat upon the proposition to bring in the Bill, which was accordingly brought in.—*Bell's Weekly Messenger.*”

The result of that Bill was the relief of the Unitarians from the Act of William III. and from the Common Law of Blasphemy as far as the doctrine of the Trinity was concerned. Exactly a hundred years have rolled by since then, and on the same date in 1913 a Bill is introduced to repeal the Blasphemy Laws altogether. Yes, the world does move, however slowly. What the great Galileo said of the physical world, in spite of the terrorism of the Inquisition, is just as true of the intellectual and moral world.

O Mundo, of May 14, publishes a translation of Mr. W. Heaford's *Freethinker* article of May 11 on “Portugal and its Traducers.” Mr. Heaford's article is given the place of honor on the front page of our Lisbon contemporary, which duly acknowledges its indebtedness to the pages of the *Freethinker*.

Freethinkers residing in or near Wolverhampton, who do not already know, will be pleased to learn that they now have an opportunity of joining a Branch of the N. S. S. in Wolverhampton. Mr. Joseph Bates, who lectured every night last week on Snow Hill to large and attentive audiences, held a meeting at the I. L. P. room in Dudley-street and invited all those present wishing to join the N. S. S. to tender their names to Mr. Wainwright, the secretary *pro tem.* Twenty-two applications were received, which will doubtless be increased when those in sympathy, who are away on their holidays, return. An offer of a room for meetings has been received and there is every prospect of a strong and useful Branch being formed.

N. S. S. Annual Conference.

(Continued from p. 326.)

therefore expresses its sympathy with that movement.” In an excellent speech Miss Pankhurst enlarged upon the humiliating subjection of woman under Christianity, upon the disabilities from which she still suffers, upon her beneficent influence in the home and in society, and upon the duty of Freethinkers to do their utmost to secure her emancipation. Mr. R. H. Rosetti seconded the motion, emphasising the fundamental principle of the equality of the sexes before the law. The Conference was in substantial agreement with this motion. Several slight alterations were recommended, and a highly interesting and lively discussion ensued, in which Messrs. Davies, Cowell, Bellamy, Savill, and others took part. Then Mr. V. Roger moved the previous question, and this, being duly seconded and supported, was carried. The feeling was that, in existing circumstances, it was not expedient that the Conference should commit itself on the subject.

Two motions by the Kingsland Branch were as follows: (a) “That an Organiser, or an Organising Committee, be appointed by the Executive, with power to confer with and advise London Branches when necessary.” (b) “That all Branches of the National Secular Society be invited to issue an annual record of their income and expenditure, together with the number of meetings held during the year, and that the Executive be instructed to avail itself of the material for the purpose of publishing an Annual Report of the Society's work.” These motions were duly moved and seconded by the delegates of the Kingsland Branch; but, after perfectly friendly questions were asked and satisfactorily answered, they were dropped.

On behalf of the South Shields Branch, Mr. R. Chapman moved: (a) “That, in the opinion of this Conference, the Scholarship Scheme should be open to all *bona fide* members of the N. S. S. without regard to the length of time during which they have been members; and that all candidates shall pledge themselves to work for the objects and principles of the Society if successful.” Duly seconded, this motion was subjected to a lively discussion. Messrs. Heaford, Davidson, Soddy, Thurlow, and the President strongly advocated adherence to the rule already adopted by the Executive, namely, that the Scheme be open only to those who have been members of the N. S. S. for twelve months. Messrs. Bellamy, Cohen, Hecht, and others were of opinion

that no such safeguard was necessary. When put to the vote the motion was lost.

Mr. Chapman, representing his Branch, moved: (b) “That public demonstrations be arranged in such places and districts where, from various local causes the Freethought movement is not making satisfactory progress.” After a brief discussion this was remitted to the Executive to take such action as may be deemed advisable.

At this stage the President had to leave, and Mr. Cohen was requested to take the chair. Mr. Heaford moved: “That this Conference welcomes the proposed exchange of visits between London and Paris Freethinkers, and instructs the Executive to take whatever steps it may find necessary to bring the proposal to a successful issue.” Mr. Heaford spoke with his usual fervor of the desirability of cultivating a feeling of comradeship between Freethinkers of different nationalities, in order to break down all national and international barriers. The motion was seconded, supported, and carried.

Mr. Cohen now pronounced this very pleasant and successful Conference at an end. There was great rejoicing that the President had been sufficiently recovered to occupy the chair at both meetings, and to guide the discussions with his usual tact and sound judgment.

J. T. L.

PUBLIC MEETING AT THE QUEEN'S HALL.

Mr. Foote, who was received with loud applause and a voice “Bravo, General!” said: After all, there was something, he supposed, in military language, for the last time he appeared in public at Essex Hall he did not break down from any independent action of his own; he was like a soldier who went out on duty and got shot, though not fatally. He was wondering at one time whether he should be there that night at all, but while there was any force left in him he hoped to be able to use it for the great, good, old cause. (Applause.) Every time he occupied the chair at these Conference evening meetings, he asked the audience to recollect that the National Secular Society was established, led, and inspired by one of the greatest Englishmen who ever lived—Charles Bradlaugh. A great many people fancied Charles Bradlaugh was gone for ever. No man who lived a useful, strong, unselfish life went for ever. Charles Bradlaugh at least lived while his memory kept alight in the heart of any man who knew what he was. It devolved upon them to carry on as best they could the work which he carried on with greater strength than they; but not, they might say without boasting, with greater love of the cause than they themselves possessed. For, after all, he did not see why an obscure man, who had kept his heart bound to the cause, who had lived without advertisement and without notice, might not stand up at last, even with the General himself, and say, “I also loved.” And if there should be a meeting beyond the grave, any one of them who loved the cause might feel sure that Charles Bradlaugh would be the very first to acknowledge the claim. But their work was their own in the sense that they had to deal with the problems of to-day with regard to their principles. It was useless for folk to go about saying that Bradlaugh would have done this or that. How did they know? They were only making his dead voice the echo of themselves. If Bradlaugh could advise them from the grave, they would willingly listen, but intermediaries were of no use to them. They had to think and decide for themselves. Fortunately, Freethinkers were never lacking in courage to do that. Courage was a great word. Christianity had been the religion of cringing. Freethought had been the philosophy of courage. What they felt ought to be done, they had always striven to do. Their men and their women went to prison in the old days and suffered persecution gladly. Why? Because they too loved a great cause. They were pioneers of its progress, and although some of them were now forgotten, and some of them could not be remembered because they would not give their names, their courage had lived in their work and made that work easier for them to-day. They stood there, firstly, for the duty to think; secondly, for the right of thought; for duties did not naturally spring out of rights, rights sprang out of duties, and anyone who fancied that he had a right which was not the counterpart of some duty, was mistaken. They held that every section of the community should enjoy the same right in order to fulfil the same duty. He had a right to think for himself; so had everyone; and one man's right could not possibly be greater than another's. As much as he differed from them they differed from him, and he had as much right to stop them as they had to stop him. Bradlaugh was prosecuted for blasphemy. He (Mr. Foote) was not only prosecuted, but he paid the penalty, and now, he was glad to say, that after the agitation of all those years, a Bill had recently been brought before the House of Commons for the total repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. (Sustained Applause.)

He had not quite recovered his voice yet from his illness, but he was glad, even as the case stood, to be able from that platform to tell them that. (Renewed applause.) That was the only revenge he wanted. He had no quarrel with Christians; he had quarrelled only with their creed. They had been in the wrong path; he was glad to see they were turning in the right. They (the Christians) were beginning to be ashamed of their intolerance. It was high time they were! The world could never again be subjected to such intolerance as Christianity had inflicted upon it. And who had won that great result? The men and women of their cause and platform, who had challenged tyranny, plucked its beard, defied it in every way, and who would at the finish feel that their sacrifice and sufferings were all compensated for by the glorious victory of liberty and truth. (Loud and continued applause.)

Miss K. B. Kough: As the Annual Conference marked the beginning of the business year of the National Secular Society, so it could also be said to mark the new year in the activities of that body, and she thought it would be as well if all of them would look around and ask themselves what was the work that lay more immediately in front of them. They knew that Freethought was spreading by leaps and bounds, and that the Churches were becoming emptier every day; and she thought they could take credit for the fact that it was almost completely due to the work of Freethinkers. It was, at any rate, the Freethinkers who began it; they had done the spade work, and Christians were beginning to see that a little Freethought must be allowed in to leaven their own principles, and they were accordingly becoming a little more reasonable every day. They had to remember that to bring that struggle to a successful issue they still needed militant Freethought propaganda. Militancy was the outcome of intense enthusiasm, and it was the note of more enthusiasm that she wanted to strike that night. She really thought that Freethinkers might make themselves a little more heard. None of the Freethought leaders, past and present, had been millionaires; and while scrupulously fulfilling their various duties, and being most excellent citizens, they had always had the courage of their convictions, and had never forsaken their Freethought principles. It was their duty to sacrifice, and not develop such sensitiveness for the feelings of their next-door neighbor or their fellow-workman. Freethinkers who take the comfortable path should think of Mr. Foote's twelve months' imprisonment. They should think of the sacrifice Mr. Lloyd made when he left the Presbyterian Church for them. Besides, many of the evils that would follow greater outspokenness exist only in their imagination. If they were only to open their mouths, it would surprise them to find how many people there were holding precisely the same opinions. What would happen to the Christian Churches if every Freethinker were to stand up and declare his Freethought principles, and allowed it to be understood that he was proud of them? It was not for all to sacrifice themselves as their greatest men had done, but much could be done in a quieter way. Circulating Freethought literature and wearing the Freethought badge were simple methods of that character. Women could be very strenuous indeed in working for any cause which had once fired their enthusiasm. (Laughter and applause.) Her regret was that they did not advocate the cause which would get them all so much forward. If they would only realise that it was religion that was woman's worst enemy, they would not only help on their own cause most wonderfully, but they would help on also the liberation of mankind. More specific objects for the immediate future were the abolition of the State Church, the passing of the Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and the seeing to it that their children should receive simple justice by a system of Secular Education in the State schools. Let all sympathisers join their ranks and stand shoulder to shoulder in the warfare that aims at saving, not slaying. It was the fight between reason and superstition, knowledge and ignorance, and they took their stand in that battle, zealous only in the cause of truth. (Loud applause.)

Mr. C. Cohen, in the course of an effective speech, liberally punctuated with laughter and applause, said he was not going to endorse Miss Kough's appeal to the Freethinkers to sacrifice. He was going to ask them to enjoy themselves. He preferred to think that all those men who fought for Freethought, and who really believed in it and appreciated it, were not people who sacrificed themselves, but people who went in for a deep and genuine enjoyment. Personally, at any rate, he had never sacrificed himself—he enjoyed himself. (A Voice: Victoria Park.) Victoria Park! He had never enjoyed himself more in his life. (Loud laughter.) And he meant to keep on. He couldn't imagine himself getting any enjoyment out of the Salvation Army, for instance, but to realise all that was best and noblest in oneself was not to sacrifice oneself, it was to realise oneself. The trouble was that there were so few people who had found out in what direction

real enjoyment lay. Some of them had been half their lives playing the humbug for the benefit of others who were busily engaged playing the humbug for their benefit. (Laughter.) Let them try to be honest and see how much they would enjoy it. When they looked around and saw how some of them were allowed to enjoy themselves without being interfered with, they were inclined to overlook another important fact, and that was that if religion was no longer actively engaged in fighting them in an open, honest, admirable way, it was none the less engaged in fighting them in an underhand, dishonorable, discreditable manner. In England, religion controlled almost all the great events of life. It prepared for you before you were born; it got ready for you in the institution of marriage, so that you might be born in a properly religious atmosphere. The Divorce Commission expressed its fear that religion would lose its hold on marriage. They consulted the Bishop of London, a celibate deeply interested in large families, as to his views on the Divorce Question. (Laughter.) The whole secret of their anxiety was that they dare not lose their grip on marriage. If that went, they lost their hold on the family; if that went, they lost their hold on the children; and if that went, how on earth could they make a man believe in religion unless they started early enough? Do not let them lose sight of the important fact that the idea of keeping religion in the schools is to turn the schools into places for breeding believers. It was purely an economic question. It was a question of providing customers for a class of goods that they would not purchase if allowed to grow up with a natural, unperverted taste. (Applause.) Another point was the Sunday question. If you once gave the people an opportunity for rational, cleanly, decent enjoyment on Sunday, how, the clergy ask, can they expect anyone to go to church? They don't. (Laughter.) But by what right should the religious world prevent the other section from having such enjoyment on Sunday in the interests of Church and Chapel. He did not believe in a one day a week morality. Nothing that was good for Monday was bad for Sunday. If a man had got any villainy in him, he thought it was better for society that he should get rid of it on Sunday, and be decent on the other six days, than that he should keep it quiet on Sundays and let it run loose the rest of the week. If Christians confined their misdemeanors to the seventh day, they would all be much better off. It was just the same in the outside avenues of life. True, the penalty for non-belief nowadays was not burning. The Church had learned that often the only man they silenced by killing was the actual man killed. The rest went on talking. The more modern method has been to insidiously discourage plain speaking. Many a man would stand out against an open bribe in money who would succumb to the insidious bribe of social position. Just as the world suffers in not realising that self-expression is enjoyment, and self-repression is the only real sacrifice, so the world fails to recognise the extent of the amount of hypocrisy, humbug, and artificiality in which religion has plunged it. What was wanted was freedom in thinking, naturalism in morals, and rationalism in social life. They did not believe that a man needed a religion in order to prevent him murdering his next-door neighbor. Whenever a man told him it was necessary to be religious to be moral, he felt inclined to tell him he was a liar. Freethinkers could be fairly decent without religion, and he did not believe they were so morally superior to Christians as Christians made out. He believed that a Christian could be, if he tried, as good as any Freethinker. He thought that thousands of their own preachers had been slandering them for thousands of years. They did not want to revolutionise moral practice. It could not be done. They could create a revolution in moral theory, but they could not affect moral practice at any rapid rate. They wanted people to look at life from a perfectly rational point of view. They wanted them to realise that it really didn't matter whether there was a God or not. Christians said the same—in practice. It didn't matter whether there was a future life or not; if it were there they would get it. There would be enough to go round. It was not a British possession—(laughter)—at least, not yet. (Renewed laughter.) He did not object to having mansions in the skies; he objected to paying rent in advance. And he objected to a people calling itself practical keeping 40,000 men to preach to them about a land of which they knew nothing. This practical people was withdrawing from active productive work, mental and physical, that huge body of men with the necessary huge amount of money, and subsidising this force to work against themselves. The ignorant South African native was laughed at because, when there was a plague of locusts, he knelt down before his joss and burnt incense to clear away the plague. At the same time, the clergy of the Church of England were offering up prayers to get rid of the floods in Norwich. What was the mental difference? (Applause.) Who had the greater excuse? The South African savage or the English savage, with every opportunity for knowing

better? Religion was a barbarous, brutalising thing. Circumstances did not at present allow it to express itself in full. Give it the chance and its vile symptoms were always shown. And give Freethought the chance of rearing a single generation from childhood to maturity, and religion, as a whole, would become a memory of the past. (Loud applause.)

Mr. W. Heaford: Brutality and rapacity belonged naturally to religion—belonged to it in the past, and belonged to it to-day to the fullest extent that the Church was able to exercise. Two hundred years ago it burnt the scientist and the philosopher, and it terrorised the great leaders of human thought. A few decades ago it was satisfied to play the part of a body-snatcher, and seized the corpse of a Darwin, after it had done its best during his lifetime to capture his magnificent intellect. The Church to-day was, after all, but the ghost of its former self. It was a ghost that hankered after the old fleshly realities that it once possessed. It still acted the part of a body-snatcher. There recently died in Madrid a great leader of Spanish Freethought, a leader of the anti-clericals, who had been excommunicated by the Church; and yet the Church was mean enough to snatch the body of that dead Freethinker in order that it might have the satisfaction of burying him in consecrated ground. He wished them joy of their victim. He believed the last stronghold of religion would be amongst the English people in these two little islands, and the inhabitants of the United States of North America. Religion was visibly dying. The democracy all over the world was slipping through the fingers of the priest, and was beginning to work out its own destiny without the help of Holy Mother Church. In Portugal, they had both disestablished and disendowed the Church,—hence the ducal tears—(laughter)—hence the reaction against the “wicked” Republic. The Portuguese democracy would not be tied to the apron-strings of the Church, and was determined to give in the schools a rational secular education to every boy and girl, and leave the priest severely outside. (Applause.) If England were to be great, if its politics were to be purified, and if its character were to be dignified by love of truth, that same process must go on here. There was the noblest gospel ever preached to mankind. It was a gospel in the sense of its being *true*; it was a gospel in the sense of its being *good news*. There was no angry God to torture and torment his creatures for ever and ever in an unmentionable place which used to be called hell. The Church had invented fresh names; but the old humbug was there, the old priestcraft was there. Until man rose above these superstitions, until he was determined to look with serious eyes upon these traditions of the past, until he was courageous enough to look facts in the face, until that day he would be in bondage to that institution which for two thousand years had been a scourge to mankind. From that day forward, if they had not the mighty intellect of a Bradlaugh, if they were not called upon to make the great sacrifice of a Ferrer or to be burnt at the stake like a Bruno, at any rate they could let their light so shine before the whole world that they would see that, as far as their personal example was concerned, the principles of Freethought would be illustrated and vindicated in their lives, and they would thus do what lay in their power to leave the world better, brighter, and clearer from superstition than when they entered it. (Loud applause.)

Mr. A. B. Moss said: He remembered Charles Bradlaugh winding up a magnificent meeting many years ago at the Hall of Science by saying that no man ever lived to see a religion die. Whilst that was perfectly true, he (the speaker) had lived to see a religion undergo great changes. He was old enough to remember a time when people really *believed* that Christianity was true; when people really believed there was a burning hell awaiting humanity. On one occasion he had heard Charles Haddon Spurgeon give a very vivid description of hell, and seen him hold his audience spellbound by his exposition. He remembered him pointing into the arena and saying in thrilling tones, “That old man over there with the bald head is *damned*.” (Loud laughter.) They were taught then that all were inherently depraved, and that all their good works were as filthy rags. Of course, that belief was only held inside the church; *outside* they didn’t believe it. And he remembered when people were so ignorant as to believe that the Bible was God’s inspired Word—every line, every syllable. They had changed since then. No clergyman nowadays could draw an audience who gave such teaching as that. The people were growing too intelligent. The Christian still thinks he follows Christ. He did not do anything of the kind. It was a good job he didn’t, as if the teaching of Jesus was practised, society would fall to pieces. “Resist not evil,” “Take no thought for the morrow,” “Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth,” “Blessed be ye poor”—he did not blame Christians for not practising such teachings, but he could hardly imagine greater insincerity. Christianity had undergone such a

transformation as to be almost unrecognisable. And as knowledge grew, they, as Freethinkers, knew that the changes would become complete still. The forces against Christianity, and which would ultimately destroy it, were the forces towards education. Science, art, music, all the great civilising influences were against Christianity. Christians themselves had come to see that the ground was crumbling beneath them. They were practically admitting it in many ways. They scented a real danger in the humble picture palace. The cinema show was proving a greater attraction than the Church. Some up-to-date churches, in fact, were so awake to this that they were introducing the pictures into their services, and he had even heard of one church in London which was charging one penny extra for admission by the early door. (Loud laughter.) On their side were science, philosophy, and reason, and these would lead to the ultimate triumph of their cause. They cared little about a heaven in the skies, they cared much more about a heaven on earth. They wanted to make it possible for man to lead a full life, with both happiness and health; they wanted to bring about a race with purified ideals and a glorified humanity. (Applause.)

Mr. F. A. Davies: He agreed with Mr. Moss that the old religion was dying, and that the old dogmatic beliefs were intellectually dead. One example Mr. Moss had given of the Christian neglect of the teaching of Jesus, namely, “Blessed be ye poor,” was a crumb—a substantial crumb—he had let fall, which would serve him as a text to base his few remarks upon. In this doctrine Christianity presented its most striking feature. Prior to Christianity, the view of real well-being that was entertained by the old Jewish people was frankly materialistic. Solomon was a wise man—but he was also a wealthy man. The teaching of Christianity on this point was quite revolutionary. If you were rich, you were poor. If you were poor, you were rich. In a mass of doubtful doctrine there was nothing that stood out so clearly. The poor would be saved; the rich would be damned. Lazarus was poor and Dives was rich. That was all we knew about them; yet it was sufficient to send one to heaven and the other to hell. Now, this one fact was a quite sufficient indictment of Christianity. They needed nothing else to show the essential hypocrisy of the whole thing to find a people professing a religion whose main doctrine was poverty, when no one practised it unless he was compelled to. No one dreamt of practising it. Why, one of the religious bodies had put aside a sum of £250,000 so that all their parsons might have a minimum wage of £120 per year. This may seem little enough, but it was more than ever Jesus had. (Laughter.) The newspapers had been engaged on one of their periodic fits of British hypocrisy over the Marconi Commission. We had Mr. Lloyd George, a sincerely religious man, a follower of Jesus, the representative of Welsh Nonconformity in the Government, a man so imbued with the Christ idea that he supported the Evan Roberts revival in Wales—we have him trying to “make a bit” over stocks and shares. But it was not only Lloyd George. “Everybody’s doing it.” (Laughter.) Mr. Garvin, a Roman Catholic, is unmerciful in his castigation of Mr. George in his endeavors to make money. He is the servant of two millionaire newspaper owners, both Christians. All were Christians, and all were following Jesus in the only real social doctrine Jesus ever tried. His one essential doctrine was poverty. They (the Christians) were following Jesus as far behind him as they could possibly keep. So ingrained was this hypocrisy that they never imagined themselves to be saying or doing anything incongruous. In fact, the easiest way to enter Christian society was to set at naught the Master’s command in that way. There was not a single Christian sect who had ever tried it. The Society of Friends had made itself unique; it had tried to follow Jesus in one respect—the doctrine of non-resistance. For this partial consistency their Christian friends gave them a warm time, and taunted them with the name of “Quakers.” But even the Quakers drew the line at following Christ on the “Blessed be ye poor” principle. If there were no other argument against Christianity, it would be sufficient to point to the reckless struggle for wealth which goes on in all Christian communities, and the absolute ignoring of this commandment of Jesus Christ. (Applause.)

Mr. J. T. Lloyd: At a recent Conference of the Congregational Union of England and Wales there was passed a eulogium of the Higher Criticism of the Bible without a dissentient voice. A layman was responsible for this, but the Conference cordially endorsed it. The gains secured by the Higher Criticism, they were told, greatly exceeded the losses; in fact, there were no losses. The gains were: a new vision, a new Bible, a new God, a new Jesus Christ, a new Savior of the world. One was justified in exclaiming, “All things are past; we behold all things are becoming new.” There was every reason for rejoicing. He was delighted to hear from so many reverent lips that the great Freethinkers of a hundred years ago had not lived and

labored in vain; that the Bible which Paine, Voltaire, and many others denounced so scathingly, and that the God believed in and worshiped so implicitly, were dead. So far the Conference deserved their praise. But from many things which were said there he, for one, most emphatically dissented. This new vision had, they were told, completely taken the wind out of the sails of the sceptical controversialists. Nothing of the sort. Their new Bible was just as vulnerable as the old one. It was not so long since Gladstone wrote *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scriptures*. That Conference had declared the old impregnable rock to be shattered into millions of fragments, and the same doom would overtake the new. Their (the Free-thought) position was that the "Holy Bible" was an exclusively human document, bearing innumerable, unmistakable marks of the ignorance, the credulity, the moral elevation (in the best portions) of its several authors and compilers, and yielding not the least sign of the superhuman. That was the position they held to-day, and the position they held yesterday, and not one incontrovertible fact had ever been adduced by the champions of the old Bible or the new Bible to the discredit. They could look these men in the face and say, so far from their statement being true, it is their own position that has had the wind taken out of its sails. (Applause.) The layman let the cat out of the bag. He said he wished the New Theology had a High Court of Appeal to which they could take all points of dispute, and take from it the decision as to whether these things were settled or not. That was just the trouble. The New Theologians, with their new this, that, and the other had no Court to take disputable questions to. They (the Free-thinkers) had one, and to that Court of Appeal they had given the short, sweet, simple name of "Reason." One great poet had called "Reason" a "monarch." They were proud to be known as the subjects of that great potentate, the only power in heaven and earth to whom they knelt. They were assured that this new deity was not revengeful like the old, but tender and patient. They were all his children, and they lived in his house; in fact, they constituted his family, and of this family he was the all-loving head. A perfect father should have perfect children, who held together in harmony, fellowship, and love. One set of the divine family, about forty-one millions, occupied an island called Great Britain, and another set numbering fifty-seven millions were to be found in the country called Germany. Now mark; the inhabitants of these two countries were all children of the same Heavenly Father, who leads them, watches them, and guards them all alike. Now, in order to see the true absurdity of such a doctrine as that, one had only to bear in mind that these two sets of God's children were armed to the teeth against one another, and that peace between them was only preserved by a vast preparation for war. Two other sets of God's children, the Mohammedans and Christians, had devoted many months to the work of killing one another by the thousand. Did they not see how tragic a farce, how stupendous a failure, it was if there were any Heavenly Father? And how had it fared with Jesus? We had lost sight of him until criticism came along and showed him to us afresh. The Savior-God, the God-man, who undertook the delivery of mankind by dying on the cross, this chimeric, impossible being, criticism had lifted bodily out of the New Testament and thrown headlong into the outer darkness; and it had left—a mere man, who was specially called to inform us that we had a living Heavenly Father up in the skies who would truly pardon us for being what he himself had made us, if we truly repented. Here we were confronted with economic injustice, the curse of poverty, and the thousand-and-one wrongs and evils of the world; and the question naturally arose, What could we do? An eminent divine had said last week that there were in God three elements—fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood—of which the human counterparts were but "shadows." He preferred the "shadows" to these so-called realities. The Holy Trinity was a dream which had never come true. The only trinity worth troubling about was the human trinity of father, mother, and child; and in that trinity lay all the transcendently glorious possibilities for the future of the world. (Loud applause.)

Mr. Foote, in dismissing the meeting, said he had been glad to have listened to his colleagues—he did not often have that pleasure—and in the name of the audience he thanked them for the treat they had provided. T. H. E.

"Him! The scum, the dirt!" responded Mr. Glubb. "You wait! I'll be upsides with him, if it ban't till we meet in a Better Land. And when the day comes, if I find him up there, I'll break his damned harp over his head as sure as my name is Glubb. Ess, I will, but he won't be there thank the Lord; his goose be cooked for that. So I'll have it out in this world, for, my eyes won't never see that dog in the next."—*Eden Phillpotts, "Widcombe Fair."*

A Bill to Amend the Blasphemy Laws.

BE it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. After the passing of this Act no criminal proceedings shall be instituted in any court against any person for schism, heresy, blasphemy, blasphemous libel, or atheism.
2. The enactments specified in the schedule of this Act are hereby repealed to the extent specified in the third column thereof.
3. This Act may be cited as the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Act, 1913.

SCHEDULE.

Session and Chapter.	Title or Short Title.	Extent of Repeal.
1 Edw. 6. c. 1	An Act against such Persons as shall irreverently speak against the Sacrament of the Altar.	The preamble and sections one to six inclusive.
1 Eliz. c. 1	An Act restoring to the Crown the ancient jurisdiction over the State Ecclesiastic and Spiritual, and abolishing all foreign power repugnant to the same.	Section fourteen so far as it revives any enactment repealed by this Act.
1 Eliz. c. 2.	An Act for the uniformity of Common Prayer and Divine Service in the Church, and the administration of the Sacraments.	Section nine.
14 Car. 2. c. 4.	An Act for the uniformity of Public Prayer and administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies.	Section twenty-four.
9 Will. 3. c. 35 (9 & 10 Will. 3. c. 32. in Ruffhead's Edition).	An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness.	The whole Act so far as unrepealed.
60 Geo. 3. & 1 Geo. 4. c. 8.	The Criminal Libel Act, 1819.	In the preamble the words "blasphemous and"; in section one the words "any blasphemous libel or"; in sections three, four, seven, and ten the words "blasphemous or."
2 & 3 Vict. c. 47.	Metropolitan Police Act, 1839.	In section fifty-four, sub-section (12), the word "profane" wherever it occurs.
10 & 11 Vict. c. 89.	Town Police Clauses Act, 1847.	In section twenty-eight the word "profane" wherever it occurs.
51 & 52 Vict. c. 64.	The Law of Libel Amendment Act, 1888.	In sections three and four the words "blasphemous or."

This Bill is introduced by Mr. Holt, Mr. Atherley-Jones, Sir William Byles, Mr. Chancellor, Mr. George Greenwood, and Mr. Radford, and is printed by order of the House of Commons.

A young man presented himself at an oral examination for the position of electrical engineer. To test his shrewdness, the examiner propounded the following question:—

"What is electricity composed of?"

The candidate looked confused, but not wishing to appear too ignorant of the subject, he replied:—

"I am afraid I have forgotten. I used to know the formula, but it has quite slipped my memory."

The examiner smiled.

"That is a great pity," he said. "There are only two people in the universe who ever possessed that particular piece of information. God won't tell, and now you've been and forgotten!"

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

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

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Religion a Product of the Human Mind"; 7.30, Miss H. Pankhurst, "How Christians are Made."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, W. Davidson, a Lecture. Finsbury Park: 6.30, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, J. J. Darby, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Miss K. B. Kough, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Square): Gilbert Manion, at 11, "Why I Reject Christianity"; 3, "The Salvation Army"; 7, "Christian Socialism Exposed." Also a Lecture each evening during the following week at 7.30.

BURNLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Place): 6.30, R. Mearns and A. Thompson.

COLNE BRANCH N. S. S. (Cumberland-street): 3, R. Mearns and A. Thompson.

LICHFIELD (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—May 23, at 8, "Rationalism and Death"; 25, at 7.30, "Omar Khayyam, the Tentmaker"; 26, at 8, "Religion in the Dog Days"; 27, at 8, "Christ: Man, Messiah, or Myth?" 28, at 8, "Clerical Popinjays."

NELSON BRANCH N. S. S. (Chapel-street): 3, R. Mearns and A. Thompson.

WELLINGTON (Town Centre): May 22, at 8, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Why?"

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