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The orthodox person puts his intelligence in handcuffs.
—W. R. PATERSON (Benjamin Swift).

Mrs. Besant's Confidence Trick.

[The foregoing article was written and published at the end of 1894. It is reproduced now as some check on the ready acceptance of Mrs. Besant's "messages" to the world. She did not go back to the Hall of Science. She did not undeceive the people she had duped.]

MRS. BESANT'S conversion to Theosophy, under the personal influence of Madame Blavatsky, necessitated my telling her publicly that, in my judgment, she was no longer a Secularist, and that her proper place was outside the National Secular Society. Having said this, I left it to her own sense and honesty to determine her procedure, and it was not long before she found her position in our party untenable.

On looking back over this episode I am entirely satisfied with the course I pursued. Many persons were dissatisfied at the time, but they did not understand the situation as I did, and I believe there are few Secularists at present who do not believe that I was in the right. You cannot have a strong and stable Society composed of persons of diverse and even hostile opinions in regard to what is ostensibly their bond of union. It is impossible for a sensible man to quarrel with the Church on account of "excommunication." Every organisation has the right to say who shall and who shall not belong to it. The mischief began when the Church, after excommunicating one of its members, proceeded to inflict upon him every possible suffering and degradation.

Before leaving us, however, Mrs. Besant elected to give a farewell address at the Hall of Science, which, of course, was crowded to suffocation. By this time she had assumed all the airs of a high priestess, who had inherited by a sort of divine right the mantle of Helena Blavatsky. The tradition of the Hall of Science, where she had lectured for many years, was thrown to the winds. Mrs. Besant walked off the platform after her address without waiting for a single question or a moment's discussion.

Throughout that address Mrs. Besant maintained the attitude she had adopted from the beginning. To her old Freethought associates she said: "Did you ever know me to tell you a lie?" Of course they did not, and the impulsive lady took that as a guarantee that all she told them was absolutely true. He logic allowed of no distinction between lies and inaccuracy.

I said at the time that this was a form of the confidence trick. No person had a right to demand such implicit credence. A man in a public-house said to a greenhorn: "Let me hold your purse while you go round the corner." Mrs. Besant said: "Let me hold your mind while you go out of it." The motives might be different, but the methods were the same.

Mrs. Besant created a profound "sensation"—as the *Chronicle* put it—by stating that, since Madame Blavatsky's death, she had received letters from the Mahatma who had been in communication with that lady. They might not believe her, but then the old

question arose again, "Did they ever know her to tell a lie?" And this dispensed with all necessity for evidence.

Mrs. Besant would say that too much importance should not be attached to these "miracles" of precipitated letters. At the same time she was wise enough to see that they were her trump card with the gaping mob of superstitionists. It is a way they have. Jesus Christ himself is reported to have made light, occasionally, of his "miracles," telling persons who profited by them to "tell no man," with the dead certainty that the advice would only make them more zealous advertisers.

"Did you ever know me to tell you a lie?" was an awkward question, especially when asked by a lady. Mrs. Besant might have got an answer if she had asked, "Did you ever know me to be deceived?" Several persons could have said, "Yes."

It now appears that Mrs. Besant was deceived. The oracle was under the influence of mechanical inspiration. The afflatus of the god was simply the breath of Mr. W. Q. Judge. This gentleman has since been accused of forging the Mahatma letters in question, with others of the same kidney. A "Judicial Committee" was appointed by the Theosophical Society to investigate the charges, and the farce of this "investigation" has been fully exposed in the *Westminster Gazette*. The Committee sagely found that the rules of the Society did not permit them to try Mr. Judge. After this grave hocus-pocus, Mr. Judge and Mrs. Besant came to an agreement. Each made a statement which has been printed for circulation among the "genuine brotherhood." Mr. Judge's statement is a rigmarole worthy of Pecksniff. Mrs. Besant's contains the following passage:—

"I do not charge, and have not charged, Mr. Judge with forgery in the ordinary sense of the term, but with giving a misleading form to messages received psychically from the Master in various ways.....Personally, I hold that this method is illegitimate.....I believe that Mr. Judge wrote with his own hand, consciously or automatically I do not know, in the script adopted as that of the Master, messages which he received from the Master, or from *chelas*; and I know that in my own case I believed that the messages he gave me in the well-known script were messages directly precipitated or directly written by the Master. When I publicly said that I received, after H. P. Blavatsky's death, letters in the writing that H. P. Blavatsky had been accused of forging, I referred to letters given to me by Mr. Judge, and as they were in the well-known script I never dreamt of challenging their source. I know now that they were not written or precipitated by the Master, and that they were done by Mr. Judge; but I also believe that the gist of these messages were psychically received, and that Mr. Judge's error lay in giving them to me in a script written by himself and not saying so.....Having been myself mistaken, I in turn misled the public."

Mrs. Besant was "mistaken," and she "misled" others. After all her posing I was right; it was a form of the confidence trick. What will she do now? This is what she *ought* to do. She should visit the Hall of Science again and confess that she was duped. She owes the people she "misled" this act of reparation. But I scarcely believe she will make it. The public admission of fallibility is fatal to those who trade on mystery.

G. W. FOOTE.

Medical Materialism and Faith.

THE study of religion falls easily and naturally into two parts. The first is a question of origin. What were the conditions that suggested the hypothesis of supernatural powers dominating or creating the world of man and nature? The answer to this question has now been furnished by numerous writers, and there can be no doubt that whatever modifications of that answer may be demanded by more extended knowledge, its outline has been accurately drawn. All the religions of the world rest on a basis of ignorance. Civilised man does not create his religion, he inherits it. Religions belong to a time when man, unaware of his own nature or the nature of the universe, formulates answers to problems that are presented to him, as they are to us. Life propounds the same questions to all, savage or civilised, but the answer given depends upon the knowledge possessed by those who furnish the reply. The variation is not in nature but in man. The untrained mind sees a spiritual power as the cause of a disease, and seeks escape by magic and prayer. The scientific mind takes test-tube and microscope, hunts for the malignant germ, and provides an antidote. If by some miracle the scientist could have been first in the field, the supernatural would never have existed. As he comes last, religion has a long start, and by the time he arrives it has bitten so deeply into human institutions, and so permeated habits of thought, that its complete eradication is the most difficult of tasks.

The second half of the study of religion is concerned with its perpetuation. Granted that religion is rooted in delusion, how comes it that this delusion has lasted so long? Freethinkers, at least, believe that all actual knowledge, all real verifiable knowledge, counts as an asset for naturalism, and is, so far, antagonistic to supernaturalism. At any rate, we do not believe that there exists a single fact that does not admit, ultimately, of a perfectly rational explanation—an explanation that dispenses with supernaturalism in any form. Why, then, has religion not disappeared? For religion cannot exist, even to the most uncultured mind, without evidence of some sort. The evidence may be irrelevant or inconclusive to a better trained intelligence, but evidence of some sort there must have been, and must be. The savage may have created religion; but that is not the sole reason why, thousands of years after, his descendants continue to believe in it. "Our fathers have told us," constitutes a strong appeal; but the children also will require proof. What kind of proof is it that religious people have, in all ages, taken as confirmation of their beliefs? A study of savage life shows us clearly enough how the religious idea vitalised the facts. We must study after ages to find what class of experiences have vitalised the idea.

It is this question I have been dealing with in the *Freethinker* under different titles. I commenced the series by taking the almost farcical attempt of the late Professor William James to deal with what he called "Medical Materialism." Under this term he classed all those who hold that a great deal of what passes with the world as religious feeling is either masked sexual feeling or due to abnormal nervous conditions. Unconnected with religion, Professor James would, in all probability, have been the first to recognise that "Medical Materialism" amply covered the majority of the cases cited in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," but connected with religion, he—although his own religious belief appears to have been of a very nebulous character—forgot his scientific caution in the endeavor to place religious experience in a category of its own. My articles, consequently, took the form of supplying the evidence, or some of it, in support of the view of the "Medical Materialist." So far as I am aware, this ground has never been systematically worked, although numerous writers have touched on it more or less incidentally. And even now, at the end of a lengthy series of articles, little more than an outline has been presented.

The lines of evidence are threefold. First, there is the fact that diseases, bodily and mental, are in the lower stages of culture universally attributed to spiritual agency. This explanation holds the field, and is not replaced until a comparatively late period of human history. But of special importance to our inquiry is the fact that this belief does not disappear suddenly. Even after the facts upon which the belief is based are otherwise interpreted, the frame of mind induced by the long reign of such a conviction persists. Supernatural and mystical cures persist, and are still used to an extent that only those accustomed to collect the beliefs of villagers and the less educated among townsmen are acquainted with. To take only one example: saffron tea is still very widely used as a cure for measles. All medical men know that it is not of the slightest value, and students of folklore can trace its origin in the theory of sympathetic cures. So with the fact of disease in general, and the persistence of religious belief. The conclusion that disease is caused by spirits is one suggested by the religious belief, but in turn the observed facts react on and strengthen religious belief. Every case of disease is a fresh proof, an unanswerable piece of evidence. And all the time religion as a social fact is becoming more firmly established.

The next line of evidence is that furnished by what I have called the culture of the supernatural. By some means or other—probably by accident in the first instance—it is discovered that certain herbs and vegetable drugs have a peculiar effect on the human mind. Those who use them see things that people do not normally see, or hear things unheard by others. Abstinence from food and other bodily privations produce similar results. What is the inevitable conclusion? The only one possible is that the subject is in communication with a spiritual world from which he is excluded under normal conditions. From this to the next step is obvious and easy. To repeat the experience, one has only to repeat the conditions. And repeated they are, in all religions, with at most a modification rendered necessary by changed times and circumstances. That is why fasting and other methods of "fleshy mortification" have played so large a part in religious ceremonies. The savage medicine-man, the Hindoo fakir, the mediæval saint created their visions and ecstasies by the simple plan of a derangement of the nervous system. Of course, they did not know what they were doing. To them the derangement was the condition of ecstasy or intercourse, not the cause of its existence.

The third line of experience is connected with the phenomena of sexuality. From the earliest times man has associated the procreation of his species with the existence of a supernatural world. This is seen in the magical devices of early and mediæval times to obtain children, and in prayers and other customs connected with childbirth that still exist. But more important than this in later periods is the fact that a great deal of expressed religious feeling is little more than masked sexuality. As has been noted over and over again by medical observers, the connection between excessive piety and eroticism in the insane is most marked. And in normal cases we see the phenomenon of childless women and unmarried men expressing themselves towards Jesus and the Virgin in language which, when diverted of its religious glamor, leaves no doubt as to the real nature of its origin. The visions described, the feelings experienced during ecstasy, are unmistakably due to strong, unsatisfied sexual feeling. In these cases we are dealing with a mere perversion of the sexual instinct.

When we have not perversion, we have misinterpretation. This occurs, as I have shown, during the period of adolescence. The primary and significant features of adolescence are a development of the sexual nature and an awakening of a consciousness of race kinship. Connected with these and flowing from them, there is a rapid development of what are called the altruistic feelings, the individual becoming

less self-centred and more concerned for the well-being of others. These things are, of course, merely so many devices of nature for the perpetuation of the race, although in the course of social development the primary features become overlaid with a number of secondary characteristics. In a society fully conscious of the nature of the forces at work, these developments would be reckoned at their true value, and wisely directed to the furtherance of a healthy social life. In a society more or less saturated with supernaturalism, a different policy is pursued. Following the customs of our remote savage ancestors, who naturally take the development of sex life as a striking evidence of supernaturalism, the modern Christian preacher seizes the opportunity of exploiting youth in the interests of religion. The vague, but none the less powerful feelings associated with sex are interpreted as the "strivings of God in the human soul," precisely as the savage associates the sexual phenomena of womanhood with the agency of the tribal ghosts. The distinction between the savage and the Christian here is verbal only. Mentally, they move on the same plane. The growth of the social feelings is given a religious covering, with the result that instead of youth being, as it should be, the period of conscious entry into the larger social life, in only too many cases it is no more than the beginning of a life-long servitude to retrogressive religious influences.

This is, of course, not the only way in which religion exploits man to-day. As supernaturalism gets more and more discredited by modern life and modern knowledge, preachers are driven further in their course of exploitation. Older generations frankly set the world against the spirit, life against religion, and treated the advance of one as involving the retreat of the other. This was a plain policy, and an honest policy, but it could not be maintained. Contemporary preachers adopt the bolder, but less honest, policy of claiming the whole of life for religion. The instinct for truth, right, justice, the love of the beautiful, and the desire for social intercourse, with the comfort and assistance that comes from it, are all referred to the influence of religion. All this is sheer exploitation of human nature by a religion no longer honest enough or bold enough to avow its real nature. And, unfortunately, the early education of the vast majority of people prepares them, easy victims, for such a policy.

In these articles I have been trying to furnish evidence of the way in which this misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and exploitation of human nature, in both its normal and abnormal aspects, has gone on. I am convinced that it is these factors that have chiefly contributed to the perpetuation of religious beliefs, and that they still form the strongest obstacles to their disappearance. For wild and absurd as some of these beliefs have been, their influence does not disappear with their rejection. They leave behind a psychological residuum fatal to positive or scientific thinking. It is like a man who has been long in slavery, but is now free. He may no longer be in real danger of the lash, but the fear of the whip has become part of his mental life and cannot be eradicated. So with all the admitted delusions that have gone to keep religion alive. Generation after generation saw proofs of religious agency that now impose upon no one in a civilised country. But the effects have bitten deeply into the social life, a temper of mind favorable to supernaturalism has become part of our social heritage. If one can imagine the course of human history to have been different; if, directly men emerged from the savage culture stage, disease had been recognised for what it is; if hallucination, delusion, hysteria, and insanity had been seen in their true nature; if emotional and intellectual qualities had always been properly understood; if these things had transpired, it is no more than a statement of the plainest of truths that religion would have died with those primitive social conditions that gave it birth.

C. COHEN.

Criticism and the Christian Faith.

IT is now beyond all controversy that criticism has come to stay and to do a mighty work, and of necessity to subject anything to criticism is inferentially to regard it as open to question. Criticism implies doubt, and doubt is the half-way house between belief and unbelief. Tennyson teaches that doubt is an enemy to be fought and conquered; but we maintain that our first duty in regard to doubt is to sit in judgment upon it, or, in other words, to examine it with calm and dispassionate care. It is by no means a foregone conclusion that it must eventuate in a stronger and brighter faith. Of course, to a fanatical believer doubt is an evil to be resisted and laid at all cost, because he is convinced that unbelief damns a man to all eternity; but criticism begins its work in doubt, and it depends entirely on the evidence at its disposal whether it ends in belief or unbelief. When the critic first laid his hands upon the Bible he did not look upon it as an infallible book, but treated the claims made for it as highly debatable; and already the result of his work is that the old doctrine of inspiration and infallibility has generally been abandoned. Professor Peake frankly admits that criticism has produced a great deal of change in the popular mind in regard to Biblical and theological questions. The change is on a much larger scale than the Professor imagines. He is primarily a theologian, and his theology hamstringing his criticism; but even he, evangelical divine though he be, is critically forced to state that "the reconstruction of the life of Jesus, the course of his ministry, and the purposes which animated him, are subjects of very keen debate." It is no longer possible to declare, as our fathers confidently did, that Christianity is rooted in history, or that the Four Gospels are literally true. Indeed, Dr. Peake himself believes that "you cannot base Christianity upon history alone," because the alleged historical facts are called in question by so many eminent scholars. "It must be confessed," he says, "that the disadvantages of our alliance with history are no figment of the imagination," which means that the history concerned is, more or less, of a doubtful character. He grants that there are elements in the Gospel story which Christianity has no vital interest in asserting, and these may be allowed to go; "but there are some things which lie at the very centre of the Christian position; cut those out, and Christianity has been eviscerated"; and therefore they must be retained whatever criticism may say.

Thus the theologian and the critic are bound to reach a point at which they must part company. Sooner or later the critic lays his axe unto the root of the Christian tree, and then the theologian cries out, "Halt! This tree must stand. It is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." If the critic responds to that appeal, the adjective "reverent" qualifies him; but if not he is denounced as an enemy of the truth, and the adjectives "negative," "destructive," "irresponsible," and "irreverent" are attached to him. The critic may do what he likes as long as he refrains from touching anything that is considered of "vital interest" to Christianity. If he keeps within the bounds of reverence he is welcomed as a strong ally, and nothing but good is said of him. "You must give up that negative attitude of yours," says the Rev. H. S. McCelland to an inquirer with whom he deals in the *Christian Commonwealth* for June 18. This inquirer had only asked the following fair question: "How many of the old landmarks will remain when the devastating tide of modern criticism and scientific inquiry has reached its height?" This is the reverend gentleman's answer:—

"All you will ever require, my friend, for the safe pilotage of your soul to its eternal haven. But don't you think it is time you began to ask a new kind of question concerning that 'devastating' tide? For there is one thing about that flood upon which we are both

certain to agree—it is running too strongly now to be stemmed by any human power. Why go on assuming that this tide is a *devastating* thing? Are you sure that it is not bringing new spiritual life to the dry and barren soil of an irreligious age?"

This answer misses the inquirer's point altogether, and must be condemned as an offhand and cruel trifling with his case. By "landmarks" was clearly meant distinctive Christian doctrines; and it cannot be doubted but that many of these have been given up or modified out of recognition under the pressure of modern criticism and scientific discoveries. Less than fifty years ago the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible occupied an essential place in the Christian creed; but to-day it is rarely we come across anyone who still holds it. The historicity of man's fall in the Garden of Eden upon which Paul built his curious theory of redemption, the view that it was Adam's sin that brought death into the world, the doctrine that Christ bore the punishment of the sins of the world—all these used to be held universally as essential tenets of the Christian religion, but one by one they have been dropped. Now, where and when is this devastating process going to stop? This question Mr. M'Clelland deliberately evaded, and took to bantering his questioner about his negative attitude and his not facing the facts as they are. We invite Mr. M'Clelland to "face the facts as they are," which he fails to do in his Correspondence Column in the *Christian Commonwealth*.

It is easy enough for an able and successful minister to give the names of at least fifty young people whom he has won over to his way of looking at things, and whom he may rhetorically describe as having been "carried forward on that life-giving sea [modern criticism and scientific inquiry!] to the shores of a new world of spiritual promise and moral enthusiasm." The reverend gentleman tells us himself that there is in some of his answers "an element of exaggeration," and surely that element is not wanting in that now under consideration. Yes, he exaggerates, rhetorises, plays with words. Modern criticism and scientific inquiry bring us no information concerning the "soul" and its "eternal haven," and they are equally ignorant of God, whom Mr. M'Clelland rhetorically describes as "manifest in varying degree in every throb of his creation." We are not one whit behind the reverend gentleman in admiration of all noble literature and all noble life, but to us they are the media, not of God's revelation, but of humanity's self-expression; not of the descent of Deity, but of the ascent of man. No one has ever been borne on the rising tide of modern criticism to a knowledge of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, or to a knowledge of the man Jesus as the perfect revealer of the Father, in whom we see life at its fullest and best. The soul, the eternal haven, God, Christ, and the better land—these are all theological or metaphysical assumptions, unverified and unverifiable, for not one of which can criticism be held responsible. We congratulate Mr. M'Clelland upon his repudiation of the "inspired" passage as something altogether distinct from the results of normal human intelligence, and marvel at his simplicity and inconsistency in looking upon not only all noble literature but all noble life as the media of God's revelation. Is all noble literature "something distinct from the results of normal human intelligence"? If not, how on earth does Mr. M'Clelland know that it is a medium of God's revelation? He does not know, but theologially imagines it, and then uncritically asserts it as a fact. We do not regard the noblest life as in any sense or degree beyond a normally endowed human being, and certainly we can see nothing in it suggestive of its being the medium of the revelation of a superhuman person.

We do not insinuate that Mr. M'Clelland has not been greatly influenced by modern criticism. It is very probable that it led him to throw the Old Theology overboard and adopt the New; but we hold that the New Theology is no more the child of cri-

ticism than the Old. It is wholly uncritical to say that criticism has given us a new conception of God. It may sound better to describe the new conception of God, not as "the special contribution of any single race or tribe," but as "a slowly developing revelation in the soul of humanity"; but the one description is not one jot or tittle more believable than the other, because neither is realisable. But our main point is that criticism is no more favorable to the one conception than to the other, because both represent a frame of mind in which criticism has absolutely no place. The whole tendency of criticism is to eliminate the supernatural. It found the Bible the work of God and left it a purely human product. In the exact proportion in which criticism and scientific inquiry gain, supernaturalism loses. The Gospel Jesus is a fine example of this principle. No accredited New Testament critic regards him as a God-man. It is all very well for Dr. Peake to assert that "no one who accepts the authenticity of any of the Pauline epistles has any right to deny the historicity of Jesus"; but Professor Drews, who is quite as competent to judge, asserts the very opposite, and we agree with him.

Criticism has only just started on its momentous career; but already it has rid the world of huge masses of theological rubbish. We are persuaded that its triumph will mean the complete downfall of superstition. To the question, "How many of the old landmarks will remain when the devastating tide of modern criticism and scientific inquiry has reached its height?" we would therefore answer, NONE. Every one of them is doomed, and so many of them have already disappeared. These are irreparably lost, and the rest are in the process of evanishment. The world will be all the richer when they shall all have gone. We lose them because we are gaining wisdom; and wisdom is the offspring of reason; and reason is the supreme critic of life and all its interests.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity and the Chinese.—VII.

(Continued from p. 389.)

"Do not dream of a life beyond this, for you will find no other, nor of a heaven beyond the universe, for beyond the infinite universe there is nothing. Earth is heaven, and paradise is on earth; it is for you to realise it. Cultivate your mind, honor your ancestors, respect your traditions, let the past and the future be both a living present to your mind. Identify yourself with one and the other through humanity. Never forget that you are one with the earth, with the universe, and take care no act of yours offends against this unity.....Such, in brief, is the catechism or religious code of China, and it has so far entered the hearts and practice of the population that the civil code is not much longer."—E. EVA. SIMON, *China—its Social, Political, and Religious Life* (1887), pp. 95-6.

"We have no wish to exalt China at the expense of European civilisation, but we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that her vices have been exaggerated and her virtues overlooked. Only the bigoted or ignorant could condemn with sweeping assertions of immorality a nation of many millions absolutely free, as the Chinese are, from such vices as drunkenness; in whose cities may be seen—what all our legislative and executive skill cannot secure—streets quiet and deserted after nine or ten o'clock at night. Add to this industry, frugality, patriotism, and a boundless respect for the majesty of office; it then only remains for us to acknowledge that China is, after all, 'a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom.'"—P. A. GILLES, *Chinese Sketches*, pp. 201-2.

IN considering the effect of opium upon the Chinese, there are other factors to be taken into consideration. For instance, it is well known that the Chinese are less sensitive to pain than Europeans are. "Chinese children," says a good authority, "bear illness and pain like little heroes." And European medical men have observed that once a Chinese has placed himself under the surgeon's hands, he will, without the aid of chloroform, undergo the most painful operations without flinching. May it not follow that the nervous system that is less

* R. F. Johnston, *Lion and Dragon in Northern China* (1910), p. 248.

susceptible to pain is also less susceptible to injury from opium than our own more sensitive nervous apparatus? Another application of the proverb that "one man's meat is another man's poison."

Then, again, it must be remembered that the Chinese have been in the habit of taking opium for hundreds of years, and as Dr. Archdall Reid has shown in his ingenious work, *The Present Evolution of Man*, that races who have had the most extended experience of these drugs and poisons are the most temperate in their use of them, because those individuals who are most intemperate in the use of them perish, leaving behind the temperate and those who have no craving for them.

However that may be, the Chinese Government—who seem to have been imposed upon in this matter by the European outcry against opium—have now taken in hand the task of altogether suppressing the trade. When they have succeeded in doing that, if they ever do succeed, they will probably find themselves in a worse position than ever. For a stimulant of some kind is essential to relieve the monotonous character of their lives, and if opium is suppressed, they will undoubtedly introduce something worse to take its place. As Professor Giles says of the Chinese:—

"In centuries past a drunken nation, some two or three hundred years ago they began to come under the influence of opium, and the abuse of alcohol dropped to a minimum. Opium-smoking, less harmful a great deal than opium-eating, took the place of drink, and became a national vice; but the extent of its injury to the people has been much exaggerated, and is not to be compared with that of alcohol in the West. It is now, in consequence of recent legislation, likely to disappear, on which result there could be nothing but the warmest congratulations to offer, but for the fact that something else more insidious, and more deadly still, is rapidly taking its place. For a time, it was thought that alcohol might recover its sway, and it is still quite probable that human cravings for stimulant of some kind will find a partial relief in that direction. The present enemy, however, and one that demands serious and immediate attention, is morphia, which is being largely imported into China in the shape of a variety of preparations suitable to the public demand. A passage from opium to morphia would be worse, if possible, than from the frying-pan into the fire."*

Dr. Morrison declares that to convert a desire for opium into a taste for morphia is analogous to changing one's stimulant from beer to methylated spirits,† a most vile and maddening stimulant.

Probably the Chinese Government will also suppress the trade in morphia when they discover their mistake. As Mr. Arthur Davenport observes:—

"There is no civilised nation in the world which does not indulge in a narcotic of some kind or other. Should the Chinese abandon opium, they will infallibly fall back on their old, but now happily vanquished enemy, alcohol, when their last state will be worse than their first."‡

When we reflect upon the ravages caused by drink in this country; that for every hundred injured by over-indulgence in opium in China, a thousand are ruined by drink in our own country; that drink turns people into madmen, capable of the most devilish cruelty and brutality, as our papers daily testify; while the opium pipe, in moderation, soothes the weary brain to sweet dreams and invigorates the tired body, how impudent and hypocritical the missionary campaign against opium sounds.

As we have said, the missionaries wax very eloquent over the sin of Great Britain in forcing our Indian opium upon the unwilling Chinese, and describe our wars with China as "Opium Wars." Now, we hold that our wars with China have been wholly unjustifiable, but they were not undertaken with the purpose of forcing opium upon China. For, as the historian, Stanley Lane-Poole, observes:—

"Opium is an ingrained habit of the Chinese people, and was in use long before the East Indian Company came into existence. In the sixteenth, seventeenth,

and eighteenth centuries opium was a recognised import in Chinese tariffs. In 1799 the drain of silver from the country in payment for foreign imports alarmed the Chinese Government, and the principal article of trade, opium, was prohibited, not because it was injurious in itself, but because it took away too much specie."*

This decree, however, remained a dead letter for forty years, and the trade went on as though it had never been issued. As the same writer says:—

"The people liked opium, the Chinese officials liked opium, large crops of the poppy were grown in China, and costly cargoes of opium were cheerfully imported from India. Opium was no more 'forced' upon the Chinese than brandy upon England; nor have the Chinese authorities ever charged us with compelling the importation. They even proposed (in 1837) to re-legalise the opium trade in the hope of checking the drain of silver, and this by itself is proof enough that the difficulty was one of finance, not of morals" (p. 9).

This is also the opinion of Mr. Eames in his history of *The English in China*, where he declares that it was "the economic side" of the opium question "to which the Chinese Government mainly devoted its attention when the opium traffic first became a subject of contention between England and China" (p. 229). Before 1828 the balance of trade had always been in favor of China, large quantities of silver being imported, a result very pleasing to them, and which lasted up to 1829, when, for the first time, the volume of imports exceeded exports, so that, instead of silver coming into the country in return for goods going out, silver began to go out of China for goods coming in, and the Chinese Government began to look forward with alarm to the time when the country would be depleted of the whole of its stock of silver. Says Mr. Eames:—

"In all the documents contributed to the controversy by Chinese writers, the main theme was how to prevent the impoverishment of the people due to the loss of wealth arising from the opium trade, whether manifested in the export of silver, or in the diversion of agricultural resources to the production of a noxious luxury in the place of products of lasting value. Though the reasoning employed and the principles relied on were not always economically sound, yet it is evident that the economic evil was considered by the Chinese the most important. The Viceroy said in terms that the object in proposing to repeal the interdiction on opium was to prevent the loss of specie occasioned by the sale of the drug for money. The regulations which he recommended were aimed chiefly at preventing this loss."†

It is true, says Mr. Lane-Poole,—

"we may read eloquent Chinese diatribes on the sin of opium-smoking, for the argument of immorality began to be advanced as soon as it was discovered that public opinion among the English was sharply divided on the subject.....But the same people who expressed the finest sentiments on the subject in public were found to indulge in the practice in private, and the official class generally throughout China were passionately addicted to opium-smoking. The habit had become national long before England had anything to do with China, and it would have continued had there never been any British trade."‡

One of these Chinese indictments of opium, widely circulated in this country, was by no less a person than the late Li Hung Chang, in which that wily statesman observes: "The poppy is certainly surreptitiously grown in some parts of China, notwithstanding the laws and frequent imperial edicts prohibiting its cultivation." Upon which Dr. Morrison observes:—

"'Surreptitiously grown in some parts of China!' Why from the time I left Hupeh till I reached the boundary of Burma, a distance of 1,700 miles, I never remember to have been out of sight of the poppy. Li Hung Chang continues, 'I earnestly hope that your Society, and all right-minded men of your country, will support the efforts China is now making to escape from the thralldom of opium.' And yet you are told in China

* H. A. Giles, *The Civilisation of China*, pp. 238-9.

† Dr. Morrison, *An Australian in China*, p. 49.

‡ A. Davenport, *China from Within*, p. 28.

* Lane-Poole, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, p. 9.

† J. B. Eames, *The English in China*, pp. 260-1.

‡ Lane-Poole, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, pp. 9-10.

that the largest growers of the poppy in China are the family of Li Hung Chang."*

Dr. Morrison, who travelled in China in 1894, observed:—

"Edicts are still issued against the use of opium. They are drawn up by Chinese philanthropists over a quiet pipe of opium, signed by opium-smoking officials, whose revenues are derived from the poppy, and posted near the fields of poppy by the opium-smoking magistrates who own them."†

Naturally, it was the producers of opium in China who were most interested in suppressing the supply of foreign opium, which entered into competition with the home-grown produce.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

"Thoughts have gone forth whose power can sleep no more." This was the motto on one of the Suffragette banners at the funeral of Miss Emily Wilding Davison, the lady who tried to stop the Derby as an advertisement of her "cause." It is a pity that Shelley's words did not receive a better all-round study. No one deprecated violence more than he did; no one gave less quarter to hatred and revenge. To try to cure evil with more evil he saw was sad, mad, and bad together.

Fight on. God will give the victory." These words were on Miss Davison's coffin. Religious people are so often guilty of nonsense and bad taste. We do not dispute that God gives the victory. We know nothing at all on that point,—and we suspect that the ladies know just as much as we do. But we regard it as perfectly certain that if God does give the victory he always gives it to those who win it. What a curious exhibition of human vanity it is that God is claimed to be on all sides—before the event! "Me and God" is the commonest partnership.

Rev. C. Hinscliffe, who took the funeral service at St. George's, Hart-street, Bloomsbury, talked the greatest nonsense over Miss Davison's coffin. First of all, he begged the supporters of the Woman Suffrage cause not to make her death a matter of party propaganda; which, of course, was precisely what they were making of it all the time. In the second place he told them that "The whole thing was in God's hands, and God always made exactly the right use of everything." So, so? Well, in that case God made exactly the right use of the 1913 Derby. And since then he has made exactly the right use of the Ascot. Thus all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Now that the original General Booth is dead Mr. Bernard Shaw remains the greatest self-advertiser in England. But swelled-head is liable to develop in this sort of business. Mr. Shaw's latest letter to the *Times* on the treatment of Mrs. Pankhurst and other Suffragette prisoners, with its reference to Mr. Asquith ("I cannot persuade him") is really colossal. We saw symptoms of this coming on at the Essex Hall meeting in favor of the total repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The one thing that loomed large to Mr. Shaw's mental vision was that the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws would enable him to write a play on Mohammed. The cream of the joke is that anybody can write as many plays as he pleases on Mohammed. Voltaire wrote one in pre-revolutionary France, and it was translated into English and staged in London. Mr. Shaw perhaps thinks himself so great a writer that a play on Mohammed from his pen would alarm the Sultan of Turkey, the Khedive of Egypt, the Shah of Persia, and all the Mohammedan rulers.

Mr. Shaw is an industrious letter-writer to the *Times*, and he is willing to tackle almost any subject. He has lately been dealing with the Suffragette question, with special relation to the Liberal Government. We must conclude that he is inspired, for he certainly utters anything but sense. One of his proposals was that the Suffragette prisoners should be allowed to commit suicide in their cells by self-starvation. This is what he offered as just and merciful in comparison with forcible feeding. Yet he has the calm assurance to declare that Mr. Asquith cares no more for the lives of Suffragette prisoners than he does for those of rabbits. After all, perhaps, Mr. Shaw made that proposal

with his tongue in his cheek. He must surely have known that it could not be carried out in any prison that had a doctor amongst its officials. The fact is, we believe, that Mr. Shaw (like most politicians, for that matter) thinks any stick good enough to beat his political adversaries with. The Suffragette prisoners have cornered the Liberal Government, as they would corner Mr. Shaw's or anybody else's Government—in the way that women can always corner men if they choose to do so. Mr. Shaw knows this quite well—he must know it—and before he denounces and derides poor distracted McKenna's fluctuating policy he is bound to state what would be his own. Up to the present his only proposal is to let the ladies commit suicide. We repeat this could not be carried out; but supposing it could, we fail to see how it entitles Mr. Shaw to assume such lordly airs of moral superiority over the authors of other proposals—especially over those who have to deal with this baffling problem in a practical manner of some kind.

Mr. Shaw's last letter to the *Times* on the rearrest of Mrs. Pankhurst on the day of Miss Davison's funeral was perfectly fantastic. His enemies might even call it dishonest. The argument was based upon a suppression of the facts. Mrs. Pankhurst boasts that she has declared war against society as at present constituted; not a defensive war, but an aggressive war,—and not even an open war, but a surreptitious war, in which the aggressor inflicts injury without facing responsibility, and even claims and enjoys the protection and all other advantages derived from a supposed peaceful association with the very people it injures. Mrs. Pankhurst boasts that she commands the female soldiers in this war; inspires them, plans for them (in person or by proxy), and finds the money for the campaign. Let us suppose for a moment that she has a right to burn down public and private property, in order to frighten society into capitulating to her demands. Let us suppose this. What, then, about the other people—the people attacked? Have they no rights? Haven't they equal rights with Mrs. Pankhurst? If she tries to destroy their property haven't they the right to try to preserve it? Is it reasonable to expect that the Government which represents the general community is going to give Mrs. Pankhurst and her Amazons a free fling? Is it reasonable to expect that they will, in consideration of her illness, brought about by her own deliberate personal act, not only let her out of prison in order that she may recover, but also allow her to attend meetings and funeral processions in aid of the very policy for which she was incarcerated? Is she to be considered to be too ill to be in prison, yet well enough to participate in public propaganda? The idea is utterly absurd. We deny that this part of the Suffragette question is a political one at all. Whether women should have the parliamentary vote is a political question. (Heaps of men, by the way, haven't got it yet.) But whether rival political parties should be allowed any weapons but persuasion—whether they should be allowed to commit, and to commit as a deliberate policy, acts which from any other point of view would be regarded as abominable crimes,—this is not a political question; it is a question of the elementary social and moral principles of human society. Mr. Shaw knows all this as well as we do. But he is a Janus-faced controversialist. He defends order or disorder as it serves the turn. But it is noticeable that he never gets in the way of danger himself.

Is it not time to say that the "militant" Suffrage movement is a middle and upper-class movement, and is therefore rather privileged than otherwise? Had it been a working-class movement the Government would have been far less embarrassed by its prisoners. It would have put their food within their reach and said, "There you are; eat it or not, as you please. There are plenty of cemeteries."

Dr. Ethel Smyth reproaches the Archbishop of Canterbury for declining to "invite prayer in our churches for guidance in the woman's question." She reminds him that women are the Church's "mainstay." That is true, anyhow; and we are sorry for it. It is lamentable to see a woman like Dr. Ethel Smyth still clinging to the faith that has been her sex's worst enemy—the faith based on the language of Jesus expanded by the teaching of Paul. Even learned ladies are foolish enough to cling to the old faith. They help the Archbishop to cling to his old salary. That is all.

Like all other sects the Primitive Methodists are far on in decay. At their recent Conference at Derby it was stated that during last year they lost 405 members and 7,091 Sunday-school scholars. During seven years there has been a decrease of 20,000 scholars and over 2,000 teachers. Tearful regrets were expressed by many in the face of these

* Dr. Morrison, *An Australian in China*, pp. 46-7.

† *Ibid.*, p. 48.

great losses, but nobody could tell how to prevent them for the future. The irresistible power of the Holy Ghost no longer counts. "Sir W. P. Hartley declared his faith in the financial self-sacrifices of wealthy men," as if abundance of cash could save the situation. The one fact that looms large is that the false pretences of the Christian Church are fast losing their hold of the masses of the people, or that, at last, she is beginning to be seen as she really is.

A Berlin correspondent to the *Christian World* for June 19 informs us that in all parts of Germany religion is visibly dying. Sunday is rapidly ceasing to be regarded as the Lord's Day. "The majority of the churches are more than half empty—at least in Protestant districts," and the few who do attend are mostly women and children. "Even the Kaiser sees nothing inconsistent in attending church on Sunday morning and spending the rest of the day on the racecourse." The correspondent's conclusion is that "as matters are at present in Germany, Sunday is not a day for religious observances so much as a day for recreation, amusement, sport, and theatre-going." As Dr. Horton admitted, not long ago, the trend of things—the spirit of the age—is everywhere distinctly and irrevocably anti-Christian; and this, in our opinion, is one of the most hopeful and encouraging signs of the times.

The Rev. Dr. Jowett, late of this country, but now of New York, has expressed his entire satisfaction with his ministry at Fifth Avenue Church. Why not? The church is a fashionable one, the congregation is wealthy, the minister is well paid. What more could any preacher desire? Naturally, Dr. Jowett finds that "in every direction religious life in America is proving itself a great and powerful factor in the cause of social regeneration." Rev. Mr. Aked, once of Liverpool, said exactly the same under similar conditions. And plenty more evidence of the same kind is procurable on the same terms.

Dr. Clifford has been at it again—not this time in connection with education. The other day he gave figures showing the exodus of people from the Roman Catholic Church. We do not question the figures, we have no need to, only Dr. Clifford's inference that the exodus is from Romanism to Protestantism. What we do challenge him to prove is this: "The cry of Europe," says Dr. Clifford, "now was, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' We are tired of ikons and images and all the masses and pomp of the Catholic Church." Dr. Clifford's hearing must be defective. The cry of Europe, as other people hear it, is that it is equally tired of the pomp of the Catholic Church and the pottifogging hypocrisies of the Protestant one. The decline of church attendance in England and Germany, with the course of affairs in France, Italy, and Portugal, are quite enough to show what a romantic imagination Dr. Clifford has.

"The majority of the Churches are more than half empty—at least in Protestant districts. There are hundreds of congregations where one seldom sees more than an occasional man. There are crowds of women and children, but the men are thronging the beerhouses and cafes or are scouring the fields and woods." This is what the *Christian World* Berlin correspondent writes on June 19. It is a fine comment on Dr. Clifford's romantic description of the exodus from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism and the cry of Europe, "We would see Jesus."

Rev. Charles Brent, Bishop of the Philippines is to be congratulated. Crossing the Atlantic from Liverpool, the Bishop travelled steerage. His reason was that "a Bishop's place is among the common people." When the ship's officers found him out—which was not, we think, a very difficult thing—the only concession to his comfort the Bishop would make was to have a cabin to himself and have his meals served there. This strikes us as not at all a bad way to travel steerage, and many others must have envied him. If we want to go to New York, we expect that if we pay steorage rates we shall have to put up with steerage accommodation. But we are not envious. On the contrary, we admire Bishop Brent's plan of campaign. That is why we congratulate him.

Why do judges persist in utilising the privileged position of the Bench to indulge in statements quite irrelevant to what is before them, and to which no reply is possible at the time—or, indeed, at any time, in the same court? In summing up the case for the jury in the late Suffragist trial for conspiracy—which made the matter more offensive than if it had been introduced after the verdict had been given—Mr. Justice Phillimore took occasion to introduce, *apropos*

of nothing in particular, some remarks on the relative merits of Christianity and Mohammedanism in relation to women. We do not know what this had to do with the case before him. The Suffragists were not avowed Mohammedans, nor had their offence any immediate connection with Christianity. We can only assume that the occasion presented itself as one in which Mr. Justice Phillimore could vent his own religious opinions, attack a rival creed, and prove that, able as he may be as a judge, he has much to learn both as regards the character of Christianity and of Mohammedanism.

Here is Mr. Justice Phillimore's deliverance, as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of June 18:—

"The religion of the world which had done most to elevate the position of women was Christianity. The religion which had probably done most to repress them was Mohammedanism..... Mohammedanism was a religion which had always been propagated by the sword."

Now we would suggest that in the England of to-day Mr. Justice Phillimore's religious opinions are his own personal possession, and that he is no more justified in crying up their value while in the discharge of his judicial duties than he would be justified in advertising the value of pictures that hang on the walls of his house. We admit that there is nothing to prevent him advertising his personal opinions on matters outside the case before him, but a nicer sense of personal responsibility than Christianity seems to develop would suggest that when one is a judge in a community which comprises all varieties of religious opinion, and a considerable bulk of no religion at all, the strictly honorable course would be to keep one's own religious opinions out of sight. A due sense of discrimination between one's public duties and one's personal opinions is always advisable, and in no case more so than when one occupies so important a position as the one filled by Justice Phillimore.

The remarks made were not merely injudicious; they were untrue. The statement that Christianity had elevated the position of woman is one that could only be made in the tone and manner in which it was made because we are living in a Christian country. It is the rule to picture Christianity as all that is good, whether facts justify the picture or not. As a matter of fact, it was Christianity that reduced woman in Europe to political and social servitude, and it is against Christian feeling that women have always had chiefly to contend. Mr. Justice Phillimore, we believe, is acquainted with the writings of the early Christians, and we defy him to find any other literature in the world in which woman is treated to so much abuse, and often abuse of such a character that it is simply untranslatable. The whole influence of Christianity for centuries was in the direction of robbing woman, while single, of all legal rights, and of making her, when married, a mere article of property belonging to her husband. In saying this we are not expressing a mere prejudice; we could cite the evidence of lawyers and historians of unquestioned eminence to prove it, were it necessary.

In saying that Mohammedanism is a religion propagated by the sword, Justice Phillimore is simply propagating a vulgar Christian slander. At any rate, it is not truer of Mohammedanism than of Christianity; and on the whole, force has never been employed against rival religious opinions by the former in the same brutal and relentless manner as it was used by the latter. No religion has used the sword more frequently or more ruthlessly than has Christianity. And the worst of European wars, since the decline of the old Roman Empire, have been either waged directly in the interests of Christianity or inspired by Christian feeling. The Crusades and the Thirty Years' War are sufficient proofs of this. It is true that Mohammedanism has used the sword also, but it at least has not used force in the interests of religion as Christianity has done. A conquered people were admitted liberty of worship by them at a time when such freedom was unknown in Christendom. Jew and Christian were allowed to follow their religions in Mohammedan Spain. How much liberty were either given when Spain became Christian? There is not, in fact, a country in the world, in which Christianity has not been established and maintained by force; and whatever the faults of Mohammedanism may be, the Christian, at any rate, is in no position to cast stones.

An inquest was held at Braintree on John Thomas Gilbey, farmer, Thomas Peter Gilbey, his son, and Arthur Smith, laborer, who were struck by lightning in a heavy thunderstorm. The jury returned a verdict of death by the act of God. Why is not that personage indicted for murder or manslaughter? Are the police unable or afraid to serve the summons or execute the warrant?

There has been a correspondence in the *Observer* lately about the curious epithets applied by Catholics and Protestants to each other. This is a subject that was thoroughly worked out in one of our speeches to the jury before Mr. Justice North in 1883, when we were defending ourselves against an indictment for "blasphemy." Our old friend and sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, going no further than the pages of Mosheim, collected a long catalogue of abusive epithets applied by Christian disputants to each other—especially during the period of the so-called Reformation. He supplied them to us—for we were in Newgate Prison at the time—and we fired them at the Roman Catholic judge on the bench, who was so eloquent on the subject of how "infidels" should attack Christianity, how polite they should be, how tender towards the feelings of the poor sensitive Christians. "Just listen to this," we said, "and hear how polite and tender the Christians have been to each other in their mutual controversies." Judge North squirmed under that catalogue of abusive epithets. It contained nearly everything that envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness could suggest. We rather think of reprinting it from the verbatim report of our speech.

We haven't been looking for rich dead disciples of the "blessed be ye poor" Nazarene for the last week or two. We have just lighted upon one—the Rev. Thomas Marsden, vicar of Chigwell, Essex, who left £18,557. Rather a big hump to go through that needle's eye.

Rev. Dr. C. F. Aked, formerly of Liverpool, since of New York, and now of San Francisco, whose salary is not less than £2,000 a year, has renounced his English citizenship and naturalised himself as an American. It can't make much difference now. The reverend gentleman has been six years absent from his native land. We guess the old country will survive the bereavement.

Mr. Aked explains that he favors America with his patronage because he is Republican and hates monarchy. But how does he reconcile that with the Christian Scriptures? How about the text "Fear God and honor the King"?

The great Anti-Home Rule meeting recently held at the Albert Hall was described in the *Daily Mail* report as "representative of all branches of Protestant Christians." "Brief religious exercises" were indulged in, and the principal speakers were clerical gentlemen. Canon Stephenson, of Belfast, repeated, amidst great applause, the foolish old epigram that "Home Rule and Rome Rule were synonymous." Rev. W. Dudley Fletcher, of Coolbanagher, Queen's County, talked about the *Ne Temere* decree, by way of showing how Roman Catholic Church law would override the law of the land. We suppose he doesn't know that this same game is openly played by the Protestant Church of England, whose clergy defy the marriage laws of the State by refusing to celebrate the marriage of divorced persons or marriage with a deceased wife's sister. There is no need to go to Ireland to find insolent priests.

Mr. H. W. Nevinson is reporting to the *Daily Chronicle* on the present situation in Albania. His first letter appeared in the issue for June 21. It was dated from "Scutari, June 14." The following extract will interest our readers:

"I need not describe the ruin that its heroic defence has brought upon the city. The centre of the bazaar (the most beautiful in the near East next to Constantinople and Pristina) has been burnt to the ground. But that happened after the surrender, and is attributed only to the Montenegrins' ancestral instinct for loot. The destruction of the cathedral by the forty large bombs fired into it was more wanton, for some 2,000 women and children had taken refuge there, supposing it to be absolutely safe. They forgot that Montenegrins and Serbs are orthodox, but the Cathedral Catholic, and that Christians do not necessarily love each other."

After describing the Montenegrins' savage defacement of the Hague conventions, Mr. Nevinson adds that the experiences inside Scutari, terrible as they were, "appear slight misfortunes compared with the slaughter and utter ruin in the surrounding villages. For the greater number of these villages have been devastated, burnt, and wiped out." Such are the sublime achievements of these soldiers of the Cross, who started out on the hypocritical pretence of "liberating their fellow Christians." They have liberated nobody. They have simply played the part of brigands—*Christian brigands*.

Thousands of Church of England people met in Hyde Park on Saturday (June 21) to protest against the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Welsh Church. The

Bishop of London and other speakers were loud in their indignation. But they had better save their breath to protest against the attack on their own Church—which will come next. Meanwhile the Bishop of London's question "Why Rob God?" will make many people laugh. They know that robbing God only means robbing the priests, and that robbing the priests means leaving them to live on their own earnings instead of other people's money.

A lady correspondent of the *Daily Sketch* refers to Jesus as "crucified between two thieves as a malefactor convicted of blasphemy." This is incorrect. Pilate refused to hear the charge of blasphemy; Jesus was then accused of sedition, found guilty, and sentenced to execution.

Mr. Harry Lauder occupied the pulpit at the Castle Green Congregational Church, Bristol, on Sunday afternoon. It was "free seats," of course, and a big crowd went to hear him at the price. He was helping a brother Scot in the person of the regular parson, the Rev. George Adams. He reminds us of the 'bus-driver who spent his day off in driving another man's 'bus.

It is curious to find the leading article in the *Methodist Times* headed "Beware of Heresy-Hunting!" It is rather late in the day for a Christian paper to issue the warning, and it looks as though the Rev. Scott Lidgett realises that to hunt heretics to-day in the Christian Churches is far more dangerous than leaving them to pursue their own road. For we do not imagine for a moment that the warning is based upon recognition of the truth that the heretic should be given the right to say what he pleases. We believe it is due to two things: First, because if all the heretics were turned out there would be few, and they the less intelligent section, left; and, second, that heresy-hunting involves acquainting many of the laity with truths that leaders of the Churches think had better be kept from them. "We will not," says the *Methodist Times*, "place a premium on the economy of truth, or on the cowardice of mediocrity." But that is precisely what all forms of Christianity have done, are doing, and will keep on doing. You cannot shut men out of office, or oppose them in public, or boycott them in business on account of their hostility to Christianity, without giving the coward or the hypocrite an advantage over the brave and honest man. You cannot even favor a Christian in public life, because he is a Christian, without doing this. And, on the other hand, to encourage all to express their opinions, without imposing social penalties upon them, would be to bring about such an exodus from the Churches as would make them a negligible factor in social life. This is really the dilemma of the Churches, although many of the leaders have not wit enough to see it.

The Rev. F. C. Spurr, of Melbourne, is a typical minister of the Gospel. He is brimful of prejudices, and expresses them without hesitation. In a letter published in the *Christian World* for June 19, he belauds two new evangelists who had just tried their hands at converting Melbourne, and are about to visit this country with a similar object in view. He praises them simply because they belong to his school of religious thought. Messrs. Smith and Robins are Americans, and represent the latest brand of evangelism, and Mr. Spurr calls them "these two great men." Now, Freethought has no great men under its banner. All its advocates are conspicuous only by their inferiority. In Melbourne it is professed by "a few brainy men," but their "ignorance of Christianity is colossal," and "a few students who studiously avoid all books on evolution that emphasise its spiritual value and implication." The Freethinkers of Melbourne will appreciate his classification of them into "some Athenians who ever run after new things, and some Yarra Bankers who hail every Rationalist as a god." This is nothing but coarse, vulgar abuse, the employment of which only shows that Mr. Spurr is anything but a great man, and that his ignorance and prejudice are simply colossal. His insulting allusions to Mr. McCabe are quite worthy of his profession.

Our correspondent "E. B." sends us the following "with reference to Mr. Foote's article on 'Where is God?'"

"What mortals think they know of God,
A thousand times rehearse.
What mortals do not know of God,
Fills all the universe.
—ANON."

"God is a blank sheet, on which nothing is found but what we ourselves have written.—MARTIN LUTHER."

Perhaps "E. B.," who has leisure as well as culture, will collect more of these epigrams.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £151 4s. 11d. Received since:—J. W. O'Leary, 10s.; O. N. Beagley and Friends, 8s.; F. M. A., £3.

H. P. MARNITZ.—(1) Glad to hear that the friend who presented you with a year's issue of the *Freethinker* has conferred upon you so much benefit. Ease and satisfaction of mind must be very welcome to one who has spent so much of a long life in a state of distraction through the dogmas and controversies of theology. (2) The Jews and Caffres have no special connection. Their national rite, the sign of their covenant with their god Yahveh, has been found in many different parts of the world, including the new world. Thanks for your good wishes. Our shop manager will attend to the rest of your letter.

C. H. M. GROM.—We note your opinion that Mr. Foote's lectures would cause still more excitement at Melbourne, if he could only be persuaded to visit it,—which, however, is not very likely now.

E. B.—Your cuttings are very welcome.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We hope the Birmingham Branch will have good weather and a successful picnic next Sunday. We should like to join it ourselves—if it were possible. We remember that golden day at Stratford-on-Avon. This may satisfy you that our health is improving.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your weekly batches of cuttings.

J. SMITH.—There is an excellent volume on Evolution by Professors J. A. Thomson and P. Geddes, in the (shilling) "Home University Library" (Williams & Norgate).

W. JAMESON.—The first of sixpenny reprints was Paine's *Age of Reason*, issued by the Secular Society, Ltd., and edited by Mr. Foote, with some thirty pages of Notes and a Biographical Preface, which the late G. J. Holyoake called "masterly." Pioneer work is more easily followed than initiated.

J. W. O'LEARY.—Thanks for your letter as well as the enclosure.

J. D. HARDING.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

C. BOURCHIER.—Sorry we cannot inform you. Try the Theosophical Society.

H. SMALLWOOD.—It is only a common case of clerical begging, and does not seem to call for any special comment.

J. E.—See paragraph. Pleased to hear from you. Enclosure returned. Glad to have your "congratulations on returning health."

O. N. BRAGLEY, forwarding subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "It is sent by a few working men in appreciation of your long and plucky fight for freedom of thought, and as a slight acknowledgment of the pleasure and enlightenment they have derived from the pages of the *Freethinker*."

F. M. A., subscribing to the President's Fund, does so "with a wish that you may do all possible to husband your health and strength, and that you may long be spared to so ably lead 'the best of causes.'"

BOLTON BRANCH.—Miss Vance will lay it first before the N. S. S. Executive.

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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.

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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.

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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 Birmingham Branch holds its annual picnic next Sunday (July 6). Members and friends take train from Snow Hill Station at 10.5 a.m. for Warwick. Hot luncheon will be served at the Eastgate Restaurant, 15 Smith-street, Warwick, at 12.30. Tickets, including train fare and luncheon, are 4s. each. Applications to be addressed to the secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone-road, Rotton Park, Birmingham. "Saints" from Coventry, Rugby, Leamington, and the district are cordially invited to join the party.

The Liverpool Branch has its annual picnic to-day (June 29) to Thurston. Waggonettes leave Woodside Station at 10.15 a.m. Local Freethinkers will all be welcome. Tickets—3s. 6d., including tea; 2s. 3d. for cyclists—can be obtained of the Branch secretary, Mr. W. McKelvie, 57 Penrose-street, Everton, Liverpool.

The Croydon Branch's Sunday evening lectures now begin at 7. We are glad to hear these meetings are so successful.

"F. M. A.," whose initials appear elsewhere in our columns this week, writes:—

"Here is a point about the word Atheist that I have never seen dealt with, showing what a grand example of the genuine Christian lie it is. In our language there are many words beginning with the Greek prefix *a*—without, but not one which denies the existence of the subject-matter of the word. Apathy, Anodyne, Anhydrous, do not deny the existence of Feeling, Pain, or Water."

We have often dealt with this point, though not lately. It is indeed a very important one. It is raised, with other important points, in our pamphlet *What is Agnosticism?*

Mr. Philip G. Peabody, of Boston—the subscriber who made up the balance of some £20 to complete the full £300 of the President's Honorarium Fund for 1912—has been travelling a great deal since then. In his last letter to us he makes an important statement. "I have been eleven times in Turkey," he says, "and the Turks deserve all the good things you say of them. The whole truth of their treatment by Christians is hopelessly unspeakable and almost unbelievable." Mr. Peabody is quite in love with the Russian people; they are naturally gentle, generous, and kind, and their cruelty to the Jews is "the most marvellous proof of the cruelty-breeding influence of the Christian religion."

We do not regard it exactly as a "Sugar Plum" that Mr. Justice Neville has made an order for the compulsory winding up of the "Daily Herald" Printing and Publishing Society, Ltd. But there is no other part of the *Freethinker* in which we can very well notice the matter. To tell the truth, we are sorry to see the *Daily Herald* going under. It seems to have made a bad mistake in supposing that Mr. G. K. Chesterton was going to save it; just as, at the first, it made a bad mistake in supposing that the working-classes cared what the Bishop of This and the Bishop of That thought about social questions. After all, however, there is no use in crying over spilt milk. Our object is rather to draw attention to the way in which the *Freethinker* has been kept in active existence for thirty-two years, during which time all sorts of advanced papers have come and gone. Our readers in general, and our friends in particular, if they think the subject over, will probably see that ours has been no light achievement. Not that we want to take all the credit to ourselves. We have had the ungrudging and unstinted assistance of a body of contributors, who, while not disdainful wages when obtainable, are (and have been) animated first of all by the soldier spirit in fighting for "the best of causes." (That phrase of Meredith's shall not die.) But that very fact helps to make the maintenance of the *Freethinker* not only an achievement but a triumph.

A good deal of money appears to have been dropped in the *Daily Herald*. The Company was incorporated in September, 1912, with a nominal capital of £50,000, of which 19,036 Preference shares and 171,000 Ordinary shares of 1s. each had been subscribed. Judgment creditors for £3,488 petitioned for the compulsory winding-up in the bankruptcy court. We do not know how this will work out, but obviously a lot of money has been lost, which may run to under or over £10,000. That sum spent upon the *Freethinker* might have made it a good property—or "a paying concern"—for so much depends on the editorship of any journal, the larger part of its value at any moment consisting of "goodwill."

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

A CONSIDERABLE time has now elapsed since I first heard of "the passing of Jesus"; but in looking around for signs of the event, I can see little to indicate that "the passing" has gone beyond the initial stage: and this small result is due mainly to "Biblical criticism" chiefly from the pens of a few scholars amongst the advanced clergy.

There is a falling off, certainly, in the attendance at places of worship; but the causes which operate in this matter are manifold, and do not, I think, often include the belief that the Gospel "history" is untrue. Yet, until the latter fact has become widely known, "the passing of Jesus" will not be realised. At a recent Conference, it is true, the Congregational Union passed a resolution in favor of the "higher criticism"; but I am quite sure that the representatives who so voted had no idea what those critical results are. Neither, again, has the great apostle of the New Theology; for that preacher, in his published sermons, refers again and again to the Gospel narratives as historic events. In the Religious Press the results of Biblical criticism are minimised or misrepresented, and only one, here and there, studies the subject with an eye to truth. To the vast majority of Christians the New Testament is "the word of God" from cover to cover. They have no idea that the Gospels contain within themselves sufficient evidence to prove to any unprejudiced reader that they are merely a collection of fictitious stories written originally by nobody knows whom. In the present series of papers, I propose simply to make a selection from those narratives, and show, as I have just stated, that they are one and all ancient Christian fabrications.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

By the above heading is meant the deliberate misrepresentations made by the Gospel writers that Jesus Christ was the subject of Old Testament "prophecy." Over and over again, throughout the four Gospels, the teacher Jesus is represented as doing this, that, or the other, in order that "the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith," etc.; and in every instance, without a single exception, the Old Testament passage which is quoted had no more reference to the Christian Savior than to the man in the moon. The following are a few examples.

1. The Virgin Mary, we are told, "was found with child by the Holy Ghost.....that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (Matt. i. 18—23).

This quotation is correct so far as it goes, save that the Hebrew word translated "virgin" denotes nothing more than "young woman." Turning now to the Old Testament narrative, we find that when Rezin king of Damascus and Pekah king of Samaria were about to unite their forces against Ahaz king of Judah, Isaiah appeared before the last-named king, and told him to have no fear, for the designs of the two hostile kings would come to naught, after which he gave him a sign. This was: that a "young woman" should conceive, and bear a son, and that before the child should be of an age to discern good from evil, or even to say "my father" and "my mother," the countries ruled over by the allied kings should be over-run by the Assyrians, and the "riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria" should be carried away by the king of Assyria. This child, as the context shows, was the prophet's own son, whose name, upon second thoughts, Yahweh decided should be "speed spoil, hasten prey." "Immanuel" was a pet name for the people of Judah (Isaiah vii. 14—16; viii. 3, 4, 8).

2. Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem because "it was written by the prophet" that out of Bethlehem should come a governor who should rule over Israel (Matt. ii. 6). Just so; and it was further predicted that this ruler—like a second David, "from of old,

from ancient days"—should deliver the Israelites of that day from the Assyrians, when the latter invaded Judæa (Micah v. 2—7).

3. The child Jesus was taken by his parents to Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. ii. 14—15). The quotation is taken from Hosea xi. 1, and reads:—

"When *Israel* was a child, then I loved him, and called *my son* out of Egypt."

The reference, it is scarcely necessary to say, is to the people of Israel, who, when young as a nation, were called by the god, Yahweh, out of the bondage of Egypt.

4. A massacre of babies, it is stated, took place in Bethlehem in fulfilment of "that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt. ii. 17—18). The quotation is correct; though how "Ramah" could mean "Bethlehem" it would puzzle anyone save a Christian reconciler to say. Turning now to the passage in the Book of Jeremiah, we see that the reference in that book is not to a massacre of infants, but to sons and daughters who had been carried away into captivity. Of this fact the Gospel writer was perfectly aware; for Jeremiah, to comfort the mothers of Israel, goes on to say:—

"Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears;.....they shall come again from the land of the enemy.....thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jer. xxxi. 15—17).

Further examples of these so-called "prophecies" are unnecessary. Similar misrepresentations, numbering perhaps forty or more, are to be found in the Gospels and the Book of the Acts, though in some three or four cases the same quotations are repeated in a second or third Gospel. In every case these pseudo-prophecies are declared to have received their fulfilment in Jesus Christ, or his apostles, or people in his days; but, needless to say, not one of the whole batch has the smallest reference to Jesus or to his time.

Looking, now, at the examples just cited, there cannot, I think, be the slightest doubt but that the Gospel writers knew perfectly well that they were perpetrating an atrocious fraud, and did so deliberately. This kind of deceit these pious Christian teachers doubtless believed they could practise with impunity, for very few of the common people had any acquaintance with Greek letters, and fewer still had access to MSS. of the Greek Septuagint. Even if the worst happened, the passages quoted in the Gospels could be found in the book named; so the fraudulent writers had no fear as to the result.

Setting aside, however, for the moment this misrepresentation, the question to be considered is: Are the incidents already noticed historical? Is it a fact of history that a virgin "was found with child" by no other agency than that of the Holy Ghost? Were a number of babies massacred at Bethlehem by order of Herod the Great? And did the parents of Jesus go to Egypt to escape this massacre? Now, if the alleged Gospel events are strictly historical, one might easily imagine the writer selecting certain Old Testament passages, and saying that these were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. But, if the Gospel stories are pure fiction (as they can be shown to be), those stories must have been suggested to the writer by something. Now, what could be more likely to do so than the passages which the Gospel writer had noticed in the Old Testament, and copied out as predictions to be fulfilled in the history of the Christian Savior? To further illustrate this point I must take another example from the Gospels.

Psalm xxii. was regarded by all the early Christians as referring to Jesus Christ. Verse 18 reads: "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots." Now this having been predicted of Jesus (from the evangelistic point of view), it is

interesting to note that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in their accounts of the Crucifixion, say of the Roman soldiers, "they parted his garments among them, casting lots." I have no hesitation in saying that this statement would never have appeared in the Gospels but for its presence in Psalm xxii. I will now go a step farther. The two sentences—"They part my garments among them"—"upon my vesture do they cast lots"—form an example of synonymous parallelism peculiar to Hebrew poetry. This consists of two sentences which express the same ideas in slightly different terms. In the present example, the second sentence—"upon my vesture do they cast lots"—is but a repetition in a varied form of the first—"They part my garments among them"—the "vesture" being but another name for the "garments," and the "parting" or division being made by "casting lots."

Now the writer of the Fourth Gospel took the "vesture" to be distinct from the "garments," and the "parting" and "casting lots" to be separate acts. Hence, in accordance with this erroneous view, he completely alters the narrative. He says (John xix. 23-24):—

"The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

Here, I think, we can safely say, "These things therefore the soldiers did *not*." The other three evangelists took their accounts from an older Gospel, and simply followed their copy, which said nothing of the fulfilment of prophecy in this case. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, however, happened to know the Old Testament source of the "parting of the garments," and he piously fabricated an incident which he considered a better fulfilment of the passage, as he understood it. The giving Jesus a seamless coat that could not be divided was certainly ingenious, as was also the giving his Savior so many garments. A complete suit in that day comprised but two—an outer garment and an under one. Peter, and probably Jesus also, only wore one (Matt. x. 10; John xxi. 7)—and no shoes.

My theory respecting the origin of a large number of the Gospel narratives does not, of course, in any way affect the fraud of the original Gospel writers, in falsely representing alleged events in the life of Jesus Christ as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. These systematic frauds are incontrovertible, and show, amongst other matters, the immoral and untrustworthy character of those writers, as well as completely disproving, once for all, the claim so often made for them by ignorant Christian advocates—that of writing their narratives under the influence of the "spirit of God."

ABRACADABRA.

Herbert Spencer.

(1820-1903.)

"Who saw life steadily and saw it whole."
—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"This man decided not to live, but know."
—BROWNING.

"Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher."
VOLTAIRE ON "Confucius."

HERBERT SPENCER was a world-figure. Long before his death men had come to think of him with Plato, with Bacon, with Kant, with Comte, and with Mill, as one of the great men who mark an era. To the great mass of people, it is true, he was only a great name; but to the world of intellect he ranked with the highest minds, with those who open up new vistas to men's eyes and widen the horizon of knowledge.

He was not born, like Darwin, to ease and affluence. He had his own way to make in the world; but for what is commonly meant by success he cared nothing. To spurn delights and live laborious days for the sake of ambition and its rewards is comparatively easy. Spencer belonged to the few great men who have sunk their personality in their cause, and without thinking of fortune or fame. To his system of Synthetic Philosophy, which puts things together and does not pull to pieces, he devoted his genius, his energies, and his patience. Struggling for years against poverty, against obscurity, against the indifference of the general public to philosophy, he persevered to the end. For forty years of his life he was perfecting the details of his philosophical scheme. There has been no grander intellectual achievement since Edward Gibbon took his memorable walk under the acacias at Lausanne. Spencer never startled the world, and his utter want of orthodoxy was not fully realised until his *Data of Ethics* appeared in 1879. Then Christians were annoyed to find that the man who had quietly taken his place as the leading English philosopher was a thorough Free-thinker. Standing outside all Churches and creeds, he built up his own philosophy by science alone.

Herbert Spencer, in his writings, sought to show that all phenomena, physical and psychical, are the natural products of elementary matter and its laws, these being modes of operation of the primal law of what he calls the "persistence of force." His scheme, probably the vastest ever conceived by the human mind, embraced the story of the evolution of the universe from formless stuff into solar systems, the process being advance from the simple to the complex, from the indefinite to the coherent. This same process from the like to the unlike was shown to be in operation in the life history of the earth. No break between things inanimate and animate being assumed, life, mind in the lower animals and man, man's social and intellectual development, are in unbroken sequence shown to be parts of the eternal order. The Synthetic Philosophy, as the author chose to call it, is nothing more or less than the law of evolution, as exemplified in nature and in man, in the animal realm and the vegetable and human, the sphere of sense, and the sphere of conscious and moral aspiration.

Spencer's literary style was austere, and he deliberately stripped his writing of all embellishment. He never chose to ornament the expression of his thought by surface graces. If he did not display the element of fancy, he had the larger gift of imagination, for, in a sense, the *Synthetic Philosophy*, as a whole, is as truly imaginative as the tragedies of Shakespeare or the pictures of Michael Angelo. To whom, Spencer asks in one of his essays, will a piece of Alpine scenery more powerfully appeal, "to an ignorant mind, or to the mind of a philosopher who knows that over that mountain a glacier slid a million years ago?"

The glory and the triumph of Herbert Spencer is that his philosophy rests on ascertained knowledge. While other philosophers have evoked various extraneous agencies to account for the difference between man and the rest of the world, he preferred to trust to evolution, the law which connects the thoughts of a Shakespeare with the obscure movements of an ascidian on the rocks. Spencer had a harder task than any of his predecessors, because the product of science has become so much more extensive, and because he took all knowledge to be his province.

Living to a patriarchal age, Spencer long outlived his associates in his early days of fame, Mill, "George Eliot," Lewes, Darwin, and Huxley. It is strange to think that Spencer's friends might well have reckoned him the least likely of their circle to survive to an extreme age. For, like Voltaire, he had a frail constitution. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he never knew what health was, so fragile was his body. For the greater part of his life he was an invalid, a victim of dyspepsia and insomnia. What courage he displayed through it all?

The quantity and quality of his work would have put an extremely strong man to shame. As the product of an invalid, it is marvellous. He was a hero as well as a philosopher.

For nearly half a century his authority has been unquestioned, not merely in his own country, but in every part of the civilised world. His works are read not only throughout Europe, but in India, America, and Australasia. In the far East the principles of the philosopher of evolution are better known than those of any other English thinker. He belongs to that rare company to whom may be applied the supreme tribute, "Others abide our question; thou art free." Spencer was not merely an academic philosopher. His love for liberty was as worthy a feature of his life as his enthusiasm for knowledge. He was not loved by priests, ever the hindmost of the thinkers, and he suffered many of the whips and scorns of clerical animosity. But Freethinkers have to endure that sort of thing. Few men, indeed, were more sober or temperate in their expressions, or more just to opponents, than Herbert Spencer.

His was a life of sacrifice. The tremendous intellectual labors which Spencer carried on brought him neither wealth nor comfort. He was unable to find a publisher for his *Social Statics* in 1850, and he had to print and sell it on commission. A small edition took over fourteen years to sell, and the *Principles of Psychology* sold almost as slowly. Again and again he found he was losing money by his writings. Once he would have had to stop his great work but for a timely legacy. After a quarter of a century's work, the sales of his works just paid the publishing expenses. All his labor had gone for nothing, and his health had broken down from the constant strain of his studies. We can but admire the singular devotion, completeness, and dignity of the philosopher's life. Seeking no honor nor applause, he made an imperishable name. No philosopher, ancient or modern, held up a higher standard of conduct, none illustrated it by a purer or more unselfish life. At a time when commercialism was rampant, the pursuit of study for its own sake, and not for any base or ulterior object, was an exception so rare as to be scarcely credible. In an age of compromise Herbert Spencer remained ever faithful to first principles; in an age of ostentation he cared only for truth.

MIMNERMUS.

Tales of Our Times.

BY A CYNIC.

THE manager of a large metal manufactory in a Midland city was talking to his assistant.

"Our managing director, Sir Brummagem Brass, has just telephoned to me that the Right Reverend Dr. Pontifex, Bishop of Dulchester, wishes to go over the works this afternoon."

"Funny taste for a Bishop," said the assistant manager. "I should have thought that some of the articles we turn out would scarcely have interested a man of his profession."

"Well, I believe he is one of our largest shareholders," said the manager, with a smile.

"Oh, that would fully account for it," observed the other, drily.

"Sir Brummagem says he hopes we will give the Bishop every facility for seeing the works; indeed, he asked me to take him round them myself, but unfortunately I have a most important engagement this afternoon, so I must ask you to do the honors of our little shop. Hope you don't mind?"

"Not at all. Shall be delighted," replied the assistant manager.

So when the Bishop's magnificent motor-car drew up at the entrance of the great metal works, the assistant manager was there to give him a polite but far from obsequious reception. In fact, the assistant manager was blessed with a fairly keen sense of humor, and promised himself quite a pleasant half hour.

The prelate was conducted through a number of busy workshops, full of the unceasing hum of rushing machinery operating under the unceasing care and vigilance of human beings scarcely less mechanical in their movements. And

all the while the assistant manager was giving the visitor rapid explanations of all salient features.

Presently, as they were entering yet another workshop, the assistant manager said:

"This is the small arms factory, your lordship. The machine you see here is turning the grooves of rifle barrels. As I daresay you are aware, we hold all patent rights in the well-known Swift-Dedley magazine rifle—which you now see in process of manufacture. It is sighted to three thousand seven hundred and fifty yards, has a muzzle velocity (with cordite charge) of two thousand five hundred foot-seconds, and a remarkably flat trajectory, thus ensuring wonderful precision at long ranges; indeed, we claim that it is the most perfect military rifle yet produced in England, and the War Office is now considering the question of adopting it for the British Army. We executed large orders for this rifle from the Argentine Republic just before the commencement of their present war with Bolivia and Paraguay, and the military authorities of the Argentine attribute their remarkable successes in the field entirely to its use—the percentage of killed among the Bolivian and Paraguayan troops being greater than that of any war of modern times.

"Here," continued the assistant manager, when they reached another part of the workshop, "we turn out the new infantry machine guns which did such useful work during the recent British expedition to the Hullabaloo Hills on the Indian frontier. These little machines are so light that they can be hauled by a couple of soldiers up the steepest hillsides; and as they fire from six to seven hundred shots per minute, they are most effective against the wild rushes of fanatical tribesmen. The half-naked Hullabaloochis, with all their magnificent bravery, could do nothing against these guns, and were mown down in thousands. In fact, as your lordship is aware, the expedition proved eminently successful from a military point of view, and settled the Hullabaloo business in a few weeks."

"Ah," observed the Bishop solemnly, "it is sad, indeed, that such things should be, even though they form part of the unavoidable duties of imperial dominion. We can only hope that the ultimate advantage may outweigh the temporary evil by conferring on these poor people the great moral benefits of British rule."

"And that, I am sure, we can safely leave in the hands of your lordship's department," replied the assistant manager with a curious smile. "For us, of course, it wouldn't do to lay much stress on the moral aspect of the question. All we are concerned with is to make our business pay the largest possible dividends."

They moved on to another great workshop, and the assistant manager's face again wore the curious smile, and there was almost a twinkle in his eye as he said:—

"This is what we familiarly call our toy department, your lordship. Here we turn out enormous quantities of religious accessories—ornaments, charms, idols, and so on, for the East Indian and African trade."

"Dear me," observed the Bishop in a dubious tone.

"Yes. And it is gratifying to feel that here at least there can be no moral scruples in our business, for it must surely be one of the duties of imperial dominion to satisfy the religious requirements of subject races. This great gold-plated pinnacle is intended to surmount a Burmese pagoda, and these brass Buddhas mostly go to Burma, too, though a fairly good trade is also done with Ceylon and Siam. There is also a large business done in West Africa with these idols in britannia metal and bronze, and since the opening up of Northern Nigeria a large exporting firm has found it worth while to establish a business at Bonny, on the Calabar coast, mainly for the trade in idols. Hundreds are sent into the interior every month, and we have been assured on good authority that deities manufactured by us are being regularly worshipped from the Kameruns to Dahomey and from Sokoto to Lake Chad. Your lordship will observe that the idols we turn out, though far from beautiful according to our artistic standards, wear a more benevolent expression than one is accustomed to find on the countenance of an African god, and this cannot fail to have an elevating and refining influence on their worshipers. We can congratulate ourselves, therefore, that while still in pursuit of dividends as our main object, we are at the same time doing our humble share in conferring those moral benefits which your lordship has just referred to."

The right reverend gentleman, who was by this time openly frowning, looked hurriedly at his watch. "Dear me," he said, "I was not aware it was so late. I am afraid I must be getting away. Much obliged to you for a very interesting visit."

But as he drove away in his motor-car he said to himself, "Rather disagreeable young man that. I believe he was laughing at me all the time."

When the manager inquired about the Bishop's visit, the assistant manager said, "Oh, yes, quite a success. His

lordship seemed deeply interested in the military small arms factory, and even more so in the toy department."

"What! Did you actually show him all those African idols and things?" asked the manager, laughing. "That should be almost enough to make him sell out of the company."

But the Bishop didn't sell a single share. On the contrary, he bought some more at the first opportunity.

Correspondence.

THE MONTREAL RELIGIOUS CENSUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As you will gather, the enclosed item, clipped from the *Gazette* (Friday, May 30), the various Protestant and the Jewish sects have united their forces to obtain a religious census of the City of Montreal:—

"Nearly eighty per cent. [I quote from the item enclosed] of the city, it is said, was visited yesterday, and on the basis of the results obtained, it is calculated that roughly ninety-five per cent. of the population will be found to lay claim to some church affiliation or connection."

We may safely conjecture from the above that within a short while the daily papers will be bristling with unctuous headlines to the effect that "The blood of Christ has washed us clean," or "Christianity dead," etc. Foreseeing this, I hasten to acquaint you with the true state of affairs.

The census, so far, has been undertaken exclusively by members of some Christian or Jewish organisation, by aid of a door-to-door canvass. The whole scheme, of course, is utterly silly; but, as the thing was to be done, it should have been done fairly. It was not.

We are five in our family—my mother, two sisters, my brother, and myself. My mother does not attend any church; my elder sister is an orthodox Roman Catholic; the younger (twenty), Agnostic; and my brother and myself, both over twenty, are Atheists (and readers of the *Freethinker*). Thus we have one Christian out of a family of five, yet we have been booked in the census lists as a Roman Catholic family!

I have not spoken to my friends who are freethinking, but I have no doubt that the same system has prevailed throughout the city. And, as many boarding-house ladies are Christian, a house will be dubbed Catholic or Protestant, though half the inmates may be Rational.

I hope you will give this letter prominence in your columns, as there are a number of your Montreal readers who will have some interesting information to offer.

Montreal.

CHARLES McDONELL.

PORTUGUESE POLITICAL PRISONERS: A FREETHINKER'S PROTEST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your paper of June 8 a correspondent, Mr. William Heaford, states that the pamphlet, *Portuguese Political Prisoners: a British National Protest* (L. Upcott Gill, Bazaar-buildings, Drury-lane), was written by a Portuguese Royalist. Mr. Heaford has been misled by an assertion to this effect in the *Mundo*. As honorary secretary to the Committee of the British Protest I am able to inform him that an English author is responsible for the pamphlet, which was submitted to the Committee before being offered for sale at the *Æolian* Hall meeting on April 22. Mr. Heaford was evidently not present at this meeting, or he would not be sceptical as to the keen and strenuous interest which is taken by the British public on the subject of the Portuguese political prisoners. The speakers were representative of all shades of opinion, and amongst them was Mr. George Macaulay Trevelyan, who spoke as a Liberal and a *Freethinker*. I quote Mr. Trevelyan's words, as they afford the clearest estimate of the motives and ideas which inspired the British Protest:—

"We have not assembled here to indulge in hysteria over doubtful and exaggerated reports. We have come still less to grind the axe of any party or any person, or any group of persons, or of any Church in Portugal or in England. This meeting over which Lord Lytton has so ably presided represents a union for one purpose of persons of very different political and very different religious opinions, which taken together go a long way to make England. The Conservative and Progressive tendencies in politics have been represented in this movement, on the platform; the Protestant, Catholic, and the Freethinking tendencies in religion have all been represented this afternoon. For my part I stand here as a Liberal who is also a Freethinker,.....and I would especially appeal to Liberals, and especially appeal to Freethinkers, not to wink the eye at crime and injustice because it happens to be committed in the name of an anti-clerical Republic.....It is not merely a question of the state of the

prisons and the treatment of the prisoners; there is the question of why they got there. Many of them have not been tried, and those who have been tried have in many cases been tried with grave injustice. They are put there because of their opinions, not because of their acts. That is not Liberalism or Socialism, but Jacobinism, and that is as much opposed to Liberal principles as despotism. These men are not Freethinkers. They indulge in the persecution of opinion, and that is the opposite of free thought."

Mr. Trevelyan went on to say that he was one of those who had protested against the execution of Ferrer, and had protested against the state of the prisons in Russia, but that this was not the time or place to discuss either. The question at the moment was to see what would be the effect upon "our ancient ally," Portugal, of the expression of British public opinion in favor of "justice, humanity, and law." The concluding phrases of Mr. Trevelyan's speech sum up the convictions of which the meeting was the outward sign:—

"Those who know Portugal best believe that there are innumerable breasts in Portugal that beat to this same sentiment, not only Royalists but Republicans also. If it be thought we are asking for something which Portugal cannot grant, when we ask for an amnesty, there is the fact that an Amnesty Bill has actually been presented to Parliament in Portugal, and it is the opinion of many experienced persons that the great majority of the nation is in favor of it."

I may add that one of those most strongly in favor of it is the President of the Republic.

Since the *Æolian* Hall meeting, over 200 Republicans and Socialists have joined their Royalist compatriots in prison, and there can be little doubt in the minds of dispassionate observers that the granting of a general amnesty would allay the discontent and widespread resentment which has been aroused by the despotism of Affonsa Costa.

C. M. TENISON.

Yokes Court, near Sittingbourne, Kent.

Self-Mutilation.

"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew v. 30).

A RECENT occurrence in India shows that the sources from which the above teaching of Jesus were derived still survive in the East. The following is a summary of the account, given in the *Pioneer* (India) of May 11, of the incident:—

Three years ago an illiterate peasant named Lachman settled down as a sadhu in a temple in Mortakka in the Central Provinces. He was full of religious fervor, had done the *Parkrama* of the Nerbudda, and listened attentively to readings from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These referred mostly to the offerings of different parts of the body as sacrifices to Shiva, and Lachman was so impressed by them that he resolved to experiment on himself. So, on March 20, he cut off his hand with a hatchet, put it in front of the image of Rama, and then went to Appaji, the pujari of the temple, and showed him his bleeding stump, which he declared gave him no pain. Appaji called up some other priests, and they applied ligatures, and also informed the village police.

Fortunately, that same evening, Captain Tarr, civil surgeon, arrived at the village, and, finding that the arm had been very roughly hacked, decided on operating. Lachman refused to take chloroform, and watched quite calmly the surgeon's work. A second operation was necessary before the hæmorrhage could be stopped.

Next morning the patient expressed no surprise that the hand had not rejoined the wrist, but he declined to remain in the village to have his wound dressed daily, so he departed on his way fully confident that no harm would befall him, as he was under the protection of Rama. Nothing has been heard of Lachman since, so probably the wound may have healed. If he is alive, he will assuredly acquire supreme merit among other sadhus. He is about forty years of age, and, though unable to read or write, yet has been, since boyhood, deeply religious.

E. B.

He was a curate and he came up from the country to try his luck at the Adelphi Theatre voice trials recently. He explained that things were very quiet in the country, and now that the theatre had improved so much he felt that he could adopt the career without loss of dignity. Then he sang "There is a green hill far away." And the audience wished him there. One verse was enough. He tried another, but was conducted out into the daylight. No doubt his next song was "Home, sweet home."

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): 3.30, a Lecture.

CROYDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Katharine-street, near Town Hall): 7, J. Rowney, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): F. Schaller, 11.30, "Atheism"; 7.30, "Christianity Unsound."

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, R. H. Rosetti, "Religion: a Product of the Human Mind."

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

PRESTON BRANCH N. S. S. (B. S. P. Rooms, 7 Market-street): 10 a.m., Meeting. All Secularists invited.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Ground): R. Mearns, 3, "Historic Christianity"; 6.30, "The Failure of Christianity."

BOLTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Steps): Gilbert Manion, 11, "God"; 3, "The Bible"; 6.30, "Christian Socialism Exposed." Monday, June 30, at 7.30, R. Mearns, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; Saturday, July 5, at 7.30, "The Churches and Modern Thought."

BURNLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Place): Joe McLellan, 3, "Is Religion a Barrier to Progress?" 6.30, "Mistakes of Jesus Christ."

COLNE BRANCH N. S. S. (Skipton-road): 6.30, Arthur Thompson, "The Sermon on the Mount."

FARNWORTH (Market Square): Monday June 30, at 7.30, Gilbert Manion, "Christian Socialism Exposed."

NELSON BRANCH N. S. S. (Chapel-street): 6.30, Arthur Thompson, "Wanted, a New God."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 7, F. M. Wilkesbarre, "Saviors."

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Steps): Matt Phair, 3, "Socialism and Christianity"; 6.30, "Will Christ Save Us?"

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