

THE Freethinker

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Evil must be removed before good has a place.
—GARTH WILKINSON.

Views and Opinions.

"KING FERDINAND MURDERED" was a big headline in Sunday's edition of a paper called the *People*. I never bought it before, and I scarcely think I shall buy it again. That headline was a "fake." King Ferdinand was not murdered. There was not a particle of evidence in support of the statement. The sole authority for it was "rumor"—which may mean anything or nothing to suit the circumstances, in case of a challenge and an inquiry. But the penny-catcher's announcement opened in this decisive manner:—

"A military revolt has broken out in Sofia, the King of Bulgaria has been assassinated, and an unsuccessful attempt has been made to kill Dr. Danoff, the Premier. The Government offices have been stormed, the Royal Palace is surrounded, and many persons have been shot down by soldiers."

This was modified by a qualification, in smaller type, that the report lacked confirmation, but was nevertheless probably true.

Monday's newspapers treated this "report" with disdain. Few mentioned it; one alluded to it as utterly contemptible. Yet this *People* is a highly moral Tory newspaper, with a great (professed) belief in Church and State and Altar and Throne.

Having no other Sunday newspaper (so it happened) than this *People*, I was obliged in common prudence to wait till Monday before writing about this alleged "assassination." And it was lucky that I did so, or I should have wasted my time. But I could not help thinking, "Suppose this be true! Is it not one of Time's conspicuous revenges? This story of the assassinated assassin proves that poetical justice is not entirely absent from the universe. It reminds one of the awful consolation of Swinburne's 'Night hath but one red star, Tyrannicide.'" For the King of Bulgaria was an assassin—though not more so than his fellow-Christian Kings of Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. He started on one of the most cruel and wanton wars of modern times with a religious service in the capital church of his capital city; he received the Primate's blessing; he dedicated himself as a soldier of Christ; it was to be a war of the Cross against the Crescent, and its immediate and practical object was to liberate oppressed populations from the intolerable tyranny of the unspeakable Turk. It was a beautiful picture. But how different is the reality! The oppressed populations have suffered more from the Christian Allies than they did from their Mohammedan overlords. Myriads of them have been wiped out of existence by hunger, outrage, and massacre. The liberators have turned out to be brigands. They took to fighting each other over the division of a larger spoil than was contemplated in their preliminary agreement. Not only have they turned their arms upon each other—Christian thief against Christian thief!—but they are calling each other the most abominable names and accusing each other of the most infamous crimes.

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King Constantine has telegraphed as follows from the head of his army to his Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Athens:—

"Protest in my name to the representatives of the civilised Powers against the acts of these monsters in human form. Protest also to the entire civilised world, and say that to my regret I see myself compelled to wreak vengeance in order to inspire terror into these monsters and to make them reflect before they commit any more crimes of this sort. The Bulgarians have surpassed all the horrors of barbaric times and have proved that they have no longer the right to be reckoned among civilised peoples."

This is a terrible indictment, and it is drawn up by the responsible head of the Kingdom of Greece. On the other hand, King Ferdinand has drawn up a similar indictment against Greece and Servia. After referring to various places where the civil population had been driven out by the thousand, the Bulgarian monarch adds that "These refugees gave terrifying accounts of the horrible deeds committed by the Servians and Greeks."

Each side denies its own guilt. Each side affirms the other's guilt. Is one to believe them both—as Voltaire said he believed both the old ladies he heard giving their opinion of each other in the public thoroughfare? King Ferdinand suggests "an inquiry." We should like to see it instituted, but we fear that such news is too good to be true.

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Roumania, the other Christian Power in the Balkans, has taken no share in the war. She played a meaner part. She stood by as a neutral, and claimed her share of the victors' spoils, as the price of her neutrality, at the finish. She has invaded Bulgaria now that her neighbor is beaten to the ground. She would be mild and placable enough if Bulgaria had beaten her Christian rivals. Such is Christian chivalry! Who can imagine the "unspeakable Turk" acting in such a contemptible manner?

* * *

The religious mind, and especially the Christian mind, is always peculiar. There is no connection between the Balkan war and the express train disaster at Colchester; only the beauty of religion is displayed in both—and on the same page of the holy and veracious *People*. A Clapham engineer told the reporter how "the driver was already dead when extricated from beneath the engine, whilst the guard was in a dying condition, and the fireman was disembowelled." Then came this gem of piety: "Another passenger," the reporter relates, "said it was nothing but a miracle that all the passengers in the first carriage were not killed." A miracle was it? Performed, of course, by God. And what a God! Why was not the miracle of the "saved" extended to those who were "lost"? God is a respecter of persons, after all. But his discrimination appears to be only a whim. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy. He is on the moral level of Caliban's deity in Browning's wonderful poem. In short the Christian "God" is a relic of the religion of barbarism, and should be dropped by all humane and intelligent people.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and the Child.

IT is a part of the case for religion that man is a religious animal. In opposition to this it has been affirmed that man is by nature an Atheist. No less a person than John Wesley held this opinion, meaning by Atheist a man unsaved by grace or revelation. It is a futile speculation in either direction. By nature man is neither an Atheist nor a Theist—that is, if we attach to either term certain definite beliefs for or against the belief in God. Indeed, by nature man is very little—far less than any other member of the animal world. Other animals are born into the world with fully formed instincts sufficient in number to preserve their lives. Man has least of all. The education of other animals lies chiefly in the direction of exercise; with man the chief work is acquisition. And herein lies the secret of man's superiority, and his capacity for continuous progress. The world of the animal varies but little. One generation succeeds another, and the adaptive actions essential to life are repeated in endless monotony. The world of man varies constantly. It changes with time and place, and puts on a growing complexity. Man is continually called on to make new adjustments, and to effect these his nature must be plastic and educable. Many instincts and less educability; fewer instincts and great capacity for education; these are the cardinal and all-important distinctions between man and the rest of the animal world.

But this advantage over the animal world has its drawbacks. The fact of man having everything to learn places him at the mercy of his surroundings. The fundamental functions of life are all right because they can be ignored by none, and so form part of every person's experience. But above these, what the child will become is mainly a question of the educative influences of his environment. He may be educated into becoming an ardent Republican or a fanatical Royalist; a strenuous Atheist or an uncompromising pietist. His code of honor will be determined in the same way—either that of the merchant, the gambler, the criminal, or the man of science. His native capacity will, of course, find expression under any conditions. It will determine the eminence attained, but the social environment will decide the form in which this capacity is expressed.

These principles give the reply to the propositions at the beginning of this article. Man is born neither an Atheist nor a Theist; but his capacity for, and his dependence upon, education makes him one or the other. It is theoretically not a harder task to bring up a child an Atheist than to train it as a Theist, given the same educational opportunities. It is only harder in practice because the dice of social life are loaded in favor of religion, and the two phases of thought do not fight under equal conditions. Inside the home one set of tendencies may be supreme, but outside other forces are encountered. The child is subjected to the incidence of other ideas and ideals. Opinions it is taught on the one hand to respect, it is taught on the other to despise. It sees certain beliefs held in admiration, and sees the social status of people determined by their adherence to these beliefs. And the child is naturally imitative; that is the source of both its strength and weakness. Exposed to the influence of an environment making at least for conformity to religious beliefs, one need not be surprised that the majority profess some form of religious faith.

In what way does religion utilise the native capacity of children? First of all, in a rough-and-ready way, children reproduce in their mental growth those stages covered by the race in its intellectual development. The fear of a child in face of the unknown, the indistinct sense of causation, the readiness to ascribe life to all around with the small development of the larger racial feelings, bring us very near to the mental condition from which religions originate and to which religions still

appeal. One may, therefore, say that if children are not born religious, their capacity for education, with their general mental endowment, hands them over, unresisting subjects, to their religious instructors. They commence with the capacity for fetishism, and there are those who take full advantage of the fact. Of course, there is no reason why children should not pass through this period with safety. Many do, just as they pass through those physical disorders incidental to childhood. But in a great many instances, in the hands of parents acting from a mistaken sense of duty, and of a priesthood that possesses a keen sense of self-interest, a passing mental phase is seized, strengthened, and converted into a permanent possession. This in turn becomes a part of the environment that reacts, educationally, on every newcomer; while the priest appeals to the existence of an artificially prolonged mental phase as a proof of man's natural craving for religious belief.

All religions in civilised countries have been quick to seize upon the plastic nature of childhood as the right period for the inculcation of religion. It is not the case among uncivilised peoples, because the whole of the environment does then what is afterwards left to be done by special instructors. But in civilised countries, when certain forces make for the destruction of religion, it is recognised that childhood is the most favorable period—perhaps the only favorable period—for the inculcation of religious beliefs. Even with adults it is only when a sense of the mysterious is strong, and is enforced by a feeling of helplessness and a consciousness of ignorance, that religion grips them strongly. At other times it may appeal to one here and there as a plausible speculation, but it does not produce a strong conviction. Religion *must* get the child, if it is to live; it must utilise the child's capacity for receiving impressions. To wait until the individual reaches maturity is to lose everything.

Religion, be it observed, is the only subject that is compelled to do this. Every other subject can wait. If we try to teach a child simple principles of mathematics, or of physics, or of any of the sciences, and the child does not understand, we wait for a time until its understanding has developed. We say the thing is beyond the grasp of the child, and we wait for it to understand until we resume our teaching. A capacity for understanding what is taught is taken as an essential condition of the teaching. With religion this capacity is never considered. The child must be habituated to religious phrases, religious forms, and a religious atmosphere. Let it alone until it reaches years of understanding, and ministers of religion are the first to assure us that the task is then a hopeless one.

It may be granted that a policy of creating sentiments in favor of certain beliefs not *wholly* understood by the child is legitimate enough in its proper place. We do not wait until the child is old enough to appreciate rationally the grounds of good conduct to give it ethical instruction. We seek to bring out certain tendencies for good and suppress those of an opposite character, and so fashion the child's nature in accordance with an accepted standard. But, at least, these are things for which a reason *can* be given, and we are sure of the child's approbation when it is old enough to understand the subject fully. But, in the case of religion, the situation is quite different. We dare not wait until the child is old enough to understand, because by that time reason would be against us. The mystery does not decrease as understanding develops; it remains to the end. Moreover, among adults it is freely admitted that the religious hypothesis *may* be wrong, and there is clearly a very wide and vital difference between cultivating in a child certain feelings, the validity of which may be rationally demonstrated at any time, and teaching it to regard as true things that all admit might be false. In the one case, we have in view the child's future welfare; in the other, we are forcing upon it certain speculations of our own, on which there exists no common agreement.

I come back to the point at which I set out. Man is born neither religious nor atheistic. But, unlike the rest of the animal world, which is furnished with instincts adequate to its self-preservation, man is born with an immense capacity for acquiring habits and information. It is this that makes him, in a very peculiar sense, the victim of the educational force of his environment. For good or ill that fact remains as the most important truth concerning him. Given a society in which knowledge of all kinds were allowed to develop naturally and express itself freely, there would be no struggle to capture the child, such as now exists in all civilised countries. But, given a society where religious ideas maintain an artificial existence by the deliberate cultivation of a frame of mind favorable to its claim, and religious organisations are forced to concentrate their energies upon the capture of the young. That is why the clergy make so fierce a fight for the schools, it is also why, alarmed at a declining adult church attendance, both Church and Chapel are driven to paying renewed attention to Sunday-school development.

The child is the raw material out of which Church and Chapel create their future patrons. The adult is in one or other class mainly because of habits formed and impressions gained during childhood. Secure the child and the rest is easy. The tenacity of early impressions is notorious; the man dying of delirium babbles of his childhood's days, the criminal on the scaffold has his recollection carried back to far-off years when he received lessons at his mother's knee; the religious lessons received in youth seldom entirely disappear. We may not always be conscious of their force, but they are there, like the scar of a wound long since received. Even when the positive belief in religion is outgrown, the fear of it remains. There is often a lurking timidity in opposing it. And if the clergy have to face the fact that a great many do escape their control, they have the consolation of knowing that their policy has diffused a certain general impression as to the value of religion in the social life of the community.

But the child is also the raw material out of which the future citizen is fashioned; and, therefore, the question of who shall possess the child—the priest or the community—involves more than a mere contest of rival teachers. It is really a struggle for the direction of civilisation. The issue is a simple but profoundly important one. Are we to pay more attention to the temper of mind induced in a child than to the inculcation of specific beliefs? Are we to value the habit of finding reasons for beliefs—of criticising received opinions freely and without prejudice—more than a slavish re-echoing of hereditary doctrines? The inherited capacity of a child can be exercised in whichever direction seems preferable. We can turn it out a mere transmitter of established opinions or a new and healthy force for rational progress. The essential issue is whether the developing mind of the child is to be directed by agencies in which the growth of civilisation is entirely due, or by organisations that are bound to perpetuate the delusions of the past as the sole condition of their power in the present and the future.

C. COHEN.

Are Agnostics Cowards?

In the issue of this journal for June 8, we animadverted upon a sermon by the Rev. F. C. Spurr, of Melbourne, upon "Courageous Agnosticism," in which the reverend gentleman endeavored to depreciate knowledge in order to place the crown on the brow of faith. We have now before us, in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 9, his previous discourse upon "Cowardly Agnosticism." In itself this oration deserves no notice, being flippant, superficial, and illogical; but inasmuch as the preacher seems to be a great luminary in the Australian religious firmament, it may serve a good purpose to examine his present utterances somewhat in detail. Flippancy

and arrogance are in evidence from beginning to end. Mr. Spurr imagines that he is a very superior person who can afford to look down disdainfully upon those who are impudent enough to deny the possibility of supernatural knowledge. Listen to the following:—

"So long as any person honestly remains in doubt concerning God and the highest things, and at the same time keeps an open mind to all light and truth, and an open heart to receive these when they appear, so long must we extend to him or her the most hearty sympathy. Sympathy, however, disappears when Agnosticism belies its name and becomes dogmatic. It is one thing to say 'I do not know God; would that I did; I am not certain; would that I were.' It is quite another to dogmatically assert, as did Mr. Spencer, and as do our Rationalists to-day, 'The whole thing is inscrutable and beyond us. God is not only unknown, he is unknowable. We cannot know. Those who say they know are simply mistaken. Knowledge is impossible.' It is this dogmatism that is offensive, and, as I shall show you, cowardly."

This promise, "as I shall show you," this cocksure dogmatist signally fails to fulfil. He contrasts Christianity and Agnosticism by affirming that the former presents certain facts while the latter deals with pure ideas; but this contrast is wholly imaginary, and puts the preacher in a bad light. What are the facts which Christianity is said to present? These: "That God, although invisible and incomprehensible, has sufficiently revealed himself—his life and power—to enable men to enter into fellowship with him"; "the fact of Christ, and the fact of the Divine action in human life." It is passing strange that it has never dawned upon Mr. Spurr that these are not facts but theories, conjectures, ideas, the very points in dispute between Christians and Agnostics. God, Christ, and the Divine action in human life are metaphysical hypotheses, not ascertained facts. To say that "our own nature is a text from which we may preach to ourselves a sermon about God," is not to state a fact, but to propound a speculative dogma. It is a gross misrepresentation to assert that Agnostics refuse to face the facts. In their estimation the facts of life are the only things that really matter; but their earnest contention is that such facts do not embrace God and Christ and the Divine action, these being not facts but theological fancies, which the divines, without rhyme or reason, offer to the world as facts. If we decline their offer they charge us with a lack of seriousness and call us cowards.

At this point Mr. Spurr allows his cocksureness to run away with him, and he raves thus irresponsibly against Agnosticism:—

"It is cowardly because it is impertinent, and all impertinence is a form of cowardice. For a man to say, 'I do not know God,' may be perfectly true for him and modest withal; but if he continues, 'I deny that anyone else can or does know him,' he is impertinent, for he makes his lack of knowledge the measure of the knowledge of others. More than this, he gives the lie direct to that accumulated Christian experience of the best kind which is witnessed to by men and women of all times."

The reverend gentleman is fundamentally mistaken. There is no more impertinence in maintaining that no one can or does know God than in claiming that he can be known by all and is known to millions. Indeed, if there be impertinence at all it lies in the claim to knowledge, not in the assertion of ignorance. Mr. Spurr admits that God is both invisible and incomprehensible, and yet proclaims him as an object of knowledge, which is plainly a contradiction in terms. Here the reverend gentleman trots out what he calls a parallel case. He draws a vivid picture of husbands and wives living together for many years in perfect love and harmony. "Through years of sunshine and storm, through joy and sorrow, in wealth and in poverty, in health and in sickness, their mutual love has suffered no diminution, no shock. Rather it has grown ever stronger, and after half a century of wedded life they are more completely lovers." Now, if anybody, say a dramatist, comes along and pronounces such a case impossible, he richly deserves to be laughed to scorn

for giving expression to such an inane, brutal judgment. Unfortunately, however, this is in no sense a parallel case. Husbands and wives are veritable people of flesh and blood whose lives are objective realities that can be watched and examined, whereas God is admittedly an invisible and incomprehensible being, with whom we have no means whatever, except by faith, of getting into any sort of touch. Christian experience of communion with heaven possesses no evidential value, because the object with whom the alleged communion is held is a creation of faith, or imagination, but by no means an object of knowledge. Tennyson was much wiser than Mr. Spurr when he said, "We cannot know, for knowledge is of things we see."

The minister of Collins-street Baptist Church, Melbourne, is a perfect treat whenever he turns scientific. Having exhausted logic in defence of his strange thesis, he appeals to science for a final confirmation of it. Agnostics are coolly informed that "the scientific spirit in the name of which they speak entirely condemns them." This is a brand-new scientific discovery, the honor and glory of which belong to Mr. Spurr alone. Listen: "What is the scientific spirit? It is a spirit that leads men to seek until they find." We are prepared now for the following brilliant ray:—

"Had explorers, chemists, astronomers, and others accepted the Agnostic faith—'we do not know, nothing can be known'—the world would never have progressed. Scientists have always refused to be Agnostics in science, and to their indomitable efforts we owe our progress."

This is a miserable travesty of the Agnostic position, and it is impossible to take it seriously, or to believe that the preacher was awake when he penned it. It is a truism that scientists are not Agnostics in science; but they are, almost to a man, thorough Agnostics in relation to theology or Supernature. They are resolved to seek until they find within the limits of the mechanism of Nature, but they know of nothing beyond or above those limits. Without fear of intelligent contradiction we hold that science inevitably tends to foster Agnosticism in the minds of its students, in relation to all matters of a superhuman or supernatural character. To our forefathers Romulus and Remus, King Arthur, and Hengist and Horsa were historical personalities, but the science of history has relegated them to the sphere of myths. Mr. Spurr says that "God is found by all who seek him as he should be sought." Of course, we all know that God is sought and found only by faith. But why should it be necessary to seek him with such diligence? Surely, if he existed, there would be no necessity to seek him. Children do not have to seek in order to find their father. To show how utterly unscientific the Christian doctrine of God is we need only point out that it at once represents God as seeking man with quenchless desire, and man as instinctively and passionately engaged in the quest of God, and that yet, in spite of this mutual seeking, in a great number, perhaps in the majority, of instances, the two never find each other, while in the comparatively few instances in which they do presumably meet they are for ever losing, or in danger of losing, grip of each other. We have no hesitation in averring that as touching such a God every sane person is bound to be an Agnostic, which is only Atheist writ large. No science would ever encourage the quest for such a Deity.

No, Agnostics are not cowards; nor are they impertinent. Why, the cowardice and impertinence are characteristics of Christian believers, who never fail to vilify all who differ from themselves; and like Mr. Lloyd George, when hit we are instinctively impelled to hit back. Is it not impertinence of the worst kind to call such great men as Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Haeckel, Schafer, Chalmers Mitchell, and Ray Lankester cowards because of their attitude of unbelief towards the Christian religion? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of genuine Agnostics in Melbourne, many of them endowed by Nature with plenty of brains; but the minister of Collins-

street Baptist Church, a professional representative of a God of love and mercy, denounces them all as impertinent cowards. How very sweet of the dear man! Fancy his audacity in oracularly declaring that "no man can courageously remain an Agnostic." That is an unqualified falsehood, and it is difficult to believe that the preacher, in uttering it, did not know that he was lying. The fact is that the public avowal of Agnosticism implies the possession of an exceptional amount of courage. A weak man cannot possibly make such an avowal; and besides strength of character there must be a considerable quantity of mental power. It requires practically no courage to make a profession of faith in Christ and join a church, and multitudes do both without seriously thinking at all. Until quite lately the conventions rendered the life of an Agnostic extremely uncomfortable. He was looked upon and treated as an Ishmael. He was shunned as if he were a pestilent fellow and threatened the moral health of the community. But the triumph of science is slowly providing for him a respectable place in society. In Germany it is already the fashion not to attend a place of worship, only about three per cent. doing so. France, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, and even Great Britain rapidly follow suit, thus proving that Mr. Spurr was radically wrong when he added that it cannot be denied but that man is "incurably religious." He is not, but we can honestly say of him that he is incurably social, which is the most hopeful sign for the future.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity and the Chinese.—X.

(Continued from p. 438.)

"Since the treaties have permitted foreigners from the West to spread their doctrines, the morals of the people have been greatly injured" (Memorial "On the Restriction of Christianity," addressed to the Throne of China in 1884 by the High Commissioner Peng Yu-Lin.)—Dr. MORRISON, *An Australian in China*, p. 192.

"As to the opinion of the [Chinese] Government, an Imperial Edict of July 2, 1900, states clearly: 'Ever since foreign nations began the propagation of their religion there have been instances throughout the country of ill-feeling between the people and the converts.....The truth is that converts.....have relied on the missionary for support, with the result that they have committed many misdeeds.' An Edict published three days after this states: 'The reason for the fighting between the Chinese [Boxers] and the foreigners sprung from a disagreement between the people and the Christian converts.' Not a word, so far as I have yet ascertained, has been uttered either by the Boxers or the Imperial or Provincial Governments respecting opium in this connection."

"In his utter disregard for the conservation of human life, the views of Jonah closely resemble those of the present-day missionary and his supporters in England. After the wholesale torture and massacres in China, they set forth the doctrine that it is impossible to convert a nation to Christianity without rebellions, riots, and bloodshed, basing themselves on quotations from Scripture, such as: 'Not peace but a sword'; 'These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also,' and other isolated texts."—A. DAVENPORT, *China from Within*, pp. 36-66.

WE have remarked that China has been twice on the verge of being Christianised: First, by the Jesuits—the conditions under which they were so successful have passed, never to recur again—the second occasion was at the time of the great Tai-ping Rebellion, a movement about which very little is known by the vast majority of people, and that little is mostly erroneous.

Most people who have heard anything at all about the Tai-ping (sometimes written Ti-ping, Taeping, etc.) Rebellion, think that the Tai-pings were a band of brigands who aimed at overthrowing the Manchu rulers and reducing the empire to a state of anarchy, from which the Chinese were only rescued by that great Christian hero, General Gordon. You will not find much light thrown on the subject by studying missionary literature, unless you can get back to the missionary literature written at the time when the Tai-pings first took the field, then you will be surprised to find that the missionaries were backing them

for all they were worth. Even English histories of China seem to be struck dumb when they reach the period dealing with its origins and aims. Just staying long enough to record Gordon's exploits, and then hurrying on like skaters over thin ice. Yet the lowest computation of lives lost through this rising is twenty millions, other authorities giving thirty-nine millions, fifty millions, and even one hundred millions! If twenty million Christian lives had been sacrificed in any European country in the attempt to introduce a foreign religion, we should have heard something about it. We dealt with this episode in these columns some five years ago (October 25, 1908). Given concisely, the facts are as follows:—

"The great Tai-ping Rebellion," says Mr. Archibald Little, "broke out after the empire had enjoyed a long peace of over two hundred years, and the leader of which, Hung-siu-chuen, was one of the very few genuine Christian converts ever made in China."*

This Hung-siu-chuen (or tsuen) was the son of a well-to-do farmer living about thirty miles from Canton. Coming to Canton to sit for a government examination, he received nine tracts from a Protestant evangelist who was giving them away in the street. Upon arriving home and discovering their character, he threw them on one side, but some time afterwards, upon the advice of his brother-in-law, who had borrowed them, he studied them and became converted. This was in 1843. He immediately began to exhort those around him to accept Christianity, and in 1846 received an invitation from J. J. Roberts, an American missionary at Canton to come there and study. He remained with Mr. Roberts for two months studying the new religion. Returning home, his followers rapidly increased in numbers until, upon one occasion while a congregation of about five thousand were deep in prayer, the leaders were overcome by what they believed to be "a Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit" in the most approved style of religious revivalism as experienced from St. Paul down to Evan Roberts. They were now ripe for mischief.

As might be expected by those who know anything of missionary teaching, they soon began to fall foul of the idols and persecuted the religion they formerly professed, but which they now denounced as idolatry, in the usual intolerant style of that religion when it has the power. Says Mrs. Little:—

"With fierce and fanatical missionary zeal they at once set to work to break up one of the most esteemed images in the neighborhood—would not many Europeans on their first entrance into China wish to do likewise?—destroyed the vessels of spice and incense burning in front of it, were arrested and imprisoned."†

Released by friends, and emboldened by numbers and success, the Tai-pings formed an army and went on the march to convert the empire to Christianity.

All the inhabitants of the towns they captured who refused to accept the new faith were killed, in imitation of the Jews when they conquered the land of Canaan. Their leader, says Mr. Archibald Little, "modelled his action on that of the Jewish leaders, his war-cry being 'Sho Yao' ('Slay the idolaters.')"‡ The Tai-ping insurrection, says James Freeman Clarke, "has shown its religious character throughout." He observes: "Hymns of praise to the Heavenly Father and Elder Brother were chanted in the camp. And the head of the insurrection distinctly announced that, in case it succeeded, the Bible would be substituted in all public examinations for office in the place of Confucius."§

In every household throughout the Tai-ping territory, the Lord's Prayer, printed in large black characters on a white board, was hung up for the use of the children. The Sabbath was religiously kept on the seventh day. They celebrated the communion once a month by partaking of wine, and

everyone admitted to their fellowship was baptised after an examination and confession of sins.

The missionaries, who thought their business was booming splendidly, were enthusiastic over their new converts, and, as Demetrius Boulger observes, "took the Taepings under their very special protection, and strained all their influence to the advantage of espousing the cause of these spurious Christians."¶ Why Mr. Boulger should brand the Tai-pings as "spurious Christians" we do not know—and he gives no explanation—unless it arose from a servile pandering to the official pretence that the Tai-pings were robbers and brigands. Evidently the missionaries did not regard them as "spurious Christians," and the missionaries were the originators of the movement and intimate with it from the very commencement. It is very certain that the Tai-pings had very much more faith and belief in the Bible and Christianity than the cosmopolitan historian of the Far East, Mr. Demetrius Boulger, or of many prominent men of the type of Sir Oliver Lodge, who allow their names to be used as supporting a belief which has nothing in common with the crude and unscientific ideas of those before whom their names are paraded. "Nothing succeeds like success," says the proverb, and all those whose adherence to the faith would tend to its credit are, by hook or by crook, made to testify to the creed; while all those who are discreditable are "spurious Christians." But the facts of the case are not so easily burked in the case of the Tai-pings.

An Englishman, who held a command among the Tai-pings, observes:—

"I have probably had a much greater experience of the Ti-ping religious practices than any other European, and as a Protestant Christian I have never yet found occasion to condemn their form of worship. The most important part of their faith is the Holy Bible—Old and New Testament entire. These have been printed and circulated gratuitously by the Government through the whole population of the Ti-ping jurisdiction."†

Of one of the Tai-ping books, Dr. Medhurst, the missionary, declared: "There is not a word in it which a Christian missionary might not adopt and circulate as a tract for the benefit of the Chinese."‡

The attempt to realise the devastation and slaughter wrought by the Tai-ping revolution would stagger the strongest imagination. Says Mrs. Little, it "was to devastate China for over thirteen years with a destruction of human life far exceeding that of the whole Thirty Years' War in Germany."§ Lord Curzon, in considering how the missionaries acquit themselves in China, observes:—

"A hostile critic might retort that the leader of the Tai-ping Rebellion, who was a Christian convert, and as such was hailed by many of the missionaries as the herald of a new dispensation, succeeded in nothing better than in devastating thirteen out of eighteen provinces of China, and in sacrificing the lives (at the lowest computation) of 20,000,000 men."||

On another page he says, "it lasted for fourteen years, [and] cost China from twenty to fifty million lives" (p. 400).

The missionary organ, *China's Millions*, for January, 1903, describes the devastation suffered in the single province of Gan-hway, as follows:—

"No idea can be conveyed to the mind of the English reader of the sufferings endured by the people of this province during the Reign of Terror. Twice did the rebel hordes sweep through its fertile valleys and plains, carrying off its possessions and multitudes of people, never to return. Those who survived these onslaughts endured fresh suffering when the rebels were driven back by the Imperial troops, who completed the destruction the rebels had commenced."

* Demetrius Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney* (1908), p. 41.

† Lin-Le, *History of the Ti-ping Revolution* (1886), vol. i., p. 306; cited by Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, pp. 64-5. We have seen Lin-Le's history, the only work, we believe, dealing with the Tai-ping Revolution from the inside.

‡ Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, p. 69.

§ Mrs. A. Little, *Life of Li Hung Chang*, p. 7.

|| Lord Curzon, *Problems of the Far East*, p. 286.

* A. Little, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges*, p. 136-7.

† Mrs. A. Little, *Li Hung Chang*.

‡ A. J. Little, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges*, p. 3.

§ J. A. Clarke *Ten Great Religions* (1871), p. 64.

"Thirty out of thirty-nine millions were swept away, and in districts so complete was the desolation that not a man, nor a woman, nor a child, nor a hamlet, nor a cottage, not even a hut was left to mark the site of a once flourishing place."

Mr. Davenport, who cites the above testimony in his *China from Within* (p. 258), observes: "Seeing that thirty millions thus disappeared in one inland province, the figure of one hundred millions as the sum of all the inhabitants who lost their lives during this prolonged rebellion is evidently too low an estimate" (p. 259).

Perhaps it will be asked why the British Government went against the Tai-pings, and sent General—at that time Captain—Gordon to help suppress them if they were Christians? The fact of the matter is, our Government's sole consideration was our merchant trade with China. They had just concluded an expensive war with that object solely in view; they had, with the help of the French and modern firearms, brought the Chinese Government to its knees (the Chinese dispatches complained that "contrary to all the rules of war, instead of coming on from the front like an honorable foe, [they] had attacked the Taku forts from the rear")* and had put it in the irons of a commercial-religious treaty, and now meant to maintain its authority against all comers. As Scarth says: "Sir John Bowring's policy was that the British trade with China depended upon the present dynasty being maintained."†

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

By 44 votes to 39 (quite a narrow majority) the London County Council has rejected the recommendation of the Parks Committee that golf should be permitted on the Hainault course on Sundays. It was not a party discussion, however, nor a party vote. Lord Haddo, for instance, said that only a few members of the Hainault Club were in favor of Sunday golf, and this was flatly contradicted by Mr. A. O. Goodrich. The latter gentleman said that he was against Sunday picture shows, but in favor of opening golf links on Sundays, though he did not say why. At least, the reason was not recorded in the report. We should say that the real reason, in all probability, was the fact that he is vice-president of the Hainault Golf Club—and wishes to play the game on Sundays himself. It may also be that the sense of a coming defeat induced him to turn upon the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, "whose Sunday was like the tradesman's Saturday—it was his busy day." This would have sounded awfully wicked in the *Freethinker*, but it was greeted with roars of laughter on the London County Council. More laughter was due to the next speaker, Mr. G. A. Hardy, though we are afraid he did not get it. This gentleman declared that Sunday golf "would, in the end, result in a terrible blow to the workers of this country." We will end at that. It was the climax of the debate.

There is little respect for poets and poetry in this Christian country. At Southport, the other day, they got eight hundred little girls in white to greet the Queen. They were not able to manage anything original for the children to sing, so they prepared a parody of a famous and beautiful Scottish song, which turned out thus in the Southport rendering:—

"Kind, kind, and queenly is she,
Kind is Queen Mary;
With honor, love, and loyalty,
We breathe the name of Mary."

The man who perpetrated that hideous parody ought to be memorialised. He deserves to be stuffed and placed in a public museum, as responsible for the worst atrocity of the twentieth century. We dare say he belongs to the clerical profession.

We have hesitated to publish reports of the accounts of the new "Bulgarian Atrocities," not because we doubted their occurrence, but because these Christian Allies have shown themselves to be such colossal liars that one could never feel quite sure which story was correct. Eastern Christians generally have a high reputation for lying and

dishonesty, and the "Allies" well sustained this character in their conflict with Turkey. Freethinkers at least will remember the way in which the Christian papers and preachers in this country slobbered over the lofty aims of the gallant Crusaders who were bent on liberating a suffering population from the yoke of the Crescent. It was a war of the Cross against the Crescent. That is quite true, so far as England was concerned. That was all our preachers saw in it—the chance of beating a Mohammedan Power, and utilising the victory to advertise Christianity. Only the other Day Canon Peyke carried, in Convocation, a resolution that—

"This House is further of opinion that it will be the duty of the Church to avail itself of any opportunity that may arise in consequence of the recent victories of the allies in the Near East for the presentation of the Gospel of Christ to the Mohammedans in Europe and Asia Minor."

That is all Christians were concerned about—the chance of new markets for their spiritual wares. Many of them publicly described the ceremonies that would take place when the unselfish crusading Allies would celebrate Christian prayers in Santa Sophia.

Now, all this Christian humbug is blown into the air. It was no war of the Cross against the Crescent so far as the Allies were concerned. It was no war of liberation. It was a purely piratical expedition by Christian nations intent on nothing but plunder, and ready to get it by any amount of lying and cruelty. It is even admitted that the Turk may have been preferable to the Christian, and that the conquered territories will benefit little by the change. So little of the Cross against the Crescent element was there that Bulgaria—from whence the phrase originated—would be only too pleased to enter into a defensive alliance with Turkey against the other Balkan States. Some of the writers of the press are beginning to recognise the truth of what we have said above—which is only a repetition of what we said at the beginning of the war—but with singular fatuity they say the crusading element was not present. We beg to differ. It was present. The Crusades were conspicuous above all wars for their greed, cruelty, and internal dissension. And in this respect, at least, the most recent Crusade has lived up to the name.

To return to the stories of massacre. A week or so back Mr. Herbert asked in the House of Commons whether the Government had any information to give the House concerning religious persecution of Mohammedans or Moslems in Macedonia. Of course, no information was forthcoming, but it was admitted that complaints had been received. Directly after the Allies began their unofficial war, stories began to appear of outrages on captured villages, of women violated and exposed to all sorts of indecency. On July 10, the *Daily Telegraph* published a long account from its correspondent at the front, who had been invited by King Constantine to visit the town of Nigrita, just recaptured from the Bulgarians, and report his experience. Summarised, the correspondent's report is as follows:—Nigrita was a town of 8,000 inhabitants and 1,450 houses. "To-day it is a reeking heap of smouldering ruins, and the acrid stench of burning flesh and bones overpowers the nostrils as I write." Only forty-nine houses are left standing. "1,500 villagers have been foully murdered. Scores of women are still living who were violated, and every house was looted." The correspondent examined and cross-examined witnesses, and tested their stories in every way. His conclusion is that "seldom in the history of warfare has the barbarity of the Bulgarians been surpassed." And the contemptible religious press of Great Britain, after parading the Bulgarians and other Allies as noble-minded liberators, sacrificing themselves for the benefit of others, has not even the manliness to confess their error—if it was an error. Anyhow, they remain silent, only regretting the "fratricidal war." War in any case is bad and brutal, but when religion is there as an inspiring force it becomes indescribably barbarous.

We beg our readers to note well the following extract from an article, headed "A War of Hate," in the *Daily News* for July 9:—

"We do not doubt that our correspondent is right when he says that the mutual antagonism to the Turk was mild in comparison with the mutual savagery revealed by the new turn of events. The war against the Turk was a war against an alien tyrant of another race, another religion, another civilisation. It was a war against an oppressor, not against a rival. The new conflict has all the bitterness of a conflict between relations infuriated by jealousy and mutual ambitions. We do not recall a struggle in which the element of sheer hate has played so hideous a part as it is doing in the Balkans to-day."

Doesn't this bear out all that we have written about the Turks and the Balkan States? It is easy to see now that

* Mrs. Little, *Li Hung Chang*, p. 13.

† John Scarth, *Twelve Years in China* (1860), p. 265.

the Turks were controlling wasps' nests. They had a frightful task in keeping the various Christian nations from flying at each other's throats. We now see these Christian nations in their true colors. It is because they are Christians that they love each other so.

Rev. Vaughan Charles Turner, of Kettering, for forty years rector of Little Oakley, left £12,885. He would have taken it if he could. "Blessed be ye poor."

More of them! Rev. John Kipling Quarterman, of Blackheath, for some time Chaplain of the Woolwich Union, left £9,651. Rev. George Alexander Skinner, of Hove, Sussex, left £6,714.

At the recent annual conference of the United Methodist Church, at Halifax, the new President, the Rev. W. Redfern, of Rochdale, declared that their Church had always had a passion for freedom. It may be so, but the fact had escaped us. We never heard of United Methodists having a passion for anybody's freedom than their own,—which is not really freedom at all, but a selfish share of privilege. It would be news to us, for instance, if they passed a resolution in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. Freedom? Yes. But not for Freethinkers.

The United Methodist Church Conference resolved to make further efforts to obtain chaplain representation in the Army and Navy. This is one of the Christian bodies which profess to believe that there should be no connection whatever between Religion and the State. That is the theory. In practice it depends on *what* religion and *what* connection. Nonconformists do not object to the State patronage of Religion when it serves their turn. In elementary schools, for instance; or in the exemption of chapels, as well as churches, from rates and taxes.

Mr. Harold Spender should really try to omit the pious gags from his political articles in the *Daily News*. In a diffuse column on "Fratricide in the Balkans" the other day, he said that "the spectacle is as miserable as it is horrible." And he might have stopped there. But he must go on to say that "the folly and crime of it cry to Heaven." It does not appear, though, to reach the ears of the Boss, who takes no notice. Mr. Spender assures us, however, that "it is one of those things over which the angels weep." Shakespeare's poetry is grand in its proper place; it is poor stuff when degraded to a newspaper announcement.

"Sub Rosa" is rather a wearisome humorist, but he might write English. He calls old Spelman "a great antiquarian." What is an "antiquarian"? There is no such substantive in the English dictionary. "Antiquarian" is an adjective. We suppose Mr. Hughes means *antiquary*.

It is not of very great consequence, only one might as well be exact, and there is a slovenly habit abroad of tacking familiar sayings on to any well-known name. Thus Mr. Philip Snowden remarks that "One French monarch was safe from assassination because his heir was more detested than himself." The story really belongs to our Charles II. His brother James had been remonstrating with him on his habit of wandering about without guards. "Fret not that I go unattended," he replied, "for they will never kill me, James, to make you King." Charles was a shrewd judge of men and circumstances, and very much wiser than most people have imagined. The popular estimate of his character which he so carefully fostered is, perhaps, the best proof of this.

Dr. Campbell Morgan tells us that God is "a God of action, reigning over the Universe in every form so that nothing escapes his government." Then, of necessity, he is still a man of war, delighting in scenes of bloody cruelty and horrible carnage; and Jesus Christ, instead of being the Prince of Peace, is the most heartless of warriors. There is absolutely no escape from this conclusion. If God governs this world, he is a God of unspeakably cruel and blood-thirsty action. Dr. Morgan has unwittingly supplied us with an unanswerable argument for Atheism.

The Bishop of Exeter has sent a friendly letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference which has opened at Plymouth. This is thought so unusual that the letter is called "very striking." It is almost a miracle when Christian denominations have a good word for each other. Such is the upshot of nearly two thousand years of the religion of love!

Sabbatarianism is naturally rampant at Cambridge. By a majority of thirty-three votes to ten the Town Council refused to sanction a Trades Union demonstration on Parker's Piece last Sunday, under the auspices of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. Several members declared that such an assembly would be "a desecration of the Sabbath." Mr. Hawkins, a Conservative Churchman, said he had had experience of such Sundays in London, and they were "more like Bedlam than Sundays." He was balanced by a Liberal Nonconformist, Mr. Sturton, who declared that it would be a disgrace to Cambridge to begin to allow these demonstrations. Every sort of religion is the same when it comes to common sense and common justice.

The following is from the *Daily News* (July 11):—

"Sir Lewis Dibdin, Dean of the Arches, yesterday delivered judgment in the Court of Arches on the appeal by the Bishop of Ely against a decision by the Chancellor of the Diocese. The Chancellor held that the writing and posting of an admittedly obscene letter by a clergyman to a young lady parishioner was not an offence under the Clergy Discipline Act, 1892, and dismissed the case. The defendant is the vicar of St. Matthew's, Littleport, and Sir Lewis said he had been in orders for more than forty years, and must therefore be above sixty years of age. He was also married. His Lordship held that the writing and sending of the letter was an immoral act within the meaning of the Clergy Discipline Act, 1892. The appeal was therefore allowed, and remitted to the Consistory Court of the diocese of Ely in order that further proceedings might be taken."

Before the passing of the Clergy Discipline Act, under Gladstone, it was impossible to get rid of a peccant clergyman. His bishop could inhibit him from preaching, but he remained a clergyman and retained his benefice. Many influential Nonconformists opposed the Bill in order to leave the Church of England with all the trouble of its black sheep. Mr. Gladstone was very angry at this, and called it blackguardly—which indeed it was. It was another illustration of "How these Christians love one another!"

We were under the impression that Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* had been withdrawn from use at the Universities, but it appears that we were mistaken. According to "Cambridge Notes" in last week's *Athenaeum*, Paley still holds the field:—

"It is a matter of speculation whether Paley's *Evidences* will be finally killed by the proposed scheme. That immortal work, though a trifle out of date, has hitherto managed to survive all attempts to destroy its study. Years ago the Divinity Professors tried to abolish it, but the present Dean of Wells—then, I believe, Norrisian Professor—spoke up so eloquently for Paley as a sound theologian and an honored member of the same college as himself, that the *Evidences* once more survived the ordeal. At present it is easier than the alternative—Logic and Chemistry, and it is studied in the analysis, as of yore, without much benefit or injury to the faith of the candidates. One thing may be said in its favor: now that Euclid has gone, it is the only compulsory subject which gives the slightest idea of the meaning of an argument; and, if Paley's premises are granted, his conclusions are hard to refute."

"A trifle out of date" is really rich. Paley never was actually up to date. It was a masterpiece, but a masterpiece of sophistry, which would have to be rewritten to be effective now,—and who could rewrite it but Paley himself? Take, for instance, his treatment of Celsus. Paley based an argument on the silence of Celsus. He was bound to allude to the fact that the writings of that keen opponent of Christianity are not extant; but it would never do to state that they were deliberately destroyed by the Christian Church by means of an imperial rescript; so Paley stuck to the truth as far as it served the turn. "The writings of Celsus," he said, "are lost." It was extraordinarily clever. But it reminds us of the appeal the American lawyer made on behalf of his client who was indicted for murdering his own parents. He besought the jury to have compassion upon the orphan prisoner.

The writer of these "Cambridge Notes" is hardly accurate, we believe, in his reference to David Hume. He relates that when Hume's "old servant" called him "Saint David" the philosopher-historian—who, by the way, had a pawky humor of his own, running easily into irony—replied "Better men than I have been called Saints." On the face of it there is something wrong with this variant of the story. We fancy the following is more like the original. Hume's reputation for scepticism was common in Edinburgh, and one day a lively street urchin chalked "Saint David" on the great man's by no means luxurious dwelling. The maidservant came running in full of indignation to tell her master of the outrage. "Never mind, lassie," he answered, "many a better man has been made a Saint." We are writing from memory, a long way from books of reference.

We do not allow political questions, as such, to be discussed in the *Freethinker*. But there are political questions which have definite religious aspects. Welsh Disestablishment, for instance. There are also religious aspects of Home Rule. Sir Edward Carson and the Ulsterites (who, after all, only represent a little more than half their province) constantly parade the religious aspects of Irish self-government. They never tire of declaring that Home Rule means Rome Rule. Without wishing to discuss Home Rule on other grounds, we unhesitatingly repeat what we have plainly asserted before, that Home Rule does *not* mean Rome Rule, but the very opposite. Irish nature does not differ intrinsically from other human nature. It is not endowed with a double dose of original superstition. What the priest wants in Ireland is not Home Rule but a perpetual agitation for Home Rule. Home Rule would rob the Church of half its power and profits in the time that it takes for a new generation to grow up. This decadence of the Catholic Church is common in all Catholic countries in which representative government triumphs. Look at Italy, look at Portugal, look even at Spain, look above all at France. Catholic France has gradually developed into Freethinking France. Protestantism can scarcely be said to exist there. So it will be in Ireland. It is only a question of time.

We have as much right to say that of Ireland as we have of any other country. That it is a part of the United Kingdom makes no difference at all. The argument is not political or social; it is independent of frontiers; it rests upon an historical law of mental development. That is the great thing. The passions of the hour die out and are forgotten. The laws of human progress are eternal. Catholic and Protestant have fought each other for centuries. Behind them both is the slow but irresistible movement of civilisation, which is overwhelming them both, and will leave them behind as landmarks of antiquarianism.

Our denial that Home Rule meant, or could possibly mean, Rome Rule, some time ago cost us the fairly liberal subscription of one of our readers to the President's Honorary Fund. We regret the fact—for the subscriber's sake. No financial consideration, in such a connection, never weighed with us more than a feather does on a railway weighing machine. We never wrote for money, and we do not think we ever shall. We trust our career has shown that we are above bribes or intimidation. When we cannot gain a hearing for what we think we shall remain silent.

We are sorry to see Sir Edward Carson descending so much to Billingsgate. We should not allow such language to appear in the *Freethinker*. We believe that Sir Edward Carson is quite in favor of prosecuting us, simply because we displease his fellow Christians; but we are far from returning the compliment; what we preach we practice; we would allow him the liberty of speech that he would deny us. We believe in freedom. He doesn't. We don't know what he does believe in. He professes to believe in religious toleration, but he rarely opens his mouth without stirring up religious bigotry and hatred.

"Alfonso," writing in the *Catholic Herald* for July 12, admits that some popes, though by no means as many as Protestants allege, have been bad men. To us such an admission seems fatal to the claim of papal infallibility, but "Alfonso" regards it as quite harmless. Indeed, he accounts for the existence of unworthy pontiffs by saying that "our Lord never promised that the supreme heads of the Church should always be holy men," and that "God permits the frailties of the popes in order to show that the Church is a Divine institution, and that it survives all, no matter how terrible shocks, by its inherent supernatural power." They must be exceptionally gullible who will find this explanation satisfactory. How on earth can corrupt popes show forth the Divinity of the Church? Whether they be many or few, the Church is disgraced by having unworthy heads. Fancy the most Holy God being represented on earth by unholy men! The very thought is impossible.

The most curious thing of all is that bad popes are yet infallible. "Alfonso" assures us that "our Lord" did promise to make them infallible teachers of the truth, and no pope has ever taught heresy to the Church. History, however, informs us that successive popes have promulgated contrary doctrines, and that not a few have contradicted themselves; and we all know that papal schisms have been notoriously numerous. We readily grant that the dogma of infallibility is implied, if not actually taught, in the New Testament; and we are convinced that no one can be Biblically orthodox without believing it. The only fault

that can possibly be found with it is that it isn't true.

Canon Masterman, in the exercise of that Christian charity which is so characteristic of the Pulpit, calls the New Theology "a Pantheistic and anti-Christian hash." This delightful bit of polite, elegant language occurs, not in a newspaper report of an extemporaneous address, but in a published volume, entitled *The Challenge of Christ*. We have no sympathy with the New Theology, any more than with the Old; and we employ the quotation merely as an illustration of the ardor with which Christians love one another when their opinions are in conflict.

Canon Masterman is a Socialist, and, like all other Christian Socialists, he is convinced that Socialism, "apart from the Christian ideal of personal character might prove a colossal disaster." Why? Is not Socialism itself an ideal of personal character? Whether true or false, Socialism is represented to be an infallible remedy for all existing evils. The Socialist is declared to be the ideal man, ideal in his own character and in his relations with all his fellows. Does Canon Masterman mean to convey the conviction that, after all, the Socialist ideal of character and conduct is defective, and that it must be supplemented by what he calls the Christian ideal? To our mind nothing is more indisputable than the fact that Christianity and Socialism are fundamentally opposed to each other. The Gospel Jesus is without doubt an Individualist, and under Christianity a stupendously cruel form of Individualism has almost invariably prevailed, and still prevails.

In connection with the Anglo-German Exhibition it is proposed to open the Crystal Palace on Sundays. The Archbishop of Canterbury has promptly written to the Imperial Sunday Alliance advising its secretary to write to the Lord Mayor warning him that this may affect the fund now being raised for the purchase of the Palace and grounds. We do not think that the threatened financial boycott will have much effect, as the fund appears to be well on the road to completion. But if the Palace is to become public property, there is every reason why it should fall in line with London museums and art galleries and open every Sunday for the benefit of the public. If Christians had a healthy and sensible concern for family life, they would realise that Sunday is the one day in the week in which a man and his wife and children could comfortably spend a day at the Palace. Any other day is difficult for most, and for working men practically impossible. Something in this direction might help to raise English family life to the level of family life on the Continent, where united parties are much more common than they are in this country. But, of course, all the Archbishop has in view is the sectarian question of how it will affect Church attendance.

The Congregational Union has decided to collect £50,000 in order to provide a minimum salary (of how much?) for its ministers. What was the maximum salary of the first twelve apostles—if they ever existed? Just what they could get into the common dish, which is mentioned in the story of the last supper. Sometimes, we dare say, it was thick with solids; at other times, we also dare say, it was thin for the want of them. Such as it was, they had to be contented; not even Judas seems to have been dissatisfied. How many Congregational ministers would accept a job in the Lord's vineyard on the same terms? How many of them, that is, are real Christians?

Now that organised Christianity is rapidly dying, its ministers assure us that unorganised or spiritual Christianity is making amazing progress everywhere. Dr. Horton states that "while it is true that religion seems to lose ground," it is equally true that Christianity is gaining ground." Religion, he admits, is not in itself a good thing, and its passing away may not mean a serious loss; but Christianity, he is confident, is taking a vital hold of the world, and slowly transforming it into the image of Christ. What evidence is there of the truth of such a statement? The Old Age Pension and the Insurance Acts. All we can say is that the case for Christianity is a desperately bad one when this is all that can be said for it. A little more than a year ago Dr. Horton sadly complained that the current of things was dead against the Christian faith, and that in consequence spiritual work was dreadfully handicapped. Can the trend of things have been so radically reversed in so short a time? It is Dr. Horton that has changed; and this is his new plea: "If religious decay, Christianity marches ever forward, for Christianity is Christ." And, at this rate, nobody can tell what either Christ or Christianity is; but never mind, both are marching to—death.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £158 1s. 11d. Received since:—J. H. (Liverpool), 5s.; Mrs. A. W. Hutty, 2s. 6d.; A. Hacke, 10s.

F. J. VOISEY.—We congratulate you, but don't see anything in the vicar's remarks of special interest to us or our readers.

E. B.—Many thanks for useful matter.

C. F. BUDGE.—You assume that Nature is bound to justify herself to you. She is under no such obligation. There are many theories, of which reincarnation is one, that are logical because they are *made* logical, and may all be false. Nothing is more logical than Presbyterianism, with its heaven, hell, and predestination. Logic, after all, means nothing but self-agreement or the absence of self-contradiction.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are very welcome.

NEOPHYTE.—The explanation is that Stephen Grellet was a liar—like ninety-nine per cent. of all the Christians who have written about "infidels." William Cobbett, who had an immense respect for Thomas Paine as a political writer, investigated that "Mary Ross" story when he was in New York in 1819; he called on the woman herself, and proved her to be a liar of whom the Devil might be proud. His conclusion was that her whole story of Paine's recantation, etc., was "a lie from beginning to end." Cobbett was not an "infidel." He was a Christian. See Conway's *Life of Paine*.

E. GWINNELL.—When we say that political questions cannot be discussed in the *Freethinker* it must not be assumed that we have not thought about them ourselves. We simply mean that our pages are not the place to ventilate them.

L. B. WARDEN.—"Absolute freedom of discussion" may refer to the treatment or the choice of topic. You confuse them. We never closed, because we never opened, our columns to essentially political discussions. What you call "militancy" is a question of policy. If you want to discuss whether arson and murder are legitimate political and social weapons in a civilised community, we can only reply that this journal is not edited and published at a lunatic asylum. We have never said a word against Woman Suffrage, or any other suffrage, in these columns. All we have objected to is violence of method,—from the initial interference with free public meeting up to arson, which easily passes into homicide. Violence is like a drug; it satisfies only by means of ever-increasing doses. For the rest, you do not surprise us by cutting off your weekly "tuppence." We have weathered other calamities, and we hope to weather this one.

A. H. DUNSTAN.—You do well to write again about the matter. Mr. Foote is away from the office for a day or two, and, as the question is obviously one for him to deal with, your letter has been forwarded.

Mrs. A. HUTTY.—Subscription received and acknowledged. Mr. Foote values your good wishes for his health, and appreciates your high opinion of his *English Review* article. Articles of that class from his pen might appear more frequently were there not other calls upon his time, and it is a case of the most urgent work first.

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

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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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We do not know that Box Hill is exactly a memorial to George Meredith, although he lived at Flint Cottage so many years. The best Meredith memorial, of course, is his collected writings. Nevertheless, we are glad to hear that the rumor that the speculative jerry builder was to be let loose on Box Hill has been set at rest for ever. Sir Robert Hunter, at the recent annual meeting of the National Trust,

announced that a gentleman who wished to remain anonymous had proposed to purchase Box Hill and hand it over in trust for public use and enjoyment in the future. The idea might now be consummated by the preservation of Flint Cottage.

"A reasonable facility of divorce" has, for ever so many years, been one of the immediate practical objects of the National Secular Society. We are delighted to see that this object is attracting more and more support amongst thoughtful people. This was shown in the late Majority Report of the Divorce Commission. It was also very strongly displayed by a recent speech of Mr. Plowden, the well-known London magistrate, to a meeting of the Actress's Franchise League. The following report of Mr. Plowden's speech is from the *Daily Chronicle*:—

"Mr. Plowden said legislation to extend the grounds for divorce was bound to come. He had authority to say that a Bill had been drafted to carry into action the proposals of the Majority Report of the Commission. The Bill was in the capable hands of Sir David Brynmor Jones, and he believed it was laid on the table of the House of Commons the previous day.

"No feverish agitation was required—no mammoth demonstrations in Hyde Park, not even the destruction of a single window-pane. What was required were a few penetrating lines in a short Act of Parliament, and there would be lifted an immense load of misery from thousands and thousands of homes which were at present rent asunder by conjugal strife.

"Referring to his police-court experience of separations, he said it was his sympathy with the poor that caused him to take an interest in the divorce question.

"I live amongst the poor," he added, "and I don't believe a more patient and more long-suffering class are to be found than in the slums and alleys of London."

"In many cases, he continued, separations led women to the gutter or workhouse through no fault of their own. What was wanted was not medicine, but a surgical operation. When a woman discovered that she had married a drunkard who terrorised her, or her partner became a lunatic, some people held that she should be bound to him, 'because the sanctity of the tie forbade divorce!' Others said: 'Whom God hath joined—.' But he was not going to confound God with a curate. (Laughter and cheers.) He would rather say, 'Whom God has ceased to join let no man keep together.' Besides holding that divorce should be granted by mutual consent, he would like to see no marriage legal unless it was performed before the registrar.

"Without divorce, marriage—at the best an experiment—was reduced to a gamble, for it punished the innocent. That a couple, whose confident hope of a happy union was replaced by a decision after marriage that they were not suited, could not break the fetters which they had innocently forged was a cruel barbarity and a positive disgrace to civilisation."

Miss Gertrude Kingston approved of divorce, but she did not wish to see it too easy. Which also is a point of view that should not be lost sight of.

We regret to hear that Christian rowdism has been developing at the open air meetings of the Edmonton Branch of the N. S. S. Last Sunday evening Miss Kough was subjected to continuous interruption during the whole of her lecture; not satisfied with this, some of the pious hooligans present took to the Biblical pastime of stone-throwing. One struck her on the back; but, fortunately, no injury was done. After she had concluded her lecture, and left the meeting, the rowdism became still greater. Perhaps Freethinkers who have a little time to spare on Sundays will feel moved to pay a visit to the Edmonton Branch meetings. There is nothing that so effectually checks the cowardly ruffianism of these Christian Evidence supporters as the sight of a goodly number of Freethinkers round the platform.

A book of what should be very great interest is promised through the Oxford University Press. It is *Autobiographical Notes* by the late William Hale White, the author of the "Mark Rutherford" series of novels and a few other volumes. He was a powerful writer and a thorough Freethinker.

The following is from last week's *Athenæum*:—

"The *Early Life of Mark Rutherford (W. Hale White)*, by himself, will be published by Mr. Humphrey Milford this month. These autobiographical notes were written by Mr. Hale White when he was 78 years old, not primarily for publication, but 'to please two or three persons related to me by affection.' The volume, which has been seen through the press by Miss Mary Theodora White, is uniform with *Pages from a Journal and More Pages*, already issued by the Oxford University Press, and includes portraits of Mark Rutherford and his father, and views of old Bedford."

We shall welcome this book and introduce it to our readers. But we must deny at once that it can be *uniform* with the two volumes mentioned, for these volumes are dissimilar from each other. We speak without hesitation, for they are both in our own library.

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

THE TWO VIRGIN BIRTH STORIES.

THE earliest Gospel legends of which we have any knowledge—viz., those from which the three Synop- tists derived the main portion of their Gospels— commenced with the preaching of John the Baptist, as in the canonical Mark. Later on, new stories came into circulation relating to the births of Jesus and the Baptist, and to the infancy and childhood of the Savior—the originators of the legends being unknown. From this later class of literature two of the Gospel writers, Matthew and Luke, have given us revised versions of the Birth stories, derived in each case from primitive narratives now called apocryphal (Matt. i., ii.; Luke i., ii.).

Matthew, in chap. i., introduces Joseph and Mary, and speaks of the latter as being "found with child of the Holy Ghost." In chap. ii. he says:—

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of *Herod the king*, behold there came wise men from the east," etc.

Further on, we find this king to be Herod the Great, who reigned thirty-four years (38 B.C.—4 B.C.), and also that the birth is placed towards the end of his reign. Next, it is stated that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went to Egypt, and did not return until after the death of Herod. Furthermore, Herod is stated to have slaughtered all the male children of Bethlehem "from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully learned of the wise men." It is implied in the narrative that the time of the appearance of the star coincided with that of the birth. These statements are all the data we possess for fixing the year of the birth of Jesus Christ; whence we have but to consider the following alleged circumstances: (1) Herod did not massacre the babies until nearly two years after the first appearance of the star; (2) he lived for some time, long or short, after the massacre; (3) he died in 4 B.C. Hence, according to Matthew, the birth of Jesus could not have been later than 6 B.C.; but it may have been earlier.

We come now to Luke's account, which commences as follows:—

Luke ii. 1—5.—"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the inhabited earth should be registered. This registration [first] took place when Kurenios was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.....to register himself, with his betrothed wife," etc.

Luke, as already stated, took the first two chapters of his Gospel from apocryphal writings, in one of which—the Protevangelium of James—it was stated (par. 17): "And there was an order from the emperor Augustus that all in Bethlehem should be enrolled." The words "enrolled" and "registered" are merely translations of the same Greek word, which in the Authorised Version is rendered "taxed."

Now Luke, in consulting the *Antiquities* of Josephus for historical data connected with the alleged Gospel events, noticed among other matters the statement that Quirinius (therein called Kurenios) came to Judæa to superintend a registration; but not taking time to properly understand the matter, that evangelist wrote, as we have seen, that all the inhabitants of countries subject to Cæsar were to be registered for taxation—which registration explained, he thought, why Joseph had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But Luke was mistaken. There was no such decree made by Cæsar Augustus: the facts are simply as follows.

Ten years after the death of Herod the Great, Archelaus, who had governed Samaria and Judæa, was deposed by Augustus, and his kingdom was made a Roman province. As a preliminary to this change of government, Cæsar, after appointing Quirinius president of Syria, sent him into Judæa

"to take account of the people's substance," and with him went Coponius as procurator. This was all. A registration was made of the people living in those two provinces, who would be required to pay tribute to Cæsar, and the list doubtless included those who had previously paid to Archelaus (*Antiq.* 17, 11, 4; 17, 13, 2 and 5; 18, 1, 1). As to "Joseph the carpenter," if he was then living in Galilee, as Luke states, he would pay his tribute to the tetrarch of Galilee: the registration related only to the two provinces that had been governed by Archelaus. But, in any case, there would be no rushing about of the whole population to cities in which some remote ancestors had once lived. The names would be taken in each city as it stood, where the residents, and their social position and property, were known. The idea of Joseph journeying from Galilee to Bethlehem to pay a tax not required of him is nothing less than idiotic.

Furthermore, all Luke's statements in chap. ii. respecting the birth and childhood of Jesus are but a revised version of fictitious narratives which he found in the apocryphal Gospels of his time. The story of the child Jesus, for instance, being found by his parents in the temple, sitting surrounded by learned rabbis (Luke ii. 41—52) is still found, almost verbatim, in one of the few apocryphal writings that have come down to us—the Gospel of Thomas.

There is one word in the foregoing Gospel statement for which Luke is not responsible: this is the word "first" in the sentence, "This registration first took place when Kurenios was governor of Syria." The word should have been expunged by the New Testament Revisers; but, instead of so doing, those Christian scholars made the passage read: "This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria"—a statement which implies that at least two enrolments were made during the governorship of Quirinius. The reason for this misrepresentation is obvious. In Matthew's account, the birth of Jesus took place in the reign of Herod the Great, in the year 6 B.C., or earlier; in Luke's account Jesus was born during the registration under Quirinius, in the year A.D. 6—that is to say, twelve years later. The only way to reconcile these conflicting narratives is by first boldly asserting that two registrations were made under Quirinius, the first in 6 B.C., the year of the Birth, according to Matthew; next, by brazenly asserting that Quirinius was governor of Syria in that year also. Now, astonishing to relate, both assertions are actually made, and the historical registration recorded by Josephus, A.D. 6, is declared to be a second enrolment, and not the one referred to by Luke. This method of harmonising shows the lengths to which Christian advocates will go to conceal obvious Gospel fictions, as well as their utter disregard for truth. For, needless to say, there was no registration in Judæa in the latter part of the reign of Herod the Great, nor in any later years, save that mentioned by Josephus in A.D. 6. Neither, again, had Quirinius been governor of Syria before the latter year. Josephus speaks of him as new to the presidency, though he had held "other magistracies" (*Antiq.* 18, 1, 1).

It is further a fact of history that from 12 B.C. down to 3 B.C., the office of president of Syria was filled by two persons only, Saturninus and Quintilius Varus, the latter succeeding the former in 5 B.C. (*Antiq.* 17, 5, 2). During this period—which covers the "Birth" of Matthew—Josephus refers to the ruling president thirteen or fourteen times, and in each case mentions the one or the other by name. There was therefore no place for Quirinius between 12 B.C. and 3 B.C. If further proof be needed of the registration to which Luke referred, it is given by Luke himself, who represents a Jewish rabbi as saying (Acts v. 37):—

"After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the Registration, and drew away much people," etc.

Here it is clear that Luke knew of but one "registration" or "enrolment," namely, that made by Quirinius (or Kurenios) in A.D. 6, as narrated by

Josephus, who in the same paragraph (*Antiq.* 18, 1, 1) records the insurrection raised by Judas of Galilee against the payment of tribute to the Romans. Here, too, we have proof that the word "first" in Luke ii. 2 is a later addition.

But the Christian falsification of history is not yet ended. In a Christian text-book called *Aids to the Student of the Holy Bible* I find a "Historical Epitome" arranged in tabular form, from which I make the following extracts:—

- 6 B.C.—"The census or registration of the Roman world (Luke ii. 2) begins."
- 5 B.C.—Antipater "is convicted before Herod and Varus, legatus of Syria.....Birth of Christ.....Quirinius legatus of Syria the first time."
- 4 B.C.—"Local rebellions, especially under Judas of Galilee, plunge Palestine into anarchy and bloodshed..... Varus, legatus of Syria, restores order with fire and sword, crucifying 2,000 Jews."
- A.D. 6.—"Augustus banishes Archelaus.....Quirinius, again legatus of Syria, makes a taxing-census."

From the foregoing, it will be seen: (1) that the two conflicting "Birth" stories are merged into one, and placed in 5 B.C.; (2) that Quirinius is fraudulently represented as legatus, or imperial governor, during that year; (3) that Judas of Galilee, who is named in the Acts as an agitator "in the days of the Registration" (*i.e.*, A.D. 6) is transferred to 4 B.C. Here we have a sample of the methods employed by Christian reconcilers to nullify the results of adverse Biblical criticism.

In the foregoing "Epitome" the words I have placed in italics are nothing less than falsifications of history. In Luke ii. 1—5, Jesus Christ is said to have been born at the time when a registration was being made in Judæa: this is the one great fact to be borne in mind. Now the first statement in the foregoing extract (under 6 B.C.)—that "the census or registration of the Roman world (Luke ii. 2) begins"—is untrue, and is made simply to support Luke's error respecting "a decree.....that all the inhabited earth should be registered." As already stated, there was no such decree by Cæsar Augustus: neither was there a historical registration of any kind in 6 B.C.—or one begun in that year—nor in 5 B.C. or 4 B.C. If a census at Rome be referred to, there was one in 29 B.C., in 8 B.C., and in A.D. 14; but none in 6, 5, or 4 B.C. But, even had such been the case, it would not affect Palestine, or any other country. The Epitome statement could only deceive the very ignorant.

Next, with regard to "Judas of Galilee," that individual only became known, even according to the Acts, "in the days of the Registration," at which time he raised an agitation against paying tribute to the Romans. There was no registration in 4 B.C., where Christian falsifiers have placed him, and no question of paying tribute to the Romans: he has therefore no place in history but A.D. 6, when that tribute was about to be paid.

Lastly, in this Epitome, Quintilius Varus is president of Syria all the time. He is named as *legatus* both before and after the "Birth of Christ"; and when anarchy arose in Judæa during the absence of Archelaus in Rome, it was Varus, not Quirinius, who marched with a legion from Antioch, and put down the disturbances. Varus was the governor of Syria: Quirinius is but an interpolated name. It is almost needless to say, there is no historical record of this Quirinius being president of Syria prior to A.D. 6.

One other question remains to be noticed. Luke states in his Gospel (iii. 23) that "in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar" (*i.e.*, A.D. 28) Jesus "was about thirty years of age." This statement places the "Birth" in the year 2 B.C.; that is to say, four years later than the time given by Matthew, and eight years earlier than that previously given by Luke himself. There are thus three conflicting dates to be reconciled instead of two. And, after all this investigation, the evidence for the historicity of the Virgin Birth stories remains the same: Matthew and Luke found them among some lying apocryphal writings of their time, and made revised copies of them—the original concoctors of the stories being

unknown. If to this lack of evidence we add the conflicting dates, the flat contradictions of the stories themselves, and the utter improbability of a Virgin birth, we arrive at the only conclusion possible—that both were early Christian fabrications.

ABRACADABRA.

Jesus on Holiday.

THEY went to church; I came down to the sea; and now I am wondering whether they are enjoying the service as much as I am enjoying the sunshine and sea-air. Somehow, I think the balance falls on my side. They are attending the old kirk with a different name. The main portions of the worship will certainly be identical to what they have respected throughout their lives. The form of the service will be similar. At the same time, many little distinguishing traits will crop up occasionally, and, methinks, their minds will readily be led from what they themselves term the reality, to the superficial. Comparisons will be worked out mentally; and not all the power of God will be able to dull to extinction the feeling that *their* method of worshiping God is by far the better. And so I conclude that they, despite their beliefs, are not so much worshipers as observers; and the suspicion steals over me that practically the same may be said of all the holidaying Christians in Britain.

Easily can I imagine the members of a small church being really imbued with the spirit (so-called) of worship. They know each other. They are more or less actuated by the same desires, and feelings, and ideas. Worshiping together, they may truly experience the fellowship that robs conflicting characteristics of their sharpness. They will draw together and taste the happiness of fellowship. Paucity of numbers makes for comradeship; and they will delight in it, saying it is one of God's great gifts. But I cannot imagine a crowd, gathered from all corners of the land, basking in the sunshine of such a fellowship. Nor is it possible that every sub-lieutenant of Jesus Christ possesses the wonderful power of linking together human units that have no mental relationship except their vaunted love of God. Consequently, the eloquence poured over pulpit bulwarks is blarney, if I may be so rude as to use the word; church attendance in holiday resorts, as in cities, hypocrisy, and, necessarily, a base insult gratuitously offered to, and never refused by, the Lord of the Heavens; and the happiness derived from it absolutely fictitious.

Besides, people on holidays usually determine to enjoy themselves to the utmost. They go for pleasure; and pleasure is not to be found within the walls of a church. "But," Christians object, "the enjoyment we receive in church is completely different from that which we indulge outside." Decidedly; and because it is so there is written above the entrance to every seaside and city church the words, "The Temple of Whited Sepulchres." For the enjoyment obtained therein is not the fellowship of worship, or the Freethinker's tasks, arduous enough, would be sterner and more troublesome: it is no more than the gratification of the demands of a weak-kneed custom and pleasure, hollow, ephemeral, more imaginary than real, and the real portion of it fraught with disaster to their own little creed.

To-day the disaster is more apparent than it was yesterday; for the saving grace of Christianity, as of all creeds, the fellowship of worship, has become a memory of the past, even in villages. The Church is too big. Through the gaps in its body, slashed open by the swords of Fræthought and Science, rushes in the wind. The Church is troubled with an ailment from which it will never recover.

Thinking of the gaily dressed congregation, and recollecting what I had heard about the famous church parade, I smiled. It is too lovely a day for me to feel the anger that generally surges over me

when my mind takes to noticing these things. Perhaps I am too sensitive to the seriousness of it to see the humorous side. But to-day I fancy I can see the Lord Jesus Christ, great broad-minded man as he is claimed to be, shoot down on a sunray to this summer resort, just for an hour's fun. Of course, being a broad-minded man, he is able, at times, to enjoy the funny aspect of things. I can imagine him standing in a corner of the church, and enjoying the farce immensely. I can see the laughter-tears roll down his white cheeks, and see the nail-pierced hands lift the thorn-crown from his head so that it may not fall off in his glee. One hand is pressed to his side; not to stay the flow of blood; it is the characteristic attitude of the merry-maker. And then I can see him sitting on a seat on the "prom.," watching the gaudily dressed church crowds, listening to their remarks, and enjoying the religious pantomime hugely.

The Man of Sorrows becomes, for an hour, the Man of Merriment. He chuckles at the play of his puppets. Amusement lights up the carewornness of the age-grey eyes. The wrinkles of loving-kindness contract into ripples of mirth. The sorrow-laden brow shines, even in its whiteness, with light-heartedness. Jesus is as happy as a boy who pulls a bottom stone from a castle he himself has built, and it topples over to confusion. He shouts, for he does not recognise it as failure, knowing not that endurance is success.

The low, sonorous music of the waves, as they rise to kiss the sunshine, then falling in millions of bright beads of creamy splendor, is more marvellous to my ears than the inspired, sickly, slavish hymns that are being sung by thousands of Christians at this moment. On the waters the wonderful colors and movements appeal more to my sense of beauty than all the verbal pictures of God, Christ, and the angels. The sunrays pressing their hot loving lips to the wave-crests, transforming them into a foaming mass of drops of light, are more lovely than the visioned white face of Christ.

I have often been told that God gave us beauty; but sometimes I think that when God and his shadow are flung from the minds of men Nature's beauty will be seen as it never was seen before.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Chamfort, the Friend of Mirabeau.

NEARLY a hundred and twenty years ago (April 13, 1794) there expired at Paris a Freethinking wit of the first order, Sebastian Roch Nicholas Chamfort. Born in Auvergne, 1741, he knew no parent save his mother, a peasant girl, who was "companion to a lady." When the lady saw another companion was coming, Chamfort's mother was turned out of doors. Her son, however, consoled her with his love, and in after life he often denied himself necessities to supply her wants. He was placed at the College des Grassins. Here he studied hard, though he said, "What I learned I have forgotten, and the little I know was guess-work." Yet he carried off all the prizes. Some fellow-students proposed to travel over the world. He remarked: "Before making the tour of the world, suppose we were to make the tour of ourselves." For his attainments he had the offer of an abbey, but he said: "I will never become a priest for three reasons—I like honor and not honors; philosophy, not hair-cloth; the fair sex, not money." He sought, often in vain, for literary employment, and at first found nothing better than writing sermons. In time, however, he gained a prize at the Academy for an *éloge* on Molière, and, coming under the patronage of M^{me}. Helvetius, attained a seat at the Academy himself. Offered a secretaryship by the Prince of Condé, lack of money forced him to accept, though he spent his time in devising means of leaving without giving offence. "My life is a tissue of striking contrasts with my principles. I do not like princes, and yet I am attached to a prince; my republican maxims are known, and yet I live among courtiers; I like poverty, and all my friends are among the rich; I fly from men, but men come after me; literature is my only consolation, and yet I am never with men of letters; I wished to be a member of the Academy, and now I never go there; I think that illusions are necessary to my existence, and yet I live

without illusions." One friend he found at court, the Titanic Mirabeau; and, curiously enough, the man of action treated the man of thought as his master. In a letter to Chamfort, whom he called *une tête électrique*, Mirabeau says: "I left off my swaddling clothes too late. The conventions of mankind have fettered me too long; and when my bonds were somewhat loosened (for broken they never were) I still found myself bedecked with the liveries of opinion. But I was too passionate, and had sacrificed too much to fortune ever to become a man of nature. It is not in the midst of dangers that one can follow a regular route. Oh, if I had but known you ten years ago, what precipices and ravines might I not have avoided! Never a day passes, and never does anything serious occur, without my saying to myself, 'No, Chamfort would frown; let me not do so, let me not write that'; or, 'Chamfort will be pleased; for Chamfort's mind and soul are tempered in the same water as my own.'"

Chamfort embraced the revolution with ardor. His sympathies had always been with the poor, whom he called "the negroes of Europe." Rivarol said there would be no patronage of men of letters in a Republic. "So," replied Chamfort, "you are one of those who forgive all the harm the priests have done, on reflecting that, but for the priest, we should not have had the comedy of 'Tartufe.'" Rivarol reminded Chamfort that he was formerly one of those who pleaded the cause of nobility. "It was, you said, an intermediary between the king and the people." "Yes," replied Chamfort, "but I added something else; true, an intermediary, but as the hound is an intermediary between the huntsman and the hare."

Chamfort took part in the leading events of the Revolution, and became secretary of the famous Jacobin Club. He disliked windy speeches. Once he rose and said that he would speak on despotism and democracy. The following is his entire speech. "I everything; the rest nothing; there is despotism. I another; another I: there is democracy." To those who advocated slight reforms, he said, "You would have the Augean stables cleaned with a feather broom! Society must be refounded, as Bacon said the understanding must." Chamfort said that priests and kings proscribed suicide in order to rivet servitude. When thrown into prison by Robespierre, he found it intolerable. "It is neither life nor death; for me there is no middle course—I must either open my eyes on the blue expanse of heaven, or close them in the tomb." He regained his liberty, but had scarcely had time to breathe the free air, still watched by a gendarme, when his prison doors again opened to receive him. He swore that he would elude his pursuers; and, on their coming to seize him, placed a pistol against his forehead and fired; the ball shattered his nose and destroyed one of his eyes. Astonished at still finding himself alive, he took up a razor and tried to cut his throat; but death rejected him. It was in vain that, maddened by pain, he slashed at his breast and cut himself in every part of his body. His blood flowed from his wounds in streams, and he fell down exhausted, but still living. He dictated to those who came to drag him to prison: "I, Sebastian Roch Nicholas Chamfort, declare that I wish to die a free man, rather than be led like a slave to prison." He signed this thoroughly Roman declaration with a steady hand and a flourish traced in blood. Strange to say, he still lived on for many days, and when at length he succumbed he said: "I am at last about to quit this world, where the heart must break if it be not brazened."

WISE AND WITTY SAYINGS OF CHAMFORT.

It is asserted that Madame, the king's daughter, playing with one of her nurses, looked at her hand, and after counting her fingers, exclaimed, "What! you have five fingers too, like me?" And she counted them again to be sure.

La Fontaine, hearing someone mourn over the lot of the damned in the fire of hell, said, "I flatter myself they got used to it, and at last are like fishes in water."

A countryman divided his little property between his four sons, and went to live, now with one and now with another. He was asked on returning from one of these visits, "Well, how were you received? How did they treat you?" "They treated me like their own child," he replied; and from the lips of such a father the answer was sublime.

Monsieur de —, who saw the source of human degradation in the establishment of the sect of Nazarenes and in Feudalism, said that, to be worth anything, it was necessary to un-French and un-baptise oneself, and become Greek or Roman in spirit.

Marmontel, in his youth, much sought the society of old Boindin, who was famous for his wit and his scepticism. The old man made an appointment with him at the Café Procope. "But we cannot speak there on philosophic matters." "Oh, yes, by means of a special language, a kind of argot." Then they made up a vocabulary: the soul was called *Margot*; religion, *Javotte*; liberty, *Jeanneton*; and

God the Father, *M. de l'Étre*. A man dressed in black, with an unpleasant countenance, joined in the conversation, and said to Boindin, "Sir, may I venture to ask you who is that *M. de l'Étre* that behaves himself so badly, and gives you such dissatisfaction?" "Sir," replied Boindin, "he was a police spy." One can imagine the roars of laughter, the man being himself in that profession.

Louis XV. inquired of the Duke of Ayen (afterwards Marshal Noailles) if he had sent his plate to the mint. The duke replied, No. "But," the king said, "I have sent my own." "Ah, sire," rejoined the duke, "when Jesus Christ died on Good Friday he knew very well that he would rise again on Sunday."

Diderot was asked what kind of man was *M. d'Épinay*. "He is a man who has eaten two millions, without saying a sensible word or doing a good action."

A lady ninety years of age said to Fontenelle aged ninety-five, "Death has forgotten us." "Hush!" said Fontenelle with finger on lip.

Fontenelle had composed an opera in which there was a chorus of priests that scandalised the devout, and the Archbishop of Paris wanted to suppress it. "I don't meddle with his clergy," said Fontenelle, "and he shouldn't meddle with mine."

Monsieur — begged of the Bishop of — a country house which he never visited. The bishop replied, "Don't you know that one should always have a place one doesn't go to, but where one thinks he would be happy if he did go?" After a moment's silence Monsieur — said, "That is true, and it is that which made the fortune of heaven."

A man of letters who was made to feel a certain nobleman's superiority of position, said to him, "My lord, I am not ignorant of what I ought to know; but I also know it is easier to be above me than beside me."

I have heard a devotee, speaking against those who discussed the articles of faith, say, "Sir, a true Christian does not investigate what he is ordered to believe. It is like taking a bitter pill; if you chew it you will never swallow it."

There are well-dressed follies as well as well-dressed fools.

The physical world appears the work of a powerful and good being, who has been obliged to leave to a malignant being the execution of a part of his plan. But the moral world seems to be the capricious work of a devil gone mad.

What is a philosopher? A man who opposes nature to law, reason to custom, his conscience to opinion, and his judgment to error.

The most wasted of all days is the one in which we have not laughed.

Society is composed of two great classes; those who have more dinner than appetite, and those who have more appetite than dinner.

Live and let live, without hurting yourself or anyone else; that, I believe, is the sum of morality.

International Federation of Freethought.

LISBON CONGRESS—OCTOBER, 1913.

It being the desire of the Executive of the N. S. S. to make such arrangements as will enable any members or friends of the movement who may wish to be present at the Lisbon Congress to travel with the official delegates of the N. S. S., I wish to call attention to the following particulars:—

The cheapest and most direct way of reaching Lisbon is by the Nederland Royal Mail Line from Southampton. The President of the Positivist Society, Mr. S. H. Swinny, who has made the journey, recommends this route.

The return fare from Southampton to Lisbon (second class) is £8 5s. For the convenience of those residing in the provinces, the Company issues a return ticket to Southampton from all important provincial towns at a fare and a quarter, available for forty days.

The shipping company do not provide hotel accommodation. This may be reckoned, from the time of reaching Lisbon, at about 11s. per day.

The Congress opens on October 4, and continues on October 6, 7, and 8; therefore, the only available boat for the outward journey is the one leaving Southampton at mid-day on September 30, the connecting train from London leaving Waterloo at 10 a.m. For the return journey the earliest boat leaves Lisbon on October 15, thus allowing ample time for sight-seeing. Tickets are also available by a boat leaving on October 17.

As the sea journey takes three days each way, friends must reckon on an absence from England of practically three weeks.

These particulars should assist in forming a rough estimate of the cost, but it may be possible to secure some reduction per head when the number of the party is definitely ascertained. I must, however, request that early notice be given me by friends proposing to join the party, as I am informed by the shipping agents that passages must be booked well in advance, and this applies also to hotel accommodation.

As has already been stated, the opening day of the Congress (Oct. 5) coincides with the date of the third celebration of the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic. Senhor Magalhaes Lima, the President of the Republic, I understand from Mr. Heaford, has expressed his pleasure at the prospect of the attendance of English Freethinkers, and our party will be included in the invitation to take part in the fêtes organised by the Government to celebrate the occasion.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

WHY DON'T HE LEND A HAND?

You say there is a God
Above the boundless sky,
A wise and wondrous Deity
Whose strength none can defy.
You say that he is seated
Upon a throne most grand,
Millions of angels at his beck—
Why don't he lend a hand?

See how the earth is groaning,
What countless tears are shed!
See how the plague stalks forward,
And brave and sweet lie dead.
Homes burn and hearts are breaking,
Grim murder stalks the land;
You say he is omnipotent—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Behold, injustice conquers!
Pain curses every hour!
The good and true and beautiful
Are trampled like the flower!
You say he is our father,
That what he wills doth stand;
If he is thus almighty,
Why don't he lend a hand?

What is this monarch doing
Upon his golden throne,
To right the wrong stupendous,
Give joy instead of moan?
With his resistless majesty,
Each force at his command,
Each law his own creation—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Alas! I fear he's sleeping,
Or is himself a dream,
A bubble on thought's ocean,
Our fancy's fading gleam.
We look in vain to find him
Upon his throne so grand,
Then turn your vision earthward—
'Tis *we* must lend a hand.

'Tis we must grasp the lightning,
And plough the rugged soil;
'Tis we must beat back suffering,
And plague and murder foil;
'Tis we must build the paradise
And bravely right the wrong:
The God within us faileth,
The God *within* is strong.

SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.

Obituary.

We regret to report the death of Miss Mary Warner in the seventy-fourth year of her age. She was for twenty-five years the faithful housekeeper of Mr. Ed. Parker, 50 London-road, Plaistow, and remained to the end a firm and consistent Freethinker. Mr. Parker is a well-known and diligent worker in connection with the West Ham Branch, and we tender him our sincere sympathy in the loss of his old friend. The interment took place on Tuesday afternoon, July 8, when a Secular Service was conducted in the presence of a very large number of friends.—J. T. L.

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, James Rowney, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): a. and e., Miss K. B. Kough, Lectures.

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, "Beelzebub," "Creation or Evolution"; 7.30, J. Bellamy, "Who Knows? Who Cares?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture. Finsbury Park: 6.30, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, R. Rosetti, "From Lutheran Mission to Atheism in Holy Russia."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, C. E. Ratcliffe, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

PRESTON BRANCH N. S. S. (B. S. P. Rooms, 7 Market-street): 7 to 8, A. Potts, "The Religion of Intolerance."

OUTDOOR.

CHORLEY (Market Square): Gilbert Manion, 3, "Christian Socialism Examined"; 6.30, "God."

LEIGH (Town Centre): Matthew Phair, 3, "A Prosecution for Profanity"; 6.30, "Socialism and Christianity."

WIGAN (Market Place): Robert Mearns, 3, "Historic Christianity"; 6.30, "Why I Became a Secularist."

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