

THE Freethinker

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Nothing more debases a nation than religious despotism.
—NAPOLEON.

Vulgar Freethinkers.

IN one of the volumes of the *Golden Bough*, Professor Frazer devotes a number of pages in proving that to the primitive savage mind names are things—or, at all events, they are the equivalent of things. A name is so much a part of an individual that some never disclose it, lest an enemy, by becoming acquainted with it, should work the owner injury. Group names are often concealed for the same reason, and the mention of a deity's name is also fraught with danger. Professor Frazer quotes with approval the opinion of another anthropologist that in all probability "the whole Aryan family believed at one time, not only that his name was a part of the man, but that it was that part of him which is termed the soul, the breath of life, or whatever you may choose to define it as being."

In some directions a very large number of people are still in the mental condition betokened by this identification of names with things, or, at most, they do not look beyond the name to see what the thing is, and whether the name fits it. Call a thing bad, and thousands will straightway condemn it. Call it good, and they will accept it without further examination. Popular experience crystallises this in the saying, "Give a dog a bad name, and you may as well hang him." Sometimes it would be kinder to do the hanging first; and one suspects that the hanging is often only deferred to make the hangman feel that he has been engaged in a justifiable work. Formerly, in the political world, a great many people shunned the name of Radical because others chose to associate it with all kinds of disreputable teaching and conduct. When the Utilitarian philosophy was called "pig-philosophy," that quite settled it so far as many were concerned. And when Atheism received from the religious world an ornamentation of rascality, thousands shunned the name as though it were the plague. Such a word as "Agnosticism" became quite reputable by contrast. Not only reputable to religionists, but to many timid Freethinkers likewise. Thus the writer of a recent popular booklet on the existence of God explains that he prefers the term "Agnostic" to "Atheist" because, while descriptive of his own position, some people misconceive it; and in the same breath points out that "Agnostic" is not free from ambiguity. Presumably the writer knows what he means by both words, and means by both the same thing. But he prefers a word inherently ambiguous to one that is misconceived, stupidly or deliberately. Why? One cannot escape the suspicion that here is another instance of the fear of a name. Atheism is called names. Agnosticism has not been so generally complimented.

Turning over the pages of *Gleams of Memory*, by the late James Payn, I came across the expression that serves as title for this article. Having occasion to mention certain of his acquaintances who were evidently heterodox in their opinions, Mr. Payn hastens to add, "It is not to be supposed, however, that the friends of whom I speak were Freethinkers

of the vulgar sort." I do not know whether the caution was written in Mr. Payn's behalf, or in order to protect the reputation of his friends. It may be that the writer did not wish his friends to be identified with anything so anathema to the respectable world as vulgar Freethinking, or it may be that he wishes to protect himself from the imputation of having vulgar associates. For next to being a Freethinker oneself, is having Freethought friends. Of course, if the Freethinking acquaintance happens to be a man of position or of wealth—the latter is as good as the former in this country—nothing will be said. But if he happens to be a man of no position and poor, not even to have had a first-class education, then the less said about one's unfortunate friendship the better. In any case, the expression is, as I am Carve would say, characteristically British. It is quite English to estimate the value of unpopular opinions in terms of wealth or social opinion, or even as lacking the hall-mark of an expensive education.

The root meaning of "vulgar" is something that is in common use, or pertains to the crowd or to the common people. But that does not quite fit Freethought. The mass of people are not Freethinkers; and although Freethought has very many more followers to-day than it has ever before had, it cannot strictly be said to be common. It is Christianity that is common; religion that is really vulgar. And, class for class, whether we take the Freethinker in the higher or in the lower social circles, the one whose parents have been in a position to give him a costly education, or the one whose education has stopped short at the elementary school, one may safely challenge comparison with others in the same social stratum. They are usually the pick of their class. Necessarily so, for the mere movement away from the ruck of accepted opinion implies a higher level of character. To compare the Freethinker of poor social position with Christians who have had all the advantages of a costly—if often wasted—education, is as fair as comparing the blood-and-fire Salvation Army preacher with Haeckel, Meredith, Metchnikoff, Spencer, or Tylor.

I suspect that what Mr. Payn had in mind was not vulgar Freethought, either in the original sense of "vulgar" or even in the sense of Freethought as expressed by poorly educated people, but plainly spoken Freethought. It is permissible, for example, to write Freethought in expensive books which only a few can purchase. It is vulgar to do so in penny pamphlets, and still more so in tracts that are to be distributed gratuitously. It is quite permissible to attack religion in language more or less obscure, accompanied by insincere expressions of respect for the thing attacked, regrets at not being longer able to support it, and untruthful confessions of the pain experienced at its rejection. But to say plainly, fearlessly, honestly, that the whole thing is a lie, that its rejection lifted a load from the mind, and that the world seems a happier and a better place without it; all this is unpardonably vulgar, unutterably offensive. You may express this in language of faultless character, there may not be a single expression to which exception can be taken—it still remains vulgar and unforgivable. It is not vulgar because it is coarse and brutal; it is vulgar because it is straightforward and uncompromising.

I daresay that Mr. Payn must have come across a number of Christians who were coarse in speech, brutal in manner, and offensive in the way they expressed their opinions, and, from all points of view, genuinely vulgar. But he does not say "It is not to be supposed, however, that these were Christians of the vulgar sort." That in itself would be considered offensive. The Christian who pesters one in the street with inquiries about one's soul, who offers his impertinent sympathies on one's forlorn state, who pushes his coarse and ignorant literature through one's letter-box, is never described as vulgar. There is no judicial decision that attacks on Freethought must be expressed in such a manner that the chaste mind of a policeman is not affronted thereby. That only holds with regard to Freethought attacks on religion. It is not vulgar to morally steal the body of a dead Freethinker and carry out the farce of a Christian funeral. It is not even vulgar to tell lies about living Freethinkers. These are only examples of religious zeal. And although some Christians are superior to such actions, none condemn them.

Curiously, this particular fault is not characteristic of the very religious man. He does not usually discriminate vulgar Freethought from any other kind of Freethought. He impartially damns all varieties. It belongs more to the one whose religious beliefs are shaky, and who seeks to guard himself from suspicion by a free denunciation of other people. It is manifested with even a certain class of Freethinkers. A large part of the attractiveness of Agnosticism lies in its being "respectable" when contrasted with Atheism. The use of the word by Huxley and Spencer—both Freethinkers, but occupying commanding positions in the world of science and philosophy—provided a useful cover for timid souls. Genuine Agnosticism was just as "vulgar" as genuine Atheism. No one has ever been able to indicate any substantial difference between them. But it was a safer word. It diverted enmity and allayed suspicion. The Agnostic could always say, in effect, "It is true I do not believe in a God, but I do not call myself an Atheist. I am not as bad as he is. I have the redeeming merit of being ashamed to say what I am in unmistakable language. And if the religious world wants someone to kick, let it kick him." And he felt safe so long as the Atheist was there. Of course, if the Atheist was not there, if all the "vulgar" Atheists decided to become respectable Agnostics, Agnosticism would be no more a protective term than is Atheism under present conditions. It is a very shallow pretence, this of vulgarity, but it evidently serves.

After all, the world would have been in a parlous condition but for these "vulgar"—that is, straightforward—Freethinkers. All the Deistic attacks on Christianity were denounced as "vulgar" by religious critics. Paine, and Southwell, and Hetherington, and Carlile, and Holyoake, and Bradlaugh were all "vulgar" Freethinkers. They went to prison—all except the latter—because they dared to tell the truth in a plain, straightforward manner, such as any person of intelligence could appreciate. Their vulgarity lay in their clarity; it was their honesty that was the offence. In a society of hypocrites the honest man is a "sport," and every new variation has to face the hostility of the established species. But they did their work. They took the truth that was being whispered and shouted it from the house-tops. They unlocked the truth from expensive volumes and distributed it in cheap papers and pamphlets. They forced the Churches to throw overboard doctrine after doctrine, and invited truth to be an occasional, if always shy, visitor to Christian pulpits. Above all, they made life easier—perhaps possible—for the "respectable" Freethinker. English freedom owes far more to the popular propaganda, carried on by men and women of poor position and limited resources, but unconquerable courage and incorruptible honesty, than it does to those who have often reaped profit and a cheap distinction in a field prepared for harvest by

"vulgar," and, so far as the world is concerned, unknown Freethinkers.

Once upon a time, the Freethinker was simply wicked. That was a plain, straightforward charge, and Christians stuck to it as long as they could. But, then, Freethinkers became more numerous and better known. It did not pay to call them wicked. The charge was refuted by common experience. Then they became "vulgar." It was permissible to attack religion so long as it was done with deference, in a mincing manner, and with an apologetic air, as though you were half ashamed of the task. That is the stage we are now in. You may believe religion to be a lie, but don't say so. Suggest that it is a doubtful truth. You may believe it to be an evil, but don't say that. Say that the Churches have been responsible for much wrong-doing. You may be a Freethinker yourself, but don't give yourself away. Point out in what respect you differ from "vulgar" Freethinkers, and suspicion will be allayed. Above all, remember the great commandment, "Thou shalt love ease and social distinction with all thy soul; and though thy life may be half a lie, yet will thy days be long and thy name honored in the kingdom of public opinion."

C. COHEN.

In Praise of Unbelief.

IT is quite the fashion with some divines, at present, to extol Scepticism with all the eloquence at their command. The Rev. Professor H. R. Mackintosh, D.D., contributes an article on its merits to the *British Weekly* for September 4. The general prevalence of unbelief, even among professing Christians, is incontrovertible. The strongest faith is ever in conflict with doubt. On this point Dr. Mackintosh is most explicit:—

"Those know little of personal religion who have not watched this profound conflict in themselves, or who deem it weak to confess it in the proper quarter. The thing is happening every day. Half the soul is for trusting God, the other half for suspecting him or defying him. One voice pleads that recent sorrow is the touch of a Father's hand, another cries that to speak of Fatherhood is folly. Each believing consciousness in its kind is a battlefield for these two. A Sceptic is hidden in the devoutest heart."

Everybody is fully aware of the truth of that passage, though the majority of clergymen would, perhaps, be inclined to deny it. When an intimate friend complained to Luther that there were times when he was unable to believe anything, to his astonishment, the Reformer gave warm thanks to God for the confession, saying that until then he had thought himself alone in that temptation. Bunyan has a great deal to say on the same subject, and one of his books is entitled *Holy War*. But no one has expressed himself with greater candor than Dr. Mackintosh does in the following extract:—

"Life does not confirm the notion that by some sudden or magic change the followers of Jesus can fling off the temptation to unbelief for good and all. The soul cannot be wound up to make right feeling thenceforward automatically certain. Warfare with doubt is no inexplicable accident; it is part of faith's life."

The reverend Professor quotes someone who says: "There are sceptical thoughts which seem for the moment to uproot the firmest faith, and there are blasphemous thoughts which dart unbidden into the most reverent souls."

Now, what are we to make of such an uncompromising admission? What the divines claim is that doubt, if properly treated, becomes a means of grace. In itself it is "a deadly and insidious enemy," and Dr. Mackintosh speaks of the "lonely horrors" of it; but the object of its existence is to strengthen faith. It is here that we may grow in grace and knowledge by fighting and throwing it. On this account Professor Mackintosh urges us "to curb our minds and tongues when we might speak bitterly of unbelievers." Be appearances what they may, a believer is hidden in the most sceptical mind just as

"a sceptic is hidden in the devoutest heart." Of course, if a man encourages his doubt by letting it have its way with him, perdition stares him in the face and shall be his lot for ever, but if he courageously faces and wrestles with it, he shall have reason to praise God for sending it. Is this the true philosophy of unbelief? According to the Christian creed everything comes to pass by the providence of God; and, surely, unbelief can be no exception. Though our "deadly and insidious enemy," our "humiliating and enfeebling companion," unbelief is yet a servant of the Lord, always doing his will. If we are wicked enough to allow it to exercise dominion over us, it will do the Divine will by destroying us; but if we rise up against and conquer it, by the help of Christ, it will serve God by indirectly increasing and purifying our faith. Dr. Mackintosh expresses the opinion that complete victory over doubt is not possible in this world. "Life will be over, and the eternal presence won," he says, "before we shall see the last of this humiliating and enfeebling companion." Now, we maintain that if God existed, doubt would be absolutely impossible. Unbelief is a positive proof that the Divine Being is not an object of knowledge. If he were an object of knowledge, he would be known to all mankind. They who affirm that they know him and have communion with him, mistake faith for knowledge, and are self-deceived. Knowledge and doubt cannot coexist. They who know that in the Indian Ocean there is an island called Madagascar are never hunted by disbelief in its existence; but if the statement were made that there is a city as big as London on the planet Saturn its truth would legitimately be open to doubt, because no one has ever seen such a city, and consequently its existence is incapable of any sort of proof. At best, such a city is merely an object of belief, not in any sense of knowledge. Its existence is a thing that can be neither proved nor yet disproved; it is purely and simply a creation of the imagination. Now, if, like Madagascar, God were an object of knowledge, no one would ever be tempted to disbelieve in him; but being, like the city in Saturn, simply an object of belief, it inevitably follows that millions of people totally disbelieve in him, whilst the firmest believers are constantly harassed with doubts and fears.

Supernatural belief is of necessity irrational, and doubt is the mind's natural protest against it. Take the belief in a Supreme Being, and consider its utter baselessness. "No man hath seen God at any time," or heard his voice. The idea of the Universe, with all its imperfections and cruelty, being the work of such a Being, is laughed to scorn by the reason. Disbelief in God is, therefore, commendable, being reasonable. To treat it as a sin is to be guilty of high treason against human nature. Dr. Mackintosh is mistaken when he says that "half the soul is for trusting God," the whole mind, when left to itself, being for having nothing at all to do with him. The children who receive no religious education whatever grow up into men and women who are never troubled by any thought of a Supreme Being. By nature every human being is a complete Atheist. The reverend gentleman is equally wrong in saying that the other half of the soul is for suspecting God or defying him, the truth being that the mind, uncorrupted by superstitious training, is utterly without the God-idea. If Dr. Mackintosh's statement were true it would be an insufferable insult to the God in whom he believes. Again, take the belief in the spiritual world, and examine it in the light of reason. What evidence of its existence has ever been adduced? Like God, it is solely an object of belief. No one has ever seen it, or a single one of its inhabitants. It is fully as imaginary an object as that city in Saturn. Some of us have seen Madagascar ourselves, and others believe in its existence on the evidence of those who have. That is to say, to some of us Madagascar is an object of knowledge, while to others it is an object of belief founded on the testimony of travellers who have been there. But nobody ever lived who could truthfully declare

that he had visited the spiritual world, and could testify that it actually existed. And yet the divines speak of it as if it were an object of knowledge, or of belief founded on unimpeachable testimony. As a matter of fact, it is neither; and we claim that to believe in it is an offense against common sense.

The same remarks apply to the belief in Christ. His existence is equally insusceptible of verification. Dr. Mackintosh alludes to his "unchanging grace"; but what has it ever done for mankind? It is said to be a supernatural commodity, but we have not seen anything supernatural about the character and conduct of the people who glory in its possession. We do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of Martin Luther, but we are quite sure that he gave expression to a morally degrading heresy when he cried, "We are nothing; Christ is all." No other heresy has ever wrought so much harm in the world as that; and, unfortunately, it is dying a painfully slow death. Dr. Mackintosh says:—

"One tried plan of safety is to cast ourselves down into the depths of Christ's sympathy, and take the shelter of his power. He, if we ask him, will reinforce the higher impulse, and disable fear, and strengthen us to believe with passion whatever about God and the great salvation is worth believing."

If there had been any reality in Christ's love and sympathy, ours would have been a perfectly good and happy world for the last nineteen hundred years. Instead of that, even Christendom, where Christ is asserted to have conquered, groans under an intolerable load of crime and misery, of oppression and injustice; and the Christian city of New York is admitted by a Christian missionary to have more murders committed in it in one week than are committed in one year in the Pagan city of Canton, in China. Where does the benefit of Christ's reign show itself? If Christendom stands morally no higher than Heathendom, are we not to conclude that God in Christ has been a dismal failure?

We therefore wish to sing the praises of unbelief in the Fables of the Above, because the belief in them has seriously hampered mankind in its upward march. It has prevented it from taking its problems into its own hands and solving them by the exercise of its own inherent powers. If Christ is all and does all, it would be presumption on our part to undertake any tasks whatever. Our duty is to pray and wait, self-reliance being the worst of sins. We rejoice to know that this demoralising heresy is at last passing, and that mankind is slowly learning to lean upon and help itself. Unbelief in God means belief in man, and doubt about the next world spells certainty concerning this. On this account we pronounce religious unbelief a highly praiseworthy virtue, which ought to prevail more and more.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity and the Chinese.—XVIII.

(Concluded from p. 565.)

"Out of this vast scene of war and terrible rapine it would be an agreeable recollection if one could think that some of the missionaries raised their voices in merciful protest against the outrages committed by the Allied soldiery. But no such voice was heard. They stood by silent spectators of this crucifixion of Christianity."—G. LYNCH, *The War of the Civilisations*, p. 318.

"Even some missionaries took such a leading part in 'spoiling the Egyptians' for the greater glory of God that a bystander was heard to say, 'For a century to come Chinese converts will consider looting and vengeance Christian virtues.'"—SIR ROBERT HART, *These from the Land of Sinim*, p. 90.

WE shall not follow the Allied Forces on their march to Peking. Mr. George Lynch, one of the correspondents, has partly described the horrors of that devastating march. He says, when the Chinese—

"heard the guns of the invaders, and saw at night their path torchlit by burning villages, [they] evidently thought that the time had come for their wives and sisters, as well as for themselves, to save themselves by suicide. There are things that I must not write, and

that may not be printed in England, which would seem to show that this Western civilisation of ours is merely a veneer over savagery. The actual truth has never been written about any war, and this will be no exception."*

Mr. Foote's fine article, written at the time, and lately reproduced in these columns, "Christian Beasts in China," gives some idea of what happened. When they arrived in Peking, the looting began. Peking is a wealthy and populous city, full of great trading establishments, large warehouses, and thriving banks. Mr. Lynch declares that the Allied Forces constituted "the biggest-looting excursion since the days of Pizarro" (p. 179). And the missionaries, who caused all the bother, took a hand in the looting as well. Mr. Lynch says:—

"First of all, there were the missionary looters. They had a number of converts more or less dependent upon them. This was given by them as a reason for what some people considered their stealing and holding sales of stolen goods. Their *modus operandi* was first to hoist flags over the houses of wealthy inhabitants, thereby protecting the buildings from the soldiers. Then on the doors they would affix a notice saying this was the property of such-and-such a mission. The reverend gentleman would then move into one of the houses, and start to hold a sale of the contents. When the goods were exhausted he would move on to another, and so on" (p. 182).

It is not only upon China that the missionaries have brought such awful disaster. Japan had a terrible experience of Christian fanaticism. A man of genius has described the result of the introduction, by the Jesuits, of Christianity into that country, as follows:—

"This religion [Christianity], for which thousands vainly died, had brought to Japan nothing but evil: disorders, persecutions, revolts, political troubles, and war. Even those virtues of the people which had been evolved at unutterable cost for the protection and conservation of society,—their self-denial, their faith, their loyalty, their constancy and courage—were by this black creed distorted, diverted, and transformed into forces directed to the destruction of that society..... Viewed from another standpoint than that of religious bias, and simply judged by its results, the Jesuit effort to Christianise Japan must be regarded as a crime against humanity, a labor of devastation, a calamity comparable only,—by reason of the misery and destruction which it wrought,—to an earthquake, a tidal-wave, a volcanic eruption."†

The Polynesian Islands of the South Seas—regarded by most Christians as the peculiar crown and jewel of missionary enterprise—has the same tale to tell. Mr. Frank Burnett, who knows the islands well, tells us that the various Christian sects not only fought and quarrelled among themselves,—

"but also urged the pugnacious and excitable inclined native to take sides in their unseemly squabbles to such an extent that the Government had to parcel the islands out among the three different warring religious communities in order to prevent the imminent danger of anarchy and lawlessness, with its bloody consequences."‡

And this is how things went on, under missionary rule, before the British protectorate was declared:—

"At Tapuileua, under combined chief and missionary rule, the Christians, who numbered at least two-thirds of the population, becoming very zealous in the interests of, and with the view of propagating, the faith, gave their Pagan brethren the alternative of either at once embracing the Christian religion or of being cleared root and branch from off the earth, thereby emulating the Jewish chosen people in their treatment of the Canaanites. The minority proved unreasonable enough to refuse compliance with such a righteous demand; consequently they were, without any delay, attacked by the Christian section, led on by the native missionaries, and, after some fighting, were defeated; whereupon they, with their wives and families, barricaded themselves in the large Maneappa or Council House on the island. An attempt to storm this place of refuge having failed, after mature consideration it was deliberately set on fire, with the result that, including those who were ruthlessly slaughtered while attempting to escape the

flames, the lives of from 1,200 to 1,500 men, women, and children were sacrificed by Christian zealots for their 'holy cause.'"*

In New Zealand the same effects followed the introduction of Christianity and the distribution of the Bible broadcast among the natives. The Pai Marire, or Hau Hau, religion of the Maoris was, like that of the Tai-pings, founded wholly upon the Bible; and transformed the natives into incarnate fiends. Colonel Hamilton-Browne, who took a leading part in fighting these fanatics, says that by the year 1853 the Bible had been translated into the Maori language, and—

"very many of the natives had learned to read, and the Sacred Writings were read with avidity. Now the Maoris were puzzled, like many others, by the various denominations, each claiming they were right and that the others were wrong, yet all asserting they drew their inferences from the same Book. Among the tribes existed bitter rivalry, hatred, and jealousy, so they gloried in belonging to different sects, and consequently added religious rancor to their tribal hatred. Missionaries, however, travelled through the country with impunity, not one receiving any harm until 1865. There was, however, a very great desire on the part of a vast number of the natives to find out which was the real and true faith, so that many of them joined one sect after another, as if to discover which fancy brand of religion suited his own constitution best; and being highly intellectual and keen reasoners, they came to the conclusion that each sect was only formed from the interpretation by the devotees of the Book itself, and that therefore they [the Maoris] had a perfect right to interpret the Sacred Writings in any way they saw fit. Just previous to the promulgation of the Pai Marire faith the Maoris had elected a king. Why, therefore, should they not have a new religion? Hence the growth of the Hau Hau's."†

The Maori wars, which began in 1860, had, up to 1864—says Colonel Hamilton-Browne, who served as Commandant in the Colonial Forces—"been carried on by the natives in a manner that had earned them the respect of our men. Their splendid courage, combined with their wild chivalry, made them an enemy worthy of the highest praise." But after 1864, says the same writer,—

"the invention of the new religion, called Pai Marire turned the Maoris, both Christian and Pagan, from chivalrous, if savage, enemies into howling, blood-thirsty fanatics who murdered in cold blood, with every vile atrocity, man and woman and child not only of the white race but even also of the Maoris who refused to join their crazy faith."‡

And this lasted for seven years, until in 1871, when unable any longer to face the superior forces brought against them, the remaining Hau Hau's fled to the King Country and remained quiet.

And what is the result of missionary teaching on the African? Miss Mary Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa* (1897), had the courage to tell the truth about African Missions. She said:—

"The missionary-made man is the curse of the Coast, and you find him in European clothes and without, all the way down from Sierra Leone to Loanda. The Pagans despise him, the whites hate him; still he thinks enough of himself to keep him comfortable" (p. 490).

And she emphatically declares:—

"I have no hesitation in saying that in the whole of West Africa, in one week, there is not one-quarter the amount of drunkenness you can see any Saturday night you choose in a couple of hours in the Vauxhall-road, and you will not find in a whole year's investigation on the Coast one-seventieth part of the evil, degradation, and premature decay you can see any afternoon you choose to take a walk in the more densely populated parts of any of our own towns" (pp. 493-4).

Professor Huxley, after a voyage round the world, in which he had an opportunity of seeing savage life in all conceivable conditions, declared that he found "nothing worse, nothing more degrading, nothing so hopeless, nothing nearly so intolerably dull and

* G. Lynch, *The War of the Civilisations*, pp. 142-3.

† Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, p. 358.

‡ Frank Burnett, *Through Tropic Seas*, p. 166.

* *Through Tropic Seas*, pp. 122-3.

† Colonel Hamilton-Browne, *With the Lost Legion*, pp. 14-15.

‡ Colonel G. Hamilton-Browne, *With the Lost Legion in New Zealand* (1911), pp. 18-34.

miserable as the life I had left behind me in the East End of London." And he said he would "deliberately prefer the life of the savage to that of those people in Christian London."*

As Dr. Knighton remarked:—

"We spend millions of pounds in the vain endeavor to Christianise remote savages of all kinds, human beings to whom the elements of Christianity are incomprehensible. We have millions of people in Europe in want of the necessaries of life, of education, and of all that makes life endurable."†

In many places savage tribes have been almost wiped out of existence through the missionaries insisting upon the natives wearing clothes quite unsuited for the tropics. Mr. Dunderdale, speaking of the Australian blacks, says:—

"The blankets we kindly gave them by way of saving their souls were manufactured for the most part for the colonial market, and would no more resist rain than an old clothes-basket. The consequence was that when the weather was cold and wet, the black fellow and his blanket were also cold and wet, and he began to shiver; inflammation attacked his lungs, and rheumatism his limbs, and he soon went to that land where neither blankets nor rugs are required. Mr. Tyers was of opinion that more blacks were killed by the blankets than by rum and bullets."‡

The Rev. C. Haldon, a strong advocate of foreign missions, tells us that "The amount annually given in the United Kingdom to Foreign Missions by all denominations is about two millions sterling. This is a fact which the historian of to-morrow will be bound to expatiate upon."§ The historian of to-morrow will expatiate upon it right enough, but not in the manner that the Rev. C. Haldon anticipates. It will be with righteous indignation at the folly and wickedness of spending this enormous sum yearly—which takes no account of the equally enormous sums contributed by America, France, and Germany—upon heathen, where it does no good, but a great deal of harm; while a large part of our own people are sunk in the uttermost depths of misery and degradation, to a degree quite unknown to any savage tribe on the face of the earth. W. MANN.

Goethe's Rhapsody on Nature.

(About the year 1780.)

NATURE! We are by her surrounded and encompassed—unable to step out of her, and unable to enter deeper into her. Unsolicited and unwarned, she receives us into the circuit of her dance, and hurries along with us, till we are exhausted and drop out of her arms.

She creates ever new forms; what now is was never before; what was comes not again—all is new, and yet always the old.

We live in her midst, and are strangers to her. She speaks with us incessantly, and betrays not her mystery to us. We affect her constantly, and yet have no power over her.

She seems to have contrived everything for individuality, but cares nothing for individuals. She builds over, and destroys ever, and her workshop is inaccessible.

She lives in children alone; and the mother, where is she? She is the only artist: from the simplest subject to the greatest contrasts; without apparent effort to the greatest perfection, to the precise exactness—always covered with something gentle. Every one of her works has a being of its own, every one of her phenomena has the most isolated idea, and yet they all make one.

She acts a play on the stage; whether she sees it herself we know not, and yet she plays it for us who stand in the corner.

There is an eternal living, becoming and moving in her, and yet she proceeds not farther. She transforms herself forever, and there is no moment of standing still in her. Of remaining in a spot she does not think, and she attaches her curse upon standing still. She is firm, her step is measured, her exceptions rare, her laws unalterable.

She has thought, and is constantly meditating; not as a man, but as nature. She has an all-embracing mind of her own, and no one can penetrate it.

Men are all in her, and she is in all. With all she carries on a friendly game, and rejoices the more they win from her. She plays it with many so secretly that she plays it to the end ere they know it.

The most unnatural is also nature; *even the stupidest Philistinism hath something of her genius.* Who sees her not everywhere sees her nowhere aright.

She loves herself, and clings ever, with eyes and hearts without number, to herself. She has divided herself in pieces in order to enjoy herself. Ever she lets new enjoyers grow, insatiable to impart herself.

She delights in illusion. Whoever destroys this in himself and others, him she punishes as the strictest tyrant. Whoever trustfully follows her, him she presses like a child to her heart.

Her children are without number. To no one is she altogether niggardly, but she has favorites on whom she squanders much, and to whom she sacrifices much. To greatness she has pledged her protection.

She flings forth her creatures out of nothing, and tells them not whence they come, nor whither they are going. Let them only run; *she* knows the way.

She has few springs, but those are never worn out, always active, always manifold.

Her play is ever new, because she ever creates new spectators. Life is her finest invention, and death is her artifice to get more life.

She veils man in darkness, and spurs him continually to the light. She makes him dependent on the earth, dull and heavy, and keeps rousing him afresh.

She gives want, because she loves motion. The wonder is that she accomplishes all this motion with so little. Every want is a benefit; quickly satisfied, quickly growing again. If she gives one more, it is a new source of pleasure; but she soon comes into equilibrium.

She sets out every moment for the longest race, and is every moment at the goal.

She is vanity itself, but not for us, to whom she has made herself of the greatest weight.

She lets every child tinker upon her, every fool pass judgment upon her; thousands stumble over her and see nothing; and she has her joy in all, and she finds in all her account.

Man obeys her laws, even when he strives against them; he works *with* her even when he would work *against* her.

She makes of all she gives a blessing, for she first makes it indispensable. She lags, that we may long for her; she hastens, that we may not grow weary of her.

She has no speech nor language; but she creates tongues and hearts through which she feels and speaks.

Her crown is love. Only through it can one come near her. She creates gaps between all beings, and is always ready to engulf all. She has isolated all, to draw all together. By a few draughts from the cup of love she makes up for a life full of trouble. She is all. She rewards herself and punishes herself, delights and torments herself. She is rude and gentle, lovely and terrible, powerless and almighty.

All is always *now* in her. Past and future knows she not. The present is her eternity.

She is kindly. I praise her with all her works. She is wise and quiet. One can tear no explanation from her, extort from her no gift, which she gives not of her own free will. She is cunning, but for a good end, and it is best not to observe her cunning.

She is whole, and yet ever uncompleted. As she plies it, she can always ply it.

To everyone she appears in a form of her own. She hides herself in a thousand names and terms, and is always the same.

She has placed me here, she will lead me away. I trust myself to her. She may manage it with me. She will not hate her work. It is not I who spake of her. No; both the true as well as the false, she has spoken it all. All the guilt is hers, all the merit hers.—*Open Court.*

A mass, if not the majority, of people in every civilised country is still living in a state of intellectual savagery, in fact, the smooth surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition. Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus as it were honey-combed by unseen forces. We appear to be standing on a volcano which may at any moment break out in smoke and fire to spread ruin and devastation among the gardens and palaces of ancient culture wrought so laboriously by the hands of many generations.—*Prof. J. G. Frazer, "Scope of Social Anthropology."*

* Cited by Canon Farrar, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.

† Dr. William Knighton, *Struggles for Life*, p. 13.

‡ G. Dunderdale, *The Book of the Bush*; chapter, "Gippsland Under the Law."

§ *National Review*, April, 1911.

Literary Gossip.

The September number of the *Humanitarian* contains two interesting articles. One is "The Language of Domestic Fowls" by Edward Carpenter and George Merrill; the other is "What is Humanitarianism?" presumably from the pen of Mr. Salt. I have the honor to agree with nearly the whole of it. But I do not, because I cannot, endorse Dr. A. R. Wallace's denial of the cruelty of nature in the operation of natural selection through the struggle for existence. It is true, of course, that a great deal of suffering, both in the lower animals and in ourselves, is a matter of imagination; but, in the ultimate result, it is that very faculty which is the vital basis of the humanitarian argument. Dr. Wallace's attitude is simply that of a supernaturalist, who has an object in "moralising" nature, instead of admitting that nature is simply non-moral. He has lately contended that our present civilised society is the worst that ever was; yet he still upholds the absurdity that wisdom and goodness are behind the world. Perhaps they are *behind* it; they are not *in* it.

* * *

It is easy to say that man's cruelties are deliberate, while nature's are not; but what, in that case, becomes of Dr. Wallace's argument—which is for *intention* in nature? That the lower animals kill each other in the quickest way means that they are hungry when they are doing it; they are after food, and not sport. When you come to man, you find that he delights in cruelty. It would take a big book to contain an account of the devilries he has practised upon his fellow man merely for a difference of opinion on quite imaginary subjects. But why call these "unnatural cruelties"? They are quite on all fours with the doings of nature. What man ever killed his most hated enemy with the cruelty that nature inflicts upon the victims of cancer? Man is not capable of such things. Nature beats him hollow in this as in other directions. She always gets the better of him in the end. Witness hospitals, cemeteries, and crematoriums. And there is a powerful passage in Mill's essay on "Nature" which nobody has ever answered—and nobody ever will answer; because it is less an argument than an unchallengeable statement of facts.

* * *

Some time ago I censured a well-known journalist for using "antiquarian" as a substantive. I said that there was no such substantive in the English dictionary. The proper word was "antiquary." I have been told that I was wrong; at least the word "antiquarian" as a substantive has been pointed out to me in an English dictionary. I knew it could be pointed out,—not only in one, but in a dozen English dictionaries. The expression I used was not an English dictionary, but the English dictionary—which is equivalent to the English *language*. I still stand by what I said. Dictionaries do not make words, they register them; and they register slipshod as well as accuracy. It is demonstrable that "antiquary" was always used properly for hundreds of years. Sir Walter Scott would have been soundly rated if he had called one of his novels *The Antiquarian*. Even now in the popular dictionaries "Antiquary" takes precedence. "Antiquarian" has a secondary place as being used both as an adjective, which it properly is, and as a substantive, which it properly is not.

* * *

The illegitimate use of the word came in, as so many other illegitimacies did, in the modern era of cheap newspapers, universal reading, and irresponsible journalism. For my own part, I do not pretend to omniscience or infallibility; but I do respect our noble English tongue; and I may add that my knowledge of it is not derived from dictionaries, but from a personal study of its literature, and above all of its masterpieces, written by great men of genius who had something to say, and not by journalists of the day and hour who were earning the only thing they could earn—their daily bread.

* * *

Slipshod writing is only too common nowadays. He who writes for daily or weekly papers of immense circulation writes for the unlearned and the uncritical. He may start well, but he is apt to become slovenly, because he has not the impulse of genius, and the public he addresses is so un-exacting. Presently he is satisfied to fill his space in a passable way; and if his readers continue to look upon him as an oracle it is because a one-eyed man—however poor that solitary optic may be—is easily first amongst the blind.

* * *

I am sorry to say that Mr. A. E. Fletcher, a Christian Socialist, who constantly praises the Sermon on the Mount without ever being detected in reducing an iota of it to practice, seems to have permanently joined this species of

journalists. He takes a sixth of a page or so of *Reynolds'* and chatters in a know-all, careless way about books and writers. Last week he took Swinburne for his subject, under the title of the "Rhetorician of Democracy." One gathers from the article with this invidious heading that it would have been far better for Swinburne if he had consulted Mr. Fletcher, instead of following his own imperfect judgment. Mr. Fletcher could have given him a great many useful hints; including, for instance, what time his death would have been most serviceable to his reputation; although that is a matter on which poets are no more ready than other persons to take advice.

* * *

Brief as Mr. Fletcher's article is it contains something about himself (of course!) as well as about Swinburne, and several references designed to show the extent of the writer's erudition, besides some blunders which he would have to avoid if he were writing in a journal that had a well-informed respect for literature. We are apprised of that obscure fact (or tradition) that Milton thought *Paradise Regained* was better than *Paradise Lost*. Also that Landor thought his *Gebir* (written when he was a little over twenty!) was going to be his masterpiece; though he afterwards "said himself somewhere [how elegant and precise!] that he believed there was only one man who ever read it besides himself, and that was Robert Southey." Such chatter is, to say the least of it, careless. Severe judges might call it by a much harsher name. It was De Quincey who believed that *he* was the only reader of *Gebir* until he met with a fellow reader in Southey. How many readers the poem had is not to be determined at this time of day, but we know that its admirers included not only Southey and De Quincey, but also Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Sir Walter Scott.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher is more truly his old self in his remarks on *Songs Before Sunrise*. But why does he speak of its "strong rhetoric"? Did it not contain magnificent poetry? Was not its thunder melodious? Did not the poet hail freedom, justice, and humanity in language fit for the gods? Mr. Fletcher admits that Swinburne was, in his younger days, "all a wonder and delight." Being printed as a quotation these words are taken, we presume, from Browning's glorious invocation of his dead wife at the end of the first part of the great *Ring and the Book*:—and spoiled in the taking.

* * *

Swinburne was a great critic as well as a great poet. Mr. Fletcher finds that "as a critic of other poets, he was extravagant both in his praise and his blame." I deny it. I admit that he was enthusiastic. Good red blood pulsed from his heart; not the milk of the sentimentalist nor the ginger-beer of the pedantic commentator. One of Swinburne's most delightful characteristics was the royal way in which he heaped praise upon other great (or good) writers—even amongst his contemporaries. There was not an atom of envy or jealousy in his composition. "Never to praise with enthusiasm," said Vauvenargues, "is the sign of a mediocre nature." Swinburne praised with enthusiasm. He praised noble work nobly. It is nonsense to say, as Mr. Fletcher does, that he was "not over generous to Tennyson." To say this is not to have read or not to have remembered. And when one is told that he was "very unfair to Præd," one can only reply, "Who the devil was Præd?" Præd!

* * *

I venture to say that Swinburne's criticism shows the highest qualities of judgment. He was nearly always right—if I may be allowed to say so. He had a wonderfully sound instinct for the best work in all departments of literature. And the addition of eloquence, which ordinary critics do not command, made his prose delightful to those who, if they had no genius themselves, were responsive to its appeal.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher is a Christian. I am an Atheist. Contrary to the common notion, it is the Christian, and not the Atheist, who has lost his reverence. It is very odd. But not so odd when you go below the surface of things. A Christian believes that God died for him. How is real reverence compatible with such insane vanity as that?

G. W. FOOTE.

Thus while the avowed creed of the enlightened minority is constantly changing under the influence of reflection and inquiry, the real, though unavowed, creed of the mass of mankind appears to be almost stationary, and the reason why it alters so little is that, in the majority of men, whether they are savages or outwardly civilised beings, intellectual progress is so slow as to be hardly perceptible.—*Prof. J. G. Frazer, "Scope of Social Anthropology."*

Acid Drops.

Religion — and especially modern religion — seems the quintessence of selfishness. One would imagine that a man who had any claim to that title would hardly think of himself in the midst of the horrors of the railway disaster at Aisgill Summit. But there was one survivor who naively told a pressman of his feelings in the following manner: "The sight was one," he said, "which I shall carry with me to my last day on earth. I cannot even speak about it, because I realise that it was only by Providence that I myself am not numbered amongst the dead." Perhaps we should charitably hope that this gentleman did not fully realise what he was saying. If he did he must have believed that Providence planned that horrible "accident," with all its shocking details of human suffering, just to satisfy the survivors of their importance in the divine economy. Even little babies were burnt to death in order to make this gentleman see what deep interest the Almighty took in his preservation. Such is the moral influence of religion! No wonder it has been called the curse and degradation of mankind.

The case of a lady traveller was not as bad as that of the gentleman who reckoned himself in the good books of Providence, but it showed that religion does not minister to disinterestedness. "One woman," the same report says, "holding her baby close to her, was sobbing out a prayer of thanks that her life had been saved, with that of her little child." There was at least the mother's love to claim forgiveness in this case.

An hysterical penman in the *Christian Age* wishes God to help the "lower-class" Secularists. Not even God could help the lower-class Christians—judging by the samples at Christian Evidence meetings.

"Sitting like a stuffed cow gazing with vacuous mind at what passes before your eyes" is, according to a Sunderland vicar, one of the effects of picture shows. Especially, we presume, on Sunday evenings.

Kansas State, a number of the inhabitants of which recently requested the Governor to arrange for a day of prayer to secure rain, has now prepared a scheme for the erection of huge reservoirs to prevent drought in future. This seems a sad waste of public money and an insult to Providence. If prayer can bring rain, it is folly to waste time and money on building reservoirs in order to conserve the water. The wisest thing would be to segregate all the believers in prayer on a tract of land and build the reservoirs among those who think more of engineers than of Jehovah.

Mr. Carnegie told a representative of a Dutch Press Agency that he likes newspaper men whatever the paper they represent. All papers are alike to him, he said. We believe Mr. Carnegie to be quite sincere in saying this. Any other advertiser would say the same thing. It is not the opinions of the papers they care about, but their circulation.

To be quite serious and quite frank, Mr. Carnegie is just an example of the demoralising power of wealth. We have been unable to see anything in Mr. Carnegie but a mind of a very commonplace order, with a perfect mania for advertising Mr. Carnegie. All he has to say on any subject never rises above the commonest of commonplaces. Had he not been a multi-millionaire, he would never have been heard of. Being a man of millions, he is able to secure that his name shall be stuck about the country on buildings that have to be maintained by the ratepayers. He figures at the Hague solely in virtue of his money. He issues an appeal to the German Emperor for peace solely because he has money, and which, coming from a poor man of ten times Carnegie's ability, would have been treated as an act of impertinence. The press fawns on him and chronicles his doings and his carefully calculated gifts. When wealth is worshiped in this way, it becomes one of the gravest of social dangers and a centre of demoralisation.

The Rev. W. L. S. Coghlan, vicar of Holy Trinity, Stepney, says "God doesn't care for clothes; He isn't a second-hand clothes dealer." It is a delicate subject, but when on earth "the Lord" was not exactly a Beau Brummel. He did a little tailoring in Eden; but that was a very long time ago.

The clergy have little sense of humor, and anyone with a keen appreciation of fun might do worse than glance at any

of the parish magazines. Writing in the current number of *The Brightside*, published in connection with Cliff Town Congregational Church, Southend-on-Sea, the Rev. D. Ewart James states, "All being well, our organ will first speak to us on Monday, September 8." Certainly, the age of miracles has not passed.

Father Gasquet, head of the English Benedictines, is paying a lecturing visit to the United States. A press agency reports him as saying that the condition of religion in England, outside the Catholic Church, is most deplorable. Oxford and Cambridge are becoming more and more Atheistical, the Anglican Bishops are frankly Freethinkers. Within a generation, says Father Gasquet, England will be divided between Roman Catholics and Freethinkers, as Protestantism is becoming more and more a negligible force. Father Gasquet's conclusion is that those who are not drifting away from all religion are drifting towards Catholicism. We quite agree with the concluding sentence, and we should be pleased to feel that the prophecy concerning what is to happen during the next generation is sound. We are afraid, however, that Father Gasquet is merely beating the big drum in an attempt to convince people that the Roman Church is the only refuge against Freethought. We believe it is the best refuge, but Father Gasquet overlooks the fact that while the Protestant world is being tapped by his own Church on one side and by Freethought on the other, the Roman Church itself is ultimately powerless to arrest the disintegration of religion. That is part of a general world-movement. The Roman Church may form a kind of religious Alsatia for deities seeking protection; but even Alsatias do not last for ever.

The Solicitor-General, Sir J. Simon, has been getting into hot water with his Nonconformist backers. Very thoughtlessly, he promised to speak at a Nationalist demonstration at Newry on Sunday, September 28. This has, says the *Daily Telegraph*, roused a storm of indignant protest in English Nonconformist circles, and it is expected that the Solicitor-General will discover that he cannot attend. Dr. Horton says that Sir John Simon's action will damage the Government far more than anything else could do. That guardian of the public morals, Rev. F. B. Meyer, has also entered his familiar greasy protest against one of his Majesty's Ministers attending a demonstration on Sunday. The Lord Primate of Ireland says that Sir John has already taken steps to climb down. We should not be surprised. Sir John Simon is a politician, and as such is not likely to offend supporters if he can possibly avoid it. The Irish voters are not in his constituency, and it will be safer to offend them than English Nonconformists. But it is a pretty state of affairs when men placed in responsible positions are so quickly brought to heel at the command of a number of Sabbatarian bigots. A due sense of personal dignity should lead Sir John Simon to treat such reproofs with contempt.

Sir John Simon, having returned from a holiday, corrects the announcement that he had engaged to address a Nationalist meeting on Sunday, September 28. His letter to the Primate of the Protestant Church in Ireland is a smart performance. He turns the tables on that ecclesiastic by asking what the Protestant Churches in Ulster are going to do on Sunday, September 28? Are the clergy not to preach against Home Rule on that date? Are they not urged to "allow their churches and services to be used as the place and occasion of demonstrations in support of Sir Edward Carson's political policy?" And if these are not political meetings what are they? Thus the Primate is caught in his own trap. We are glad to see that the Solicitor-General does not perceive anything wrong in a political speech on Sunday—at a proper place.

In India the revenue from the sale of intoxicating drinks has increased from two to four millions sterling during the last ten years. In India there is no religious instruction in the State schools, and so the *Methodist Times* improves the occasion by asserting that "It is education apart from religion that must be held mainly responsible for this decadence," and invites subscriptions to the missionary fund. We beg to point out that England grew more and more drunken while education was wholly in the hands of religious organisations, and when there was no education apart from religion. It has become less drunken since education has been partly freed from religion. We are not silly enough to assert that the drunkenness resulted from the religious teaching, or that a growing sobriety was wholly due to the State taking education out of the hands of the Churches. But if we did so the argument would be quite as good as that advanced by the *Methodist Times*.

A local preacher writes to the *Methodist Times* that he has not much hope of the world being converted before Christ's second coming. Neither have we. He also believes that the second coming will convert the world at once. So do we. We agree completely with this local preacher. When Christ comes again we quite believe that it will work a wonderful conversion in all who are then alive. And if the *Freethinker* is then alive, we shall not be surprised to find the whole of its staff converted—editor and all. When he comes. Yes, when!

We have often had the impression that Dissenters believe civilisation commenced with the "Free" Churches. Many little things keep occurring to confirm this. For instance, the managing director of the Free Church Lecture Agency says that if it had not been for the Free Churches, lecturing would scarcely have come into existence at all. After that, we should not be surprised to learn that the Free Churches invented gravitation and manufactured the British Constitution.

Two little French girls have been seeing visions of Joan of Arc. She appears to them every day in the same spot, and cinematograph operators have been on the spot to "film" the appearance. Of course, the camera fails to show the vision; but this does not interfere with a number of people believing it to be genuine. The proof is that when the girls were shown a picture of the spot, they still saw the saint there—which is just what one would expect. Joan addresses one little girl in Latin and the other in French. It is said that feeling runs very high among the villagers, and the number of visions seen by other people increases daily. An epidemic of mystic hysteria seems to be setting in. Such occurrences remind one how very thin, after all, is our veneer of civilisation.

M. Henri Bergson has been hailed by the hard-pressed defenders of the faith as a modern St. George attacking the dragon of Freethought. At the time we doubted if they would find the distinguished philosopher so orthodox as they thought. The Pope has now condemned M. Bergson's views as "false theories" and "poisonous error."

The prospectus of a seaside school for boys announces that "the headmaster believes that a child should be taught to follow the religion of his mother." If the lady were a Seventh Day Adventist, or a Muggletonian, the schoolmaster's face would be worth seeing.

A book has been published with the suggestive title, *Religion and Fairyland*. So far as the Bible is concerned, from the talking snake in Eden to the aeronautical expedition of the Messiah, the book is mainly a collection of fairy tales.

The Rev. Frank Ballard, the notorious infidel slayer, has been described by a *Christian Commonwealth* interviewer as "a man with no skin to his soul." This is a fortunate circumstance should the reverend gentleman ever visit the Nether Regions.

A Roman Catholic Bishop—Bishop Amigo—visited Wandsworth Prison the other day to attend to the spiritual needs of his co-religionists. He found 200 there to welcome him, and delivered an address in the prison chapel. He pointed out what a "great blessing and privilege" it was to have a special chaplain and a beautiful chapel at their service, and urged them to make the most of it. We have no doubt they will, and many of them will pay the place a return visit. We are also told that the Bishop was delighted at the hearty way in which the prayers were said and the hymns were sung. Quite so; we should not be at all surprised to learn that some of these inmates in Wandsworth Prison are amongst the most devout in the diocese. Evidently their offences, whatever they were, do not interfere with the fervency of their religion; and just as evidently the fervency of religion does not prevent their being in Wandsworth Prison, with a special chaplain and a beautiful chapel, not open to the general public. The joke is that this account is taken from the *Catholic Times*, so that it is not the creation of a sarcastic reporter. But we wonder what would be said if the President of the N. S. S. visited Wandsworth Prison and found 200 of his fellow unbelievers ready to listen to an address? The religious people seem somehow to get all the privileges.

"What a lot of Jews there are in high places" writes a society journalist. Was he referring to the fact that half Christendom worships a Jew and the other half a Jewess?

A new play is to be produced with the title of *The Ever-Open Door*. It has no relation to a recent controversy, but to London, which is getting almost as congested as the place where the "Lord" consigns his failures.

Southlands Brotherhood, York, has published a list of its Sunday afternoon speakers for September. Rev. A. Stanley Parker's is not bad—"Midnight Adventures in New York streets"—the streets, apparently, being in "the underworld." Councillor J. T. Clarke's subject, however, is better than that: "What God and I can do." We understand that God can do everything. Councillor Clarke, therefore, does all the rest. We are glad to know that the Almighty has such good backing.

Rev. W. H. Heap, of Hull, says that there could be "no absolute proof" of a future life "until we woke up on the other side." We have been saying that for forty years and more, and thousands of sensible people believe it. Mr. Heap joins us on this point. Many other clericals will do the same when they are honest enough—or frightened enough.

Blue Books are mines of information to the skilled reader. Two striking examples of drunkards reformed by change of environment and treatment appear in the report of the Inspector for Scotland under the Inebriates' Act. One was a drunken woman, well known to the police, who has for three years filled a responsible position and led an exemplary life. The other case is that of a married woman with a long list of convictions. She has also been reformed, and has lived respectably with her husband for over two years. As these women were reformed by purely secularistic agencies, their photographs will not be published in the religious press, and evangelists will not get delirious in reciting their stories.

Christian Scientists are now being brought into court, just like the Peculiar People. They may treat themselves as they please, but they must bring in a doctor to attend to their sick children. We did not know that this was the law of England, but the judges are evidently going to decide that it is. But if medical science is to take the place of prayer—and we are quite agreeable that it should—the New Testament should be thrown out of English courts of justice where it is still used as a swearing-block. To swear a man on that book, and punish him for obeying it, is a thing that could only occur in a Christian country. Christians are the worst hypocrites on earth. When a real Christian turns up all the others fall upon him. They would soon have Jesus Christ himself under lock and key, if his "second coming" were not so unconscionably delayed.

Rev. Arthur Wellesley Batson, sixty years of age, left Severn House, Watchet, Somerset, and went up to London. His rural innocence, combined with a little something to drink, which "disagreed" with him, got him into trouble. Eventually he had to pay the doctor's fee of 7s. 6d. at Bow-street, and the cabman's charge of 6s. The fine was only 1s. We hope the reverend gentleman has gone home. And we hope he will keep there. If he follows Paul's advice to Timothy there he can provide for any possible "disagreement."

Rev. Jos. Miller, of Great Bolas, aged 74, is marrying Miss Roberts, who is 54 years younger. He is marrying her for the good of the parish. That is the first consideration. The second is that he may "have a co-worker in holy things." The reverend leaves it at that. So will we.

More poor Jesusites! All from one morning's paper. Rev. Neill McBride, Glensha, Forfarshire, left £13,124. Rev. William Borrer Tracey, Director of the Church Missionaries' Home, Limpsfield, Surrey, left £4,601. Rev. Charles Edward Thorne Roberts, rector of St. Vedas, Foster-lane, E.C., left £4,881. Rev. G. O. F. Griffith, Beckenham, Kent, left £1,459. The last is almost a minnow.

Essex has got a Bishop. His headquarters will be at Chelmsford. But he will doubtless be often seen at Southend-on-Sea. Business is sure to call him there a good deal—especially in the summer time.

Potiphar's wife plays the game all right with Joseph in Sir H. B. Tree's Biblical drama. But her invitation to *il casto Giuseppe* has to be extended and subtilized for modern taste and manners. The lady spends only three words on the invitation in the Bible story. They prefer "Cat and Mouse" methods nowadays.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

September 21, Leicester.
 October 5, Birmingham Town Hall; 19, Manchester; 26, Stratford Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £175 15s. 9d. Received since:—Alex. Lewthwaite, 10s.; Greevz Fisher, 9s. 6d.

The Sides of Walworth: Mrs. Louis F. Side and Family, £1 2s. 6d.; R. H. Side, £2; E. D. Side, £2; Mrs. E. D. Side, £1; Miss Beatrice Side, 10s.; Bartrum Side, 10s.

W. GOODBOURN.—There is not much in it. The Hull men of God seem a very dull lot. Thanks, all the same.

THOMAS FOWLER.—See paragraph. Thanks.

M. ROGERS.—The suggestion would be all right if one could see the prospect of getting one's money back on the publication.

W. H. B.—See paragraph. Thanks.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

H. BAILEY.—It is of no special value. Might fetch 2s.

H. ROSETTI.—We hope it will prove effectual.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for batches of useful cuttings.

E. SCHMITZ.—Mr. Cohen is half sarcastic, of course, in calling this a Christian country. But, as a matter of fact, Christianity is legally established here.

A. M.—The verses have already been published, and they are not specially suitable for our columns. Are they?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Leicester Secular Society has selected "Shakespeare's Humanism in the *Merchant of Venice*" as the subject of Mr. Foote's lecture next Sunday evening (Sept. 21). There could hardly be a finer subject, and as Mr. Foote never lectures better than when he lectures on Shakespeare, there should be a crowded audience to welcome him after his late illness and absence from the platform.

What might be a difficulty on the occasion of Mr. Foote's visit to Birmingham on October 5 has been met by a new arrangement. Two lectures in the Town Hall, with only an interval of a couple of hours or so between them, are a great effort under any circumstances. It has been decided to drop the afternoon lecture this time and concentrate on the evening meeting.

It is rather odd that this dropping of the afternoon lecture should take place in connection with Mr. Foote—by whom it was introduced. There used to be but one (annual) meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall, which was held in the evening. Mr. Foote took it for several years running and worked the audience up to gratifying proportions. After some time he threw in an afternoon lecture. It cost the Branch nothing, and the collection helped to defray the day's expenses. Having "caught on" it was continued when other lecturers were introduced.

A new course of lectures will be delivered at the Stratford Town Hall under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., on the second, third, and fourth Sundays in October. The lecturers will be Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Foote. Subjects and other details will appear next week.

North London Freethinkers are requested to note that Demonstrations will be held at Parliament Hill to-day (Sept. 14) at 3.15, and at Finsbury Park this evening at 6.

The speakers will be Messrs. Hope, Ratcliffe, Davidson, Miss Kough, etc.

Mr. Thomas Hardy opens the September number of the *English Review* with a short poem entitled "The Place on the Map." It is the story of a poor schoolmaster whose love for a woman should have been a joy to both, but proved a tragedy "Under superstition's hideous control." Mr. Henry Newbolt writes appreciatively of the immortal genius of Chaucer. In contrast with this is an outspoken article by "Civis" on "The Doctors and Venereal Disease"—a painful topic, but one affecting the very life-blood of England. Mrs. Walter Gallichan's article on "The Sexes Again" is able and powerful in its way, but it certainly invites criticism; and one of the best forms of it would be a day's narrative of the life of the society in which her suggestions—for they are not exactly proposals—were carried out. There are other interesting articles in this number of the *English Review*. The editor contributes a noticeable one on "Socialism and Social Sense."

We are glad to be able to cut the following paragraph from the *Evening Dispatch* (Birmingham):—

"Evidently the world does move. The *Chicago Dial* reminds us that John Fiske, whose daughter has just been married, was once reprimanded and threatened with expulsion from Harvard because of his addiction to Darwinism. Less than ten years later he was called back to Harvard in order to expound the very views that he had previously been punished for holding. This change on the part of the Harvard authorities was not, of course, due to any liberalising process in theological thinking. It was due to the bayonet pricks of public opinion, which is the only propulsive power that theology has ever known—or will ever know."

Twenty years ago such a paragraph could hardly have appeared in any other journal than the *Freethinker*. Yes, the world *does* move. And everybody has got to move with it.

Someone loves (or hates) the *Freethinker* so much that he has been stealing it from the West Ham Public Library at the Green, Stratford, E. A capable pair of eyes are watching for him when he calls for his next weekly copy.

An Isle of Man reader, who is nearly eighty-two years of age, says that his "life would be very dull without the *Freethinker*." This is a better testimonial than most journals could print. Honestly, we mean; for some journals will print anything.

The veteran Mr. R. H. Side, who is now eighty-nine years of age, called at our office early in the week and left the Side family's annual contribution to the President's Honorarium Fund. Our old friend is afraid he won't be able to come to any more annual dinners. He says that he sat in a draught last time, and was also unable to hear; and that he requires something better at his time of life. Of course he does. And we will see that he gets it.

Mr. Foote will review the new shilling shocker—*Is There a Hell?*—in next week's *Freethinker*. He will follow it with a review of Professor Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought*—on which he has a good deal to say that will not be said elsewhere.

Even with the best intentions a man's words may be altered by those who quote them "from memory." What must it have been in early Christian days when there was no printing and most people were illiterate? Our own readers have already begun to quote a phrase of George Meredith's wrongly. In a letter to us he spoke of our fighting "for the best of causes." Will our readers note that this is the authentic text—and keep to it.

Let us praise the pioneers of progress—the thinkers, the discoverers, the propagandists—whose only weapon was the living word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." We subscribe to that text. The living word passes from man to man, from city to city, from nation to nation, from generation to generation; and as it passes it cries, "Behold I make all things new." Without armies, battlefields, or bloodshed the Word which is God achieves its conquests. The youthful Tennyson well sang that Wisdom wrought in the same way:—

"No sword
 Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
 But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
 She shook the world."

—G. W. Foote.

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

THE Gospel in use among the Nazarenes—viz., that "according to the Hebrews"—was, as we have seen, called by many "the original Gospel of Matthew," and was said by some to be the canonical Matthew "mutilated" because it did not contain the Virgin Birth story. It would appear, then, that if the first two chapters of Matthew be expunged, that Gospel would be little more than a revised Greek copy of the Gospel of the Nazarenes. Now, if we compare the Gospel of Matthew with the other two Synoptics, we find that Matthew differs chiefly in containing certain lengthy discourses which are not given by the others. Chief among these is the Sermon on the Mount, which fills three long chapters (v., vi., vii.), though Luke gives a number of extracts from it (vi. 20—49). The next long discourse given by Matthew only is chapter xxv., which, after introducing the subject by two parables—the ten Virgins and the Talents—gives a graphic description of the Last Judgment, in which only those were allowed to enter heaven who had showed kindness to the "brethren" by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, and visiting the sick. This Last Judgment scene is of the same character as one found in the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Dead," and was, no doubt, taken from that book by the Nazarenes, and made their own plan of salvation. Hence, the religion of the primitive Jewish Christians was simply humanitarianism, the belief in Jesus as a god forming no part of their creed. To this twenty-fifth chapter should be added several parables bearing upon the same subject which are recorded by Matthew only. These include the Tares and the Draw-net (Matt. xiii.), the Merciless Servant (Matt. xviii.), the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. xx.), the Marriage of the King's Son, and the Wedding Garment (Matt. xxii.).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

This notable "Sermon" is represented in Matthew's Gospel as delivered upon an unnamed mountain; Luke's short version of it is said to have been spoken upon a plain: it is also represented as delivered at two different periods in the ministry of Jesus. After reading Matthew's long and complete version, we need little critical knowledge to see that this so-called "Sermon" is in character and structure a purely literary composition, which was never uttered extempore on either of the occasions represented. Moreover, it is in itself a complete code of rules and prescriptions relating to conduct, which are identical with the known doctrines and practices of the Essenes. The Nazarenes and Essenes were Jews who conformed to all the Mosaic ritual except animal sacrifice, for which they substituted gifts to the altar at Jerusalem. Matthew's Sermon is but a copy of the doctrines and principles of the society, drawn up by elders of the sect, and was probably read out daily to new members until they knew all the paragraphs by heart. The Essenes did not go about trying to make converts, as described in the Book of the Acts. Their principles were known and respected by all Jews, and those who had thoughts of adopting their mode of life went to their houses, and were allowed to stay with them for a short period. Josephus did so before deciding to become a Pharisee. The following passages in the "Sermon" show that it was drawn up for Jews who still conformed to the "law of Moses":—

Matt. v. 17.—"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

Matt. v. 23, 24.—"If therefore thou bring thy gifts to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

The following passage commends the continence

practised by the stricter order of the Essenes:—

Matt. xix. 12.—"and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

The Christian teacher, Origen, understood the last passage literally, and being "able to receive it," he did so: but it is possible that the passage only means what is stated in Rev. xiv. 4.

THE TEMPTATION AND TRANSFIGURATION.

One of the most obvious of the Gospel fabrications is the story of Jesus being tempted by a real live Devil (Mark i. 12—13; Matt. iv. 1—11; Luke iv. 1—13). This temptation is threefold: (1) Jesus having fasted forty days is asked by the Devil to turn stones into bread; (2) Jesus is placed by the Devil on the pinnacle of the temple, and asked to cast himself down unharmed; (3) the Devil promises to give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" if he will worship before him. After resisting these temptations "the Devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

In the Zend-Avesta, the holy prophet Zoroaster is first assaulted and afterwards tempted by the Persian devil Ahriman. One of these temptations is that Ahriman promises to make him "ruler of all the nations" if he will renounce the god he serves—which he refuses to do.

In the Buddhist scriptures, Gotama, when about to leave home, wife, and child to devote himself to the enlightenment of mankind, is tempted by Mara, the Evil One, to wait for seven days until "the wheel of empire" should make him "sovereign over the four continents"—but he refused to stay. Many years later Gotama Buddha fasted for several weeks, during which he was assailed by Craving, Discontent, and Lust, the daughters of Mara, whom he resisted: then, on the forty-ninth day "angels came and ministered unto him." These legends date from several centuries B.C., and were, no doubt, known to the Nazarenes, to whom they suggested the story of the temptation of Jesus.

A second obvious fabrication is the alleged transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. xvii., Mark ix., Luke ix.). Upon this occasion the Nazarene, with Peter, James, and John, ascended a high mountain.

"And Jesus was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.....and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."

In this story, Peter recognised the two resurrected men, and names them. The Buddha was also transfigured before his death. Another obviously fabricated story is that of the baptism of Jesus, with the dove and the voice from heaven. It is almost needless to say that all the alleged events in the Gospels are narrated as historical occurrences: hence, all Christians who endeavor to get rid of the most obvious fabrications by treating them as allegories are simply perverters of their own scriptures.

It is unnecessary to cite further examples: the whole of the Gospel "history" is of the same fictitious character. There is not a scrap of evidence that any human being ever heard or saw any of the sayings or doings ascribed to "Jesus the Nazarene." They are one and all early Christian fabrications, and as such I will now leave them and bring this series to a close.

PALEY'S EVIDENCES.

Some weeks ago I noticed in the *Freethinker* that a writer in the *Athenæum* says of Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*:—

"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."

It is really amusing to see Paley's *Evidences* placed next to Euclid for reasoning, and more so to be told that "if Paley's premises are granted"—etc. What an "if"! I thought everyone knew that it is in the premises all the fallacies lie. Thus, Paley's main

"argument" for the truth of the Gospel miracles runs as follows:—

"If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their own eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived;.....If I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burned, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account;—still, if Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say, that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them."

Here we see assumption piled upon assumption, every one of which can be challenged. I select this example because the same style of reasoning is still employed by all kinds of Christian advocates. I have noticed several cases during the last year or so.

Now, it is scarcely necessary to say that we have not the testimony of "twelve men" who witnessed the alleged Gospel miracles: we have not even the testimony of *one* man. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not witnesses of anything they record, and though two of the apostles are said to have been named Matthew and John, the latter were not the writers of the Gospels so called. Not one of the writers of the canonical Gospels was an apostle, and all four lived in post-apostolic times.

Paley's "twelve men" are the so-called "twelve apostles" of Jesus, respecting whom nothing certain is known except the names: and such being the case, it is simply ridiculous to assert that they were noted for "probity and good sense," in the modern acceptation of the terms. Assuming that they were no worse than other Jews of their time, they were very ignorant and credulous men, whose heads were filled with all the superstitious ideas of the times in which they lived: they could not, in fact, be otherwise when their teacher himself believed in demoniacal possession. Paley further says that the "probity and good sense," with which he gratuitously credits them as possessing, "had long been known"—which is obviously untrue.

In drawing up his premise, Paley evidently had his eye on the accounts narrated in the Book of the Acts, in which twelve apostles are represented as going about preaching a new religion and creating disorder, regardless of threats, stripes, or imprisonment. It never entered his mind that no Roman procurator would have allowed such doings to go on for a single day; but apart from that, he ought to have had the sense to know that in the account in the Acts we have not the testimony of the "twelve men" to anything done by Jesus: for they are merely some of the *dramatis personæ* in that work of fiction, and, as everybody knows, an author can make the characters in his story say or do anything he pleases. At the very most, the testimony derived from the Acts could only be that of one person, the writer; but in this case we have not even that testimony, for Luke was not a witness of what he records in that book. Moreover, the long speeches placed in the mouths of Peter, Stephen, and Paul are fabrications made by Luke himself. The critical scholar Renan and the author of *Supernatural Religion* have each independently compared these orations in the Greek, and, after studying the various forms of expression, have arrived at the same conclusion—that they were all composed by Luke himself. A writer in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* makes the same admission.

Paley further says that the Gospel miracles were "wrought before the eyes" of his "twelve men," and that "it was impossible that they should be deceived"—his only authority for which statement being the Gospel narratives themselves. But, supposing those narratives to be pure fiction—as they undoubtedly are—how then were miracles "wrought before the eyes" of the apostles? And not having witnessed any of these "mighty works," what nonsense it is to say "it was impossible that they should be deceived"? We are thus dealing with silly assumptions.

Lastly, what evidence have we that these "twelve men" allowed themselves to be "racked, burned, or

strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account"? We have none whatever. Many absurd stories of martyrdom are told by later Christian writers; but these, when sifted, prove to be nothing but fables. We *do* know, however, that in later times thousands of Christians have suffered torture and death rather than deny certain facts or doctrines which to them were simply *matters of belief*: whence it follows that the only apparently real argument used by Paley—that of steadfastness to religious convictions under persecution—is no proof of the truth of the matters believed.

ABRACADABRA.

Holiday Notes and Reflections.

FOR several years past I have recorded my impressions, in these columns, of the manner and method adopted by the various types of religious folk at the seaside of propagating their special superstitions for the edification of visitors, and I have derived a good deal of pleasure—which I hope has been shared by my readers—in stating my views in these columns. This year I visited Clacton, a growing seaside resort on the East Coast, after an interval of eight years, and I found it had undergone considerable development; indeed, everywhere I found signs of prosperity. Fine wide streets, with large, handsome buildings on the main thoroughfare, and then street after street of well-constructed houses, with beautiful gardens in front, and in one part of the town what promises to be a handsome Garden City. There are plenty of churches and chapels in Clacton, representing many varieties of sects of the Christian faith; there is also a large Salvation Army Barracks, and several mission-halls belonging to Primitive Methodists and other Christians of an equally primitive kind.

Clacton is not, like many other seaside places, a fishing district, and although the natives are a slow-going kind of people, they are not without a certain amount of intelligence that makes them less susceptible to religious impressions than the ordinary uncultivated fisherman. Most of the lodging-house keepers, however, appear to be very pious persons, if one may judge from the number of pictures that adorn their rooms—pictures representing the Virgin Mary and young Jesus when he was a baby and various framed texts from the Gospels that hang upon the walls. Over my head, as I lay in bed, was the portrait of young Jesus when he was about fifteen or sixteen years of age; and a more effeminate looking youth it would be difficult for anyone to imagine. At Clacton the religious folk have no open-air meetings on the front; the only meetings they have—with the exception of the Salvation Army—are either held in their churches and chapels, or outside of them, after the usual indoor services are over. The only meeting I saw during my visit was that of a small section of the Salvation Army that paid a visit to the street in which I was lodging and sang a song to the tune of an old nigger melody that I remember to have heard when I was a boy. A venerable-looking old gentleman, not unlike the late General Booth, but without his pronounced Jewish nose, was the leader of this little band; but, as he delivered no sermon, but contented himself with offering up a short prayer, I am unable to speak concerning his ability to uphold the traditions of the Army as an inspired prophet of the Lord. But, as I have said, there are plenty of churches and chapels in the town, and to these visitors are cordially invited to attend. On the West Cliff a very beautiful church—St. James's—is in the course of erection, and visitors are very earnestly invited to contribute to the cost, which is to run into several thousands of pounds; and the worst of it is that while it is difficult to get enlightened people to contribute towards the provision of a Freethought Temple or Institute in London, where scientific and rational ideas may find expression, there always seem to be plenty of

people willing to spend their money on the erection of buildings in which old and effete ideas on theology may be propagated.

At Clacton I came across a melancholy figure, who is regarded as a sort of silent follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. He is a tall, thin, delicate-looking man, with a gloomy cast of countenance; with aquiline nose, thin lips, dark brown beard and moustache. He sits about near the bandstand, apparently taking no heed either of the music or the passers-by. He wears a long, shabby frock-coat, worn almost thread-bare, and patched in many places; his shoes are much the worse for wear, and covered with Blakey's. Nearly everyone looks at him as they pass by. He rarely speaks or smiles; but he gives a sad glance at those who appear to pity him.

I heard one of the members of the crowd refer to this strange man as "J. C.," and then, pointing to his forehead, said that the poor fellow was a little touched in the upper story, which clearly goes to show that the ordinary man in the street regards Jesus as being somewhat insane, with only occasional intervals of good sense. This melancholy man of Clacton, I afterwards learned, had been disappointed in love, and had registered a vow that he would never, till the day of his death, wear any other clothes than those in which he was to have been married, and so far he has kept his word. It seems, then, that the effect on the mind of a person who is over-earnest in love matters is not unlike that of persons who are over-earnest in matters of religion—that way lies madness. M. Jules Soury, in his work on *Jesus and Israel*, maintained that all religious enthusiasts were insane, that most of them suffered from chronic congestion of the brain, and many of us have witnessed some sad examples of this malady. This strange character, to which I have just referred, like Jesus, was very effeminate in appearance. How is it, I may ask, that Christians worship as a God a being who was so destitute of manly characteristics? Christians say that Jesus was so good, so kind, so tender, so loving, and all that kind of thing, but they never say "Jesus was so bold, so courageous, so manly, so heroic"; and, consequently, strong, manly men can never have much admiration for him. In point of fact, the qualities of nature which we most admire in women we generally despise in men.

When I found that there were no religious meetings being held on the front, I considered the question as to whether there were any clergy or ministers announced to preach at any of the churches or chapels within reasonable distance worth hearing, from a Freethought point of view, and I decided, whether rightly or wrongly, that there were not. Moreover, it is such a long time since I went to a church or chapel to hear a discourse, that I felt that, apart from the feeling of being in a very uncongenial atmosphere or environment, only a very powerful and logical speaker could draw me away from the front, where I had an opportunity of listening to a very efficient military band while I gazed upon the calm, blue sea as the waves rolled ceaselessly on to the shore.

And, after all, it was only a small minority of the people who had gone to church—the majority were on the front listening to the band, bathing, or going brake drives. But I saw many good, kind Christians when they came out of church. They came on to the front before dinner, and the ladies seemed to take as much delight in displaying their fine clothes and their expensive jewellery as the most worldly minded ladies in the crowd.

Some of the churches, no doubt, have good congregations during the summer season, but when the visitors have returned to their homes, I suspect that there are plenty of empty pews to be found in all the churches and chapels, not only of Clacton, but at most of the seaside places in this country.

While away on my holidays, I did a fair share of reading; I read a couple of Geo. B. Shaw's plays and several serious essays on the question of Peace. I also waded through the "Hell-fire" correspondence

in the *Daily News*. Some of the letters, in my judgment, were extremely good from a Freethought point of view, especially that by Wm. Archer, who calls himself a "Protestant," though he is as much a Freethinker as I am, one by a Unitarian minister, and another by Mrs. Ormiston Chant.

Wm. Archer, like Thomas Paine, showed that there are gradations in the culpability of sin; that a man who would tell a good spanking lie would hesitate a long while before he would think of cutting a man's throat.

On the other hand, the Unitarian parson demonstrated that hundreds of thousands of people had been condemned to hell by priests and parsons on a wrong interpretation of that word. But the letter to which I desire to call particular attention was one by the Rev. Dennis Lloyd James, Chaplain of Gordon-road Workhouse, Peckham. He wrote that there was a hell open to sinners and unbelievers, and he insisted on Christians upholding this belief. "As long as sin remains a fact," he says, "in God's moral universe there must be a hell both in this world and the next. Hell in this world is sin ripe, in the next rotten ripe, hence irremedial; hence the doctrine of eternal punishment."

It is bad enough for a priest or a parson to frighten little children with the story of a Devil or hell-fire, but children may live long enough to outgrow these wicked ideas; but to torture the minds of old people in the workhouse or in the infirmary with the wicked lie that any God of goodness will consign a poor creature to either a figurative or a literal hell for ever and for ever is nothing short of infamous; and I am only sorry that I am not a member of the Camberwell Guardians, so that I might give this reverend gentleman a piece of my mind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Noses.

SOME people will think this a strange heading for an article. A few, perhaps, will turn up their noses at it, and ask, "What will the man write about next?" Probably the most severe will say the subject is below the dignity of philosophy. But, with all due respect, we think they are mistaken. There was once a cant about the dignity of history; everything was beneath its attention except the doings of princes, popes, generals, and statesmen. But the *coup de grace* was given to that superstition by Lord Macaulay. Nothing is really trivial to the eye of a philosopher. The laws of the universe are as much involved in a grain of sand as in a planet. The mystery of life is as great in an insect as in a Shakespeare. A common song has often been more powerful than a law passed by both houses of parliament, sanctioned by the crown, administered by judges, and enforced by policemen, gaolers, and soldiers. Has it not even been said that the history of the world would have been changed by a difference of an eighth of an inch in the length of Cleopatra's nose? Let us have done then with "dignity," and let us look at facts. And who can say that noses are not facts? Is not the nose called "the prominent feature"? Why, there was a gentleman, immortalised in an old epigram, whose long nose was an advance agent—a herald to announce he was coming. *His nose was a fact, anyhow.* Look at Cæsar's nose, look at Wellington's, look at Napoleon's. Such noses are not only facts, but *tremendous* facts. They ploughed deep furrows in the world's history. They are unforgettable noses.

Laurence Sterne, our great English humorist, wrote a long dissertation upon noses, which is well worth reading; although, like the Bible, it is not exactly fit for children. A later writer devoted a whole book to noses—and a very witty and instructive book too. We are therefore not the first in the field. Nevertheless, our remarks will have their speciality. We shall not follow Sterne or his suc-

cessor, except in point of time, but strike out a line of our own.

The nose, dear reader, has played a very great part in religious history. The priests have always led the people by that organ. It was the easiest to catch hold of, but that was not the reason. The fact is, the nose was the gate of piety. The soul went in and out of the nostrils. When the Hebrew prophet had a dead boy to resuscitate, he stretched himself upon the lad seven times; at last the lad's soul came back, and the reanimated corpse sneezed. And why did it sneeze? Parsons cannot answer the question. But we can. The lad's soul re-entered his body through the nose; in doing so it set up a titillation, and relief was found in the usual way.

Dr. Tylor, in his splendid work on *Primitive Culture*, has some instructive pages on this subject. Sneezing customs are general, though not universal. When the Englishman who sneezes cries "God bless me!" he is following an old custom of which he has lost the original meaning. The object was to keep evil or foreign spirits from entering. Zulu diviners cultivate sneezing, which they regard as an indication of the presence of the spirits they are invoking. Calabar negroes, when a child sneezes, will say "Far from you!" with a gesture as if throwing off some evil. On a Samoan's sneezing, the bystanders exclaimed "Life to you!" The Jewish sneezing formula is "Good life!" The Moslems say "Praise to Allah!" Prometheus, in the Greek mythology, prays for his artificial man, when it gives the first sign of life by sneezing. Jehovah breathes into Adam's nostrils to make him a living soul. Jacob prays that man's soul may no longer depart from his body when he sneezes. The sect of Messalians used to spit and blow their noses to expel the demons they might have drawn in while breathing. Mediæval exorcists drove the devils out through the patients' nostrils. Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates that he saw a Jew, named Eleazar, curing demoniacs in the time of Vespasian, by drawing out the demons through their nostrils with a magic ring.

This is enough to explain the religious mystery of noses. The reader is now aware why the priests have kept their eyes on those organs. The men of God suspect and hate our eyes. They tell us we must not walk by *sight*. We must walk by *faith*. That is, we must follow our noses; or, in other words, walk by *smell*. The parson goes in front, and we must tramp after him. As Hamlet says, "you shall nose him as you go," by his flavor of brimstone, until at last you come to the great treacle-pot called Heaven.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Affiliated" Criminals.

There are no declared Agnostics, Freethinkers, or Atheists listed in the monthly report just published from the State Penitentiary of Nebraska — which is, perhaps, not be wondered at, since Nebraska is the home of that eminent and influential Christian, William Jennings Bryan. Of the 250 odd inmates 76 are Catholics, 65 Methodists, 57 Baptists, 31 Christians (Campbellites), 15 Presbyterians, 13 Lutherans, 9 Episcopalians, 6 United Brethren, 4 Congregationalists, 2 Christian Scientists, 2 Mormons, 1 Hebrew, and 75 Non-sectarians. Thus four-fifths of the persons imprisoned for crimes in Nebraska are affiliated with church, synagogue, or tabernacle, and but one-fifth are unattached. Of the population of Nebraska, the Roman Catholics form somewhat less than 10 per cent., but they supply more than 20 per cent. of the criminals. According to the Government census, the non-church members of Nebraska make up nearly 70 per cent. of the population. And yet these 75 "unaffiliated" are only a little more than 20 per cent. of the prison population, while the "affiliated" supply the 80 per cent. Let us here refer to the statement of Mr. Bryan, which, to eke out his meagre salary of \$12,000 a year, he is now repeating at the Chautauquas for \$500 a lick, that if we were to divide the sheep and the goats, here the people who are with the church and there the people who are not, on the one side would be found all who are virtuous and law-abiding, and on the other side the criminal and worthless class generally. And right in his own State the prison statistics rise up to

overwhelm him. If Mr. Bryan's religion were as generally accepted by the law-abiding as by the law-breaking population, Nebraska would be 80 per cent. instead of only about 30 per cent. "affiliated." There is no excuse for misrepresentation regarding the close relation, in all countries, between religion and crime. The facts have been made the subject of close investigation by unprejudiced minds. That religion makes people good who would not be so without it, or that unbelief loosens rather than strengthens the moral character, is a pious fiction and nothing more.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Friend or Fool.

To discover the will of a Deity whose sway
In the universe naught can resist,
It would seem at first sight that a sensible way
Is to notice the things that exist.
By his hand into space all the planets were hurled;
He for ages unchallenged has reigned.
It would seem as if God who created the world
Had created the things it contained.
But no; we must learn we are wide of the mark.
What is logical need not be right;
The disciples of Reason are all in the dark,
The disciples of Faith in the light.
If from slavery, cruelty, carnage, and crime
The intentions of God should be gleaned,
The Almighty Creator would seem for all time
But a paramount Infinite Fiend.
So we learn the Almighty is not what he seems,
But is better and kinder by far.
He intended great things that are still only dreams—
Is distressed by the facts as they are.
The Lord is the potter, and man is the clay;
But, in spite of his infinite skill,
He sadly refuses to have his own way,
And mould the poor stuff to his will.
The Lord is a shepherd who places his sheep
On the edge of a dangerous rock;
And, while to destruction they stumble or leap,
Sits bewailing the fate of his flock.
But, on seeing the fruit of the theory they state,
His defenders may open their eyes;
For, in robbing our hearts of a Deity to hate,
They have given us one to despise.
In working his dolls on their miniature stage,
If a showman would imitate God,
He'd weep for poor Judy and tremble with rage
When his Punch was applying the rod.
But, despite all the freaks that his puppets have
The showman contrives to keep cool; [played,
While God by his puppets is grieved and dismayed,
And sits in despair like a fool.
Great God! though the timid who cringe at thy feet
May in terror thy wisdom avow,
The man who's conducting the show in the street
Is a hundredfold wiser than thou.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

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Man has been studying all sorts of things during the ages, and most of them unreal. At last he has taken to studying himself, and therein lies his salvation. "Man, know thyself," said the wise ancient. After the lapse of nearly three thousand years, man is beginning to think there is something in the advice. Some hundreds of years ago, the great Montaigne expressed astonishment at the fact that while man could not make a flea he would be making gods by the dozen. Happily, he is growing tired of that branch of industry. Instead of looking towards the fancied heavens, and exclaiming to their imaginary sovereign, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" the modern man is taking himself a great deal more seriously. He is rising from his knees and trying to stand erect. He is full of a newly awakened curiosity. He has heard so much about the gods! "What am I? What are my fellow men? What were the men who went before us? What will the men be who come after us?"—such are the questions he is now asking. And this means an entirely new departure. The theocentric theory is giving way to the homocentric theory. Theology, the science of God, is giving way to Anthropology, the science of Man. We are at the beginning of the end—in spite of all the Church Congresses in Christendom.—G. W. Foote.

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

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, "Beelzebub," "Wonders of Science and Miracles."

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WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Christian Sects; or, We are Not Divided."

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