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PRICE TWOPENCE

*He who will not freely and sadly confess that he is
MUCH a fool is ALL a fool.*—FULLER.

Trust in God.

ONE of the speakers at the Norwich Free Church Congress complained that often in the Churches the man with the cheque-book was thought more of than the poor man. He thought this was one reason why the Churches lacked force, and had lost, or was losing, the confidence of the mass of the people. The complaint comes rather late in the day, because there never has been a time when the man with the cheque-book was not thought most of in the Churches—and one might add very generally outside the Churches. And, if he were sufficiently cynical to say so, the rich man might point out that in this the Churches were only doing their duty. They may preach to the poor, but they exist for the rich. How often are the wealthy classes told that they ought to go to church as an example to the poor? And what is the great work of the Churches but to maintain order, which is only another way of resisting change and of conserving established interests? A French writer said once that it was the duty of the poor to protect the property possessed by others. So one might also say that the stock teaching of Christianity to the poor has always been the duty of maintaining an order from which they benefit least of all.

The speaker referred to advised that we should trust less to the millionaire and more in God. But why? Why should we put more faith in God than we do in a millionaire? Millionaires may not be always admirable persons, although some of them do not seem to be at all bad fellows, but at least there is no doubt as to their existence. We do not have to read volumes or wade through miles of argument to find out whether they exist. And some of them do use their wealth in a way which they believe will benefit their fellows. But there is no such certainty in the case of God. We cannot be certain that he exists; we cannot be sure, even if he does exist, that what he does is for the best, or that we can rely upon his assistance. His existence is only a possibility, his benevolence a matter of mere inference. In the case of distress we might approach a wealthy man with a fair amount of certainty that he would render assistance. No one can approach God with the same degree of confidence. An American millionaire who some years ago met an appeal on behalf of the public with a "Damn the public," was generally condemned for his callousness. But, as a mere matter of fact, God doesn't say it, he does it. Thousands of people are tortured by disease or overwhelmed by disaster. And if we are to trust believers, it is God who is behind all. It is certain that if any wealthy man were to act with as little regard for human well-being as does God, he would stand before his fellows as a moral monster. This is not alone the opinion of an Atheist, a convinced Theist comes to the same conclusion. Mr. W. H. Mallock says that if Theists will look the facts of the universe steadily in the face,—

"They will see that if there is anything at the back of this vast process, with a consciousness and a purpose in any way resembling our own—a Being who knows

what he wants and is doing his best to get it—he is, instead of a holy, all-wise God, a scatter-brained, semi-powerful, semi-impotent monster. They will recognise as clearly as ever they did the old familiar facts which seemed to them evidences of God's wisdom, love, and goodness; but they will find that these facts when taken in connection with the others, only supply us with a standard in the nature of this Being by which most of his acts are exhibited to us as those of a criminal madman.....Habitually a bungler as he is, and callous when not actively cruel, we are forced to regard him, when he seems to exhibit benevolence, as not divinely benevolent, but merely weak and capricious, like a boy who fondles a kitten and the next moment sets a dog at it."

What encouragement have we that we should rely upon God? Of course, the clergy tell us we should; but that, as Heine said of another occasion, is their trade. Our trust in God is the only warranty for their existence. But what reason does experience furnish for this trust? If experience is to be trusted, God does nothing. Civilisation is not the gift of God, but the product of human labor and human wisdom. And civilisation, when one comes to look at it, largely consists in correcting God's handiwork, or directly reversing it. God furnishes poisons and diseases ready made, but *man* has to slowly discover the antidotes. God inflicts pain without the slightest regard for merit or demerit, and human society flourishes as it negatives this method. We do not willingly punish the innocent for the guilty, or the children for the parents' faults; but that is precisely God's method—that is, if we are to adopt the belief in a God who speaks through nature. If experience has taught us anything at all, it is that human development depends entirely upon our acquiring the qualities of self-dependence and co-operation, and treating God as a quite negligible factor in our lives.

Preachers often enough lament that people ignore God, without apparently realising the significance of the charge. That we do ignore God is true enough; but how comes it that we can do so? Facts are not things that can be ignored for long with impunity. Beliefs that are vital to human well-being cannot be lightly set on one side. A fact is the most stubborn of things. We may ignore its presence for a time; but it remains awaiting, and finally compelling, recognition. The Gradgrindian philosophy did not break down because it insisted on facts, but because it left out of account facts quite as important as those it recognised. It was the neglected facts that ultimately wrecked it, as they will sooner or later wreck all false conceptions of life. How comes it, then, that we can neglect God? And not only neglect God, but do so without anyone being able to show that we are the worse for our neglect? Does it not argue that in neglecting God we are losing sight of nothing of any genuine importance? For, after all, it is not the man who gets on *with* the belief in God by which its value is to be tested, but by the man who gets on without it. Health *with* whisky drinking cannot prove that it is necessary to prevent disease; health *without* it does prove that it is quite unnecessary. The testimony of a thousand believers is not nearly such good evidence as that of a single unbeliever.

Observe, too, that this neglect of God is not the case of a people who have not yet arrived at the stage of trusting God. It is the case of a people

whose neglect is the expression of experience. Trust in God was once universal. People depended upon God as far as it was possible for them to do so. Historically and individually, trust in God represents a stage that has been outgrown in those who "neglect God." The believer too generally forgets when he lectures the unbeliever that we know all about it. We have been where he is. He has not been where we are. We know all his arguments, we have experienced all his feelings. We know what it is to trust in God, and we know what it is to go our way having put this belief behind. We really are in a position to lecture *him*. He is in no position to lecture us. He is in the position of a confirmed whisky-drinker lecturing a teetotaler on the necessity of whisky to perfect health.

Of course, the world generally ignores God. How could it be otherwise? Experience may not be always expressed in words or formulated in theory, but it is there in practice. We may express faith in the power of God to heal disease, but we do not refrain from calling in a physician or surgeon. We may profess to believe in the power of faith to move mountains, but we place infinitely greater reliance on engineers. We may pray for a safe voyage overseas, but we all know that a well-built vessel and a skilled navigator is more important. We pray in Parliament that God will direct the decisions of those present, but no single member believes that anything of the kind occurs. We say we believe that God is on the side of right in warfare, but we certainly place more reliance upon men and armaments. We go on trusting God in theory and ignoring him in practice, because nature does not mind what theories we hold so long as we do not practise them. It is practice that tells, and sooner or later experience compels us to adopt a practice that is consonant with our welfare, as it compels us to drop practices that make against it. Man does not trust God in practice, because experience has shown him what a broken reed this trust is. And mankind cannot go on fooling itself for ever.

In sober truth, while conscious Atheism may not be general, practical Atheism—that is, the setting on one side of God in the affairs of life—is fairly common amongst civilised people. And this is only what one might expect. Practice is before theory, nearly always. In the main, theory only expresses practice. It summarises life rather than directs it. Life precedes theory, and philosophy explains and systematises what is and what has been. And this divorce between theory and practice, this trusting God in theory and ignoring him in practice, only means, at bottom, that the forces of life are too insistent, too strong for religious doctrines. In practice, God is ignored because he has failed to justify confidence. All our beliefs, all our institutions are, like forms of life, ultimately amenable to the operation of the survival of the fittest. If they are inimical to welfare, they die out sooner or later. If they are useful, they flourish and increase. If they are merely harmless, they may persist for an indefinite time. But religious beliefs have not increased. On the contrary, there is no denying their general decline. It only remains for theory to summarise practice here as elsewhere. Life will then once more represent a consistent whole, while our perception of the nature of the forces involved in human development will make our progress at once more rapid and more secure.

C. COHEN.

Irrationalism Glorified.

THE term "Irrationalism" has two principal significations. It is employed to denote a philosophy which regards all the processes and conclusions of reason as practically valueless, and contends that the emotions alone furnish the tests of truth as well as the rules for individual and social conduct. It is also used to signify the denial or disbelief of the

principles of Rationalism. In the present article we shall combine the two meanings of the word. Two outstanding metaphysicians of to-day, Bergson and Eucken, are uncompromising Irrationalists, though the latter is claimed as an advocate of rational spirituality. We maintain that the very notion of spirituality is entirely irrational, a contention in which Bergson is on our side. He argues that "the intellect is characterised by a natural inability to comprehend life." "Intelligence," he adds, "treats everything mechanically." Therefore "on intuition alone can we rely in dealing with life." To the famous French philosopher life is a spiritual entity or force bending matter, more or less, into conformity to its own will. This is a truth which the reason, according to him, cannot comprehend. We agree with him, but on wholly different grounds. We hold that our intelligence cannot deal with life as a spiritual reality simply because there is no evidence whatever that life is such a reality, and Professor Bergson makes no attempt to adduce any.

In a sermon which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for March 18, the Rev. R. J. Campbell confesses that no theory of the Atonement of Christ that he has ever heard of seems to him to be completely exhaustive of the subject, in fact, that of all the innumerable theories not one has quite got at the heart of it. They all fall short, are all more or less inadequate to the greatness of the fact they try to explain. "There is a spiritual depth they never touch," he says, "but of which the soul can have direct experience all the same." Then comes the following remarkable passage:—

"I believe I am right in saying that we all feel a power, a richness, an all-satisfying completeness in the Gospel of the atoning work of Christ, which are not fully accounted for in terms of the reason. You read what all the master theologians of the past and present have to say about it, and you rise from the exercise with the feeling that there is still something left unsaid, and that that something is the most important thing of all; in fact, I am not sure that the essence of the atonement ever could be expressed in terms of the human understanding. It eludes exact statement; it sublimates the moment you try to seize it with the forceps of the intellect. You can get hold of something, it is true, but that which you cannot get hold of is—or so one is almost forced to believe—just that which has most of all given the Gospel power over the hearts and lives of men."

Now, if all theories of the atonement have failed to get quite at the heart of it, how does Mr. Campbell know that it has a heart to get at? We have read what all the master theologians have to say on the subject, and we have risen from the memorable exercise feeling, not that there was still something left unsaid, but that it would have been infinitely better if all they do say had been left unsaid. If "that something" has never been expressed by a single divine, living or dead, how on earth can Mr. Campbell so confidently assure us that it is "the most important thing of all"? But, the reply comes, it is a thing "of which the soul can have direct experience all the same." Fancy a sane person coolly asserting that he has a direct experience of "the most important thing of all," but that for the life of him he cannot tell us what it is! That is precisely what Mr. Campbell claims to be true of every genuine Christian. "It is a great mystery," he adds; "and it remains a mystery when the utmost has been said that can be said in answer to the questions of the mind concerning it." What a contemptible city of refuge to fly into!

Let us look for a moment into this curious subject of Christian experience to which Mr. Campbell continually alludes. After treating of the atonement as the infallible means of reconciliation between God and man, and of saving people from the penal consequences of sin, the reverend gentleman proceeds to quote from a letter sent him by an old friend of the City Temple, in which the writer describes the terrible experiences of "a very poor woman of about forty-two, worn and prematurely aged, rather deformed, partially deaf, with that look in her eyes

which a dog has in his when suffering," who yet "looks after and attends to a father, who is suffering from softening of the brain and insomnia, and who is in consequence very irritable, a crippled brother and his son." This very poor woman toils and slaves day after day, month after month, her one desire being to sacrifice herself in the service of those she has in charge, and she never murmurs or complains, often going without food herself so that father, brother, and his boy may not go without. The writer of the letter concludes thus: "For patient endurance, for loving unselfishness, for bravery and heroism, for unrequited devotion and self-sacrifice, this poor, deformed, deaf, toiling woman seems to me to be a burning and a shining example." One naturally infers that the unfortunate woman makes no religious profession whatever, for the writer's purpose seems to be to use her case to put to shame the religion of the Churches. There is a great number of such women in London alone, who wear themselves prematurely out in loving devotion to those dependent upon them, and some of them, to our personal knowledge, are moved to such conduct by no religious motives or sentiments of any kind, but alone by wifely and motherly affection. And yet, wonder of wonders, this is Mr. Campbell's amazing comment on that letter:—

"We have not far to look for evidence of the saving power of Christ. There it is, and in all such lives as this. The redeeming love of Christ finds opportunity through the self-sacrificing spirit thus expressed, and will in the end prevail over everything opposed to it, and lift mankind back to the heart of God."

Is not the reverend gentleman aware that the existence of the conditions which make it possible for good and loving women so to toil and slave and endure unspeakable privations in a Christian country is a conclusive proof of the utter failure of the Christian religion? Does he not know that in Great Britain to-day several millions of God's children, for whose salvation Christ is said to have died, are living in the miserable state of semi-starvation, and that every year scores actually die of hunger? This is what the atonement of Christ has done for our country, and it has done no more for any other.

But we are urgently pointed to the blissful experience of real Christians. The curious thing is that this "simply cannot be stated in terms of the intellect at all," which means that the highest Christian experience is unintelligible to rational people. Listen to this:—

"One will have to use hyperbole in order to do it, for plain, matter of fact statement is inadequate. It is that which from the point of view of common sense is an impossibility, namely, making the guilty innocent. It is something that goes beyond even forgiveness as we ordinarily understand that word. It is putting the penitent sinner in the position of never having sinned."

Do you now see what hyperbole means? It is nothing but rhetoric, deliberate overstatement, intentional exaggeration, an affirmation that cannot be literally true. Here is a man who for fifty or sixty years has wallowed in the filthiest moral gutters, bringing irreparable ruin upon innocent young girls, swindling in business, defrauding those who trusted in him, and perpetrating many other dark deeds; but at the last hour he repents, gives his heart to the Savior, and, in consequence, is assured that he has received "something that goes beyond even forgiveness as we ordinarily understand that word," with the result that he jumps to his feet and excitedly exclaims: "Hallelujah! The man I was five minutes ago is dead and buried for ever; I am no longer that man in the sight of God; in relation to the eternal holiness I am as though I had never fallen; that load of transgression has nothing to do with me; I am as those who have never known it."

Such is Christian experience; and without the use of hyperbole we can honestly say that it is rooted in a lie, and can lead to nothing but the worst form of hypocrisy. According to Mr. Campbell's teaching in this sermon, Christians pretend to be what they are not, and so must be written down as play-actors. They are encouraged from the pulpit both to believe

and act a lie. They are taught to persuade themselves that what took place at their conversion was, not merely a severance between them and their guilty past, but "the utter destruction of that past, so to speak." Such teaching is fundamentally immoral, and is bound to exert an injurious effect upon the character of those who accept it. It is Irrationalism glorified with a vengeance. We prefer Rationalism, apart from the Gospel of something "that goes beyond even forgiveness," completely divorced from Christian experience, which can engender nothing but the most intolerable and intolerant form of self-righteousness; and we prefer Rationalism because its supreme emphasis is on the great law of Nature that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

J. T. LLOYD.

Science and the Soul.—IX.

(Concluded from p. 181)

"Since the awakening of the scientific spirit in Europe, it has been recognised that the promise of a future life has no basis of fact to support it. The modern study of the functions of the mind has shown beyond all question that these are dependent on the functions of the body, in particular of those of the central nervous system."—PROFESSOR ELIE METCHNIKOFF, *The Nature of Man*, p. 159.

"Each man born is but a living wave of matter curving over the ocean of being, to sink again into the unseen trough of the next, while the calm of obscurity settles over all in this Universe of Oblivion."

"The soul which he inherits from the elements, whatever it may be, he also returns to them: his personal immortality consisting solely in great thoughts, words, and deeds, and the depth of their impression on the shifting sands of men's memories."—A. R. DEWAR, *From Matter to Man*, pp. 284-286.

"Notably too I observed among serious people there (at Havana) what I have observed in other places, the visible relief with which they begin to look forward to extinction after death."—J. A. FROUDE, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 323.

"I find that when a Christian loses a friend the tears spring from his eyes as quickly as from the eyes of others. Their tears are as bitter as ours. Why? The echo of the promises spoken eighteen hundred years ago is so low, and the sound of the clods upon the coffin so loud, the promises are so far away, and the dead are so near. That is the reason."—COLONEL INGERSOLL, *The Dying Creed*, p. 31.

IT is said that Frederick the Great, upon seeing one of his regiments hesitate to charge, at a critical moment, shouted, "Rascals; do you want to live for ever?" It is certain, as Miss Edith Simcox has remarked, that "the lust for living for ever is one which will be found least deeply rooted among men." Moreover, as the same writer points out, "No mortal knows whether a resurrection to eternal life would answer his expectations or not."*

Every believer is quite certain that he, personally, whatever may be the fate of others, is going to have a good time in the life to come. Like the old French nobleman who declared that God would never damn a person of his quality. But, as Leslie Stephen observed, "The argument that because evil and good are mixed wherever we can observe, therefore there is elsewhere unmixed good, does not obey any recognised canons of inductions."† And John Stuart Mill has remarked that, in a "happier condition of life, not annihilation, but immortality, may be the burdensome idea," and that we should "find comfort, and not sadness, in the thought that it is not chained through eternity to a conscious existence which it cannot be assured it will always wish to preserve."‡

It is religion—with its ghastly pictures of endless tortures—which has made the thought of death so distressing to men. It is as natural to die as to be born. And as men lose the groundless fears of religion, so they will lose the fear of death.

As the historian Froude remarked:—

"Men used to pretend that the idea of annihilation was horrible to them; now they regard the probability

* *Natural Law*, p. 359.

† *Freethinking and Plain Speaking*, p. 356.

‡ *J. S. Mill, Essay on the Utility of Religion*.

of it with calmness, if not with actual satisfaction. One very interesting Cuban gentleman said to me that life would be very tolerable if one was certain that death would be the end of it. The theological alternatives were equally unattractive; Tartarus was an eternity of misery, and the Elysian fields an eternity of ennui.*

Some men have even looked forward to absolute annihilation with pleasure. Mainlaender did so. Metchnikoff says:—

"Mainlaender describes the state of mind of a man who develops the will to die, and commits suicide. 'At first he glances anxiously and from afar at death, and shrinks from it with horror. Later, he draws nearer and walks round it in wide circles. Day by day, however, these circles become smaller, until finally he embraces death with weary arms and looks it straight in the face. Then peace comes; gentle peace!'

"It is absurd to expect anything to follow death but absolute annihilation, and the ordinary man faces this prospect with terror. 'But it is essential,' says Mainlaender, 'that man should dominate the universe by knowledge, and wise men look forward to total annihilation with joy.' 'In relinquishing Schopenhauer's will to live,' concluded Mainlaender, 'I have finally arrived at the will to die. I have raised myself upon the shoulders of Schopenhauer, until I have attained a point of view such as others have never accomplished. At present I am alone, but behind me all humanity is pressing on to freedom; and before me is the clear translucent vista of the future.'†

Mainlaender, true to his principles, committed suicide when barely thirty-five years of age. We do not advocate, or approve, of Mainlaender's principles. Man should not cower down with terror in the presence of death, neither should he rejoice at its approach; he should relinquish himself to the inevitable without fear, and without joy, after the manner of the Greeks and Romans before the advent of Christianity, with its debasing superstitions of heaven and hell.

Among the Churches to-day there is a tendency to believe that everything will be all right in the end. Even among the old believers, the doctrine of hell-fire is not held as it used to be. Instead of the old fierce joy aroused by the idea of seeing unbelievers suffering indescribable torments, there is a tendency to keep this side of the "glad tidings" out of sight, to be ashamed of it, to regard it as a regrettable necessity, but taught by the Bible.

The more advanced section of the Churches now tend to the belief that everyone will be saved. The text now is taken, not from the Bible, but from Tennyson:—

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill."

In Miss Marie Corelli's *Sorrows of Satan* even the Devil sneaks into heaven at last. Poor Devil! what a fate!

This future existence is pictured, especially by those who have been beaten and broken in the battle of life, as a floating, dreamy existence, careless and painless, where, bursting all bonds of habit, we shall be at liberty:—

"There to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.
Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy
skies,
Breadths of tropics shade and palms in cluster, knots of
Paradise.

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-
fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres
of sea."‡

They take all the best of life, eliminate all its badness and sadness, and then imagine it continuing for ever. For instance, a worker in a smoky town goes to the country or the seaside for a summer holiday. For a few days he leads a happy, careless existence, all smiles and sunshine. He forgets that he would soon tire of such an existence; those who dwell by the sea do not spend all their time in gazing upon it, and the agriculturalist would be more likely

to agree with James Thomson ("B. V.") in his pessimistic mood, disgusted with—

"The same old solid hills and leas;
The same old stupid patient trees;
The same old ocean, blue and green;
The same sky, cloudy and serene;
The old two dozen hours to run
Between the settings of the sun,"

than with the raptures of a dweller from a London tenement. Even the existence described by Tennyson would soon begin to pall, and in the prospect of an eternity of it, we should, like the Wandering Jew, cry for an end to such a life. The Atheist, like others, regrets that he cannot recall past joys, but recognises the futility of attempting it, and resigns himself to the inevitable. Lafcadio Hearn, who abandoned Western for Japanese civilisation, and married a Japanese wife, was an Atheist and an unbeliever in a future life, but in a few pathetic lines he put more feeling than in all the millions of sermons that have been preached.

They were found in his desk after his death, and are entitled "Illusion." It is reminiscent of a beautiful Japanese scene, and of a child who is no more:—

"An old, old sea-wall, stretching between two boundless levels, green and blue. On the right only rice-fields, reaching to the sky-line; on the left only summer-silent sea, where fishing craft of curious shapes are riding. Everything is steeped in white sun; and I am standing on the wall. Along its broad and grass-grown top a boy is running towards me—running in sandals of wood—the sea breeze blowing aside the long sleeves of his robe as he runs, and baring his slender legs to the knee. Very fast he runs, springing upon his sandals; and he has in his hands something to show me: a black dragon fly, which he is holding by the wings lest it should hurt itself struggling.

"With what sudden, incommunicable pang do I watch the gracious little figure leaping in the light—between those summer silences of field and sea! And how softly vivid all things under this milky radiance—the smiling child-face with lips apart; the twinkle of the light, quick feet; the shadows of grasses and of little stones!

"But quickly as he runs, the child will come no nearer to me; the slim, brown hand will never cling to mine. For this light is the light of a Japanese sun that set long years ago.

"Never, dearest!—never shall we meet—not even when the stars are dead!

"And yet—can it be possible that I shall not remember?—that I shall not still see, in other million summers, the same sea-wall under the same white noon; the same shadows of grasses and of little stones; the running of the same little sandalled feet that will never, never reach my side?"

This, of course, is not a longing for a future life, but a desire for a repetition of the past, like the idea of the "eternal recurrence" which filled Nietzsche with such despair; but none knew better than Hearn the futility of such crying for the moon. Hearn could never resist the idea to put all his emotions into words; emotions everyone feels, but only men of genius can transcribe.

Lastly, we have to deal with the moral argument. We are told that if we do away with the rewards and punishments of a future life, everyone will give vent to their evil passions, and no man's life and property would be safe.

Well, the Buddhists, who are more numerous than the Christians, have no such beliefs to restrain them, yet they do not require an army of police to keep them from robbery and murder as the Christians do.

Leslie Ward says:—

"This is a question upon which men are very prone to err. Just as they imagine they would commit crime but for certain governmental restraints, so they think they would do wrong but for religious restraints, when in fact they would do just the same as now if neither existed. The moral sanction is in reality first, both in time and in authority, and it has therefore been lashed to religion as a means of carrying the latter through, and not the reverse. It is moral sanction which gives authority to religious dogma, and not religious sanction

* J. A. Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 323.

† Metchnikoff, *The Nature of Man*, p. 190.

‡ Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*.

which gives authority to moral principle. It is morality which has saved religion, and not religion which has saved morality. Here, as so often elsewhere pointed out, the apparent is the reverse of the real.**

Heine mocks the idea of virtue being rewarded after death, in his *Confessions*, where he says:—

"One beautiful starlight night, Hegel stood with me at an open window, I being a young man of twenty-two, and having just eaten well and drunk coffee, naturally spoke with enthusiasm of the stars, and called them abodes of the blest. But the master muttered to himself, 'The stars! Hm! hm! the stars are only a brilliant eruption on the firmament.' 'What!' cried I; 'then there is no blissful spot above, where virtue is rewarded after death?' But he, glancing at me with his dim eyes, remarked, sneeringly, 'So you want a *pourboire* (a tip) because you have supported your sick mother and not poisoned your brother?' At these words he looked anxiously around, but was reassured when he saw it was only Henry Beer."†

The man who practises virtue, only in order to avoid punishment and gain a reward in some future life, is not a moral man at all; he is only a bad man in chains; and, at the best, is only acting from selfish motives.

We cannot better conclude than by giving a verse from Swinburne's magical *Hymn to Proserpine*:—

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be,
That no life lives for ever
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

W. MANN.

Wordsworth's Poetry of Life.

Wordsworth, A Lecture by George Bedborough. Price 3d. (Letchworth, Garden City Press.)

MR GEORGE BEDBOROUGH, in choosing Wordsworth for the subject of his lecture, was wisely inspired. There is far too much neglect of that great poet, a master of verse, to whom discriminating judges grant a very high place among English classics, and to whom Matthew Arnold and other poets gave the sincere flattery of imitation. Moreover, Mr. Bedborough, a most democratic critic, turned to Wordsworth as to a poet "whose message is for our day and our people." And with justice he defends the poet from the charge of disloyalty to liberty and ingratitude to his friends, besides removing other popular misconceptions.

The booklet is the more agreeable to read because its slender length gives its author small chance of analysing in detail the various phases of Wordsworth's genius. Mr. Bedborough was perforce content with a brief summary of the poet's career, and with a more lengthy appreciation, which contains some of the soundest criticism on the subject that we have had the pleasure of reading.

At times Mr. Bedborough puts his thoughts on literature in a dramatic form, and fits them with a proper background. How excellent is his method of explaining who were Wordsworth's contemporaries. "About the time that Wordsworth was born, a dozen children prattled and played unconscious of their destiny, bearing the names of Charles Lamb, Walter Scott, Landor, Coleridge, Campbell, Hazlitt, Moore, Southey, Hallam, and Ebenezer Elliott." The last name indicates Mr. Bedborough's democratic sympathies, for no ordinary critic would have recollected this singer of the people, or mentioned that "about the time that Wordsworth died, Walt Whitman was editing the *Daily Eagle*."

Mr. Bedborough has some excellent remarks on the theological opinions of Wordsworth, whose religious and moral orthodoxy has generally been taken for granted. Says Mr. Bedborough:—

"He [Wordsworth] had many relations in the orthodox Church. He never troubled directly to defy

orthodoxy, and he frequently used orthodox phraseology. If his whole work does not undermine orthodox morality it is only because we are incapable of understanding the implications of philosophy.....Wordsworth's Christianity was neither his chief nor his second concern. He loved Nature more than he loved anything, and Nature included humanity."

"Wordsworth's message," he adds in another place, "is essentially joy for the life that now is, or, in the poet's own beautiful words:—

'Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island. Heaven knows where,
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us—the place where in the end
We find our happiness or not at all.'

We thank Mr. Bedborough for a fine tribute to the abiding power of one of the greatest English poets. Not to care for Wordsworth is not to care for poetry. Byron has been described as the favorite poet of the unpoetical; Keats is by common consent the poets' poet; Wordsworth, like Shelley, cannot cease to be the fashion, because he never was the fashion. Wordsworth was never, for instance, a general favorite, like Tennyson, whose popularity was equally great with the half-educated many and with the educated few. He delighted lovers of poetry with "The Lotos Eaters" and "Rizpah," and he charmed ordinary people with his sugary tributes to Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and with versified novelettes.

Matthew Arnold rightly insisted that Wordsworth is one of the very chief glories of English poetry. The admirers of Wordsworth are the most cultured students of literature. Wordsworth owed his proud position to his truthful interpretation of nature, and it is this quality in his writings which gives them their imperishable strength. Wordsworth belonged to the philosophic school. He was, if anything, a Pantheist. In his inspired moments, he absolutely forgot the Christian tenets and communed with Nature, which existed before all creeds, and will outlast them all. Hearing oftentimes the "still sad music of humanity," his poetry is charged with the profoundest meaning. That is why he abides, for his poetry has the quality of inevitableness. It could not have been otherwise, and no one else could have written it.

The difference between Wordsworth uninspired and Wordsworth inspired is the transition from a drone to that of a silver trumpet. When the dross has been removed from Wordsworth's work, there remains a greater mass of the finest gold than can be put to the credit of any English poet save Shakespeare, the master of them all. At his finest moments, Wordsworth was Shakespearean in splendid simplicity, as when he said of the sonnet that—

"The thing became a trumpet."

He was the equal of Milton in eloquence, as when he spoke of the ruined tower wearing its crown of weeds through the centuries:—

"And yet cannot sustain
Some casual shout that breaks the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of time."

On occasion he was the peer of Keats, as when he wished to—

"Hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

His finest lines are "jewels that sparkle for ever on the stretched forefinger of time." But, better than all these tributes, he was Wordsworth, who, with eyes fixed on Nature's loveliness, saw all in "the light that never was on sea or land." His splendid genius is like a pure, white flame, which, seen amid the blackness of contemporary literature, is a beacon to those whose lives are "consecrate to truth and liberty."

MIMNERMUS.

AN EQUIVOCAL ANSWER.

During an "Instruction" class, an inquiring youngster asked the instructor if Jesus was ever married; to which the priest replied that he never was.

Then little Bertie further asked, "Whom then did Jesus live with?" To this the priest replied, "His mother."

* Leslie Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 283.

† Heine, *Prose Writings*, pp. 302-3.

Acid Drops.

The *Manchester Evening Chronicle* recently published a laudatory notice of the work of Dr. Knox as Bishop of Manchester. The notice is primarily concerned with the building of new churches and mission halls during Dr. Knox's tenure of office. Thanks to a committee appointed by him, in nine years £65,000 had been raised directly, and another £185,000 indirectly. In nine years, therefore, says the *Chronicle*, "£185,000 has been expended in extending Church work in the bounds of the ancient parish of Manchester and adjoining parishes." Now this is a huge sum of money, and it must be observed it was merely to extend Church work. All the pre-existing agencies have to be added before we exhaust Church activities. But the figures do bring home to one the extent of Church work, and one ought to look for striking results. Given any organisation other than the Church with these huge sums of money at command over a given area, and one can safely say that area would be transformed—for either good or ill.

What, now, has been the consequence of the extension of Church work in Manchester? Curiously enough, the *Chronicle* supplies an answer in another part of the same issue. Preaching in the Cathedral, the Rev. W. E. Kemp drew up a sweeping indictment against the morals of Manchester. In the factories, he said, "there was no deep realisation of the dignity of manhood and womanhood." Certain districts "were given up to organised vice."

"Our church workers can tell you of outrages on children of a shocking character. In the district where I work the more decent mothers dare not let their children out at night, and only within the last fortnight a girl of eight was taken from the steps of the church and violated disgracefully. There seems to be no moral sense in the community."

There was much more said to the same effect, but the above will do to go on with. Now if the Rev. Mr. Kemp is not telling the truth, it is plain that the Bishop would do well to spend some of the money raised in training clergymen of a more truthful character. If he is telling the truth, or anything near the truth, how much has Manchester benefited by this expenditure of an extra £185,000 in nine years on Church work? Give any other body of men seriously interested in making things better in Manchester £20,000 a year for nine years, and is it not highly probable that they would be able to show much more in the way of improvement than the Bishop is able to show? The Bishop can point to more churches and mission halls. But his own clergy confess that the moral rot continues.

The *Scotsman*, in a recent issue, had some comments on the position of the Churches that have a direct bearing on what has been said above. Dealing with the returns of the United Free Church Presbytery, it points out that "In the crowded and poverty-stricken areas of the city [Edinburgh] the Churches have but a slender proportion of the population with them.....In the last twenty years eleven churches of the United Free Church have been extinguished in populous districts. It gives figures in support of its statements, and these fully justify the scathing comment: "They say, 'Pay so much per sitting and we will declare the glad tidings.' And when the people cannot or will not pay, then Morningside is filled with churches and the Canongate is left with only one church for every 5,000 of the population." The Church of Scotland has, in fact, only a membership of 3·3 per cent. of the population. "In other days," says the *Scotsman*, "the Churches were after men, but now they are after money." It is only fair to point out that the *Scotsman* attributes the present condition of affairs to the "senseless rivalry" of the Churches. It would probably not do for a leading Scottish daily to go any deeper into the question. But as all the Churches, not only in Scotland but all over the civilised world, are losing their hold on the people, one wants a better explanation of the facts. Of course, a deal of energy is being wasted in competition; but the real significance is that the Churches are competing for customers in a market that is rapidly declining.

Christians are getting squeamish. In the view of the National Peace Council there are grave objections to the use of lead soldiers for children. Some day tender-hearted pietists will cease telling little children of the horrors of hell—a far more serious matter than that of boycotting toy soldiers.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who has republished his amusing volume, *The Defendant*, says that "the Christian martyrdoms were more than demonstrations: they were advertise-

ments." It would be more correct to say that they have been used as advertisements. The martyrs died on the cross; the exploiters live on it.

When our missionaries go abroad they usually carry with them all the prestige of a conquering race. They have, moreover, the advantages that are derived from advanced scientific knowledge and a generally higher social development. They are not slow in placing all the advantages derived from these sources to the credit of the religion that they preach. Very often the plan works. All people are not like the Japanese, who said quite openly, "We are quite willing to take any scientific knowledge you may have, but your religion you may keep." In a great many cases it is concluded that the advantages paraded by the missionary, and particularly the knowledge and skill of the medical missionary, are first-class evidence of the value of Christianity. We at home, of course, know better. We know how little connection there is between our really helpful knowledge and current religious belief, with the result that—even though all the stories of missionary conquests were true—Christianity is a declining force. And when natives of India, China, or Japan visit this country they are not slow to note the fraudulent character of missionary claims, and report accordingly.

The truth of this was admitted in a speech before the Free Church Congress, by Mr. Malcolm Spencer, Social Service Secretary to the Christian Students' movement. He said:—

"In British universities more than 2,000 Eastern students are being turned against Christianity by the shame of our slums, the cruelty and materialism of our commerce, our behavior to each other, and more especially our attitude to the foreigner. When an educated Hindoo arrives in this country, he is at once impressed by the poverty and wretchedness of multitudes in our cities, particularly since he notices also a display of wealth and luxury, making it quite evident that poverty is due not so much to any want of material resources as to sheer lack of desire to overcome the difficulties."

In other words, intelligent non-Christian observers find that at home Christians fail miserably in developing a better human life. In India, religion is at least a disciplinary force, whether it makes for good or evil. In this country they see that religion is mainly used for the purpose of keeping one class in a state of subjection, and giving greed, lust, and cruelty a veneer of morality.

Mr. Silvester Horne says the British Parliament is only realising now what Moses realised 4,000 years ago—that man needs one day's rest in seven. Rubbish! Moses—or whatever the name stands for—realised nothing of the kind. The Sabbath has no connection whatever with the principle of rest. It is not the principle of rest, but the principle of taboo that is involved here. People were forbidden to work on a certain day because all work on that day was unlucky and offensive to the gods. Students of comparative mythology know this well enough, although it has become entangled with the question of necessary rest and recreation. How little the Sabbath has ever had to do with the need for rest is seen by the way in which men, women, and children have been worked like galley-slaves six days in the week, even in very recent times.

The Hon. Henry Cope has written a little booklet on *Our Schools and the Bible*. He speaks in it of the "pernicious influence of the popular notion that God is a Person." The *Christian World* objects to this as showing prejudice. As the question is an open one perhaps it would be more correct to refer to God as a "suspected" person.

The Master of Manchester Grammar School, Mr. Lewis Paton, says that the decreasing number of children in Sunday-schools is due to our shrinking from imposing endurance upon them for the sake of endurance. Maybe; but this is certainly not the only reason. Children are not at Sunday-schools in such large numbers as they once were mainly because the parents do not believe as keenly as they once did. And the better type of parent in the semi-religious world naturally and properly shrinks from forcing upon children views concerning the veracity and utility of which he is himself doubtful. Mr. Paton adds, that in the old days children who were in church were not necessarily joining in the worship. We fancy this applies to a great many adults nowadays.

The *Westminster Gazette* recently portrayed Mr. Lloyd George as a porcupine, some of whose spines were sticking in the trousers of a boy, under the legend "Not St. Sebastian This Time." This reminds us of the American who saw a

picture of the saint, covered with arrows, at the National Gallery. "See here," the visitor said, "I don't mind the Venuses, but I can't stand this infernal pincushion."

It is seldom that those "Fathers-in-God" the Bishops have been subjected to such a fusillade of criticism as has been levelled at their devoted heads by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, the author of the well-known hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and a number of popular novels, who, in his new book, *The Church Revival*, applies the red-hot poker with all the zest of a pantomime harlequin. According to the writer, Bishop Sumner, of Winchester, was a "narrow-minded Evangelical"; Bishop Davys, of Peterboro, was "as out of place as a corporal elevated to be a general"; Gilbert, of Chichester, was "hard and unsympathetic"; Sumner, of Canterbury, he calls "a mere nose of wax"; and Thorold, of Winchester, was a man "of little mental capacity." The gem is the description of Archbishop Tate as "a schoolboy set to work on a problem beyond his capacity." We don't presume to improve on the last, for it seems true of the whole bunch.

"Vanoc," of the *Referee*, referring to Mr. Kipling's remarks on the smells of different countries, says that "Small follows religion. Burning peat or charcoal suggests the ancient faith of Rome. The smell of roast mutton, beef, and apple tart hint at Protestant Sundays. The sickly-sweet, luscious perfume of the lotus—speak of the Buddhist philosophy." He might have added that the smell of burning heretics characterised Christianity for centuries.

"The Poems of Job, Translated in the original metre." Dear, dear! We have been told so often that Jehovah wrote those verses.

There must be freedom of the will says Rev. R. F. Horton, and "the meaning of the will being free is simply this: that we are perpetually choosing, and the choice which is made has a determining influence." All we can say is, that if that is what the freedom of will means, there is nothing to quarrel about, and Dr. Horton is threshing the air. But that is *not* what is meant by freedom of the will. No one denies the fact of choice. It is as obvious as daylight, and has never been questioned by anyone. It is the question of the nature of choice that raises the issue. Not whether we choose, or are free to choose, but whether we have the power to determine what shall be the nature of our choice. Or to look at the matter from another angle, whether our choice is determined by a freely moving will or not. It is a pity that so many writers and speakers should so often fail to grasp the truth of this subject.

Words show the nature and current of a man's thinking, and when Dr. Horton asks whether it is possible to conceive a perfectly unthinking, unconscious, material universe, "setting about to produce the lower animals"? he shows us how hopeless his thinking is. "Setting about"! There is everything in that expression. It is a form of thought that belongs to Central Africa rather than to a scientific age. He can only think of things occurring because some person or persons decide that they shall occur. Educated people by this time ought to be aware that nature does not "set about" producing anything. Nature does not "set about" arranging things to produce a storm; the storm occurs because the conditions arise favorable to its being. Dr. Horton thinks it remotely possible that the world might have occurred without God up to the point of producing life; but after that, God was needed. God had to be called in, like a vaccination officer, to inoculate the earth in order that evolution might advance a stage.

"We are all of us," says the *Guardian*, "in a condition of antagonism to nature." Very largely this is true. We only need add that nature is as God intended it—if there is a God. The moral is not a difficult one to draw.

The Christian Evidence Society, through its organising secretary, has discovered a very deeply laid plot against Christianity. He writes to several religious papers asking people to let him have reports of any attacks on Christianity that appear in the "professedly neutral papers." These attacks, he says, "often emanate from the chief anti-theistic societies, which carefully organise the attack upon Christianity." So Christian readers are asked to co-operate in defeating these deadly designs. This gentleman has discovered a mare's nest. There is no organised attack upon Christianity by this means, and we fancy he knows it as well

as we do. We suspect that the real thing animating this appeal is the hope that people will enclose subscriptions along with the press cuttings. Christians need not be alarmed. It is not the attack on, but the defence of, Christianity that is illustrated by the press of this country. Unless from a man whose communication editors dare not refuse, attacks on Christianity are rigorously boycotted by newspapers. A well-known Freethinker stands about as much chance of getting his communications in the press as he does of getting appointed to a bishopric.

Pity the poor clergy! Here is a list of recent wills of clerics that calls for much sympathy. Rev. O. E. Anwyl, Plymouth, £5,122. Rev. A. Barff, Prebendary of St. Paul's, £3,679. Rev. C. S. Bruce, Cork, £4,263. Rev. E. Hughes, Oakham, £2,237. Rev. H. Lewis, Bermondsey, £3,774. Rev. R. Mole, £8,849. Rev. L. H. O'Brien, Limerick, £6,804. Rev. J. Robertson, Ripon, £5,235. Rev. A. V. Thornton, Truro, £8,201. These are only some of the—from a monetary point of view—smaller fry. Here are a few others. Rev. F. E. Broome, Gloucester, £30,811. Rev. C. Aubrey, Darlington, £20,729. Rev. T. Carlyon, Falmouth, £18,945. Rev. A. T. Chapman, Cambridge, £12,195. Rev. C. Hipkins, Banford, Derbyshire, £10,598. Rev. A. Jessop, Scarning, Norfolk, £11,817. Rev. V. Le Bas, Preacher of the Charterhouse, £16,175. Rev. W. P. Nichols, Devizes, £20,128. Rev. J. Porter, Blackheath, £13,838. Rev. J. Richardson, Sandy, Bedfordshire, £13,237. Rev. St. Aubyn H. Molesworth, St. Aubyn, £35,351. Rev. W. C. Sayer-Milward, Wallingford, Bucks, £110,109. That's all—for the present.

Wallasey, in Cheshire, will witness the opening of a women's church, and, say the papers, "a special church may be built." To be an entirely feminine production this sacred building should be planned by a lady architect, built by lady bricklayers under the direction of a polite forelady. The east window should have the blazoned figure of St. Jael with the little hammer, the patron saint of very advanced ladies.

The *Daily Mirror* has published a futurist menu, which shows that the cookery of the future will include tomatoes with brandy, and herrings served with jam. If the Christian superstition be true, the menu for most of us in the next world will consist of "something with boiling oil in it."

The Christian ideal of a heavenly father does not often fit the facts of everyday occurrence. Over 1,000 persons have been drowned in South Russia by the high tides; at one town alone 200 workmen were washed away in their sleep.

Emotional preaching is good on occasion, but it has its pitfalls. Recently a preacher, gushing over the Garden of Eden, said that it was "the apple of Adam's eye"; and a brother in the Lord, ranting elsewhere, declared that a missionary "went out with nothing but a torch to shoot a lion." These things could not be said before less stupid audiences without provoking uproarious laughter.

The few missionaries at work in the McKenzie River district, North West Canada, would have delighted those two ardent medical students, Bob Sawyer and his friend. One of them performed an operation for the removal of a man's leg with a butcher's saw and knife, owing to the lack of proper instruments. Why did they not rely on prayer? These Christians are always Secularists in their actions.

Still another account of George Muller, of the Bristol Orphanages, has been published with the sub-title of "A Record of Faith Triumphant." Muller pretended that prayer and faith were sufficient to carry through all his projects, and the obsequious press made him the most paragoned man in the world, and he held the world's record for free advertising. As a consequence, he received a vast amount of money, which, of course, he attributed to his "faith."

America, the land of tall buildings and tall statements, has produced a Woman's Bible. The notes begin by blaming Adam, and end by denouncing all who wear trousers. Paul, we presume, has some special paragraphs devoted to his remark that women should keep silence in the churches. But what have the dear ladies done with those naughty stories in the Old Testament?

The notorious Billy Sunday, the American evangelist, whose ruffianism on the platform delights some Yankee

preachers and disgusts others, has been calculating the cost of his converts. Dividing the amount expended by the number saved, he calculates the cost per sinner is in Indianapolis £125, in New York £109, Boston £90, Chicago £79, New Orleans £18, and Atlanta £15. At this rate the conversion of America promises to be an expensive affair; and, after passing through this evangelist's hands, we should imagine that it would be just a matter of opinion whether the converts deserved a prison or an asylum.

"We've got to resort to tricks that the Devil would be ashamed of to get money to fight the Devil with." This piece of wisdom was uttered by the Rev. Billy Sunday. Was he thinking of "Sermons to Men only" or church bazaars, where inflated prices are charged for inferior goods?

A Welsh vicar, of Whitchurch, near Cardiff, died recently whilst preaching at a church. As the deceased minister was not a Freethinker, his death was not considered a judgment of the Almighty.

A movement is on foot to establish an American church in London at a cost of £250,000. If this materialises it will constitute a Yankee invasion, for two well-known Free Church pulpits are already occupied by parsons from "over the herring-pond."

There exists some religious trouble in connection with the lunatic asylums under the control of the West Riding County Council. The Lunacy Commissioners report that the "Arrangements for Divine Service are very inadequate," and "the attendance of the patients both of the Church of England and Roman Catholic services are much below the average in asylums generally." Presumably, the inmates who profess other religious opinions are well up to the average in point of attendance. This, however, is poor comfort to Churchmen and Roman Catholics, who are naturally indignant at the loss of so promising a congregation. The *Church Times* demands that a sum of £30,000 shall be spent. The Council replies that the spending of such a sum for such a purpose would be "absolute lunacy." But the Church party remains firm, and we cannot avoid sympathising just a little with their desire to make the most of their opportunity and with such promising material.

Nothing is more amusing than the curious manner in which the men of God treat what they call "modern thought." They always seem to take it for granted that Christianity and modern thought are two entirely different things, though there need be no conflict between them. That is to say, the divines will tolerate modern thinkers so long as the latter pay due respect to the former. Principal Garvie, in a paper read before the recent meeting of the Free Church Council, was kind enough to say that the Christian Church "must allow its view of the earthen vessel of the Holy Scriptures as human literature to be modified even as regards the literary character or historical value of many of the writings, if the evidence carefully tested demands such a change." Nothing could be more delightful than this attitude of compulsory toleration towards modern criticism. It is as though the men of God said to the critics: "We do not like you; we have no confidence in you; but so long as you behave yourselves with reverent modesty we reluctantly give you permission to carry on your work."

How condescendingly considerate! But Principal Garvie sounds a solemn note of warning by telling us that the Church, being tolerant towards reverent critics, like Canon Cheyne or the late Canon Driver, "can the more confidently challenge the competence of criticism" when it is the hands of those who deny or depreciate "the heavenly treasure of the Divine revelation" alleged to be contained in "the earthen vessel" called the Bible. Does the Principal imagine that intelligent "young persons, maidens as well as lads," will not perceive that such an argument is rooted in conscious or unconscious hypocrisy?

There is a sharp conflict among Birmingham Jews over the question of the separation of the sexes in the synagogue. This reminds us of Ingersoll's jest that it took the Christian Church many centuries to understand that a man might worship God standing by the side of his own wife rather than by being next to a gentleman he had never been introduced to.

"Adam" and "Eve" are to be seen upon the London stage in an adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The censor insists "that the costume of Adam and Eve before the Fall will be of such a character that no possible objec-

tion will be taken by anyone." Maybe they will come on backwards.

Canon W. L. Grane has published a book on *The Passing of War*. It would be more to the purpose if he could persuade his ecclesiastical superiors to discontinue blessing battleships and the flags of regiments in the name of the "Prince of Peace."

A New York commission, proudly calling itself a World Conference on Faith and Order, has asked the various Christian Churches to join in "a truce of God." This is a practical admission that they have been at war for twenty centuries. Unfortunately, leopards do not readily change their spots.

At the recent meeting of the Free Church Council a paper was read on "The Church as a Redemptive Fellowship," the underlying idea of which was that the Church is a society composed of superior people whose mission it is "not merely to improve the world, but to save it." A more ridiculous or egotistical idea never entered the human brain. In point of fact, the Church stands quite as greatly in need of improvement or salvation as the world outside. Envy, malice, jealousy, strife, competition, self-interest, sweating, and impurity are fully as rife within the courts of Zion as in the camps of the Philistines; and surely people who live in glass houses should never indulge in stone-throwing. When the maladies of the world are so minutely diagnosed by the Church the world can reasonably retort, "Physician, heal thyself, and leave me alone."

That unscrupulous maligner of dead Freethinkers, and peripatetic revivalist, Dr. Torrey, distinguished himself lately by claiming the Patron Saint of Ireland as a Protestant. This silly claim is as groundless as were his bitter and brutal attacks upon Paine and Ingersoll. Indeed, very little is known of St. Patrick but the fact that he was a devout and zealous Catholic. When we bear in mind that he flourished in the fifth century we can realise what a blessing it is that Dr. Torrey has not added an Ecclesiastical History to his long list of foolish blunders.

The parents were discussing the production of *Paradise Lost* at tea-time, and mamma said, "Of course Adam and Eve are going to wear clothes." The little girl expressed her opinion, "Then it won't be Paradise really, will it?"

"Nonsense is faith," says Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Maybe he was thinking of that arithmetical puzzle, the Trinity-in-Unity, or of the feeding of the five thousand—where the fragments left over exceeded the original menu.

A writer in the *Daily Mirror* advocates the founding of a Moral Inquiry Bureau. It would have to be on a comprehensive scale, for the clergy's shortcomings would occupy a lot of time.

A book has been published, entitled *Lectures on the Icosahedron, Solution of Equations of the Fifth Degree*, by Dr. Klein, Professor of Mathematics at Gottingen. It should be useful to Christian ministers, who are unable to understand that three and one are not identical.

"The Call of the Lord" was the title of a placard placed outside a suburban tin-tabernacle. Judging by the handful of people who attended, the Lord was a little husky.

Tramps sometimes carry mascots, such as cats, and leisured society people have a weakness in the same direction. Superstition is a hardy plant, which takes very little cultivation.

Mr. A. C. Benson, son of a former Archbishop of Canterbury, has confessed that he has always been hampered by fear. A recollection of his excursions into theology supports this view.

The Bishop of Manchester says that when he was eighteen years of age he had difficulty with a class of girls. The clergy of all ages, from eighteen to eighty, seem to find flappers a stumbling-block.

There are men in Wales, says the Bishop of St. Asaph, capable of saying, "Your dead shall not rest under the shadow of the cross they have worshiped all their lives." Bishops appear to think as profoundly at sixty years of age as schoolboys of sixteen.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914—Previously acknowledged, £105 19s. 5d. Received since:—Five Liverpool Freethinkers, 10s.; Dr. and Mrs. S. Laing, £2 2s.; G. F. H. McCluskey, £2 2s.; Henry Tucker, £1 1s.; M. Corbin, 10s. 6d.; Mr. G. L. Alward (per Miss Vance), £1 1s.; Mrs. Alward (per Miss Vance), £1 1s.; M. Deas (South Africa), £1.

G. F. H. McCLUSKEY.—Glad to hear that you and old friend Tucker are pleased to express once more your "unabated confidence in the President."

DR. AND MRS. LAING.—Your subscription and your good words are both very welcome.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks again for cuttings.

E. RAGGETT.—We cannot say what is the present exact position of Rev. Frank Ballard in the Methodist body. We have no doubt that the *Methodist Times* would inform you whether he is now on regular circuit work or not.

H. PAIGE.—The opposition of Christians to works of art was shown by the "Iconoclasts" of the early Christian centuries, whose special aversion was to images, etc., in the churches. Hence their name—the Image Breakers. We do not think the paragraph in question makes this applicable to all bodies of Christians. At a later date the Church used art as it used other agencies on which to float its supernaturalism.

MR. W. MANN writes, in reply to a request from Mr. L. S. Mann for the whereabouts of a sermon referred to him in a recent article, that the quotation was from a sermon which he heard the Rev. F. Ballard deliver. So far as Mr. Mann is aware, the sermon has not been published.

E. B.—We note your correction that *The Professional Aunt*, from which we gave quotations in our last issue, is by Mrs. George Wemyss. Our reference made it appear as though the work was by a man. We cannot say whether the error was due to carelessness in transcribing or to the compositor. Anyway, we thank you for the correction.

C. ATTWOOD.—We cannot say where you could now procure a copy of *Facts Worth Knowing*. A very large special edition was distributed gratis by the National Secular Society, but the supply is now exhausted.

F. J. RUSZY.—Letter to hand, but no cuttings. They have been omitted. Your news, all the same, is interesting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Special.

I HAVE handed this week's *Freethinker* over entirely to Mr. Cohen's control. He has done this work well (and cheerfully) before, and he is prepared to do it again.

I contracted a cold, and it turned out to be something more serious. Not quite so bad an illness, apparently, as I suffered from last March, but then, as Shaw says, "You never can tell." I hope to pull through fairly early, if the weather will only be a little kind. At present I am in a very weak condition.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

South Lancashire friends had doubtless been looking forward to Mr. Foote's visit on Sunday last. His sudden illness made travelling—to say nothing of lecturing—an impossibility, and at short notice his place was taken by

Mr. Lloyd. We have no doubt that everything at Manchester went off in a perfectly satisfactory manner, but up to the time of going to press no report has reached the office.

We print in another column a brief report of the Essex Hall meeting in favor of the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The meeting was a good one in point of numbers, and the letters read showed a very widespread opinion, among people of differing religious views, that the time had arrived when these survivals of mediævalism should be abolished. The resolution was moved by Professor Gilbert Murray in a speech of marked distinction, although one felt that he was inclined to take the antics of the Christian Evidence Society too seriously. Some emissaries of this body had been distributing a leaflet against the object of the meeting, and Professor Murray seemed to take them as enemies to be fought. They are not. They are merely people to be ignored.

There was an attempt made by a member of the Christian Evidence Society to move an amendment to the resolution proposed by Professor Murray. The Chairman ruled that there was no time for this, which ruling we are rather inclined to regret. It might have been better to have allowed that gentleman to put the amendment, as he and two or three friends came for that special purpose, and so have demonstrated that these specially imported ones were the only persons who supported it.

Some little disturbance was created during the evening by two or three ladies bent on interrupting the Chairman, Mr. G. H. Radford, and Mr. Arthur Lynch, both members of Parliament, and the interrupters had to be ejected. The interruptions were quite unjustifiable, but a little tact, and above all, strength, on the part of Chairman and speaker, might have obviated the necessity for ejection. Unfortunately, ejection from public meetings is in the air, and for this the Suffragettes have only themselves to thank. We do not get anything in this world without paying a price, but it is possible to pay too highly for what we get; and it is time Suffragettes took into consideration the question of whether even "Votes for Women" might not be too dearly purchased if the cost involves the right and freedom of public discussion. This is the most fundamental of all social rights, and without which even "Votes for Women" would never have emerged.

By the time this paper is in the hands of its readers, Mr. Asquith will have received a deputation on the subject of the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. We are not very sanguine as to what will result from this, but it will at least serve the purpose of advertising the injustice of these Acts remaining on the Statute Book. In this matter publicity and the education of the public intelligence are our great, if not our only, aids. Mr. Burrows said in the course of his speech that he was getting tired of meetings for this purpose. Well, so should we be if we saw any other way of achieving the abolition of these laws. But we do not see any other way. Parliament, it is true, must finally rule these laws out; but Parliament will do here exactly what outside opinion forces it to do. Freedom and justice rest ultimately upon education and enlightenment.

We again remind London readers of the half-yearly meeting to be held on Tuesday next at Chandos Hall, Chandos-street, Charing Cross. The gathering is confined to members of the N. S. S., who will please bring their cards of membership with them. Those not so provided may obtain admission by sending in their names to Miss Vance. We hope there will be a good rally of London Freethinkers on this occasion. The object of the meeting is to consider ways and means by which the propaganda of Freethought in the metropolis may be furthered. Some important resolutions may be forthcoming, and the meeting therefore should be as representative as possible. The chair will be taken at 8 o'clock.

A correspondent, writing from Sydney, informs us that a very resolute attempt is being made by the authorities to prevent free speech on advanced subjects. There is a Theatre and Halls Act which prohibits all except religious bodies from holding meetings on Sundays. That shuts out all who do not run a hall of their own. In the streets and open spaces the same one-sided legislation operates. Socialists and Freethinkers are being imprisoned for speaking at street corners on Sundays, although this privilege is freely granted to religious preachers. Attempts are also being made in Melbourne in the same direction. Christians in Australia have the same conception of liberty as they have elsewhere.

Life and Love.

HELEN, the doctor's daughter, was the spring of the romanticism of the village, but she was more; for she was the women's nurse. Around her personality had gathered two completely different circles of ideas in the minds of the villagers. The first was colored with the yellow lights of suspicion. One had to be careful what was said in her hearing, especially if it related in any way to religion and the Church. Helen had a sharp and witty tongue; and very often even Solemn John, the registrar, had to pull himself up quickly, when it struck him he was laughing at religion and the sacred things of life and death and the paradise to come. Not that Helen could be accused of irreligiousness, nor of base levity, nor even of sarcasm. One never felt very sure of her; that was all. And then, she was quite frequently at church, where she always appeared decorous and serious and attentive. Still, the villagers could not manage to forget the funny things Helen had said about the very subject upon which the minister preached; and the sight of her pretty face bent upon her prayer-book *did* give one occasion to wonder a bit what kind of a girl Helen was.

Then would crop up the old romance, the minister affair, about which everyone knew so much and so little. She was practically engaged to the young man who came from London at the time when Mr. Wise was very ill. He was a very clever young fellow. His sermons were invigorating and delightful. He filled the church, too, in the forenoons; for people came from far and near to hear him.

Yes; they would have made a fine match; but after a bit, near the end of his stay, there must have been a difference. It was noticed that he didn't go so often to the doctor's house. And then, there was the awful sermon, the last one, about some people being like serpents and cunningly poisoning the simple love of God and God's Book; how they would laugh and joke at the beliefs of others, and in so quiet and friendly a manner that they could crawl silently right into the holy of holies of God's love, and drop their poison there. And hadn't the young minister gazed at Helen all the time? And weren't her eyes always looking down into her lap, as if she knew he intended it all for her? but her face was so serene and bonnie that day that no one could rightly understand what the minister meant.

The villagers liked to recollect all the incidents of the romance as they called it. It was part of the Helen they knew, and as incomprehensible.

For all this suspicion, Helen was the trusty friend of the women in their times of need; and the first question of the sufferers was always, "Is Miss Helen coming?" although they knew she was sure to come. Many a man had Helen to thank for the existence of his wife; and many a woman had Helen to bless for the safety of her sons and daughters. At these periods the suspicion died, to be remembered immediately the danger was passed and Helen's tongue resumed its quiet, funny work of making the Scriptures ridiculous.

The minister affair had happened some time before I came to the village; but I had never discovered the real thread of the story.

One evening, while reading aloud to Helen likely paragraphs of interest from the newspaper, I chanced across one that contained the name of our village. It referred to the wedding of a clergyman who had, as the news item said, spent a very successful year of his ministry in this part of the country.

"Impm; that's very interesting; but you didn't read that because you had a dim idea in your head that I was personally interested?" she said quietly, when I finished.

"Good Lord! No," I replied. My embarrassment must have been so obvious and painful that she laughed.

Well, I'll tell you the story, Bob, if you'll light your pipe, and don't interrupt. Besides, it's getting

too dark for reading, and the gloaming is *the* time for reminiscences, isn't it? And the news of his marriage has set the old memories moving in my mind. You mustn't think I'm worried, or sad, or feel any of the heart-stirring emotions we read of in the ordinary novel, you know. In fact, I'm amused. I would like to laugh. I always feel like this when I compare our nice, very cultured habit of overlooking the real facts of our existence with people's ideas of things; and Mr. Pastor's future experiences appeal to me rather comically. You know what I mean, Bob, I've spoken about it before to you, when we've been criticising books.

The novelist imagines a man and a woman cast adrift in a small boat. He speaks of the hardships and all that; but he always forgets the man and the woman are human, and have bodies, and that the natural forces of these bodies must be obeyed regardless of environment. The mental delicacy of the novel-reading public is awful. Of course, that's an extreme case; but it shows what I mean. We have made too many things sacred. And a woman's body is so sacred that we are told a man must not look upon it lest it be defiled. Out of this has arisen all that despicable hypocrisy and cant and humbug about things that are as natural as sunshine. I hate it.

Amongst a certain class of people, the protectors of our morals—and all pastors are members thereof—this "gingerly" attitude towards the so-called crudities on the one hand and the so-called sacred things on the other, is most appalling. My poor pet pastor was a good example.

Do you know that he once cut up rough because he happened to see me dressed in a short underskirt and long stockings, and I hadn't very much covering for my neck and bosom? He was so exquisitely refined that my appearance shocked him. He thought it was indecent. You see, every woman was a potential mother, and maternity being, oh, very, very sacred, it followed, I suppose, that woman was sacred too. Consequently, she should be hidden like all other sacred things.

Fannily enough, he could read the most detestably obscene passages in the Bible without a blush or a stammer. That brought on the trouble, for I chaffed him unmercifully on the subject. In fact, what I said shocked him more than my unladylike appearance. And we moved slowly into the waters of intellectual discord.

Up to then I suppose I loved him; and if a dog-like attendance is any guarantee of a man's fondness, I guess he returned the compliment. But a battle between brains is a good love-test, whatever type of love it may be. Mental warfare tests the steel of affection better than anything else, I think. All the flaws become apparent; all the weaknesses are made evident; and instead of ideals you get facts. A man reveals himself more at these times than any other. He cannot hide his real character. That's why I love the men who have championed intellectual freedom. You get to know them so well that they become friends.

Well, I discovered that the man I had nearly idolised was rather mean-minded. He never ignored an opportunity for subterfuge. He even told downright lies, perhaps because he didn't like to be cornered by a weak woman.

Things went from bad to worse, till, one evening, they came to a boiling point. His sermon the preceding day had been all of God's wonderful handiwork. I was feeling bad, because father had told me that Mrs. Higgins would die, and that her baby would be a monstrosity, and very probably would live. The pastor was irritable that night, and I was simply spoiling for a tussle; and when we set to I made mincemeat of his wonderful-loving-kindness idea. He got personal a bit; but father came in just in the nick of time, and told me to get my coat on and come immediately.

I contrived that the pastor should accompany us, and father, who had a quiet way of being cynical with all ministers, saw I meant something. The

upshot of the matter was that Mrs. Higgins died, and her baby lived, and I asked my friend if he would kindly come into the bedroom for a minute. I wanted him to see an example of God's loving-kindness.

Father held the baby boy up so that the minister could get a good look at him. He was a hunchback. His head and his sex organ were abnormally developed. His wee arms and legs were crooked. Across one eye was a brown mole. He whimpered and squirmed in father's hands like a little animal. He was the most repulsive, ape-like child I've ever seen.

"Mr. Fernside," said father, softly, in the tone he uses when he's angry, "this boy is full of vitality. He will grow to be a strong man. Society will probably call him a born criminal. He is an atavist. As a minister you are privileged to be here at this moment; but you will, I hope, keep what you have seen and heard entirely to yourself."

Mr. Fernside bowed, and went into the kitchen, where we heard him praying for God's solace towards the father and the motherless children.

He never spoke to me again; and that, Bob, is the romance of the doctor's daughter. Here comes father, and we'll have supper.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Animal Enemies of Plants.—II.

(Concluded from p. 189.)

CULINARY plants are preyed upon by weevils, which place their eggs on or within the pods of the growing vegetable, and these germinate within the seed. The leading parasite of the pea is the pea-weevil, that of the bean the common bean-weevil; and both these pests are widely and abundantly distributed, and are therefore to be regarded as particularly noxious insects. Immense injury is caused by the mischievous doings of these parasitic organisms. Until quite recently it was commonly supposed that the well-being of the plants was in no way threatened by the presence of the larval beetle in the interior of the seed, but this belief has been proved erroneous by careful scientific inquiry. The growing pods are also injured by the bollworm and pea-moth, and the foliage is destroyed by blister-beetles, leaf-beetles, caterpillars, and cutworms, while plant-bugs, aphides, and other vermin weaken the plants by sucking their juices. The seed pea suffers seriously from the depredations of the pea-weevil. In the eighteenth century the injuries inflicted by this pest were so great that pea culture was for a time abandoned in several American States.

This particular parasite appears to have come originally from the Orient, but it now accompanies the pea plant wherever cultivated, and no known area of pea production is now immune to its ravages. A cold climate, however, seems to check its activities. In the more rigorous atmosphere of Canada it is comparatively harmless, and in consequence much of the seed sown in the United States is purchased from the Northern territory.

To the bean grower the common bean-weevil is a formidable foe. Its place of origin remains a matter of dispute, but it has spread in every direction, and, like the cowpea-weevil and four-spotted bean-weevil, it is feared and execrated by every cultivator of leguminous crops.

The seed-corn maggot is a further stumbling-block to the doctrine of Design. After the seeds of peas, beans, cereal and other plants have been sown in suitable soil they sometimes fail to develop, and this failure has been traced to the mischievous propensities of the seed-corn maggot, which damages the delicate sprouts and stems of the germinating seeds. What the wireworms, white grubs, and other insects fail to accomplish, this pest frequently succeeds in doing. Where the corn-maggot operates, the seed decays and the plants perish. Entire plantations are sometimes ruined; but, fortunately, the evil is

usually restricted to a relatively small number of plants. The early growths are the chief sufferers, but if these can be carried through the first stages of development they become more hardy, and are then enabled to withstand considerable attack without serious injury.

The bean-ladybird is another pest, but luckily its food-plants are few in number and its distribution is limited in range. This insect is one of the three ladybirds that are detrimental to the American agriculturalist; the remaining species are his friends, as they actively devour soft-bodied insect larvæ and wage relentless war on the detested plant lice. But the bean-ladybird is a deadly enemy of the bean crop, and its powers of destructiveness have not inaptly been compared with that of the damnable Colorado potato-beetle. It ravages the leaves, green pods, and blossoms of the bean with insatiable relish.

In the pea-growing districts of Canada a seed-destroying parasite called the pea-moth is very abundant, whose larvæ develop in the maturing peas within the pods. "This is a comparatively new importation from the Old World, and it is as yet unknown in the United States, but it will probably in time invade the Northern States."

Until the year 1899 the American pea crop suffered little serious injury save that inflicted by the pea-weevil. At this time, however, the pea cultivator was driven to desperation by a visitation of the pea-aphis, which destroyed the crops in every direction. In 1899 and the following year the pea-aphis—despite the energetic attempts that were made to overcome the pest—swept down upon and ravaged some 50 per cent. of the crop from Nova Scotia to Virginia and Maryland. The estimated loss to the American farmer in the Coast States for one year only reached the high figure of three million dollars. In the succeeding year of 1900

"the loss over the same area was placed as early as June 15th at 4,000,000 dollars. Several cases of severe damage were reported, in which 80 or more per cent. of the peas on farms of 500 or 600 acres were completely destroyed. In short, pea-growers as far westward as Wisconsin sustained such severe losses as to give rise to the expression that the country had been visited by a veritable scourge."

These abominable plant "lice" begin their attack on the young plants; they mass themselves about the terminals, and as soon as the leaves are smothered they proceed to swarm along the stems. Scarcely a plant escapes, and in a few weeks the once promising crop is destroyed. The vermin hibernate in clover and vetches, and they fly from their sleeping quarters in April or May to commence their pestiferous work among the pea fields. As might have been predicted, the reproductive powers of plant lice are prodigious. The female insect at certain seasons produces living young. These attain maturity in from ten to fifteen days, or even sooner in favorable weather. Several generations arise each season, and Professor W. G. Johnson has estimated that the female pea-aphis gives birth to 110 or 120 young. "Calculating from the average number of insects produced each day (six), one individual would in one year become the progenitor of 482,912 'lice.'"

Other insects inimical to peas and beans abound in rich variety, but we will glance at the parasites which infest spinach and beetroot. The former plant is sadly harassed by the all too close attentions of the spinach leaf-miner, spinach flea-beetle, and other pests; but as this excellent vegetable is less cultivated than the beet, fewer of its enemies are yet known to science. In the case of the beet, however, some 200 species of parasites are its ascertained enemies.

Beetles and caterpillars of several species damage this valuable vegetable to a very serious extent. Of flea beetles that attack the sugar-beet there are twenty forms. Some of these are widely distributed; others are local. The larger beet-leaf beetle preys upon its host both as larva and adult; hun-

dreds may be counted on a single plant, with the result that it is either utterly devoured or so seriously injured that it shrivels and dies. The Western beetle is responsible for much monetary loss to the farmers of the Pacific Coast. This parasite pierces the plant's leaves so that only a network remains of the naturally rich leaf, and this checks growth to so great a degree that the young roots wither away. Another terror is the blister-beetle, and at least eleven species of this pest are known to inflict disastrous injury upon the sugar-beet alone. These creatures also attack potatoes, beans, tomatoes, and other important crops, as well as destroying several flowering plants. Very troublesome pests are the army and webworms; plant-bugs, leaf hoppers, and aphides, if at all numerous, are all a source of loss to the beet-grower.

The sugar-beet leaf-hopper first attracted notice as a beet pest in Utah and other States in 1905, and was in that year responsible for damage to the extent of half a million dollars. Strangely enough, this species (*Eutettix tenella*) was quite unknown to entomologists until 1900. The beet-aphis is another scourge to the cultivator; in the State of Oregon it destroyed upwards of 1,000 tons of beet in one valley in a single season.

As anyone who has striven to cultivate cabbages and other cruciferous crops in urban or suburban gardens is only too well aware, the insect pests that prey upon these vegetable growths are innumerable. No single moment in the life of a cabbage-plant is immune to insect attack. The cabbage-maggot destroys the roots; it devours the tender rootlets, and frequently penetrates the lower sections of the stalk. The American grower regards this destructive parasite with well-merited aversion. It is an imported pest, and has already wrought sad havoc among cruciferous plants, all of which it impartially attacks. Its destructiveness assumed serious proportions in 1902, and for some years afterwards its depredations steadily increased, and large field crops have not infrequently been ruined.

But the "Imported Cabbage Worm" is the worst pest of all. As Dr. Chittenden puts it:—

"It is altogether too well known throughout North America and Europe, and the white butterfly is quite generally recognised as its parent. The caterpillar is velvety green, and measures, when full grown, about an inch and a quarter.....This species was first observed in the United States in 1865, and in about a score of years it had invaded nearly every state and territory in our domains."

Prior to the appearance of the cabbage butterfly, the Southern cabbage butterfly inflicted considerable injury; but for some reason or other this particular pest is now less plentiful than in previous years. The potherb butterfly, the cross-striped worm, the common cabbage-looper—these last the larvæ of moths—all wage un pitying war on the unfortunate cabbage. But this by no means crowns the iniquity; the already much-exasperated cabbage-grower has now to encounter a new enemy to his crops. This pest made its appearance in the Southern States a few years since, and there is every prospect of its spreading in every direction.

The turnip is the unwilling entertainer of the destructive flea-beetle; watercress is preyed upon by leaf-beetles and sowbugs; while the leaves of the radish, cabbage, and other cruciferous plants usually have to endure the presence of foliage-miners and other malignant pests.

Next to the universally persecuted cabbage, the worst-suffering garden crops are the cucumbers, melons, and related plants. From the moment they are planted until the fruit is ripe, nearly a score of species of parasites infest these growths. "It is no uncommon sight to see four or five distinct species on the same plant, and several others in the same field." A maggot assails the newly sown seeds, and prevents their germination. Where the seeds do succeed in sprouting, the young plants are harassed by the striped cucumber-beetle. Those plants that manage to escape the presence of this and other

pests are liable to the attacks of the squash-bug, to be succeeded by that of the squash-vine borer. This baleful parasite frequently kills the plant outright. When the vegetable has run the gauntlet of this formidable array of parasitic enemies, the pickle-worm and the melon-caterpillar commence their operations against the persecuted plants. The parasitic organisms which damage and destroy sweet corn, potatoes and other tubers, the lettuce, onions and other bulbs, the tomato, celery, carrots, parsnips, and kindred vegetables, are all too numerous to mention.

Sufficient has been said, however, to show that the struggle for existence is bitter in the extreme, even in circumstances most favorable to the healthy development of plant life. On evolutionary principles, the presence of countless parasites on highly developed plant forms is open to a rational interpretation; but in terms of the doctrine of Providential Design their destructive and almost morbid activities point rather to a diabolical than to a beneficent biological scheme of things.

T. F. PALMER.

"Twopenny Torquemadas."

NOTABLE PROTEST AGAINST THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

MR. G. H. RADFORD, M.P., presided at a crowded meeting held at the Essex Hall, Strand, London, on Friday (March 20), in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The platform, which was an influential one, included two members of Parliament, Mr. G. H. Radford, M.P. (who was in the chair) and Mr. Arthur Lynch, M.P.; Professor Gilbert Murray, the Rev. Walter Walsh, D.D., and Messrs. Herbert Burrows, Harry Snell, S. H. Swinny, Mrs. Bonner, and others.

Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society, who was unable to be present, sent the following letter to the Chairman, which was read to the meeting:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am on the list of speakers at this meeting, but I am sorry to say that I shall not be able to attend. My doctor forbids me to leave the house at present, and travelling and addressing audiences are quite out of the question. Happily you have a good list of speakers without me, and it affords me the highest gratification to know that the meeting must, from that point of view, be a thorough success.

"I and my friends have done all we could to make it a success from the point of view of numbers. If the press treats you with common justice—which, however, I hardly dare hope—I shall see a report in Saturday's newspapers of what I have no doubt will be a magnificent protest against the most bigoted, odious, and indefensible laws that disgrace this boasted land of liberty.—Yours sincerely, G. W. FOOTE."

Letters of apology were also read from Sir W. Byles, Sir A. Quiller Couch, Mr. F. W. Jowett, M.P., Mr. Chancellor, M.P., Canon Scott Holland, Dr. Clifford, Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, and Mr. Israel Zangwill.

Owing to the presence of the members of Parliament, Suffragettes attended the meeting and created considerable disorder during the earlier part of the proceedings, cries being continually raised on behalf of "Votes for Women."

The Chairman, in his opening remarks, characterised the Blasphemy Laws as "fossils," which belonged to past ages.

Professor Gilbert Murray, who had a fine reception, in proposing a strongly worded resolution calling upon the Government to introduce a Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, said that there had been a great modification of the law of blasphemy, and Judge Coleridge's ruling that religion might be attacked if the decencies of controversy were observed had been maintained. Although this was a humane and sensible ruling, it was a compromise. The Blasphemy Laws would never have lasted if they had not been explained in this manner. But if one party was condemned for the use of offensive language, so should all others. He objected to these laws because they made good manners the test, and good manners were not the test of crime; they punish one side only; and they create prejudice. It was difficult to carry on religious controversy without ridicule. The present interpretation of the Blasphemy Laws heavily weighted the scales of justice against uneducated men. Who is to be the judge as to language being offensive? The jury usually consisted of persons of all kinds of views, and in the main orthodox, and with a dislike of audacity of mind. The law exposed Christianity to ridicule. The main fight of Freethinkers must be against social sanction, widespread sentiment, ingrained feelings. At present the law steps in against the cause of enlightenment.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. Arthur Lynch, M.P., in a speech full of good phrases, and who reminded the audience that Torquemada had burnt 10 000 heretics, and inflicted less drastic punishment on 100,000 others. The indignant comment made by Shelley remained true after a hundred years of enlightenment. He (the speaker) had drawn from Mr. McKenna the admission that it was not blasphemy to speak in offensive terms of Judaism or Islamism. Christianity was the only religion in the British Empire needing protection. The Christian religion was like an invalid, and has to be spoon-fed and nursed. Christians ought to invite criticism. If their religion was true, the touch of Thor's hammer or Ithuriel's spear would only make it rise greater from the test. We have outlived the era of imbecile inquisitions and twopenny Torquemadas.

He was followed by the Rev. Dr. Walsh, who spoke forcefully and well. No one, he said, knew what was meant by religion as defined by the Blasphemy Laws. It would need another bench of bishops to settle what was religion. The Blasphemy Laws were irreligious, and an infringement against the Golden Rule, which was found in all systems of religion.

A practical and business-like note was introduced by the veteran Mr. Herbert Burrows, who pointed out that the one constitutional way of abolishing the Blasphemy Laws was through Parliament. Freethinkers should be out to get votes. Society had no right to suppress free speech. The common law was quite capable of dealing with cases of indecency. You cannot punish a man for hurting another man's feelings, or we should all be in prison. The Blasphemy Laws are simply a relic of persecuting days. We have got rid of physical cooking, but still have mental cooking in its place. The Blasphemy Laws are a cancer in the social state, and the case of the repealers was good for civic justice and freedom.

Mr. Harry Snell roused the meeting with a capital speech. What a man believes, he said, he has a right to express. If a man is guilty of obscenity, let him be prosecuted for obscenity. Christians should be with us on this question. Hideous Blasphemy Laws put a premium on liars. The State's duty towards religion should be to let it alone. Orthodox believers do not love heresy the less because it is in a clean cup. Once Christians fought far higher men than they fight now. Formerly they attacked such giants as Carlyle, Holyoake, and Foote, and now it attacks only the outposts and the stragglers. The Blasphemy Laws should be abolished in the cause of our common humanity.

At this point the veteran, Mr. A. B. Moss, rose and asked the Chairman if, in the regrettable absence of Mr. Foote, he would permit another representative of the N. S. S. to address the meeting. There were loud calls for Mr. Cohen, who was present, and, in response to the wishes of the audience, he mounted the platform amid loud and continuous applause. His was a fighting speech, and brought the meeting to a triumphant conclusion. Although called upon at a moment's notice, Mr. Cohen was admirable in every way, and he roused the audience to a white heat of enthusiasm. He said he stood there as a blasphemer of twenty-five years' standing, and his view was that the Blasphemy Laws merely represented the orthodox hatred of Freethought opinions. The plea of obscenity was a cowardly evasion of the truth. When Mr. McKenna—that apology for a man—said that a blasphemer was locked up for his obscenity, it was a lie. The man was imprisoned because he attacked religion. We have no objection to people being locked up for indecent speech, but it must be fair-play all round. We could only admit one test as to the decencies of controversy. Language that was permissible elsewhere must be permitted here. We could not tolerate one rule of speech for politics and another for religion. At present a policeman decides what is blasphemy. His modest ears decide what deserves a five-shilling fine for mere profanity, and what language constitutes blasphemy and deserves four months' imprisonment. Once Christians burnt their opponents; but now their conduct was only cowardly and contemptible. A judge may be a Jew, and Lord Chief Justice Isaacs might have to decide if the Christian religion had been attacked with becoming taste. The Blasphemy Laws manufactures hypocrites by the thousand. The repeal of these odious laws rests with the people and not with the Government. They should be swept away as a remnant of barbarism.

The resolution was put to the meeting and carried with only seven dissentients.

C. E. S.

In synagogue and cloister, mosque and school,
Hell's terrors and heaven's lures men's bosoms rule;
But they who pierce the secrets of "The Truth"
Sow not such empty chaff their hearts to fool.

—Omar Khayyam; E. H. Whinfield, Trans.

THE SOUL'S SPRING CLEANING.

Yes, clean yer house, an' clean yer shed,
An' clean yer barn in ev'ry part;
But brush the cobwebs from yer head,
An' sweep the snowbank from yer heart.
Yes, w'en spring cleanin' comes aroun',
Bring forth the duster an' the broom,
But rake yer foggy notions down,
An' sweep yer dusty soul of gloom.

Sweep ol' ideas out with the dust,
An' dress yer soul in newer style;
Scrape from yer min' its worn-out crust,
An' dump it in the rubbish pile.
Sweep out the hates that burn an' smart,
Bring in new loves serene and pure;
Aroun' the hearthstone of the heart
Place modern styles of furniture.

Clear out yer morril cubby holes,
Sweep out the dirt, scrape off the scum;
'Tis cleanin' time for healthy souls—
Git up an' dust! The spring hez come!
Clean out the corners of the brain,
Bear down with scrubbin'-brush an' soap,
An' dump ol' Fear into the rain,
An' dust a cosy chair for Hope.

Clean out the brain's deep rubbish hole,
Soak ev'ry cranny, great and small,
An' in the front room of the soul
Hang pootier picturs on the wall;
Scrub up the winders of the mind,
Clean up, an' let the spring begin;
Swing open wide the dusty blind,
An' let the April sunshine in.

Plant flowers in the soul's front yard,
Set out new shade an' blossom trees,
An' let the soul, once froze an' hard,
Sprout crocusses of new ideas.
Yes, clean yer house, an' clean yer shed,
An' clean yer barn in ev'ry part;
But brush the cobwebs from yer head,
An' sweep the snowbanks from yer heart.

—Sam Walter Foss.

CHILDREN OF FAITH.

One memorable Sunday, Betty did go to church as a great treat, and when the hymn, "Peace, Perfect Peace," was given out, a beatific smile illumined her face, and with her hymn-book upside down she was prepared to sing when Diana said, whispered rather, "You don't know this, darling." "Yes, I do, mummy, peace in the valley of Bong,".....

Betty walked to church with me. "Aunt Woggles," she said, "you know the gentleman in the Bible who lived inside the whale?"

"Yes, darling," I said, "I do remember." My heart sank at the difficulties presented by Jonah as a gentleman.

"Well," she said, "what d'you suppose he did without candles in the dark passages of the whale?".....

At luncheon Diana cautioned Betty against swallowing a fish bone. "You might die, darling, if you did."

"Then I shall swallow every single bone I can," announced Betty.

"But, darling," said Diana, "why do you say that; you don't want to die? You are quite happy, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm very happy, but I want to die all the same."

"Oh, darling, don't say that," said Diana; "there is a great deal for you to do in this world before you die."

"Yes; but you see, darling," said Betty, "if I don't die soon, I shall be too old to sit on Jesus's knee."—Mrs. G. Wemyss, "The Professional Aunt."

A CHILD'S LAUGH.

Strike with hand of fire, O weird musician, thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair; fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft touches of the organ-keys; blow, bugler, blow, until thy silver notes do touch and kiss the moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering amid the vineclad hills. But know, your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh—the laugh that fills the eyes with light, and every heart with joy. O rippling river of laughter, thou art the blessed boundary-line between the beasts and men; and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fretful fiend of care. O Laughter! rose-lipped daughter of joy, there are dimples enough in thy cheeks to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief.—Ingersoll.

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