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PRICE TWOPENCE

Some of your griefs you have cured,
And the sharpest you still have survived ;
But what torments of pain you endured
From evils that never arrived !
—EMERSON : translated from old French.

The Carnegie Report on the Balkans.

"Enquête dans les Balkans. Rapport présenté aux Directeurs de la Dotation Carnegie par les Membres de la Commission d'Enquête. (Paris : 1914 ; volume hors commerce.)"

THE long-awaited "Report of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry on the Balkans" only came to my hands on July 1, and I have not yet had time to read all the 496 massive pages, with deeds of almost unexampled ferocity recorded in every line, which compose this eloquent and terrifying impeachment of war as waged by Christian nations against each other or against "the malignant and turbaned Turk"—whose malignancy in the light of these revelations seems to have lost its primitive splendor. So far as I can see, after a careful preliminary scrutiny of the findings of the Commission, there is nothing for me to withdraw or even to modify, except in the sense of amplification, in respect of the statements made by me in the three articles on the "Balkan Pandemonium" which appeared in the *Freethinker* issues of June 21, July 5, and July 12. In point of fact, many of the documents and atrocities cited by me in my articles, and especially the horrors contained in the Greek "Fac-simile" letters and the delightful doings of the Greek bishops are set forth at length, and accepted as authentic, in the Commission's Report. Up to the present stage in my studies, I have had the melancholy satisfaction of finding that the better informed and more authoritative verdict of the Report confirms the general thesis of my argument and relieves my mind from the haunting fear of having exaggerated or distorted the repulsive features of fanaticism and ferocity which, as I contended, marked with especial savagery the conduct of the Balkan War. My sin was in erring on the side of moderation.

The Report, which is enriched by fifty fine engravings and eight valuable maps and ethnographic charts, is preceded by an admirable "Introduction" (pp. 27), by M. D'Estournelles de Constant, who presided over the labors of the Commission. This contribution of the distinguished statesman makes a broad philosophic survey of the critical situation in the Balkans, where we find a medley of populations mixed together, as he tells us (p. 9), in an inextricable chaos of languages, religions, races, and nationalities, consisting of Turks, Bulgarians, Servians, Serbo-Croats, Albanese Servians, Koutzowallacians, Greeks, Albanians, Gipsies, Jews, Rumanians, Hungarians, Italians, who are no worse and not less endowed than others of their race in Europe and America. "Those amongst them who seem worse have only lived a longer time in servitude and neglect. They are martyrs rather than criminals"—a judgment which is no less sound philosophically than well-merited as a difficult but necessary act of social justice to men and races placed by the cruel accident of history in abnormal conditions of conflict with each other.

The temperate, but lurid, pages of this timely analysis and report enforce, with terrible illustrations of man's inhumanity to man, and of religion's failure to humanise him, the historic statement of a well-known fighter that "War is hell"; only they prove with twentieth-century atrocities that war is never so hellish as when waged in these modern times between Christian races and nations who have had numberless temptations and opportunities during the ages to treat each other—as, for instance, Greeks and Bulgarians, Serbs and Albanians—as wild beasts. As M. D'Estournelles de Constant pertinently remarks (p. 20), "It is time that people should learn what war really is," and the Report now presented to the world by the Commission over which he so worthily presided will help to stimulate our torpid imagination and stir up our sympathies in directions favorable to the cause of peace, which, after all, is the cause of humanity.

The Committee, while issuing the awful revelations in their Report, are careful not to cry "Peace, Peace" under conditions by which our modern Zimris, with their shameless policies of national expropriation and enslavement, render peace impossible. The dignified language that M. D'Estournelles de Constant employs (p. 7) I can applaud and make my own:—

"We repeat to those who accuse us of 'bellowing peace at any price,' the statements we have always made:

"Rather than slavery, we prefer war.

"Rather than war, we seek arbitration.

"Rather than arbitration, let us have conciliation."

But the present conditions in the Balkans, as disclosed in this Report, which in every page shows us religion everywhere as the accomplice or handmaid of the rival races and politicians, would only serve to make peace the sleep of death for the oppressed races, as also for the bottom-dog religions, of this fateful region; for peace in the Balkans to-day is but a sinister period of truce during which the sleepless animosities of the Balkan races will be biding their time for fresh outbreaks of war, massacre, and mutilation. The outlook is not a pleasant one, nor creditable to European civilisation.

Nothing could be more severe—nor, alas, more true—than the summary which M. D'Estournelles de Constant makes of the net result of the most horrifying of all modern wars, where, as he tells us (p. 22), "We see hundreds of thousands of human beings systematically degraded by their own hands and corrupted by their own violence." With all its carnage and heroism, the second Balkan War, so far from being a solution, is only the prelude of other wars, or rather of the sort of war waged without intermittence in the Balkans, this being the worst of all wars, as he tells us, inasmuch as it is a war of religion, a war of reprisals, a war of races, a war of one people against another, of man to man, and brother against brother. What is actually taking place to-day and every day in Macedonia (as shown in the *Freethinker* of July 5) is really something more pitiless and meaner than the full-dress pomps and circumstances of official war; for what goes on is the pettifogging rooting out and administrative harassing of the bottom dog—Bulgarian, Greek, Turk, Albanian, etc.—who has been driven away from his ancestral kennel, is kicked and cuffed, "converted," proselytised, and tortured by an un-

holy combination of petty officialdom and narrow piety. Nothing is bettered in the Balkans after all the recent horrors. The churches and schools belonging to the rival Christian sects are left fighting against each other, and are to-day "less free," we are told, "than they were under the Ottoman domination." The result is that a new region—the Mediterranean and the countries laved by his blue waters—has received its solemn consecration as the fresh battlefield of races and religions in readiness for an endless vista of future years of carnage.

The documentary evidence, forming some 240 pages of appendix, including depositions and oral testimony proffered to the Commission and records of personal examination by its members *in loco*, leave no doubt in my mind that acts of horrible atrocity were committed by the soldiery, the irregular troops or volunteers, and by the racial partisans of the different armies who made the Balkans during 1912 and 1913 the theatre of their ghastly operations. In these matters, wherever war is waged, and at whatever period of human history it breaks out, one must look with placid fatalism for a certain amount of savagery as the normal product of soldierly violence, but the utmost latitude of modern charity must learn to draw the line at acts of bestial mutilation like those recorded on pp. 126-7 and those on p. 385, which were committed on the bodies (no doubt before death) of Servian soldiers by the Bulgarians. Equally horrible were the outrages of Servians upon the Bulgarians (pp. 128, 325, *et seq.*). The record of such atrocities takes the mind back to the worst excesses of barbarian armies at the dawn of history, and seem incredible in an age of civilisation, with churches and bishops in every nook and corner of the world. It is due in justice to the Bulgarian Government and army to note that from the outset severe measures were enjoined and put in operation against marauding and outrage; on the other hand, no regulations can avail in repression of these abominations where racial feelings are exacerbated by the bloodthirsty sentiments of animosity which moved the statesmen above and soldiers below during the reign of terror in the Balkans. In the case of Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians, it was one set of religionists mutilating and massacring their dearly beloved brethren of the common faith—a clumsy interchange of cruel compliments between the Nationalists and Orangemen in the Balkanic Ulster, which, let us hope, does not prefigure the realities in store for us when the civil, but religious, war at last breaks out, according to the threat of prophecy, in the real Ulster. But, as the Report tells us very truly (p. 76), there was never any need of artificial excitement to produce the race hatreds which serve to explain the violence of the Christian allies in the late war, "and more especially the outbreaks of Bulgarian violence against the Turks." Race, language, history, and religion had built up a barrier between Turk and Christian which was insurmountable except for the more tolerant spirits of the rival faiths, to the zealots of which all things were possible and everything permissible. The Greek press could find no word of blame for the Bulgarian excesses against the Turk when the memory of these crimes was still fresh. But as soon as the subsequent differences arose between Bulgaria and her former allies, the lightest details of Bulgarian criminality were flourished belatedly as arguments against the hated rival in the race for territorial aggrandisement in the Balkans. King Constantine began the new crusade by his celebrated telegram, dated July 12, 1913 (p. 300), in which, after fathering a number of massacres upon the Bulgarians, which are of doubtful authenticity (see Miletitch *passim*) he stated that he found himself obliged to proceed to reprisals, and declared to all Europe that "the Bulgarians had surpassed the horrors perpetrated by their barbarian hordes in the past, thus proving that they have no right to count themselves amongst civilised peoples." Very soon the Athenian press represented the Bulgarians as a race of monsters and exerted public opinion to a

degree of jingo passion which inevitably made the war, when it broke out, one without mercy. Oral or printed, the same phrase summed up the general sentiment of the Greeks against the Bulgarians—*Dhen inc anthropi*—"they are not men" (p. 77). A Greek officer expressed himself thus before the writer of chapter ii. (from which I have here cited): "When you are dealing with barbarians you must conduct yourself like a barbarian. It is the only thing they understand." In the course of the inquiry the Commission saw in the streets of the Pirea and Salonica an atrocious picture, which the Greek soldiers were greedily buying, representing a Greek mountaineer bearing down to the ground, from behind, a Bulgarian soldier, whose hands were firmly gripped, whilst the Greek is seen gnawing the face of his helpless victim with his front teeth, just like a wild beast (p. 77). This disgusting emblem of national hatred is entitled "The Eater of Bulgarians" (*c.f.* the term *Bulgaroktonos*) and is embellished with four ferocious verses in the classic tongue of Homer. The picture, beautiful as a work of art, but indescribably horrible in its sanctification of animal ferocity, is reproduced on p. 108, and is described as a popular Greek illustration published at divine Athens. Another popular picture, also described on p. 77, represents a Greek soldier in the act of tearing out the eyes of a Bulgarian while still alive. The reproduction of the picture faces p. 116, and the letterpress represents the inhuman act as one of the episodes of the battle of Kilkich. Another popular picture illustrates a Greek making a meal off the cheek of a stricken Bulgarian as an actual event in battle. As the Commission state in their report: "These things have their importance because they tell of the sentiments which animated the Greek Army. They make it clear that the Greek soldiers were happy to think that they or their comrades in arms were able to accomplish these bestial horrors" (p. 77). The letters of the Greek soldiers seized at Raslog, which the Commission accept as authentic documents, reveal the depths of infamy to which the soldiery were brought by the inflammatory appeal of the regal telegram and the pictorial glorifications of barbaric savagery.

By the publication of this Report the Carnegie Foundation has rendered a world-wide service to the cause of humanity and fulfilled a necessary task of public enlightenment which puts to shame the indifference and reticence of European Governments who watched the shameful carnage and did nothing beyond the proffer of platitudinous words. Its just and fearless award of responsibility and blame should chasten the consciences of Balkan kings and politicians, and especially the spiritual directors of the martyred peoples who inhabit this region of the earth.

The Report is published already in French and English. I have good reason to believe that it will also be published in Spanish for the behoof of the Latin Republics in South America. I hope the Foundation will see its way to issue the Report in German and Russian, if not in other languages of widespread influence, in order that the terrible object-lesson of racial hatred and religious rancor which the Balkans now exhibit to the world may not be lost upon the democracies nor fail to act in restraint of the jingoes who control their destiny.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Do We Survive Death?—III.

(Concluded from p. 435.)

FROM the physiological point of view there is still another argument against the survival of the human personality beyond death. There were no insuperable difficulties against believing this so long as the primitive conception of a double, or ghost, or soul inhabiting the body obtained, either in the original form of that conception or in the form given it later

by philosophical speculation. But now we know, not as a mere theory, but as an absolute fact, that what we call the life of man is not single at all, but multiple. However deeper research may go, this one fact remains—the unit of every organism is the cell. Every organism is built up of myriads of cells, each living its own life, and at the same time contributing to the life of the organism of which it is a part. These cells are born, they live, they die, and all the time the health and complexity of the total organism is, so far as we can see, absolutely dependent upon their health and complexity. There is hardly room for doubt about this. It is, indeed, an accepted biological truth.

In a rough and ready way we may treat individual and national life as analogous. In the one case we have cells constituting the organism, in the other we have individuals constituting the nation. And just as what we call national life is no more than the combination of individual lives, so what we call the individual life is no more than the combination of cell lives. New cells replace old ones without disturbing individual existence, just as individuals come and go without disturbing the national existence. In each case the birth of new individuals makes good the losses caused by death. But suppose instead of the deaths of individuals in a nation being partial and gradual, they were sudden and universal? Suppose that all the individuals comprising a nation were to be suddenly blotted out. What, in that case, would become of national life? It would simply cease to exist. No one individual may fully express national life, but national life in the absence of all individuals is a sheer inconceivability.

Is it not equally inconceivable that the life of the individual should persist after the destruction of the cells composing the body? Death is to the individual exactly what an overwhelming catastrophe would be to the nation. As the latter means an end to all the units of a nation, and so to the nation as a living fact, so death means the cessation of cellular activity. And it would be as rational to talk of national life existing apart from the individuals composing the nation, as it is to speak of individual life persisting after the cellular activities, of which it is an expression, have ceased to exist.

Some little time back, this aspect was put by Edison in reply to the question as to whether he believed in immortality. Edison replied:—

"No—no. I am not I—I am not an individual—I am an aggregate of cells, as for instance, New York city is an aggregate of individuals.....I do not think we are individuals any more than a great city is an individual. If you cut your finger and it bleeds, you lose cells. They are individuals. You don't know your cells any more than New York City knows its five millions of individuals. You don't know who they are. No; all this talk of an existence for us, as individuals, beyond the grave, is wrong. It is born of our tenacity of life—our desire to go on living—our dread of coming to an end as individuals. I do not dread it, though. Personally, I cannot see any use of a future life."

What has been said may be taken as the physiological aspect of Lady Grove's question as to which of the complex characters and varying characters that make up a single organism—in the course of its existence—survives? Loosely, but perhaps conveniently, we speak of "self" as though it were something more or less independent of bodily changes or states, and so obscure the fact that each organism exhibits, not a single "self," but a multitude of selves, each gliding more or less imperceptibly into the other. And, as Lady Grove asks, which is to survive? Is it the last "self"? If so, why that more than the earlier ones? Or if the earlier ones do not persist, why should the last one? The reasoning is of the same value, and the evidence is the same, in both cases.

The only reason we have for believing that there exists a "self" separable from the actual organism, is the requirements of metaphysical theories and religious beliefs. Otherwise, it is easy enough to see the way in which the conscious self is built up, and also to note, in many cases, its disintegration. A

newly born infant has no consciousness of self; and even with young children it is of the weakest possible character. At an early stage of life the limbs of a child appear to have to it a quite independent existence. It actually *discovers* its limbs as it discovers their uses. It will appreciate blame being attached to its hands for breaking something before it can appreciate being itself blamed as the cause. We can watch the development of a consciousness of a psychic self, and trace the steps by which that self is built up. The child's experience of home, of friends, of the outside world, of school, and of the larger social life, gradually builds up that consciousness of a "self" which each possesses. The "Ego" of the philosophers is not, therefore, something that is struggling to find expression through the physical medium of the body; it is something that is being evolved before our eyes.

In brief, "self" is never more than the aggregate of sensations felt at any given moment, together with the memories of past sensations and experiences, and the ideal representations of experiences that may occur in the future. It is manifestly not simple, but complex; not indecomposable, but always offering the possibility of decomposition into simpler elements.

For we can not only observe the "self" being built up, we can also observe it being destroyed under the action of disease. Loss of memory—which is only the psychic side of neural derangement—will place an impassable barrier between the self, that is, and the self that was. In other cases, we may see how the wearing action of disease reduces a brilliant personality to absolute imbecility. Or, we have cases of alternating personality, where one personality has no recollection of the other. Which is the true self here? And which is it that is going to survive? Will it be Jekyll or Hyde? Or, yet again, we have the permanent alteration of a human personality as the consequence of an accident. In such cases we say, quite properly, So-and-so is not the man that he was. In any intelligible sense, he is not. In all such cases we are witnessing the disorganisation, the alteration, or the degradation of a personality that has been slowly organised and integrated. These cases offer no difficulty whatever to the Materialist; they do offer insuperable difficulties to the believer in the existence of an independent "Ego" and of survival after death.

Consciousness of the persistence of a "self" throughout all change is really no more than a memory of past experiences. Where this memory is lacking, no such consciousness exists. Thus, in the fairly common case, where, from accident, or other causes, a person forgets his name, friends, family, and all his previous associations, we, quite correctly, call it a loss of memory. But, in reality, the man's "self" is lost, and a new one is built up. In every case this sense of personal identity can be shown to be entirely dependent upon memory. We are told that I know I am the same person that existed twenty or thirty years ago, in spite of the constant change of bodily structure. This is quite true, so long as memory is there, but how when memory is lacking? The testimony of parents and friends assures me that I am the same person that, as an infant, extracted nutriment from a feeding-bottle, or crawled, more or less helplessly, about the floor. But, so far as my personal consciousness is concerned, that person forms no part of me at all. I have no recollection of myself as an infant, and because no memory exists, there is no sense of personal continuity. There never is, in fact, a complete sense of persistence such as is assumed. Some experiences are lost, some are blurred, others are fused together. All we have is a succession of changes—a stream of consciousness—with the fact of memory producing the illusion of a "self" that is superior to, and independent of, all change.

Now, memory is only the psychological aspect of a universal quality of organic matter. We are all, for example, familiar with the fact that, within

limits, a muscle becomes stronger as it is used. It not only becomes stronger; it does its work with increased efficiency and ease. All nervous tissue has this quality, which may be described as the capacity for repeating the response to identical stimulations. This lies at the basis of all education, scholastic and otherwise. We perform an action slowly at first, then more rapidly, and at last automatically. Put in psychological language, we may say that the nervous tissue is all the time learning that particular stimuli call for particular responses. The nervous elements are contracting a memory. They remember, and they also forget; for just as frequent repetition makes an action easier, so desistence for any length of time makes its recurrence difficult.

Let me emphasise the statement that to speak of nervous tissue as possessing memory is rather more than a mere figure of speech. It is no more than an expression of the same fact, now in physiological, now in psychological, language. On the psychological side there is a memory of previous events, because there is on the physiological side a structure that responds to stimulation, conserves to some extent the effects of past stimulations, and repeats itself when identical stimulations occur. To say that memory recalls an event tells us nothing. Memory is the act of recalling, and we are merely giving a name to what occurs. But to say that the structure registers impressions, and, under appropriate conditions, repeats them, offers us something in the nature of positive information. We have related the psychological state to a physiological condition, and it is only along that line that genuine information can emerge.

As I have already said, it is the necessities of a theory, not the logic of facts, that is responsible for the assumption of a "soul," a "self," an "ego," inhabiting the body, and so surviving its disintegration. No genuine verifiable evidence has ever been offered in its behalf; and, what is quite as important, all the phenomena met with may be explained without its aid. I say *may* be, not *can* be, because there are many obscurities connected with the problem that still remain. But the soul-theory removes none of these obscurities. It only adds to what is at present unexplained something that not only itself calls for explanation, but which is wholly inconceivable. And so far as questions have been answered or difficulties removed, it has been done by ignoring the hypothesis of a transcendent soul, and treating all mental phenomena as the equivalent aspects of neurological conditions. In practice we all—Theist and non-Theist alike—do this; for in practice the logic of facts is stronger than the logic of theory, and the connection between bodily states and mental phenomena, with the dependence of the latter on the former, will not be denied. The soul-theory is useless in theory and ignored in practice. It is, as Professor McDougal says, "a mere survival from primitive culture, one of the many relics of savage superstition that obstinately persists among us in defiance of the clear teachings of modern science."

C. COHEN.

Christian Courtesy.

WE are frequently reminded that Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of love. Its God is said to be love and its Savior the manifestation of love on earth. St. John's words are most emphatic: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; for everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (1 John iv. 7, 8). This is declared to be the Christian doctrine of love, and a supremely beautiful and fascinating doctrine it seems to be. St. John comes to the practical point thus: "Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"

(1 John iii. 17). We are pointed to these and other similar words, and asked, "Is not this doctrine of brotherly love by far the grandest and noblest in the world?" We answer, "Yes, if you can take it as it stands." Then we are authoritatively assured that the two central truths of Christianity are, the Universal Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of all Mankind. Clergymen are continually telling their hearers that Christianity surpasses all other religions by its enthronement of love. Now, as all Christians recognise the Bible as their Court of Appeal, let us examine more critically the New Testament doctrine of brotherly love. We have acknowledged the ideal beauty of this teaching, *if it can be taken as it stands*. Unfortunately, it cannot be so taken, because it occurs in a context which robs it of the super-excellence claimed for it. A part of the context is to be found in chapter ii. verse 15, where the "brethren" are exhorted not to love the world, and an eminent commentator says that the "world" here "is *man and man's world*, in his and its fall from God." That this exegesis is correct is proved by other passages in the same epistle. In chapter iii. verse 10, the world is divided into two opposite classes, the children of God and the children of the Devil, between whom there should be no fellowship because they are supposed to possess nothing in common. In 1 Peter ii. 17 the saints are enjoined to love the brotherhood and honor all men. In St. Paul's Epistles the exhortation to believers is to love one another, not the world outside.

Now, the only legitimate inference from such teaching is that, in the opinion of the Apostles, God is not the father of all mankind, but exclusively of believers in Christ, and that all men are not brothers, but only the redeemed of the Lord. We are fully aware that many modern divines teach the very opposite; but it is equally undeniable that what they put into *practice* is the apostolic teaching. The other Sunday, Dr. Horton was celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of his ministry at Hampstead; and in the *British Weekly* for July 9, he is reported to have spoken "very beautifully" on the cloud of witnesses who looked on at those midsummer services. Many of the witnesses, he said, were beyond. Then he referred to the belief in immortality as "an imperious necessity." Becoming extravagant, he exclaimed: "We live just because we are convinced that our loved ones live and that we are moving to meet them." What a deplorable and contemptible character the reverend gentleman by implication attributes to himself. What his language means is that, were it not for his hope of a future life, he would not live at all, or, in other words, would commit suicide. In other words still, Dr. Horton thinks so badly of this world, though made and governed by a loving Heavenly Father, and is so utterly tired of living in it that he would certainly destroy himself did he not believe that God had prepared another and better one into which he shall pass at death and live therein for ever with his loved ones. This is an exceedingly doubtful compliment to the God of love, to say the least. But that is only by the way. What we wish to call special attention to is this godly gentleman's following allusion to the people who do not share his belief in a life to come:—

"The people who are unaffected by this, whose hearts are so callous and so selfish that they never loved anyone well enough to be heart-broken by a loss—these people do not count. They are of no importance in the world. They are of no importance to those who live, just because they are of no importance to those who are gone."

It was taught in the early Church that Christians were not obliged to keep faith with unbelievers. It is quite certain that Dr. Horton does not believe in being courteous towards them. Many years ago, being unable to meet Professor Haeckel's arguments, his Christian charity permitted him to fling at his honored head the most vulgar abuse. And now, unhonored by the passage of time, he is still at the same despicable game. The words employed on this

occasion are coarse as well as discourteous. It by no means follows that when unbelievers in immorality lose their loved ones, their hearts are so callous and so selfish that they do not miss them. If the reverend gentleman is accurately reported, he is guilty of wickedly calumniating people of whom he evidently has no first-hand knowledge. Possibly what Dr. Horton really meant was that Freethinkers would be heartbroken by the loss of loved ones if they were not so callous and so selfish. If these wretched people could but love passionately, the death of their relations and friends would cast them into unfathomable despair; but since they are not so overwhelmed by grief, the only possible inference is that they are heartless and selfish brutes who do not count at all. They are beneath notice. It is believers alone who are of importance in the world; and apparently, of all believers, those who sit under Dr. Horton Sunday after Sunday are of the greatest importance. He said at his thirtieth anniversary: "I think no building ever gathered so many hearts that were faultlessly loyal to those they loved." We hold that such insulting treatment of unbelievers is shockingly unfair and unjust, though characteristically Christian. It is the kind of rudeness we naturally expect from the pulpit.

A few weeks ago we censured Sir William Robertson Nicoll for asserting that every Briton is "a Christian in many respects, and cannot cease to be one, however much he may wish it." This week the offender is the Rev. A. C. Hill, of Tollington Park Congregational Church, London, who, with more ingenuity and plausibleness than Sir William displayed, represents Christ himself as claiming all good men everywhere. Mr. Hill must be aware that the Gospel Jesus never makes such an absurd claim. Indeed, this preacher bases the title of his sermon in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 8, "Christians Without the Name," upon a deliberate misrepresentation of the narrative as contained in Luke ix. 49, 50. He says that "these disciples of his were a little concerned because a certain man had been casting out devils, and not doing it in the name of Jesus." The actual Gospel words are these: "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you." Upon that slenderest of foundations, while misrepresenting an essential part of it, Mr. Hill bases this tremendous claim:—

"He [Jesus] will not try to make his goods cheap in the market place. He is not content to strive and cry in order that men may be won and allured. But he does desire with all his heart that where there is no active, concrete opposition, where men are not deliberately opposed to him, it may be taken for granted that they are with him."

But Jesus, if he ever lived, has been dead for two thousand years, and desires nothing any more, and no preacher has any right to speak in his name. What Mr. Hill does is to place the responsibility for his own biased opinions upon the shoulders of a purely imaginary being. As everybody knows, and some divines admit, the Christ of the Churches is a creation of theology. Whatever criticism may ultimately say about the Gospel Jesus, it is beyond all serious dispute that the Christ of theology never lived; and to represent him as claiming all good men is an act of unpardonable impudence. Even on the assumption that Christ exists, we unhesitatingly declare that he would have no right to claim as his own the people who do not believe in him, however good they may be. The Christ Mr. Hill preaches is a supernatural being; but there are millions of thoroughly good people in the world who have no faith in the supernatural, and who have a conscientious objection to be called what they are not. "With a daring that is absolutely startling," Mr. Hill thus advances his own and the Church's claim in Jesus' name:—

"Wherever men are good citizens, wherever they are obedient to the laws, wherever they are rebellious

against unrighteous laws, wherever they are pitiful, tender, loyal, Jesus claims them as his servants, followers of his banner, disciples of his person."

Jesus does nothing of the sort, and even if he did he would deserve the severest condemnation, or, to adopt the preacher's own words, he would "illustrate an arrogance that ought to be met with derision and contempt."

Christian courtesy towards non-Christians there is not. Even to claim all passive unbelievers who are eminently noble and good, as well as to denounce all active opponents of Christianity as people of no importance in the world, "illustrates an arrogance that ought to meet with derision and contempt." As all Christians are by no means good, so all good people are in no respect Christians. J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

Some hundred and fifty years ago there was a sort of young men's debating club at Tarbolton, not far from the residence of the peasant poet of Scotland, who was indeed a member of it, and is said to have drawn up its rules, which we can well believe. One rule declared that every young fellow fit to be a member of that club was, amongst other things, to be "a professed admirer of one or more of the fair sex." *One or more!* Surely this shows the generous genius of Robert Burns.

Burns was then only nineteen. He spoke of love with mingled innocency and ardor. No woman could hate him. Some loved him; most of them not wisely but too well,—one of them wisely and well—the woman who was his wife, and bore his children, and mothered one of them who was not hers, and put up with all his faults and failings, and whom he in his heart of hearts loved too from first to last. This should be said in justice to "Jean," and it would have her husband's approval; for he quite understood his own case, as we could prove by many profound lines from his own poems; indeed, at bottom, his views on morality in general, and sex in particular, were as austere as Wordsworth's. No doubt this statement would astonish a crowd of Burnsites who really do not admire him for his genius and his greatness, but for other qualities that bring him into too much likeness to the common herd of the Scotsmen, to whom the Kirk had left no recreations but drink and fornication—to use Henley's true and strong account of the situation.

If there are such things as "holy places"—which religion declares but which Freethought rather doubts—surely the birthplace of Robert Burns is one of them. It is a place of pilgrimage from all parts of the world. When the great "infidel," Robert Ingersoll, visited it he felt "as one who touched a shrine." Ingersoll said that in one of the two poems he wrote, speaking formally; in prose he said that he would rather stand up drunk at the Day of Judgment and say he had written "A man's a man for a' that" than stand up sober and say he had written the Westminster Confession of Faith. And every man who is a man would endorse the same statement with regard to himself.

Many a woman also would sign that statement. It was not little but great love that made Bassanio tell Portia—"only the blood speaks to you in my veins." Perhaps the blood of Robert Burns was too often in that condition, but he was not a mere sensualist, even when the "old hawk," as Stevenson called it, was dominant in him. His general feeling towards the sex of his wife, the sex of his mother, was one of love and reverence: we might call it adoration. His essential gallantry is not to be doubted; and it was not selfish but disinterested. Robert Burns could never have accepted—in the full sense of the word—the Bible theory that God made man "good" and then made woman to spoil him. He put it the other way about. He eliminated "God" altogether from the business. It was Nature who first

"tried her 'prentice hand on man
And then she made the lasses O!"

What a superb compliment in comparison with the Bible story of creation! And one would think that the ladies would feel it. But some of them evidently don't. Two don't for certain. They are what is called militant suffragettes.

Two of these extraordinary ladies, who imagine that the way to persuade men to agree with them is to burn down

their property, took it into their heads to blow up Robert Burns's birthplace. It is the last place in Scotland one would expect they (as women) would think of touching. But it had no sanctity for them. They did not recognise that it memorised a great man, and a great woman. Robert Burns produced some wonderful poems, but his mother produced Robert Burns: and which is the greater, the man's works or the man himself? Forgetting all this, the amazonian arsonists got their bombs ready and placed them against the lowly walls of the birthplace of that mighty spirit. Fortunately they were disturbed and the famous cottage was saved. One of them escaped, the other was arrested, jabbering just like a lunatic all the time; which she must indeed have been to fancy that such a deed could benefit any man, woman, or child on this planet.

In his latest Monthly Lecture, Dr. Horton admits that thousands of thoughtful and educated people "find golf more attractive than God," that religion has lost its attraction, and that, consequently, the multitudes have become totally indifferent to it. This is perfectly true; but the reverend gentleman is entirely wrong when he alleges that this decay of interest in Christianity is the antiquated and utterly inadequate statement of its truths still in force in the Churches. To set matters right, what is needed, he tells us, is "such a statement or setting of religious truth as will carry complete conviction to the thought of our time"; but we confidently affirm that such a statement neither man nor woman shall ever be able to make. It is not the ruling statement or setting of Christianity that is unattractive, but Christianity itself. Golf is more fascinating than God simply because golf is real and God is not. It is the supernatural, as such, that is losing its hold upon the world, not merely an imperfect doctrine of it.

In the very lecture under consideration, Dr. Horton makes assertions which are both false and absurd. It is not a fact "beyond all dispute," that "by far the greatest moral and spiritual dynamic in the world is simply the story of Jesus." Only a person blinded by prejudice would dare to put forth such a silly claim to-day. Why, the story of Jesus is just now seriously called in question by hundreds of Christian scholars. Christendom, even Great Britain, yea, London itself, in which the reverend gentleman waves the Christian banner, is a living witness to the colossal moral impotence of Jesus and his religion.

"The Heat Wave" was the advertised topic for a sermon at St. Mary-at-Hill Church, London, E.C., recently. There was no need for publicity, for parsons have preached on that subject for centuries.

The Rev. J. M. Thompson, the famous Oxford divine whose views on miracles have brought him into trouble, has a remarkable article in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, entitled "Post-Modernism," in which he maintains that criticism has a right to handle every conceivable subject. We mention it simply because it raises a point that has been raised, again and again in this journal, namely, the evidential valuelessness of religious experience. Mr. Thompson is, perhaps, the first divine to admit that it is a mistake to appeal to experience as evidence for the truth of Christianity, because it is legitimate to ask whether it springs direct from a real person called Christ, or whether it is derived from what is believed about Christ. We are firmly convinced that religious emotion is altogether due to religious beliefs, and is never shared by those who are devoid of such beliefs. Thus, the "new apologetic," as it has been called, falls completely to the ground.

"Brigham Young abolished monotony by harnessing commerce to theology," says "Vanoc" in the *Referee*. The same teams are driven nearer home; but our newspapers do not notice them.

"Mr. Carnegie has deluged Britain and the States with free libraries, and the effect of those libraries has been to encourage the begging-letter writer to multiply the discontented portion of the community," remarks Mr. Arnold White in the *Referee*. If this be so, they must be nourished on inferior fiction and worse theology, which form the staple output of such seats of learning.

The new county borough of Southend-on-Sea has a coat of arms under consideration of the Town Council, the predominant features of which are the figures of two monks. Presumably, the holy men are meditating on the Sunday bands, cinemas, and other amusements, to say nothing of the thousands of Sabbath trippers.

The Westminster Abbey authorities quickly offered to bury the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in that famous building, although he was known to be a Unitarian. We thought the building was full when Swinburne and Meredith died—but they were not Unitarians.

Naturally, Nonconformists have made the most that could be made of the death of Joseph Chamberlain. He has been acclaimed as a product of Nonconformity, despite the fact that for some years before his enforced retirement Nonconformists were loudly denouncing him as a "Judas," as having betrayed the democratic cause, etc., and despite the further fact that all Nonconformists are not of the Chamberlain type. And so one is left wondering what these other Nonconformists are the product of. Surely not of Episcopalianism? And if Chamberlain was a product of Nonconformity at one stage of his career, what was he a product of at another stage? The only conclusion that follow from such senseless chatter is the amount of foolishness current among those who claim to play a large part in modern political life, and also the readiness with which religious parties seize upon anything in order to practice their favorite game of self-advertisement. The steps of the reasoning are as follows: Chamberlain was a great man. Chamberlain was of Nonconformist descent. We are of Nonconformist descent. Therefore —. Anyone can draw the implied conclusion for himself.

Mr. R. J. Campbell says that Mr. Chamberlain was "a great Free Churchman, unswervingly faithful to his religious convictions." Well, we imagine that what Mr. Chamberlain's religious convictions were are very doubtful. He never paraded them; he never went about preaching in chapels, like some other political leaders, and rarely, if ever, introduced religion into his speeches. We fancy that what Mr. Campbell—who has quite a genius for giving words wrong implications—means is that Mr. Chamberlain was faithful to what is called "religious equality," but what we prefer to call the equality of opinion. We are not now discussing whether this is true or false of Chamberlain, but only pointing out that it has nothing whatever to do with religion. It does not originate with religion, and religion does nothing to favor its development—save so far as the division of religious opinion into sects makes for a larger measure of tolerance than would otherwise obtain. Indeed, we should like to see Mr. Campbell tackle this problem: If the equality of opinion is a religious conviction, how comes it that the countries in Europe where it obtains in largest measure are those in which religious opinion is weakest, and that its bitterest and most numerous opponents are always found in the ranks of the devout?

The Bishop of Bristol has been preaching on the subject of "Will Christianity Survive?" When that question is asked by a Bishop, one knows what kind of answer to expect. Of course, he thinks it will, although he admits that it is "desperately hard at times to understand the ways of God." But the attitude of the proper devotee is not to understand the ways of God, but to believe that they are for good. Christianity never taught that people were to be saved by understanding. That has always been an heretical doctrine. It is as Ingersoll said, if the world could only be saved by understanding religious doctrines, it would surely be damned beyond redemption.

Although the number of church attendants has declined, the number of parsons has increased. The 1911 census shows that there is a slight increase in all the Churches except the Established Church. That shows a decrease of about 400. The others, however, make up for them. Evidently the decline of worshippers is not due to want of preaching.

The Canterbury House of Convocation has been considering whether it should admit women on the Central Board of Missions or not. After considerable discussion, it was decided to co-opt women members to the number of twenty. The Dean of Canterbury opposed their admittance on the ground that it was contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of the teaching of St. Paul. The Dean was unduly cautious. Both the letter and the spirit of Paul's teaching, and, one may add, the whole spirit of Christian legislation, is dead against such an innovation. Their place, if Paul is to be taken as an authority, is to obey their husbands and to keep silence in the churches. The discussion only made clear the utter hopelessness of expecting anything in the shape of a rational lead in social matters from a congregation of Christian clergymen.

The *Church Times* warns Dissenters not to expect too much in the way of stopping the leakage from the Churches

by forcing religion on children. It points out that there are other factors beside early training to be considered; and in this we quite agree with them. Early training is a very important thing, and undoubtedly a large number of people remain with the Churches because of this. But it is not everything, for in that case there would be very few non-Christians about. As the *Church Times* says, there are other factors, and these remain even though every child received a sound religious education. Early training is nearly all-powerful when the general currents of life enforce it; but when the forces of life pull in one direction and early training in another, it may well happen that the former triumphs. And this is obviously what happens in the case of the majority who throw off religion when they reach maturity.

It is a little noted but extremely significant fact that this great concern about the religious training of children is, on the whole, a modern thing. In earlier ages children were, of course, taught religion, but only as they were taught other things. There was no need to specially emphasise religion, because the general social environment enforced it. Religion was a part of life, and there was no greater need to surround the child with a special "religious atmosphere" than there is to give it to-day a geographical or an arithmetical atmosphere. A change of conditions necessitated a different policy. The environment, instead of endorsing religious teachings, began to be in flat contradiction to them. The general tendency of life became anti-Christian, and it became necessary to guard the growing generation from its influence. Hence the present position. The secular teacher asks only the opportunity to instruct, and leaves it to daily experience to endorse and enforce his lessons. The religious teacher knows that this is impossible with him. He must keep the child insulated, as it were, against the hundred and one tendencies of modern life if he is to keep him religious. To some extent this may be done with children. But it is impossible to do it with adults. Life is there when the Churches have finished their work; and although early religious training may minimise, it cannot annihilate its influence.

One of the easiest things in the world is to say that a thing you dislike is dead. And to a certain type of mind saying it appears to develop a conviction that it is so. People have gone on, generation after generation, saying either there could be no such thing as an Atheist, or that Atheism was dead, quite blind to the fact that the number of Atheists in the world steadily increases. So with Materialism. It is always being killed, but yet it is always alive. Always being crushed, and yet never losing its activity and potency. Of course, this cheap and easy way of getting rid of an enemy largely owes its efficacy to confusion of thought and looseness of language. The *Christian Commonwealth*, for instance, says in its last issue:—

"All the great scientific thinkers of the world have given up the materialistic hypothesis of the Universe. No thinker of reputation to-day stands for the materialistic philosophy."

The sole ground assigned for this is that the old conception of matter is shown to be inaccurate. Well, suppose it is; what then? Materialistic philosophy is no more dependent upon a particular conception of "matter" than the science of geology is dependent upon a particular theory of coal formation. The essence of Materialism is that the forces of the universe are of a determinable, and ultimately calculable, character; and with that the character of "matter" has simply nothing to do. As to scientific thinkers having given up Materialism, that is sheer nonsense. Sir Oliver Lodge knew better when he asked the British Association to be tolerant towards the anti-materialistic explanation. He knew quite well that, instead of Materialism being discarded, it is the working creed of every scientific thinker worth troubling about.

We do not deal with party politics in the *Freethinker*, but when "King Carson" introduces "God" into the Preamble of his new Constitution for Ulster, as being on the Protestant side, we feel like saying a word or two, and replying to those who resent our doing so by reminding them that "he spoke first." Carson represents himself and his "covenanters" as "trusting to be strengthened by the Power who helped our fathers in their need." This is not politics: this is religion: and is not entitled to pass uncriticised because it is in connection with politics. We say at once that, if there be a God, this is the most blasphemous and hypocritical language we ever read. It was not God, but Great Britain, that made the Protestant the upper dog in the Irish fight. And who dares to say that God made that upper dog the brutal and bloody beast he was? It was the story of an Irish peasant, thrashed at a cart-tail—stroke by stroke and step by stroke—that made young Charles Stewart Parnell

clench his teeth and silently resolve to do—what he did. For the man was tied to the cart so that he had to walk backwards, and the dreadful lash cut open his belly as he went, protesting that such cruelty was against human nature itself—though an English colonel *ordered* it to be done and *saw* it done. God helped them, did he? Helped them to tear out the living entrails of a poor Irish peasant, for doing what Carson and Craig and the rest of them now profess to be doing in their turn, and call upon "the Power" (which surely must be the Orange God) to help them as he helped them before.

Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, in the course of his address to the jury in the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1883, said that the persecution of Catholics by Protestants in Ireland for a period of a hundred and fifty years was unparalleled in human history. The very last infamy was practised by the Protestant landlords, with the full consent of the British Government. They pulled down the peasant's cottage when they could get no more blood out of him in the shape of rent. Never before had *that* been done. It was a scanty dwelling, but it was hallowed by life and love, and births and deaths, and joy and pain, and all that makes a poor man's home what a rich man's mansion can never be. To strike men *there* was an attempt to murder the very "soul" of a nation. And the rich did it to the poor, and the men of one religion did it to the men of another religion, and "God" was with them in that "man's inhumanity to man" which has thrown a last black insolubility into the problem of evil, and made the world vile beyond redemption.

Had not Protestants been divided amongst themselves—first of all into the two great parties of Church and Dissent—they would have exterminated the Irish Catholics, which they very nearly succeeded in doing as it was. We don't say the Catholics would have been any better if they had possessed the same power; but they did not possess it, and they are not guilty; you cannot make men responsible for hypothetical crimes. Neither do we wish to stir up religious passions unnecessarily. But when convicted persecutors cry to "the Power" for help against their victims, and convicted bigots clamor against a merely possible intolerance, one can only ask if any such spectacle has been witnessed since Satan rebuked Sin?

All we have said has been provoked by that appeal to "the Power." We have nothing to do with Ulster Protestants' politics. When they publicly appeal to "the Power" of this infinite universe to take sides with them in a political contest, they are posing as religionists and they invite the most candid criticism even from non-politicians.

It is pretended that the Battle of the Boyne, the triumph of Dutch William, who was imported from the Continent to uphold the Protestant interest in Great Britain, was a victory for religious toleration. It was nothing of the sort. All the toleration it secured was between Protestants themselves. No toleration was extended to Catholics. None, of course, was extended to Freethinkers. Less than ten years after the "glorious revolution" of 1688 a fresh statute was directed against Freethinkers. It was called "An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness." It was a long Act, but in substance it was this: that anyone having been educated in the Christian religion, or at any time made profession of it within this realm, who shall deny the Holy Trinity, or shall say that there are more Gods than one, or deny Christianity to be true, or the Bible to be of divine authority—such person shall be disabled from holding any public employment, and on a second conviction be imprisoned for three years and deprived for ever of all civil rights. That was the "religious toleration" which followed the Battle of the Boyne, the flight of James II., and the safe seating of William III. upon the throne of Great Britain.

The government of Ireland, while it is purely secular, may be this or that so far as we are concerned. But the government of Ireland has never been anything else than the government of Irish Catholics by British and Irish Protestants. "To hell with the Pope!" was the sublime shibboleth on one side. "To hell with King William!" was the sublime shibboleth of the other. We do not mean that religious bigotry was responsible for *all* the misrule and misery in Ireland; we mean that it sanctioned and exasperated every other cause of quarrel; the chief of which, of course, was the oppression and exploitation of the majority by the minority of the nation.

Protestants had all the power when the Act of Union was passed. There was not a Catholic in the Irish Parliament.

After the revolutionary period of 1848 the Protestants made it "treason felony" to suggest that the Act of Union could ever be repealed. This was to make every Nationalist orator or journalist a criminal punishable by death. That is, mere reformers, like John Mitchell, who wrote pretty much what T. P. O'Connor writes now—only with real literary genius—stood in fear of capital punishment. On the occasion of Mitchell's trial, with a batch of his colleagues on the *Irish Tribune*, the Crown exercised its right of unlimited challenge, and every Catholic was kept off the jury, as well as every Protestant who was not thought "sound" enough. Every defendant, of course, was found guilty; every one of them, of course, was sentenced to death.

History is written too much in the abstract. The bestial circumstances of the execution of the English Regicides, for instance, is almost unprintable. Historians use abstract language; they say that the unhappy men were cruelly executed, or use some other polite circumlocution. But what was the actual death sentence on these Irish patriots—for such every man must be who risks his liberty and even his life in opposition to the government of his country by foreigners? The following sentence on William Smith O'Brien will do for all the rest,—there being only a change in name:—

"The sentence is, that you, William Smith O'Brien, be taken from hence to the place from whence you came, and be thence drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, and be there hanged by the neck until you are dead; and that afterwards your head shall be severed from your body, and your body divided into four quarters, to be disposed of as her Majesty shall think fit. And may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

There, dear reader; let that sink into your "soul." This horrible sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, but it sounded in the ears of the prisoners in the dock. Had the Irish been all Catholics, or all Protestants, those infamous words would never have been uttered. The hellish spirit of religious bigotry turns men into beasts. Nay, worse than beasts; for what beast ever hated another beast for a mere difference of opinion on any subject whatever?

Party politics are nothing to us. Neither are we very much concerned about the "business government" which some people wish to see. But when a great political problem is discussed in the light of religious dogmas, and in the spirit of religious animosity, it becomes Freethinkers, at least, to insist that every word of religion should be eliminated from this controversy, and that the discussion should turn upon what is actual and appreciable by ordinary human intelligence in this world.

At the present time, Scottish Sabbatarians are fighting most strenuously for the preservation intact of their field-day. The magistrates of Saltcoats have unanimously refused to consent to the holding of Sunday evening concerts. The Ardrossan and Saltcoats *Herald* assures their Honors, however, that they are laboring under a delusion if they assume that their finding has the approval of the entire community. It certainly has not the approval of the *Herald*. But there are Sabbatic stalwarts at Saltcoats, who have the courage of their convictions. Mr. (or should it be Rev.?) W. M'Neil Biggam, for example, is a modern Goliath, who looks down with blustering contempt upon all and sundry to favor the secularisation of the Lord's Day. This warrior, flourishing two hundred years after his time, goes to the absurd length of asserting that "it is seriously open to question whether the rendering of even the finest sacred music by competent artistes, under concert conditions on a Sabbath evening, would result in permanent moral good." We contend that it is more seriously open to question whether the most eloquently and impressively conducted Church services, taken by themselves, have ever contributed to the moral elevation of the people. But the question is, Will intelligent Scotland patiently listen and submit to such crass and fumed exhalations of seventeenth century Puritanism in this enlightened twentieth century? Will the residents of Saltcoats allow themselves to be led by the nose by such obsolete teachers as Mr. M'Neil Biggam? We are confident,—

"O Caledonia, stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child,"

that thou wilt take thy full share in the grand task of rescuing the venerable day of the sun from the tyrannous rule of the Sabbatarians.

There was an altercation in High-street, Southend, on Sunday, between a policeman and a citizen of London, who

had come down to "see the fleet" and had been seeing it, not wisely but too well. Presently the policeman lost his temper a bit and began to use "language." Whereupon the other disputant, who seemed to belong to the working classes, said, "Look here! Don't you Bernard-Shaw me!" Such is fame.

Rev. Paulus Askanazie (an odd name), vicar of Ulrome, in East Yorkshire, had an odd experience. He went up to inspect an upper chamber in the church tower, but the ladder broke and he could not get down again. Tolling the bell for three hours brought no relief, although it caused wonder in the heads of his parishioners. Providence rendered no help—as usual. At last the reverend gentleman broke a window and held out a white flag in the form of a handkerchief with the "S. O. S." signal, which brought him relief.

Rev. George M. Norris, of South Cove, Wangford, Suffolk, left £73,897. Pity the poor clergy!

Lord Halsbury, who was the leading counsel for the crown in the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1883, was an elderly man then. He seems to be living from everlasting to everlasting. But he does not appear to spend much time in improving his knowledge of the Bible. He quoted Scripture the other night in the House of Lords against the Government, and this is what he made of it:—"Make no more vain orations; your hands are for blood." The real quotation, from Isaiah, is—"Bring no more vain oblations; your hands are full of blood." *Oration* for oblations is distinctly good. Lord Halsbury is getting quite comical in his old age.

A most remarkable man is the Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead! Between his facts and his conclusions there is a connection so subtle that only the initiated are able to discern. Thus, under present conditions, he has grave doubts as to whether the British people are fit for Empire. And, as becomes so subtle a reasoner, he supplied the data on which such a conclusion was based. An Australian on a visit to England gave Dr. Horton the benefit of his experiences. One Sunday morning this Australian visitor went to High Mass at the Cathedral at Westminster. In the afternoon he went into Surrey, and found about a thousand people playing golf. That was sufficient. His next move was to visit Dr. Horton's church—all in the same day—and he "emphatically declared" that we were not fit for Empire. That is a quite wonderful chain of reasoning, and very few beside Dr. Horton would be capable of it. Because there is High Mass on Sunday morning and golf on Sunday afternoon, the English people are in a state of decadence. We cannot quite see the connection; but Dr. Horton says it, and Dr. Horton is one of the shining lights of Metropolitan Nonconformity.

The following is from the *Daily News* of Friday, July 10:—

"A dock worker named William James Ahern, who said he was 'not religious,' gave some trouble to the Rotherhithe Coroner's officer when he sought to induce him to take the oath at an inquest yesterday.

"The Coroner's officer (P.C. Allen) commenced: 'Repeat after me, I swear by Almighty God—'

"Witness: No, I don't.

"Officer: Repeat, 'I swear—'

"Witness: But I won't.

"Will you take the oath?—No, I ain't religious.

"Then affirm, 'I do solemnly and sincerely affirm.'—No, I shan't.

"The Officer: But it is not religious. Repeat, 'I do solemnly and sincerely affirm.'—Yes.

"Repeat it.—Yes.

"Will you please repeat what I say? 'I do solemnly and sincerely affirm.'—Yes.

Officer (sternly): Will you either affirm or take the oath?

"Witness (looking disgusted): No.

"The Coroner (Mr. H. R. Oswald): If you do not you will get into trouble. Repeat after the officer.

"Witness said he would not, but the officer urged, 'But it is not religious,' and witness consented to have another try.

"Finally he rounded off the last words of the affirmation with the addition of words from the disliked oath, 'So help me God.'"

We hardly think this gentleman can be amongst our readers. If he were he would probably know that the Oaths Act passed by Charles Bradlaugh gives every witness or juror a right to affirm in any court of law simply on the ground that he has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is against his religious belief. We may add that the form of affirmation in the Act was drawn up by Charles Bradlaugh himself, and it may therefore be taken as quite satisfactory.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £178 18s. 6d. Received since:—Mr. and Mrs. Kerslake, 10s.; H. Silverstein, 10s.

HERMANN SHACKLETON.—Pleased to have your encouraging letter, and glad to hear that this journal has been so much good to you for so long a time.

J. H. KENMARD.—How is it, we wonder, that Christian Evidence people are nearly always such blackguards?

EDWIN PURCHES.—Mr. Foote may see the "saints" at Portsmouth some other time.

RATIONALIST.—It is amusing, as you say, to see Mr. W. H. Thresh described as "a new speaker." He lectured for several N. S. S. Branches ten years ago, and his advertisement as a lecturer appeared (gratuitously) in the *Freethinker* at the time. We believe that there was an editorial paragraph about him in this journal. Mr. Thresh's lectures were well appreciated. What we object to is the "new." Others may be responsible for that.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

MR. AND MRS. KERSLAKE.—We should be fortunate indeed if all our friends' good wishes were realised. Thanks for yours.

W. R.—Translations received with thanks. We hope to see you before long. The "Positive article" is being considered. We are afraid of trespassing beyond our proper province in the *Freethinker*.

R. H. WELLINGS.—Glad to hear your *Freethinker* has been delivered regularly since our intervention.

E. B.—Your weekly "batch" is always welcome.

EDGAR JONES.—Mr. Foote's *Will Christ Save Us?* would probably have served your purpose, but it is out of print at present.

H. R. WRIGHT.—We are sending you a supply of "specimen" back numbers of the *Freethinker* for free distribution, and shall be glad to supply other friends in the same way.

ANDREW MILLAR.—Too late for *this week*; but see *next*.

H. SILVERSTEIN, a member of the N. S. S. Executive, and in a position to know what he is talking about, sends his annual subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, and writes: "My admiration for your great ability and devotion to our cause becomes greater with the passing of the years, and as long as you remain our leader I shall always give you my unswerving support."

J. W. DE CAUX.—Glad you think our "Word of God" *first-rate*. If reprinted, as you say, there would have to be footnotes to enlighten the reader on some technical points.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's special address to the Freethought party generally, and to his many personal friends in particular, is postponed still further. It must not be interrupted when it has once begun, and a good deal of standing matter has yet to be used up first.

One part of Mr. Foote's address will be concerned with the heavy financial strain involved in some unavoidable changes. There is more, rather than less, need of the President's Honorarium Fund being well supported. It is to be hoped that all intending subscribers who have not yet remitted will do so as promptly as possible. The money is likely to be badly wanted in the early future.

There are fewer clergymen in England than there were ten years ago. Actors and actresses have increased by fifty per cent. These are sure marks of the growth of civilisation.

Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner objects to the N. S. S. President's statement, backed by the Executive, that all the effective fighting against the Blasphemy Laws has been done in the law courts. She does not state where else it was done. It was the fight over the *Freethinker* prosecution more than thirty years ago that produced Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's epoch-marking judgment, which made all discussion on religion, as such, entirely free, and confined the punishment of "blasphemy" to the use of outrageous language. Twenty-five years elapsed before another "blasphemy" case occurred. The President and Executive of the N. S. S. saw the importance of fighting the Boulter case. They did fight it and they won. It was a critical occasion. And the result was the endorsement of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's declaration of the Common Law of Blasphemy. That is settled for ever. Just as Mr. Foote said it was in 1898 when he established the Secular Society, Limited. His view was that our funds were safe, but our personal liberty was still in danger owing to the *manner* in which Christians might choose to find that we had attacked their faith.

Nearly everybody said that the N. S. S. President was mistaken. It was they who were mistaken. He was right—as he usually is in such matters. Some of those who were pleased to think he was a blunderer in 1898 were just as mistaken in 1908. They advised Boulter to climb down, to express regret for his "blasphemy" and to promise never to do it again. And one of them plainly stated in print that English Freethinkers had quite as much freedom of speech as was good for them. Now they are posing as the heroes of the "repeal" movement, and ignorant people are actually believing them. No wonder Matthew Arnold called History a Mississippi of falsehood.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner objects to the statement that while the Deputation to Mr. Asquith, and his reply, were good things in their way, they "could not possibly lead to any fresh steps in the direction of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws." She does not tell us what steps they *could* lead to, or what fresh step they have led to. Nothing fresh has been attempted. Circulars, questions for candidates, petitions, questions in Parliament,—all had been done before. Mrs. Bonner hints at another Bill. There cannot be a better one than her father's, which was introduced (and lost, of course) in 1889. He was still President of the N. S. S., by the way, when he made this gallant effort. To tell the plain truth, all the fighting against the Law of Blasphemy, until quite lately, has been done by the N. S. S., and by no one else. The monster has long been moribund. What is being arranged for now is its funeral. To give it the *coup de grace*, to bury it out of sight and sound, is a good work in its way. But the real work was the work of the pioneers—who dared and suffered and did all that men could do to maintain their and every man's right of free thought and free speech.

The circumstances under which the suggested new Bill is to be introduced "will be more favorable than has ever been the case hitherto." Very likely. But those more favorable circumstances only mean, after all, that much progress in the general spirit of toleration has taken place since 1883 and 1889.

Mrs. Bonner throws out a final hint about the necessity of Freethinkers working unitedly together in respect to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. This will sound a little odd to some members of the Blasphemy-Laws Repeal Committee.

A vicar for a long time had to bear what was to him a very unpleasant state of things, namely, a large number of empty pews. He had tried to find a remedy, and at last thought of a novel idea. He had bills and posters printed, and sent broadcast, announcing that on a certain Sunday he would preach a special sermon on "The Old and the New Sacrifice," and that to illustrate the old sacrifices "real fire" would come down from heaven. The vicar accordingly arranged for a boy to go up in the roof of the church, and when he repeated, for the second time, the text, "And fire came down from heaven and burnt the sacrifice," the boy was to light some paper and drop it down. The appointed service came; the church was, of course, filled almost to suffocation. The vicar arose, and gave out the text—once—twice—but no fire came down, and on looking towards the roof to find the cause, the boy shouted out, "If you please, sir, the rain has got on the matches, and they won't strike." At the end of the sermon the vicar said he hoped there would be a good collection to carry on the work of the Lord at that place.

From the West Country.

The Judge's Chair. Dartmoor Stories, by Eden Phillpotts. John Murray: 1914. 6s.

MR. EDEN PHILLPOTTS has given the reading public many surprises. First, when the capital, short stories which made the magazines unwonted sources of laughter, were collected and issued over his signature, and later and greater, when the ingenious historian of *The Human Boy* dropped the cap and bells, and, in *The Secret Woman*, contributed the most powerfully written novel of its year to our wonder and amazement. In a still later book, *The Thief of Virtue*, Mr. Phillpotts gave his admirers yet another surprise, for he translated the philosophy of Nietzsche into the vernacular of the West Country, and gave us a convincing picture of the superman in homespun.

No one among the present day writers has a better claim to the succession to the mantle of Mr. Thomas Hardy than Mr. Eden Phillpotts. Since the Master has forsaken novel writing for poetry, the younger writer has been gradually adding volume to volume of his Dartmoor Stories until he can claim to have attempted a prose epic of the West Country. The latest volume of this splendid series of novels, *The Judge's Chair*, is before us, and forms a triumphant finale to the master-work, well worthy of the strong hand of the famous Devonshire novelist.

This volume of stories bring to a conclusion the author's Dartmoor work. They are along the line of previous volumes and mingle comedy and tragedy; but as in the case of *Widcombe Fair*, he ended the longer stories with a play of humor and a glimpse of the happier side of life; so, for the most part, these tales, told by an old Moorman from *The Judge's Chair*, are laughter-moving and saturated with the quaint and original philosophy of the Moor folk.

Because of the range and maturity of the stories, *The Judge's Chair* is a most characteristic work. These peasants, with their racy and vigorous dialect, are not merely West Country photographs, they are "forms more real than living man" which the imagination of the author has created. The reader knows that the important factor is nature, and that the simple story is but a portion of the world's life. And the struggles and love-affairs of these peasants are to this theme merely as the hare running along the railway is to Turner's rainstorm and express train racing one another in his world-famous picture. It is a true instinct that impels Mr. Phillpotts to choose backgrounds of landscape rather than houses and furniture; for, in like position, did not the great painter crown his Ariadne with stars?

There are no less than eighteen stories in the book, and they include tragedy, comedy, and even farce. Mr. Phillpotts tells stories, too, in such a way that his readers are counted by the tens of thousands, for in this phase of his art he is irresistible. Listen, for example, to his description of Tommy Caunter, the patriarch of *The Judge's Chair*:—

"A little old man with a brown and withered face all wrinkled into one laugh. Every line of a thousand lines was merry. His eyes were small, bright suns, and the obvious happiness in them must have astonished an observer. Could it be that any mortal had found seventy years on Dartmoor one long jest? Teeth Tommy Caunter had none, but his shrunken mouth followed the skull lines and grinned a genial smile. He wore a blue shirt, corduroy trousers, and battered black leggings. His coat and his hat were beside him on the seat. He was bald save for a thin ring of white hair—a half halo of silver that had slipped off his head and been caught behind his ears."

This Tommy Caunter is the character to whose memory Mr. Phillpotts professes to owe the stories. In keeping with this genial supposition, on page after page brilliant touches of homely wisdom strike the reader, as, for instance:—

"We always remember the man who trod on our corns, though we may forget the man who tried to set our house on fire."

"Talk is very well; but it won't heal a cut finger."
 "The youngest of us makes mistakes."
 "If cleanliness be next to godliness on one side, 'tis close kin with a devil of a temper on t'other."
 "Youth will rush in where middle age casts a look and goes by."

For Freethinkers these stories have an unusual interest, for the keynote of all is frankly and fearlessly Pagan, and interpenetrated with the Greek ideals of life. It is this quality that gives Mr. Phillpotts' art an imposing and elemental quality. He is, in a word, a thinker; but he is too clever an artist to allow his aesthetics to be overshadowed by his ethics. One of the most charming of the stories deals with the scientific truth that the child of to-day is nearer his prehistoric ancestors than the adult by many an age. This story, "The Apostates," recounts the superstitious wonder of two children who find a rock idol, and the dialogue between the brother and sister is very suggestive:—

"You oughtn't to pray but to Gentle Jesus," she repeated.

"I don't see that," argued Bobby. "Gentle Jesus have got His hands full without me and you. Everybody be always at Him for one thing and another, and you can't expect Him to bear a couple of little squirts like us. But if this here gent chap be a real idol, so like as not he's just busting to help somebody to show his cleverness. He might be a proper friend to us, and none the wiser."

How the young apostates fared, and the result to the rock-god is told with consummate art.

In quite another vein is the poignant story of "The Wife" written, with a lucid and compact sense of craftsmanship; whilst "Providence and Tommy Caunter" is seasoned with a delightful irony. The remainder of the stories are the work of a writer to the manner born, and the book should increase the already wide reputation of Mr. Phillpotts.

Amid the rampant commercialism and frivolities of modern literature, it is pleasant to find a popular novelist taking his art seriously, and producing works which not only command the admiration of the many, but compel the attention of the critics. Mr. Eden Phillpotts is in this enviable position that, while he is on easy terms with his publishers and his many thousands of readers, his work shows a really notable advance from the days when he lighted up the magazines with his humorous stories until he had given us the epic of Dartmoor, and also proved by the publication of *Wild Fruit*, a refreshing volume of verse, that he could wear with a grace the singing robes of Apollo, and who sings for singing's sake, and who seems indifferent to the praise or blame of coteries or critics. The Dartmoor series of novels, of which *The Judge's Chair* is the concluding volume, have a real and lasting value. For in the country, where ways are simpler and men less prone to hide their moods, we get nearer to the heart of things than in towns. And, to his credit be it said, Mr. Phillpotts has never sold his birthright as a thinker. Like Meredith and Hardy, he has passed through the Valley of Dead Gods, and looked with wondering eyes upon the celestial ocean of Truth.

MIMNERMUS.

Animals Recently Extinct.—III.

(Concluded from p. 445.)

REPTILE life, which reached such a marvellous state of development in the remote past, had long been deprived of its lordship before man appeared on the planet. Their fossil remains prove that gigantic terrestrial tortoises were widespread on the leading land surfaces of the earth in many areas in which they have been for ages extinct. These reptiles were latterly driven to seek shelter in secluded island sanctuaries, and from these, their last retreats, the coercive hand of man has now expelled them. During the last few generations the expiring land-tortoise has been restricted to a small number of islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

That these organisms were the stranded survivors from a greater continental past, appears evident from the fact that far apart as their localities were, these tortoises displayed the closest affinity, and that the minor tortoises were entirely absent from these island havens. Unfortunately for themselves, these reptiles became a favorite food with the men who landed on their wave-encircled homes, and their numbers sadly declined. A few giant tortoises have recently been protected in Aldabra; some are kept in captivity in zoological collections, but for all practical purposes these interesting relics of the earth's earlier fauna may be regarded as departed things.

During the historical period, more than fifty species of birds have been suffered to expire. Nearly all these extinct animals were island dwellers, and it is to be feared that other feathered creatures similarly circumstanced are destined to extinction at no distant date. In the interests of science and humanity it is to be trusted that these isolated species will be protected and their perpetuation secured, for our feathered fauna are among the most lovable and beautiful of Nature's children.

The dodo is dead. There is, and there has long been, no doubt that it is as dead as Queen Anne. Our first knowledge of this "ponderous pigeon" dates from the time when the Dutch navigators landed on the island of Mauritius and annexed it to their country's possessions. The bird was not a thing of beauty, with "its huge beak, hooked and covered except towards the tip, with a bare skin..... the short, thick legs, with the usual four toes, three in front and one behind, the wisp of a tail, and the heavy, fat body, much too big for the wings, which were not actually absent, but simply very small and useless."

This fat, flightless bird was, of course, quite at the mercy of the human intruders in its only place of refuge; it was hunted down for culinary purposes without compunction, and although some of a more delicate palate complained of the coarseness of the dodo's flesh, not one was spared, and the last of its race perished towards the close of the seventeenth century.

Professor Reinhardt contended that the dodo was related to the pigeons. This theory was at one time derided until the great anatomist Owen's study of the bones, says Professor Newton, "confirmed the judgment of the Danish naturalist, and there is now no possibility of any other view being successfully maintained." The dodo was bigger than the biggest cock turkey and its nearest living relatives have been identified in the green-tinted pigeons of the tropical east. These birds, however, are strictly arboreal in habit, while the dodo was a ground bird. One of these tropical pigeons possesses a bill that is shaped remarkably like that of the dodo, and although this organ is smaller, both absolutely and relatively, its resemblance is very striking to that of the defunct dodo. The didunculus or dodlet, of Samoa, is another connecting link with the dodo, and although the dodlet is a terrestrial bird, its powers of flight are very considerable. No reliable specimen of the extirpated dodo has survived, but the earlier descriptions are amply corroborated by the fossil remains that were brought to light in 1865 when large tracts of the marsh-lands of Mauritius were drained.

The solitaire of the neighboring island of Rodriguez was a big bird with a bill similarly formed to that of the dodo. The cock bird, which was much larger than the hen, weighed as much as forty-five pounds, and, like the dodo, was pleasing to the palate. It was not, however, so easily caught; but it was captured and devoured nevertheless. The solitaire owes its name to the circumstance that its habits were solitary; it was usually found singly or in pairs. A nest some foot and a half high was constructed in the open, in which one large egg was laid. The hatching was a prolonged affair that extended over seven weeks, the two birds relieving one another in the task. They were very jealous of their nursery, no other solitaire being permitted to approach nearer

than two hundred yards of the nest. But one curious characteristic of the bird, and one that attracted the attention of several observers, was the remarkable aversion of the parent birds to an attack on one of the opposite sex. If the solitaire which happened to be sitting saw "a stranger of the opposite sex approaching, it would summon its partner by a rattle-call of the wings to drive it away, for males would not attack females, or *vice versa*."

The newly hatched bird remained in the nest for several weeks; but even when it was able to walk abroad, the mother bird was in constant attendance. It was repeatedly noticed that a short time after the young solitaire had left the nest, a crowd of thirty or forty others brought a second young one to it. The parent birds then joined their visitors, and all wandered away together. After an interval of time, the assembled solitaires dispersed separately or in pairs, and the two young ones were left in peace together. This custom was known among the colonists as the solitaire's marriage.

No solitaire ever left its native island alive. It moped in captivity, refused food, and soon pined to death. There appears no record of the bird's skin having at any time been sent to Europe. For its appearance and habits we are entirely dependent upon the testimony of travellers and the early colonists of Rodriguez. A large number of bones and skeletons of the solitaire have been discovered in the island during the past fifty years, and a pair of these skeletons may be seen at the South Kensington Museum. The upshot was that in less than a century after the bird's discovery it had passed to its long rest.

The great auk is the only flightless European bird, and also the only feathered creature that has become extinct in the Northern Hemisphere in modern times. Although well known in Northern Europe, the great auk's chief habitat was North-Eastern America, and there its extermination was carried out with unrestrained cruelty. As early as 1497, the war against this bird began in America, where its numbers must have been extraordinarily vast at the outset, since, nearly three hundred years later, the great auk was still very abundant. At the latter date the auk was slain wholesale for its feathers, and its numbers were seriously reduced. This destruction continued unchecked until the great auk disappeared for ever from the shores of America. In Europe the birds lingered in isolated stations until the nineteenth century, but their days were numbered. They were persecuted in their last retreat, and captured by collectors. The surviving birds were reduced to a single pair; these were killed in 1844, and since that date they have never been seen alive.

A very remarkable group of extirpated birds which inhabited New Zealand, and to a smaller extent Australia, was made up of the various species of moa or dinornis. These feathered bipeds differed considerably, both in size and structure. Some were about 2 ft. in height only, while the large moas attained a height of about 14 ft. One of the leading peculiarities of these birds was the entire absence of wings, but the lower limbs, on the other hand, reached quite massive proportions. One of these immense birds had "a drumstick bone over a yard long, and stood 12 ft. high, while the ostrich is only eight, and is much less massive in build than the moas were." An allied genus also existed, the Palapteryx, which possessed rudimentary wings and also a fourth toe, while the moas were all three-toed birds. These defunct birds find their nearest relative in the still extant apteryx, which is a tiny creature in comparison with his departed allies.

The extinction of the moa is of comparatively recent date, for, apart from the native traditions, feathers, and "a part of the neck with muscles and skin attached," have been found. Their bones have been discovered in large numbers in the sea-shore sands, in meres, stream-beds, and swamps. Many of these are in an excellent state of preservation. In general appearance the moas more closely resembled the emu than any other living bird.

As in most of the other instances dealt with, the food problem played a large part in the extinction of the moa. Despite a supposedly ancient Maori poem which is alleged to refer to something as being "Lost as the moa is lost," there are several reasons for thinking that the giant moas were still in existence a few centuries since in fairly large numbers, and that one or two survived down to the nineteenth century. In this connection it may be remarked that the notornis, which flourished in the days of the moa, and whose existence was first made known to science through remains which were found in association with those of the extirpated moa, has since been discovered in a living state. Native traditions do not as a rule carry very far, and as Finn justly says, "even the dodo was suspected of being fabulous at one time, since no tradition of its existence survived in its native island."

But, apart from the injurious intervention of the human biped, the moa is almost certain to have died out. They appear to have frequently perished from the dearth of food, from accident and disease. Moreover, the remains of an extinct eagle—a sanguinary bird of prey much larger than the golden eagle—have been found in company with those of the moa. This bloodthirsty bird doubtless devoured the young of the larger moas and easily preyed on all the smaller species of these flightless birds. Still, man must have been the chief antagonist of the ornithological fauna of New Zealand.

It has long been a puzzling problem why so small an area as that of New Zealand should have contained so surprising a number of species of moas. But this remarkable moa variety is no more amazing than that of the cormorants. Of the forty species of cormorants distributed throughout the earth, New Zealand possesses sixteen, or nearly half of the entire number.

If the innumerable accounts of the enormous flocks of passenger pigeons which flourished in America within the last few generations are moderately accurate, the utter extermination of these birds is simply astonishing. As a rule, the gregarious habit is distinctly advantageous to the animals which display it, but in the case of the passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*), its communal customs aided materially in its undoing. Migrating at uncertain intervals in vast flocks, amounting at times to millions, in search of food, they perished in incredible numbers. They nested together in countless multitudes; no secrecy was possible in such circumstances, and all their enemies, "human, furred, and feathered—gathered to the spoil," and wrought wholesale destruction on the defenceless birds. Their human foe was pre-eminent at this work of slaughter:—

"On one occasion, in 1881, 20,000 were used for the so-called sport of trap-shooting. Thus they were gradually killed out. In 1894-1902 they were still to be seen in pairs or half-dozens; but by 1905 it was believed there were none in the wild state and very few in captivity."

A number of these pigeons were sent to Europe, and some were set at liberty in England, and possibly a few may still survive in woodland retreats.

Although the enemies of the passenger pigeons were legion, and despite the fact that they supplied food to the American agriculturalists and the Indians in almost as easily accessible a form as the fabled omelettes that grew on trees, even then it is hard to understand how the birds became utterly exterminated in America in so short a period. That the birds were driven from their favorite breeding-places to less hospitable quarters, where their young commonly succumbed to cold, and that the forced migrations of the adult pigeons were attended with heavy mortality from accidents and inclement weather, must have been important contributory causes of their extinction. And what is more probable, diseases of an epidemic nature, when once they had established themselves within the flocks, would wreak appalling destruction among the millions of pigeons congregated together. But whatever the factors

involved may have been, this beautiful bird may now be considered as an exterminated creature.

Deeply as we deplore the departure of so many interesting representatives of the world's fauna, and greatly as we feel inclined to reproach the human actors in the various tragedies briefly described, we are, nevertheless, bound to remember that the extinction of floral and faunal forms is no new feature of the earth's career. Thousands of different plant and animal organisms have arisen and developed, only to decay, without leaving legitimate issue. The giant amphibians were descended from puny ancestors, but, having attained the limits of growth, they were soon eclipsed by the superior splendors of reptile life. The reptilia evolved a wondrous wealth of form and function, but were destined to be completely outclassed by that rising mammalian life which grew apace while the earlier lords of the land sank to comparative insignificance. Side by side with the now reigning mammals flourished the winged and feathered avian fauna which had also sprung from reptilian stock. But mammalian life has long since passed its meridian, and is hastening towards its end. Will the proud inheritor of all the ages prove a permanent denizen of earth, or is the brainiest mammal, man, likewise doomed to pass from the scenes of his triumph and glory, having prepared the path for some other mode of Nature's eternal energies?

T. F. PALMER.

Homewards.

"WHY should your voices be lifted up in weeping? Why should your souls faint on the path of woe? Why should the sunrays be dimmed by your tears, and the merry laughter of man grow cruel in your ears? Have you no faith, O, my people? Has the love of God perished in your hearts, my children? Do not I tell you he awaits your home-coming? And who, other than my Father which art in heaven, is greater than I?"

Jesus Christ often used words similar to those in addressing his audiences. When he died and became a God, his sayings developed from dogmatic advice into commandments; and it is as the latter that Christians should recognise them. The modern apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ should make no row over the matter. Almighty God cannot, in the very nature of him, give counsel. He commands. Advice can always be neglected. It gives room for choice; and were the All-in-All to concede choice to the infinitesimal bit of omnipotency, in other words, the ordinary Christian, it would simply shatter the deistical nature the All-in-All possesses. At least, I think so; for I cannot imagine such an autocrat giving all and sundry the opportunity to deem him in the wrong, so much in the wrong with his guidance that they would treat it with contempt, doing that which was directly opposed to his wishes.

No one will deny that God should have a utility value, that the usefulness of him should be most evidenced in the exigencies and hardships of life. There should be no doubt upon its clear recognisability. In these matter-of-fact days it is necessary that Christians should be plain; and if Christians were plain in their faith they might work wonders with the minds of the rest of the people, even yet. God's activities should be felt and shown. They can be most serviceable during periods of trouble; for emotions cannot well be subdued and hidden at these times. Naturally enough, if God and his commandments are of any use-value at all, the human heart, having, as priests say, the esoteric divine knowledge in its depths, will, undoubtedly, appreciate them most when it is molested. God's commanding advice will be actualised. Strangely contrary to our expectations it is not. Something is awry.

We can sympathise heartily with the sevenpenny novelist who says that love is life. We also know

what the loss of love means: the cinema tells us. Understanding these things, we cannot be justifiably accused of callousness. Professing allegiance to the aphorism that love is life, we cannot be deemed cynical regarding its influences. Possessing, at times, a nearly unrestrainable dose of sentiment in the realm of ideas, we cannot be termed serpent-hearted. For all that our gorge rises in disgust at the mawkish sentimentality, otherwise contemptible snivelling, that fills the atmosphere to putridity when the hand of God comes out, like an embracing tentacle, from the skies to the waters or to the earth, to pull a few thousand lovers of him homewards.

God is a God of love, and therefore his doings are lovable. Being lovable, he is a good God. When we imagine he smites us we are mistaken. We know, deep in our souls, his ways are not ugly and cruel; we know they are beautiful and kind. How foolish we are when we think he gives us sorrows; they are not really sorrows; they are blessings. We all know it. Besides, Jesus Christ told us; and he should have known. God's great heart is so overflowing full of love for us that he cannot possibly chasten his children. It is not misery, nor tribulation, nor suffering, that comes to us. It is all love, all joy, all divine wisdom. We are fools to think differently. If we grieve over the loss of loved ones drowned in a sea tragedy, killed in a railway disaster, burned in molten lava, we are blasphemous fools, and we all know it. God cannot mean ill towards us and ours. Naturally and supernaturally he knows best. When we see a child torn from its mother's arms by a devouring wave; when we see a fair young girl crushed in its spray-white breast; when we see a powerful man, hopelessly futile against their wrath, tossed to death by the surging waters; when we see a mother sucked relentlessly into an ever-moving grave; there is no need for bitter grief. We are fools to moan when we see our wife's body, battered to pieces, in the wrecks of an express. We are fools, blasphemous fools, to weep when we gaze on the purple, blotched face of a once lovely daughter lying dead amidst the ruins of an earthquake-shaken town.

These are God's ways. They are beautiful, lovable, wise, and kind. They are divine. We know nothing can mar God's exquisite craftsmanship. Nothing can blight the beauty of his delicate and cunning artistry. Everything he does, he accomplishes so marvellously, and so full of his supernatural originality, so laden with evidences of his stupendous power is it, that we actually wonder how it happens that Freethinkers can disbelieve in him. Yes; God is in the riven ship and in the raging waters that engulf our friends; he is in the shivering town as its walls fall before the lava stream; the crash of a collision is the noise of his mighty voice; and in the demons of fire flames his eyes shine with joy.

For twenty centuries Christians have been endeavoring, sometimes feebly, sometimes strongly, to inculcate the household wisdom of try-try-try again. Nearly every individual in Britain has come under the sway of this Christian instruction. We are told dogmatically that a bad habit can easily be conquered if the Lord is on our side; a good habit can be easily acquired if God's grace is with us. Christians, by this time, should be able to experiment with the good habit of praising God joyously when their friends are done to death by God's most wonderful works. Long enough have they had the training essential to the substitution of a good characteristic for a bad one. It is strength of faith, of divine love, of the grace that is never dimmed, to recognise the kindly Father of Heaven in all his manifestations. It is weakness to weep within sight of the all-seeing eyes. For twenty centuries the omnipotency of God has been assisting Christians to be strong. For the same span of years his apostles have been helping God to help his followers to see that death, whatever the circumstances, is just a going home. And God, plus Jesus Christ, plus

the Apostles, a trebly concentrated dose of omnipotency, with faith, mountain-moving faith, divine love, and wonder-working grace, thrown in, have been so weirdly successful that one is compelled to regard their beneficence with awe. For when God's hand clutches the souls of our friends, in storm, in fire, in calamities of all kinds, poor, weak human nature, despite its beliefs, its ideals, its heavenly joys, its divine assistance, still prostrates itself in grief. Tears fill our eyes; sadness and weariness our hearts; and the human mind silently denies its most cherished beliefs. In the dumbness of the aching soul of Humanity there is no God.

Human life denies the goodness of God oftener in tears than in laughter. Religion fights life; and life always wins. The hard facts of existence discredit Religion and deny its reality. The truths of life are the denials of Deity.

How long are the priests going to bolster up supernaturalism? How long deserve the accusation of hypocrisy? They know that all the so-called religious powers are useless to stay the tears and solace the hearts of Humanity. Thoroughly do they know that Christianity has been utterly and ignominiously unsuccessful in making even the religious mind decently religious. God sleeps in his heaven while Humanity suffers.

Christians are still preaching and praying and believing. Let them demonstrate their faith. When the next Transatlantic liner, chosen by God to be the tomb of thousands of his children, goes down into the cold darkness, let them prove their love of God beyond the love of their friends. They owe it to God. Let them be religionists first; and, if they *must* be natural, let them keep their sorrow for the blasphemous quietnesses of their own hearts. Let them rejoice publicly that they can see God in the fog, in the storm, in the lightning, in the collision. Let them sing hymns of praise that the Heavenly Father has taken their friends homewards in the strong grip of his fingers and the death embrace of his mighty arms. Their beliefs enforce such a demonstration from them; and when so magnificent an opportunity as at a time of national disaster? Let them prove that religious emotions are stronger than human emotions; let them show if human life, with its love, tenderness, solicitude and pathos, its grief and tears, its natural sorrow and inevitable suffering, can lay down its head on the bosom of God, in a sweet sleep, and smiling like a happy child, serenely free from trouble, while God's dark messenger, Death, busily reaps the waters of their burden of human suffering and anguish.

ROBERT MORELAND.

A patriarchal artist's model in Rome was known as "God the Father," because his benevolent aspect and long beard made him chosen to represent the boss of the Trinity in religious pictures. He, however, eked out his living by combining a little brigandage with his deific attributes. An American student, who had been absent from Rome for some time, missed his model, and inquired of an old friend, "Where is God the Father now?" "Alas!" replied the artist, "God the Father has been hanged." What an unfortunate family!" exclaimed the American.

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

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