

1915

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THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXV.—No. 10

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1915

PRICE TWOPENCE

Liberty consists in the power of doing what others disapprove of.—LORD HUGH CECIL.

On the Horns of a Dilemma.

NIETZSCHE says that sin is an idea for which we are indebted to Christianity, and that if it had not been for the Jewish belief in Jehovah we should never have heard of it. In the Jewish religion, sin is a crime against the Deity, not against mankind. In other words, sin is a Hebrew invention, and Christianity became possible only "in a Jewish landscape, in a landscape over which hangs continually the gloomy and majestic thunder-cloud of the angry Jahveh." "Only there could the rare and sudden outburst of a single ray of sunshine be held to be a miracle of 'Love,' as a ray of the most undeserved mercy. Only there could Christ have dreamed of his rainbow and his heavenly ladder on which God descended to man." That aspect of the subject is powerfully delineated in the *Joyful Wisdom*. In the *Genealogy of Morals* the exploitation of the animal or social guilty conscience by the priest is most clearly and convincingly portrayed. After minutely tracing the origin of the feeling of "guilt," and finding it to be "a piece of animal psychology and nothing else," the author proceeds thus:—

"Sin"—for that is the name of the new priestly version of the animal 'bad conscience' (the inverted cruelty)—has up to the present been the greatest event in the history of the diseased soul: in 'sin' we find the most perilous and fatal masterpiece of religious interpretation. Imagine man, suffering from himself, some way or other, but at any rate physiologically, perhaps like an animal shut up in a cage, not clear as to the why and wherefore! imagine him in his desire for remedies—reasons bring relief—in his desire again for remedies, narcotics at last, consulting one, who even knows the occult—and see, lo and behold, he gets a hint from his wizard, the ascetic priest, his first hint on the 'cause' of his trouble: he must search for it *in himself*, in his guiltiness, in a piece of the past, he must understand his very suffering as a *state of punishment*" (p. 188).

Thus theology exploits the relations of the individual to society by characterising them as relations in which he stands to God. His debts to his fellow-beings become debts to a Divine creditor, who is angry with him because he cannot pay them, and threatens him with soul-slaying penalty both here and hereafter, unless he repents in dust and ashes and accepts as surety One who volunteered to pay them all on his behalf. These hereditary debts are what the divines call original sin. Ever since Adam ate the apple humanity has been in a lost condition; that is, liable to lie under God's wrath forever in hell-fire. All children are said to be born in a lost condition in the sight of God. If they die unbaptised they are damned for ever and for ever. An inquirer, who heard an evangelist make that statement in a village church, tells Professor David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for February 25, that he cannot yet accept such a horrible doctrine; and in his reply the Professor says:

"I trust you will never accept it. The idea that children are born in a lost condition and perish everlastingly if they die ere they are able to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is an inference, and an illegitimate inference, from the doctrine of Original Sin." We unhesitatingly declare that Dr. Smith is entirely

wrong, and that in this very column he flatly contradicts himself. He endorses the following definition of original sin by a Puritan divine: "Original sin is the habitual exorbitation or deviation of man's whole nature from the law of God." Actual sin flows from original sin "as an act from a habit, or as the fault of a person from a fault of nature"; and thus is fully justified the depicting of original sin as "the fuel of sin." Calvin frankly admits that "nothing is more remote from common sense than that all should become guilty for the fault of one, and thus sin become common"; but the Genevan autocrat dared not quarrel with it because he believed it to be, not "a theological fiction, but an indubitable principle, none other than the scientific law of heredity." Of course, every scientist knows well that original sin, as taught by the Church and the law of heredity are two entirely different things. According to orthodoxy, Adam's descendants sinned in him, his guilt being imputed to them. In God's sight they are held guilty of his offence. We fail to realise that the eating of the apple did Father Adam any harm, and the command not to partake of it, as Butler rightly points out, was not a moral, but a positive, one. It is not recorded that the first man did anything that was in itself wrong or injurious, but that he disobeyed a non-moral request, and thereby fell into disfavor, which disfavor is visited upon his posterity to all generations. The Biblical doctrine of original sin is purely one of imputation. Just as Adam's guilt is imputed to all his descendants, so is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all believers.

But even granting, for argument's sake, that the imputation of guilt is grounded upon an inherited corruption of nature, it inevitably follows that children, who are both guilty and corrupt, are from birth in a lost condition. On what ground, then, does the Professor express a hope that his correspondent will never accept such a doctrine, when he himself does virtually accept it? Here are his own words:—

"The stream of life flows from generation to generation, and it is a polluted stream—polluted at its source. It seems to follow that, from the hour of his birth, a child, though guiltless as yet of actual sin, is in a lost condition by reason of his hereditary corruption."

Dr. Smith calls that an illegitimate inference; but what makes it illegitimate? Is Heaven well-pleased with a child tainted with hereditary corruption? St. Augustine was sufficiently consistent to maintain that children who die unbaptised cannot be in a state of salvation, salvation being possible only through faith in the blood of Christ. Consequently, they are in a state of damnation, though of a somewhat passive character. The great theologian called it *damnatio levissima*—the lightest damnation possible. If infants have original sin, and if original sin signifies "the exorbitation or deviation of man's whole nature from the law of God," there is no possible escape from the conclusion that infants are in a lost condition, and that if they die before arriving at years of discretion, their lost condition must last for ever. Dr. Smith sneers at what he styles the "medieval fiction of the 'Limbus Infantum'"; but, surely, if the doctrine of original sin be true, there is nothing to laugh at in it, and the reverend gentleman ought to bear in mind that the largest and most cultured Church firmly believes in it to this day.

The peculiarity about Dr. Smith is that he insists upon holding and proclaiming the doctrine of original

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sin without facing its logical and ethical implications. He declares that "an infant has no guilt and, therefore, needs no salvation," and that "there is no guilt where there is no consent"; but the standards of his own Church give him the lie direct. The Confession of Faith asserts that the guilt of the sin of the first parents is imputed to their posterity and a sinful nature transmitted, "they being the root of all mankind." In the *Shorter Catechism* the following question and answer occur: "Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin." The two Hodges, of Princetown Theological Seminary, defend the teaching of the Confession and Catechism; and it is safe to affirm that the Orthodox Church in all ages has done the same. We agree with Calvia in the opinion that common sense condemns the whole doctrine of original sin, but since Dr. Smith believes in it, why does he shrink from applying it to infants? Is it because, if applied to them, it becomes so absurd that common sense positively declines to give the preeminence to faith? What does the Professor say?

To us the whole doctrine is utterly false, though in its absence Christianity would speedily collapse. It was invented on purpose to give Christianity a seemingly reasonable basis. Christ came to restore to us what we were supposed to have lost in Adam. The fall in the latter rendered necessary the rising in the former. Without Adam there could have been no Christ, and without Christ there would have been no Church to profit by the exploitation of both. Professor Smith alludes to science several times, and seems to claim it as an ally; but science knows nothing of a first man and an initial catastrophe. What science has discovered is the long, long process of evolution, and that all the activities of the universe are controlled by physical and chemical laws. No sign of a catastrophical fall can be found anywhere. Man is seen as a slowly rising animal, but never as an animal that has met with a fatal accident. The colossal failure of Christianity is an unanswerable testimony to the truth of science. Theology is a deliberate falsifier of natural facts in the interest of supernatural belief. It has flourished upon its ingenious exploitations. Sin, in all its forms, has always been its chief asset. Tacitus applied to the Christian Faith the term "pernicious superstition," and no term was ever more suitably used. Speaking of the Calvinistic dogmas, Lecky avers that "it is not too much to say, that in the form in which they have often been stated, they surpass in atrocity any tenets that have ever been admitted into any Pagan creed" (*History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 96). You have only to look at the history of the Church to see how terribly true that statement is; and in these days of scientific inquiry and discovery, and of economic and social awakening, the divines find themselves even more and more perilously on the horns of a dilemma. They are terrified by the logical implications of their own doctrines, and cowardly fail to face them.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Impertinence of Piety.

ESTABLISHED things have a tendency to become objectionable merely because they are established. However much the original act of establishment may have been due to intrinsic merit, in course of time the mere fact of establishment breeds a quite unnecessary feeling of superiority, and an air of condescension towards other things not so fortunately placed. What is at first accepted as a privilege is later taken as a matter of course, and finally demanded as a right. To question its claims is resented as an insult, and, on the other hand, power becomes often the occasion for the exercise of what is little short of impertinence. It is, in fact, true of both individuals and institutions, that power and privilege

are things that few are able to withstand. Hard as it is to bear defeat, it is still more trying to overcome the temptations provided by success.

Religion offers the finest field for the illustration of the truth of this, as it does for the illustration of many other unlovely mental and moral qualities. Religious belief has been for so long an established fact in life that many people honestly believe life to be impossible without it. To question its claims was for long regarded as a punishable offence; it is so still in many parts of the world, and where it is not legally so, it remains subject to social punishment and ethical condemnation. And from ignoring the legitimate claims of others, to treating these others as a negligible or non-existent quantity, is an easy psychological transition.

Christians, for example, speak of this as a Christian country, calmly ignoring the fact that there are some millions of people who are not Christians, everyone of whom has the same right to consideration and consultation as themselves. In the long-standing matter of the education controversy, Non-conformists and Churchmen talk as though the only important thing is for them to agree upon something, and that there is no one else to trouble about. There are scores of illustrations of the same kind that might be cited, and never does it dawn upon the Christian intelligence that in most instances this attitude is little better than a vulgar impertinence.

The other day, a gentleman who had lost a son in the fighting in France, wrote a letter to the *Times* complaining of the annoyance to which he had been subjected since the notice of his son's death had appeared in the papers. He had been pestered with letters from tradesmen—stonemasons, photographers, and others—who had seen in his loss no more than an opportunity for pushing their wares. Others had pestered him with appeals for subscriptions to the organisations with which they were associated. Naturally, this parent was a bit indignant with people who could act in this way. The lack of decency displayed by such importuning is only overlooked because it is so terribly common.

Finally, the writer complained of the conduct of dealers in "spiritual wares." To them his loss was also an opportunity for doing business, and the nature of their intrusion may be gathered from the following:—

"I would appeal to those who, with a singular lack of delicacy and failure to understand the ethics of Christianity, take the opportunity of plunging our stricken souls into vexed questions of eschatology, and ask us to ponder the probability of our dear one's 'soul being saved,' by means of circulars dwelling on this solemn subject. It is not only impertinent, but fatuous, and would seem almost incredible that people should have such bad taste; but it is the case, and only last week such a pamphlet found its way into my fire."

I do not understand in what way such conduct conflicts with the ethics of Christianity; it is certainly consonant with Christianity as ordinarily understood and practised. Indeed, most Christians would feel that their duty demanded making most of the opportunity. They would be merely "improving the occasion," and feel themselves lacking in Christian zeal if they failed to do so. They are discharging what they would call a Christian duty, and if that self-imposed duty conflicts with good taste and decency, it cannot be helped.

The writer of the letter was moved to protest against what he regarded as an impertinent intrusion because the occasion was the death of his son. That does undoubtedly aggravate the offence. The loss of one dear to us leaves our nerves in a state of "rawness," which most people appreciate and respect. It is not a time when the presence of strangers is welcome, and even with friends the sympathy expressed by a silent presence is more eloquent and helpful than speech. Words are apt to ring hollow in the presence of a great sorrow, and a quiet hand-clasp expresses and conveys more than the most eloquent of tongues. But apart from this rather obvious truth, it needs to be pointed out that the impertinence of the religious propagandist

the intrusions of the self-elected missionary are not confined to one part of life. They cover the whole. The instance cited is only an example of a radically bad policy.

In one of his books—the *Præterita*, I think—Ruskin speaks of his immeasurable disgust at hearing a preacher in some miserable little chapel condemning all not included in his own small congregation to eternal perdition. Undoubtedly that preacher—so far saved from oblivion because pilloried by Ruskin—would have been astonished had he been told that he was impertinent. So would the man who calls round from door to door and delivers tracts, inquiring as to the moral and spiritual life of people. The act itself is offensive enough, but the conscious assumption of moral superiority is more so. Consider all that is implied in a man such as the Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, calmly asserting that men who do not believe in human immortality bestialised life, lowered the tone of everything, and ought to be ostracised from human society. Amongst those whom Dr. Horton's sentence of ostracism involves would be men such as Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Meredith, Shelley,—to mention only a few who are no longer living, except in a sense that is never likely to be applied to this clerical bigot, but who have been excluded from society because they were not fit to associate with a Hampstead preacher! Is there any other word than "impertinence" that adequately describes the frame of mind indicated by such expressions?

Dr. Horton represents the cultured believer; but his attitude is that of the vast majority of believers, cultured or uncultured. How often does one hear a Christian, obviously struggling to be unprejudiced, saying that in his opinion a Freethinker *might* be as good as a Christian. The delicious impudence and egotism of it! How gratified the Freethinker ought to feel that it is possible—the "might be" is very suggestive—for him to be as good as a Christian? And the Christian actually feels that he has proved himself so much the better man for having conceded so much.

Or one meets with the other type of Christian who will, on learning that one is a Freethinker, express his profound sorrow at such a deplorable discovery. Both go well with the converted convict, ex-drunkard, or ex-wife beater, praying that "our poor lost brother" may see the light, and so reach the pinnacle of virtue attained by him. They are all examples of the intense egotism developed by Christian belief and the profound impertinence encouraged by Christian custom. The evangelical Christian lives and moves in an atmosphere of conscious spiritual and mental superiority. And the narrower, the more ignorant, he is, the more convinced he is of his incontestible superiority to the rest of mankind. In secular matters, one often finds the ignorant man only too conscious of his shortcomings. In religion, ignorance only serves to give point and power to egotism. When Dickens drew the character of Uriah Heep he pilloried this type for ever. It is the type of the man who struts—or crawls—through life with his mouth filled with professions of meekness and humility, but with an underlying feeling that he is the superior of men immeasurably above him.

I once twitted a Christian with the impertinence involved in his unasked for, and quite unwelcome, concern over my welfare. He replied that every man was really his brother's keeper. I retorted that while that might be so, my objection was that Christians seemed to regard themselves as everybody else's warder. And that, I still think, expresses the situation. The Christian will persist in treating the rest of the world as made up of potential, or actual, criminals, and himself as divinely commissioned to keep an eye on it. Hence the multiplication of agencies of a more or less objectionable character, all based upon the principle of inquisition. His concern for other people is not that of securing a number of fellow-workers or fellow-interrogators to promote a common purpose, as it is an activity based upon an overweening and quite unjustifiable

conviction of his own superiority, and an egotistic desire to see people striving to be as he is. He is the salt of the earth, the light set upon a hill, one of the elect, one of the chosen people of the second dispensation.

Psychologically, the "humility" of the Christian marks an egotism of the most profound description. And it is not without reason that the more intellectual of Christian leaders have always warned their followers against the sin of "spiritual pride." But, as is usual, it is those who need the lesson least who have taken it most to heart. The coarse, the brutal, the unintellectual have merely had their egotism and impertinence strengthened by their belief. They have believed themselves to be superior persons because they have accepted a belief which damned thousands of men better than themselves. They have been strengthened in their impertinence by the identification, for professional purposes, of moral worth with intellectual difference. There is small wonder that with so long a reign the impertinent egotism of the evangelical Christian has become so much a part of his nature that he is almost unaware of its existence.

C. COHEN.

Burton and the Body-Snatchers.

The Kasidah of Haji Abdu Elyezdi. By Sir Richard F. Burton. (Hutchinson.) 1915. 5s. net.

In the foremost ranks of the noble band of illustrious explorers of which Britain is so justly proud, stands the honored name of Sir Richard Francis Burton, traveller, author, and linguist, whose knowledge of Oriental idiom deceived the Mohammedans, among whom he risked his life during that memorable pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, on which the slightest accent betraying the Frank would have unsheathed a hundred swords.

This celebrated journey, the result of an adventurous spirit worthy of a descendant of Rob Roy Macgregor, has seldom been surpassed in audacity, and would suffice to immortalise its hero if he had not in addition explored Harar and Somaliland, organised a cavalry corps in the Crimea, explored into East Africa from Zanzibar, sojourned with the Mormons, traversed the Cameroon mountains, visited the King of Dahomey, travelled through the interior of Brazil, voyaged to Iceland, and discovered and described the Land of Midian. For many years he braved hunger, thirst, heat, cold, wild beasts, savage tribes; fought and suffered, carried his life in his hands for his country's honor, and did it all nobly and successfully.

Such a man, speaking thirty-five languages, and mixing with so many men of all creeds and no creed, was unlikely to regard any religion as the sole depository of truth. Christianity dwindled in his mind to its true proportions. To him, it was not the only religion, but one amongst very many. He did not believe in the idea of immortality, and thought all notions of another existence were simply idealised copies of the present. Indeed, in the highest sense of the term, Burton was a Secularist, and his advice was always practical. Uproot ignorance, avoid extremes, do good for its own sake. From these convictions, arrived at in the prime of his intellect, and after profound study, Burton never swerved. His fine poem, *The Kasidah*, a new edition of which has just been issued, will satisfy any fair-minded reader of his innate scepticism.

The original edition of *The Kasidah*, issued in Vienna in 1880, is a very rare book, while of the re-issue after his death only one hundred copies were printed, Lady Burton, who was a bigoted Catholic, apparently agreeing to this very limited circulation.

In his audacious poem, Burton decries the theologues of the priests:—

"There is no god, no man-made god; a bigger, stronger, crueller man;
Black phantom of our baby fears, ere Thought, the life of Life, began."

He is equally emphatic concerning other clerical ideas:—

"There is no heaven, there is no hell; these be the dreams of baby-minds;
Tools of the wily fetisher, to fright the fools his cunning blinds."

In some very caustic lines he tears the mask from the faces of the priests:—

"Be ye good boys, go seek for heaven, come pay the priest that holds the key.
So spake and speaks, and aye shall speak, the last to enter heaven—he.
Are these the words for men to hear? yet such the Church's general tongue.
The horseleech cry, so strong, so high, her heavenward psalms and hymns among.
What? Faith, a merit and a claim, where with the brain 'tis born and bred?
Go, fool, thy foolish way, and dip in holy water buried dead."

Burton's solution of the riddle of existence is the gospel of self-culture; with which is combined the recognition that we are part of a wider humanity:—

"Survey thy kind as one whose wants in the great human whole unite,
The homo rising high from earth to seek the heavens of life in light,
And hold Humanity one man, whose universal agony
Still strains and strives to gain the goal, where agonies shall cease to be."

The poem is accompanied with notes, written with Burton's vast fund of knowledge, drawn from the storehouses of thirty-five languages. The chief value of *The Kasidah* is its revelation of the mind of one of the most romantic figures of the nineteenth century. It shows that one of the most virile and individual personalities of his generation was a thorough Free-thinker.

Yet it was over the dead body of this man that the awful farce of a pretended conversion was acted. Burton's funeral took place in the largest church in Trieste, and was made the excuse for an ecclesiastical triumph of a faith the great man had always loathed. Even the disgraceful demonstrations at Trieste were not sufficient. Again, at Mortlake, the shaven priests intoned the mass, again the acolyte bearing the hated crucifix, preceded the helpless corpse to the grave. Twice was Truth trampled under foot in vain endeavor to exalt a Church over a formidable enemy. The pity of it is too deep for tears.

It was nothing to these priests that their grim farce would, if taken seriously, give the lie to the dead man's whole life. All they cared for was that the world should understand that this terrible infidel had submitted to the Holy Mother Church at the last. While Richard Burton was sound and strong, his contemptuous disgust of Christianity was wont to exhaust the whole vocabulary of his scorn. But when the living man was replaced by the helpless corpse, nothing hindered these Christian body-snatchers at their ghastly death-bed revels.

The Great Lying Christian Church has made body-snatching one of the fine arts. She smuggled Prince Jerome Napoleon into the Church when the death agony was upon him. She buried Charles Darwin "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection," and with equal effrontery and impudence mumbled her mythological nonsense over the coffins of doubting Thomas Huxley and Robert Buchanan, one of the most Anti-Christian of the English poets. It is such disgraceful and disgusting scenes as these which partly account for the irreconcilable enmity of Freethinkers to clericalism.

MIMNERMUS.

The Creed of a Secularist.

"We, too, prefer a creed; but it must be a creed as definite as science and as flexible as progress; a creed that shall have its deepest roots in the human heart and count as its highest victory the permanent well-being of the people."
—G. J. HOLYOAKE.

THE chief feature in Mr. Bottomley's "New Religion" is that it is "a human religion, free from intellectual dishonesty and moral Pharisaism." Well, these

characteristics must be accounted as meritorious in any man's creed. A man who is free from intellectual dishonesty in matters of religion is a man who is worth meeting any day of the week; but such an one should certainly start by avoiding misleading phraseology. He should not use the word *God* without explaining what he meant by the term, nor should he speak of "an Unknown Author of all that is and has been and is to be," until he had satisfied himself that there was such a being, and he could not well be in that state of mind, while the *author* remained unknown, not only to Mr. Bottomley, but to everybody else. Then it was also a part of Mr. Bottomley's creed that "there must be an end, too, of the disingenuous tricks by which the parsons sought to resist the truths and teachings of science and sane secular thought."

With that statement I find myself in complete agreement; but I really do not see how anybody is going to prevent the clergy or the parsons of the various denominations of the Christian faith from misrepresenting the teachings of modern science, especially when they know that to tell the truth about them would be fatal to the successful propagation of their particular phase of the Christian religion. Every man with an elementary knowledge of the teachings of modern science, must know that they are in absolute conflict with the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith. For example, the Bible, upon which all Christians found their belief, teaches that man was manufactured out of the dust of the earth by Jahveh, the God of the Jews, less than six thousand years ago; but modern science demonstrates that man has existed upon the earth hundreds of thousands of years; and, further, it establishes on the most reliable evidence that man has come up from the lower animals, and carries within his bodily structure all the scaffolding, so to speak, of his lowly animal origin. And if man was not made perfect at the start, then it is clear that the story of his alleged Fall is not true; nor is the story of the Atonement by the alleged death of Jesus—for if man never fell in the Garden of Eden, it is quite obvious to any reasonable being that man did not require anybody to die to blot out sins which he never committed. And if this is conceded, Christianity has no *raison d'être*.

But it will be asked if we are going to destroy Christianity by showing that it is neither reasonable, nor true, what do we propose to put in its place? The answer is very simple. We want to substitute truth for error, and reason for faith.

Now the new philosophy is called *Secularism*—which John Stuart Mill thought might be well called a religion, in the best meaning of that most abused term.

The Secular religion, or this-world philosophy, as I prefer to call it, is a purely human production; it emanates entirely from man, and does not pretend to have anything supernatural about it.

It relates entirely to this world, and to the concerns of this life; which, after all, is the only life of which we have any definite knowledge. As my old friend, George Jacob Holyoake, used to say, "Secularism is a philosophy that gives heaven no trouble." In all things the Secularist is guided by reason. He does not say that reason is an infallible guide, but he says that it is the best guide that man has. What is better? Faith is blind. It not only leads men into bogs and quagmires, or over precipices; it leaves them there to perish. We must have Freethought as a primary condition if we are to discover Truth; and, at worst, we require the free exercise of reason to guard ourselves from being imposed upon by all sorts of persons who are interested in getting us to accept religious beliefs that are opposed to reason and common sense.

Freethought, then, implies the duty of free inquiry and a steadfast war against all ignorance and superstition. Secularism relies upon science—by science meaning not the hypotheses set up to account for certain occurrences in nature, but facts that have been ascertained and verified by experience. By

constant observation, men of science have come to acknowledge that the phenomena of the universe acts according to general laws; that wherever they find an effect, they invariably find an antecedent cause sufficient for such effect. From this uniformity of Nature's working, the Secularist deduces the conclusion that miracles do not happen; and since they do not happen now, when men are more capable of studying Nature than they ever were in previous history, he sees no reason to believe that miracles have ever occurred.

With this idea firmly impressed on his mind, the Secularist discards all belief in the efficacy of prayer. During the whole of his experience he has never known a properly tested answer to prayer. Alleged answers to prayer always occur so far away that it invariably happens nobody can get to verify them. The Secularist believes in action, not faith; in conduct, not prayer.

One of the primary essentials to a useful life is health. A man whose health is bad, whose organisation is shattered by disease, cannot well be an active, useful citizen. No man or woman inheriting disease has a right to marry; or, if they do, they should be exceedingly careful not to bring into the world children with the germ of an insidious disease in their nature. To do so is a crime against humanity.

Secularism teaches that parents should devote special attention to the physical, moral, and intellectual cultivation of their children. Let them be trained with kindness and care, and taught to seek after truth wheresoever it may be found. Let them understand that all the errors, all the follies, all the crimes of life spring from ignorance, and that good conduct alone brings happiness. All the virtues of which men and women are capable are purely secular; they all relate to actions, the wisdom of which can be tested in this world. Courage, fortitude, sincerity, honesty, truthfulness—these, and all other virtues, are purely human qualities, and derive no additional force by theological sanctions.

Finally, the creed of a Secularist bids us not to dream of a heaven where all injustice will be righted, all inequalities adjusted; but commands us to work in this real world and, by arduous labor, to render the redemption of mankind possible here. The goal after which we are all struggling, though diverse roads are traversed to attain it, is happiness. The highest happiness is virtue. The Secular Faith is, then—seek to be virtuous; and to be that, one must endeavor to grasp truth—to grasp all that is good and pure in all the religions of the world; and having learned the truth, to act it out in everyday life. "All the world is my country, and to do good my religion," wrote Thomas Paine. Secularists echo this lofty sentiment; they claim that this embodies a noble religion. The true is the good; and to know the truth and act up to it, is the highest philosophy for man. And now, Mr. Bottomley, I ask you, honor bright, what fault can you find with this philosophy?—tell me that.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

P.S.—I have just seen Mr. Bottomley's article in the current number of *John Bull*, entitled "The Cry of the Soul," in answer to my article of February 7 in the *Freethinker*. To this article I propose to reply at the earliest opportunity.—A. B. M.

Christian Apologetics.

THE REV. A. MOORHOUSE.

THE Rev. Arthur Moorhouse, "Tutor in Old Testament languages and literature," of Didsbury College, has written a small work on "Inspiration"; and the "inspiration" which this learned Hebrew scholar has taken in hand to defend is that of the Old Testament, respecting which, among present-day Christians, mere doubts probably exist than in the case of the New Testament.

Now, had our learned Hebrew Professor written an article on some Hebrew subject, say the Creation Story (Genesis i.), giving the meanings of some of the most important Hebrew words in it, with a new translation, such an article could not fail to be of the greatest value. We should be glad to know, for instance, whether the word "created" (*bara*) in verse 1 signifies "to make out of nothing," or merely means to re-make, re-form, or put into shape: whether the word "firmament" (*rakia*) in verse 7 means an immense, solid crystalline roof, strong enough to hold oceans of water above it, as the writer states were actually placed there; and various other matters. For this kind of work Professor Moorhouse is eminently qualified; but upon the question of "inspiration" his knowledge and learning cannot be of much assistance to him. Assuming that the translation in the Revised Version is fairly correct, then anyone not deficient in ordinary common sense is quite as competent to form a correct opinion on the subject as the most learned Hebrew scholar.

In opening the subject our rev. lecturer states that "the old Testament is the record of a long evolutionary process of which the New Testament is the completion," and that "in the Old Testament we find the simple, elementary, pictorial expression of the truths and principles which are fully developed in the New."

Now this statement, at the very outset, is one which is not in complete harmony with fact. In the Old Testament, it is true, we have a record of a long period of Jewish history—that is to say, from the time of the Judges to that of the end of the kingdom of Judah, and, after a blank interval of half a century, another later period from the time of Zerubbabel to that of Ezra and Nehemiah (538—482 B.C.). But this history shows no evidence of "a long evolutionary process of which the New Testament is the completion," or of "truths and principles which are fully developed in the New."

In the Old Testament books no marks of evolution are perceptible: neither should we expect to find any, for the simple reason that they were all either re-written or compiled two or three centuries after the Exile—the compilations being made from earlier writings, many of which are named. In 1 Chron. xxix. 29, for instance, we read:—

"Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the history of Samuel the seer, and in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the history of Gad the seer."

Not one of these three histories written in the days of David has come down to us: we have only the books of Samuel and Kings, which were compiled after the time of Ezra from the more ancient writings available, including the three just mentioned. Even the most ancient book in the whole collection, the Book of Judges, has also been revised after the Exile, and we find, for instance, a name given to a previously nameless Levite (Judg. xviii. 30).

Again, there is no connection whatever between the religious rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Old Testament and the plan of salvation given in the New. The latter is not a development of the earlier ritual: it is a complete and startling innovation. The ceremonial laws that are stated to have been given to the Israelites by Moses were the very same that were in use among the Jews in the time of Jesus Christ. Those laws are expressly stated in the Old Testament to have been given for all time. The lineal descendants of Aaron were to "have the priesthood by a perpetual statute," and this priesthood was to be "an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Exod. xxix. 9; xl. 15). The yearly atonement made by the high priest for the whole nation is stated to be "a statute for ever unto you....an everlasting statute" (Lev. xvi. 29, 34). The sacrifice of animals as "peace offerings," etc., was to be "a perpetual statute throughout your generations" (Lev. iii. 17). The Sabbath was to be observed by the Israelites "throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" as "a sign between the Lord and the children of Israel for ever" (Exod.

xxi. 16); the same for the three annual feasts, and for all the other ordinances. All were to continue in force to the end of time. The god Yahweh is also said to be a deity who did not change.

That the Jews, as a people, had evolved between the time of the Judges and the apostolic age goes without saying: this is seen from the Old Testament Apocrypha. But this fact merely caused some of their "lawyers" to give new interpretations to matters connected with their Law, as may be perceived in the writings of Philo (A. D. 40—50), as well as in the later Talmuds. We know, also, that in apostolic times one sect of the Jews, the Pharisees, had come to believe in a resurrection of the body, and consequently in some kind of immortality; but this doctrine is not found in the Old Testament. The Pharisees probably took it from the apocryphal 2 Esdras; but they still held to the Jewish Law, and scrupulously observed the Mosaic ritual.

Proceeding with his plea for Old Testament inspiration, our Hebrew lecturer says:—

"I shall not attempt to define inspiration.....Our Lord and his Apostles nourished their own souls on the truths of the Old Testament, and every generation of Christians since have borne witness that in this Book.....they have heard the voice of the living God..... The Book is not all on the same moral and spiritual level; there are degrees of inspiration.....Yet the whole Book, as such, is an inspired Book; the breath of God's life is in it.....The amount of inspiration in any writing can be judged by comparison with the words of Christ. If they make us conscious of God and of eternal things.....they are inspired words."

All the foregoing statements are simply apologetic nonsense. That the primitive Nazarene Gospel writer, and the later canonical evangelists, had read many parts of the Old Testament is beyond question; but that "our Lord and his Apostles" had also done so—unless we take them as elders belonging to the sect of the Nazarenes or Essenes—is merely an assumption, like the statement that they had "souls." It is quite true, however, that many Christians believe that they "have heard the voice of God" in the Old Testament; but this is because they have been taught to so believe. Many people in India imagine that they hear the same "voice" in the Hindoo sacred writings, and many other people think that they hear that "voice" in the Koran: but the reason for their so believing is precisely the same as that of the Christians. It is a question of geographical position and education. Furthermore, to compare the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels with statements found in some of the books of the Old Testament furnishes no proof of inspiration whatever. The comparison, in fact, tends to discredit the alleged "inspiration." Take, for instance, the following examples:—

OLD TESTAMENT.

Isaiah lxvi. 2.—"Thus saith the Lord.....To this man shall I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit."

Isaiah lxi. 1—3.—"The Lord hath appointed me.....to comfort all that mourn.....to give them the oil of joy for mourning."

Psalms xxxvii. 11.—"But the meek shall inherit the earth."

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

Matt. v. 3.—"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matt. v. 4.—"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Matt. v. 5.—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Now, according to our Professor, the passages here quoted from the Old Testament, when "judged by comparison with the words of Christ," were inspired by "the voice of the living God." At the same time, there can be no doubt whatever that those Old Testament passages suggested the corresponding passages in Matthew's Gospel. But the mere fact that the original Gospel writer had selected the foregoing Old Testament sayings (with several scores of others) as suitable, when slightly altered, for wise sayings of Jesus Christ—such selection could not in any way make the passages selected "inspired," nor could it alter the character of the Old Testament narratives as a whole. And since we know from the Gospels that the primitive writer was well acquainted with the books of Isaiah and the Psalms, there can be no

doubt that he *did* take the foregoing Gospel passages from those here quoted from the Old Testament, and that he piously placed them in the mouth of his Savior. We have no evidence that an historical Jesus ever publicly gave utterance to them. The so-called "Sermon on the Mount" was never delivered as described in the First Gospel. It is a purely literary composition, which must have taken the primitive Nazarenes a long time to frame and draw up. It is Essene in character and doctrines from beginning to end, and probably represented the complete religious views of the sect. Irenæus tells us that the Nazarenes of his day received only the Gospel of Matthew, but without the Virgin Birth story—which the members of that sect rejected.

Again, assuming that there are doctrinal "truths" in the Old Testament, none of the foregoing passages can be ranked among them; for not one of the three sayings is a statement of fact. The "poor in spirit" are not blessed; "all they that mourn" are not divinely comforted; "the meek" do not "inherit the earth." Before, as well as after, the time of Christ, the bold and the unscrupulous enjoyed the good things of this world: the "poor in spirit" and "the meek" were roughly pushed to the wall, and, if they complained, were brutally trampled on.

In reading the Old Testament we find a very large number of passages which "make us conscious of God"—that is to say, the tribal god Yahweh—but there is not a single word in the whole book, from Genesis to Malachi, that could convince a thoroughly rational person that the tribal deity named was anything else than an imaginary Being.

All the main contentions of our Professor will be noticed in the next paper.

ABRACADABRA.

Acid Drops

The true attitude of the professing Christian to war, says the *Daily News*, has always been one of difficulty. As a statement of fact, this is correct, and yet the matter is simple enough. The true doctrine of Christianity is passive obedience and submission to the powers that be. It was those features that recommended Christianity to Constantine and to the Roman Emperors that succeeded him. It was the adherence of a body of people fanatically superstitious, and subscribing to a theory of government, that gave autocracy free scope. The difficulty commenced when Christians tried to accommodate their teaching to the demands of actual life. Then they had to harmonise the doctrine of non-resistance with armed resistance or actual aggression. And they were equal to the task. Non-resistance meant, you were not to resist so long as you were convinced of the justice of the force applied. If you were not convinced, resistance became a moral duty. The only difficulty that remained was that some Christians were still obstinately honest, and protested that the New Testament meant what it said. To them it was replied that if you did not resist the wrongdoer, you encouraged him. Which is quite true, only instead of demonstrating the wrongness of the honest Christian's interpretation, it really proves the impracticability of Christian teaching.

Some of the apologies for militarism, which many of our own opportunist clergymen are putting forward, are simply astounding. Thus, Dr. George Adam Smith, Principal of the Aberdeen University, is ready to place the soldier at the very head of the nation's workers. He says that "Battle was anciently a ritual, and the consecration of the soldier to it makes him yield more than any period of peace can get out of him." And when Dr. Smith has stood "by the bedside of some of the wounded, I have felt that all the work of my fairly lengthy life diminished into insignificance in comparison with theirs." Now, it cannot surely be taken as wanting in appreciation of the many thousands of young men who have enlisted since the War broke out, to point out the utter falsity of teaching of this kind. It is really the kind of thing for which the Press of England has been blaming Germany for months past. While people remain only partly civilised, the soldier—if only for defensive purposes—may be necessary. And he is entitled to all the respect and consideration that this necessity demands. But to talk of the soldier as

though civilisation depended upon him, and as though the military life alone brought out the highest and most useful qualities, is militarism in its worst form. It is precisely what the teachers and philosophers of modern Germany are blamed for doing. And, for our part, we want to see militarism destroyed, not merely in Germany, but all over the civilised world.

As to the work of the wounded soldier being more important than the whole life of Dr. Smith, that may be a matter of individual judgment. And, at any rate, we do not think that Dr. Smith believes this to be so. As a general principle it is decidedly false. There is no force in social life that is more powerful or more important than the influence of teacher and thinker. We have been repeatedly told, since the War began, that the conflict is one of ideas and ideals. In the main we agree with this. The War represents the triumph of the ideal of military force over that of rational social organisation. No matter who is responsible for the War that truth remains. And we are quite convinced that the way to prevent a repetition of such senseless conflicts is to fight the idea of military force with other ideas of a more rational character. And every glorification of the military life over that of civil life is making the destruction of militarism the harder. All honor to the soldier, if you will, but the truest service to the State lies in the direction of making him unnecessary in civilised society. Bury militarism with all honor, if you will; but in the name of humanity, bury it.

In a weekly paper it is stated that one of the most popular actors of the day possesses the real name of Samson. It is a pity he did not keep it, for Samson was one of the earliest actors who brought down the house.

The Bishop of Birmingham said recently that "if the Archangel Gabriel were to appear, some church people would say, not how charming were his wings, but that he was moulted." His Lordship does not appear to have heard of people who doubt the existence of angels. Besides, if Gabriel appeared in these troublous times, some Christian soldier would mistake him for an aeroplane.

"I do not recognise God the Father in the War. God of Germany," says the Archbishop of York. What about the other two members of the same divine firm?

Christians worship mammon as ardently as they worship God. The *Truthseeker* (New York) says that Harry Thaw, the murderer of Stanford White, has been sent back from New Hampshire to New York, and adds, "Thaw will be sorely missed by the Young Men's Christian Association of Manchester, New Hampshire, which displayed the characteristic sycophancy towards the wealthy degenerate, and made him the captain of one of its athletic teams."

Rev. J. Rattenbury says that he saw a hymn written for use during the War, and which commenced with "Lord Jesus Christ, Great Prince of Strife." Mr. Rattenbury thought this was very unwise; and it certainly does give the game away. The usual plan is to call him the Prince of Peace, and then appeal to his influence in order to spur people on to war. Still, truth has a very uncomfortable habit of popping up at the most unexpected juncture.

Mr. Arnold White is a Protectionist, but he believes, evidently, in Free Trade for language. Writing in the *Daily Express*, he says, "Cobdenism and Pacifism command the specious and glittering beauty of religious terminology." It is doubtful if anyone could introduce the "glittering beauty" of religious language now to any extent in politics, but at the next election someone might try a few pious posters. "Damn Free Trade" and "To Hell with Tariff Reform" might suggest sufficient religion for the purpose.

Among the firms that have experienced an increase of business since the War is the Berlin Depot of the Bible Society. In addition to its ordinary output, it has issued 360,000 copies of the New Testament, to be distributed amongst the German troops and enemy prisoners. The compilers of German atrocities will no doubt be able to detect the beneficial influence these gifts have had.

Billy Sunday has been invited to Chicago, and the *Advance*—a Chicago religious paper—says that if he does come it is to be hoped that he will stop his profanity. It wishes he

were a gentleman, but fears he never will be; it wishes he were not mercenary; thinks he is abusive, harsh, unjust, bad-tempered, shrewdly shifty, and boorishly rude. Still, it believes he is a Christian, and if he does come the paper will give him hearty support. Boorish, profane, abusive, mercenary, shifty, bad-tempered, unjust—but a Christian. What a catalogue! And what a commentary!

The *Church Times* is doubtful, in spite of all that has been said and done, "if very many more people go to church than before the War began," but it thinks churchgoers are more earnest than they were. This may be so; but if so, it does not amount to much. It also says, as proof of this great earnestness, that nothing was more remarkable than the way in which St. Paul's was crowded from early morning till night on Intercession Day, with a huge crowd which had come "not as sightseers, but to pray." This is overstating the case. If people wish to pray they can pray anywhere at any time. What really brought the vast majority of the people to St. Paul's was the expectation of being one of a huge crowd. They may have gone to pray—the majority—but they also went as sightseers. To put it accurately, they went as sightseers to pray. There is no other significance in the organisation of these huge gatherings.

Another example of the "moral uplift" brought about by the War, and concerning which the Bishop of London and others have on several occasions tried to enlighten us, is seen in the world of agriculture. Farmers are at present doing exceptionally well, but they are nevertheless agitating for permission to employ children in field work, and in some countries are getting it. We should have thought that the evils, and ultimate inutilty, of child labor were sufficiently clear for this to be disallowed at once. Of course, there is talk of a shortage of labor; but that, at present, is a statement, and no evidence in proof has been offered. But it is altogether deplorable that at the first opportunity children of twelve years of age should be taken from school and set to labor in the fields. The Minister for Education, Mr. J. A. Pease, expressed his regret at the readiness to exploit boy labor for agriculture, and said that farmers had taken advantage of the boy labor at hand, instead of taking advantage of other resources which were available. Nevertheless, our good clergy assure us that the nation is "spiritually richer" for the War.

"Fairy Tales from the East" was a headline in a London newspaper concerning the Turkish accounts of the War operations in Egypt. The title would be a good one for the imaginative stories in the Bible.

A shrewd hit at the attitude of the Churches with regard to the War is shown in a jest of the *Boston Transcript*, which reads: "Christian missionaries are afraid nowadays to teach the heathen to read for fear they should pick up the War extras."

Church services in provincial places are being held in the daytime owing to a shortage of gas. Rather a curious difficulty with so many clergymen on the premises.

A writer in the *London Quarterly Review* says that Lord Morley has been "profoundly influenced by the teaching and ethical ideals of Christianity," and that this "is seen in his striking familiarity with the English Bible." There is nothing startling in the remark. Few professional theologians know the Bible so well as Paine, Voltaire, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and other leading freethinkers.

The clerical mind, like its God, passes all understanding. The Bishop of Stepney, referring to the present War, said that "never had religion burned with such passionate intensity in the breasts of the people." To the non-religious mind the spectacle of 21,000,000 Christians attempting to murder one another does not arouse enthusiasm of any kind.

The Rev. Dr. Jowett, minister of the richest Presbyterian Church in the world, is a most enviable sort of man, if we take him at his own valuation. He tells us that merely by wishing it on bended knees, "in a moment he can cross continents and seas, and carry resource, by the grace of God, to his servants in the remotest parts of the earth." He has a sufficient weight of influence in heaven to secure God's succor and help for anybody, or for any number of people, in any portion of the world, by simply asking for them. It is within his power to be the "strengtheners of men's souls" all over the globe, being, through the greatness of his influence in

heavenly places, "free from the limitations of space." More wonderful still, "by prayer he can visit thrones, he can sit in cabinets with statesmen, he can go into the editorial office and influence the articles in the daily press." What a dream of a man, to be sure!

Such is the high-sounding braggadocio of the minister of the Fifth-avenue Presbyterian Church, New York. Now, we will submit to this conceited man of God a practical test. There is in the reverend gentleman's own city an extremely pernicious journal called the *Truthseeker*, and in London there is an even worse organ known as the *Freethinker*. Now, let Dr. Jowett enter the editorial offices of those ungodly publications every week for six months, and if at the end of that period these two newspapers shall have become advocates of the Christian religion, we shall gladly take him at his word. But he is too much of a coward to accept so simple a test. It is Tyndall's old test which the British Churches of forty years ago dared not take up.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Jowett does not really mean what he says. His is a kind of tall talk common to the pulpit and the religious press everywhere. Prayer is the most egregious fraud in creation. It pretends to be able to do everything and does actually nothing. Are the fortunes of the War affected in the least degree by the daily prayers at the City Temple and elsewhere? Would a Supreme Being worthy of the title need to be coaxed by millions of his own creatures to do what he knew to be right? From every point of view, prayer is condemned as the most worthless, foolish, wasteful, and blasphemous exercise ever indulged in; and all the boasts about it are just the frothy exuberance of Christian pride, and mean less than nothing in the practical affairs of life. In other words, they are but an instance of the empty self-glorification of the priestly profession.

Rabbi C. A. A. Green was the lecturer at the City Temple Literary Society the other day, and in the course of his address said that if the Jews ever returned to Palestine he hoped they would continue to live under the protectorate of England and not try to govern themselves, as in that they had always failed. This is not saying much for God's "chosen people," but we do not think there is any immediate prospect of the Jews returning to the Holy Land—except as tourists. It is true there is a Jewish prayer hoping they will return, but we imagine this is said with the tongue in the cheek. Still, if Rabbi Green had inquired why the Jews had been a failure in governing themselves—as a separate State—we think he would have found the only real and permanent obstacle to be religion. Apart from this there seems no reason why the Jew should be more unfitted for self-government than other people.

The decision of the railway authorities to suspend cheap bookings is likely to produce some curious consequences. The sporting papers say that it will diminish the attendance at race meetings. The religious papers fear it will affect the spring meetings, and some may have to be abandoned altogether. Perhaps a joint conference of sporting men and parsons might be able to suggest a way out of the difficulty. As "tipsters," both are equally concerned with the new regulations.

A man with many aliases, sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor at the Old Bailey, was described by the police as a thief all his life, and it was stated that when last arrested he was praying at a Salvation Army meeting. Evidently praying did not prevent him preying.

Two men working in a church at Drogheda, Ireland, were killed on the altar steps through the breaking of a plank. No theological moral is to be drawn from this.

A very interesting correspondence has been published in the *Times* concerning the clergy as combatants in the European War, and some plain speaking has been indulged in. Dr. P. D. Eyre, of Framfield, writes that "the feebleness of the English parson and the inadequacy of his leaders in this colossal crisis have been beyond words." It would be a pity to attempt to paint this lily of speech.

According to the American papers, native Roman Catholic clergy in Mexico city are being to held to ransom for £100,000. As a rule, priests have the pleasure of extracting money from other people.

Since the War began there has been a deal of talk about capturing German trade, and much has been said of neglect

of scientific manufacturing by the British Government. That the Government is not blind to the necessity of encouraging scientific study a recent advertisement for chemists in Woolwich Arsenal shows. The advertisement requires that applicants shall be thoroughly trained, have some experience, must be expert analysts, and that University men will be preferred. It promises them in return for this a wage of £2 0s. 6d. per week—almost as much as the ordinary workmen are getting. We presume that the odd 6d. is intended for pocket-money; or perhaps the Government, with a sublime disregard for economy, when arranging the pay, said, "Oh, hang the expense; let's be generous, and chuck in an extra sixpence."

Providence manages all things well—for some people. Just when poor folk, faced with the enormous rise in the price of coal, are scheming how to economise the domestic "firing-line," "Providence" steps in to the help of the coal-merchants with a bitterly cold snap that forces people to purchase. We can quite understand the pious coal-king attending church, and murmuring with deep sincerity, "He doeth all things well."

Truth calls attention to an individual who is running an association for the supply of Bibles under the false pretence that they are specially printed by "Royal Command" for sale to domestic servants. They are to be sold at a specially cheap rate—which turns out to be £2 5s. each. We presume that they are sold on the instalment system. *Truth* may not be aware of the fact, but this sale of Bibles at exorbitant prices is a fairly large industry in this country. It flourishes almost exclusively in country districts, the more remote the better, and is a flourishing trade in Wales. Bibles worth at most 10s. are showily got up and sold at about three times their value. In Roman Catholic countries a similar traffic goes on in images; but that, of course, is pure superstition. In this country it is Bibles and illuminated texts, and that is pure enlightenment. But the profits remain the same in both cases.

Truth, the *Times*, and Lord Rosebery, with some other publicists, are agreed that those people who are rejected for military service as medically unfit should wear an official badge signifying the same. The proposal strikes us as an eminently undesirable one. We fancy that most sensitive and intelligent people would have a strong objection to turning themselves into a walking advertisement of their physical infirmities. In addition to this, while we object in principle to conscription, we have a still stronger objection to unofficial compulsory service. If we desire to maintain a voluntary system, let it be voluntary, leaving it to each man's sense of what is right whether he is to enlist or not. And the assumption that every man who is physically fit is bound to join the Army is simply monstrous. If that were carried out, the victory of Germany would be assured. On the other hand, if we are to have conscription, let it be official, and let the Government take the responsibility for the step. A tyranny enforced by thousands, but for which no one is individually responsible, is, of all forms of tyranny, the most objectionable.

The War is having an influence on religion. *Blackwood's Magazine* relates the story of one soldier who had been badly wounded, and who said, "I used to be afraid of hell, but hell can't possibly be worse than what we have been through the last few days." The prospect of soldiers returning with this feeling will not be encouraging to the "blood and fire" preacher. He will probably be driven to invent a new hell of a more terrifying character than the old one.

The second officer of the *Harpalion*, one of the ships torpedoed off Beachy Head on February 24, told a *Times* representative, "We had just sat down to tea at the engineer's table, and the chief engineer was just saying grace. He had just uttered the words, 'For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful,' when the torpedo struck the vessel. We hope Christians will make due note of this statement as a really authentic case of answer to prayer. The next time that crew says grace they will probably add, 'except for torpedoes.'"

Homer is so much at home amongst his gods, and is so familiar with them as a poet, that he must have been deeply irreligious; that which the popular faith gave him—a measure of rude, partly terrible superstition—he treated as freely as the sculptor does his clay, with the same unconcern, by which Æschylus and Aristophanes possessed, and by which in later times the great artists of the Renaissance distinguished themselves, as also did Shakespeare and Goethe. Nietzsche.

To Correspondents.

THE note in this column last week, replying to W. Dentith, at present with the British Expeditionary Force, has brought us a letter from Mr. F. Hasprey, of 35 Chesterfield-street, Crewe, who would like Mr. Dentith to write him. He believes him to be an old friend of whom he has lost sight for several years.

J. HOIS.—We have not a Webster's Dictionary at hand just at the moment of writing. "Agnostic" has both a theistic and a philosophic implication. In the first instance, it stands for an attitude of mind that is without knowledge of God and believes such knowledge to be unobtainable; in the second, that the world of reality, as distinguished from the world of sense impressions, is absolutely unknowable.

INQUIRY.—It is rather difficult to explain "Paley and the Watch Theory" in a paragraph. You appear, however, to have the gist of the argument. Paley argued that as we assume a maker for a watch without actually knowing him, so from the works of design in the universe we are warranted in inferring the existence of a deity. The argument is really much older than Paley, but it is quite fallacious. And in the Paleyan form it is now discredited by most thinkers of repute, even on the theistic side.

A. ASK.—Received. Thanks.

R. BELL.—P.O. received. A statement concerning the Honorary Fund will be made shortly. Thanks for cuttings. There can be no two opinions about the article in question.

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.

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.

Personal.

THE following note will, in a way, explain itself. On February 22 Mr. Foote was taken suddenly ill—how ill I did not know until some days later. Since then he has been getting better, but is still too unwell for work. It also explains the non-continuance of his article, "On the Brink," and the delay in the promised announcement concerning the Honorary Fund. To-day (March 2) Mr. Foote writes:—

"DEAR MR. COHEN,—I can only just send you a line or two from my sick-bed this morning. I have had a dreadful breakdown, but happily I am improving, though slowly. With regard to the President's Honorary Fund I ask subscribers to send direct to me at once, without the usual circular, which I cannot attend to now. The trustees of the appeal will forgive me for this once. I hope to be better next week.

Yours sincerely, G. W. FOOTE."

Mr. Foote hopes to be up and about in a very short time, and I am sure that all *Freethinker* readers will be delighted to see the old pilot once more at the helm.

C. COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley has taken up the gauntlet thrown down by the *Freethinker*, and has replied to Mr. Moss's article, his rejoinder occupying a full page of *John Bull*. As will be seen by the note to Mr. Moss's article on another page, he purposes replying to Mr. Bottomley at an early date. He would have replied at once, but the present article was written before he saw Mr. Bottomley's criticism. The reply, we are sure, will lose nothing by a little delay. We have no desire whatever to anticipate Mr. Moss, but there is a slight misstatement at the commencement of Mr. Bottomley's article that may as well be corrected at once. Mr. Bottomley refers to the *Freethinker* as the "virile organ of the British Secular Society." So far as we are aware, there is no such body as the British Secular Society in existence. There is a National Secular Society, which was founded by Charles Bradlaugh, and of which Mr. Foote is the President. Nor is the *Freethinker* the "organ" of the National Secular Society. News concerning that Society is given to the world through the *Freethinker*, and its pages

are freely used by the National Secular Society to advertise its needs, defend its reputation from attack, and to generally promote its interests. The mistake is an excusable one for an outsider to make, but it is as well to be accurate.

Mr. Bottomley pays the editor of the *Freethinker* a compliment by saying that "Mr. G. W. Foote could, like the late Mr. Bradlaugh, have been anything in public life if he had chosen a less unfashionable sphere for his great gifts." There is no mistaking the sincerity of the compliment to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, which it is pleasant to find in a journal with so large a circulation as *John Bull*. Perhaps the editors of other papers will drop their boycott of Freethought now that Mr. Bottomley has shown them how to do it; but it would be foolish to pretend ignorance of the fact that any man who can make a place for himself in the world of Freethought could have easily achieved distinction elsewhere had he chosen more popular paths. Fortunately, both for themselves and for others, neither Mr. Bradlaugh nor Mr. Foote aimed at achieving social distinction, or cared much for popular applause. It is really not difficult to secure both. If anyone doubts it, let him look at those who are successful, and their doubts will soon be removed. Freethought leaders have never chosen—or cared for—the popular path, but we have no doubt about their having chosen the better one. It is, indeed, easy for anyone with ability to become anything in public life—provided that one lacks the qualities that cause them to place principles and convictions before ease and personal gain.

We seem in the way of compliments this week. The *Gateway*, edited by J. Leatham, and published at the Cottingham Press, Cottingham, has the following:—

"It is the irony of ironies that if we wish to see the humane, moral, sensible, Christian view of war, we have to turn to the Socialist and Atheistic publications for it. An Atheist friend—the kindest, cheeriest, most open-handed man I have ever known—sends me a copy of the *Freethinker* because of an article on Nietzsche which that issue contains. I had not seen this journal for years. Looking over its well-written and well-informed pages, one could not but be struck with the immense superiority of its tone to any of the Christian weeklies one sees. And of course it was opposed to the war, and struck the humanist note in this welter of inhumanity."

The first clause in the last sentence is not strictly accurate, although we have tried to deserve the compliment paid in the last one. On principle we are opposed to war as being a perfectly barbarous way of trying to settle disagreements among nations. But as nations are, we do not see how we could well have kept out of this War, once the fatal step was taken. Our complaint about the War is that it is the outcome of a general spirit of national ego-mania and militarism that has been abroad for years. All the countries involved are not equally to blame, but all are to blame more or less.

Most of the London N. S. S. Branches are now considering their arrangements for open-air work during the summer season, and in spite of the War there seems no reason why the propaganda should not be carried out with vigor. Religious people have been, and are, very busy drawing "morals" from the War, and there are plenty of an opposite character that only Freethinkers are able to place before the public. Many of the Branches will, however, feel the effects of the War both as regards men and money. Some very ardent workers will be absent, through enlistment and other causes, and there will be a greater difficulty in meeting the expenses that are incurred in running out-door stations. For this reason it is to be hoped that those who are willing and able to help, either with service or financially, will make known their intentions as speedily as possible. The address and needs of local Branches can be obtained on inquiry at the National Secular Society's offices.

We hear, says the *Church Times*, many "simple and touching stories of the prayers of soldiers in the trenches." We do not doubt it. But *we* also hear stories of soldiers in the trenches who do their duty without thought of prayer. We cited one such letter last week. Here is another from a gunner who has never missed receiving his *Freethinker* since the commencement of the War, and who writes:—

"I can assure you that my comrades and myself anxiously await its arrival each week. We make many a dull hour bright chatting over the articles published in your paper."

The *Freethinker* has, we should say, never been read under more tragic circumstances, and its contributors will write with more zest through knowledge of this fact. The writer says that both he and his comrades are in excellent health and spirits. We hope they will continue so to the end.

Artifices in Defence of Home and Offspring.

BIRDS at the breeding season not only don their nuptial plumage, but also develop a pugnacity from which they are usually free at other periods of the year. The special spring plumage varies from striking conspicuousness to scarcely appreciable feathered change, but the difference between the behavior of many birds at a time when they have eggs or nurslings to protect, and that of normal occasions is very noticeable indeed. Various normally retiring and timid creatures which take alarm at the slightest danger, at this season develop fighting qualities of the first order, and will risk their very lives in guarding their treasures. The usually apprehensive hen will turn on the cat or dog that approaches her newly hatched brood. Nor is this instinctive passion to protect the defenceless young special to birds. The writer has, on more than one occasion, known a doe-rabbit—one of the most craven of all animals—to attack a ferret in defence of her dearly loved children.

Among birds all aspects of protective device have been evolved. Menaces, onslaughts, and stratagems have been employed by different species, and some birds, whose colors completely harmonise with their surroundings, sit so closeiy on their nests that they will allow themselves to be touched before deserting their eggs. Wild and even domesticated ducks, which breed early in the year, will brave the fiercest snowstorm or the keenest frost, and never abandon their nests save under the direst compulsion. Indeed, instances are on record in which the faithful duck has been frozen to death while brooding over her eggs.

The female fowl is a proud and affectionate mother, and as she will cover a large number of eggs, the hen is frequently used to hatch out a clutch of duck's eggs. A few days after the ducklings have emerged from the eggs they make a bee-line to the nearest pond, for, despite assertions to the contrary, the newly hatched ducklings swim instinctively. The fowl, on the other hand, is a strictly terrestrial bird, and as soon as her foster-children sail on their native element, the poor hen is reduced to a state of despair. Love, even in this water-loathing bird has been known to laugh at liquids, and a fowl's solicitude for her semi-aquatic ducklings has risen over her aversion to water, and lumbering swimmer as she is, a hen will actually splutter over a pond in pursuit of her rebellious brood.

The larger wild birds very rarely nest near the habitations of men, and nearly always regard the human species with suspicion. Birds of prey are mostly big powerful creatures, and with the exception of the owl, a bird that does not attack feathered things, the carnivorous avifauna seldom approach homestead or hamlet. Probably this, to some extent, explains the fact that song-birds and other small and medium-sized avifauna are so partial to the vicinity of the farmhouse and the cottage. To be sure, there are other attractions, such as orchards, gardens, trees and shrubs, in the neighborhood of human dwellings, all of which furnish food and shelter to our feathered friends. Still, one is inclined to think that a sense of security from aggression also plays its part in inducing even the tiny tomtit or the diminutive wren to build and warble in the closest association with human handiwork.

The swallows, the martins, and the swifts always seem to nest by preference under the eaves of houses, stables, or barns. The house-sparrow and the starling have a decided liking for man's company, as they derive great advantages from the food, protection, and nesting accommodation his proximity affords. In the coast countries of Continental Europe the stork has for many centuries been a popular favorite. These birds arrive in the early spring and return to Africa in the autumn. In Holland and Northern Germany a box or wheel is commonly placed on the roof for the bird to nest in. The devotion of the parent-stork to her offspring is sometimes more

heroic than wise, as Mark Twain noted, and as the following account proves:—

"At Neuendorf, in Prussia, a barn on which a pair of storks had for years brought up a family was struck by lightning. The nest, a great heap of sticks, big enough to make a good bonfire, at once burst into flames, but instead of flying to a place of safety, as she might have done, the mother-stork brooded over her helpless, screaming nestlings, as if to protect them, and she and they together died amidst the flames."

Another remarkable case is that of the American chimney-swifts. These devoted birds have been seen to fly to the chimneys which contained their nests when the dwelling-house has been ablaze. And although the migratory instinct is so strong that, at the season for departure, birds will frequently forsake the late broods which are too young to accompany their parents on the journey, yet there are well-authenticated instances of parental love proving more potent than the migrating passion itself.

Some birds assume a hostile attitude when intruders trespass near the sanctuaries they have adopted for their homes. Others utter curious cries for the purpose of scaring off their enemies. That celebrated singer, the nightingale, as the old Nature-lover, Gilbert White, assures us, will warn away too inquisitive strangers from its new-born young. In such circumstances, these little birds—

"make a plaintive and a jarring noise; and also a snapping or a cracking, pursuing people along the hedges as they walk; these last sounds seem intended for menace and defiance."

Birds that nest in holes and trees, such as the nuthatch and others, will hiss like snakes if disturbed, and this habit certainly possesses great advantages, for the most brazen bird's-nesting boy, in company with his cousins, the apes and monkeys, has an instinctive horror of snakes. Another characteristic of the nuthatch deserves mention. This bird occasionally breeds in a hollow previously occupied by the woodpecker, and the nuthatch is particularly careful to plaster up the opening so as to prevent the larger woodpecker's return. Should the nuthatch's appropriated nursery be invaded, the bird fights furiously, and hisses in the most intimidating manner.

The trouble taken by the American woodpeckers to remove all traces of their nesting-places is only equalled by their ingenuity. The pileated woodpecker (*Picus pileatus*), commonly dubbed the wood-chuck, a beautiful creature, whose numbers are sadly declining—

"is a very powerful and artistic workman, and it is said that when it is cutting a hole in a tree-trunk for the purpose of making its nest, it often removes the traces of its presence by carrying away the chips and scattering them at a distance."

Quite unlike the migrant bird that visits our shores and, in the vernal season, makes music with its delightful call-note, the cuckoos of America build their own nest and rear their own brood. When hatching out her eggs, the yellow-billed cuckoo will erect her feathers in the most terrible manner on the approach of any strange animal. Usually a fearsome bird, this cuckoo will attack any intruder who attempts to violate her sanctuary. Even the shy blackbird and the timid partridge will assail their enemies in defence of their young. All of which goes to show that the love and sacrifice of the mother for her offspring is a general phenomenon of the higher animal world.

Geese, again, are intensely pugnacious where the eggs and young are exposed to danger. The domesticated gander maintains perpetual guard while the goose broods over her eggs. With the wild birds it is the same, both in the Old World and in the New. The male Canadian goose, when threatened with danger, resolutely withstands an attack, while he calls to his spouse to retreat from her nest. As soon as she has reached a haven of refuge, he, too, seeks security in flight, but with him it always appears to be the rule of "ladies first."

The fury of the golden eagle at the appearance of a trespasser on his aerie has often been described.

But there are reasons for doubting the entire truth of these stories. These powerful and sanguinary birds are alleged to fall with unmitigated fury on the would-be despoilers of their nests. There are, however, good grounds for thinking that the golden eagle, albeit a very brave bird, makes but a very indifferent parent, and is more concerned with its own safety than the protection of its brood. But, despite the fact that the old birds readily desert their nest and either fly away altogether or watch the seizure of their property from a distant retreat, there may still be occasions on which they make a fight for their possessions. In the light of the fact that all organisms display considerable variation, it is quite likely that there is more than an element of truth of the numerous testimonies as to their devotion to their young. In every species in which the offspring are defenceless, parental care and affection are essential to the perpetuation of the species in question.

Carnivorous birds, such as the osprey, the goshawks, and others, will make a splendid stand on behalf of their threatened progeny, even when the assailant is a much larger animal. The beaks, wings, and claws of big birds of prey are all powerful weapons, and the injuries these organs are capable of inflicting, sometimes prove very serious indeed. The owl family, owing to their nocturnal habits, are commonly regarded as an unassuming group. But all the innumerable species of owls are, in reality, brave and enterprising birds. The cat herself is wary when dealing with a big rat, but the business-like manner in which many of our native owls will pounce on these pestilent rodents is positively admirable. The short-eared owls will unite to attack a dog that has wandered too near their nest.

Not only must birds protect themselves against their mammalian enemies, but there are also many sinister and sanguinary assailants of their own race. The king bird of North America furnishes a fine instance of fighting power in this connection. This militant bird is rather smaller than our song thrush, he is modestly attired, but bears himself with confidence and dignity. As a musician, he is of little account; his fame rests on his success in battle. From the very beginning of the building operations until the time when the young are able to fly, feed, and fight for themselves, the cock king bird dedicates his life to securing food, entertaining his wife and children, and impetuously attacking from dawn till night every intruding bird that shows itself in the vicinity of his jealously guarded nest. The very cats show their respect by avoiding his presence. Even large predaceous birds are assailed by this martial king bird, and his fighting qualities are such that, whether as victor or vanquished in these combats, he invariably succeeds in preserving his home from harm.

In a state of Nature, the ducks have numerous enemies to outwit and overcome. The drake is hardly an ideal husband or father. But the eider duck is devotion itself, and when attacked on moat or stream, she gathers her family around her, beats the surrounding water into spray with her wings, and urges the ducklings to dive for safety. If the danger increases, she endeavors to beat off the enemy, but a common trick is to pretend lameness, thus encouraging the foe to attack her instead of the young. But as soon as the ducklings have escaped, the old bird herself flies rapidly away. Gulls are not averse to young ducks, but the prudent mother-birds occasionally co-operate, and in this way ward off these greedy assailants of their offspring.

Where their own young are concerned the gulls make a fearful fuss if their colonies are threatened. In the Antarctic Regions, the skuas, near kinsmen of the gulls, will strike at the human trespasser on their breeding-grounds. But according to the late Captain Scott, although the birds sweep round their foes, they do not really strike them but, when within striking distance, suddenly turn aside. Nevertheless, the sailors were brushed by their wings, and had these powerful birds seriously attacked them, the skuas would have proved themselves no mean antagonists.

The giant petrel has evolved a curious protective device. In the Southern Orkneys these carrion birds abound and breed in colonies of a couple of hundred nests, in each of which a single egg is deposited:—

"In order to secure the egg the bird has to be knocked off the nest, and it shows its resentment and does its best to protect its property by sitting down a yard or two away and ejecting the contents of its stomach at the intruder."

Well may Mr. Lea say that the old mariners were well within their rights in dubbing this nauseous bird the "Stinker."

The penguin of the South Seas has as yet not adapted himself to the intrusive proclivities of mankind, and does not scruple to assail the lord of creation's lower extremities. Dr. Wilson, who journeyed with Scott in the famous Antarctic expedition, thus relates his experiences of this remarkable bird:—

"When annoyed in any way, the cock-bird ranges up in front of his wife, his eyes flashing with anger, his feathers erect in a ruffle round his head, and his language unfit for publication. He stands there for a minute or two breathing out threatenings and slaughter till his rage overpowers him, and, putting his head down, he makes a dash at one's legs and hails blows upon them with his flippers, like bullets from a machine gun."

But a further article will be necessary to illustrate and exemplify even stranger phenomena of avian guardianship and affection. Interesting and suggestive as the phenomena already brought forward undoubtedly are, another and an even more wonderful aspect of these protective devices remains to be dealt with, and to this we will next address ourselves.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

What it Means to be a Catholic.

A lecture delivered in Chicago, by
M. M. MANGASARIAN.

THE Roman Empire is one of the few enduring political monuments. It is true that its frame, or shell, has wasted away, but the *substance* of it is eternal—as much as anything could be called that. Just as every ocean-crossing vessel only repeats what Columbus did, every form of government of to-day or of to-morrow, is, and will be, a reproduction, with modifications, of the Roman pattern.

Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, says, "If a man were called upon to fix a period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the accession of the Emperor Nerva to the reign of the Antonines." It is immortality enough for any country to have produced the one oasis in the desert of the past.

The capital of the world empire was Rome, which partook of this quality of imperishability, or eternity. One could grow eloquent in describing the innumerable monuments—the gardens, the villas, the temples of the gods, the palaces of the rulers—the Forum, the Via Nova, the Via Sacra—the masterpieces of art and literature, of law and jurisprudence; the public works, solid and substantial, the democratic institutions, granting to every citizen the liberty to be himself; the note of universalism in the culture and of toleration in the religion, of the Mistress of the World!

One of the admirable buildings of Pagan Rome was the Palace of Peace, built by the Emperor Vespasian, and dedicated to the Goddess of Peace. We have a Prince of Peace; the Pagans had a Princess of Peace; but while our Prince has yet to establish peace on earth, the Roman Goddess of Peace blessed the whole world, from the Indus to the Pillars of Hercules, with the *Pax Romana*, bringing about that unexcelled and happy era in human history of which Gibbon speaks with such enthusiasm.

"War," said Marcus Aurelius, "is the disgrace and calamity of human nature"; and yet we have heard Protestant clergymen claim that even the word "peace" was not known before Jesus Christ!

Greater than all the wonders of Pagan Rome which I have mentioned, were the wonderful men whom the Eternal City nursed into being—men who attained a stature rarely reached and perhaps never surpassed in modern times. As big and as eternal as Rome, was Cæsar, whom Shakespeare calls "the foremost man of all this earth." Where are his equals among Europe's royalty of our day? But Cæsar was only one of a galaxy of orbs of the first magnitude. These have been shining for the last two thousand years, and yet they possess more light to-day than when they first swam into our sight! The more light they give, the more light they have.

Of course, there were many evils in this cosmopolite city. There was poverty, ignorance, slavery, vice, crimes, and superstition in Pagan Rome. Somehow, the ugly sneaks into the most exclusive circles, and dust and dirt defy all brooms. Perhaps the worst thing in Pagan Rome, the one which has left the deepest stain on pre-Christian civilisation, was the gladiatorial combats, which were a form of brutal entertainment. Could anything be more shocking than to see men and women, among them the foremost in the community, crowding the galleries of the Roman Colosseum to applaud bloodshed and shout for more of it? We cannot understand how philosophy and brutality could dwell on intimate terms without coming to grips. In justice to the Ancients, however, let us admit that the Roman gladiatorial games were already a step in the direction of reform. Before, and outside of, Rome, the universal custom was to kill all prisoners of war in cold blood. The Romans modified this barbaric custom of the past by offering the prisoner a chance to fight for his life. Be it further noted that the slaves fighting in the arena with wild beasts, or with one another, had a better chance of escaping alive than, for example, the French Huguenots who perished in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. The latter event occurred nearly fifteen hundred years after Christ. Furthermore, the Pagans trifled with the lives of malefactors and captives only; the Inquisition, Protestant as well as Catholic, trifled with the lives of the *elite*—Giordano Bruno, John Huss, Michael Servetus, Savonarola, Joan of Arc at the age of nineteen, when she was in bloom like a lily—and oh, ever so many others—the bravest of the race!

But if Modern Rome, with its Inquisition, sank as low, if not lower, than the gladiatorial barbarities of Ancient Rome, where is the evidence that the City of the Popes rose to the splendor and beauty of the City of the Philosophers? The celebrated Italian historian, Professor Villari, a Catholic himself, speaking of the capital of Christendom in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, says, "The Vatican," and the Vatican was Rome, "became the scene of every imaginable orgy and outrage, of plots and poisonings." Unfortunately, every word of that is true! He understates rather than overstates the case. When the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent started for Rome, his father said to him, "You are now going to that sink of all iniquities." Luther, too, came to Rome, and he was so shocked that he lost his faith, and ran away from the papal court as one would from the cholera. Professor Villari writes that the popes now openly acknowledged their children, and no longer referred to them as their "nephews"; and the popes' children, he says, were leaders in the unmentionable immoralities of the city. In fact, the people had become so accustomed to the craze for gold and the lust for power and pleasure of their prelates, that they had ceased to be scandalised by anything the popes ever did.

"The Eternal City," writes the same Catholic historian, whom I have already quoted, "had become a great market of offices and posts created only to be sold to the highest bidders." There was no crime for which a pardon could not be purchased. Gold was God. A father who had murdered his two

daughters, received absolution for eight hundred ducats. Every morning dead bodies found about the streets of the Holy City were thrown into the Tiber, and there was hardly a morning when corpses were not found lying in the streets. It was impossible to walk through the city or its near suburbs without fear of robbery and assassination. Besides these gangs of criminals who had made Rome their headquarters, the city was infested with an army of beggars, the dirtiest in the world, and impossible to shake off. In addition to this, pestilence and plague, famine and massacre, anarchy and revolution, invasion and pillage—Alaric and his Visigoths, Attila and his Huns, Genseric and his Vandals—succeeded one another with the regularity of the seasons. Yet all this would not be a circumstance in comparison with an ignorance the densest and a superstition the most sordid, which suffocated every living thing to death. The Europe that had seen "the glory that was Athens and the grandeur that was Rome" was now an intellectual Sahara.

When the supposed head of the supposed Saint Andrew was brought to Rome, the people went out to meet it with thirty-five thousand torches. Where was this relic discovered? Who recognised it as belonging to Saint Andrew? Who was he? What were his services to humanity? If his skull was miraculously preserved for fifteen hundred years, why were not his brains? But superstition asks no questions. Poor Rome! From a city of philosophers it had become a city of quacks and their dupes. From a city a million strong, Rome had sunk into a dilapidated town of a few thousand, mostly beggars. From one of the most beautiful centres of the world, housing one of the healthiest and most vigorous races, Rome had become an infirmary, an ambulance—the *lazaretto* of the world. To this day, the only *live* people in Rome are the dead Pagans, and the greatest treasures of papal Rome are the ruins of Pagan Rome. To confirm these conclusions, let me read a few more passages descriptive of Papal Rome from Villari's book on *Machiavelli*.

One of the passages in its entirety from which I have already quoted, reads:—

"There was a very imposing ceremony on the arrival of the youthful Cardinal, Giovanni dei Medici, then only seventeen years of age, and to whom his father, among other useful advice, wrote that he must bear in mind that he was about to inhabit the sink of all iniquity. And this Rome certainly was. The Pope's sons and nephews made the town ring with the scandal of their daily life."

And this is the way one of the popes is introduced:—

"Nor did this misfortune come alone, for on the 25th of July, Innocent VIII. died, and was succeeded by the worst Pontiff who ever filled the chair of St. Peter—a man whose crimes were sufficient to convulse any human society."

That divorces were sold for favors as well as for gold, may be seen from the following:—

"The latter (Pope Alexander's son), as soon as he had thrown aside his frock, was sent as envoy to France, bearer of a Bull of divorce to Louis XII., who wished to be separated from his wife, and married to the widow of Charles VIII., bringing him Brittany as her dower."

As emphasising the pursuit of gold of the Italian clergy, the following is significant:—

".....Many offices were sold, and no less than three hundred individuals accused of infidelity, and those allowed to purchase their pardon."

"But inasmuch as there are some," writes Machiavelli,—

"who believe that the welfare of Italy depends from the Church of Rome, I will allege two very weighty reasons against her.....The first, that by the infamous example of that Court, this land has lost all devotion and all religion.....We Italians, then, are first indebted to the Church and the clergy for the loss of our faith and the gain of wickedness; but we likewise owe them another and greater obligation, which is the cause of our ruin. It is that the Church has kept and keeps our country divided."

The same celebrated political writer says:—

"Thus the Church has been the true cause for which Italy has never been united under one head, but always divided among many lords and princes, wherefore the land has fallen into such feebleness that it has become the prey of the first who attacked it. For all this we Italians are indebted to the Church and to none else."

Machiavelli also adds that the invasion of Italy by the barbarians was brought about by the treachery as well as the incompetence of the popes. The invasion—

"gave the popes occasion to acquire increasing prominence, and govern the country at their will by fostering its divisions.....Accordingly, all the wars made by the barbarians upon Italy in these times were chiefly promoted by the popes, and nearly all the barbaric hordes that swept over the land had come at their call. The which course of proceeding is still pursued in our own day, and has kept and still keeps Italy disunited and defenceless."

Continuing, our author shows how—

"the popes, always faithful to their traditions, always covetous of authority and power, first deprived the Roman people of their right of acclaiming the Emperor, then of that of electing the Head of the Church, and finally set them the example of deposing an emperor. Thereupon some sided with the Empire, others with the Papacy, thus sowing the seed of the Guelph and Ghibelline humors, so that, as soon as Italy were freed from barbarian invasions, it might be torn by internal struggles."

This is important testimony, sufficient to prove the worst charges against the Papacy which wrecked the most splendid culture the world had yet seen, and created the leanest centuries and darkest period which ever afflicted the earth. Then came the Renaissance.

The word "Renaissance" is one of the most beautiful in our vocabulary, and the period which it describes, one of the greatest in history. On Renaissance Sunday we celebrate the re-birth of man. Renaissance means rejuvenation. The Western nations, after a prolonged drought, which withered ten centuries of modern times, drank from the wells of Hellas, and became young again.

Have you ever been in a fog at sea, when neither sky nor shore was visible, and how suddenly the wind shifted, and through the thinning veil shore and sea and sky reappeared? The influences which contributed to the revival of ancient Athens and Rome were as gentle as the change in the wind which lifts the fog at sea. In the age of Dante and Petrarch there appeared here and there a few translations of Greek and Latin manuscripts. These palpitating pages, as full of ideas as a tree is of sap in the spring, silently, and by their mild persistence, leavened the thought of the elite of the Occident. The translations from the classical masters were like the seeds of a new harvest, and the first crop, rich and abundant, was gathered in Italy because that was the country in which ancient culture had lingered longest. If you hold a rose in your hand long enough, something of its scent is sure to pass into your hand. Italy had long been the vase for the flower of culture.

We have on our program this morning a portrait of Dante, and on the stage a bust of Petrarch. As you see, both Petrarch and Dante are crowned. The flowers which the Daughters of the Renaissance, of our Society, have arranged about the bust on the stage token the fragrant and beautiful homage we would pay his memory, and the laurel woven about Dante's brow shows how others, in times and climes distant from our own, shared our affectionate reverence for his genius.

Only a few years separate Petrarch from Dante. It will be safe to say that they both belong to the fourteenth century. Very early in life, Petrarch devoted himself with the zeal of an apostle to the task of collecting Greek and Latin manuscripts. These ancient documents were laden with the gold that perisheth not. They also contained the "tonic" which an anæmic world needed. The printing press had not yet been discovered, but Petrarch made

numerous copies of many of the manuscripts, thus insuring them against loss. And he studied and expounded the works of Cicero, of Seneca, of Aristotle, with so much ardor and admiration that his devotion to these immortals has perfumed his memory. In order to share his newly found wealth with his countrymen, he wrote a series of letters which are considered masterpieces, and which he addressed to his friends, to princes, to posterity. In these letters he tells the people that the very dust under their feet is the ashes of the immortal dead; that every turn of the spade will unearth a work of art; that the ground they walk upon is sown with genius, as thickly as the summer meadows with the dew. These letters are prose-poems—a kind of rhapsody, an *éloge* of the times when mind ruled the world. Have you heard the lark singing to the dawn? He is a stammerer in comparison with Petrarch's passionate, palpitating, vibrant, musical anthem to the new day.

(To be continued.)

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEB. 25.

Members present:—Messrs. Bowman, Brandes, Cohen, Cunningham, Davey, Davidson, Judge, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Thurlow, Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

Mr. Victor Roger was elected to the chair.

The Secretary reported that Mr. Foote was recovering from a sharp attack of illness, and the Executive unananimously expressed pleasure at hearing that the illness was abating.

New members were admitted to the Parent Society, and several matters adjourned from the last meeting were discussed.

Arising from correspondence was a suggestion as to the future enrolment of members, and Mr. Davidson gave notice of motion on the matter for the next meeting.

Mr. Samuels gave a report from the Benevolent Fund Committee.

Messrs. Shore, Quinton, and Roger were elected as a sub-committee to arrange for a new meeting-place for the Executive, it being necessary to vacate the premises at 2 Newcastle-street, shortly.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

NOT GOD-INSPIRED, BUT JUST AS FUNNY.

I was bathing in that pleasant sea near Marseilles one summer's afternoon, when I discovered a very large fish, with his jaws extended, approaching me with the greatest velocity. There was no time to be lost, nor could I possibly avoid him. I immediately made myself as small as possible by closing my feet and placing my hands at my sides, in which position I passed between his jaws, and into his stomach, where I remained in total darkness. The fish was discovered by some Italian fishermen, who harpooned him, and as soon as he was brought on board I heard the crew discussing how they should cut him up so as to preserve the oil. I was in most dreadful apprehension lest they should kill me also, therefore I kept in the middle of the fish. When they opened the fish's belly, I called out lustily, and noted their astonishment at seeing a naked man walk out of the fish's body.—*The Adventures of Baron Munchausen.*

FORTUNATE HALT.

Johnny used to say his prayers every night and ask for a little baby brother. But for a long time no baby brother came along, and at last he stopped praying for one. Soon after this his mother became ill, and the nurse took Johnny in to see her. She showed him twins. Johnny looked at them awhile and said:

"It's lucky I stopped praying when I did."

When you are in doubt, say so. Don't keep still, for such silence is lying. Doubts will make you bigger, better. Give them a lot of room. They won't hurt you. You must doubt some things, for you do not know everything. If you do not play an honest game with yourself, you will have to live by cheating. Don't shut up your mind. Keep it open; keep it free, and let it look at things straight and fair. Every thinking man doubts. The other fellow believes.—*Truth-seeker*, New York.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templars' Hall, 122 Ingram-street): 12 noon, Mr. Ogilvie, "Woman and the Supernatural."

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