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Views and Opinions.

Religious Fools and Religious Rogues.

The religious fool and the religious rogue fit each other like the blades of a pair of scissors. Their existence is as good a proof of design in nature as one could hope to find, and if they do not form part of the established apologetic for the existence of God, it is because the reflections aroused might undo the good achieved by the argument. Not that the religious fool himself, or herself, would be affected. Their folly is proof against assault, but outsiders might see the moral, and act accordingly. Quite naturally, the existence of the religious fool provides the condition for the development of the religious rogue. So long as fools are in the world so long there will not be wanting rogues to practice on their folly. And as the religious fool is more hopeless than any other kind of fool, so the religious rogue is more brazen, and more successful. He need be less on his guard, and is far more certain of the devoted championship of his dupes. One need only run over in one's mind the long and historic list of religious rogues to realize that in no other walk of life could impudence and ignorance meet with so great success. Messiahs, miracle-workers, end-of-the-world prophets, faith-healers, etc.—the list is almost infinite in length and variety. And the religious fool learns nothing from experience. The crop here is perennially plentiful, and the rogues jump at the tempting dish.

* * *

Death of Pastor Russell.

Last week's paper contained an account of the death of one of these religious impostors—Pastor Russell, a travelling American preacher, whose fearful and wonderful literature has been distributed broadcast in this country. Some time ago this man's career was outlined in *Truth*, and a particularly unsavoury story it was. The paper was threatened with an action for libel, but the action never matured, and in such a case judgment goes by default. Starting as a business man, Russell gave that up to enter the, for him, more lucrative field of religious exploitation. One of his earliest enterprises was

a "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society," which is said to have received about two million dollars in donations. Through the money received in this way, Pastor Russell became financially interested in a Brick Company, a Turpentine Company, a Coal Company, and various others. He sold a bogus "miracle wheat" at a high price, which was guaranteed to give a much greater yield than the ordinary kind, and was one of the evidences of the approaching millennium. He was co-respondent in a divorce case, an unsuccessful plaintiff in a libel case, and was living apart from his wife. But he came to this country, advertised largely, took the Albert Hall, bled his dupes freely, and not one of our prominent clergymen publicly protested against him. This last circumstance is well worth noting.

* * *

For the Sake of Religion.

The career of this man, one may assume, was known to the religious leaders of the country. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for them to have warned their people, and the general public, in the most open manner that Pastor Russell was trading on their ignorance out of his own cupidity. Had a Freethought advocate been in the same position, and with a similar record, this would have been done. Of that there is no doubt. Why, then, was it not done in this case? The reason is not hard to discover. When Mr. Foote's exposure of the notorious Torrey took place, only one Christian publicist was affected by it. It is to the credit of the late W. T. Stead that he at once declared that a man guilty of such slander and mendacity ought to be driven out of public life. He said he would write to well-known Christian preachers and invite their co-operation. He was warned of the little help he would get, and the warning was justified by events. Most of those written to ignored the matter altogether. Some replied that to expose Torrey would bring discredit on religion; none gave any help. A religious rogue has thus a double advantage. He has not alone a larger and a more helpless body of people to exploit, he is protected against exposure by the fear that injury may be done to religion. Torrey escaped public condemnation. Pastor Russell pursues his career to the end. The clergy are afraid to say anything for fear attention may be drawn to the general character of their own occupation. And these are the men who tell us of the injury that will be done to the cause of morality if religious belief is destroyed!

* * *

The Cultivation of Superstition.

To the man in the street Pastor Russell was just an ordinary kind of a religious rogue. And it may be urged that his kind is too common to arouse much comment. But others may be excused for seeing in him something of a more serious social kind. After all, people of the Russell, and Dowie, and Torrey order could not flourish unless there were a large number of people with us ready to support their absurdities. And these men do not create their audiences, they are ready-made, waiting for them. And the rest of the Churches

see that this kind of audience is never lacking. Their own existence depends upon it, for the simple reason that a religion such as Christianity cannot be maintained for long unless there exists a bed rock of superstitious belief and feeling amongst the mass of the people. How this is utilized by the Churches is seen in the exploitation of superstition in the erection of street shrines, wayside crosses, and the like in connection with the War. Pastor Russell exploits the mass of superstition in one direction, the Bishop of London exploits it in another. And the social significance of each is identical. It is the Christian Church that keeps alive in our midst a floating mass of primitive credulity and superstition, and there is small wonder if every now and then a Pastor Russell comes along and exploits it in his own interest. He is reaping where others have sown. Where the field of fools is large, rogues find reaping an easy task.

* * *

An Ever Present Danger.

Unfortunately, the evil is not confined to religion. It represents an ever threatening social danger of the gravest kind. No less an authority than Professor Frazer pointed out some years ago that one unexpected result of the study of folk-lore was to make plain the fact that the mass of the people—perhaps the majority—were everywhere living in a state of intellectual savagery. Their outlook was crude and primitive, they were more or less under the influence of superstition. Our cultured society, he said, was sapped and mined by superstition, we were “standing on the edge of a volcano which may at any moment break out in smoke and fire to spread ruin and devastation.” The experience of the past two years have more than justified this warning. Many of us had thought that civilization had gone too far for a war of the present kind to occur. Events have shown to the contrary, and have proved that beneath the thin veneer of culture the primitive passions and outlook that make for war have still strength. The charge against Germany—it is also Germany's charge against others—is, that in order to gratify the ideals and ambitions of a party within the State, she did not hesitate to plunge the world into war. And so we may say that in the case of the Christian Church we have an organization that would think any price worth the paying in order to restore her ancient belief and power. And so long as the Church can count upon the superstition of the crowd, so long may she hope for a real religious revival with all its disastrous social consequences.

* * *

Reaction and Religion.

One cannot but regard this existing mass of superstition as a standing menace to all that is sanely useful and progressive in our social life. Unscrupulous journalists and politicians utilize it in their exploitation of the public. Financial rogueries are perpetrated under its protection. Reactionists of all kinds see in it their greatest friend. The appeal to religion, to God, to Christ, to superstition, is utilized by all these; because it involves a weakening of the critical and investigating spirit which is the chief protection we have against folly and fraud in high places. It is because of this that we regard it as waste of time to draw any sharp line of distinction between men of the Pastor Russell type and other religious practitioners who are more highly placed. For the folly upon which *he* lives is precisely the same folly upon which *they* live. Indeed, without them he could not exist. The one may count his gains in a personal bank balance; the others may count theirs in a less personal way, in power, and wealth, and importance gained for their class and its associated interests. But high or low, the final result of their activities is the exploitation of the people,

intellectually and socially. And for this evil there is but one remedy—the destruction of the ignorance and superstition upon which they all count. The democratizing of knowledge and the rationalizing of life are the only way out. While fools are there, the rogues will fatten. And the quickest way to destroy the rogues is to make their occupation more difficult and less lucrative.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Dying Tree.

THE Rev. F. C. Spurr, minister of Regent's Park Baptist Church, avails himself of every opportunity to give expression to his Christian hatred of his “Rationalistic brethren.” He regards them as enemies, and though his Master commands him to love and pray for them, he is utterly unable to do so. He hates them with perfect hatred, and cannot resist the temptation to disparage both them and their work. While he was at Melbourne he gained an unenviable notoriety as a contemner of the Freethinkers who had the audacity to make themselves heard in that city. In several articles which appeared in the *Christian World*, he went out of his way to revile them, denouncing some of their well-known leaders as vulgar, ignorant, and utterly unworthy of an intelligent hearing. On one occasion, the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne described the extravagance of his language as utterly intolerable. In the early stages of the War he predicted the speedy decay and disappearance of Rationalism, a prophecy that has already been falsified by the event. As a matter of fact, Free-thought meetings were never better attended than they are in this the third year of the War, nor were attacks on the Christian Faith ever more, if as, heartily endorsed. In an article in the *Christian World* for November 23, entitled, “Fading Leaves; Autumn in the Churches,” he makes the following significant admission:—

In the Churches the leaves are falling from many an ancient tree. The period of former overwhelming Christian prosperity seems to have departed. No longer is the magic of the springtide with us, the Christian Church is not displaying its immeasurable possibilities in new and living ways as do the trees in May and June send forth their overflowing life in a wealth of fascinating foliage. The time of the falling leaf has come. Ugly gaps are disclosing themselves upon branches which were once clothed in verdure. An autumn, if not a winter, has descended upon us. We are all feeling it; we make no attempt to disguise it.....Nobody is mad enough to imagine that the Churches at present are rejoicing in their springtime. The autumn leaves at our feet compel us to recognize where we are and what has happened.

Everyone who goes about with open eyes and ears knows how very true that admission is at the present time, and has been for more than a decade. Mr. Spurr, however, is convinced that this undoubted fact affords no excuse for pessimism, asking, “Is the tree dead, or is it the leaves only that are dead?” We answer that question by saying that if a tree puts forth fewer and fewer leaves for many years in succession, it proves that its vitality is decreasing, and that death is staring it in the face. This answer the reverend gentleman laughs to scorn, saying:—

Our Rationalistic brethren, the great McCabes, Robertsons, and the rest of the gods are already sounding their war-whoop: “Religion is going,” they say. “It has had its day; the ancient tree is rotten at its heart, it awaits but a final storm, and then the world will see the giant prostrate on the forest-floor, condemned to the fire.” Doubtless they would wish to have it so, but they also are doomed to disappoint-

ment, as have been their ancestors in unfaith a hundred times over, when they pronounced the sentence of death upon Christianity. If these gentlemen would condescend to read history, their undue exhilaration would receive a wholesome check. For history shows us the ancient tree of Christianity periodically shedding its leaves in the interests of a fuller springtime.

That cheap sneering at opponents, so characteristic of the reverend gentleman, is a sign of the essential weakness of his case. "Our Rationalistic brethren, the great McCabes, Robertsons, and the rest of the gods," to be sure, make a big noise as they beat the drum of unbelief, but their ignorance of history is stupendous. Mr. Spurr's knowledge of history is, of course, inexhaustible, and he can afford to look down with withering contempt upon his ill-starred "Rationalistic brethren." Let us now examine his appeal to history. We ask, does "history show us the ancient tree of Christianity periodically shedding its leaves in the interests of a fuller springtime"? To this question the correct answer is emphatically in the negative. During the first three centuries Christianity was comparatively weak, and had to enter into competition with other so-called world-religions, such as Neoplatonism and Manichæism. What won for it the supreme place was the conversion of the Emperor, Constantine, who made it the religion of the State. Ere long all the Pagan cults were suppressed by force, and Christianity reigned alone. The Christian Church was the only Church recognized and protected by the Roman Empire. All Secular schools were closed, and science itself was crushed out of existence. Christianity had the field all to itself for many centuries. Whenever a Freethinker arose and advocated his views, he was silenced by imprisonment, which usually ended in some form of execution. The Ages of Faith were numerous, and they are all known as Dark Ages. If Mr. Spurr would condescend to read history, with an unprejudiced mind, he would see that for many centuries the Christian tree flourished abundantly, when there were scarcely any "seasons," or times of revivals and decay, when leaves were plentiful and never fell. Yes, the tree flourished magnificently, not for a day or a year, but for countless generations, and its leaves neither fell nor faded. The only fruit it bore, however, was saintship, which was a product intended for the spiritual world, not for this. The Gospel Jesus is reported to have cursed a fig-tree once, because it bore no fruit, though it was covered with leaves. The Christian tree bore a splendid and continuous harvest of leaves throughout the savage Middle Ages, but those leaves were its only fruit. Mr. Spurr cannot be blind to this fact, for it is carefully recorded in Histories by Baronius, Mosheim, Neander, Milman, and Schaff.

For a thousand years Christianity, as embodied in the Church, dominated every department of life. The priest's word was absolutely law on every subject. But a time came, in consequence of the revival of learning, when the domination of Christianity began to be challenged, when priestly tyranny received a wholesome check, when the secularization of life commenced, and when science once more rose to the surface and started on its modern career of ever-growing ascendancy. This disintegrating process commenced prior to the Protestant Reformation, and was really the cause thereof; and it has been more or less steadily going on ever since. Does Mr. Spurr deny this? The Protestant Reformation was itself the outcome of an older movement and proved in turn a facilitating element in it—a movement that was bound eventually to undermine supernaturalism and to establish the rights of human reason as the governing factor in society. It was a movement which infallibly made for the displacement of religious beliefs

and practices by natural knowledge and wisdom. What Mr. Spurr calls "revivals" are modern Protestant attempts, scientifically planned and prosecuted, to stem the process of religious decay constantly taking place, by renewing the zeal and fervour of backsliders in the religion which they have practically neglected, if not positively rejected. But it is becoming more and more evident, year after year, that revivals, whether conducted by Wesley, Whitefield, Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, or Chapman and Alexander, fail to achieve the object they have in view, for each revival is followed by an accelerated growth of positive unbelief. It is well known that the result of Evan Roberts' revival in South Wales has been what Christian workers look upon as a woefully intensified indifference to religion.

What Mr. Spurr means by the leaves is not quite clear. Whatever they are, the War is supposed to be dislodging huge masses of them from the tree. He reminds us that the leaves are not the tree; but surely they are part and parcel of the tree, and there are many trees which never shed their leaves at all and are described as evergreens. Why is it that there are periods when Christianity is almost, if not wholly leafless? It is conceded that there are dead leaves on the Christian tree, and in calm seasons they linger upon the ancient branches, but that the tempest of war strips them off at once. But the Christian leafless tree, we are assured, is not dead, nor is its leafless condition by any means a bad symptom. We have never affirmed that it is dead, but simply that a permanently leaf-losing tree is in the throes of death. Christianity is, undoubtedly still alive, and this War is not going to force it through the gates of death. All we claim is, that for upwards of three hundred years its hold upon the minds of men and women has been perceptibly slackening. This is an incontrovertible fact. The Bible, so eloquently attacked by Voltaire and Thomas Paine, has disappeared from the belief of all intelligent Christians; while the Gospel, so zealously preached during the first half of the nineteenth century, is proclaimed from scarcely any pulpit to-day. Superstition always dies hard and slowly; but its death-knell is being rung by modern knowledge. The parsons are doing their very best to revive it, but all their efforts fail to work the desired miracle, and their hearers are becoming gradually fewer with the years. The reign of reason and common sense is knocking ever more loudly at the doors, with the result that the bolts and locks are being slowly driven back.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Government Religion.

If I had been a bishop, with an income of five to fifteen thousand a year, I should have had an inexhaustible source of rejoicing and merriment in the generosity, if not in the credulity, of my countrymen.—*John Bright.*

MANY persons must have recalled the biting phrase of Thomas Carlyle, "that great lying Church," when reading the fervent patriotic appeals made by the clergy, coupled with the fact that these pastors and masters have had themselves exempted from military service, and are free to tread the primrose paths of peace. For that form of the Christian Church, which is known as the Church of England, has been manufactured by Parliament, and from time to time has been under the hands of its creator for repairs. The creator is a cynical association known as the House of Commons, having no religion in particular, and looking upon the theology which it patronizes as a special constable, whose duty it is to frighten folk from attending too much to the affairs of life by promising them rewards when they are no longer alive.

In the ranks of the clergy are a number who pretend that the Church of England represents a religion independent of Parliament. Most clergymen are notoriously ignorant of the culture of their own profession, but the ignorance is unpardonable when they see from time to time the ritual, government, and doctrines of their Church being declared by Acts of Parliament, framed by Freethinkers, Roman Catholics, Nonconformists, Jews, Unitarians, and the other religions or non-religions professed by the six hundred members of Parliament.

It appears also that these clergy, who are too proud to fight for their country, are many of them perjurers. They subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion sanctioned by the King "by God's ordinance, according to our just title, Defender of the Faith and supreme governor of the Church within these our dominions." But in practice they openly defy these ordinances, which are declared to be "the true doctrine of the Church of England, agreeable to God's Word." These articles include the belief that Christ went down bodily to "hell"; that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that Adam was the father of the human race, and that he ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which countless generations are damned to everlasting torture; that the Romish doctrine concerning pardons, worshipping, and adoration, as well as of images and invocation of saints is a vain invention; that the Bible is the word of God; and that the monarch is the head of the Church.

To these Articles of Faith, among others, every Church of England parson subscribes. And we know that great numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them; that they are taking money on false pretences; and that their main reasons for remaining in the Parliamentary Church of England are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former canon of St. Paul's puts it. And the right to appoint clergymen to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it was so much coal or a quack medicine. Parliament makes the religion, and the landlords appoint its professors, or barter the appointment to the highest bidder. And, mark you, the confessional is now an institution in hundreds of State Churches. The furniture, ceremonies, and doctrines taught in very many churches of the Establishment are not to be distinguished from those of Rome. Even during the past few weeks wayside shrines have sprung up like mushrooms all over the country.

The clergy pretend, hypocritically, to be entirely uninfluenced by financial motives. They manage, however, to keep very sharp eyes on the main chance. Thirty-nine archbishops and bishops share £180,700 yearly between them. The bishops suggest ingeniously that they spend the money they get in the upkeep of the dignity of their positions. It is untrue, for they frequently leave large sums of money. The late Bishop of Colchester left estate valued at £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who used to talk of the fearful struggles of the wretched ecclesiastics to keep out of debt, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000, and Archbishop Benson a similar sum. The biggest episcopal estate of late years was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tuffnell's £65,800, and Bishop Phillpot left £60,000, whilst Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, and the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem quite modest.

No reform of the Church of England is needed. It should be disestablished and disendowed, and then let it reform itself like any other society. And why has the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church been

dropped out of the Liberal programme? The Established Church simply absorbs so much money and so many offices and dignities, and is an ecclesiastical branch of the Primrose League, an organization founded to perpetuate the memory of the most Machiavellian of modern politicians.

Elsewhere one knows what a Church stands for. You say this obeys implicitly the Pope and the College of Cardinals, that is faithful to the Westminster Confession, and another yields homage to the Eastern Patriarchs. But ask what the Church of England stands for and who can tell you? One points to the Thirty-nine Articles, while another laughs in his dainty lawn sleeves at the simplicity of laymen.

We are told from every pulpit that, when the European War is over, our national religion is to be something quite different from what we have known before. There is much room for drastic alteration. It concerns us all, for the legal theory of this country makes us all parties to the constitution of the Church. If it were in the United States or the British Colonies, where no such thing as a State Church exists, we need not care a pin what humbug went on in a particular church, for it would be none of our affair. But the legislation of Parliament makes us all partners in this Church of England, and compels us to be, as it were, privy to its dishonesty. The votes of the bishops in the House of Lords is sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking persons, and their shameful opposition to all progress shows how hopelessly the Church is out of touch with democratic aspirations. The bishops voted against admitting Free Churchmen to University degrees, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Rationalists. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London borough councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, flogging women in prison, or flogging in the Army and Navy. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working-classes have been opposed by these ecclesiastics, and their record is sufficient to carry its own condemnation. Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than this of possessing a powerful institution in its midst that saps the very springs of morality, that permits mental and moral confusion, and that hinders the wheels of progress in the way that the Church of England does. It is the enemy of democracy, and must be fought to the death. For the Church is opposed to the spirit of Liberty which animates the progressive peoples of the world.

MIMNERMUS.

Pagan and Christian Morality.

VII.

(Continued from p. 758.)

A peculiarity of Jesus often remarked is, his choice of hearers. He avoids all who have power to criticize him. He preaches his "Glad tidings" by preference to the poor.

It is hard to point to anything in the teaching of Jesus, at once new to Hebrew and Greek sages, and likewise in general estimate true. Forgiveness of injuries, kindness to enemies, life after death, future retribution, had all been taught in Greece or in Egypt long ago.

One may search in vain through the Gospels for a precept or sentiment so novel and valuable as to justify the grandiloquent boast: "*Blessed are ye who hear now from me things which many prophets and kings have in vain longed to hear.*"

He never appeals to the learned and cultivated intellect, but to the poor, as though "babes and sucklings" were the best judges.—*Professor F. W. Newman, "Christianity in its Cradle," pp. 50-51-52-53.*

Never was there a public teacher whose doctrines were more unfortunate and more unadapted to convert his hearers

than those which Jesus preached. It is by no means wonderful that, after labouring for three years, his disciples only numbered twelve, and that, at his apprehension and martyrdom, even these forsook and denied him.—E. P. Meredith, "The Prophet of Nazareth," p. 146.

It has been said that the teachings of Jesus which were true were not new, and that the teachings which were new were not true.

We have amply proved the first part of this criticism, and although many of the foolish and untrue teachings of Jesus can be paralleled in earlier writings, there are some so extravagantly foolish and bad that no parallel can be established. No sane person could have uttered them. For instance, as an offset to loving our enemies, we are to hate our nearest and dearest friends. Jesus declares: "If any man come to me and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). No parallel to this atrocious and revolting commandment can be found in Pagan or heathen sources, although history attests that the Christian monks and saints carried out this terrible command in all its rigour. "It is the highest praise of St. Fulgentius," says Dean Milman, "that he overcame his mother's tenderness by religious cruelty."¹ The historian Lecky observes: "To break by his ingratitude the heart of the mother who had borne him, to persuade the wife who adored him that it was her duty to separate from him forever, to abandon his children, uncared for and beggars, to the mercies of the world, was regarded by the true hermit as the most acceptable offering he could make to his God."²

As to the precept that a man must hate his own life, as Meredith observes: "To hate life is the exercise of a grossly immoral passion, a violation of one of the first laws of nature, and a strong incentive to suicide, in which act of insanity it generally terminates. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus did not advisedly teach the pernicious doctrine of suicide when he repeatedly enjoined his hearers to hate their own lives, and told them that whosoever lost his life should find it, and so on."³ Which should provide food for thought for those who, against all evidence, pretend that all suicides are Atheists.

It is in the "Sermon on the Mount" that Jesus says, "whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment.....but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." In the first place, no one can possibly be angry *without a cause*; and if Jesus meant without a *just* cause, why did he not say so? asks Meredith, and further: "Can it for a moment be supposed that—granting the existence of the Christian hell—a person for telling another, even his own brother, that he is a fool, or is rebellious when he really is so, incurs the everlasting torments of 'hell fire,' described by Christ, on another occasion, in such strong and definite language? Can a person incur this endless and incomparably intense torment for *telling the truth*, and giving expression to what he believes?"⁴ We are commanded to hate our brother—along with all the rest of the family—but if we call him a fool we are in danger of hell-fire. It is needless to say that no parallel to such teaching can be found in Pagan literature.

As Gerald Massey, that tender poet and good democrat, has remarked: "Some of the sayings (of Jesus) are no more appropriate to our human wants than was the old lady's tract on the sin of dancing, which she offered to a poor fellow who had to hobble about on two wooden legs and crutches! 'If thy right eye offend thee

pluck it out'! Of what value is such advice as that?" And further:—

"Blessed are they who have not seen yet have believed." Why, tyranny could devise no doctrine that could be turned to more fatal account!

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Do you call the teaching of that saying divine? I think it would be false and fraudulent if uttered by a voice from the Infinite with all heaven for its mouthpiece! The poor in spirit are the accursed, the outcasts and pariahs of the earth; those who sink into the squalor and crawl in the filthy dens of poverty, to become the natural victims of all its parasites of prey. The poor in spirit are the prematurely old men, weary, worn-out women, and wizened children, all bleaching into a ghastly white in the chilling shadow of daily want! The poor in spirit are those who crouch and offer their backs to the whip, who remain bowed just as if they were bent, and allow their hands to be fettered and held fast in the attitude of prayer, when they ought to be up and striking. They who are content to crawl like caterpillars, and be trodden as caterpillars under-foot. Poverty of spirit is the very Devil; the source of half the evil extant; most of the meannesses in human nature may be traced to poverty of spirit!.....The poor and needy, the hungry and suffering, are not the blessed, and no assumption of divine authority on the part of the sayer will ever make them so.¹

Then we have the advice of Jesus to "Resist not evil" (Matt. v. 39). If we did not resist evil, we should soon be evil ourselves. Civilization and progress consist in resisting evil—evil men, evil thoughts, evil conditions of life. As E. P. Meredith well says: "This precept is diametrically opposed to all principles of reform. If means are not taken to arrest evil in its course, no improvement—no higher degree of perfection, but the reverse—is to be expected."² The same writer quotes George Jacob Holyoake as saying that this advice to "Resist not evil" is calculated "to give a long lease to tyranny, to permit it to ride roughshod over the world, and to subdue, with the authority of a divine sanction, all humble and oppressed peoples, who ought to unite in resisting the oppressors, who would destroy them."³ As Professor Newman remarked: "The rights of Men and Nations are wholly ignored in the New Testament, but the authority of Slave-owners and of Kings is very distinctly recorded for solemn religious sanction."⁴

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also taught: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow"; "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matt. vi. 25-31-34). "Close and general obedience to this precept," says Meredith, "and others of a similar meaning, with which the Gospels abound, would soon plunge society into general ruin: poverty, want, wretchedness, starvation would be the inevitable consequence." Much ingenuity has been expended by theologians and commentators in trying to explain this foolish text away, or to read into it a different meaning. They say that the words "take no thought" in the original Greek mean "take no *anxious* thought." But Meredith points out that the Greek words employed simply mean "take no *thought* or *care*—be not careful.—There is nothing whatever in the expression which justifies the idea of '*anxious* thought.'" The same word "is most frequently, in the New Testament, rendered *care*; and that in such connections as utterly exclude the idea of any particular anxiety, such as is sought to be attached to the word in the precept under notice." That there should be no doubt as to his meaning, Jesus

¹ Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 176.

² Lecky, *European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 125.

³ E. P. Meredith, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 320.

⁴ Meredith, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 313.

¹ Gerald Massey, *The Logia of the Lord*, p. 23.

² E. P. Meredith, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 317.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 317, note.

⁴ F. W. Newman, *Phases of Faith*, p. 112.

immediately illustrates it by adding: "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them"; "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." As Meredith justly remarks: "Because the fowls of the air neither sow, reap, nor gather into barns, man should not do so; and because the lilies neither toil nor spin, man has no need to do either. This must be confessed to be one of the grossest comparisons ever made by the most witless teacher of morality of any age.....Let everybody *take no thought for the morrow*; let none either sow, reap, or gather into barns; let none *take thought of raiment*; let none *take thought of life*; and soon will all be running about naked and hungry,—soon will all die of starvation,—soon will the human race become utterly extinct! It is, certainly not to much to say,—a more extravagant, absurd, impracticable, and immoral precept than this was never proclaimed. It teaches the most unqualified improvidence and recklessness. It is brimful of immorality."¹

Professor Newman also observes:—

The virtue cardinal to his moral system, the virtue without which no disciple can be *perfect*, is that fundamental one of the Essenes, the renunciation of private property. This pervades his discourses from end to end. Not many Christians in any age have obeyed him, and the prevalent excuse is, that he intended the precept *for the twelve apostles only*. But the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the multitude, and therein he enjoins: "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him who would borrow of thee turn not away." The precept has no limitation. He who *asks* may be idle, may be a worthless beggar or a drinker; no special case is suggested as ground for just refusal. That industry is a human duty cannot be gathered from his doctrine: how could it, when he kept twelve religious mendicants around him?²

A great English judge, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, in his book, *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, has declared that if men took "the philanthropic passages of the four Gospels as the sole, exclusive, and complete guide of their lives, they would in sober earnest turn the world upside down. They would be a set of passionate Communists, breaking down every approved maxim of conduct and every human institution. In one word, if Christianity really is what much of the language which we often hear used implies, it is false and mischievous." This verdict was endorsed by the late Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, when he electrified the Christian world with the declaration that: "It is not possible for the State to carry out, in all its relations, literally, all the precepts of Christ, and a State which attempted this could not exist for a week. If it were possible to do this the result would be a perfectly intolerable tyranny."³

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

The Stranger.

TRUTH may be quaint; but it certainly is not mystical. Searching for it, toiling and struggling and fighting towards it, along pathways strewn with obstacles by the forces of evil, is no more than the phraseological balderdash of the pulpit. Truth never plays hide-and-seek. It is no coward, no pulpit-lover. It does not dwell in a high inaccessible castle, situated on the mountains of madness; nor does it love to dupe man into what is

no more and no less than chasing an ill-begotten will-o'-the-wisp over a pathless morass.

In fact, truth is inclined towards bullying. It hits straight from the shoulder. Deliberately and very stubbornly it crushes its peerless way through everything. The retaliative power of its opponent matters not. Strongest and weakest alike must endure its blows; and none of us escapes from that peculiar experience in which sullen astonishment characterizes our most acute feelings.

Recently I have heard a lot about the true manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, his nearness to us, the nobility of his example, and the supreme use we men can make of it. And as I sat in church this morning listening to the old tale, it dawned upon me that this Lord Jesus Christ, despite the omnipresence of his being, his love, and his homeliness, was *the Stranger*.

We were told to hold fast by the precepts he formulated. In them lay the world's greatest storehouse of wisdom; and all the other age-encrusted lies were produced to prove that Jesus Christ was our real prototype.

It was pardonable of me to smile; for the congregation was a military one. We were all soldiers. Advising us, as the parson did this morning, to look to Jesus Christ for help, never to forget him in times of trouble, and so on, is verbalized insipidity. The truth is, we never forget him in times of trouble. His name is always at our tongue's end on these frequent occasions. Our prayers to God are short, various, and many; but we do not delude ourselves into hoping for prayer fruition. We know our petitions are futile. We do not care whether a lazy Deity listens or not.

Had parsons merely a few operating brains they would realize we are devoid of any real morality. True, there exists a comradeship that does not always exert itself; and we possess also, perhaps, a kind of ethic standard that centres round our enforced enmity towards the bloody Germans.

Our lives are not pretty, nor are our words or deeds or prospects gentle, meek, mild, and full of the milk of human kindness. We are coarse, hard, rough. Our language is as filthy as our work; and we find the words "God" and "Jesus Christ" aids to fluency. Our estimation of womenfolk is excessively primitive. Our thought for the morrow, when we are broken in, is couched in terms suitable solely to ourselves and Old Testament writers. Our estimation of things religious, social, scientific, is limited to their immediately personal utility and, occasionally, to their usefulness in drawing the blood of the aforesaid Germans. Our inclinations are, as a whole, not such as a pastor might profitably comment upon from his haven of refuge. We are religious once a week because, in camp language, we are not damn fools enough to desire fatigues. And so I might easily continue to a book-length, giving innumerable examples abundantly to prove the truth of what I say; but the subject likes me not. It is hateful. Only the fantastic rhapsodies of pastors, and people of that ilk, make it amusingly ludicrous at times.

Truth is a bully. All the colours of the religious rainbow cannot enrobe war in garments of purity. All the attempts to clothe our barbaric trade in lovely raiment are fools' work. The picturesque Jesus Christ, manufactured in these modern years by a mentally decaying clergy, has no home amongst us. He is an alien. He comes within the gore-bespattered grounds of our activities as an irrecognizable stranger. We know each other not. If he spoke, we should laugh. If he preached, we should turn away. If he prayed, our language should become doubly incarnadined. If he wept—and methinks I can see those pearly tears running down the sorrow-stricken cheeks of the man who, it is related, strove

¹ E. P. Meredith, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 315.

² *Christianity in its Cradle*, p. 57.

³ "The State and the Sermon on the Mount," *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1890.

revolutionize the world of humanity, to ease the path of emancipation, to lever from the road of progress our oppressors and tyrants—then were it mete for soldiers to spurn and taunt him.

Jesus Christ is a stranger. His apostles, his worshippers, his followers, his admirers, salute, with the Judas-kiss, a shadow cast upon a mist of tears. His friends befuddle themselves with dreams as spurious as their imbecilic ideals. So lonely a stranger is the Lord Jesus Christ that even an unknown, little Atheist like me can feel genuinely sorry for him. And, judging from my own experience, so disturbing are the influences of loneliness upon us, it would not astonish me to learn that the stranger hated, really hated, the human part of his environment.

And what if it should be so? How will it fare with these men who, in his name, and with his lessons and teachings, cover the loathsome, despicable things he attacked, the actions upon which he poured so much strenuous recrimination, the follies against which he levelled the sharpest arrows of his scorn, the evils in the battle against which, it is said, he gave his life? How will the scales of divine justice swing when the commandments of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are weighed with the war vapourings of a deliberately lying priesthood and apostlecraft?

Jesus Christ might say unto them, I was a stranger amongst you. Forsaken was I, and lonely; you were far from me. I taught unto you; and you made mock of me. I was your guide, and comforter, and friend; and your denials crucified me anew. I prayed for you; but you were deaf. I appealed to you; you were dumb. I wept for you; you were blind. Your cowardice has encircled my brow with a heavier thorn-crown. Your hypocrisy has re-opened the wound in my side, and cruel is the pain thereof. Your lies have torn the flesh from my hands and arms; and now, can I bless you, my false children? You have hardened your hearts against the wisdom I preached unto you; and into a desert of sorrow and suffering have you wandered, bearing with you only the fragment of a memory of Jesus Christ, the stranger.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops.

Everyone is aware what a difficult thing it is for the Bishop of London to stave off starvation on his paltry £10,000 a year. He now says he is quite willing to let the Finance Board of the diocese take over his income, arranging for him to have "a moiety," and arranging for him to be "placed in a position where he can have personal touch, as now, with all the important men of England," and also to allow him £1,000 a year for charity. Quite a modest programme, which, when carried out to the Bishop's satisfaction, would not, we fancy, leave much out of the present salary. Anyway, the Bishop knows that nothing is likely to come of his offer. By the way, what is the "charity" of the man who first of all demands the money of the nation? Most of us could be charitable under similar conditions.

The Bible Society boasts that it issues copies of the Bible in the language of every one of the nations engaged in the present War. We give in. We have always held that belief in the Bible does not make for peace and brotherhood. But after this proof, we feel utterly crushed. We surrender.

The evangelists of the British and Foreign Bible Society are not too saintly to overlook business, and the annual report of that organization shows that its emissaries dearly love a bargain. In Colombia a Testament was sold for two tins of sardines and another for fifteen cakes of chocolate. In the Andes gold-miners bought their Bibles with grains of

gold. At Cairo a Gospel was bartered for four eggs—good ones, we hope. Our old friends, the Chinese Presbyterians, who used to figure in former reports, have, apparently, back-slidden. Anyhow, their names have dropped out of the list of subscribers. Another well-known name is also conspicuous by its absence, and the German Kaiser no longer graces the list of patrons. Perhaps he has forgotten his customary cheque.

During the past six months the Young Men's Christian Association has received public subscriptions amounting to £220,289, and the receipts from sales of refreshments, etc., was £506,194 in England, and in France £149,773. What a pity they cannot imitate the Founder of Christianity, and feed 5,000 persons with three sardines and two buns.

A Church Army worker, in a letter to the Press, says the soldiers called for cocoa as "hot and dirty," while tea was known as "wet and warm." All aerated waters were "pop." He does not mention what the boys called the communion port. Perhaps it is unprintable.

A newspaper paragraph states that the Bishop for North and Central Europe has left for Switzerland, and it is hoped that he will visit Germany. On his return he may be able to enlighten his colleagues on the subject of Teutonic "Atheism."

In a leading article in the *Weekly Dispatch* on the Food Problem, it was stated: "Four thousand years ago Joseph, the greatest food dictator the world has ever seen, saved a great nation and the surrounding peoples from starvation." Thus is the public fooled in the twentieth century. The Biblical story is wholly legendary, and Egyptian history shows no traces of such an occurrence. The story of a Hebrew slave lording it over the hereditary rulers of a great civilization is simply Jewish boastfulness.

Father Vaughan told a meeting at Donne that when he was asked "Why did not God stop the War?" he replied "Why did not God avert the Tay Bridge disaster?" Well, the one question is as pertinent as the other. Why didn't God avert both? Really, he ought to be doing something to justify his existence. And if he can't, or won't, do anything, what on earth is the good of bothering about him? Father Vaughan seems to think that because God does not avert one disaster we ought not to expect him to avert another. And we don't. But that isn't a very satisfying apology for God. Multiplying the cases of negligence doesn't establish carefulness.

Father Vaughan is certain God is with us in this War, but he asks, "Is he going to be with us afterwards?" Does Father Vaughan mean that God is only with us so long as we are out to kill large numbers of his children, whose chief fault is that they are as he made them? Really, the less we have of that kind of a God the better.

One of the evening papers remarks that the new Emperor of Austria is a "blue-eyed nonentity" who will be hailed by the Vienna Press as a heaven-born genius. Well, there is nothing unusual in that. Every monarch, so far as we have observed, is hailed as a genius, and "written up" in the Press of the particular country over which they are gracious enough to reign. The virtues go with the office. And when they die, all that the newspaper man need do to find materials for an obituary notice is to look up the record of the last monarch, and alter the name and date.

The entire area of the new cemetery at Surbiton was dedicated by the Bishop of Southwark, assisted by the Rev. E. J. Jones, a Wesleyan minister. The Bishop said he had never heard of a similar happy understanding between Churchmen and Nonconformists. It has taken the Church of England some centuries to respect a dead Nonconformist.

As a mere item of news we note that the Rev. Dr. W. H. Flecker, Master of Dean Close School, Cheltenham, was

charged at Westminster Police Court with stealing from the Army and Navy Stores. One of the assistants said she watched defendant for twenty minutes. She saw him in the book department carrying an attache case and a newspaper. He laid the case on some volumes, and appropriating a book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, from an upper shelf, he placed it in the case, which he shut. In another part of the department he took other books, including several novels, and packed them up in his newspaper. In the stationery department he picked up an attache case from a pile, put it into his newspaper parcel of books, and walked off. The defendant reserved his defence, and was committed for trial.

A Scotch Labour paper has the following:—

Cardinal Gibbons (R. C.) of America, in advocating Conscriptio for the Yankee Branch of the Dubb family, does so with a frankness that has been foreign to the utterances of the bell-weather hierarchs on this side. Writing from the Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Southampton, New York, he declares: "Another advantage is, that the discipline will instil into them a spirit of *obedience to lawful authority*, a virtue too often disregarded in our land of freedom. It will teach them the dignity of *obedience*, which they will regard, not as an act of servility to man, but as a *homage rendered to God*, since they will consider their *superiors* as His representatives.

Rather letting the cat out of the bag!

Writing from "somewhere in the East," an officer says, "There is something Biblical in the way the gods of this ancient land have conspired to punish us. There is malice in the sky and soil; malice of heat and drought; hunger and thirst; and flies; damp and cold and mire; flood, hurricane, fever, and ague, interwoven in the web of circumstance." And, be it remembered, the place is the supposed site of the "Garden of Eden." It sounds like "Revelation" rather than "Genesis."

The Rev. F. W. Gillingham, the cricketer-parson, says, "it is thoroughly immoral to support the Church with a copper, and expect a tip-top service, good sermon, a well-warmed and lighted church. You cannot expect the rare and refreshing fruits of the Church for a penny." What a Secularist Brother Gillingham is, to be sure! He talks as if a church were a cafe-chantant.

The Catholic Church is the only one among the rival Churches of Christendom which has a statesman-like grip of the present situation. Cardinal Mercier, in his dignified protest against the deportation of Belgians, appeals for aid to "believers and unbelievers alike in allied countries, in neutral countries, and even in enemy countries, who have a respect for human dignity." This is a new note in clerical appeals, but it is none the less welcome.

The tenacity of a superstition once set going is well illustrated in the case of Johanna Southcote. She was born in 1750, and died in 1814. Amongst other beliefs concerning her, she was believed to have repeated the miracle of the Virgin Birth. One would have thought that the followers of such a woman would not have survived her death. But a Brighton paper reports a lecture by a clergyman on "Johanna Southcote: Her Life, Times, and the Mysterious Box." The lecturer "unfolded her life, the prophecies she gave, the half million of her followers, her belief in the child that was not born on the physical plane." Recent religious impostures seem tame at the side of this one, and the persistence of it down to this year does away with all cause for wonder at the persistence of Christianity.

The Archbishops of York and Canterbury propose the establishment of five committees to consider how the Church may recapture the nation. We have no doubt they are in earnest in this matter, as their business is just now in a parlous state. As the *Times* says, "there is a widespread neglect of religion and an amazing poverty of spiritual expression in our great industrial centres and agricultural districts." That, we can well believe, causes great concern to the Archbishops. For if they cannot keep the masses in order, of what use are they to those who supply the funds?

Their business is to keep the people under control. When they fail to do this, their utility is gone. Religion is for the "masses." The "classes" have it for the sake of example.

There is a "Microscopical Section" of the Young Men's Christian Association. It would have a hard task to find the Christian theology amid the secular trading ramifications of the Society.

The New Orleans *Times Picayune* says that during the Presidential election in the United States, a leading Methodist Church in St. Louis had wires installed and returns from the whole of the States were announced. Refreshments were also served. This arrangement took the place of the regular prayer-meetings.

Is the truth dawning in the minds of theological gentlemen? According to the Notice Board, the preacher at a Bootle church discoursed on the following, last Sunday:—

Morning: "Man's Chief End."

Evening: "What is Hell?"

The subjects for the previous Sunday were:—

Morning: "Man's Last Illusion."

Evening: "What is Heaven?"

A timid way of letting the cat out of the bag, by answering questions a few hours before asking them.

Rev. H. G. Western, Dorchester, dropped dead on the public road while going to conduct service at a village chapel. There is no moral in the incident, except it be that prayers to be saved from sudden death are quite useless when one is the unfortunate possessor of a weak heart.

The Church of England is to have a Day of Prayer, in connection with the War, on December 31. The Free Churches are also announcing their intention of having a similar performance on the same date. The decision seems to us unwise. It can only lead to confusion. There will be some danger of the Lord confusing the one with the other. Besides, if he answers one, there is no need of the other. There should have been different dates, then the matter would have been clear, and "God" saved all confusion.

A woman crystal-gazer, charged at Clapham with telling fortunes, was arrested while she was on her way to a church bazaar. She knew where to find kind-hearted and soft-headed clients.

Canon Dormer Pierce says that "true progress is seen best in the light of the future life." Unfortunately, so many of his brethren remind us that some of the "light" of the future life comes from the red-hot poker department.

The Southend Town Council has given permission for the placing of a street shrine in a central position of the town. For three centuries such things have been unknown in Essex, and at Rayleigh, a few miles away, there is a memorial to the men who were burnt alive for protesting against similar superstitions. Truly, as Milton says, "Presbyter is but priest writ large."

A Sunday newspaper has published considerable correspondence on the subject of "Prayers to Remove a Curse." One of the greatest curses of our time is the way in which journalists pander to ignorance for the sake of circulation.

The Bishop of London stated at St. Paul's Cathedral that a committee was to be appointed to look into the matter of Church reform. We do not expect the leopard to change its spots.

How "stale, flat, and unprofitable" has the much-boomed "National Mission of Repentance and Hope" become! No one outside the Church—as was to be expected—bothers with it, and even inside it seems to be given up as hopeless. It has only served to demonstrate afresh the intellectual sterility of the Churches, and the impossibility of turning even the War into a source of sectarian profit.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 10, Leicester; December 17, Liverpool; January 7, Chesterfield; January 14, Nottingham; January 28, Swansea; February 4, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 31, Abertillery.
- BONNIE DUNDEE.—We agree with you that when a "K.C." writes seriously of "the progenitors of the human race" passing "from the serenity of the Garden of Eden to a world of toil and strife," he is pretty far gone—too far for criticism.
- H. W. EDWARDS.—Thanks, will prove useful.
- T. WILLIAMS.—You are quite mistaken. We do not object to the clergy going to France, or Salonika, or Jericho—so long as they get away from here.
- J. WRIGHT.—*An Englishman's Farewell to His Church* is published by Messrs. Mills & Boon, Rupert Street, London. Price 1s.
- S. AMES.—It is quite impossible for us to undertake correspondence in the general Press—that is, unless we could squeeze thirty-six hours into the day. One day we hope to properly organize this part of the work.
- J. WILLIAMS.—If *all* did contribute, our Sustentation Fund would be large enough to carry us through all losses for several years. —This correspondent informs us that his experience with the recruiting officer was similar to the case recently noted in these columns. He insisted on affirming, and the officer insisted on his taking the oath. Finally, he was told to "clear out," which he did. He is now, in virtue of the recent decision, a rejected man. And his rejection is due entirely to the stupidity of the recruiting officials.
- J. REID.—We quite fail to see anything inaccurate in a Freethinker describing death as "a great adventure." Adventures are adventures while they last, and an adventure may end in stillness and silence. Besides, it is hard for a Freethinker to be denied all poetic license in his use of language.
- In the letter from "Criminologist," in last week's "Sugar Plums," "the mixing of mankind" should have read the "misery" of mankind.
- E. STAFFORD.—Received.—Shall appear as early as possible.
- H. WILLIAMS.—Your friend's opinion of our pamphlet on *War and Civilization* is very flattering. Many friends have taken advantage of our special offer of the pamphlet at 6s. per 100. We could undertake their free distribution at this end if desired, and if you indicate how they are to be distributed.
- ECCENTRIC.—There is nothing eccentric in being fond of Sir Thomas Browne's works—at least, we hope not. We had a small pocket edition of the *Religio* and the *Urn Burial*, which we carried round for years for reading at odd moments, and never felt in the least eccentric.
- W. E. JARMAINE.—Your suggestion of carrying on an agitation amongst the London Clubs against the L.C.C. resolution is a good one. Some circulars are being sent you for distribution.
- D. THOMAS.—Sorry your communication was overlooked last week. There is no circulating library in connection with the *Freethinker*, but one might be established one day in connection with the N.S.S. You will probably find Buckle's *History of Civilization and Draper's Intellectual Development of Europe* of service, if you have not already read them.
- J. W. WOOD.—The rendering you send us from the *Freethinker* of November 19 is the correct one.
- G. RULE.—Your note reached us on Tuesday afternoon. Too late for use.
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

Sugar Plums.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a member of the N. S. S. Executive, and one of our London lecturers, is now "doing his bit" in the shape of serving in an Essex regiment. He sends us an interesting account of his experience with the officers in charge when it came to answering questions concerning religion. In reply to the question, "What religion?" Mr. Rosetti properly replied "None," and, as a further description, "Atheist." The officer, evidently flabbergasted, replied that he must be either Church of England, Roman Catholic, or Free Church. As the result of Mr. Rosetti's firm attitude the matter was left for a higher authority to deal with. Eventually, Mr. Rosetti was called before the Sergeant-Major and asked his religion. The reply was, "None." This was then taken down without comment.

There was no reason why this course should not have been followed in the first instance. The Army instructions are that he must take down the recruit's "own statement" "without question," and without "any attempt to influence him." We printed the order last February, but as it may be of service, we reprint here:—

ARMY COUNCIL INSTRUCTION.

No. 179 of January, 1916.

War Office, 21st January, 1916.

179. Religious denomination of a Recruit on attestation.

It has recently come to the knowledge of the Army Council that in certain cases Recruiting Officers and others when filling up the attestation papers of recruits enlisting in the Regular Army on a Duration of the War engagement, or in the Territorial Force, are in the habit of asking them to state their religious denominations. It is therefore necessary to point out that on the attestation papers referred to there is no printed question as to religion, and no question on the subject should be addressed to a recruit at the time of his attestation.

In this connection attention is drawn to W.O. letters 27/Gen. No./2514 (Chaplains), of 23rd Nov., 1914, and 27/Gen. No./4279 (Chaplains), of 30th June, 1915, and all Officers and N.C.Os. are reminded that whenever it may be necessary to obtain information as to a soldier's religion, as for instance for the completion of his identity disc., etc., his own statement on the point should be taken without any attempt to influence him, and should be acted on without question. 27/Gen. No./5063 (A.G. 2B).

By Command of the Army Council.

That should be plain enough, and in the face of that "Instruction" the higher authorities must be acquitted of all blame. A soldier has the right to demand that Atheist, Agnostic, or Freethinker should be entered as descriptive of his attitude towards religion, and he should insist on this being done.

We regret to see that it has been decided to raise the price of the *Literary Guide*, commencing with the January issue, to twopence-halfpenny. It may, says the editor, have to be increased to threepence later on. The increase is, of course, due to the growing wages and paper bills in connection with newspaper production, which, as everyone is aware, represents a very serious outlay. The *Times* has already raised its price to three-halfpence, and it is expected that other papers will follow suit. The position is the same for all. As an alternative to raising the price of the *Literary Guide*, the editor requires an immediate guarantee fund of £100 to cover the year's estimated deficit on the twelve issues. So that, perhaps, the increase may not materialize after all. We hope not, as a rise in price means decrease in circulation, and lessened usefulness.

It was this latter consideration that decided us against any rise in the price of the *Freethinker*. It would have been possible to have covered the loss by raising the price or printing fewer pages, but either course involved decreased utility, and we were resolved that nothing should stand in the way of keeping the paper at its old level. So far we have succeeded, and we hope to always subordinate purely financial considerations to the interests of the great cause which the *Freethinker* represents. We hope to see even

this War through with an unchanged paper, and to say, when peace is declared, that not even a European War could deter us from our course. We shall be very proud to be able to say this, and, frankly, it will be something to be proud of.

With regard to our own Sustentation Fund. It will be observed that over £200 has been subscribed. This wipes off the deficit up to the beginning of October, and leaves something in hand towards the new loss which is running along at about the same rate as last year. To be quite frank, the more that is subscribed before the Fund closes the better, as it will save our running into debt—a thing we greatly dislike—and do away with a deal of personal anxiety and worry. Some capital is also needed for the advance purchase of paper for new publications. Still, we do not intend the Fund to remain open indefinitely, and if, say, January 14 is fixed on as the closing date, that will give everyone an opportunity of subscribing who intends doing so. For the rest, it would be ungracious not to say here how very deeply we appreciate the ready response to our appeal, and the many, many encouraging and appreciative letters that have reached us.

Mr. Howell Smith has received the names of fourteen persons who have signified their desire to join his reading and discussion class. The subject selected for a beginning is "The Origin and Growth of the Christian Church," and the first meeting will be held at the N. S. S. Offices, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C., on Thursday, December 7, at 7.30 p.m. Christians as well as non-Christians will be welcomed, as the aim is to promote study and stimulate natural criticism. It is also hoped that this class may lead to others in both London and elsewhere.

We regret to say that Mr. J. W. Gott has been again in trouble with the authorities for "publicly offering for sale a profane book." This is the reading of the newspaper—the *Birkenhead News*—which gives us the only information we have on the matter. We have written to see if we can get particulars, and until these are available refrain from saying anything in detail. But it looks as though the prosecution took place under one of the Police Acts, which were not intended to cover "blasphemy" cases at all. The proceedings were very summary, as the offence was committed on the evening of Tuesday, November 21, and a sentence of fourteen days' hard labour passed the following morning.

The North London Branch continues its Sunday evening discussions, with satisfaction to all concerned. Last Sunday there was a good address given by Mr. Harris on "Geology and Genesis," followed by discussion. To-day (Dec. 3) a discussion is to take place between Mr. Palmer and Mr. Coldwell on "Do We Want the Catholic Church?" Mr. Palmer opens in the negative.

The course of lectures in Avondale Hall, Brixton, which was financed by the Special Propaganda Fund, was brought to a close by a lecture from Miss Kough last Sunday evening. The experiment was so far encouraging that the Camberwell Branch has decided to continue the meetings there during December—if not beyond. The speaker to-day (December 3) will be Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, and the lecture will commence at 7 o'clock. We hope South London Freethinkers will see to it that the meetings are made well known.

All Freethinkers who are looking round for a suitable gift for their boy or girl friends will do well to invest in a copy of *The World's Wonder Stories for Boys and Girls*, by Mr. A. G. Whyte (Watts & Co., 6s. net.). Mr. Whyte cannot be said to be endowed with that rare quality of direct simplicity which appeals to the very young mind, but for youths of, say, from ten to fifteen years of age, he has provided both a useful and entertaining outline of universal evolution. All the questions that arise in the young mind in connection with the physical universe, with evolution, with the origin of religion, and the nature of morals, are dealt with and answered. It is on the side of literature for the young that Freethought is weakest,

and we hope that Mr. Whyte's effort will meet with the success it richly deserves. Even those of a more advanced age than that mentioned might well read this work with advantage. Lastly, the volume is well produced, with a cover design, colours by T. A. Brock, and a number of plates, which greatly add to the attractiveness of the volume. The book may be procured either direct from the publishers, or by sending to our Business Manager, Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.

Our Sustentation Fund.

THE object of this Fund is to make good the loss on the *Freethinker*—entirely due to increased cost of materials, etc.—from October, 1915, to October, 1916, and to provide against the inevitable further losses during the continuation of the War.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £202 16s. 6d.—Mathematicus, 10s. 6d.; James Adams, 6s. 8d.; Fred Cox, 6s. 8d.; John Williams, 6s. 8d.; F. Smith, 2s.; C. J., £3; Dr. A. W. Laing, £5 5s.; Col. Stuart Graham, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. Beatrice Bayfield, 4s.

Sir Hiram Maxim.

THE death of Sir Hiram Maxim removes a striking personality from the public life of this country. American by birth, English by choice, a "chronic inventor" by nature, few men have led a more varied life, or a more industrious one. A man of "many inventions," his devices have ranged from a cure for asthma to the deadly machine gun, and from a mechanical mousetrap to smokeless powder and incandescent lighting. At the age of seventy-six he passed away, busy to the last with his inventions, engaged in work which never appears to have been labour, but only an enjoyable outlet for abounding mental energy and physical activity.

We are not concerned here with Sir Hiram's career as an inventor. That has been quite sufficiently dealt with in the ordinary Press. Our main purpose is to make good a calculated omission in that quarter. For it is characteristic of the mingled cowardice and hypocrisy of the English Press that no mention should have been made of the fact that Sir Hiram Maxim was an avowed Freethinker. The nearest approach to a disclosure of fact appeared in the *Star*, to the effect that he was a "Rationalist," which was certainly a mild way of putting it, and might mean anything. This omission, however, could not have been accidental, because Sir Hiram made no secret of his opinions, either in public or in private. Unlike many of our public men, he took no pains to hide his Freethought, and availed himself of many opportunities for expressing it. He published many letters attacking the Christian creed, besides writing *Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book*, which was a sustained attack on Christianity, chiefly by way of a criticism of Christian Missions in China. He was a great admirer of, and regular subscriber to, the *Freethinker*, and only a few weeks before his death sent a cheque for £10 towards our Sustentation Fund. And, again, as an example to so many of our public men, he strongly desired a Secular Funeral Service—a desire which, to the credit of Lady Maxim, is being honourably fulfilled.

In pious but religiously hypocritical England there are things which all Freethinkers will remember with gratitude. We know we have the best brains of the country on our side. If only that were accompanied by moral courage our work would be, comparatively, child's play.

It is significant of the character of Christian civilization that the obituary notices in the Press should have

laid chief stress upon his work as the inventor of the Maxim gun. Christian civilization can appreciate and pay the man who invents something that will kill; it will neglect and starve the man who spends his life in devising something that will save. Sir Hiram was not a militarist by instinct or by profession. He was too deeply impressed with the value of Confucian ethics for that. And he would, we believe, rather that his name should have been permanently identified with a more peaceful invention. But he was a born inventor, and his inventive genius was turned in the direction of improving firearms by a chance remark made to him by a Jew in Vienna.

On that point we note something that is just a little curious. The *Daily Telegraph* report of the incident is that the Jew said to Sir Hiram: "Hang your chemistry and electricity; if you wish to make a pile of money, invent something that will enable these Europeans to cut each other's throats with greater facility." We remember his telling us of this incident some years ago, when "Christian" took the place of "European" in the story. We cannot, of course, say which is the more correct version, but the remark struck us at the time, and certainly "Christian" would have been the most natural expression for a Jew to use in the circumstances.

Here is another story which we remember him telling us at the time the *Daily Telegraph* correspondence was running. He had contributed a letter to the controversy, and, soon after its appearance, a lady put to him the query:—

"What is your belief, Sir Hiram?" "Oh," he replied solemnly, "I can believe anything. You see, madam, most people tackle the question of belief in the wrong way. Now, I am a scientific man, and I went about this matter of belief in a scientific way. Take, for instance, the story of Jonah and the whale. Many people try to believe the story as it stands, and the result is failure. Now, I went into training for it. I commenced with a very small fish, and when I could believe that I took a little larger fish, and so on until I reached the dimensions of the Bible story. The result of this training is that I can now believe almost anything. There is only one thing in front of me, and that is transubstantiation. But I am hard at work on that, and I expect to believe it very soon."

The story is characteristic of the shrewd humour which he threw into many of his criticisms of Christianity. There was often quite a "Yankee" flavour about these, and they were none the less effective on that account. In addition to the publication of *Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book*, there were several Freethought leaflets of which he was the author, but which were published anonymously.

We have just time to add (we are writing this on Tuesday, November 28) that the funeral took place to-day at West Norwood Cemetery, in the presence of several thousand spectators. Mr. F. J. Gould conducted a Secular Service in accordance with Sir Hiram's wishes. Mr. Gorham represented the Rationalist Press Association, and Mr. J. T. Lloyd represented the N. S. S. Tuesday being publishing day, the requirements of the *Freethinker*, as well as other engagements, prevented Mr. Cohen being present.

We may appropriately close this sketch by what may be called Sir Hiram Maxim's own confession of faith:—

We are no longer children; mystery and falsehood are no longer necessary; and I do not hesitate to say that, if we were to take all our religious books, and treat the myths, falsehoods, and interpolations in them as the Russian Censors treat objectionable articles in the English papers when they enter their country, we should gain materially. I do not believe that the welfare of nations depends on the teaching of myths and fables to our children, and I do not believe that it is right to tax

our industries to teach anything but correct and truthful ideas of the universe in which we live. I do not recognize any difference between the laws of God and the laws of Nature. If anyone has a God whose laws differ from natural laws, that God is a false god, just in so far as he is untrue to nature. I believe that plain, naked truth, unadulterated with falsehood or myth, could be made more attractive than the religion of the present day. I see no reason why morality should not be inculcated on scientific lines; and I feel that, as the nineteenth was the century of scientific investigation and mechanical reform, brought about by some of the most remarkable giants of intellect that the world has ever known, so the present century will be a century of religious and moral reform—a reform that will be startling both in its range and influence.

C. C.

Science as the Servitor of Man.

EIGHTY odd elements are now known to science, but the classic conception of four elementary substances only (fire, air, earth, and water) dominated the world of thought right down to the period of Robert Boyle in the seventeenth century. And this antique belief survives in popular opinion even in our own times.

The production and use of fire have long been familiar to all. How early man first ascertained the means of generating fire—whether by friction, through witnessing some conflagration set up by lightning, or by the burning of some combustible material ignited by the flying sparks given off by the chipping of his primitive flint tools—remains an unsolved problem. But the universal sacredness of the hearth, and the widespread recognition of the value of fire, prove that the most rude races have always treasured the flame as a priceless possession. The story of Prometheus who stole this blessing from the haughty gods who withheld the gift from man, coupled with the faith of the disciples of Zoroaster, who venerate fire as the chosen abode of the divinity, afford further evidences of human thankfulness for the sweet light and generous heat of the beneficent flame.

Although the myth and legend which encircled the ancient and mediæval hearth have receded before the discovery that fire is simply a manifestation of chemical activity, and that it may at any moment be produced by merely striking a match, yet the phenomena of combustion remain exceedingly wonderful. And the part played by this chemical process in modern manufactures, in aerial, terrestrial, and ocean transit, in the multifarious methods of artificial lighting, and other essentials of civilization, render combustion more marvellous than all the fading fancies of the past.

Atmospheric air is a mixture of two invisible gases, oxygen and nitrogen, and it also contains small percentages of carbon-dioxide and water-vapour, which are extremely important to living things, as well as traces of the rare elements helium, argon, neon, krypton, and xenon. Oxygen gas forms about one-fifth of the air by volume; it is the vehicle of combustion, and not only causes it to occur, but so powerfully promotes it that, when a glowing piece of wood is plunged into this gas it immediately flames, while the element phosphorus burns with an overpowering brilliancy.

Oxygen constitutes nearly half of all the substances of our planet, while the two elements, oxygen and silicon, together comprise about three quarters of the sum total of terrestrial matter. Oxygen is a very vigorous element, and readily combines with most others, and this mode of combination is termed oxidation. The other leading atmospheric element, nitrogen, is, on the contrary, a sluggish gas which extinguishes the most brilliantly burning phosphorus when this glowing substance is

introduced into it. Combustion or burning, then, as Lavoisier demonstrated, is the resultant of the chemical combination of the inflammable material with the oxygen of our atmosphere. Nitrogen is not concerned in the phenomenon, but serves to restrain the energy of burning bodies.

The question arises why substances of a combustible character do not ignite when exposed to the atmosphere. Gas may freely escape into the air, highly inflammable oils, fats, and other substances susceptible to rapid combustion may remain in contact with air, or even pure oxygen, without appreciable change. The explanation is, that the energies of the oxygen are unable to exert themselves until combustible materials attain a temperature termed the ignition point of substances. This point of ignition varies with different substances, as in lighting a fire we see that paper ignites more easily than wood, and wood more readily than coal. The energy of chemical change is intensified by an increase in temperature. The higher the temperature of combustible things the greater their reaction with oxygen gas, with the consequent evolution of further heat until the substances reach their ignition point, when the reaction proceeds with such rapidity that the heat generated by the activities of oxidation suffice to exalt the materials to a state of incandescence and to sustain the flaming substances at a temperature above the point of ignition. In a disastrous fire which occurred some years ago in the City, the heat became so insupportable that the water poured on the flames was immediately transformed into vapour.

When the temperature of a burning substance falls below the point of ignition, combustion ceases and the fire goes out. This apparent truism is really an important verity which lends itself to easy demonstration. As Professor Findlay points out in his excellent *Chemistry in the Service of Man* :—

If we hold a piece of metal wire gauze at a distance of half an inch or an inch above a burner from which coal gas is issuing, and if we apply a light to the gas above the gauze, we shall find that the flame of burning gas is arrested by the gauze and does not pass through to the burner; for the wire gauze conducts the heat of the flame away so rapidly that the temperature is lowered to below the ignition point of the gas. Only after the gauze has become quite hot does the gas below the gauze become ignited. Similarly, if the gauze is brought down on a flame of burning gas, the flame is extinguished at the gauze. The gas itself, however, passes through, as can be shown by bringing a light to the upper surface of the gauze, when the gas will take fire.

These phenomena were adapted to the service of man by Humphrey Davy when he invented the miner's safety lamp. The lamp now used by the toilers in the mines, owing to the transformations it has undergone since Davy's day, betrays small signs of its safety securing powers. But a study of this contrivance shows that all the openings which admit air to the flame, or through which the heated air and products of combustion emerge to the outer air, are covered with thin wire gauze. The consequence is, that although the explosive gas—the fire damp—can penetrate this protective gauze and burn within the lamp, the flame is prevented from passing through the gauze and entering into the highly explosive mixture of air and fire damp present in the mine. The presence of fire damp is denoted by the appearance of a "cap" of blue over the flame of the miner's lamp. And the greater the amount of fire damp present, the bigger becomes this blue danger signal.

Even in these days of the match tax we light our fires and pipes with such ease that we forget how extremely modern matches are. Rude peoples still employ the

primitive plan of rubbing bits of dry wood together to obtain light, and the flint and steel were used for the same purpose by our great grandfathers.

It was not until the nineteenth century that practical methods were adopted to adapt the discoveries of the chemist to the production of fire. One pioneer among others was the Frenchman, Chancel, who met with some success in securing this end. He utilized a mixture of sugar, potassium chlorate and gum for tipping strips of wood. When light was required this composition was dipped into oil of vitriol and then "the sugar took fire and burned at the expense of the oxygen contained in the potassium chlorate; and this combustion was then communicated to the wood splint." These curious matches were articles of commerce down to 1850.

John Walker, about 1827, invented a match called the lucifer, which was the earliest friction match. This was tipped by a mixture of potassium chlorate and sulphide of antimony and ignited when pulled between folds of glass paper. Several attempts were made to employ phosphorus and for many years phosphorus matches were in general use. In the generation of fire these proved the best so far invented. The heads of these matches—the Congreves—were formed mainly from a mixture of phosphorus and some substance well endowed with oxygen. But phosphorus is an extremely inflammable element, and these matches were responsible for many fatal conflagrations. Again, phosphorus poisoning became common, and the deadly disease, "phossy jaw" (necrosis of the jawbone) smote the workers in the match factories. So serious became the evils flowing from the use of white phosphorus in the match industry that its employment has been legally prohibited in Britain.

But phosphorus exists in another form than that of the readily combustible but poisonous white state. It is found in the condition of a red powder which is far less inflammable and is non-poisonous. In fact this form of phosphorus is obtained by heating white phosphorus to a temperature of 480 F. A German scientist made red phosphorus a commercial possibility, and the Swedes adopted the discovery and developed the famous safety match. The match-tip will not ignite when drawn along an ordinary surface, but bursts into flame when struck on a specially prepared surface. And the wood itself is subjected to peculiar treatment, so that the match turns black immediately it is blown out.

The match, once laboriously made by hand, is now, for all practical purposes, a machine made commodity. The machine chops the blocks of wood into splints of the size desired, tips them with the combustible preparation, and packs them into boxes, which it likewise manufactures and labels. "A single machine," it is stated, "can thus turn out over 5,000,000 matches in a day..... The firm of Bryant & May, the largest British manufacturers, can alone produce, in the course of a year, as many as 90,000,000,000 matches, not to mention wax vestas and tapers, and it has been estimated that the consumption of matches in Great Britain amounts to about nine matches per head of population per day."

Thus, the easy production of fire, once so difficult, is now within the reach of all. Thanks to science, it is no longer necessary to steal it from the graceless gods.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

A picture much in evidence in fine-art shops is one entitled, "Mother, Your Bible Saved Me!" The drawing depicts a returned soldier showing his mother a battered Bible. Something similar has been placed on the market during each war for some decades past. Evidently someone understands the Christian public.

Death of W. J. Ramsey.

THE death of William James Ramsey, at the age of 72, breaks another link with the older generation of Freethinkers. Himself the son of a Freethinker of the school of Southwell and Hetherington, he was brought up in an atmosphere of heresy, and received an early introduction to militant Freethought. Before he was twenty, he came under the influence of Charles Bradlaugh, and a little later became a prominent figure at the Old Street Hall of Science. He held the position of Chairman there for over sixteen years, and was actively interested in the organization of outdoor propaganda. When Bradlaugh became his own publisher, Mr. Ramsey was offered, and accepted, the position of manager.

In 1881 he was associated with Mr. Foote in launching the *Freethinker*—he as Proprietor and Manager, and Mr. Foote as Editor. When, in 1883, the *Freethinker* prosecution took place, he was one of the three indicted, the other two being Mr. Foote and Mr. Kemp—Ramsey received nine months' imprisonment.

After his liberation he returned with renewed zest to his Freethought work, and was well known at all the London open-air stations. Always good-humoured and humorous, he could usually be depended upon for keeping his audiences.

In addition to his Freethought work, he was a keen politician, and was closely associated with the work of the Metropolitan Radical Federation. As an outdoor speaker on political occasions, we believe he was greatly appreciated.

The funeral is arranged to take place at Abney Park Cemetery on Saturday, December 2, at 2.30. We have no doubt there will be a good gathering of London Freethinkers to pay their last tribute of respect to one whose life was spent in the service of the best of causes.

Talks With Young Listeners.

XIX.—The Man Who Suffered.

THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil; and there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His property also was 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 pairs of oxen, 500 she-asses, and a host of slaves; so that this man was the greatest of all men of the East.

The Lord Yahweh sat on his throne in cloud-land one day, and the sons of God came before him in courtly assembly, and among them was Satan. Now, it was the business of the angel Satan to accuse men of their sins, so that no wrong-doer might escape pain, no matter how meek and mild and holy he looked. Hence, this angel was sometimes called the Adversary, or Witness-Against.

"Whence came you, Satan?" asked the Lord of Heaven.

"I have walked up and down the earth," answered the dark angel.

"Have you seen my saintly Job?"

"Saintly; ha, ha!" laughed Satan. "Does Job worship God for nothing? Why, he grows fat on your favour. Ruin his property, and then see!"

"Very well, Accuser; ruin his property and let me know the result."

Satan salaamed, and flew down to the world, passing many a star on his heavenly road.

All in a day it was done. Wild Bedouins rushed to

the pastures, and seized the herds and all Job's herdsmen, except only one who escaped to tell the tale. Lightning killed all the shepherds, except only one who escaped to tell the tale. Robbers from Chaldaea drove off the camels, and slew all the drivers except only one who escaped to tell the tale. A whirlwind crushed the house in which all Job's children sat at a feast, and killed every one, and all the slaves except only one who escaped to tell the tale.

Job got up quietly, shaved all the hair from his scalp in sign of grief; then he rent his mantle, and he made a salaam and said:—

"A naked baby I came from my mother's womb; a naked man shall I die. Yahweh gave me all I had, and Yahweh has taken his gifts back; blessed be his name."

The court of heaven assembled again, and the dark angel bowed with the rest.

"Well," asked Yahweh, "what of Job? You see he is a saint."

"Try him closer," sneered Satan, "touch his bone; touch his flesh; and he will curse you to your face."

"As you will," nodded Yahweh.

Away the Adversary fled, and he touched the man of Uz; he touched and touched, till Job was one mass of horrible disease from head to foot, nor could he stay in his house, or tent; he went to a place apart, and squatted on an ash-heap like a dreadful skeleton.

"Curse God, and let him slay you, Job," said his wife. "Better die than be like this."

"Good comes to us," replied Job, "and evil comes to us. We must take it all from God as it comes."

Satan heard, and turned away, and he appears no more in this tale.

Three friends of Job had news of his trouble, and they agreed to go and comfort him. When they saw him, he looked so unlike his old self that they burst into tears, and they tore their cloaks, and sprinkled dust on their heads, and sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. None spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

After that, he said, in a hoarse voice:—

"Curse my birthday! Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it."

"It will do you good," said the First Friend. "Happy is the man whom God chastens."

"I wish now that I might die," groaned Job.

"You cannot be a saint," said the Second Friend, "for God will not cast away saints."

"But," said Job, "I am only a man, after all; and I am like the prey hunted by a fierce lion!"

"You are punished less than you deserve," exclaimed the Third Friend. "Besides, you cannot know all God's reasons. Can man, by searching, find out God?"

"Miserable comforters are you all," shouted Job. "I have heard such talk before; and, if you were sick like me, I could talk to you with vain words. I cannot find one wise man among you."

Thus they argued, till the Three Comforters (who did not comfort) dropped into silence, and listened to Job as he talked of the memories of his past life—how he had loved truth and goodness and wisdom. Wisdom, he said, was not to be dug from gold mines; nor could the far-flying bird discover it; nor did it lie in the depths of the sea; nor could it be bought with red rubies. He had loved wisdom, and people had loved him. Young men bowed as he passed, and old men rose up till he was seated at the assembly by the village gate. The ear that heard his voice blessed him, and the eye that saw him was glad; because he gave help to the orphan and the widow, and aided the man who found no comfort elsewhere. But the world was strangely gone wrong;

and thistles seemed to grow instead of wheat, and cockle-weeds in place of honest barley.

At this word "barley," Job ceased; and sad was the scene, as he lay still on the ashes, and the Three Comforters (who did not comfort) bent their dusty heads, and gazed at the ground.¹

A dark cloud arose in the south. It came nearer and nearer, till it spread over the sky, and the land of Uz was overshadowed; and there was a roar of a whirlwind.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:—

"Who is this that uses words without knowing what he says? Gird up your loins like a bold man, and reply to my questions. Where were you when I made the world? Where were you when my stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy as they saw the creation? Who put the sea in its place, and ordered it to flow in tides upon the shore, thus far and no farther? Did you? Who made the path for the rays of light? Who collected the snowflakes in their cloudland, and made a way for the lightning and the thunder? Who lit the glittering stars, and stretched the sparkling belt of Orion on the midnight sky? Who sent the lion to hunt for prey, the wild ass to career over the wilderness, the deer to leap, the horse to gallop amid the armed men, his neck clothed with thunder, and his valiant spirit caring naught for the terrors of battle, when trumpets blow and captains shout?"

The voice paused.

"I have no word to say," said Job.

No, he could not speak against the voice of the whirlwind; but, for all that, Yahweh had not yet told him why he should have to bear such dreadful pain.

"Again!" sounded the voice. "Again, I ask questions. Can you make monsters as I can? Could you make a hippo, with its thick hide, its enormous bulk, its stout limbs, its huge mouth for swallowing, its powerful stroke for swimming? Could you create the scaly crocodile of the river, its fierce snapping jaws, its fiery breath, its terrible teeth, its proud defiance of the puny weapons of the children of men?"

"I have no word to say," said Job. "I sit here in dust and ashes."

No, he could not speak against the voice of the whirlwind; but, for all that, Yahweh had not told him why he should have to bear such dreadful pain.

"As to you three so-called Comforters," said the whirlwind, "you have talked less common-sense than my servant Job. Offer seven bullocks and seven rams in burnt sacrifice, and ask Job to pray for you, dullards that you are."

The Three Dullards offered the sacrifice, and Job, who was now restored to health, generously prayed for them, and all was well.

Then came all Job's brothers, and sisters, and all his other friends, and they did eat bread with him in his house. Every man gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.

So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning. For he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 couples of oxen, and 1,000 she-asses; and, in due time, he had also seven sons and three daughters; and, in all the land of Uz, there were no women so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them property. After this, Job lived 140 years, and he saw growing up his sons, and his sons' sons.

But he never saw why he should have to bear such dreadful pain.

F. J. GOULD.

¹ The speeches by Elihu, in chapters xxxii. to xxxvii. are now accounted by all critics an interpolation which spoils the poem; so they are here left out.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 7, C. E. Ratcliffe, "Whence? Why? Whither?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Do We Want the Catholic Church?" T. H. Palmer, negative; G. E. J. Coldwell, affirmative.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park): 3, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller, "Lecky"; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Kells, "Why Christianity Fails"; 6.30, Messrs. Beale, Saphin, and Hyatt.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, E. Egerton Stafford, "Early Christianity."

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