

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

MRS. BESANT CORNERED.

MRS. BESANT'S short letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, which is referred to in our paragraphs, promised to deal with the *Westminster Gazette* revelations three months hence. The month she mentioned was April, and of all days in that month the first would have been the most appropriate. On second thoughts, however, she decided to make at least a partial reply at once. It did not require much sagacity to see that such a long delay might prove fatal. Judgment might, in the meantime, go by default, or the public might then be tired of hearing about Theosophy, and utterly indifferent about the fate or the reputation of the Theosophical Society. Mrs. Besant has, therefore, forwarded her exculpation, or explanation, or whatever she likes to call it; and the long, verbose document was published on Tuesday. It occupied three columns and a half, and was printed in large type. Greater prominence could not have been given to it if it had been a manifesto by Mr. Gladstone in the midst of a national crisis. Yet it only concerns the intrigues and squabbles of a comparatively insignificant Society. What a testimony to the public interest in quarrels and scandal! What a testimony, also, to the respectability of superstition! Mrs. Besant as a Secularist might have been honored with twenty or thirty lines of small type; Mrs. Besant as a Theosophist is allowed to riot over the principal page of a great daily newspaper. Look on this picture and on this; and then reflect on the boasted intelligence of this fag-end of the nineteenth century.

The *Westminster Gazette* calls Mrs. Besant's long letter "a very pitiful document," and speaks of its "absence of all clear reasoning," its "avoidance of all sharp issues," its "mental wobbling," and its "moral flabbiness." Feebleness and laxity are its chief characteristics. You may search it in vain for any trace of Mrs. Besant's old vivacity. It concludes with a long-winded bid for Christian sympathy. Mrs. Besant will imitate "the holy Initiate"—Jesus Christ to wit—who was accused of consorting with sinners. If her "brother" Judge has "simulated" and "duped" her, she will still work with him. She will ask him to resign, but if he declines to do so she will not "separate" herself from her "brother." Of course not. Brother Judge knows too much. He holds the key of the Mahatma business; and, without Mahatmas, the Theosophical Society is a hook without bait.

We will go through Mrs. Besant's verbiage to the very heart of the matter. More than three years ago, soon after Madame Blavatsky's death, Mrs. Besant went to the Hall of Science and delivered her farewell lecture. "Mr. Foote," she says, "had charged Madame Blavatsky with forging the *Occult World* letters, and I said I believed the various letters I had received in June, July, August to be genuine." We are now favored with a verbatim report of her startling announcement on this point:—

"You have known me in this hall for sixteen and a half years. You have never known me lie to you. My worst public enemy through the whole of my life never cast a slur upon my integrity. Everything else they have sullied; but my truth never: and I tell you that since Madame Blavatsky left I have had letters in the same writing and from the same person. Unless you think that dead persons write—and I do not think so—this is rather a curious fact against the whole challenge

of fraud. I do not ask you to believe me, but I tell you this on the faith of a record which has never been sullied by a conscious lie."

This extraordinary announcement caused a "sensation," as well it might. Mrs. Besant subsequently assured an interviewer that these Mahatma messages came "not through the post," but by "precipitation," and "in a way which some people would call miraculous."

Note the use to which these Mahatma letters were put. They were to vindicate Madame Blavatsky against the most formal and circumstantial charges of forgery; they were to prove the existence of Mahatmas; they were to establish the reality of "precipitation," which, in any honest use of the word, is miraculous; and they were to show, though of course indirectly, that the occult mantle of Madame Blavatsky had fallen upon Mrs. Besant. And all this tremendous edifice was based upon nothing whatever but Mrs. Besant's bare word! She submitted no evidence, she invited no investigation. Nay, the very suggestion of inquiry was met with a theatrical air of injured innocence—"Do you doubt my honor, sir? Am I not a lady?" And the cream of the joke was, that the lady claimed to be, above all, "scientific."

Mrs. Besant is now compelled to admit—not only to the Theosophic inner circle, but to the world at large—that the letters she announced so oracularly were forgeries. She played the confidence-trick upon the public after it had been played upon herself. She used a forgery to prove that Madame Blavatsky was no forger. And the lady who acted in this ridiculous fashion, the lady who duped others by standing sponsor for a very vulgar deception, pretended to have access to sources of wisdom which are inaccessible to common mortals! She questioned the stars and fell into a pit.

Let there be no misunderstanding. What we state is not an inference, but Mrs. Besant's explicit admission. "On the letters," she says, "I was duped." And she adds, "I willingly take any blame on my gullibility that may be cast upon me."

How generous! How humble! But is it done "willingly"? Nothing of the kind. It is done under irresistible pressure. Mrs. Besant's attitude in the whole of this wretched business is an illustration of the old adage that you cannot touch pitch without being defiled. Behind every mystery there is always a cheat. Dabblers in the "occult" are sure to get more or less corrupted. They wink at trickery for the sake of "the cause"; they are deceived themselves, they deceive others; and when they are undeceived they try to keep silence, rather than have their vanity wounded or suffer a loss of infallibility.

Mrs. Besant was bound in honor to undeceive the very people she had deceived. It was her plain duty to go to the Hall of Science again and unsay what she had said. The ordeal would have been a painful one, but Mrs. Besant is always boasting of her readiness to suffer in the cause of truth.

In the ordinary sense of the word, we do not dispute Mrs. Besant's integrity. But what of her judgment? How can any sensible person place the slightest reliance upon it in future? She has said that Charles Bradlaugh, for some time before his death, had lost all confidence in her judgment; which simply means that he had the sagacity to see what subsequent events have painfully demonstrated.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

RECENT attempts to introduce "The Apostles' Creed" into Board schools, and to obtain a decision from the Education Department that this is not in opposition to the fourteenth clause of the Elementary Education Act (33 & 34 Vict., 75), which provides that "no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school," render it advisable to give fresh attention to that creed. In *The Crimes of Christianity* some orthodox authorities will be found cited who admit that the Apostles' Creed is one of the many instances of pious forgery imposed on the credulity of the Christian world.

Dean Stanley, in an article on "The Creed of the Early Christians," in the *Nineteenth Century* (August, 1880), wrote: "The creed of the Roman Church came to be called 'The Apostles' Creed' from the legend that the Apostles had each of them contributed a clause. It was successively enlarged by 'The Remission of Sins,' 'The Life Eternal,' then by 'The Resurrection of the Flesh,' then by 'The Descent into Hell' and 'The Communion of the Saints.'"

Principal Tulloch, who writes the article "Creeds" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (vol. vi., p. 561, 9th edition), says: "The growth of this creed is involved in considerable obscurity. The tradition which ascribes it to the apostles themselves, it is needless to say, has no authority, and does not reach beyond the fifth century, if it can be carried back so far. The definite source of the legend is supposed to be two sermons spuriously attributed to St. Augustine, and found in the appendix to his works." So that the ascription of this forgery to the apostles depends itself upon other forgeries, probably the work of the same monkish gang.

Professor Adolf Harnack, in Schaff's *Religious Encyclopædia*, says: "The text, Latin and Greek, first occurs in a manuscript from the eighth or ninth century of the *Psalterium Grecum et Romanum*, erroneously ascribed to Gregory the Great." So the earliest manuscript is bound up with another forgery. The legend is that the apostles made the creed, by each putting a clause. Thus Peter said, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty"; John, "Maker of Heaven and Earth"; James, "And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord"; Andrew, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"; Philip, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried"; Thomas, "He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead"; Bartholomew, "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty"; Matthew, "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead"; James, the son of Alphæus, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church"; Simon Zelotes, "The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins"; Jude, "The resurrection of the body"; Matthias, "The life everlasting." There are some disagreements in the various reports of the legend as to the authors of the various sections, but all agree, with monkish humor, in making the sceptical Thomas commit himself to the declaration that Jesus rose from the dead. "This legend," says Harnack, "is contemporary with the creed itself." Professor Harnack points out that the earlier forms of the Apostles' Creed omitted some of the most important dogmatic clauses. He says: "It is one of the best established results of history that the clause, born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, does not belong to the earliest gospel preaching."* His conclusion is, that the Apostles' Creed is "the baptismal confession of the Church of Southern Gaul, dating from the middle, or rather from the second half, of the fifth century."

J. Rawson Lumby, B.D., in *The History of the Creeds*, brings it later. He says (p. 171): "The exact words first occur in the Creed given by Pirminius, a bishop who labored in France and Germany about the middle of the eighth century. This date, A.D. 750, may therefore be assigned to the first appearance of the Apostolic Creed in its present form." Again he says (p. 173): "Though the Creed has been found in the precise form we now have it, it would be a mistake to suppose that it was of general

acceptance at the date of Pirminius. Even down to the fifteenth century variations of the language are to be found."

M. Michel Nicolas, a learned French Protestant, in his investigations into *Le Symbole des Apôtres*, finds the document "without the least dogmatic authority," and the only use of it is to afford us a list of the successive formations of Christian belief during the ages which witnessed its birth and development (p. 334). He says: "Not only is the Apostles' Creed not the work of those venerable personages to whom legend attributes it, but it is even far from being a faithful scheme of their doctrines. On the one hand, we find in it doctrines which they did not know, and others of which they formed to themselves an entirely different conception; and, on the other hand, there are wanting in it many of those to which they attached an extreme importance [such as the near approach of the end of the world], and which they considered as constituting the very essence of Christianity" (p. 75).

One instance of contradiction will suffice: While the Apostles' Creed affirms the resurrection of the flesh, St. Paul declares flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

WAS CHRIST A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER?

(Continued from page 22.)

PROFESSOR HUXLEY, in the *Nineteenth Century*, No. 144, pp. 178-186, points out that Christians have no right to force their idealistic portraits of Jesus on the unbiassed scientific world, whose business it is to study realities and to separate fiction from fact. The Professor's words are: "In the course of other inquiries, I have had to do with fossil remains, which looked quite plain at a distance, and became more and more indistinct as I tried to define their outline by close inspection. There was something there—something which, if I could win assurance about it, might mark a new epoch in the history of the earth; but, study as long as I might, certainty eluded my grasp. So has it been with me in my efforts to define the grand figure of Jesus as it lies in the primitive strata of Christian literature. Is he the kindly, peaceful Christ depicted in the catacombs? Or is he the stern judge who frowns above the altar of Saints Cosmas and Damianus? Or can he be rightly represented in the bleeding ascetic broken down by physical pain of too many mediæval pictures? Are we to accept the Jesus of the second or the Jesus of the fourth Gospel as the true Jesus? What did he really say and do? and how much that is attributed to him in speech and action is the embroidery of the various parties into which his followers tended to split themselves within twenty years of his death, when even the three-fold tradition was only nascent? . . . If a man can find a friend, the hypostasis of all his hopes, the mirror of his ethical ideal, in the Jesus of any or all of the Gospels, let him live by faith in that ideal. Who shall, or can, forbid him? But let him not delude himself that his faith is evidence of the objective reality of that in which he trusts. Such evidence is to be obtained only by the use of the methods of science as applied to history and to literature, and it amounts, at present, to very little."

Equally emphatic are the remarks of John Vickers, the author of *The New Koran*, etc., who, in his work, *The Ideal Jesus*, on pp. 160, 161, writes: "Many popular preachers at the present day are accustomed to hold Jesus up to admiration as the special friend of the poor—that is, as the benefactor of the humble working class, and their representations to this effect are doubtless very generally believed. But a greater delusion respecting him than this can scarcely be imagined; for, however much he may have been disposed to favor those who forsook their industrial calling and led a vagrant life, his preaching and the course which he took were prejudicial to all who honestly earned their bread. He did nothing with his superior wisdom to develop the resources of the country and provide employment for the poor; all his efforts were directed to the unhinging of industry, the diminution of wealth, and the promotion of universal idleness and beggary. It was no part of his endeavor to see the peasant and the artisan

* *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1893.

better remunerated and more comfortably housed, for he despised domestic comforts as much as Diogenes, and believed that their enjoyment would disqualify people for obtaining the everlasting pleasures of Paradise. A provident working man who had managed to save enough for a few months' subsistence he would have classed with the covetous rich, and required him to give away in alms all that he had treasured as the indispensable condition of discipleship. On one occasion he is said to have distributed food liberally to the hungry multitude; but the food was none of his providing, since he was himself dependent on alms. Moreover, the recipients of his bounty were not a band of ill-fed laborers returning from work, not a number of distressed farmers who had suffered heavy losses from murrain or drought, but a loafing crowd who had followed him about from place to place, and spent the day in idleness. Such bestowment of largess would only tend to produce a further relaxation of industrial effort; it would induce credulous peasants to throw down their tools and follow the wonder-working prophet for the chance of a meal; they would see little wisdom in plodding at their tasks from day to day, like the ants and the bees, if people were to be fed by wandering about trustfully for what should turn up, as the idle, improvident ravens (Prov. vi. 6; Luke xii. 24)."

Many eminent Christian writers maintain that Jesus was a social reformer, because he is represented as having been in favor of dispensing with the private ownership of property, and also of people living together, enjoying what is called "a common repast." Professor Graetz, in the second volume of his able *History of the Jews*, devotes a chapter to the social practices which prevailed at the time when Jesus is alleged to have lived. On page 117 he states that Christianity was really an offshoot from the principles held by the Essenes, and that Christ inherited their aversion to Pharisaical laws, while he approved of their practice of putting their all into the common treasury. Further, like them, Jesus highly esteemed self-imposed poverty, and despised riches. In fact, we are told that the "community of goods, which was a peculiar doctrine of the Essenes, was not only approved, but enforced. . . . The repasts they shared in common formed, as it were, the connecting link which attached the followers of Jesus to one another; and the alms distributed by the rich publicans relieved the poor disciples of the fear of hunger; and this bound them still more strongly to Jesus." But Graetz also adds that Christ thoroughly shared the narrow views held by the Judeans of his time, and that he despised the heathen world. Thus he said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. vii. 6). If this is "Christian Socialism," it is far from being catholic in its nature. The Socialistic element of having "all things in common" was limited by Christ to one particular community; it lacked that universality necessary to all real social reforms. It was similar to his idea of the brotherhood of man. Those only were his brothers who believed in him. He desired no fellowship with those who did not accept his faith; hence he exclaimed: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv. 6); "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given" (John xvii. 9); "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 9); "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). This may be the teaching of theology, but it is not indicative of a broad humanity, neither would it, if acted upon, tend to promote the social welfare of mankind.

Professor Graham, M.A., of Belfast College, contends, in his work, *Socialism: Old and New*, that Christ taught "Communism" when he preached "Blessed be ye poor," when "he repeatedly denounced" the rich, and when he recommended the wealthy young man to voluntarily surrender his property to the poor. The Professor also says: "In spite of certain passages to the contrary, pointing in a different direction, the Gospels are pervaded with the spirit of Socialism"; but he adds: "It is not quite State Socialism, because the better society was to be brought about by the voluntary union of believers." He admits, however, that "the ideal has hitherto been found impossible; but let not any say that it does not exist in the gospels—that Christ did not contemplate an earthly society." Now this last point is just what could be fairly

urged, if the Gospels were trustworthy. There can be no reasonable doubt that the disregard of mundane duties would be the logical sequence of acting up to many of the teachings ascribed to Jesus. For instance, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). "I am not of the world" (John xvii. 9). "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. . . . Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew vi. 25, 34). "If any man comes to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). "Everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew xix. 29). Even the disciple who wished to bury his father was advised by Christ to forego that duty of affection, for "Jesus said, Follow me; let the dead bury the dead."

The fact is, Christ was a spiritualiser, and not a social reformer. If he had been to his age what Bacon and Newton were to theirs, and what Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall have been to the present generation; if he had written a book teaching men how to avoid the miseries of life; if he had revealed the mysteries of nature, and exhibited the beauties of the arts and sciences, what an advantage he would have conferred upon mankind, and what an important contribution he would have given to the world towards solving the problems of our present social wrongs and inequalities. But the usefulness of Jesus was impaired by the idea which he entertained, that this world was but a state of probation, wherein the human family were to be prepared for another and a better home, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

We have thus seen the views of the scientist, the historian, and the professor, upon the subject under consideration; it will now be interesting to learn what one of the successors to the apostles has to say in reference to the same question. B. F. Westcott, D.D., the present Bishop of Durham, in his work, *Social Aspects of Christianity*, says: "Of all places in the world, the Abbey, I think, proclaims the social gospel of Christ with the most touching eloquence. . . . If I am a Christian, I must bring within the range of my religion every interest and difficulty of man, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This is not by any means correct, for many other "foundations," which have nothing to do with Christ, have been laid, and upon them systems, some good and some bad, have been built. For instance, there are Individualism, Socialism, material standards of progress, unlimited competition, and the application of science. These are "other foundations" that men have had apart altogether from Christ. But the solution to present social evils, Dr. Westcott considers, is to be found only in the Christian faith. He says: "We need to show the world the reality of spiritual power. We need to gain and exhibit the idea that satisfies the thoughts, the aspirations, the aims of men straining towards the light." He admits that science has increased our power and resources; but, he adds, it "cannot open the heavens and show the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Of course it cannot; for science has nothing to do with the impossible, or with the wild speculations of theology. In the *Social Aspects of Christianity*, as presented by the Bishop, it would be difficult, indeed, to recognise the principles of true Socialism. Moreover, as it is admitted by him that science has increased our "power and resources," it is a proof that Jesus must have been a poor reformer, when we remember that he did nothing whatever to aid this strong element of modern progress.

From the references which I have here made to some of the ablest writers of to-day, it will be seen how Jesus is estimated by them. I now propose to analyse the various statements which, according to the Four Gospels, were uttered by him, that have any bearing upon the political and social questions of our time. It will then be seen whether Christ has any claim to be considered a political and social reformer.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be continued.)

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

OUR fathers did the best they could. They believed in the supernatural, and they thought that sacrifice and prayer, fasting and weeping, would induce the supernatural to give them sunshine, rain, and harvest—long life in this world, and eternal joy in another. To them, God was an absolute monarch, quick to take offence, sudden in anger, terrible in punishment, jealous, hateful to his enemies, generous to his favorites. They believed also in the existence of an evil God—almost the equal of the other God in strength, and a little superior in cunning. Between these two Gods was the soul of man, like a mouse between two paws.

Both of these Gods inspired fear. Our fathers did not quite love God, nor quite hate the Devil; but they were afraid of both. They really wished to enjoy themselves with God in the next world, and with the Devil in this. They believed that the course of nature was affected by their conduct; that floods and storms, diseases, earthquakes, and tempests were sent as punishments, and that all good phenomena were rewards.

Everything was under the control and direction of supernatural powers. The air, the darkness, were filled with angels and devils; witches and wizards planned and plotted against the pious—against the true believers. Eclipses were produced by the sins of the people, and the unusual was regarded as the miraculous. In the good old times Christendom was an insane-asylum, and insane priests and prelates were the keepers. There was no science. The people did not investigate—did not think. They trembled and believed. Ignorance and superstition ruled the Christian world.

At last a few began to observe, to make records, and to think.

It was found that eclipses came at certain intervals, and that their coming could be foretold. This demonstrated that the actions of men had nothing to do with eclipses. A few began to suspect that earthquakes and storms had natural causes, and happened without the slightest reference to mankind.

Some began to doubt the existence of evil spirits, or the interference of good ones in the affairs of the world. Finding out something about astronomy, the great number, the certain and continuous motions of the planets, and the fact that many of them were vastly larger than the earth—ascertaining something about the earth—the slow development of forms—the growth and distribution of plants, the formation of islands and continents, the parts played by fire, water, and air through countless centuries—the kinship of all life—fixing the earth's place in the constellation of the sun—by experiment and research discovering a few secrets of chemistry—by the invention of printing and the preservation and dissemination of facts, theories, and thoughts, they were enabled to break a few chains of superstition—to free themselves a little from the dominion of the supernatural, and to set their faces towards the light. Slowly the number of investigators and thinkers increased—slowly the real facts were gathered—the sciences began to appear—the old beliefs grew a little absurd—the supernatural retreated, and ceased to interfere in the ordinary affairs of men.

Schools were founded, children were taught, books were printed, and the thinkers increased. Day by day confidence lessened in the supernatural, and day by day men were more and more impressed with the idea that man must be his own protector, his own providence. From the mists and darkness of savagery and superstition emerged the dawn of the natural. A sense of freedom took possession of the mind, and the soul began to dream of its power. On every side were invention and discovery, and bolder thought. The Church began to regard the friends of science as its foes. Theologians resorted to chain and fagot—to mutilation and torture.

The thinkers were denounced as heretics and Atheists—as the minions of Satan and the defamers of Christ. All the prejudice, ignorance, and malice of superstition were aroused, and all united for the destruction of investigation and thought. For centuries this conflict was waged. Every outrage was perpetrated, every crime committed by the believers in the supernatural. But, in spite of all, the disciples of the natural increased, and the power of the Church waned. Now the intelligence of the world is on

the side of the natural. Still the conflict goes on—the supernatural constantly losing, and the natural constantly gaining. In a few years the victory of science over superstition will be complete and universal.

So there have been for many centuries two philosophies of life: one in favor of the destruction of the passions—the lessening of wants—and absolute reliance on some higher power; the other, in favor of the reasonable gratification of the passions—the increase of wants, and their supply by industry, ingenuity, and invention, and the reliance of man on his own efforts. Diogenes, Epictetus, Socrates, to some extent Buddha, and Christ, all taught the first philosophy. All despised riches and luxury—all were the enemies of art and music—the despisers of good clothes and good food and good homes. They were the philosophers of poverty and rags—of huts and hovels—of ignorance and faith. They preached the glories of another world, and the miseries of this. They derided the prosperous, the industrious, those who enjoyed life, and reserved heaven for beggars.

This philosophy is losing authority, and now most people are anxious to be happy here in this life. Most people want food, and roof, and raiment—books, and pictures, and luxury, and leisure. They believe in developing the brain—in making servants and slaves of the forces of Nature.

Now the intelligent of the world have cast aside the teachings, the philosophy of the ascetics. They no longer believe in the virtue of fasting and self-torture. They believe that happiness is the only good, and that the time to be happy is now, here, in this world. They no longer believe in the rewards and punishments of the supernatural. They believe in consequences, and that the consequences of bad actions are evil, and the consequences of good actions are good.

They believe that man, by investigation, by reason, should find out the conditions of happiness, and then live and act in accordance with such conditions. They do not believe that earthquakes, or tempests, or volcanoes, or eclipses are caused by the conduct of men. They no longer believe in the supernatural. They do not regard themselves as the serfs, servants, slaves, or favorites of a celestial king. They feel that many evils can be avoided by intelligence, and for that reason they believe in the development of the brain. The school-house is their church, and the university their cathedral. The teacher, the interpreter of Nature, is their preacher, and all the truths that have been demonstrated constitute their creed.

They believe in the gospel of Intelligence, and they wish to save the world from ignorance, superstition, and misery.

The New Religion satisfies the heart and brain.

The Old Religion is cruel, childish, and absurd. The Old Religion was in perfect harmony with a flat world, with a little heaven above it, and a large hell beneath. The Old Religion had a powerful savage, an immense barbarian for a god, and another savage for a devil. Man at his best was a poor slave, whose happiness and misery dwelt in the smiles and frowns of these supernatural monsters.

The New Religion has destroyed these phantoms. The universe is no longer governed by a tyrant, and man at last is free.

The Supernatural has almost gone, but the Natural remains—the Gods have faded, but Man is here.

—*Truth Seeker Annual.*

R. G. INGERSOLL.

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THE DRAMA IN 1894.

THE Freethinker is by nature concerned with all that tends to raise and enliven and beautify life. And the drama is one of the most powerful of the culture-influences of the present day. The stage has become the vehicle for teaching, and often discussion; on it are thrashed out some of the most important problems of our social life. And, much as the problem-play has been decried, much as we have been appealed to to relinquish the strong meats of Ibsen and Pinero and Grundy for the milk-sop of the Adelphi or the semi-music-hall burlesque, yet experience has shown that the "problem-play" has come to stay. It may, therefore, be not out of place to take a brief look round at the stage output of the year that has just closed.

The first thing to remark is that there has been no play produced during 1894 to rank with "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." That work, by common consent, has been adjudged first place. Even when all deductions have been made, when we have agreed that the main cause of Mrs. Tanqueray's wreck was not that which the author evidently intended to be the cause—nay, even when we have perceived that the moral which the play was popularly supposed to teach was vitiated by the author's creation of the happy, self-satisfied Lady Orreys; when all has been said, it still remains that "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" represents alike the high-water mark of Mr. Pinero's genius and of the modern English drama. But if nothing to equal Mr. Pinero's play has been seen, it has had its effect. As a critic in one of the reviews recently remarked, we seem destined as one result to be treated to a series of "women with pasts," personally conducted across the footlights by hands less skilful than Mr. Pinero's. Indeed, it would be safe to say that a play is not now considered complete without a Magdalen somewhere or other in the cast. There does not seem any very obvious reason why this should be the case. But the success of a master will always beget imitators.

Nothing, however, has come from Mr. Pinero's pen during 1894. He is engaged on a new piece to which everyone is looking forward. But if Mr. Pinero has been silent, others have been prolific. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has produced two notable plays, "The Masqueraders" at the St. James's, and "The Case of Rebellious Susan" at the Criterion. "The Masqueraders" gained the popular favor mainly through the melodramatic card scene, in which David Remon, a dreamy astronomer and sincere lover, plays a game for the woman he loves with the husband who maltreats her and whom she hates. There was not very much else of great interest in the play; though the upshot of "The Masqueraders" illustrates, at least to us, a singular hesitancy, which seems constitutional in Mr. Jones, to face the logical issues of his plots—a tendency to hedge at the last moment in deference to Mrs. Grundy. In the reviews and magazines there is no more strong-worded opponent of Mrs. Grundy than Mr. H. A. Jones. Passage after passage we might quote in which he has brilliantly assailed the cast-iron conventions and social shams that hamper art and life. Yet, when he comes to write his plays, his courage seems to ooze out at the point; it is doubtless his temperament, for there is no reason for believing that he writes with his eye on the box-office.

Take, for instance, some of his recent plays. In "The Masqueraders" David Remon is truly the husband in spirit of Dulcie Larondie. She is tied to a drunken, gambling, dissolute brute, whom she hates, and even loathes, because of the odious suggestions he makes to her; on the other hand, she apparently returns Remon's love. Remon is invited by her husband to play, and the husband accepts Remon's bargain. Remon wins, and Dulcie goes with him to his observatory. Now, the natural result would be for Remon and Dulcie Larondie to live together happily as man and wife. The social conventions would, of course, be shocked; it would be adultery. But it would be the healthy, sane, proper ending; better a union like that than the sham union of Dulcie and Sir Bruce Skene. Yet Mr. Jones higgles. At the last he makes David's brother fetch him away, telling him that the platitudes which Dulcie's sister represents the "voice of God." Mr. Jones, in fact, seems to have been afraid to let David Remon and Dulcie live together. It would have been too outrageous.

In the same way Mr. Jones made an inconsequential play out of "The Bauble Shop" last year. The thesis—avowed thesis—of the play was that a politician who "went wrong" (in the conventional sense) was often very much better than the man who denounced him; and it was intended to illustrate the large amount of hypocrisy that enters into "purity" crusades. But Lord Clivebrook and Jessie Keber were as innocent, as far as one could judge, as the most zealous Vigilance Society could desire. The result was that all the pull-devil-pull-baker business about nothing made a farce out of what might have been a good play. Mr. Jones again was afraid; and even in his last work the same thing has to be said. Lady Susan and her calf-lover are enveloped in a mystic haze. Mr. Jones takes as the text of the play: "If women may not retaliate openly, they will retaliate secretly—and lie." But there is the greatest doubt as to what happened on that Sunday afternoon in Cairo, so much doubt that Mr. Labouchere headed a clever article in *Truth* "Is Susan Really Rebellious?" Mr. Jones seems again to be hesitant. And, as there is no compulsion on him to deal with the problems of sex relationship in his plays, it is all the more surprising that he should voluntarily get himself or his characters into such positions.

However, to turn to another dramatist of rank. Mr. Sydney Grundy must be congratulated on having scored several successes during the year. "An Old Jew," at the beginning, was a comparative failure, but "A Bunch of Violets" at the Haymarket, and "The New Woman" at the Comedy, went splendidly. "A Bunch of Violets" dealt with the career of a financial trickster, *a la* Jabez, who trades on his goody-goody surroundings and his charitable reputation to swindle large sums out of a blunt Yorkshireman, who had not so much portable virtue. Amongst the many admirable societies to which Sir Philip Marchant belongs is the Sunday Anti-Enjoyment League. Ultimately, having been proved to be a bigamist, he commits suicide. So ends the man of sanctity.

The other success of Mr. Grundy's, "The New Woman," was a very clever caricature. The "old woman," who glories in "obeying" her husband and so forth, is held up in contrast to her "new" rival, much to the disadvantage of the latter. Mr. Grundy hits off the extravagances of the new movement admirably—the ladies who write books called *Man the Betrayer*, and *Naked but Not Ashamed*, and *The Ethics of Marriage*. All this hitting was very clever; but, of course, it was caricature. In order to plead for the removal of unjust laws and conventions, which even still restrict women's freedom, it is in no wise necessary to bounce about like a savage, wear ridiculous costumes, and talk brilliant nonsense to everybody who doesn't want to hear you. Nor is there any reason why a woman might not have all the grace and charm and sweetness of Marjorie; and a good deal of the sweet and charm, we fancy, was Miss Emery's nature rather than Mr. Grundy's art—without being a giddy, ignorant, frivolous little doll. But Mr. Grundy's play, of course, was not meant seriously as an attack on the ideals that underlie what has come to be called the new woman movement.

And we suppose we must add to Mr. Grundy's list "Slaves of the Ring," produced on December 29 at the Garrick; which makes Mr. Grundy the most prolific playwright of the year. "Slaves of the Ring" is a great play, too, and it is a realist play—realist in the best sense of the word. For true realism need not, and does not, perpetually concern itself with the dung-heap and the cess-pool; these things certainly are part of life, and in the rebound against the old it is well to emphasise that they exist. But there is the realism of "Slaves of the Ring" that refuses to end well and make everyone live happily ever after. "You know well enough that things don't really happen like that," says Ibsen's Petra. Tragedies are not so easily settled in real life as they are on the Surrey-side stage.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree has not had a very successful year. There was a pretty little fairy story, "Once upon a Time," which really, as an allegory illustrating the make-believe of the multitude on matters of which they are ignorant, was charming. The crowd who pretend to see the king's fine clothes when really there are none, and persuade themselves they see lest their fellows should think them fools or knaves—all this hit popular superstition to the heart. But the play was not a success, which, under the circumstances, is not surprising. And Mr. Tree also produced a moderately successful play of Robert Buchanan's,

called "The Charlatan," which was directed at Theosophy. There was a Madame Obnoskin, a Russian adventuress; and a hysterical young lady who was shown a vision of her father by occult means, and so on. But it was more or less flat. Indeed, it is curious that Mr. Buchanan, master as he is of a pungent, full-bodied, biting style of prose, is yet not very convincing as a dramatist.

But one cannot omit in these columns to thank Mr. Tree for his reviving, and to some extent popularising, Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People"—perhaps the most defiantly Freethought play put on the English stage. It is not likely that allegories, and, least of all, such an one as this, will ever reach great popularity. But Mr. Tree's excellent personation of the heroic Stockmann fighting a world in arms, the perfect revelation—as in a flash—of how every "vested interest" is enlisted against an unpopular truth, and the demonstration that truth is even strongest and most feared when it is most attacked; all this won thousands of admirers. Take, for instance, this one extract from Stockmann's speech to the public meeting—a speech that ought to be circulated almost as a Freethought tract, and then judge of the effect of the performance. We quote from Mrs. Marx Aveling's translation in Mr. Archer's edition:—

DR. STOCKMANN: "I'm going to revolt against the lie that truth resides in the majority. What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths that are decrepit with age. When a truth is so old as that it's in a fair way to become a lie, gentlemen. (Laughter and jeers.) Yes, yes, you may believe me or not, as you please; but truths are by no means the wiry Methusalehs some people think them. A normally-constituted truth lives—let me say—as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years; at the outside twenty; seldom longer. And truths so stricken in years are always shockingly thin; yet it's not till then that the majority takes them up and recommends them to society as wholesome food. I can assure you there's not much nutriment in that sort of fare; you may take my word as a doctor for that. All these majority truths are like last year's salt pork; they're like rancid, mouldy ham, producing all the moral scurvy that devastates society."

Such is a sample of the style, not very eloquent or polished perhaps, with no brilliant epigrams or daintily-worded commonplaces, but plain, direct, straight to the point, as becomes the character who utters it. For Stockmann is not one of your yellow drawing-room butterflies; he is a type of the sterlingly honest, clear-eyed thinker. And one owes some gratitude to the manager who put such a play on his stage.

But we have transgressed beyond our limits, we fear. We can only say, in conclusion, that in the drama too we can trace the influence of what we have called the Freethought spirit. We are leaving the old, worn-out, rosy-colored but false style behind. We want to see life as it is, not as in an imaginary world imaginary characters might be; we want real men and women on the stage, not fairies and phantoms, who talk a language that never was talked, and live a life that never was lived. And one has only to glance at the drift of things to see how far we are moving towards that ideal.

FREDERICK RYAN.

God Sends the Little Babies.

They say, "God sends the little babies." Of all the dastardly revolting lies men tell to suit themselves, I hate that most. I suppose my father said so when he knew he was dying of consumption, and my mother when she knew she had nothing to support me on, and they created me to be fed from stranger hands. Men do not say God sends the books, or the newspaper articles, or the machines they make, and then sigh and shrug their shoulders, and say they can't help it. Why do they say so about other things? Liars! "God sends the little babies!" the small children say so earnestly. They touch the little stranger reverently who has just come from God's far country, and they peep about the room to see if not one white feather has dropped from the wing of the angel that brought him. On their lips the phrase means much; on all others it is a deliberate lie. Noticeable, too, when people are married, though they should have sixty children, they throw the whole onus on God. When they are not, we hear nothing about God's having sent them. When there has been no legal contract between the parents, who sends the little children then? The devil, perhaps! Odd that some should come from hell and some from heaven, and yet all look so much alike when they get here.—*Olive Schreiner*, "The Story of an African Farm."

ACID DROPS.

PARNELL is said to have referred to Tim Healy as "the dirtiest little hound in all his pack." When the split came Tim did his best—and it was a very good best—to justify this description. The language he used about his old "chief" was simply disgusting; and still more disgusting the language he used about the unfortunate woman who shared in Parnell's calamity. Tim was always "on the make." All his variations have been determined by one motive. Years ago, at a South London meeting in favor of Home Rule, after a speech by Mr. Foote, Tim Healy said that Irishmen had watched his brave struggle for freedom with much sympathy. The remark served the turn at the moment, which was all it was intended to do. Tim is now on quite another tack. He is the most conspicuous champion of the Catholic hierarchy. His latest denunciation is launched at men like Michael Davitt and T. P. O'Connor for opposing Cardinal Vaughan's orders to the London Catholics to support the Diggleites in the School Board elections. Cardinal Vaughan, Tim says, was "simply carrying out the Gospel and the mandate of his Master." Tim Healy is shrewd. Now that Parnell is gone, he sees that the Church is the greatest force in Ireland, and he means to be on the winning side.

Mrs. Besant has left Australia and gone to India. We understand there are Mahatmas somewhere in that part of the world, and Mrs. Besant should really bring one home with her. It is all very well to say, as she does in her hasty letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, that she is a member of the Theosophic inner circle, which is pledged to secrecy like the Freemasons. The world at large—except in relation to its inherited religions—is sane enough, in the long run, to turn away from a curtain that is never lifted, and to say, "There is nothing behind it."

Mrs. Besant does not appear to see that she is playing the old confidence trick, which is really the basis of Paley's defence of the Christian miracles. Have I not been before the public for twenty years? she asks, and have I ever been detected in falsehood? Just in the same way, Paley argued that the Apostles were good men and true, that they suffered hardships in maintaining what they taught; therefore they were entitled to be believed, and, therefore, it is a fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. All this is logical hocus-pocus. Honesty in a witness does not prove the accuracy of his evidence. Every sensible person recognises this in daily life, and to ignore it in religion or philosophy is to hand one's self over to the dominion of the most vulgar credulity.

"I am a lady" is the burden of all Mrs. Besant's explanations and defences. The *Westminster Gazette* was unchivalrous in opening its batteries on the Theosophical Society while she was at the antipodes! It does not occur to her that it might be asserted, *per contra*, that she had gone off in order to be out of the way when the attack was delivered. Newspapers must deal with matters of immediate interest. They cannot wait until Mrs. Besant tells them it is convenient for her that they should begin.

High Churchmen, last week, were celebrating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the execution of that pedantic bigot and callous persecutor, Archbishop Laud. Relics of this unfortunate man of God were publicly exhibited—such as his chair, his chalice, and his red skull-cap. The exhibition would have been far more interesting if it had included the sword of Oliver Cromwell, with the expressive if inelegant inscription, "I settled the blooming lot."

It was under Laud that Dr. Leighton, a Scotch [divine, father of Archbishop Leighton, was punished for writing *Zion's Zeal against Prelacy*. For this offence he was fined £10,000, imprisoned for life, put in the pillory, whipped, and after whipping had one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and was branded on the forehead with "S. S." (sower of sedition); after this his other ear was cropped and the other nostril slit. Laud pulled off his cap when this merciless sentence was pronounced, and gave God thanks for it.

Hugh Price Hughes is back again, and the judges are once more complaining of perjury in Wales.

Hughes had a great reception at St. James's Hall on returning from his six months' holiday. By arrangement the meeting stood up and sang the Doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Did they include "The Atheist Shoemaker"?

A very pious man at Thorncliffe Collieries, near Barnsley, is in the habit of carrying God's Word about with him.

Recently he was missed for two days, and when he was discovered his only companions were the Bible and a keen frost. The skin of his legs came off with his stockings. Of course we have all read of the Bible stopping bullets on a battle-field, but it doesn't seem able to counteract the cold.

The ancient wheeze about the pious soldier who was saved through a bullet lodging in the Bible which he carried in his pocket right over his sympathetic heart was improved on the other day by a Wellington evangelist. According to this man's story, a private, who was serving in Havelock's army when it entered Lucknow, had the usual Scripture buttoned inside his waistcoat and adjacent to his stomach, and while thus encumbered he was rushed by two mutineers—one in front with a gun, and one on the flank carrying a large axe. The Briton's own rifle was empty, and he felt that it was all up with him. Therefore, he uttered a silent prayer, and was going to lay on with the butt-end: but at that thrilling moment the man in front fired, and the bullet glanced off the Bible and killed the person with the axe; and, before the gunner could reload, the British soldier leaped on him and pounded him to death. This, said the speaker, was another proof that Providence was a great institution; and the audience evidently believed him. The average mission audience, in fact, will believe anything.

John Angell Gibbons, a well-known evangelist, named after Angell James, is a fallen angel. He was, for a considerable time, superintendent of a mission, held at Pin Mill Brow, Higher Ardwick, and in that capacity obtained a credit account at Mr. John Heywood's, the well-known publishing firm. From time to time he visited Heywood's place, and was detected stealing. When his house was searched three hundred and sixty new books, one hundred and twenty-eight of which were identified as stolen from Heywood's, were discovered. His counsel gave him a high character for religion, and contended he was a victim of kleptomania. The magistrate thought six months' imprisonment a proper prescription for the evangelist's disease.

Miss Tessa L. Kelso, librarian of the Public Library of Los Angeles, California, has sued the Rev. J. W. Campbell, of that city, for praying for her in public. She is said to be a "worthy young woman," and recently advised the purchase of certain books for the library. The offensive prayer was to this effect: "O Lord, vouchsafe thy saving grace to the librarian of the Los Angeles City Library, and cleanse her from all sin and make her worthy of her office." The prayer has been declared to be slanderous, and Miss Kelso demands \$5,000 for "the defamation of her character in public."

Those who like to see Bibliolaters striving to squirm gracefully will enjoy the following from a Christian Evidence writer on the stoppage of the sun when Joshua fought the Amorites: "The whole narrative is perfectly consonant with reason and experience. Joshua makes a forced march all night to the relief of Gibeon, and when the rising sun and waning moon both have influence he makes the attack on the besieging army. He requires a continuance of the light, and the great God of the universe, in whom we believe, hears his petition by bringing natural forces to operate for the desired purpose at the precise time required."

This is not the best of it. The following is still more delicious: "An analogy is given in the action of Sir Garnet Wolsey at Tel-el-Kebir. He, like Joshua, wanted neither moonlight nor sunlight, but a mixture of both, so that the enemy could not see his approach. A mistake of half an hour would have been fatal to the whole British force, and a similar error in the case of Joshua would have resulted in the total annihilation of the Israelitish army. So closely do the two cases parallel each other that one is strongly inclined to think that the British Commander specially took Joshua as his guide and pattern."

We have reason to believe (says the *English Churchman*) that Cardinal Vaughan is pushing the claims of the Papacy in every department of English life. Information reaches us that he now holds courts, and exercises judicial functions. On one recent occasion he sat in great state, wearing the well-known historic robes of a Papal prince, and having the assistance of two of Her Majesty's County Court judges as legal assessors.

Cardinal Vaughan got his secretary, Monsignor Johnson, to say that he only acted as arbitrator in disputes between Catholics who loyally accepted his decision as final. This, however, appears not to have been the case with Mrs. Alice Laidlaw, who sued Father Fleming for £100. The Cardinal arbitrated in the priest's favor, but Judge French at the Bow County Court decided in favor of the lady, with costs.

"Peter Lombard," in the *Church Times*, laments the growing neglect of "kowtowing" in Church at every mention of the Lord's name. "Merely as a protest against Unitarianism, the wholesome practice should not be dropped." The inculcation of bowing is part of the game of inducing people to order themselves lowly and reverently.

The Jewish Rabbi at Hampstead has been insisting on the necessity of strict observance of the Sabbath. The priests of all religions are the same. They want the day revered and observed on which they come to the front. The motto of these would-be monopolists is, "No competition with our business."

John Burns has returned from America full of admiration for the public school system. He says the classes are smaller and better managed than at home. A correspondent of the *Times*, however, says that the common school system is largely going down before the Church, and especially the Roman Catholic, schools. It seems that, while 13,000,000 scholars are enrolled, there is only a daily average attendance of 8,329,234, and that the increase of scholars does not keep pace with the population of the States.

Christians are laggards in the path of secular progress, but when they come to a point which Freethinkers have long passed they generally ejaculate a lusty cock-a-doodle. Some of our readers, perhaps many of them, will remember that Charles Bradlaugh once called a demonstration in Hyde Park to protest against the English slaughter of the Egyptians. The ministers of religion were dumb dogs; few of them whined, fewer still barked, against the iniquity; for the poor Egyptians were foreigners, and, worse still, Mohammedans—followers of that "Arab thief," as the Wesleys called him in their hymn-book. It was the Atheist who raised a voice on behalf of humanity, and all he got for his pains was brutal ill-treatment, which nearly robbed him of his life.

Peace principles have made much progress since then. "Now," says the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, "the very idea of war is utterly loathsome, except as a patriotic act." Surely there is much force in that "now." Why was it not always so, in the old days of Christian supremacy? Was it not Wordsworth, the Christian poet, who sang?—

But Thy most dreaded instrument
In working out a pure intent
Is man arrayed for mutual slaughter;
Yea, Carnage is thy daughter.

Mr. Hughes might also read a famous sermon by the great Baptist preacher, Robert Hall, addressed to soldiers who were going forth to fight the French. Such a sermon could not be preached "now." But we owe no thanks for this to Christianity. We owe them to the general spread of common sense and humanity.

The good Christians of Liverpool cannot let the Moslems of that city perform their devotions in peace. The *Crescent* reports that on Sunday evening last the snow lay heavily on the ground, and when the Muezzim, Brother A. Hassan Radford, went to give the Azan, a mob of Christians, who had collected near the Mosque, rushed forward and pelted the "caller to prayer" with snowballs. He was struck on various parts of the body, and one of his hands was severely cut open by the sharp edge of a stone which had been enclosed in one of the snowballs. Some hundreds of missiles were thrown, and many of them contained stones.

The male big drummer and the female cornet player of a Dumfriesshire Salvation Army band having simultaneously disappeared, an elopement is inferred. The drummer's wife is left lamenting.

It appears from Mr. Bramwell Booth's just-published account of *Work in Darkest England* that the financial aspect of Booth's much-vaunted scheme is very unsatisfactory. The Farm Colony has incurred a loss during the past year of £2,445 6s. 4d., and the City Colony of £4,423 12s. 4d., although the Food and Shelter section boasts a profit of £1,179; though it may be doubted, after the recent revelations of the poor woman who died from cold and exposure after paying twopence for her bunk, if the General can place this profit to his heavenly, or, at any rate, to his humanitarian, credit. The Hanbury-street Shelter, where the recent scandal took place, shows a profit of £6. The item of "firewood" also shows a respectable profit; but we are reminded of the wood-choppers who have complained of being driven to the workhouse because Booth spoiled their trade.

The curious fact, which, however, will not surprise readers of *Salvation Syrup*, is that, speaking generally, the Salvation Army, or Mr. Booth, has earned profits on such charitable schemes as the shelters, where losses might be expected, and provided for by generosity; but has incurred very marked losses on the industrial experiments, which can only

pauperise unless they succeed financially. The accounts for 1894 show that, as a social experiment, the Salvation Army has been no more able to turn the "out of works" into profitable workers than before. The work done, therefore, can only have a bad effect on wages and prices in the ordinary labor market. And all there is to set against this is the record of an experiment.

In allusion to the story of John Morley going to prayers and joining in the singing of hymns "heartily and reverently," as told by Dr. Berry, a correspondent cites a passage from Morley's book on *Compromise* (p. 170), in which he says such conduct in others "is very edifying to all who are not in the secret, and who do not know that they are acting a part, and making a mock both of their own reason and their own probity, merely to please persons whose delusions they pity and despise from the bottom of their hearts. On the surface there is nothing to distinguish this kind of conduct from the grossest hypocrisy." We suppose the right honorable gentleman, now he is a statesman, has got under the surface.

We read in the *Christian World* that the Rev. David Thomas, the Grand Old Man of the *Homilist*, is "gone to his grave, like a shock of corn fully ripe." We never heard of a shock of corn going to its grave, but we presume that the Rev. David Thomas is dead and buried. "No thinker of the present century," we are told, "supplied so many thoughts for pulpit use." "He went in for pith and point and power." Naturally we looked out for a sample. And here it is—a bit of his versification; Martin Tupper himself couldn't call it poetry:—

Never may sect-zeal pervert them,
Narrow creed or priestly rite;
God guard our pulpits from all bigots,
And grant our preachers Christly light.

This is described as "his own characteristic prayer." What a "thinker"! What "pith" and "point" and "power"!

Christians are in communication with God Almighty, but they are no better at prophecy than other people. Dr. Parker and Canon Scott Holland have both given a glimpse of the twentieth century in *Great Thoughts*—worthy receptacle of the ideas of such tremendous personages. And what is the result? We quote from a Christian paper: "Everything that the one confidently declares is going to happen, the other, with equal confidence, assures the world is exactly what will not take place."

The Rev. Mr. Collect says he believes in personal religion. He pronounces it "purse an all."

The Lord Mayor of Liverpool (Councillor W. H. Watts) has expressed the opinion that there is nothing for the unemployed but to "let them go to the devil." This has evoked much feeling and controversy. The Lord Mayor is a Liberal, a Baptist, and evidently a follower of the "Manchester School." He was one of those who voted against granting the use of the Picton Lecture Hall for the N.S.S. Conference. In what does his "Liberalism" consist?

The *Westminster Gazette*, noticing the centenary of the London Missionary Society, concludes by mentioning that "the missionaries prepared the way and made the path straight for the Imperial authority." This looks much as if the chief use of Christianity was to make the running for Mammon.

The religious people are much elated because the Emperor of China, having heard that the Empress had been presented with a Bible by some Christian ladies, also sent and bought a "Jesus religion book." Despite its calamities, there is little likelihood of China turning to Christianity, which by no means suits the character of the people as well as the simpler ethical precepts of Confucius.

In the good old days the priests well knew they had only to convert a king or chieftain in order to obtain the following of his people; and the majority of the nations of Europe were converted to Christianity in this way. In the so-called mediæval romance entitled *Floire et Blanceflor* the hero becomes a convert to Christianity, and no sooner is he received into the Church than he compels all his subjects to follow his example:

Qui le baptesme refusoit,
Ne en Dieu croire ne voloit,
Floire les faisoit escorchier,
Ardoir en fu ou destrenchier.

(Those who refused baptism,
And would not believe in God,
Floire caused to be flayed,
Burnt in the fire, or beheaded.)

The American arch obsceneist, Anthony Comstock, who has made himself notorious by prosecuting editions of *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Random*, and who is said to blush at the mention of the legs and drawers of a desk, has been charged with accepting bribes. If the immaculate Anthony is corrupt, where can virtue be found in America?

The *Twentieth Century*, of New York, says: "Of all the crimes committed in the name of Christianity, perhaps none calls for more severe condemnation than does the Trinity corporation. This trust, organised for the purpose of saving souls, has a capital of \$150,000,000, and an annual income of \$600,000, drawn principally from the most wretched class of New York's poor. Out of its tenant population of 1,681 there has been a mortality of 273, making the death-rate of Trinity's tenements thirty-five per cent. higher than the general death-rate of the city. This may be saving souls, but it is a process that sacrifices bodies, and such a process is generally known as murder."

The Rev. R. Heffernan, a Catholic priest, appears to have come to his death by an accident while intoxicated at the Albion Hotel, Chester. It appears that the rev. gentleman was in the habit of going to bed drunk.

Some people with a good deal of time on their hands, and others with personal grievances to air, have been writing to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* on "The Decline of Secularism." The last person who joins in the correspondence is Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who displays his old fondness for suggesting that hardly anybody ever understood Secularism but himself. He admits that Secular principles are spreading, but he complains that Secular Societies are too anti-theological. But is not this a very cheap complaint? Is it possible for Secular Societies, as such, to take a great part in "other work"? They are tabooed socially after being robbed legally. We invite Mr. Holyoake to tell us what he himself has ever done for this "other work" in connection with any Secular organisation? Has he not been obliged to do it as an independent individual? And if this has been his own experience, why on earth does he spend so much time in lecturing other people for being as unfortunate as himself?

Robert Louis Stevenson hoped to die with his clothes on, and the hope was realised. This has led to a correspondence in the *Westminster Gazette* on the prayer in the Church of England liturgy against "battle, murder, and sudden death." One writer says it only means a death unprepared for; the sudden death doesn't matter if we are always "ready to meet our God." But this was not the idea of the Church when the prayer in the liturgy originated. The idea was that we might not die suddenly, perhaps after some mortal sin, for which we had not received absolution. Julius Caesar, and other men of heroic mould, preferred a sudden death instead of long sickness or slow decay; and, indeed, the only objection to it, if our worldly affairs are settled, is the distress which a sudden shock might give to the dear ones we leave behind us.

J. S. Mill on his Father.

I have a hundred times heard him say that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression; that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. "Think," he used to say, "of a being who would make a hell—who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and, therefore, with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment!"—*J. S. Mill, "Autobiography," p. 41.*

Obituary.

AN advanced thinker and able historian has passed away in the person of Sir John Seeley, better known as Professor Seeley, of London and Cambridge. Professor Seeley first made his name by *Ecce Homo*, a work which Lord Shaftesbury described as "the worst book ever vomited forth from the jaws of hell," but which would now be considered a mildly rationalistic publication. His *Natural Religion*, which followed, was an equally thoughtful book, but did not excite the same interest. His most important historical work was the *Life and Times of Stein*, the Prussian land reformer.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 27, Liverpool.
February 3, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 20, Nottingham; 27, Hall of Science, London. February 3, Hall of Science, London; 10, Camberwell; 17, Plymouth; 24, Newcastle-on-Tyne. March 3, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

J. TOMLINSON.—All religionists are Spiritualists. The small party which arrogates that denomination are really Spiritists. The essence of their system is personal communication with spirits. We mean no offence in designating them properly; nor can we see why they should be ashamed or hurt when we do so.

W. F. WRAY writes: "As an appreciative reader of the *Freethinker* and of George Meredith, I suggest that you give us who live so far from London an opportunity of reading your lecture upon the latter, either in the former or in a pamphlet." We have not had the lecture reported, but the substance of it will be worked up in the *Freethinker* as soon as Mr. Foote gets time to do the writing.

J. FULTON.—Thanks. We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in the spring, when we expect to visit Glasgow.

W. DYSON.—See paragraph.

E. SMEDLEY.—Your orthodox friend should tell you what *private* right the clergy have to *tithes*, for instance. Thanks for the jokes. We have no doubt you will be pleased with Mr. Watts's lectures at Nottingham.

H. PEABODY.—Your order is handed to Mr. Forder, to whom please send direct in future.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Hull Branch, 6s.

C. HUGHES.—(1) We are never offended by outspoken criticism which bears no trace of malignity. The world is wide enough for differences of opinion, and only a fool or a prig is offended at them. Will you, in turn, pardon us for saying that we think you have misread what we wrote about James Thomson and Charles Bradlaugh? It was only honest to state the reason which Thomson alleged at the final rupture, but we studiously refrained from approving or discussing it. (2) We do intend to write more literary articles in future in the *Freethinker*. Unfortunately, in one sense, we are much hampered by the heavy burden of presidential duties. We are glad to hear you have found our John Morley pamphlet useful.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.—Thanks for cutting. We have received for the Watts Election Fund:—J. Fulton, £1; J. K., 10s.

MR. FOOTE'S FIGHTING FUND.—F. W. Sirett, 2s. 6d.

WATTS ELECTION FUND.—Mr. G. Ward, treasurer, acknowledges:—F. W. Sirett, 2s. 6d.; W. W. Roberts, 2s. 6d.

J. SULLIVAN.—Your question is obscure. Colonel Ingersoll has written many articles in the *North American Review*. Father Lambert's reply to Ingersoll is a poor and impudent production. The writer has no standing in America, where people would only laugh at Ingersoll for condescending to notice him.

W. H. THRESH.—We reciprocate your good wishes.

H. W. JONES.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

E. HOWARD.—See paragraph.

C. BROWN and H. MILLS.—Received. Many thanks. The bird was deliciously tender, and should have been washed down with nectar from Olympus.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—Miss Annie Brown, secretary, acknowledges the following Dinner subscriptions received by her:—C. Thomas, £1; Mrs. Thomas, 10s.; C. J. Pottage, 10s.; W. Hardaker, 3s.; A Friend, 2s. 6d.—Full list in our next.

F. ATTWOOD.—What was the subject of your verse? We do not recollect its arrival.

J. K.—Thanks. We hope there will be no earthquake.

J. C. WELCH.—An amusing misprint, though not reproducible. Pleased to hear you value the *Freethinker* so highly as to take the pains to complete your set from the beginning.

A. J. W.—Your lines on Shelley possess merit, but are they not rather wild?

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Blackburn Times—Liverpool Mercury—Two Worlds—Eastern Daily Press—Labor Leader—Western Figaro—Progressive Thinker—Liberty—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Secular Thought—Liberator—Freedom—Der Lichtfreund—Der Arme Teufel—Froidenker—Für Unsere Jugend—Kansas Lucifer—Scottish Guardian—Truthseeker—Open Court—Manchester Evening Mail—Eastbourne Chronicle.

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

It being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—(Narrow Column) one inch, 3s.; half column, 15s.; column, £1 10s. Broad Column—one inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

SPECIAL.

THE Hall of Science Club Committee having given the Board of Directors a guarantee that no outside letting of the premises shall be made without their knowledge and consent; and the resolution of the Executive having been passed with a view to this condition being secured; I hereby—acting upon the terms of that resolution—declare the suspension of affiliation at an end; and announce that members of the National Secular Society visiting the Hall of Science are now free to participate in the Club privileges.

G. W. FOOTE (President).

P.S.—The gratifying announcement I hoped to make this week, in addition to the above, is deferred until next week; not because I am not in a position to make it, but because I find it will take greater space than is here available.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE sudden setting in of milder weather on Sunday turned the streets of London into a dismal mud-swamp. In the circumstances, an excellent audience attended at the Hall of Science in the evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "God's in his Heaven." Mr. Guest occupied the chair. This evening (January 20) the platform will be occupied by Mr. Touzeau Parris. We hope he will have a good meeting and a hearty reception.

Mr. Charles Watts had to contend against most severe weather in Leicester last Sunday, where he lectured twice. The bitter frost, snow, and wind made it most uninviting to venture from home. Still there was a good audience in the morning, and an excellent one in the evening. Mr. Watts always receives a hearty reception in Leicester, and Sunday was no exception. To-day (Sunday, January 20) he lectures three times in Nottingham.

Mr. Charles Watts has republished some of his recent articles in the *Freethinker* in a neat pamphlet, entitled "Why Do Right?" Our colleague displays thought, care, and eloquence, and we hope his pamphlet will enjoy a wide circulation.

The annual Children's Party will take place at the London Hall of Science on Wednesday, January 30. Tea will be served at 5.30 to as many children as the funds will provide for. A first-rate program of music, games, races, etc., has been arranged, and the proceedings are to terminate with an all-round distribution of toys. Adults can sit in the gallery and see the fun on payment of threepence, and it is well worth the money. Of course the Committee will be delighted to receive presents for the little ones in the shape of cake, oranges, apples, lemonade, etc. Even plum-pudding will not be declined. Equally, of course, the Committee will be pleased to receive subscriptions. Mr. Forder is treasurer, and Miss Vance secretary. There should be no lack of funds for such an entertainment.

Three Score and Ten Years (Scribner & Co.) is the title of a book of recollections by William James Linton, the poet, engraver, and author, who edited the *National*, the *English Republic*, and other advanced publications. Mr. Linton has interesting reminiscences of Mazzini, George Sand, Carlyle, Tennyson, O'Connor, Heywood, the Howitts, and others, as well as of the political and reform movements in which he participated.

London friends have not supplied us with the information to enable us to print a full list of Secularists returned in the late Vestry elections. Among the names hitherto omitted is that of Mr. George Standing, who was elected (unopposed) in No. 4 Ward of St. Luke's parish.

Mr. Thomas Hurley, who is ticketed "Socialist," and whose program included Secular Education, has been returned at the head of the poll in the Blackburn School Board elections. Mr. Hurley is a young man of ability, and a reader of the *Freethinker*.

The Westminster Branch held its half-yearly meeting on Sunday. Most of the old officers were re-elected. It was resolved to open the outdoor campaign in April; also that the local Free Library should be requested to include the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*. As the Bell memorial wreath in Brompton Cemetery had been destroyed, no doubt by some religious fanatic, it was decided to substitute a marble slab.

The annual social party of the Failsworth Secular Sunday School was held on Saturday, January 12, and there was a large attendance. After tea the String Band discoursed acceptable music, and dancing, singing, and recitations completed a capital program.

The *Bazaar* is a strange paper in which to find the following answer to a correspondent: "No authentic reference to Jesus Christ is to be found anywhere outside the Gospels."

The death of Sir John Seeley reminds us of the ferment aroused by his *Ecce Homo* some twenty years since. Violently denounced, it yet did its work, and the orthodox find themselves glad to take up the position which formerly excited so much indignation.

The *Monist* for January is full of interesting philosophical matter. It opens with a posthumous essay, by Dr. Romanes, on "Longevity and Death." He says: "As after the breeding age is past the influence of natural selection is entirely withdrawn, the organism may be regarded as dead as soon as it has ceased to procreate; for any diseases which belong to old age will be allowed, by natural selection, to commit their ravages without let or hindrance, while diseases which belong to earlier periods of life will be, as far as possible, eliminated." Dr. Romanes frankly says that Mr. Darwin considered his views "speculative." As notable is a paper by Dr. Edmund Montgomery which follows, entitled "To be Alive: What is it?" Dr. Francis E. Abbot writes on "The Advancement of Ethics"; Moncure D. Conway on "Ought the United States Senate to be Reformed?" and Lester F. Ward on "The Natural Storage of Energy."

To Freethinkers, one of the most interesting items in the *Monist* is a triangular debate on Christian Missions, held before the Nineteenth Century Club of New York, in which Bishop Thoburn, Virchand Gandhi (a Jain of India) and Dr. Paul Carus took part. The speech of the Hindu was most interesting. He said he had studied the way in which Christian ministers and missionaries were manufactured, and had learnt to pity them, for their education was all calculated to make them narrow-minded. He said: "The central ideas of Christianity—an angry God and vicarious atonement—are contrary to every fact in nature, as also to the better aspirations of the human heart; they are, in our present stage of enlightenment, absurd, preposterous, and blasphemous propositions." We shall probably return to this debate in an early number.

The Islington Branch have arranged for a series of Thursday evening lectures at the headquarters of the Liberal and Radical Association, near the Vestry Hall, Upper-street. Detailed notice will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

At the Battersea Secular Hall, this Sunday evening, Mr. L. D. Hewitt (of the Wimbledon Branch) will give a lantern lecture on "China and the Chinese," which is sure to be interesting and instructive. Friends in south-west London are earnestly requested to support the Branch by their presence on Sunday evenings. The lectures are of a varied description, and are followed by select social gatherings for members and friends.

M. Bignon tells the story of *Bjornson, and His Life Work*, and recalls a legend current in Norway, which tells how one morning the great writer came down as if transfigured, and, calling both his family and servants together, told them that he recognised the error of his ways, and that he would in future take his place among the Freethinkers and Agnostics! Be this story true or false, observes the French critic, it is a fitting allegory of what has befallen the Norwegian nation during the last fifty years; for there, even more than elsewhere, the philosophers have taken the place of the

prophets. Bjornson, according to M. Bignon, is a seeker after truth, an enthusiast, a sentimentalist; his large heart is full of tragic intensity and love for humanity. Those who wish to know him as he is should read in the original his *Little Verses*.

In Professor Budd's edition of *The Books of Samuel*, the verses of which are printed in different colors to represent the different strata of authorship, no fewer than nine different colors are used. We shall shortly print an article on "The Dates of the Bible Books," from the pen of Chilperic, who will bring the results of recent criticism up to date in as concise a form as possible.

The Worcestershire peasantry, according to a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, are wonderfully "indifferent in matters of religion." The parson plays but a small part in the life of the people, and is often a nonentity in his own village. Church nor chapel excites much interest; religion, in fact, is "at a discount." The *Guardian* writer declares that "it really appears that Churches might be established or disestablished, but not one elector in ten would care, and neither friends nor foes of the Established Church see any use in attempting to excite the interest of the constituency in the question." This is good news in its way, but the indifference is carried to a point which is profitable to the clergy who are in possession of the fleshpots.

We are pleased to note that the French Freethinkers have formed a committee to raise a monument to Maria Deraismes, an eloquent advocate of Freethought and of woman's emancipation. Maria Deraismes was the first female Freemason, having been invited to become a member by the Masonic Lodge of Le Pecq, near Paris.

Miss Amye Reade, cousin of Winwood Reade, who has recently appeared on the Freethought platform, has published two novels of a humanitarian character. One is entitled *Ruby*, and is founded on the life of a circus girl. The other, *Slaves of the Sawdust*, deals with the same phase of life.

The veteran, Dr. Ludwig Büchner, writes in the *Freidenker* on Celsus as "Ein Heidnischer Kritiker des Christenthums" (A Pagan Critic of Christianity). He shows the importance of the testimony of Celsus as to the credulous character of early Christianity.

Despite the patronage of religion by the Emperor of Germany, the theological students at the principal Universities have, for the last ten years, been steadily on the decrease, while those in medicine and jurisprudence have correspondingly increased.

Whereas, fifty years ago, at Cambridge, only five out of twenty-four professors were laymen, there are now, outside the Divinity professorships, forty professors at Cambridge and forty-eight at Oxford, only three of whom in each case are clergy. And whereas in 1843 ninety Fellows of the Royal Society were in Orders, there are now only sixteen. In other words, the intellect of the country, its leaders in science, learning, and literature, are no longer in the clerical ranks.

The January number of *De Dageraad*, of Amsterdam, opens with a portrait and an account of Dr. Robin, whose conduct of the orphanage at Cempuis occasioned a notable debate in the French Chamber. Another article on "Modern Sanctity" is translated from Professor Guglielmo Ferrero, of Bologna. In the *Universal Review*, as usual, there are a number of items translated from the *Freethinker*, by J. van der Ende.

De Dageraad gives a "Sugar Plum" to Mr. Foote, both for his editorship of the *Freethinker* and his conduct of the affairs of the National Secular Society. It congratulates its English comrades on having a zealous and able (*ijverigen en flinken*) President.

Charles Rose, who some years ago wrote an able little book entitled *A Light to Lighten the Gentiles*, is now contributing to Mr. Symes's *Liberator* a series of articles on "Philosophic Materialism."

It is said by many that there is one who watches over this world, ready to aid all who call upon him. If this were true, there would be neither error nor want anywhere; for we know that all the inhabitants have been at him with their passionate requests. The rule that theology lays down for success is that we should pray as though there was no help in us, and work as though there was no help in heaven. This is doubling our labor. The Secularist sees that Secular exertion is alone productive, and chooses that course without complaint.—*G. J. Holyoake*.

WHO WAS THE MOTHER OF JESUS?

(Concluded from page 27.)

THESE religious writers evidently consider faith more reasonable than evidence; but such credulity would stand but a poor chance if such a case took place to-day. When Joanna Southcott tried the same game early in the present century, it is true she deceived a very large number of people in all stations of life—medical men, clergymen of various denominations, and probably herself. A thorough exposure of her pretensions appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, February, 1815; but, notwithstanding, thousands of her followers continued to believe in her, and that she would eventually return to earth to give birth to Jesus at his second coming. Now, considering that the very existence of Mary is highly dubious, whilst Miss Southcott's existence is unquestionable, the conclusion of the *Edinburgh Review* article may be quoted as applicable to all forms of superstition: "Upon the whole, the mission of Joanna Southcott is an extremely curious article in the history of human credulity. But, while we laugh at the simplicity of her disciples, we may all of us look homeward, and consider whether our own belief is not on various occasions determined by our feelings more than by evidence; whether we are not sometimes duped by respected names or bold pretenders, and sometimes by our own fancies, fears, or wishes."

The Christian Church fixed on Sept. 8 for Mary's birthday, certified as it was by a direct revelation from heaven; for the Catholic Forster, in his *Perennial Calendar*, describes how on that day, "a concert of angels having been heard in the air to solemnise this important event, the festival was appointed by Pope Servius about the year 695." This writer, with Alban Butler, thus perverts Genesis iii. 15: "I will put enmity between thee—serpent—and the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." What would be said of us if we were guilty of such palpable forgery? Having found her birthday, it became necessary to find her a father and a mother in the persons of Joachim and Anne; and in the fulness of time (1854) the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated by Pius IX., and has now to be accepted by every Catholic Christian. This doctrine is that, as Mary had to be spotless and free from Original Sin, it was absolutely necessary that she should be conceived and born out of the ordinary course. But when we think on this for a moment, it will require that all Mary's ancestors should have been conceived in like manner. But Christians are anything but consistent when reason stares them in the face. It is sufficient here to say that both father and mother are purely legendary, and the miracles ascribed to them by Church writers and impudent fabrications.

Father Lambert, in that flippant and insulting tract, *Notes on Ingersoll*, quoting his antagonist, says: "Is it not wonderful that Luke and Matthew do not agree on a single name of Christ's ancestors for thirty-seven generations?" To which the wily priest replies: "It is wonderful only to those who are ignorant of the fact that Matthew gives the ancestors of Joseph, while Luke gives the ancestors of Mary, the Mother of God." What impudence! This is mendacity in *excelsis*. Yet for Lambert's readers it is sufficient; for no Catholic dare to have in his possession, let alone read, a Freethought book of any sort whatever. It is sad indeed to say it, but, during my experience years ago, when my business as an insurance agent took me to the homes of scores of Catholics, I never saw any literature in their dwellings other than devotional works, and these but few, except, in a few cases, Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation*. Yet in every room there were cheap, gaudy prints of Mary, Joseph, saints, and crucifixes. The mental state of those who surrender their reason to a priestly caste is to-day what it was a thousand years ago—blank ignorance, dire credulity, utter neglect of all the means of secular improvement, and a thorough belief in the supernatural power of their priests. But priest Lambert's statement, that Luke gives the genealogy of the "Mother of God," is, of course, gratuitous, so far as Luke is concerned. The Authorised Version translates the passage as follows: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli." This, of course, is

early seventeenth-century English, that would now be rendered "who" in place of "which," and the parentheses would be left out. Sharpe, in his translation, who follows the original most faithfully, thus gives the passage: "And he, Jesus, when he began, was about thirty years of age, being, as was allowed, the son of Joseph, the son of Heli," etc. Not a word in the original, or to be deduced therefrom, of this being a genealogy of Mary.

Even the Roman Catholic version (Douay) is dead against Lambert's pretentious explanation, for it gives the rendering in almost the same words as the Protestant version, but has a note for the safe guidance of the faithful thus: "*Who was of Heli.* St. Joseph, who by nature was the son of Jacob (Matthew i. 16), in the account of the law, was son of Heli. For Jacob and Heli were brothers by the same mother, and Heli, who was the elder, dying without issue, Jacob, as the law directed, married his widow; in consequence of such marriage, his son Joseph was reputed in the law the son of Heli." So, from this authoritative statement of the infallible Church, Luke, or the Holy Ghost, omitted these particulars—and, by the way, if this was according to the "law," it is bad form for the Church to object to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. But the point is that the two contradictory lines of descent of Jesus still stare us in the face, and Father Lambert must try to confute Ingersoll on other lines.

ROBERT FORDER.

PROGRESS OF FREETHOUGHT IN DENMARK.

DENMARK is now hardly taken into account as a nation. It contains about half the number of inhabitants that daily parade London streets. Yet it has a language, government, literature, and institutions of its own; and some of the last mentioned are, I venture to say, not only unimitated, but far in advance of any country, except her Scandinavian sisters. When, a few years back, the great Norwegian writer and Freethinker, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, visited Denmark, he said, at a great public meeting, that the Danish country-people were the most enlightened peasantry he had encountered on his travels throughout the world. I think I may safely add—and also the most sceptical.

Now, I am bound to state that all this has, involuntarily, been brought about by Christian agencies, with a view of advancing Christianity; but we Freethinkers rejoice in the fact that it has proved itself to have the opposite result. This shows clearly to me that enlightenment is a greater factor in establishing Freethought than the most ardent propaganda. Denmark has had no great Freethought martyrs; the work of the spirit of Freethought has been going on in a docile and unconscious way within the Church, from the rigid and absurd form of Protestantism which you have here in England, through a broader and more liberal form called Grundtvigianism, Deism, and is slowly culminating in rank scepticism on the part of the young, and many of the leading Christian teachers of the young themselves.

I shall briefly review the movement, and, as far as the space at my disposal admits, record some of the principal causes of this development. In order to do this, it is necessary to take the reader back a century and a half. The people were nothing more nor less than serfs, entirely controlled by the parson and the squire, ignorant, stupid, and apathetic. Then arose a writer and poet, whose fantastically romantic nature almost bordered on madness—to practical people's minds. Nevertheless, he was a great genius. His name was Bernhard Severin Ingemann. He wrote a series of historical romances—half history, half fiction, all in a romantic style. Dry history, had it been accessible to the people, would have been too tedious for them; but Ingemann's works gave them taste for reading. They woke up, looked around for something to corroborate what they had read, found it in other manuscripts, read it, and so acquired some knowledge. Another great man of the same period was Steen Steensen Blicher. He was a village parson, but a devoted friend of the people. On Sundays, when people went home from the church he had preached in, it is said that they often met him on the heather, with his gun under his arm, and his field terrier with him. He was very fond of hunting, and also of associating with the gypsies, who then invaded the vast heaths of Jutland, and whose language, it is said, he learned. He wrote two great volumes of novels in the Jutish dialect, depicting the peasants' habits and customs, and attached them to places familiar to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. They were, and still are, read with immense delight by the peasantry. This gave them still more fascination for reading.

The final abolition of the soccage-duty was another great step towards the emancipation of the people. When it received this liberty, it did not know what freedom was; but a child cannot learn to walk till it tries, and so, when the people got the liberty, they gradually learned to use it.

In the first part of this century arose a great literary giant and pedagogue, whose name was Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig. When he was a young man and a student, it is said, he passed through an ordeal of scepticism and temptations of affection to a married woman, which lasted for two years, and culminated in his adopting religious views, differing from those which then predominated. He began writing and preaching them at an early age. He held that no man could be saved by his actions, but only by faith; nor by knowledge of the Bible, but by believing the two articles, Baptism and Communion—which two he called "The word of God"; that playing cards, dancing, and other innocent jollifications were not necessarily evils; and that there was a chance of salvation after death. He advocated a fuller education, and that children should not learn lessons, but only be told and made re-tell, especially in religion; and contended that the clergy should not be appointed and paid by the State, but be entirely kept by the people. Of course, for pleading religious liberty he was persecuted by State and Church. His books were confiscated, and he was condemned to supervision by the police for life, his works having to be examined by them before they were published. Yet, at length, as he gained influence, this censure was retracted, for he won admirers and followers by the hundred; and he gradually rose, at last being appointed a bishop. He died at an extremely old age; but his writing—poetic and prosaic—and disciples he left behind him, to fight, suffer, and triumph.

In 1848, when the noble-minded and kind-hearted King Frederick VII., whose motto was, "The people's love is my strength," came to the throne, the hitherto existing press laws were repealed; persons, undergoing terms of imprisonment for press offences were set at liberty; the Conservative ministry was replaced by a Liberal one, some members of which were leaders of the Democracy; a full constitutional Government was founded, and a so-called "Fundamental Law" was given, expressing the mutual duties of Sovereign, Government, and people towards each other.

In the same year the insurrection broke out in Holstein, which then belonged to Denmark, but which was surrendered to Germany in 1864. After a three years' struggle, the rebellion was quelled, and now, after those victories over internal and external foes, a wave of enthusiasm swept over the country. The Press revelled in its new-born freedom, poets arose on every hand, and wells of literature sprang up and flooded the land.

As time passed on, the seeds of mental independence and religious liberty, which "Old Grundtvig" had sown, speedily gained ground, and now—in order to make it short—Denmark is quite unlike what it was, say, thirty years ago. The people have banded together in Societies, Unions, and Companies; gymnastic and rifle unions, who come together once a year from whole districts to win prizes; dairy companies, the members of which send their milk to the headquarters, have their cream separated from it by machinery, and have it returned; provision companies, who have their household necessaries sent to them from Copenhagen, in order to dispense with the profit-making merchants; private schools and congregations have been, and are being, formed by people who feel themselves too independent to have their spiritual affairs guided by their "superiors." The Grundtvigian teachers and ministers gather young and old around them once a week to discourse to them on historical subjects gratuitously, besides forming evening classes for a trifle. When the youth has outgrown this instruction, he receives, on application, a sum from the Government towards his maintenance for six months at a so-called "High School." A word about these in conclusion. The High School is an entirely private institution, but is granted a certain sum from the State every year when it has attained to such a position that it is recognised as such. It has a class of young women in the summer months, and of men in the winter. For maintenance, lodging, and instruction the pupil is charged, as a rule, thirty kroner per month, a krone being the equivalent of an English shilling. There are no degrees taken, no compulsory attendance, so that the degree of the instructor's ability is indicated by the number of his pupils. The students come together once a week in the lecture-room, and discuss the topics of the day with a fervor and earnestness which one would not expect to find with young people. All this tends to develop the young man's affections and intelligence. As he himself becomes a better man, so his God becomes better; he being filled with love to his fellow man, his God is no longer a revengeful monster, but a God of love, who cannot torment his children for ever, but will save all in time. Darwin's theory being proved to him, the story of the Creation and the Fall is absurd, and the Savior is gone. God is all-wise, and cannot fail in purpose; every man is created to fulfil a certain function, and if he goes to hell for ever, he has been

created without a design. Hell is gone, and with it the Savior. As the many purposeless occurrences and injustices appear before the young man's widened view, and as his knowledge of astronomy increases, so God himself vanishes before his gazing eye in the chaos of the mighty universe; and although the High Schools are conducted in a Grundtvigian, Christian, spirit, somehow or other the young men and women, as a rule, leave it confirmed sceptics. Nay, what is more, the Grundtvigian leaders themselves gradually drift into infidelity.

In 1885 a Free Church minister (Henning Jensen) wrote a book which went to show that the alleged books of Moses were not written by that personage. This, of course, brought his colleagues into array, and one of them asked him to show his real colors, and admit that he was a Freethinker, in order that he might know how to deal with him. This same H. Jensen was brought into court for administering the communion to a dying child, not yet confirmed. Two eminent High School masters have lately, people assert who have visited their schools, entirely given up all belief in Hell, and are, in fact, so deeply adrift in scepticism that they don't know where they are.

Finally, at the annual Conference at a leading High School of the country, a few years since, an entirely modern spirit prevailed. Heterodoxy reigned supreme; most of the old ideas being discarded. Thus, superstition in Scandinavia is committing suicide by using the weapon against her enemies, under which she is herself doomed to fall. Scepticism is doing its work within the Church, bigotry is dying, the spirit of Freethought is gradually gaining headway, and I for one wish her "good speed."

J. A. MAAGAARD.

CHRISTIANITY.

THOU who standest at the threshold of the charnels of the dead,
Looking eastward, where the sunlight gloweth gloriously red,
And, with frightened eyes, beholdest how the skies grow bright o'erhead;

Thou with pallor on thy lips and the dry blood upon thy hands,
Trembling, seest how the morning spreads above the waking lands,
And how man, with eager glances, in expectant waiting stands.

All the earth before thee lieth, and, from Europe's very stones,
Goes a cry on thee with curses, and the winds are filled with groans—
Yea, before thee stand the living, and behind thee lie the bones.

By the memory of martyrs; by the children thou didst nurse;
By the evil heart of man; by thy hypocrisies made worse;
By the blood of Jew and Gentile—thou art cursed with a curse!

Thou hast trodden out the winepress; and the wine that rippled free
Was the blood of unbelievers, which thy lips have drunk with glee,
Till the richness of its virtue hath made glad the heart of thee.

From the open square at Strassburg, in discordant chorus rise
Shriekings of two thousand Jews, that roast for sacrifice
To the hell-born God thou dost invoke, who gloats on agonies.

There in Frankfort, Salzburg, Baden, thou didst scatter blood like rain,
Reddening all the peaceful cities by the waters of the Main,
Till the rivers of the Rhineland flowed encrimsoned with the stain.

Aragon, Madrid, Granada, in possession of the Moor,
Yielded shelter to the Rabbi; there in peace he might endure—
Where the Moslem banner floated he was quiet and secure.

But thy shadow loomed portentous; haughty Spain was forced to feel
What it is to groan and tremble under holy Christian zeal.
Quoth the priest, "My yoke is easy"—grinding Jews beneath his heel.

Spurned by England, Austria, Russia, he was sheltered by the Turk;
There in Judengasse or Ghetto was no longer need to lurk;
Islamitish hands were ever clean from thy accursed work.

Through the mad and furious ages thou hast finely borne thy part—
Cowed the people into bondslaves; crushed the wife's, the mother's heart;
Laid thy rod upon the children; banished beauty, stilled art.

Savage gods!—relentless ages! But by earth be it confessed,
Thou of all hast been most cruel—thy God fiercer than the rest;
For thou hast devoured the children that were suckled at thy breast.

What have been thy mild persuasions, who in love did so abound?
Lo! at Nuremberg a sample of thy tenderness is found—
Rack and thumbscrew, boot and caldron, in black dungeons underground.

Charitable institutions? Yea, indeed, for well we know
That the Spanish Inquisition founded many a year ago
Was a Christian institution ruled by holy saints below!

Blessed had he been for ever who had strangled thee at birth,
Ere thou hadst attained thy vigor, ere with wild Walpurgis mirth,
At thy bidding hell was emptied of its fiends upon the earth;

Ere thou didst from out the clutches of the mother tear the child,
Laughing loud to think the notions of a heretic beguiled:
In the glare of blazing fagots then thou sattest still and smiled.

Thou hast kept the people darkened from thy childhood until now—
Smothered truth and bound opinion; but a mightier than thou—
Science, rising strong and godlike, hast brought low thy brazen brow.

Crown thy head with foulest ashes—hater thou of Truth sublime!
Cry aloud and rend thy garments to the utmost bourne of time;
Thy Eternity would scarce suffice to expiate thy crime!

So the soul of man rejects thee, rising as from out a tomb,
And the world of mind denies thee, and thy face is toward the gloom,
And there is no Resurrection Day for the dead that Truth shall doom.

DARIUS HYSTASPES.

A Model King.

"In St. Ferdinand, King of Castile (d. 1252), the virtues of a king shone out brightly—magnanimity, clemency, love of justice, and, above all, zeal for the Catholic faith and a burning desire to protect and propagate its religious worship. He showed this especially by the vigor with which he pursued heretics. He never allowed them to exist in any part whatever of his dominions. When they were discovered, he himself with his own hands carried the fagots to burn them.—*Breviarium Romanum, Feast of St. Ferdinand, June 5.*

"Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys," etc.—*Col. for All Saints.*

Clergyman (to his son Bobby)—"Is there any news, my son?" Bobby—"Yes, father." Clergyman—"Well, what is it?" Bobby—"Why, a church caught on fire yesterday, and all were saved except the organ." Clergyman—"Why couldn't they save the organ?" Bobby—"Because the firemen couldn't play on it."

At the sacrament a priest gave, without perceiving it, a bone counter instead of the wafer. The communicant, thinking it would melt, patiently waited and sucked, but without effect. The priest, seeing him hesitate, inquired what was the matter. "Matter," said he, "I hope your reverence has not made a mistake and given me God the Father? He is so hard and tough there is no swallowing him."

BOOK CHAT.

Madame Blavatsky and Her "Theosophy": A Study, by Arthur Lillie (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; 1895), takes for the motto of its title-page the words of Mrs. Besant: "If there are no Mahatmas, the Theosophical Society is an absurdity." Mr. Lillie, in his preface, tells us that, in sketching the career of Madame Blavatsky, "I propose to leave out as much as possible the private character of the lady as far as regards sex relations. The authenticity, or non-authenticity, of her 'miracles' is plainly too vital to be passed over."

With this side of her career omitted, the record of the modern Cagliostro is, nevertheless, a very shady one. She was ever an adventuress, and for the major, though lesser known, portion of her life posed as a Spiritist. And it is Spiritists, like Mr. W. E. Coleman, W. Oxley, and our author, who have devoted most trouble to expose her pretensions.

Mr. Lillie, however, does not advert to the accusation made by Mr. R. Hodgson, who was sent out to India by the Society for Psychical Research to investigate the lady's "miracles." Mr. Hodgson gave his opinion, in the third volume of the Proceedings of that Society, that the lady was a Russian spy. He came across some writings of hers which strongly bore out this view. Mr. Newton, who was treasurer of the Theosophic Society when first formed at New York, says she had an interview with the Russian Minister of Legation before deciding to transfer the Society to India. Possibly she only became an American citizeness with a view to protection in India. The political key of her *Secret Doctrine* is the statement in the Introduction: "We have not long to wait, and many of us will witness the Dawn of the New Cycle, at the end of which not a few accounts will be settled and squared between the races." Some other particulars of Madame Blavatsky's career, not appearing in Mr. Lillie's book, were given by Professor Coues in the *New York Sun*, of July 2, 1890, and by A. Rudolph in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of April 5, 1894.

According to Colonel Olcott, there were two distinct beings in the red dressing gown of Madame Blavatsky—a fibbing Russian lady and a mighty Mahatma. The trouble was that you could not tell to which from which. A message was given to Mr. Sinnett as from the Mahatma, Koot Hoomi, and published in the *Occult World*, which proved to be a plagiarism taken almost verbatim from an address on Spiritualism by Mr. H. Kiddle, at Lake Pleasant. Madame Blavatsky's defence made matters worse by saying that the Mahatma explained that he had been present in his astral body at Mount Pleasant, and so gathered up the Spiritist discourse. A liar was never more clearly exposed than was Madame Blavatsky in *Light* of 1884. Dr. Wyld, Dr. Anna Kingsford, Mr. Maitland, Mr. Stainton Moses, and Mr. C. C. Massey retired from the Theosophical Society. But plenty of dupes remained, and the adventuress always was ready to make one defeat the prelude to another victory.

One would have thought she would never have recovered from the exposure by the Psychical Research Society. Writing experts certified that the Mahatma letters were in her writing. They contain the same misspellings and foreign locutions. But the credulous are not easily undeceived. "Doubtless the pleasure is as great in being cheated as to cheat."

Mr. Lillie's book is one which illustrates the perennial credulity of human nature, and the ease with which charlatans impose on those who are ever seeking something new. That Mrs. Besant should have become the dupe of a coarse, swearing impostor like Madame Blavatsky has been a wonder to many. And yet there is nothing surprising in it. The Russian lady really had the only secret of all magic and occultism. She understood the power of a determined will. Without any magnetic passes or hypnotism she could wind the Celt around her little finger. Madame Blavatsky had travelled widely, though Mr. Lillie gives reason to doubt her having ever visited Tibet; and she had a varied experience of human nature. The Cagliostro of the nineteenth century will long remain an interesting study.

Dr. Hermann Oldenberg, whose able work on *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, has been translated into English, has issued at Berlin a work of about the same size on *Die Religion des Veda*.

Der Jesuit und der Freidenker is a play in three acts, by W. Gerling, published by W. Rubenow, Berlin. It was written for the Freethinkers' Congress at Cologne last year.

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 post-card.]

LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.): 11.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Political Outlook." (Free.) 6.30, musical selections; 7, Touzeau Parris, "Science Against Theology." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Wednesday, at 8.30, a lecture.

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, L. D. Hewitt, "China and the Chinese," with lantern illustrations. (Free.) Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8, dramatic club. Thursday, at 8, committee. Friday, at 8, dancing.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, George Standing, "Some Farcical Aspects of Religion." (Preceded by vocal and instrumental music.) Thursday, at 7.30, science classes. (Free.)

FINSBURY BRANCH (Minor Hall of Science): 12.30, special general meeting—all should attend.

MILTON HALL (Hawley-crescent, 89 Kentish Town-road): 7.30, John Turner, "Anarchism and Trade Unionism."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Cleansing that which is Within the Cup."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, a lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Coffee House, corner of Broad-street): Thursdays, at 8, papers, discussions, etc.

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, Mr. Hawker, "Flowers."

DERBY: Monday, at 7.30, meeting at the Wooding Institute. Pear-tree-road—having been evicted from the Coffee Tavern, Friar Gate.

DUNDEE (City Assembly Rooms): 11, discussion class—paper by a Christian on "Christian Socialism"; 12, choir practice and elocution class; 1, shorthand class; 2.30, D. Taylor, "Burns"; 6.30, Burns concert.

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion class—G. Faulkner v. J. Cowie, "State Socialism"; 6.30, Zosimus, "Great French Freethinkers—III., Pierre Bayle."

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street): 7, A. Adams, reading—*About the Holy Bible*, by Robert G. Ingersoll.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, John Roberts, "James Thomson (B.V.)." (Owing to the continued illness of the conductor, the Philosophy Class is suspended for a week or two.)

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, C. Corbett, "The Bible and Theosophy." (Free.)

NOTTINGHAM (Assembly Rooms, Low Pavement): 11, Charles Watts, "The French Revolution—Causes of the Excesses"; 3, "Christ Not a Political or Social Reformer"; 7, "Why Live Moral Lives—the Christian and Secular Answers." (Admission 3d. and 6d.)

PORTSMOUTH (Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea): 7, a meeting. Wednesday, at 8, dancing.

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street): 11, Sam Standing, "Associated Homes"; 3, "Jesus the Fish-Catcher"; 6.30, debate with Mr. Smith (of Milnrow), "That the Creeds are Essential to Christianity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, members' general meeting; 7, W. Dyson, "The Problem of Evil—Theism's Latest Defence."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, O. Cohen, "The Political Ethics of Herbert Spencer"; 7, "Is the Belief in Miracles Reasonable?"

STOCKTON (32 Dovecot-street): 6, business meeting—all friends are invited.

SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite *Echo* office): 7, The Secretary, "Why Should Atheists be Persecuted?"

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—All Sundays until April, 1895, South Shields.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Jan. 20, Chatham. Feb. 3, Edinburgh; 10, Dundee.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 3, New Brompton.

SAM STANDRING, 6 Bury-road, Rochdale.—Jan. 23, Tyldesley. March 26 and 27, Sheffield.

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