

THE

# Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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## Lost—Hell!!

At the recent Conference of the Baptist Union the secretary, who boasts the prodigious name of Shakespeare, gave a very gratifying account of the progress of the Twentieth Century Fund, which promised to reach a total of something like two hundred thousand pounds. This glorious announcement was received with thunders of applause, especially by the gentlemen who will have the spending of the money. When the cheering subsided, the Rev. Dr. Clifford rose to address the assembly. This gentleman seems to long for a new state of society under the beneficent guidance of Christian Socialism, in which the ministers of religion will boss the whole show, pretty much as they did in Scotland in the palmy days of the good old Kirk. That he means well we have not the slightest doubt, but he takes a most exaggerated view of the importance of his profession. Still, we are a long way off Christian Socialism yet, and in the interim we pause to consider what Dr. Clifford has to say on the subject of theology. He admitted that organised Christianity had "lost many men and women of culture and intellect," but that was "because the age was saturated with the survivals of a partial, inconclusive, and ill-adapted theology." Religion, it appears, must be brought up to date; theology needs reconstruction. So said Dr. Clifford, and his language is very significant, particularly as it was much applauded. Evidently the wideawake men of God intend to throw overboard all the cargo that threatens the safety of the ship. They are also prepared to modernise the machinery and the fittings. It will be all right, they think, as long as they fly the same old flag at the mast-head. Nobody will mind the change while there is no alteration in the name. It is enough for people to "profess and call themselves Christians." What is meant by a Christian may be left to depend upon the exigencies of the day. In this way a constant "inspiration" may be secured, without the disadvantage of a fixed "revelation." Of course, a plain man is apt to think that the Bible, for instance, must mean now precisely what it did when it was written. But that only shows a want of subtlety. This is an age of evolution, sir, an age of evolution; and, although the Bible does not change, its interpretation does—which simple-minded men are prone to fancy is the same thing. What the Bible says is unalterable, but what it means is subject to perpetual mutation. Its meaning changes as rapidly as the necessities of the Churches in the presence of modern criticism. The clergy will always see that it means exactly what suits their purpose. They are wonderfully clever at the business of exegesis. Some of them, indeed, are almost *too* clever; having arrived at the stage which Shelley perceived in the Moonosophy of Coleridge, who

Got so subtle, that to be  
Nothing, was all his glory.

Dr. Clifford is getting dangerously near this point himself. He is an eminent Baptist, but he no more believes the Baptist creed, in any honest sense of its words, than we do. In the speech we are dealing with, for instance, he remarked that "though faith in a material hell might have passed, yet the fact of punishment for sin remained." So the material hell is gone, is it? Presumably, then, it never existed. It was only the dark delusion of a dream—to use the language of Shelley. But in that case the writers of the New Testament were grossly mistaken; nay, Jesus Christ

himself was grossly mistaken. If he did not teach a material hell, nobody knows what he did teach; for, if his words do not mean that, it is impossible to tell what they do mean. The oracle is dead, and the key of his verbal mysteries is buried with him. For nearly two thousand years he misled the world into believing what was a monstrous blasphemy against God—if God exist, and a brutal outrage on Humanity. During the whole of that period thousands of millions of men and women lived under the horror of hell fire. It never frightened scoundrels from infamy, but it poisoned the peace of the good-hearted, and drove the tenderest into misery and suicide. And now, forsooth, when the civilised world will have no more of it, and casts it forth with disgust and contempt, the clergy are telling us it was all a mistake, and asking us to believe that God winked at an odious lie because it was inopportune to state the merciful truth.

Now this is precisely what went on under ancient Paganism. The priests taught the doctrine of a literal hell, to frighten their dupes into implicit submission. But in the course of time they allowed certain relaxations; and eventually they confessed, at least to the educated and thoughtful classes, that the old doctrine was not to be taken literally, but as symbolic of the anger of the gods against those who disobeyed their will. Was it not Paul who said that the Gospel was "to the Greeks foolishness"? And why was it so? It was not more puerile, intellectually and morally, than their own orthodox theology. But they had really outgrown that theology, and no longer regarded it as of living authority. They gave it a certain respect because it was national, and because of its antiquity. But they laughed when they saw a new folly start up, without any of the excuses of the old ones. What was *childlike* in its proper season became *childish* at a later period.

Christianity is thus following the universal process of evolution. It preserves its shibboleths, which are really what the multitude care for, but gives them a different meaning, or empties them of meaning altogether, as it continues in the midst of this ever-changing world. The name of Hell remains, but the *thing* has "passed"—or, more accurately, passed away; not from the region of reality, for it never had any actual existence, but from the region of human belief. No doubt a great many people still believe in a literal hell-fire, but they are the intellectual residuum of society. They count for little in the present, and will count for less in the future—as the Church well knows.

This immense change in Christianity has taken place in the lifetime of the present writer. Of course there was a long and great preparation for it, but the change itself has occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century. Hell has been lost in fifty years. All the brimstone has disappeared from Christian theology, and only the treacle remains. But will that suffice alone? Will it be operative? We trow not. Religion really begins in fear, and it dies with fear. Heaven itself has never had much attraction. People were frightened with Hell. And when they no longer believe in it, but even laugh at it, we know that the end of priestcraft and theology is drawing near. An old Scottish elder, whose minister preached "leeberal" sermons, and emptied the church, remarked that "A kirk w'out a de'il is na' worth a damn." Substitute "hell" for "devil," and that elder's remark is a fitting conclusion to this article.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Secularism as a Moral Force.

(Concluded from page 259.)

In my article last week under the above heading I commenced my reply to six questions which a Christian correspondent wished me to answer. In that article I dealt with his two first questions and partly with his third, which was upon the influence of the Christian teachings of future rewards and punishments. I shall now finish my reply to the third question, and then notice the remaining three.

The influence of a belief in the Christian teaching of rewards and punishments can scarcely be said to strengthen the moral principle, even on the supposition that they are justly dispensed, since it makes men do from self-interest that which they ought to do from a purer and higher motive. The man who is deterred from stealing solely through fear of punishment is most assuredly less moral (using this term in its philosophic sense) than he who refrains from taking what is not his own because he believes that to take it would be wrong. To say, "Do right, and you shall be admitted into a state of happiness hereafter; and do wrong, and nothing but eternal torments await you," may sometimes result in good, but it can only be with the lowest order of minds. And, beyond doubt, such a principle does not serve to establish pure and disinterested morality. He who performs a good action because it is right is undoubtedly acting in a far nobler manner than is the man who performs it because he hopes to be rewarded. If, therefore, the Secularist and the Christian are equally moral, the former deserves infinitely more credit than the latter. The lesson that the world requires to learn is to exclude all consideration of personal advantage as a motive to right conduct; when that is done a high degree of morality may be established. And whatever opposes this does not tend to the elevation of the race. The fear of hell may be the hangman's whip to keep the wretch in order, but improvement of the "wretch," so that he required no such fear to keep him in order, would clearly be much better. Disinterested benevolence and philanthropy, from which all hope of reward is excluded, meets, and deservedly, with the approval of all. Once show the world that man's generous acts result from selfish motives, and you destroy the charm which attracted society towards him. No doubt there are many good Christians who lead an upright life, without allowing the hope of reward or the fear of punishment to influence their actions. In such cases they are superior to the system, and it is that we are here considering.

(4) "Has not Christianity improved the position of woman, and did it not abolish slavery?" Here we have a fair specimen of the orthodox habit of attributing all human progress to the influence of the Christian faith, and that in spite of the fact that when Christianity was at its height as an active factor amongst the masses there was, comparatively, no progress. The real advancement in all things that tend to promote the welfare of the people has been made in the most sceptical period of the world's history. For the improvement which has taken place in the position of woman we are indebted, not to Christianity, but to that love for justice which has grown with the increase of the secularisation of the nineteenth century. The teaching of the Bible as to woman is utterly degrading. Her husband is to rule over her, and to him she is to submit herself, and to "learn in silence with all subjection." History teems with evidence showing that in those nations where the Bible has held most sway the condition of woman has been menial and humiliatingly dependent on the caprice of man. Sir Henry Maine, in chapter x. of his *Ancient Law*, gives a clear statement of the influence of canon law on the liberty of person and property that Roman women then enjoyed. Speaking of their freedom, he says:—

"Christianity tended from the very first to narrow this remarkable liberty.....No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institution is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by middle Roman law."

Lecky also states:—

"The pagan laws during the Empire had been constantly repealing the old disabilities of women; and the

legislative movement in their favor continued with unabated force from Constantine to Justinian, and appeared also in some of the early laws of the barbarians. But in the whole feudal legislation women were placed in a much lower legal position than in the pagan Empire. In addition to the personal restrictions which grew naturally out of the Catholic Christian doctrines concerning divorce and the subordination of the weaker sex, we find numerous and stringent enactments, which rendered it impossible for women to succeed to any considerable amount of property, and which almost reduced them to the alternative of marriage or a nunnery. The complete inferiority of the sex was continually maintained by law; and that generous public opinion which in Rome had frequently revolted against the injustice done to girls, in depriving them of the greater part of the inheritance of their fathers, totally disappeared. Wherever the canon law has been the basis of legislation, we find laws of succession sacrificing the interests of daughters and wives, and a state of public opinion which has been formed and regulated by these laws; nor was any serious attempt made to abolish them till the close of the last century" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii., pp. 358-9).

As to slavery, the book from which Christians obtain their doctrines not only sanctions it, but it has laws to govern its perpetuation, and it enjoins the infliction of most cruel and heartless punishment upon its victims. In the time when Christ is said to have lived the horrors of slavery existed in all their enormity, and yet he was silent upon this great evil. In fact, slavery is plainly endorsed in the New Testament, and the believers in this book have been its most persistent supporters. Bell, in his *Life of Canning*, on page 218, referring to the efforts of the Abolitionists, says:—

"The greatest stress of all was laid on the antiquity of slavery. This was a difficulty which paralysed many persons of tender conscience. They felt.....that slavery was cruel, that it blighted human beings, crushed the god-like part of them, and reduced them to the condition of the lower animals. But it was a sacred institution; it had flourished in the earliest ages; it had a Divine origin."

It must not be overlooked that the most determined opposition in America to the abolition of this God-inflicted curse upon humanity came from Bible believers, who contended that, as it was a "divine" institution, any attempt to remove it was wrong, and ought not to be permitted. The Bible doctrine is that of "master and servant," not employer and employed; no delicacy of sentiment, no dignity of character, and no independence of action are allowed the servant, for he is to be subject to his master "with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Peter ii. 18).

(5) "Was it not Atheism that produced the horrors of the French Revolution?" Most emphatically no. The excesses of that mighty struggle for freedom were caused by Christian tyrants, who had crushed out the liberties of the people, forcing them into a state of physical, intellectual, and moral degradation. Of course, it would have been far better if the violence which was resorted to during the French Revolution had been avoided; but the real promoters of that outbreak rendered this impossible by inflicting upon the people cruel and humiliating miseries that dethroned their reason, so that when in the throes of the very depths of despair they could think of but one thing—revenge. If a nation is enslaved, bound hand and foot with the fetters of armed despotism, incapable, through the force of tyranny, of vindicating its right and honor, what, may be asked, are the remedies to which it may have recourse? A people politically dead, pining in the worst stages of serfdom, socially excommunicated, destitute of domestic security, subject to arbitrary imprisonment, and to have wives and daughters dishonored in the very presence of husbands and fathers who are powerless to resist the wrong—can we wonder that a people thus outraged should, in their mighty effort of self-emancipation, be driven to resort to more or less violent measures, especially when we reflect upon the fact that a coalition of foreign despots threatened to re-impose upon them their former chains and shackles of slavery? Besides, it must not be overlooked that many of the most prominent actors in the French Revolution were not Atheists. Rousseau, Voltaire, Robespierre, and Thomas Paine were all believers in God. But the point to be noted here is

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that what is termed the Reign of Terror was caused by the oppression and crimes of the Church, and those who opposed such tyranny—and some of them were Atheists—rendered inestimable service to France. Crowe, in his *History of France*, says: "At the epoch of the revolution the ecclesiastical power was the most prominent and the most felt. It was the vanguard of oppression. Not only was it guilty of those gross instances of injustice and crime—the breaking of Calas on the wheel—the execution of La Barre for pretended sacrilege—enormities which sully the Dark Ages—but it also wreaked its petty despotism in being the torment, the spy, and the bugbear of domestic and social life."

(6) "Is it not true that the little good there is in Secularism has been taken from Christianity?" No, it is not true; but if it were, it would not detract from the merits of Secular philosophy. The moral precepts found in the New Testament are mostly from so-called heathen authors, and we have as much right to their teachings as Christians have. When we borrow from Christianity, or any of the religions of the world, we only select that which is worth having, leaving behind that which is worthless. It does not follow that, because we approve of some of the precepts of the Bible, therefore we are bound to swallow its fables and superstitions. Secularism takes what is good wherever it finds it, "on heathen or on Christian grounds." But some of the best and most useful teachings of Secularism are not to be found in Christianity. For instance, as Secularists, we teach that reason is a safer guide than faith; that the concerns of this life are of greater importance than those which are said to pertain to a future existence; that reliance upon the facts of science is more efficacious in the promotion of human welfare than dependence upon supernatural aid; and that persecution for differences of opinion should never be indulged in. Where does Christianity contain these inculcations?

I have now answered my Christian correspondent's six questions, and it is to be hoped that what has been here said will prove an advantage not only to him, but also to others who share his misapprehensions.

CHARLES WATTS.

## The "Rock" is Shocked.

### CENSURE ON THE "FREETHINKER."

WHATEVER may be thought about the *Freethinker*, it has always been attentive, not to say respectful, to that old-established organ of Protestantism, the *Rock*. From time to time it has extracted tit-bits from the pages of the "Popular Protestant Church Newspaper," and (with comments) has accorded them an extended circulation, for which the editor might at least appear a little grateful. If his circle of readers is larger, the *Freethinker's* is more select, and the widening of publicity is surely no ground for complaint.

The extracts, always acknowledged, have been such as could speak for themselves. They—probably more than the comments—have now and again raised a smile. That is not the fault of the *Freethinker*. There is often a naivety about the *Rock* which is distinctly charming. Most Freethinkers have rejoiced with it when they have learned, through these columns, that it has been able to land an effective blow on that colossal iniquity, the Church of Rome. Most of us have sympathised with it in its task of stemming the tide of Ritualism in the Anglican Church. We have as much contempt as the *Rock* has for church millinery, wax candles, smoke, auricular confession, masses, genuflexions, and other Ritualistic nonsense. When it has been able to hold up vacillating bishops and recalcitrant clergy to just reprobation, we have not withheld our approval. Some of us have thought that its attacks on the pillars of its own Church have not always been in the best of taste, and that its undying hatred of the "Scarlet Woman" has occasionally led it into self-defeating excess. Latterly it has been very waspish with that poor man, the Archbishop of Canterbury. It has ever been insanely bigoted in regard to Lord's Day Observance.

Generally, the *Freethinker* has been respectful to

the *Rock*, paying that deference to it which is due to old age, even when it verges on second childhood with all its senile whims and querulousness. Why should it now turn on the *Freethinker*, and strive to keep it out of the Free Libraries? Why does it permit a correspondent to say nasty things about us? Why does it editorially draw attention to its correspondent's censure? Or threaten us with being dealt with by our own weapons? Obviously the *Freethinker* will have to be careful about the *Rock* in future, for the latter has a giant's strength, and apparently means to use it as a giant.

This, however, is merely by way of preface. When the present writer took up his latest of *Rock's*, namely the number published last week, he found therein a portentous editorial note "commending to our readers' attention" a letter appearing on the next page. Here is the "commended" letter:—

"Agnostic papers, as a rule, are not purchased for readers at our free libraries and public institutions, but their supporters are very active. I found at a library a day or two ago the *Freethinker* with the following:—

Says the *Rock*: 'Since this sad war commenced, a weekly prayer meeting has been held at the Manchester Y.M.C.A., to offer opportunity for united prayer for peace, and for the sufferers by the war. This is in addition to the usual daily prayer meeting.' Now we shan't be long. The war will soon be over if these good young men will only pray hard enough. They might, however, first ascertain whether there is anybody to listen to them, or able and willing to interfere when he has heard them.

I was informed by the librarian that 'the greatest vigilance was exercised in removing Agnostic papers and circulars from the reading-rooms, but a most active propaganda was carried on, and if people of all religious denominations would bestir themselves a little more to circulate newspapers of a healthy tone, instead of encouraging the purchase of cheap comic papers, many young minds would not be ready to listen to anti-Christian jokes.' I agreed with him, and I think some of our religious teachers will see from the above extract the necessity of fighting the Agnostics with their own weapons. "SHOCKED."

In the first place, one is pleased to be informed that the supporters of Agnostic papers are "very active." That is as it should be. There is room for more activity, of course, and when we receive these polite attentions from "our friend the enemy" there is an incitement to renewed activity, if only to support the pleasing assurance that is given. It is true that Agnostic papers, as a rule, are not purchased for readers at our free libraries and public institutions. But Christian papers are; and that, too, out of rates to which many Agnostics contribute. That for the present may pass; the immediate cause of complaint is that *Freethought* journals, when gratuitously presented, are often churlishly refused.

Who is the librarian—the public official who so unctuously imparts the information above quoted to the gentleman who is "shocked"? Where is the public free library in which so much vigilance in the way of censorship is exercised? We know that there are public institutions of the kind from which *Freethought* journals are excluded—far too many of them, and their number has got to be reduced; but, still, one would like to know the location of this particular news-room, mainly with a view to some action. There surely must be on the Library Committee some member liberal-minded enough to endeavor to secure fair-play all round.

The editor of the *Rock* probably finds the letter of his correspondent the more to his taste because of the suggestion that religious denominations should bestir themselves in introducing papers of a "healthy tone"—including, of course, the *Rock*. But what do Roman Catholic ratepayers think of the "healthy tone" of the *Rock*? They have quite as much reason to object to the *Rock* as the *Rock* has to the *Freethinker*. There is really no difficulty in this matter at all, except that created by intolerance. The frequenters of public news-rooms need not take up and read any paper they find lying there unless they like. They can leave it alone, and pass on to something more to their taste. The real fact is that Christian cowardice is at the bottom of all the objections to *Freethought* papers having fair play. Modern religionists would suppress all publications that run counter to their creeds, as their ancestors



burnt heretical works in the market place and reduced their authors to cinders at the stake.

The reference to "cheap comic papers" is not quite intelligible. The *Rock* is cheap—only one penny; and it is nearly always comic.

Perhaps the *Freethinker* owes an apology to "Shocked" for upsetting his nerves. Still, he seems to have survived, and is even valiant. He suggests "fighting the Agnostics with their own weapons." Well, let him come on. The war-fever just now is high. Possibly, however, it is only rhodomontade. He and his fellow Christians may, at the first shot, run away like the Boers and ensconce themselves behind some friendly kopje, such, for instance, as that of which we are, in this connection, irresistibly reminded:—

*Rock of ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.*

FRANCIS NEALE.

## Martineau's "Study of Religion."

(Concluded from page 261.)

### V.—THE LIFE TO COME.

It may be questioned if the belief in a God would inspire anyone with aught but a mere academic interest were it not accompanied by the belief in a future life. It is the latter belief which gives the former its interest, and without it human concern for "the recluse in the skies" would quickly languish. Historically, too, the people who have had a faint belief in a future life have had an equally flaccid belief in God; and, in spite of all that has been said as to the disinterested nature of religious feelings, it yet remains clear that, on the whole, people believe in God because of what they believe he can do for them; and in this scheme of prospective rewards and punishments the belief in a future life necessarily plays a prominent part.

Dr. Martineau's survey of religion would, therefore, have been incomplete had there been no mention of the belief in human immortality, and so a concluding chapter introduces us to "The Life to Come." I do not know that it is necessary to say very much upon Dr. Martineau's criticism of the doctrine that relates thought to brain action as that of function to organ. It is next to impossible to say anything fresh on the subject, and when all has been said—the ground facts, the insuperable difficulties in the way of any spiritualistic theory of mind, are that thought is never found apart from nervous organisation—there is a close and invariable correspondence between the quantity and quality of nervous matter and intellectual manifestations; death is certainly a disintegration of the bodily organs, and there seems no reason for supposing that intelligence continues to exist in the absence of what has always been a condition of its manifestation.

There is, of course, the usual attempt to parry these facts by submitting that science cannot yet tell us in what manner the molecular motions of the brain are transformed into thought, and the much-quoted dictum of Professor Tyndall to that effect is dragged in to give the statement scientific weight. But at most this only amounts to a confession of ignorance, and cannot be logically twisted into a proof of the impossibility of such a transference taking place, or of knowledge of some contrary process. To say that we cannot intellectually bridge the gulf between brain action and thought, and to say that thought is independent of brain action, are two completely distinct assertions, and the proof of the first assertion in no sense carries with it the accuracy of the second. Besides, if we cannot see how molecular motion gives rise to thought, if the chasm between the two is "intellectually impassable," it must be equally impossible to see how thought gives rise to brain action. The distance from thought to brain is as great as that of from brain to thought; and, having once declared the gap to be unbridgeable, it is not open to Dr. Martineau, or anyone else, to assume a passage where it has just been declared none exists. Dr. Martineau concludes that, while there "is nothing [in the physical phenomena] to prejudice the question of

life beyond, they amount.....to a vanishing of the prior evidences of life"; and I am content to say that until we have produced some other evidences of life's continuation that is quite sufficient.

But, as is usual in such disquisitions, by far the greater emphasis is laid upon the supposed moral necessity for a future life. In spite of the triumphant refutation of the argument from physiology, Dr. Martineau admits that "Were the problem surrendered to physics and metaphysics, it could never quit its state of suspense; there would be nothing to forbid the future; there would be nothing to promise it; and, in such a question, this intellectual balance would be tantamount to practical negation. Not till we turn to the moral aspects of death do we meet with the presiding reasons which give the casting vote." It is the prophetic indications given by man's moral and mental constitution that clinch the matter, and raise a mere possibility into a strong probability.

In the first place, we are told, the constitution of the human mind is not what we should expect "if it were constructed for a lease of a single life like ours.... When you place side by side the needs of human life, taken on the most liberal estimate, and the scope of the intellectual powers of man, I shall be surprised if you do not find the latter to be an enormous over-provision for the former..... There is clear evidence of their being adequate to indefinitely more than the present term of life allows them to accomplish."\* I do not know that it would be possible to select passages that show the hopelessness of Dr. Martineau's method more conclusively than these. In the first place, had he assimilated the evolutionary doctrine he discusses so freely, it would have been plain that our minds are not "constructed for the lease of a single life"; but that, while bearing immediate reference to the needs of the individual, they have ultimate reference to the preservation of the species. One need go no further than the parental instinct for proof of this. Our whole mental structure has this dual reference, and to criticise the structure of the mind from the standpoint of only one of its aspects is of all methods of procedure the most misleading.

What, again, can be meant by the "needs of human life"? Dr. Martineau obviously means by the phrase enough to preserve life. But to shut out from our consideration the higher intellectual life, and to label this as unnecessary because the species could exist in its absence, is to rob man of all that is characteristically human and reduce him to the purely animal stage. The truth is that the æsthetic and intellectual faculties, the "looking before and after," are vitally necessary to the full conception of man, and, while they may be an "enormous over-provision for the maintenance of animal life," are certainly not so for the maintenance of human life. Dr. Martineau, in order to prove that the "over-provision" argues another life elsewhere, simply shuts his eyes to the obvious uses of those faculties here. Similarly with the concluding sentence I have quoted. To say that man's mind is adequate to more than it does can only mean adequate under different conditions. Given longer experience, wider knowledge, different surroundings, and the human mind would accomplish more. Granted; but in that case it would not be the present mind, any more than the mind of a Salvation Army soldier is that of Dr. Martineau. All that any mind is adequate to do, under present conditions, it does. That it does not do more is proof that it is inadequate to do more. Looked at in any other light, the statement is simply an assertion of the possibility of development, and this is as true of the lower animals as it is of man.

In a similar strain it is argued that, if this life is all there must ensue a fearful waste of human material and of human energies. "I do not know," says Dr. Martineau, "that there is anything in nature (unless, indeed, it be the reported blotting out of suns in the stellar heavens) which can be compared in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds; their gathered resources, their unflinching tact, their matured skill, their luminous insight, are not like instincts that can be handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable; grand conditions of future power, unavailable for

\* *Study of Religion*, ii., pp. 347-8-56.



the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual. If that growth is not to be, the most brilliant genius bursts and vanishes like a firework in the night."\* The extravagance of the statement is most marked. It is simply not true that these qualities are absolutely personal (save in the sense of being lodged in individuals) and inalienable. There is not one that is not communicable to some extent. It is precisely because the great genius can impart to others some degree of his skill, insight, and tact, that he is valuable to the race. And even were it not so, what logical force is there in such outbursts? Is waste so foreign to nature that we should affect surprise to find it existent here? Nature produces a thousand seeds for every one that fructifies; a thousand germs for every one that reaches maturity. Waste here would only be in line with the rest of nature's working. We may wish it were otherwise, but our business is not to exalt our wishes into necessities, but to school our desires by a knowledge of facts.

Finally, Dr. Martineau argues from the "unfinished" moral condition of this world to "justifying a perfect sequel" beyond. This world is far from perfect, but "there is no telling what boundless reserve of rectifying possibilities" there is in the next. And so after much circumlocution we reach the familiar theistic position that because this world is bad, therefore there must be another where the balance of things is redressed. Why? To redeem the character of God. But if God wished the righteous to triumph, why not in this world and now, rather than in some other world and at some future time? All that we know of God's work, if God there be, must be gathered from his work here; and if he has not seen fit to harmonise this world with our sense of right and justice, what earthly reason is there for supposing any other or better condition of things elsewhere? It is one of the strangest pieces of reasoning imaginable that because God has made this world imperfect, therefore he must have made another perfect one; because right does not triumph here, therefore it must elsewhere. God is given a last chance, an extra half-hour for repentance, for which he, and we, should be duly thankful.

The truth is, that what Dr. Martineau calls "vaticinations of the intellect" are not vaticinations at all, but afterglows. They are survivals of a belief, not its originative conditions. When all has been said, it remains true that not one man in a million ever believed in a future life as the result of any or all of the reasons that Dr. Martineau has paraded. The origin, the real cause of the belief, is to be sought in the ignorance of our savage ancestors; and only as its primitive foundations crumbled away was some more enduring basis sought. The reasoning did not suggest the belief; it was the belief that suggested the reasoning. And what is true of this belief is true of the others I have been criticising.

It is not in his physical structure alone that man carries evidences of his development from lower forms of life; he carries them also in his mind. As with organs, so with functions; as the rudimentary muscles of the ear bear eloquent testimony to the time when man's ancestors lived under far different conditions to those now prevailing, so his religious beliefs bear irrefutable testimony to the time when man, ignorant of nature and of himself, read life and intelligence into every movement of the cosmos. Primitive man saw life everywhere; in every stream, in every wind, in every phenomenon. Where he saw life we see the clash of physical forces. The face of nature has died into unconsciousness, and the gods are fast being banished to the limbo of exploded delusions. Not all at once, though. Nature changes, but slowly. Man sheds his religious beliefs, but so gradually that he is seldom aware of the process. It is only on looking back over many years that he discerns how much of the old has been given up, how much of the new has been accepted. For this reason such apologies as those of Dr. Martineau are always welcome. They direct attention to the course of thought, and by stimulating inquiry hasten the end. The gentleman to whose kindness I am indebted for a rereading of *A Study of Religion* tells me he regards it as "the most powerful piece of special pleading that

has been published for some time." Possibly; but not all Dr. Martineau's power of reasoning can make up for an absence of real knowledge, nor can his fatal flow of graceful language do aught but clothe in regal raiment the body of a corpse.  
C. COHEN.

### A Nurse Who Wished to Die.

#### RECORD OF A SUICIDE'S IMPRESSIONS.

A REMARKABLE record, as near being "The Diary of a Dead Woman" as we are likely to come across for some time, was read at the inquest on Theresa O'Connor, aged thirty-one, a professional nurse, who killed herself with a pair of scissors in a Paddington coffee-shop. In consequence of a letter from deceased, her brother, Mr. Oliver Joseph O'Connor, a salesman and clerk, living in the Borough, communicated with the police, and the deceased was found dead in the coffee-shop. She had been employed by a gentleman at Westbourne Park, who stated that the deceased took from his bookcase *The Sorrows of Satan*, and passed remarks on the book.

Mr. Levell, the coffee-shop keeper, explained that the deceased, who engaged a bedroom there on Wednesday night, said she did not wish to be disturbed the following day, as she was very tired. Some food was taken up to her the next day, and on Friday she asked for a loan of a pair of scissors. On Saturday morning the door of the bedroom was forced open. The deceased was lying on the bed quite dead, with a wound in her breast. The police found bottles of chloroform and laudanum, a pair of scissors covered with blood, and another pair broken, and on the table a letter. A looking-glass had been placed by the side of the bed, so that the blow might be accurately struck.

The coroner then read the letter, which was as follows:—

"I am about to end my life with laudanum. There is no one to claim my body; let it be given to the dissecting-room. May be of some benefit to others after death. I have heart and lung troubles, and I don't see the use of prolonging a life that would probably end in a prolonged and dreary illness. I am sorry to make a sensation in this house, but I must die somewhere.

"My last wish is there shall be no publicity given to this affair. I do it deliberately. It is no love affair at the bottom of it. I simply don't want to be a helpless invalid, and think I may as well go at once as to wait till I get worse. I don't believe in a future life, so I go cheerfully to rest. I've taken 4oz. of laudanum. I had a struggle to keep it down, but I managed to do so.

"I feel so drowsy now. I hope I'll die soon. At the last moment I will try to write 'Yes' if I believe there really is a future life, and 'No' if otherwise. My face is very flushed. There is a ringing in my ears. My pupils are contracted. I long to go to sleep, but I am sure I must take more poison. I took good care to have enough to do its work properly this time.

"Now I am beginning to see double. Can't write much more. I itch all over, and have to scratch everything. Great Scot! It takes a long time to end me; I must take another dose.

"It's a nice death, I think. I suppose it's 2 a.m. now. I am going to chloroform myself now with 2oz. of chloroform. I don't hear any music or angels, so I can't believe there is another life.

"Oh, it must be about 6 p.m., Thursday, now. I'm so disappointed to find I am alive still. I've just took a cup of tea and bread in at the door. I'm trying to bleed to death. I've broke my scissors; I've asked for one instead."

The coroner remarked that the letter was evidently written at different periods.

Medical evidence having been given that the penetration of the heart was the cause of death, the jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide whilst of unsound mind.

—*Westminster Gazette.*

Between that period during which a nation has been governed by its imagination and that in which it submits to reason there is a melancholy interval. The constitution of man is such that, for a long time after he has discovered the incorrectness of the ideas prevailing around him, he shrinks from openly emancipating himself from their dominion, and, constrained by the force of circumstances, he becomes a hypocrite, publicly applauding what his private judgment condemns. Where a nation is making this passage, so universal do these practices become that it may be truly said hypocrisy is organised. It is possible that whole communities might be found living in this deplorable state. Even after ideas have given way in public opinion their political power may outlive their intellectual vigor, and produce the disgraceful effect we here consider.—*J. W. Draper.*

All truth is safe, and nothing else is safe; and he who keeps back the truth, or withholds it from me from motives of expediency, is either a coward or a criminal, or both.—*F. Max Müller.*

\* *Study*, ii., p. 356.



## Acid Drops.

ACCORDING to the Rev. W. Cuff, the new President of the Baptist Union, the "great want of the hour" is "the power of the Holy Spirit in the modern Church." Yes, but will the modern Church get it? Ay, there's the rub. That same Holy Spirit seems very shy nowadays. In the New Testament times it was very much the opposite. It appeared visibly in the form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus, and the spectacle must have been witnessed by a goodly number of people. Later on it came into a certain room with a rushing mighty noise—something, perhaps, like a big escape of gas—and perched upon the apostles' heads like cloven tongues of fire, probably as a symbol of the lies they were going to palm off upon the world. Subsequently it gave such power and eloquence—"saving eloquence" the pious call it—to Peter and his pals that three thousand persons were converted by their preaching in one day. When the Rev. W. Cuff is able to convert people at that rate we shall be apt to believe that the Holy Spirit is in him.

Dr. Clifford's speech at the Baptist Union was inordinately long, and when he at last concluded many of the delegates made a rush for their hats and coats to get off to their dinner. President Cuff, however, begged them not to break up in such a hurry. "Remember," he said, "that we are all in the presence of the Press—and of the Almighty." What a comical juxtaposition of spectators! But even this was not enough, and President Cuff added, "Our seats will be kept for us at the Holborn." That settled it. As long as the dinner was all right after all, the delegates were ready to wait for the Benediction.

Speaking at the Colonial meeting on Monday evening, the Prince of Wales referred to his escape from that silly young pantomime assassin's bullet, and remarked that he (the Prince) was "In the hand of God," as all men were, and that, whatever happened, they must bow to his inscrutable will. Well, we all know that every man must bow to what does happen. What has been has been, and there's an end of it. The past cannot be altered. But if the Lord turned aside the bullet aimed at the Prince of Wales, we should like to know why the same power did not turn aside the Boer bullets that have put an end to so many lives in South Africa, most of which were quite as valuable as the life of Albert Edward. It hardly seems fair and kind for "Providence" to save a Prince and do nothing for less conspicuous persons, whose wives and families are often left to hardship and even destitution.

A pious Boer mother is proclaiming a distinct answer to prayer in the miraculous preservation of her son who was fighting in the ranks of the Boers. She says that one morning she was "drawn out in much prayer." She asked the Lord to give her a word of comfort. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" was the word given. That day the battle of Elande Laagte was fought, and her son was chased by some Lancers. Coming to the steep bank of a river, he threw himself off his horse, rolled down the bank, and threw himself into the swollen waters. He was taken safely across, and escaped.

This is a pretty little story for a Sunday-school class or a local preacher's discourse. It may, or may not, be authenticated; that does not matter, for, at the best, it only suggests a coincidence. How many other mothers have prayed for their soldier-sons, only to afterwards learn that they were killed? It is a fair assumption that the bulk of the Boers who are now numbered amongst the slain were prayed for by some of their kith and kin. To prove anything, something more than this isolated case of the Boer mother would be necessary. The text, too, would have been more to the point if the mother herself had tumbled into the water and had managed to escape.

The Rev. J. W. Kenworthy, vicar of Braintree, has learnt an offertory lesson by sad and painful experience. He told his vestry meeting that the collections were disgraceful. "Some people put buttons in the bags," he said, "others put bad money in, and others even put in bits of paper." The consequence is that collecting-bags will be used no more. Open plates will be passed round, and the congregation will have to bestow their donations under the vigilant eyes of keen collectors. This will put an end to the buttons, the bad coins will at least have to look valuable, and the bits of paper will have to bear the Bank of England's promise to pay. We congratulate the vicar of Braintree on his business sagacity.

Christian Maddock, who is described as "a Christian young man and a temperance advocate," has been charged for the second time at West Ham with arson.

St. Patrick's name is to be added to the calendar in the

Prayer Book, by the order of the Lower House of York Convocation. This is another illustration of the absolute unoriginality of Protestantism. It sticks to a number of saints, but every one of them was made so by the Roman Catholic Church; and, whenever a fresh one is wanted, Protestant Churches have to borrow him (or her) from their Popish rival.

There was a "Great Protestant Demonstration" on Peckham Rye last Sunday, conducted by Christian Evidence and Anti-Infidel gentlemen, who seem to regard Catholics and Free-thinkers as equally on the road to everlasting damnation. The proceedings did not promise to be very harmonious, and they did not prove to be so. A correspondent wonders whether this had anything to do with the "providential illness" of one of the principal announced speakers. What a wicked suggestion!

In a leaderette on the Huxley monument, the *Daily News* praised his literary style and his varied interests, but observed that "he was rather too fond of rushing into domains of thought, such as theology, which were quite out of his proper sphere." Now we venture to call this nonsense. Does our contemporary mean that a naturalist should never write on any subject but biology, that a doctor should never write on any subject but medicine, and that a statesman should never write on any subject but politics? If it does mean this, its position is ridiculous; and if it does not mean this, what on earth does it mean? Huxley's "proper sphere" included every subject he was competent to deal with; and about his competence to deal with theology, from the standpoint of an evolutionist, there can hardly be a difference of opinion amongst well-informed judges. What an admirable piece of work, too, was his little book on Hume. It could not have been bettered, within the same limits, by any professor of philosophy.

Huxley had at least as much right to deal with theology as theologians have to deal with philosophy. As a matter of fact, it has not been theologians, but philosophers, who have exercised the greatest influence on theology. The progressive impulse has almost invariably come from outside. To prove this one has only to mention the names of Bacon, Locke, Descartes, Spinoza, Voltaire, Paine, Spencer, and Ingersoll.

Dean Farrar and Miss Marie Corelli are writers of somewhat similar genius and profundity. Both of them are issuing new works. Miss Corelli's is a novel entitled *The Master-Christian*, which will no doubt inform us precisely what Christianity is. Dean Farrar's is a biography entitled *The Life of Lives*, being Further Studies in the Life of Christ. It seems to us that if the "v" were left out of the second substantive the title would be very considerably improved.

The Fabian Society has had ructions over the war in South Africa, and there may be lively times in Ethical circles. Dr. Stanton Coit and Mr. A. J. Hobson have for some time been working together. Mr. Hobson's opinions on the war are well known. He is what is commonly, and a little maliciously, called a pro-Boer; and he holds Mr. Cecil Rhodes in the greatest abhorrence. Dr. Coit, however, appears to look upon Mr. Rhodes as a moral colossus. According to the *Daily News* report of his last Sunday morning's lecture on "Mr. Cecil Rhodes as a Statesman," Dr. Coit sang the great man's praises in many keys. Even his treatment of the natives came in for eulogy. Dr. Coit went on to praise Paul Kruger's genius too. "His idea," the lecturer said, "was the expansion of the Dutch Republic over the whole of South Africa. Cecil Rhodes never meant to extinguish the Transvaal Republic; but he did mean the expansion of the English nation even there. If we condemned Cecil Rhodes, we condemned the policy of England for three centuries." All this must be the most damnable heresy to Mr. Hobson, and we wonder what the upshot will be. Common sense, of course, would suggest that Societies organised for one object should not divide over others.

We have little to say on the death of the Duke of Argyll. He was a very great man, evidently, in his own esteem, and in the reckoning of a few orthodox religionists. He was simply an amateur who affected to be an expert, and he wrote upon science, philosophy, religion, ethics, and politics with a God Almighty cocksurenness. He recalls Macaulay's phrase, applied to Brougham, of "slovenly omniscience." It is hardly likely that any book of his will be read by anybody in another ten years. He belonged to the old Gladstonian school in many things, particularly in theology; and his contributions in defence of that system of ignorance are just fit to rank with Mr. Gladstone's defence of the Bible.

The Rev. Carlile, the clerical showman, declines to be snubbed by those superior persons in the Church who object to his sensational methods. Some have professed to be shocked at his three-minute phonograph sermons as given in his Church of St. Mary-at-Hill. But he writes to the *Church Times*: "I cannot comprehend what greater objection there can be for the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached through



the brazen trumpet of the phonograph than by the Jubilee trumpets under the Mosaic law." That is a palpable hit.

A Methodist minister in Stroudsburg, Pa., publicly prayed, it is stated, that lightning would strike a new brewery nearing completion. During a severe thunderstorm, some days later, the brewery really was struck by lightning, and destroyed. The owner, it is said, will sue the pastor for damages. That looks like crediting the man of God with a great deal of praying power. If he really possesses it, what is the use of suing him? He has only to pray for a verdict in his favor, and he will get it.

But ought not the Lord to be linked with him as defendant? It was as much his doing as the pastor's, unless, of course, he could not hold out against such a powerful supplicant, and merely acted in the humble capacity of agent. The moral of the affair is a little obscure. If the Lord has any objection to breweries, how is it he has not destroyed a good number of them before? Was it necessary for the Stroudsburg minister to wake him up before it dawned upon him that it would be a good thing to shatter a manufactory of beer?

Dear, dear, what dangers lurk in religious performances to-day which were never apprehended by our unsophisticated forefathers. First, we hear that the water in fonts is often full of dangerous bacilli. Next there is an objection to kissing the New Testament kept in Courts of Justice because of the perils of contagion. Now a solemn warning is given in the *Sanitary Record* against the custom of handing the "Sacred Chalice" from one communicant to another in the communion service.

The *Sanitary Record* says: "We can hardly credit persons of sound common sense with seriously holding the belief that special immunity from infection would be miraculously accorded to participants in the sacred function of the Lord's Supper."

A correspondent of that journal suggests the use of a serviette for wiping the cup after use! Well, well, these loving Christians can't even meet at the Lord's Supper without looking askance at one another, and fearing to touch with their lips the same cup from which their dear brethren in Christ have sipped. Fancy Jesus at the last supper handing the cup to his apostles, and hearing Peter mutter: "I ain't going to drink after that cursed John. Here waiter, bring a towel and wipe this mug!"

The supply of Talmage is abundant just now, owing to the visit of the great preacher to this country. At Manchester he said: "When it came to the time of Armageddon the Agnostic or Infidel would be a curiosity; we should look upon him as we looked upon one who allowed his hair to hang below his shoulders and left his finger nails uncut, and had in his eye a stare of incipient lunacy—something to be pitied, not to be argued with."

This is very rich. Talmage has given here an exact description of the early saints of the Christian Church. Most probably it is a photograph which would give the salient features of any one of our Lord's apostles. He omits to say anything about the body-vermin that saints used to pride themselves upon.

Here is another Talmage tit-bit: "There was a farm willed away some years ago; all the proceeds of that farm were to be spent upon spreading infidel books. Somehow matters have changed; and now all the proceeds of that farm go towards the missionary cause." What does this refer to? We can quite believe that the men of God have got the estate or its proceeds. Trust them for grabbing anything they can lay hold of. But if the testator left the farm for a specific purpose, there must have been some rascality, or, at any rate, something wrong, in its being diverted to an entirely different object.

An undergraduate of Christ Church College, Oxford, and son of the Rev. Sutherland Macklem, of Toronto, committed suicide the other day in Kensington by throwing himself from a window. He seems to have unsettled his mind by overstudy. In addition to being disturbed by the "fourth dimension," he told his father that there was a connection between religion and science, but that he could not possibly discuss it. He left a note addressed to his father containing the following singular statements: "I am going to inform you of a fact easily verified by observation. You may of course know it already. Well, the fact is, that man originally consisted of body and brain. Religion is concerned with the ultimate ideas of the brain, and science is concerned with the body. We must develop the body and brain equally. If you have not heard this fact, I leave it to your judgment as to whether others should be informed of it."

The professional nurse, Theresa O'Connor, aged thirty-one years, who committed suicide at Paddington the other week,

seems to have been a woman of strong nerves and firm purpose. She took a quantity of laudanum and chloroform, but, finding these ineffective, she stabbed herself to the heart with a pair of scissors. Very deliberately, upon taking the poison, she set herself the task of jotting down all her sensations, so as to leave a record, as far as possible, of how it feels to die.

In the course of her notes she wrote: "I don't believe in a future life, so I go cheerfully to rest." Later on she wrote: "I will try to write 'Yes' if I believe there really is a future life, and 'No' if otherwise." Still later she wrote: "I don't hear any music or angels, so I can't believe there is another life." It is a pity that a woman of so much determination and of such an observant turn of mind could not have lived. She, however, believed herself destined to a prolonged and dreary illness, and preferred early death to lingering on a hopeless invalid.

Amongst the stories in Bishop Walsham How's *Note Book* is the following: "A verger was showing a lady over a church when she asked him if the vicar was a married man. 'No, ma'am,' he answered, 'he's a chalybeate.'"

The Dublin correspondent of the *Rock* notes with "deep regret" that Her Majesty, during her visit to Dublin, went on a Sunday afternoon to one of the Romish institutions of the city. "With Lord Denbigh as her cicerone, that cannot be wondered at," says this correspondent, who, however, adds that "it would have been a good object lesson to those inclined to break the Sabbath in this city if Her Gracious Majesty had declined to pay the visit, and kept the Sabbath in quiet." But, then, Her Majesty is not quite so bigoted as to see any evil example in such a harmless visit, nor do we.

The Swansea Watch Committee have commenced a crusade against the small shopkeepers who open on Sundays in that town. Thirty-three summonses were issued; but a meeting of tradespeople has been held, and it was decided to ask the Mayor to postpone the hearing of the cases pending another meeting of the Watch Committee, at which an effort is to be made to have the resolution revoked. If the tradespeople who opened their shops should be convicted, serious reprisals are threatened, as it is their intention to have the Act enforced in the case of cab proprietors, the owners of private carriages—in fact, to enforce the Act wherever it is possible. It seems only fair that, if the Act is brought into operation at all, its provisions should be enforced all the way round.

A grim relic has just been presented to a San Francisco museum. It is a "back-scratcher," once the property of the wife of a Fijian chief, which is made from the leg bone of a missionary who was killed and eaten by the islanders early in the century. The late owner inherited the item from his grandfather, "but his newly-wedded wife would not permit him to keep in the house an article with such gruesome associations, and so it was sent to the museum."

The newly-wedded wife probably thought that, if there was any "scratching" to be done, nature had sufficiently equipped her in the shape of finger-nails. Anyhow, we don't wonder that she objected to this misuse of missionary remains. Is the man of God who was eaten now in Heaven, and does he know of the use made of his shin-bone?

He was a pale young curate. And when he read of the universal adoption of automatic couplings, he threw the newspaper on the floor, and exclaimed: "What is to become of us? The public will soon be able to dispense with us altogether."—*Topical Times*.

The reception accorded to Sir George White on his return home seems to have turned his head. Take the following maudlin nonsense to which he gave utterance at Portsmouth:—"I could not bring myself to believe that the Ruler of the Universe, who had ordained the centuries to succeed each other, could after the dawn of the twentieth century hurl the loyal and progressive colony of Natal back into the seventeenth century of darkness and bigotry which is represented by Boer rule."

If Sir George White continues this sort of pious cackle, he will go far to spoil the reputation he has made. What has the "Ruler of the Universe" to do with the matter; or what can Sir George White know about his designs, supposing the "Ruler of the Universe" to be really directing events? He allowed Ladysmith to have a very narrow squeak for it, and the dreadful way in which he has permitted the war to drag on does not seem to show that he is in any hurry to dispose of the "darkness and bigotry which is represented by Boer rule." If Sir George White cannot talk more rationally than this, his friends would do well to advise him to keep his mouth closed.

The "Religion of Sovereigns" is the title of an article in the *Spectator*. Christianity was the religion of a "tanner"—or at any rate of his lodger, one of the disciples—but perhaps



this is not the same thing as the faith of monarchs. More likely the religion of "sovereigns" is the worship of Mammon.

The vicar of Friston, in Suffolk, cannot induce any of his parishioners to accept office as churchwardens. He nominated as his warden a Mr. H. Hambling, but that gentleman indignantly declined to serve. He refused to be forced into responsibilities for which he had no inclination. "Won't anybody take it up?" asked the vicar, plaintively. Nobody would. Evidently that parson is known, even if he is not appreciated.

The New York *Christian World* deprecates the preaching of higher, or any kind of, Bible criticism as being unacceptable to the people. "Successful pastors," it observes, "are Bible expositors, not critics." That is true, for if they were critics first they never would be expositors afterwards—or, at least, their expositions would prove a trifle hair-lifting to the pious people whom they addressed.

Dr. Parker has been trying his hand at editing a newspaper—though the fad has been quite played out by the gifted Sheldon. Dr. Parker, in addition, contributes to the *Sunday Special* an article on "The Ideal Newspaper Reader." It is rather twaddle, though "copyrighted in the United States." He relates one amusing story, which is as follows: "The well-known Rev. William Jay, of Bath, printed a sermon upon the text, 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' And an unmarried (I feel sure he was a bachelor) young typographer printed the text thus (long before the revised version was thought of): 'All that a man hath will he give for his wife.' On returning the proofs to the printer, Mr. Jay wrote on the margin, 'This depends on circumstances.'"

When so grave a Church dignitary as Dean Farrar undertakes to relate a "little story," and gives it as a matter of fact, we, of course, are expected to accept it as such, out of mere politeness. Otherwise we should be inclined to doubt the little narrative he amused an Exeter Hall meeting with the other day. He said that a Hooligan, being asked how he spent his time, replied: "When we are thirteen, we plays the wag; when we are sixteen, we nicks the shiny; when we are eighteen, we bashes the copper."

The slang is all right, but the epigrammatic terseness smacks more of the literary Dean than of the Cockney larrikin. The *Topical Times* is evidently of our opinion, for it observes that, if this is one of the Dean's "little stories," one of his big ones would be a regular Rougemont.

Professor George Adam Smith has been preaching at the Presbyterian Church, St. John's Wood, on the personality of Satan. He says it is not at all needful to believe in the bodily appearance of Satan to our Lord—that he really presented himself in a form of flesh and blood. If this be so, it may be equally urged that it is not at all needful to believe that Christ ever appeared in the form of flesh and blood. One personage seems to be about as mythical as the other. The evidence is the same for the existence of each. We can't make flesh of one and a vision of t'other.

Christians have no monopoly of "answers to prayer." During the illness of Professor Max Müller the priests and pundits of Benares met together in their sacred temple and offered up prayers for his recovery. They had never seen him, but they honored him for his writings on Hindu religion and philosophy. And the curious thing is that Professor Max Müller's recovery began while they were praying. Evidently the ears of God are not exclusively held by the priests of Christianity.

"Providence" was of no use in relation to the great fire at Ottawa. Fortunately human sympathy is far more efficacious, and, although it could not prevent or stop the fire, it is able to bring succor to the homeless and destitute.

There is a good deal of point in the description by a Malay paper of the way in which England extends her empire. The native paper says: "First, England gets a missionary; when the missionary has found a specially beautiful and fertile tract of country, he gets all his people round him, and says: 'Let us pray'; and, when all eyes are shut, up goes the British flag!"

On the understanding that the defeat of the Boers is a "work of necessity," even Sabbatarians may be inclined to tolerate the operations of British troops on the Lord's Day. A private of the 1st Welsh Regiment, writing home from Bloemfontein, draws attention to the following strange coincidence: "We left Port Elizabeth," he says, "on a Sunday, arrived at Naauwpoort on a Sunday. It was on a Sunday, too, that we left the Modder River, and on the day of rest following we fought the battle of Paardeberg." Thus were four Sundays occupied.

Amongst the eighty-three applications for the post of additional inspector of weights and measures to the Hull

Corporation, salary £80 a year, was one from a student who mentioned as his qualification that he had "passed with distinction in Scripture." This seems to be about as relevant as if the fraudulent shop-keepers, whom he would have to detect, applied to be let off on the ground that they had been brought up in Sunday-schools.

A false swain, formerly organist of a chapel at Holcombe Regis, has been sued at Exeter for breach of promise of marriage. In one of his letters the amatory organist seems to have turned on the Scripture "stop," signing himself "Jehu, the son of Nimshi, a fresh name they have given me because I am a furious driver; but I am your own Sam." The courtship, which he commenced at chapel, and broke off to go to "the front," will cost him £75, and legal expenses.

Some fine sanctimonious "high-falutin'" is indulged in by a *Daily News* war correspondent in describing a night attack. Here is a specimen: "Once again the stillness as of death fell upon us where we lay face downwards on the soil waiting we know not what, it might be wounds, or that strange passage of the immortal soul which men call death. And in the blackness where no eye but the eye of God could reach we each man stood face to face with his own soul."

Standing face to face with your own soul is distinctly good. The only difficulty is to realise what is meant. But immediately after this we are told of the "hellish music of the guns" which join in the "devil's orchestra," and the "death-angels with all-seeing eyes" who watch the fateful bullets as they rattle over the "shrivelled souls" lying prone on the grimy earth. All of which may be thought very fine writing by the correspondent himself, and is perhaps excusable on the ground of the evidence it affords that his nerves must have been sadly unstrung. He seems to have got mixed over the "eyes," for if none but the "eye of God" could penetrate the darkness, where did the all-seeing eyes of the "death angels" come in, unless, indeed, all these optics are to be taken as one?

Having edited the *Topeka Daily Capital* for a week, just to show how Jesus Christ—that is to say, God Almighty—would run a newspaper, the Rev. C. M. Sheldon is visiting England to give us the benefit of his divine illumination. His object over here is "to found a new institution which will combine all the Protestant sects into one great body of Christian Socialists." His stay amongst us will be about eight weeks. What a modest gentleman he must be! Any other man would need eighty thousand years, more or less, probably more, for a job like that.

The *Outlook* is not kind to Dean Farrar in its article on the Cowper Celebration at Olney. "Dean Farrar," it says, "delivered one of those sermons which are made with a text and a pair of scissors."

By the way, the *Outlook*, in reviewing the Society of Ethical Propagandists' new collection of Essays entitled *Ethics and Religion*, points out the absurdity of asking Christians and Agnostics to join Ethical Societies together. "The Christian and the Agnostic reformer," it says, "must continue to work apart. To the Christian, religion is the fundamental basis of morality. To ask him to forego or forget his faith in order to raise mankind is to ask him to cast away the only means by which he can hope for success in this work." Dr. Coit and his friends, the *Outlook* says, find a religion in their Ethical code, while the Christian finds an ethical code in his religion. We have pointed this out in the *Freethinker*; perhaps it will attract more attention in another journal.

The following story is told in Mr. H. S. Cooper's new *History of Hawkeshead*, the northernmost parish of Lancashire. Mr. C. W. Rawson, now vicar of Brathay, was at Wray, where one of his school lasses was noted for waggery. The vicar one day was endeavoring to impress on his class the force of the word "covenant." "Now children," said he, "I want you to understand. If I was to arrange with a man to do something for me and then go away, what should I do if, when I returned, I found that it hadn't been done?" "Oh, please, sir, I know, sir," answered Martha with alacrity: "blaspheme, sir."

Dr. Percival, Bishop of Hereford, in consequence of the resignation of Dr. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, has now the right to sit in the House of Lords. He took his seat as a Lord Spiritual on Monday. Two other Bishops introduced him, and he presented his writ of summons on his knee to the Lord Chancellor, after which he was free to make or spoil laws for the people of England. Some day or other, we suppose, this ridiculous arrangement will come to an end. It is certainly odd, to say the least of it, that a dignitary of what is after all but one religious sect should have a right to sit in Parliament, without any sort of invitation from the country. For our part, we are strongly of opinion that ministers of religion should be excluded from secular bodies altogether, and confined to the business of soul-saving.

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## N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stone-cutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Tuesday, May 8, Public Hall, Barking-road, Canning Town, E. : at 8, "The Doom of All the Creeds."

May 13, Athenæum Hall, London; 20, Manchester; 27, Athenæum Hall.

## To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 6, Athenæum Hall, London; 19 and 20, Failsworth; 27, Bradford. —All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

J. G. SLIGH.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraph. Our readers do us a real service in sending us newspaper extracts on which we can find an "Acid Drop" or a "Sugar Plum."

SEVERAL subscribers to the *Freethinker* complain of not receiving it. We beg to assure them that the fault does not lie with the Freethought Publishing Company, but with those who received the subscription and undertook to supply the paper. However, we are doing, and will do, our best to have justice done in the matter, even at our own expense. Subscribers who do not receive their *Freethinker* are invited to inform us how long they subscribed for and from what date, and the paper shall be forwarded to them.

W. COX (Liverpool).—Receipt for the 10s. duly to hand. Member's form handed to Miss Vance.

JAS. NEATE.—See paragraph.

E. PARKER, on behalf of the West Ham Branch committee, appeals to the local Freethinkers to "rally round the flag" at Mr. Foote's lecture next Tuesday evening (May 8). With regard to "financial assistance," this correspondent is informed that Mr. Foote will appeal to the meeting after his lecture. Of course it will make no personal difference to him, as his services are gratuitous on this occasion.

T. WILMOT.—Delighted to see the Camberwell Branch going ahead with its propagandist work. Fighting the common enemy is the great road to success. See paragraph for the other matter. Thanks.

J. PARRY.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen made such a fine impression at Cardiff on Sunday. It is to be regretted that the weather was so wet, but this is a damp climate, and you are on the dampest side of the coast. We are glad to know that so many names are handed in for membership in the new Cardiff Branch. Miss Vance will, of course, send you the necessary forms. With regard to Mr. Foote's visit, which you say is eagerly expected, you will doubtless see and hear him early in the autumn. We shall be glad to see you in London, especially at the N. E. S. Conference.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.

ESS JAY BEE.—Always pleased to hear from you. Glad to hear that you paid a visit to our new premises at Stationers' Hall Court, and that you think it "a capital position."

J. SEDDON.—Thanks for the cuttings. Send us more, please, whenever the spirit moves you.

E. W. QUAY.—Charles Bradlaugh died on January 30, 1891. He did affirm in the House of Commons at first, by the resolution of the House at his own risk and responsibility. We have not the precise date, nor the date of the Oaths Act, by us at the moment, and your letter arrives late on Tuesday; but we will give the dates in our next issue.

H. SEYMOUR, 51 Arundel-square, London, N., asks us to announce that petition-sheets can be obtained from him for signatures, requesting the Home Secretary to remit the sentence of twelve months' imprisonment passed by Mr. Justice Darling upon Mr. R. D. B. Wells at Birmingham. Most of our readers will recollect this case. Mr. Seymour also asks us to say that a manifesto will shortly be issued by the Trustees of the Free Press Defence Committee Fund.

E. R. JENKINS.—There is no one comprehensive book on the subject, which is really too vast to be treated adequately in a single work. You will find Dr. Tylor's *Anthropology* a very able summary. It is, indeed, from the pen of a master.

FRANK HALL.—Will be used in our next.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Glasgow Herald—Freidenker—Manchester Express—Greenock Telegraph—Progressive Thinker—Torch of Reason—El Libre Pensamiento—Irish Catholic—Isle of Man Times—Two Worlds—Daily Mail—Ethical World—Boston Investigator—Crescent—De Vrije Gedachte—People's Newspaper—Truthseeker (New York)—Sydney Bulletin—Yarmouth Mercury.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—T. Thornett, 5s.; Birmingham Branch, £3 1s.; Dr. Nichols, Ilford, £1; J. Halliwell, 1s.; Blackburn Branch, 7s. 6d.

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

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

## Special.

FORMAL notices have been posted to the Shareholders of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, that the Board of Directors have called up the unpaid Capital in two instalments of five shillings per Share each, payable on June 1 and August 1 respectively. Shareholders whose Shares are not yet fully paid up need not wait, of course, for the expiration of this notice. They can pay at once if they choose, and thus put the Directors as promptly as possible in possession of the working resources of the Company. A fresh Prospectus will shortly be issued, with an appeal for new Shareholders. A good many Freethinkers, who might support this enterprise, have still to be brought "within the fold." We are getting settled down in our commodious business quarters, and we are particularly anxious to push the sale of the *Freethinker*. To this end we once more invite our friends to send us the names and addresses of newsagents who will display a copy of the weekly contents-sheet.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Sugar Plums.

It was rain, rain, rain at Liverpool on Sunday, until early in the evening. Mr. Foote's morning and afternoon audiences were affected by it, but there was a capital meeting to wind up the day's proceedings. The lecture on "Is Dr. Mivart in Hell?" was followed with the closest attention for nearly an hour and a-half, and the laughter and applause were frequent and hearty. Mr. Hammond, who occupied the chair in the evening, made a spirited appeal for fresh members and a good attendance at the annual meeting on the following Sunday. He also referred to Mr. Foote's labors in establishing the Secular Society, Limited, which had been proved to be sound and stable, and to afford security for legacies and bequests. Out of one bequest the Society had helped the Liverpool Branch, and had enabled it to face the immediate future more hopefully. Mr. Hammond trusted that this fact would not be forgotten by Freethinkers who had anything to leave at their decease.

Mr. Foote opens a course of indoor lectures for the West Ham Branch on Tuesday evening, May 8, at the Public Hall, Barking-road, Canning Town, E. His subject will be "The Doom of All the Creeds," so that it has application to religionists of every denomination. This lecture is to be the first of four; the rest will be delivered by Mr. Cohen and two other speakers with whose names we have not been favored. Freethinkers in the district are requested to give these lectures all possible advertisement, in order that there may be good meetings, consisting largely of the general public.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured at the Athenæum Hall, London, to a highly intellectual and discriminating audience. Judging from the frequent and hearty applause, Mr. Watts's presentment of "The Emancipation of Human Thought" was greatly appreciated. Mr. C. H. Cattell, of course, made an excellent chairman. Mr. Hartmann and another gentleman put several questions to the lecturer, which were replied to.



Mr. Watts lectures again this evening, Sunday, May 6, from the same platform, taking for his subject "Scientists of the Victorian Era." Previous to the lecture Mrs. Charles Watts will give a recitation.

Branches and members of the N. S. S. will please observe that all notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be sent in to the Secretary—Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.—by the first post on Monday, May 14. As already announced, the Conference will be held in London on Whit-Sunday, as usual, and the very handsome and accessible Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged for the evening public meeting.

Freethinkers all over the country should try to make this 1900 Conference a grand success. The nineteenth century is ending, and we shall soon be beginning the twentieth century, which promises to open most favorably for the Secular movement. The establishment of the Secular Society, Limited, and of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, has provided the movement with two powerful instruments of progress; and it will be the fault of the party if it does not go ahead splendidly in the immediate future.

Mr. Cohen had three good meetings at Cardiff on Sunday in spite of the unfavorable weather, and he appears to have delighted his audiences. There was a good sale of literature, every copy of the *Freethinker* being cleared out, and about thirty names were handed in for membership in the newly-forming N. S. S. Branch. One gentleman promised to take ten Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company.

Mr. Cohen delivers this evening (May 6) the first of three consecutive Sunday evening open-air lectures for the West Ham Branch at the Grove, Stratford. No doubt the local "saints" will do their utmost to secure first-class meetings.

Mr. W. Heaford lectured on Sunday afternoon to a large audience in Victoria Park. His subject was "Unrealities of Religion." He was confronted with some of its realities in the form of Christian Evidence men who frequently interrupted him. But they did not daunt the lecturer, and they caused no disorder except their own noise.

The Camberwell Branch holds a *Conversazione* this evening (May 6), after which the Hall will be closed for the summer season. The Sunday evening lectures in Brockwell Park will be resumed on May 13.

Mr. Edward Clodd, in his Introduction to Mr. Glyde's *Life of Edward Fitzgerald*, the magnificent translator (or renderer) of Omar Khayyam, calls Fitzgerald "an agnostic." Whereupon the *Morning Leader* snuffles out an objection that, though Fitzgerald was "not logically convinced of the truth of Christianity," his letters show that "he valued its influence on life supremely," and was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Well now, we have no hesitation in saying that Fitzgerald's letters show nothing of the kind. We have read them, and read them all, which is perhaps more than the *Morning Leader* critic has done. Moreover, we beg to remind that gentleman that the "almost persuaded" phrase is based upon a false rendering of a certain speech in the Acts of the Apostles. King Agrippa did not really say to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," but "Do you think you are going to persuade me to be a Christian so easily?"

Mr. J. M. Headley has an excellent letter in the *Yarmouth Mercury* on "Socialism and Romanism," giving some striking facts about the lives and doings of many of the Popes, who, instead of being better than other men, were often a great deal worse.

Freethought is spreading in all ranks of society, and even in the Churches. More than one Catholic priest has turned his back on Rome and joined the Freethought party. Mr. Joseph McCabe is a salient instance. More than one Church of England clergyman, too, has thrown up his "work for Christ" for a similar reason, and others seem ready to pursue the same course under conditions that are not quite intolerable; for, after all, if a man has a wife and children depending upon him he is bound to look after them in some way or other. Only the other day—it was on April 25—a "Middle-aged benefited clergyman" advertised in the *Daily News* for "some remunerative secular employment." He stated that he was "without private means," and that he contemplated "resigning Holy Orders, owing to developing Agnostic views." We hope this clergyman has found, or will find, what he sought in that advertisement. It must be a great relief to him to earn his bread by perfectly honest labor.

The Natural History Museum at Kensington is enriched by a monument to Professor Huxley, in the form of a white marble statue, the work of Mr. Onslow Ford, R.A. It was unveiled on Saturday, April 28, by the Prince of Wales; speeches being delivered by Professor Ray Lancaster, Sir Joseph Hooker, Sir Michael Foster, and the Duke of Devonshire as Chairman of the Memorial Committee. Professor

Lankester said that "The statue was the expression of the admiration, not only of the English people, but of the whole civilised world, for one who as a discoverer, teacher, writer, and man must be reckoned amongst the greatest figures in the records of our age." Sir Joseph Hooker spoiled his eulogy by rather ineptly remarking that the most notable thing in Huxley's career was his being a Privy Councillor. Sir Michael Foster recalled how Huxley had fought for the mighty Darwin, how much the progress of biological science had been due to his labors, and how "anatomists, zoologists, geologists, physiologists, botanists, and anthropologists all went to him for help and guidance." The Duke of Devonshire referred to the influence that Huxley was still exercising on the minds of the younger men of science. And the Prince of Wales said "ditto" to the preceding speakers.

It is worth noticing that subscriptions to the Huxley Memorial came from every country in Europe, from India, from every British colony, and from the United States. Science is truly international, and is slowly but surely preparing the way for the final internationalism of all mankind.

Cardinal Logue dined with the Queen during his recent visit to Ireland. We shall not be suspected of any sympathy with Roman Catholicism as a religion when we say that we have sympathy with Roman Catholics as citizens, and that we are pleased to see the Queen giving a slap in the face to Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Freethinkers want to see equal justice all round; nothing less, and nothing more.

## Ernest Renan.

"Authors who have influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas or sentiments which were tending to the birth."—  
JOUBERT.

ERNEST RENAN was born in 1823 at Tregnier, a small town which had grown under the shadow of a vast monastery. The monastery has disappeared, but the cathedral remains. Under its vaulted roof he passed long hours, breathing the monastic atmosphere in an age of unfaith. His childhood was surrounded by legends of the saints and of the sea. His father, the master of a small coasting boat, was drowned when Ernest was three years old. This misfortune doubtless served to deepen the piety of the Renan household. The boy, educated by the priests, grew up with the fixed determination to follow in their footsteps. Everything in his early years predestined him to a modest ecclesiastical career in Brittany. "I should have made a very good priest," he has told us, "indulgent, paternal, charitable, blameless in my life and conversation." Such was the prospect before Ernest Renan when a slight incident completely changed his future.

This was his success at the College at Tregnier, where he carried off all the prizes of his class, and attracted the notice of the Abbé Dupanloup. This eminent ecclesiastic, afterwards Bishop of Orleans, offered Renan a position in his seminary, which he was anxious to fill with promising recruits. For three years Renan was one of Dupanloup's most eager pupils. Thence he was sent for four years to Issy to receive his final preparations for the priesthood in that great lying Catholic Church, which years after regarded him as the living embodiment of the spirit of Antichrist.

Sojourn in Paris, even in a seminary, awoke his critical and scientific interests. He began to feel that such a career as had been marked out for him was now impossible. He left the Church with much hesitation and much self-questioning, but without bitterness and without regret.

Much pain naturally followed on this disruption of old ties and affections. Renan has given us a touching picture of his mother's distress at his scepticism. "I exerted all my ingenuity," he said, "in inventing ways of proving to her that I was still the same *filis a pube* as in the past. Little by little the wound healed. When she saw me still good and kind to her, as I always had been, she owned that there were several ways of being a priest, and that nothing was altered in me but my dress, which was indeed the truth." Like Ingersoll, this Prince of Cynics was happy in his family relationship.

There were material hardships, too, but his sister Henriette's devoted care solaced and supported him till he made friends of his own and reached an independent position. Then commenced the long career

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of successful literary and scientific labor, which finally resulted in his being recognised as the greatest intellectual force of his day in France, maybe in the world. One of the chief causes of Renan's influence is to be found in his incomparable style, that pure, severe, and delicate manner, which is at once the delight and the despair of imitators. With the success of the *Vie de Jesus*, published in 1863, a stronger current drew him down a more brilliant stream with deeper eddies. But the Renan who survives in all memories is the early Ariel of grace, caprice, and charm. If the greater Renan had much to gain from the free play of his varying faculties, he had something to lose. The paradox which wearies, the irony that withers, the familiarity which diminishes, never tarnished the more chastened wisdom of his earlier self. A certain moral grace, an exquisite gravity, dignify these earlier works, from which all non-essentials have been eliminated. We can imagine no canon of style which would find them imperfect. He sighed sometimes in finishing his most brilliant, his most dazzling, pages. More than once, looking back, he will own to a preference for the sober excellence of his earlier manner. More than once the capricious luxuriance of his later genius offended the delicate standard of his inmost taste. The Gascon in him wept then for the loss of the Breton, to adapt his own charming phrase. But, whether we applaud or condemn his later style, there is no denying its excellence. He has shown the sarcastic power of the French language in hands that can evoke its subtleties and wield its trenchant blade. So much more effective than Gibbon's method, although many tracts in his thousand years of history seem as if they had been made to suit the great historian, who wrote amidst the acacias of Lausanne. With his scientific bent on the one side, and his clerical training on the other, Renan was still at heart Voltairean. He even suggests that Jesus, in Gethsemane, may have looked back with a sigh on the young girls of Galilee who, under happier circumstances, might have made his bliss. The sentiment was popular. We remember hearing a sympathetic lady reader of the *Vie de Jesus* lament, with a sigh, that the Second Person of the Trinity was not a marrying man.

Renan's favorite subjects are chosen from a race of men, as he has himself remarked, as different as possible from his own. But when his theme is one of the heroes of philosophy, a Marcus Aurelius or a Spinoza, the reader reaps the benefit of the similarity and sympathy between author and subject. The figures breathe before us; the language displays a wise elevation and disenchanted calm.

Renan used his incomparable skill to interpret the mind of his generation to itself. His *Vie de Jesus* took the world by storm. Fifteen hundred books or pamphlets about it were published within a year of its appearance. Whether men applauded or anathematised, none could deny the high gifts of which it gave full proof. Savants might gibe, clerics might rail. But they have had to reckon with it. Not even the most orthodox of subsequent commentators on the gospels have written as they would have written had it never been published. Rationalists have found in it a rich mine of ideas, a full fountain of inspiration. Renan's method was as fatal to religion as Strauss's laborious thoroughness, as he explains away the wonder and the glamor of the Christian superstition.

Science ever brings the unknown into the realm of the known. In this process she is continually encroaching on the domain of religion, bringing things which seemed unearthly into the ordinary category of observation and experiment. Science will finally exterminate religion by explaining it. The conception of law will make the belief in miracles impossible. History will explain, dogmas and science will dry them up. Men will turn their backs upon religion like witchcraft and astrology. The illusion of our fathers was that there must be mystery where they ceased to see. Our standpoint is changed. We no longer take our mental horizon for an objective wall.

A subtler ether than ever hung over the windless Olympus of the gods of old is now the subject of differential equation. And men now compel the very flash and bolt of immortal Jove to light houses, to carry messages, and to drive motor-cars.

Ernest Renan helped materially to hasten the coming

of the dawn of freedom. Himself a truth-seeker, he fired the hearts and brains of millions with the same noble passion. It is a splendid record. Such a man is a worker at the looms of the future.

MIMNERMUS.

## John Calvin and His God.

(Concluded from page 267.)

LET us suppose that the scheme of John Calvin is all true, as alleged; let us admit every premise, concede every statement; then the supreme misfortune of man is that he was ever born. As between the final state of the wicked and that of the redeemed, any decent man would prefer to be damned and remember than to be saved and forget. We are all told that this is for the exceeding great glory and praise of God. It is for his glory that the saved man must forget his old friend, the saved mother forget her lost child. One of the Universalist ministers, speaking of that doctrine, used an expression which appealed to me. He said he would rather be an asbestos sinner in hell than a petrified saint in heaven. If the Atonement was to be worked out as Calvin said it was, I would offer an amendment. The only begotten son of God was killed as a sacrifice, in virtue of which certain of the human race were to be saved. If by the death of one a multitude could have been saved, then by the death of two twice as many could have been saved; God ought to have had twins. The scheme shows the exceeding and abounding grace of God. A few people, with John Calvin at their head, have been striving for salvation—for whom? For themselves. The great men of this world are the men who forget themselves. The great prophet of Nazareth sought not his own gain, but gave himself to others as the flower gives its perfume, or as the morning gives its light. They call it exceedingly gracious in God that he provided a means whereby some may be saved. In other words, they call God good because he is no worse.

Suppose a man stood at the river's bank. There is a lumber pile near by. Men and women and children are struggling in the water; each moment some are sinking for the last time; now and then this man, because of his exceeding goodness and abounding grace, deliberately takes a board from the pile and cautiously pushes it out into the stream, and one of the struggling souls floats upon it to the shore. Others are sinking. After a while this man, because of his abounding grace and exceeding goodness, takes another board and pushes it out into the stream and watches to see some despairing, frantic, agonising soul throw its arms about it and float safely to shore. Would any man in his senses praise that man for his goodness and his abounding grace? We should never think of the ones he had saved, but hold him responsible for the death of every one he might have saved and did not.

If we turn the doctrine about, and think of the lost that God passed by, it leaves us no escape from the conclusion that he might have saved them and did not, and is therefore responsible for their loss. Who believes the theology of John Calvin? Who accepts it? This is the most astonishing thing in the whole astonishing development of Christian history; all the Christian world, the Methodists alone excepted, believe, or say they believe, the doctrines of John Calvin. The Roman Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Congregationalists, and the Episcopalians, every one of the important divisions of Christendom, base their doctrine upon the Institutes of Calvin. The theory is relatively modern that man is an evolution from the lower order of life; that on the strange and mysterious journey man has passed over all the road travelled by four-footed things; has crawled with the snake; has prowled with the beasts of prey; has lain in wait with the beast that crouches and springs upon its victim. The doctrine of John Calvin, accepted practically by universal Christendom, may be cited as evidence of man's ascent from the beasts of the field. In this doctrine are the bark of the hyena, the howl of the wolf, the crouch of the tiger, the conscience of the snake. The problem used to be, How can God be just and the justifier of man? In other words, how can



God save man? The problem is now reversed. With all reverence, and with all sanctity, how can man justify God?

The doctrines of Calvin are founded upon fable—understand that. At the outset we allege that theology assumes its facts, and works out its theory in accordance with them. The whole proposition of John Calvin is based upon the primal assumption that man was created in knowledge, innocence, and holiness; that God Almighty made a covenant with him; that if man wilfully, and in a rebellious spirit, transgressed the covenant, the burden of his guilt and condemnation would rest upon himself. That is the fable.

If God made Adam, as the fable said he did, may we suppose that God thought? Did he reflect? Standing there or kneeling there in the garden, taking the cool, moist clay, touching it here and there with shaping hands, seeing it grow beneath his wondrous touch into form and semblance of a being that was to be, did he think? Did he stop to consider the consequences of what he did? If he had and had been a just and holy God; if he had longed for the happiness and well-being of his creatures, and taken no delight in the death of him that dieth, then when he looked upon that unliving, unbreathing form he ought to have kicked it back to atoms. If God did as they say he did, leaned above it and breathed into it a living soul, he must have known, knowing all things, the consequences of his deed. When the man was made, God was so well pleased with his work he thought he would try again and improve upon him, and he did so; he made the woman, and put them together in the garden in their innocence and holiness, and made a covenant with them that they should eat of the fruit of all the trees of the garden save one, the "fruit of which thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Yet God's work of wonder and of creation was not yet complete. He made another thing. He made a snake and completed it somewhere. He did not tell Adam about it. He left that for a surprise, and when the tragedy had happened, when the transgression had been committed, then God walked again in the garden and said, with his challenging voice: "Adam, where art thou?" and the fable ought to have said that Adam stood forth and said: "I am here; but where art thou, deceiver; where art thou?"

Did God think; did he reflect? He knew when he went away, having made and left them there, that he should come back as an avenger, as a Nemesis. He must have known all that would come to pass. Did he think when he launched that boat of life upon the world's fountain of waters; did he see all along the banks of the ceaseless, unending river, the broken barks, the strewn pieces of wreck; did he see the serpent of fear coiled and hissing upon the coffin of the dead; did he see the necessity of being put under the humiliation of taking his richest treasure, his own son, and causing him to be put to death upon the Cross; did he see all these things, and yet deliberately go forward to do it? There is no man who could not produce, if he had the power of creation, a more rational scheme and more noble results. But it was all founded upon fable. Let us not forget that. If the science of the world has demonstrated anything, it has demonstrated the Eden story as a myth, a fable, and nothing else.

In the light, then, of what we know, can God be justified? At the judgment seat of man, can God give an account of himself? Looking at this doom of life, this doom that was thrust upon us, I am reminded of the Dutchman's apostrophe to his dog. He said to him: "You are lucky: I have to get up in the morning and build the fire, you warm by it; I have to go into the barn and feed the cattle, you stay in the house; I have to get my breakfast and feed you yours; I have to clear the table, you have no dishes to wash; when you die I will bury you in the ground; that is the last of you; when I die I have got to go to hell already."

Not by any scheme proposed by theology can God be justified. To know such a being, and enjoy him for ever, would be a worse doom than to be for ever banished from his presence. The future life and salvation are not to be desired unless we love and remember, and have again the ones who loved us here. If there is anything in theology that makes a man want to claim a

selfish heaven; if there is anything that separates between hearts that once throbbed together; if there is anything that steals from a mother's head the halo of divine devotion to her child, then religion, with every scheme, is an accursed, a hateful thing. A young man once went to Mr. Ingersoll and asked him to be converted and saved, and the great-souled man said to him: "Young man, do you believe in these doctrines?" "Yes." "Then suppose you should go to heaven, and should find out that your mother was in hell; would you be happy there?" The young man said: "God knows what is best for mother." It would be a waste of time to save such a man.

Can God be justified at the judgment seat of man? Not yet, not yet. We will hold our judgment in suspense, because it were too rash to condemn what we do not understand. Why did he make the tiger's crooked claw? Why did he put daggers in the mouths of beasts of prey? What did he make those perfect talons, that cruel beak, with which the eagle tears and rends the flesh of lambs? Why did he make the heart to love, to hope, to cherish, and then separate lovers at the grave's mouth? Why does he permit the burden of suffering to lie upon the virtuous and the good, and the benefits of fortune and wealth and external good come trooping to the unjust, the wicked, and the cruel? Why is crime crowned and virtue scourged? Why are the noblest and the best in dungeons, and the useless and the perverse prospering? No man knows. There is no hypothesis by which the onworking of this world can be ascertained, nor man and the lives below him be accounted for; but we will not condemn, we do not know enough for that. We acknowledge the difficulty, and do two things: make neither apology for God Almighty, nor despair of any living thing.

I am rash enough to believe that somehow in the imperfection, somehow in the defects, there is a possibility of an outcome, somehow, somewhere. Notwithstanding the bitterness mingled in life's cup, notwithstanding the darkness that broods, unbroken by a star; notwithstanding the cry unanswered that souls in agony make in the presence of the mysterious and the unknown; notwithstanding it all, I will trust that the life once lived will always be; that hope and aspiration and room for effort will never be denied; that rounding this world like the cushioned atmosphere is a wisdom inscrutable to man, and that when its purposes are all complete we may be able to see that the tiger's claw and the eagle's beak help somehow in the betterment and progress of the human world; that somehow we shall see that our hells we have imagined, so far from being eternal and revengeful, are temporary and remedial; that the smoke and torment of God's enemies will not ascend forever to the praise and glory of his great name, but that the praise and glory of his great name will never, never be complete nor confessed by creature man until every wound has passed the healing hand, until the last fire in every hell has been extinguished by pity's tears, until the last poor wanderer in darkness and wickedness has returned, and is pulling with eager hands the latchstring at the door of God.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

J. E. ROBERTS.

### A Chance for Freethinkers.

THE Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, does not intend to confine its business to its own publications. It is open to supply all "advanced" literature, orders for which may be placed with it at any time and for any amount. A trade will also be done, in the course of time, with what are called "remainders"—that is, new books which have had their principal sale at the published prices, and are offered at a considerable reduction. The Company has some copies just now of Dr. E. J. Dillon's *Sceptics of the Old Testament*. This is a very valuable and interesting work, written by a very liberal-minded scholar, and is well worthy of a place on Freethinkers' book-shelves. The three Old Testament writers dealt with are the authors of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. "All three," Dr. Dillon says, "reject the dogma of retribution, the doctrine of eternal life, and belief in the coming of a Messiah, over and above which they at times strip the notion of God of its most essential attributes, reducing it to the shadow of a mere metaphysical abstraction. This is why I call them Sceptics." Dr. Dillon's essays on these three Sceptics are full of learning, courage, and interest. He also supplies an independent translation of Job and Ecclesiastes, and of portions of Proverbs. This important work was

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published four years ago at 7s. 6d. net. A fire occurred at the publisher's recently, and copies have been put on the "remainder" market as "soiled." They are soiled, but for the most part very slightly. There is a trivial water mark on some of the covers, and in some cases the edges are a little smoked. But the printed page is not in any case affected; and, generally speaking, these copies are almost as good as new. The Company is able to offer them at 3s. 6d. each, or post free for 3s. 10d. No doubt all the small number of copies on hand will be cleared off immediately. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

**Book Chat.**

The *Humane Review* for April (E. Bell, 6 York-street, Covent-garden) is the first number of a new magazine, published to promote the general objects of the Humanitarian League. The editor, presumably Mr. Salt, says that politics and economics will be avoided; what will be dealt with is "the higher ethics—the ethics of humaneness." It hardly need be said that we wish this venture every success. The first number is well printed in large, bold type, and is generally pleasant to the eye. Mr. G. Bernard Shaw contributes the opening article on "Science and Common Sense." It is brilliant and pungent, and is delightful reading to anyone with fairly quick wits and a little sense of humor. Mr. Shaw goes for all sorts and conditions of fanatics and infallibilists, including Socialists and Vegetarians, to both of which he belongs himself. But his arrows of scorn are chiefly directed against the men of science who torture animals in the pretended interest of mercy, and put poison in our blood to safeguard us from disease. His last word is a wise one: "The final conflict is between the cruel will and the humane will." Miss Honor Morten follows Mr. Shaw with an article on "Inhumanity in Schools." We are glad to see that she is absolutely opposed to corporal punishment. Mr. W. H. Hudson writes pleasantly on "The Dartford Warbler," advocating the better protection of birds against sportsmen and fanciers. Dr. J. Oldfield opposes capital punishment in an article on "Hanging in the Nineteenth Century," Mr. Atherton Curtis deals with "Animal Protection in France," which appears to be rather behind-hand, Mr. J. M. Robertson writes with his customary vigor on "Militarism and Humanity," and Mr. Richard Heath takes for his subject "The Kafir and His Masters." It will thus be seen that the *Humane Review* affords a capital variety of interesting reading, and we are pleased to note that its existence is guaranteed for at least twelve months. By the way, it is to be published quarterly.

*Will Women Help?* is the title of a little book by Mr. F. J. Gould, published by Watts & Co. (1s.). We ought to have noticed it sooner, but we have been too busy for some weeks to write anything for this "Book Chat" column. Mr. Gould is a thoughtful and elegant writer, and this is not the least valuable of the works that have proceeded from his fluent pen—or rather, to be more strictly accurate, from his active brain. We wish the women of England could be induced to read his message to them. He exposes the absurdity of the orthodox boast that religion in general, and the Bible in particular, is their best friend. "The Bible," he says, "gives woman no moral or political charter. It is itself a purely masculine production. Not a single book of the Bible appears to have been written by a woman." Moreover, its pictures of woman are seldom elevating, or even complimentary; and in the tenth commandment the wife is included in the inventory of the husband's property. From this starting-point Mr. Gould proceeds to show that woman has everything to gain by turning towards Freethought—not only as a wife, but as a mother, who has such a tremendous share in moulding the bodies, minds, and characters of the children of the race. "The pioneers," Mr. Gould says to them, "have prepared for you the house of the new faith. Come, I beseech you, and make the place beautiful."

The "Truthseeker" Company (28 Lafayette-place, New York) sends us a new *Collection of Forms and Ceremonies for the Use of Liberals*. "Liberals," we may observe, is the common American term for "Freethinkers." The price of this publication is 25 cents. Of the Collection itself we may say that it is something like the English climate, which has been declared to be the best in the world, since it is so diversified that a man must be very fastidious who cannot find something to suit him. Many distinguished authors are laid under contribution, and there are Forms for Marriage, for the Naming of Infants, for Burials, for Festive Occasions, etc., besides poems that may be read in addition to these forms. We heartily wish this little Collection the success it

We have received a ponderous volume from the University Press, Watford; namely, the *University Magazine* (edited by Democritus) for 1899. It may be remembered that this magazine used to appear monthly, but its circulation was

practically destroyed by the Bedfordshire prosecution. But its conductor was not to be utterly beaten, so he has since issued the publication yearly. The contents of this volume are very various, some being well-written and valuable, and others of a much lower order of merit. "Darwin on Trial at the Old Bailey" is an amusing "skit" on the proceedings against Dr. Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*. Mr. Thomas Common vigorously replies to Professor Seth's attacks on Nietzsche. "Is Philosophy Progressive?" is asked and answered by Mr. Joseph McCabe. Dr. Havelock Ellis writes on the case of a famous French nun, Sister Jeanne des Anges. Mr. G. Astor Singer puts in a satiric "Word for the Priest," whom he cannot blame for adhering to a Church with an income equal to the interest on three hundred millions in Consols. Frederick Rockell contributes an interesting article on "Anarchists of American Literature," but he should not have spelt James Thomson's name with a "p," which every Thomson abhors; nor should he have taken the first two lines of the *City of Dreadful Night* as Thomson's own, for they were printed within quotation marks and were taken from *Titus Andronicus*. The most important of the remaining articles is a long one, not concluded, by Professor A. Hamon, of the University of Brussels, on "The Illusion of Free Will." Altogether this publication may be said to be a very expensive enterprise, which ought to command support amongst "advanced" people of all denominations.

The *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) for May is well up to the usual good level of this publication. There are excellent articles by F. J. Gould and Frederick Ryan, a number of book reviews, and a large supply of readable paragraphs.

Peter Eckler, the "Liberal" publisher of New York, sends us No. 47 of his Library of Liberal Classics. It is an English translation of the *Will in Nature*, by the great Schopenhauer, and the price is 50 cents. This little book of nearly two hundred pages must not be confused with Schopenhauer's voluminous masterpiece, which is published in this country in three octavo volumes. Its sub-title is "An Account of the Corroborations received by the Author's Philosophy from the Empirical Sciences." Of course it will be most interesting to those who have read the larger work; still, it is far from being without interest to others, for Schopenhauer is always original and stimulating, and his pungent literary style brightens up even his severest philosophical pages.

**Correspondence.**

**OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION.**

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Gould's letter is somewhat puzzling, not to say unsettling. We will say nothing of the novel doctrine that morality and justice are quite different nowadays to what they used to be, beyond expressing a fervent hope that the statement is not correct. But what of "religion"? We are told that the word denotes a combination of loyalty, consistency, high purpose, gentlemanliness, honorable temper, ethical straightforwardness, and faithfulness to an ideal of a purely human character. On taking down last year's *Secular Almanack*, I find an article by Mr. F. J. Gould in which he sneers at the prevalent practice of imparting "religious instruction" to the young. We are therefore to understand that he opposes the idea of children receiving instruction in loyalty, consistency, high purpose, and the other virtues. From the same almanack I learn that the National Secular Society has for its principles "to disestablish religion." That is, to disestablish "loyalty, consistency," etc. It proposes, further, "the abolition of all religious tests"—that is to say, the abolition of all tests of a "loyal, consistent, high purposed," etc., character. To me it is inconceivable that a body of honest men could band themselves into a society with any such objects.

In expounding the meaning of the word "religion," Mr. Gould informs us that the opposite consists of a combination of "indifference, carelessness, loose purpose, and caddishness." The verbal antithesis of religion is irreligion. Therefore we are to understand that Mr. Gould defines irreligion as an amalgam of these unlovely qualities. We have had worse things attributed to it by orthodox controversialists, and supposed that they were merely actuated by theological malice, but now Saul also is among the prophets.

If religion is really the beautiful and admirable thing that Mr. Gould describes, we can only ask why he associates himself with those whose avowed purpose it is to overturn religion, and to disprove its doctrines and its dogmas.

CHILPERIC.

**Obituary.**

I REGRET to announce the sudden death of Mrs. Towers, a most consistent and earnest Secularist, and a greatly respected member of the West London Branch. The deceased lady was interred on Wednesday, April 18, at Acton Cemetery, Mr. W. Ramsey reading the Secular Service.—B. M. MUNTUN.



## 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.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Scientists of the Victorian Era."  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, A Conversazione.  
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Browning."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Salvation."  
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Claims of Free-thought."  
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.  
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. White.  
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. Davis (opening lecture).  
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.  
LIMEHOUSE (corner of Salmon's-lane): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.  
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.  
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, C. Cohen.  
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.  
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, "The Other Side of Christianity."

## COUNTRY

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, Members' meeting to consider Conference business.  
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School.  
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Celsus, "The Fight for a Free Press"; 6.30, Robert Park, M.D., "The Sex Question and its Philosophical Implications."  
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, The Annual Meeting. Members and friends are urgently requested to attend.  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed on account of Labour Demonstration in Alexandra Park.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Stanley Jones—3, "Reaction in Modern Society"; 7, "The Roots of Christianity." Tea at 5.

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—May 6, m., Ridley-road, Dalston; a., Victoria Park; e., West Ham. 13, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., West Ham. 20, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—May 6, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 13, a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park. June 17, e., Stratford. 24, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—May 20, Birmingham. 27, Northampton. June 10, Birmingham. 17, Northampton. July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—May 6, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 13, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 20, a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park. 27, m., Westminster.

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