

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Morality and Religion.

ACCORDING to the *Christian World*, a special sermon was recently preached by Professor Jones, of the Chair of Moral Philosophy, at the Glasgow University, upon Morality and Religion. His object was to prove that morality "was not independent of religion, but implied religion; and religion, if enlightened, knew itself as not independent of morality, but as the assurance of its victory." Here we have the old glaring error of orthodox theologians—namely, that religion and morality are inseparable, that without religion virtue and honor are impossible, and that "enlightened" religion assures the triumph of morality.

But does such an allegation accord with history? It can easily be shown that it does not. First, however, it may be asked, how are we to differentiate "enlightened" religion from that which is *unenlightened*? The Professor states that "the truly religious were such by maintaining an habitual reverence for, and contemplative intercourse with, what they believed to be God." And he adds: "Religion was an attitude of mind. God stood as the symbol of perfection, and there must be constant communion with that. The God found to be imperfect ceased, *ipso facto*, to be God. And religion was the consciousness of oneness with that perfection." But is not all this claimed for the other great religions of the world? Do not their devotees profess to have the "attitude of mind" here referred to? If an imperfect God ceases to be God, then Christians are certainly "without God," for the Deity depicted in the Bible is the very embodiment of imperfection. So evident is this that no able representative of Christianity can be induced to defend in debate the character of his God as given in the Bible. If it is supposed that I am wrong in my allegation, let a recognised clergyman or Nonconformist minister consent to meet me in public discussion. If he will, I will undertake to prove that the Christian Deity is not only imperfect, but that his character from a moral standpoint is, to say the least, thoroughly objectionable.

In spite of the Professor's statement to the contrary, history and experience prove that morality and religion are not identical. They were distinct in their origin, and have remained so throughout their development, even down to the present day. As the Rev. Minot J. Savage observes in his work, *The Morals of Evolution*: "Religion and morality were totally distinct in their origin. At first they had nothing to do with each other. Religion was simply an arrangement between man and his gods, by which he was to gain their favor or ward off their wrath. Morality, on the other hand, is a matter of behavior between man and man." The fact is, religion originated in fear and credulity, while morality was the outcome of intellectual culture and thoughtful experience. Ethical science derives but little assistance from the orthodox Christian religion. Notwithstanding the fact that Broad Churchism or Latitudinarianism has of late made some concessions to reason and scientific progress, and however strongly apparent may be the desire for compromise on the part of the theologians, there are many of the distinct doctrines of orthodoxy which are most decidedly opposed to the standard of modern ethics and their influence. Such, for example, is the doctrine of vicarious atonement, where paternal affection is ignored, and where the innocent is made to suffer for the guilty. It is really beyond the power of such a system as the orthodox one to promote the moral development of humanity.

This can only be effectually done by the action of those social, political, and intellectual forces to which we are indebted, as it were, for the building up of man from the very first institution of society. These have been, are, and ever must be, the moral edifiers of the human race. Without them true progress is impossible, since it is by them that we are what we are. It is the *social activities* that have led to the formation, maintenance, and improvement of human society; the *political activities* that have led to the formation, maintenance, and improvement of general government; and the *intellectual activities* that have led to the interchange of human thoughts, to the formation of literature, to the pursuits of science and art, to the banishment of ignorance and the decay of superstition, to the diffusion of knowledge, and, finally, to that mental progress which so widely removes the civilised man from the savage.

The differentiation between morality and religion is manifest in the ancient religions, whose believers were strictly consistent in their profession, but whose conduct was grossly immoral. The same is true of the religionists of the Old Testament. Take the case of Jacob, who was religious, but certainly not remarkable for morality; or the stories narrated of Samson, David, Jephthah, and other characters in the Hebrew records. Was it morality which induced Joshua to command the slaughter of Canaanitish men, women, and children? Was it morality which led Samuel, God's high-priest, to murder Agag, whom even Saul would have spared? or which prompted David to kill the Philistines, while he himself was the honored recipient of Philistine hospitality? Such actions cannot be defended morally, but religiously they can; and they have been vindicated and excused by Christian teachers and preachers. A similar lack of moral conduct has been shown by the exponents of the New Testament religion. Bishops in Parliament and ministers in their pulpits have expressed their approval of wars which were a disgrace to any civilised country. Mr. Gladstone was so impressed with this fact that he admitted that it was painful to him to find that "thousands of Churchmen supplied the great mass of those who have gone lamentably wrong upon questions involving deeply the interests of truth, justice, and humanity." It is not here contended that morality is never associated with religion, but that the two are not of necessity allied, and that there is ample evidence that the one is to be found professed and acted upon without the other. In direct opposition, therefore, to Professor Jones, my contention is that the religion of to-day bears upon it the impress of that morality which has gradually grown (apart from all theology) with our growth and strengthened with our strength, and that it is morality that has modified religion, not religion that has modified morality.

The Professor frankly admits the supreme force of morality; but he indulges in the fallacy of making it a part of religion, without which, he contends, no ethical code could exist. Here are his words:—

"Provided a law be a moral law, nothing in heaven or earth could add to, or detract from, its authority. It was absolute, and the absolute had no history. To attach rewards to goodness was to veil its purity. Morality was independent of time, place, eternity, if there be eternity, and of Gods, if there be Gods. The good man, who knew that nobility of character was worth possessing, even though death ended everything, would reject evil, though there were no God in heaven. Then where was there need for religion? 'Nowhere,' answered the critics. He also would answer 'nowhere' except for one most important consideration. There was no room for religion except it should happen that morality

itself was impossible without it. Morality was self-sufficient and sovereign precisely because it included the objects of religion. They could not exclude religion from morality without destroying morality."

Now, here we have some semi-truth mixed with much that is erroneous. It is such vague writing as this that so frequently misleads the orthodox believer. What does the Professor mean by "a moral law" being "absolute," and "independent of time, place," etc.? There exists no one universal idea of morality. Thus it has been found that what was deemed moral at one time and place was not so regarded at others. Despite the Professor's allegation, the fact remains that the ethical status of a nation has always depended upon existing conditions. Herbert Spencer made this clear by showing that moral characters can never be evolved from bad environments. For instance, what was accepted as moral in Bible days would not be tolerated as such at the present time. Neither would the sense of right which is current in China or Turkey be accepted in this country. We are told that "to attach rewards to goodness was to veil its purity." But this is just what the Christian religion does. The incentive to goodness offered by Christianity is the promise of enjoyments to be bestowed in some future world.

As to the Professor's contention that morality is impossible without religion, that was shown to be an error in the early part of this article. Not only have many of us personal experience to the contrary, but such writers, and even theologians, as John Stuart Mill, Professor Tyndall, Chalmers, and the Bishop of Hereford, testify that morality is independent of all religion. As Mill puts it: "A large proportion of infidels in all ages have been persons of distinguished integrity and honor..... It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith." CHARLES WATTS.

The Gospel of Freethought.

(Concluded from page 146.)

PHYSIOLOGY and Medicine were opposed on similar grounds. We were all fearfully and wonderfully made, and the less the mystery was looked into the better. Disease was sent by God for his own wise ends, and to resist it was as bad as blasphemy. Every discovery and every reform was decried as impious. Men now living can remember how the champions of faith denounced the use of anæsthetics in painful labor as an interference with God's curse on the daughters of Eve.

Geology was opposed because it discredited Moses, as though that famous old Jew had watched the deposit of every stratum of the earth's crust. It was even said that fossils had been put underground by God to puzzle the wiseacres, and that the Devil had carried shells to the hill-tops for the purpose of deluding men to infidelity and perdition. Geologists were anathematised from the pulpits and railed at by tub-thumpers. They were obliged to feel their way and go slowly. Sir Charles Lyell had to keep back his strongest conclusions for at least a quarter of a century, and could not say all he thought until his head was whitened by old age and he looked into the face of Death.

Biology was opposed tooth and nail as the worst of all infidelity. It exposed Genesis and put Moses out of court. It destroyed all special creation, showed man's kinship with other forms of life, reduced Adam and Eve to myths, and exploded the doctrine of the Fall. Darwin was for years treated as Antichrist, and Huxley as the great beast. All that is being changed, thanks to the sceptical spirit. Darwin's corpse is buried in Westminster Abbey, but his ideas are undermining all the churches and crumbling them into dust.

The gospel of Freethought brands persecution as the worst crime against humanity. It stifles the spirit of progress and strangles its pioneers. It eliminates the brave, the adventurous, and the aspiring, and leaves

only the timid, the sluggish, and the grovelling. It removes the lofty and spares the low. It levels all the hills of thought and makes an intellectual flatness. It drenches all the paths of freedom with blood and tears, and makes earth the vestibule of hell.

Persecution is the right arm of priestcraft. The black militia of theology are the sworn foes of Freethought. They represent it as the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness in this world or the next. When they speak of the Holy Ghost they mean themselves. Freethought is a crime against *them*. It strips off the mystery that invests their craft, and shows them as they really are, a horde of bandits who levy black mail on honest industry, and preach a despot in heaven in order to maintain their own tyranny on earth.

The gospel of Freethought would destroy all priesthoods. Every man should be his own priest. If a professional soul-doctor gives you wrong advice and leads you to ruin, he will not be damned for you. He will see you so first. We must take all the responsibility, and we should also take the power. Instead of putting our thinking out, as we put our washing, let us do it at home. No man can do another's thinking for him. What is thought in the originator is only acquiescence in the man who takes it at secondhand.

If we do our own thinking in religion, we shall do it in everything else. We reject authority and act for ourselves. Spiritual and temporal power are brought under the same rule. They must justify themselves or go. The Freethinker is thus a politician and a social reformer. What a Christian *may* be he *must* be. Freethinkers are naturally Radicals. They are almost to a man on the side of justice, freedom, and progress. The Tories know this, and hence they seek to suppress us by the violence of unjust law. They see that we are a growing danger to every kind of privilege, a menace to all the idle classes who live in luxury on the sweat and labor of others—the devouring drones who live on the working bees.

The gospel of Freethought teaches us to distinguish between the knowable and the unknowable. We cannot fathom the infinite "mystery of the universe" with our finite plummet, nor see aught behind the veil of death. Here is our appointed province:—

This world which is the world
Of all of us, and where in the end
We find our happiness or not at all.

Let us make the best of this world and take our chance of any other. If there is a heaven, we dare say it will hold all honest men. If it will not, those who go elsewhere will at least be in good company.

Our salvation is here and now. It is certain and not contingent. We need not die before we realise it. Ours is a gospel, and the only gospel, for this side of the grave. The promises of theology cannot be made good till after death; ours are all redeemable in this life.

We ask men to acknowledge realities and dismiss fictions. When you have sifted all the learned sermons ever preached, you will find very little good grain. Theology deals with dreams and phantasies, and gives no guidance to practical men. The whole truth of life may be summed up in a few words. Happiness is the only good, suffering the only evil, and selfishness the only sin. And the whole duty of man may be expressed in one sentence, slightly altered from Voltaire—Learn what is true in order to do what is right. If a man can tell you anything about these matters, listen to him; if not, turn a deaf ear, and let him preach to the wind.

The only noble things in this world are great hearts and great brains. There is no virtue in a starveling piety which turns all beauty into ugliness and shrivels up every natural affection. Let the heart beat high with courage and enterprise, and throb with warm passion. Let the brain be an active engine of thought, imagination, and will. The gospel of sorrow has had its day; the time has come for the gospel of gladness. Let us live out our lives to the full, radiating joy on all in our own circle, and diffusing happiness through the grander circle of humanity, until at last we retire from the banquet of life, as others have done before us, and sink in eternal repose.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and Civilisation.—XVI.

OPPOSITION TO SCIENCE.

(Continued from page 149.)

A DETAILED account of the opposition offered by the Christian Churches to scientific discoveries is neither desirable nor possible in a series of articles such as the present. Dr. A. D. White has covered nearly nine hundred large octavo pages in describing this contest, and even then has far from exhausted the subject. It is a grim comment on the claims of modern Christians that a work of such a size as *The Warfare of Science with Theology* should be needed to describe a portion of the opposition offered by the Christian world to the process of intellectual development. And the pitiful side of the story unfolded by Dr. White is its truth. Governed by the absurd belief that the Bible contained all that it was necessary for man to know, convinced that any belief that ran counter to its teachings must be wrong, the Christian world received with the bitterest opposition every attempt to read nature's riddle aright.

The more earnest the belief, the more energetic the opposition. Untaught by the defeat sustained in the struggle against the Copernican system of astronomy, the Newtonian theory of gravitation was resisted in exactly the same spirit—with a similar result. It was said that Newton had "substituted gravitation for Providence," and had thus taken from God "that direct action on his works so constantly ascribed to him in Scripture, and transferred it to material mechanism." Even a thinker like Leibnitz opposed the Newtonian law on purely theological grounds.* There is, in fact, scarcely an argument used two centuries later against the doctrine of evolution that had not been anticipated in the opposition offered to the law of universal gravitation.

The attempts to demonstrate the true nature of comets and cometary motion met with similar opposition. The belief that every comet was a messenger from God, heralding punishment or destruction on a sinful world, was so closely intertwined with Christian theology, and had been so heartily endorsed by all Christian writers, that no doubt seems to have existed among Christians on the subject until the sixteenth century. A comet that appeared in the tenth century was believed to announce the end of the world. The Black Plague was also ushered in by the appearance of one. The comet, afterwards known as Halley's, was solemnly excommunicated by Pope Calixtus III. John Knox saw in comets a warning from God that the king should extirpate Roman Catholics. Luther, as usual, was on the side of superstition. He writes: "The heathen write that the comet may arise from natural causes; but God creates not one that does not foretoken a sure calamity. Whatever moves in the heaven in an unusual way is certainly a sign of God's wrath." Until well on in the eighteenth century such views as these prevailed in the Christian world. In Universities no other teaching was permitted; a whole army of writers were at work proving, from Scripture, from common belief, and from the Christian Fathers, that comets were always and everywhere the messengers of divine anger. Even more ridiculous than Mr. Gladstone's attempt to demonstrate to Professor Huxley the harmony of science and Genesis were the endeavors of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century theologians to overturn the views of men like Copernicus, Galileo, Cassini, Newton, and Halley.

A sharp and decisive issue was raised on the question of philology. Here the teachings of Scripture and the Church were unmistakable. The story of the Tower of Babel gave clearly enough the origin of languages, and, as Jahveh, the serpent, Eve, and Adam were all able to converse one with the other, there was clearly no room for the conception of growth. All was instantaneous, all was miraculous. Furthermore, as the Jews were God's chosen people, it was assumed that Hebrew was, therefore, the primitive language.

Not by one here and there, but by all theologians, was it held that "Hebrew is the most ancient of all languages, and was that which alone prevailed in the world before the Deluge and the erection of the Tower of Babel. For it was this which Adam used, and all men before the Flood, as is manifest from the Scriptures, as the Fathers testify." Dr. Adam Clark, in his well-known *Commentary*, held this view as late as 1830, although by this date a great number of religious leaders were beginning to see the absurdity of the orthodox position.* It was, in brief, here as elsewhere first a dogmatic assertion, resting on no better foundation than Biblical tradition; then a frantic attempt to suppress the truth at all costs; and, finally, a series of more or less ingenious, and more or less honest, attempts to harmonise the new teaching with orthodox beliefs.

The concluding phases of the resistance offered by the Churches to a scientific geology and palæontology is a matter of almost contemporary knowledge. That the earth with all that it contains was not more than 6,000 years old, that sin, disease, and death were consequences of Adam's "fall," and that all species of animals were miraculously created, were dogmas to which all the Churches gave their fixed adherence. John Wesley declared that no one who believes the Scriptures can deny that "sin is the moral cause of earthquakes," or doubt that "before the sin of Adam there were no agitations within the bowels of the earth, no violent convulsions, no concussions of the earth, no earthquakes." Before the fall of Adam the earth "did not shock the view with horrid precipices, huge chasms, or deserts of barren sands." None of the animals then "attempted to devour or in any way hurt one another.....the spider was then as harmless as the fly, and did not lie in wait for blood." These views were all reiterated by his follower, Watson, whose *Institutes* forms the text-book of Methodists, I believe, until to-day.

In these assertions, and others of a similar kind, Wesley had the whole Christian world with him. When, therefore, new views arose which taught that the Biblical 6,000 years was a mere fragment of human history, and but an infinitesimal point in the history of the earth, the opposition reached a point that we, who live in the midst of a more accommodating religion, can hardly realise. In France the great geologist Buffon was forced to print a recantation abandoning "everything in my book respecting the formation of the earth, and generally all which may be contrary to the narrative of Moses." In England, nearly a century later, so strong was religious prejudice that Sir Charles Lyell withheld from publication his views concerning the antiquity of man, long after he had announced them at the houses of his intimate friends.† Mary Somerville was openly denounced by name from the pulpit of York Minster for writing her well-known studies in physical geography.‡ Geology was denounced as a "dark art," as "dangerous and disreputable"; it was "not a subject of lawful inquiry"; it made use of "infernal artillery," and was "an awful evasion of the testimony of revelation." To account for the fossils unearthed by geologists the religious world had various explanations. They were "sports of nature," organisms "made on the first of the six creative days, as models for the plants and animals to be created on the third, fifth, and sixth days," or else just objects created by God in order to confound the speculations of irreligious scientists. This last was a revival of Milton's opinion that God carefully hid the secrets of nature from man so that he might afterwards laugh at their attempts to discover them.§

It was the old story over again, with the customary ending. In every battle with science Christianity had been ignominiously defeated. There still remained one field, however, where the Churches felt secure—that of biology. Here, at least, the very complexity of the phenomena promised refuge. Alas for the Church! the pronouncement of the doctrine of evolution, the grounds of the last great battle between science and religion, robbed Christianity even of this retreat. As

* I cannot at the moment put my hand on the authority for the statement, but the theory of gravitation was only introduced into Cambridge by means of a trick—it being printed in the authorised text-books in the form of notes, by way of exhibiting its absurdity.

* For a full discussion of the attempts of the Churches to crush the scientific view, and their subsequent attempts at "hedging," see White, ch. xvii.

† See Alexander Bain's *Practical Essays*, p. 275.

‡ White, *Warfare*, i., 224.

§ *Paradise Lost*, bk. viii.

a speculation, evolution had its beginnings in the fruitful days of the Greek philosophers; but, like many other valuable speculations, it was crushed out during the supremacy of the Christian Church, to be revived in the middle of the last century, chiefly by the labors of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. The echoes of the conflict aroused by the teaching of this doctrine have hardly yet subsided, although the victory was practically completed within a generation of the publication of the *Origin of Species*. But short as the conflict was, when compared with other encounters between the Church and science, it outdid them all in bitterness. From one end of the country to the other the pulpits rang with denunciations, and the clergy grew eloquent with abuse. Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, declared the Darwinian theory to be "absolutely incompatible with the word of God"; it was "a dishonoring view of nature," and had a tendency "to limit God's glory in creation." Cardinal Manning described evolution as "a brutal philosophy—to wit, there is no God, and the ape is our Adam"; and his successor in the office, the present Cardinal Vaughan, a few days after Darwin's death, spoke of him as then burning in hell for writing the *Origin of Species*.

In America, in France, in Germany, the attack was equally bitter. Not unfairly, it was pointed out: "If this hypothesis be true, then is the Bible an unbearable fiction.....then have Christians for two thousand years believed in a lie." One authority declared: "Mr. Darwin is, we have reason to believe, the mouthpiece or chief trumpeter of that infidel clique whose well-known object is to do away with all idea of a God." Another that "These infamous doctrines have for their only support the most abject passions. Their father is pride, their mother impurity, their offspring revolutions. They come from hell and return thither, taking with them the gross creatures who blush not to claim and accept them." The Pope, Pius IX., by showering decorations on Dr. James for his book against Darwinism, definitely committed the Roman Catholic Church to an anti-evolutionary attitude. Mr. Gladstone voiced the common religious view in the assertion that "Upon the grounds of what is termed evolution God is relieved of the labor of creation; in the name of unchangeable law he is discharged from governing the world." Even Dr. Whewell, the author of the *History of the Inductive Sciences* and numerous other works, refused to allow Darwin's book in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Of course, there was ultimately the usual "reconciliation." When the truth of evolution could no longer be disputed, the next thing was to "harmonise" it with the Bible; and the same people who proved creation and evolution to be essentially antagonistic were equally ready to prove that they were essentially harmonious. With the validity of the arguments used to reconcile the two views I have dealt with elsewhere,* and need only say now that, to those who know the history of the conflict between science and Christianity, they fully justify one's expectations. By reading a great deal into the Bible, and leaving a great deal out; by dwelling dogmatically upon the meaning of obscure texts, and closing one's eyes to the meanings of obvious ones, it is still possible to make the Bible prove all that one wishes it to prove. No one can accuse the Christian world of inconsistency in thus acting; it is the time-honored policy, and, on the whole, it would be difficult to suggest a policy that would answer the purpose of the Churches better.

The preceding generation lived in the midst of the conflict; heard evolution denounced as godless, immoral, degrading, brutalising; heard Darwin, one of the mildest, most truthful, and sincere characters that ever shed lustre on the name of man, denounced by clerical ignoramus as though he were the vilest of men. The present generation sees evolution accepted by the whole scientific world, and by a large part of the religious world likewise; it sees Darwin, the avowed Agnostic, labelled, by a prominent Nonconformist, with characteristic dishonesty, as a "typical Christian leader," and hears evolution adopted at Church Congresses as opening up nobler and grander views of nature and of man. The world does move, after all. It is an ugly

and inconvenient circumstance for the Churches, but it is a fact nevertheless.

Do not, however, let us be deceived; and do not let us deceive ourselves. Do not let anyone imagine that, because the religious world has been forced to recognise the teachings of experience, it receives the admonition with gladness. On the contrary, I insist that what the religious world *was* the religious world *is*. It is more cautious in its utterances—that is all. None dwell more gleefully upon the disputes of scientific men than religious leaders; none greet with a greater shout of joy the enforced ignorance of science on some of the more weighty problems of life. It is the limitations of science the religious leader loves to dwell on, not upon its conquests. The hatred is there, as it always has been; but it is the hatred of a beaten, dishonored, disheartened adversary, not that of an open, upright enemy. The history of the warfare between science and religion was not fortuitous—it was necessary; and the Ethiopian does not change his skin, nor the leopard its spots.

C. COHEN.

Christian Critics.

A VERY silly notice of a book called *Thoughts of a Free Thinker* (A. & C. Black) appears in the *Rock*. One never expects much from the *Rock*. When it is not assailing recalcitrant bishops, or trying to invest Kensit's crusades with some semblance of importance, or discovering unheard-of and probably non-existent Jesuit plots, the *Rock* is nowhere. The strongest mariner's glass that ever swept the ocean would never discover it, if these special flags weren't flying.

When a rational sort of person accidentally strikes the *Rock*, he stops and inspects it. Then he smiles and sails on, with the amused remembrance that the *Rock* is very funny. If he splits anything at all on the rugged projection, it is his sides—with laughter.

Oracularly, and as if it had acquaintance with everything under the sun, the *Rock* says "There is nothing very new in this little book," meaning the *Thoughts of a Free Thinker*. Probably so, but is there much in the *Rock* that is "very new," barring the special features we have mentioned, which belong mainly to the realms of fiction? If the author had happened to say that there was lawlessness in the Church, that the bishops were too timorous to enforce their own decrees, that we were departing from all the traditions of Protestantism and were heedlessly drifting to Romanism, and that Kensit and the Church Association constituted (with the *Rock*) our only hope of salvation, the *Thoughts of a Free Thinker* would doubtless have commended themselves, without question as to whether they were either new or true. The accompanying unbelief would have been mildly excused, and the new testimony thankfully accepted. But the author does not seem to have said anything of the sort. And "O, what a falling off was there!"

The *Rock* says that the book is "written in a far less offensive fashion than is usual among free thought advocates." Indeed! What does the *Rock* mean by that? Is not that observation offensive in itself? Are Freethought advocates "offensive" because they express opinions which do not commend themselves to the *Rock*? Who constituted the *Rock* an authoritative standard on the point? Suppose, for the moment, that Freethought advocates *are* "offensive." What is said by High Churchmen of the paid advocates of the Church Association, and of the *Rock* itself? What, especially, is said of Mr. Kensit and his Wickliffe preachers? They are supported hard and fast by the *Rock*, and that journal occupies a considerable space every week in recording the adventures of the Protestant band—"crew" the High Church organs call them. Either the Ritualists must be very "offensive," or Kensit and his followers are open to that charge. And the "offensiveness" must be of a very aggravated description, too, for rotten eggs and broken heads are common details of the disturbances.

The *Rock* suffers no qualms of conscience about Kensit. It watches and reports his peregrinations and speeches with placidity, though many of Kensit's tirades

* See my pamphlet on *Evolution and Christianity*.

are excessively coarse, if we accept the opinion of the *Church Times*. The *Rock* even makes excuses for Kensit, and might well be called upon to make excuses for itself. Certainly, of all the hundred or more religious weeklies of any importance, the *Rock* is the last one to talk about offensiveness.

But, generally, what is the meaning of this cheap cry of "offensiveness"? To bigots—especially religious bigots—the least dissent, however mildly and cautiously expressed, is "offensive." They take it as a personal insult that anyone should differ from them. In former ages dissent from the dominant faith meant persecution, torture, and death. Christians are unable nowadays to imprison, torture, and burn heretics; so they whine that heretics are "offensive."

What is really meant is that in these latter days Freethought advocates are not "offensive," but effective. That is where the sting comes in. No doubt, if we consulted the tastes and wishes of the Christian Churches, we should offer our opposition with "bated breath and whispering humbleness." We should talk of doubt, and not of denial; of inquiry, and not of assurance; of a desire to believe, instead of a decided disbelief—with apologies to no one.

To this day it is expected of Freethinkers that they should shed tears because they have renounced, once and for ever, a bundle of incongruities called Christianity. If any tears are shed, they are tears of rejoicing. Having liberated ourselves, we are moved by a natural impulse to endeavor to free others. The custodians of the creeds are certain to say that we are offensive, whether we start on that rescue boldly or timorously. Their criticism of our methods is of no importance to us. We don't consult *them*. We should be fools if we did.

They complain of ridicule. In the same breath they try to ridicule Freethought. But there is a vast difference in the results. No Freethinker ever complained of ridicule. Why should he? The best efforts in that way have been feeble and ineffective. But, from our side, the shafts of satire have so entered the heart of the Christian superstition that it is impossible for the system to survive.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Emerson.

"I count him a great man who inhabits a higher sphere of thought, into which other men rise with labor and difficulty."

—EMERSON.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON first saw the light in a parsonage. His father and his grandfather were clergymen. When he was only eight years old, his father died. The widow, with six children and straitened means, moved from the pleasant parsonage to another and poorer home. After suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune for some years, he followed the footsteps of his ancestors, and in 1829 was ordained as a Unitarian minister.

Of his early preaching it is said that it was rather ethical than devotional. He did not care for the threshing of old straw. There is even a suspicion of chafing under the harness. The prime duty, he thought, was to be truthful and honest, and he revolted at the "official goodness" of the ministerial office.

Later there was a question of the efficiency of the rite of the Communion. His mind was brought to pause. In fact, scepticism was an early and pronounced quality in him. Nonconformity was in his blood. His elder brother, William, was even more strongly rationalistic, and declined altogether to take "holy orders." As early as 1831 he opened his church to anti-slavery agitators. In 1833 a pleasant interval of travel broke the monotony of his duties. He made the acquaintance of Thomas Carlyle at Craigenputtoch. It would have been worth recording the conversations between the young American and the keen-sighted Scot. That visit was the germ of a great friendship, notable in the history of literature. In 1834 Emerson published his first book, a slender volume on *Nature*. It is, perhaps, more logical than his later writings, and showed fully

that he found the Unitarian fetters not the less real for being simple and few. In the meantime he had lost his young wife, after less than three years of wedded life. He had begun early to feel the sobering experiences of life. Later there came to the front that notable project of Brook Farm, of which Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller were adherents. Its ultimate failure left a sore place in his heart.

His friend, Thoreau, volunteered instruction to Emerson in the mysteries of gardening, to the practical side of which the philosopher did not take kindly. Indeed, a pleasant observer tells us how the young son was wont to call out warningly: "Don't dig your legs, father!"

But, in spite of his agricultural ignorance, there was always companionship with the pines that fringed the Concord hills and that sighed over his own house, growing into the calm, meditative philosophy of his poems, in which he says:—

And, chiefest prize, found I true liberty.

Nor can we believe that Emerson carries only intellectual chill with him, or distrust of his emotions. There was a fulness of affection behind the pen which wrote that wonderful "Threnody" for his dead boy, and the glowing and plaintive lines in the Carlyle correspondence on his brother Charles. The hideous cruelty of the Fugitive Slave Law caused him to break out into vehement, scorching protest. He hailed John Brown as the saint, whose martyrdom made the gallows glorious. The quiet lapse of the years beside the flowing river of Concord is not wholly unbroken. Sorrows cast shadows over those peaceful meadows. He made a second visit to England, out of which came the book known as *Representative Men*, and the later one of *English Traits*. The biting and searching qualities of this latter volume are well known. There is honest praise and free speech. He mistrusts mitres, indeed, as he smiles over his glass at my Lord Bishop's table. He was, indeed, critical of the follies of the mother country, but he took pride in her virtues.

Emerson wrote little after the close of the Civil War. He aged early; memory refused him its old favors; his eyes tired him. In his old age he struck Carlyle as "confidently cheerful." Travel brought relief, but not for long. Egypt failed to rouse his enthusiasm. Yet a brave optimism kept by him when the shadows were darkest. "If it be best that conscious personal life shall continue, it will continue; if not best, then it will not: and we, if we saw the whole, should, of course, see that it was better so." He died on April 27, 1882. A fragment of granite marks his grave—a fitting symbol of his nobility of character.

Critics never tire of alluding to an imaginary parallelism between Carlyle and Emerson. We fail to see this resemblance. Emerson impresses us as having been an abler man than Carlyle. Emerson was remarkable for reticence; Carlyle for superfluous speech. One expressed himself in epigram; the other in rhetoric. The American was an exultant optimist; the Scot was a confirmed pessimist. In Emerson we have a notable contradiction of the adage which excepts the prophet from honor in his own country. His reputation was so widespread that it is, indeed, no exaggeration to say that he became a classic during his lifetime. His detractors were few and feeble. The joke that, when Emerson interviewed the Sphinx, she said to him, "You're another," explains their outlook very well. Time is, in this instance, on the side of the big battalions. The passage of the years has only more assured his place among the really great writers. Certainly no one stimulates thought like Emerson. His books are most of all a discipline in self-knowledge, self-reliance, and self-fulfilment. They are a perpetual antidote to the insidiousness of custom and tradition. Golden thoughts confront us on every page:—

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Villambrosa.

No less cautious a critic than Matthew Arnold has told us that Emerson's Essays are the most valuable prose contribution to English literature of the century, and he has not hesitated to assign to Ralph Waldo Emerson a niche beside the imperial philosopher, Marcus Aurelius.

MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops.

THE vicarage of Blackburn—which has just fallen to the lot of Dr. Thornton, previously vicar of St. George's, Birmingham, and formerly Bishop of Ballarat, Australia—is not at all a bad catch. It is worth about £1,500 a year, supplemented by a free residence; and it carries with it the patronage of nineteen benefices in the neighborhood. Dr. Thornton is perhaps cheap at the price. Whether he is so or not is no business of ours. But a salary of £1,500 a year is rather out of harmony with the text, "Blessed be ye poor." And it seems to us that there is something rotten in our civilisation when a man is paid some fifteen times the wages of a skilled artisan in order to point out the road to the unknown.

Another lucky man is Dr. Winnington-Ingram, the new Bishop of London, who drops into a salary of £10,000 a year, with a palace to live in. Letting the palace slide out of the estimate, this is twice as much as the nation pays the Prime Minister. The kingdom-come business pays better than the most laborious statesmanship.

Preaching at St. Andrew's, Stoke Newington, on Sunday evening, the new Bishop of London said that their motto should be, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." *Author*, if you please; but surely not *finisher*. Jesus never anticipated the *finish* that his apostolic successors would put upon his faith. At the end of his career his Church's exchequer was empty, or the cashier would not have rattled for thirty half-crowns. Had it been otherwise, there would have been no "betrayal" by Judas, no arrest of Jesus, no crucifixion, and no Christianity. Jesus seems to have been fond of poverty; he taught that it carried a divine blessing. But directly he was dead that little mistake of his was remedied. The apostles got well-to-do disciples to sell their property and lay the price at the said apostles' feet—where it did not remain for any considerable time. From that moment the Church of Christ was "on the make," and it has been playing the game for all it is worth ever since; so that now a parson will preach "Blessed be ye poor"—yea, and "Woe unto you rich"—for thousands a year; and the rich and the poor will club together to keep him going. That the rich should do so is quite intelligible, for they can afford to wink at the "woe" threatened them in the next world as long as they have the best of it in this world. But the co-operation of the poor is really astounding. The only excuse for them is that they have never had the time to think over, and see through, the trick by which they are villainously robbed after being miserably bamboozled.

According to a newspaper report, Bishop Winnington-Ingram, in the sermon referred to, called upon Christians to live up to their supernatural creed. "In the Victoria Park and in the Halls of Science," he said, "the difficulties suggested were not the possibility of miracles, or the reasonableness of prayer, but that Christians were as selfish and grasping in business, as ill-tempered and self-seeking in society, as unbelievers." Of course the Bishop believes all this. He would not say so otherwise. Still, he is mistaken. "Infidel" speakers do oppose the idea of miracles and the idea of prayer—which is only a form of the miraculous. They have not dropped their intellectual objections to the Christian faith. They are not silly enough to believe that any number of good Christians would prove that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. At the same time, they would be very glad if the good Christians were more numerous. They take no pleasure in seeing Christians selfish, grasping, and ill-tempered. But while Christians are so, it is legitimate on the part of the "infidels" to point out that, from a moral point of view, belief in Christianity has no advantage over unbelief. It may make men better candidates for heaven, but it does not make them better citizens of earth.

Living up to a supernatural creed is what the Bishop of London calls upon Christians to do. But why doesn't he make a beginning himself? Why not renounce his salary and try living on faith? There is nothing very "supernatural" in rubbing along on £10,000 a year. An Atheist could do that just as well as a bishop.

It appears that the appointment of the new Bishop of London has given tremendous satisfaction in unexpected quarters. We take the following from the *Westminster Gazette*:—"At Oxford House it goes without saying that there is great rejoicing. One of the Bishop's 'boys' now at work in the world outside was met by a correspondent by the merest chance to-day on the top of an omnibus in the Bethnal Green-road. 'Eh, have ye 'eard the grand news?' said the young man. 'Our old 'ead at Oxford House is the new Bishop of London. God bless him. 'E be a mon. Us Lancashire folk—I comes from Bolton—don't care much for bishops, but 'e be a mon and a straight mon, and what 'e 'as done for me and many more lads none can tell. I seed 'im first in Victoria Park a-tackling them 'ere Hatheists, and, my word, it wor a sight. Then I joined 'is club, and I and

all my mates would do anything for 'e. I am just back from the front, and a-going to see my old mother, when I reads this 'ere good news of the old 'ead a-becoming Bishop of London. God bless 'im, 'e'll do summat, and workin' men will love 'im.' Our correspondent pressed the young man to give his name, but he said: 'The old 'ead would not like it.'"

Very likely it "wor a sight" when the Bishop tackled "them 'ere Hatheists" in Victoria Park, and we daresay the "Hatheists" had their own view of the "sight." Anyhow, the Bishop does not seem to have made much impression on the "Hatheists," whatever impression he made on this anonymous young disciple. They flourish in Victoria Park as vigorously as ever. We don't think the whole bench of bishops would be able to displace them.

The *Examiner* warns its young readers against risking the delicate bloom of their souls in the "frigid atmosphere of infidelity." It mentions the case of a young Christian who said, "I like to read the other side," as he perused a journal of Freethought. "Was it surprising," asks the *Examiner*, "that in later years he lost the sensitive reverence for the things of God?"

No, it is not at all surprising. The surprising thing would be that he retained any reverence for them at all. But isn't this counsel given by the *Examiner* marked by a craven sort of fear? We are not afraid of Freethinkers reading anything or everything published on the Christian side—if they are so minded. Indeed, to halting inquirers we say, Read as many of the standard works of Christian apology and "evidence" as you can, only don't accept the statements and arguments until you have tested them by what has been said in refutation on the Freethought side.

The diocese of Peterborough ought to congratulate itself. A Nonconformist journal says that the Bishop, Dr. Carr-Glyn, "occupies the see through family influence, and certainly not by virtue of his superior intelligence or administrative abilities. He has none of the qualities needed for a bishop." What a pity his *Nolo Episcopari* was not accepted.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, in their Annual Report, congratulate themselves on an increase of income, chiefly resulting from "the favorable conditions which have recently affected the coal trade." It seems hardly fitting, however, that clerical livings should be augmented, parsonages be built, and assistant curates' salaries be supplemented through the success of an unscrupulous coal ring, which has made the winter bitter to tens of thousands of poor families by starving their fires. The Commissioners appropriate a capital sum of £200,000 out of the Common Fund towards the augmentation and endowment of benefices for the current year.—*Christian World*.

A flash of lightning set fire the other day to the Lutheran Church attached to the German Hospital at Dalston. The organ, which was 250 years old, and is described as very beautiful and interesting, was almost totally destroyed. Providence, however, seems to have thought but little of it, and the people who erected the church seem not to have placed much confidence in him, for they attached a lightning conductor to the steeple. The Lord, it would appear, directed the electric fluid in such a way as to avoid that protective contrivance.

One would very much like to know the opinion entertained by the congregation of the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel of Bwlch of their pastor, the Rev. D. Tyler Davies. A district nurse, the other day, brought an action against him for breach of promise of marriage, and was awarded £100 damages. He had induced her, she said, to make a sham renunciation of her faith as a Roman Catholic, in order to bamboozle his congregation. Then he jilted her when he found that she had not much money. The man of grace seems to have been scarcely less deceitful than some of the Old Testament patriarchs.

In consequence of the illiberal action of certain Churchmen, the Northampton Town Council have resolved to discontinue attending officially any public religious services in future. Quite right, too; these official church parades are a survival that might well be dispensed with. It is chiefly the sky-pilots who desire them as a kind of "kowtowing" to which they are not at all entitled.

We may expect that the Lord will pay special attention to the 9 p.m. services at St. George's, Albemarle-street. The worshippers are to attend in "evening dress." This is an idea of the rector, the Rev. Ker Gray, D.D. He wishes his fashionable parishioners, after an elaborate dinner, to proceed to his church in "evening dress," and proclaim themselves "miserable sinners."

Rev. John Smith, D.D., contributes a special article to the

British Weekly on the recently-published work by Professor George Adam Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*. He believes that the author of that book, and those whom he represents, are "forcing upon the British Churches the gravest issue that any of them has had to face in living memory." He thinks that, by "undermining the historic base" of the Old Testament, revelation is weakened and preachers are deprived of some of that authority with which they speak in the name of God.

He believes that the criticism adopted in Professor Smith's work "disintegrates the Old Testament, and to some extent affects the credit of the New." It "annihilates the first creative step in revelation, and discredits the judgment of Paul, which was that of all the apostles, and of the Lord." That, no doubt, is the effect of the modern criticism. But to attempt to burk it because it is unpalatable is both useless and absurd.

Australian papers just received contain accounts of the execution in New South Wales of "Crooked-toed Jacky," an aboriginal, for the murder of white settlers. The black's last words to his spiritual adviser were: "Shall I be in heaven by dinner-time?"

Good Lines is the "monthly journal"—diabolical English!—of the Commercial Travellers' Christian Association, of which Sir George Williams is the President, Mr. P. J. Whitaker the Treasurer, and Mr. Leonard Courtney the Chairman. Looking over the pages of the current number of this publication, we note a short article headed "Moral Contrasts." It deals with Wesley and Voltaire, in a fashion which could hardly commend itself, we imagine, to Mr. Leonard Courtney—except in his capacity as a Christian. Wesley is represented as all that was good, and Voltaire all that was bad. Moreover, when the "hoary veteran of evil" approached his end, he is represented as saying, "I hate life, and yet I am afraid to die." Now, we have to remark (1) that this is an orthodox lie without a particle of foundation, and (2) that it is most uncharacteristic of Voltaire. He never hated life; on the contrary, he always enjoyed it, in consequence of his wide intellectual interests, and he was bright and sparkling to the very last.

Good Lines is not a bad title, but in this particular case is not the middle letter in the second word rather superfluous?

Amongst the "Words Worth Noting" in *Good Lines* we observe the following: "God made one as well as t'other, said the man who had a wart on his nose." God makes cancers as well as warts; and perhaps, by way of a joke, our contemporary will explain how this fact illustrates the divine wisdom and beneficence.

Rev. Alfred Waller, a Southend clergyman, has publicly offered to pay £2 a year to any publican who will hang up behind his bar a temperance placard containing a verse of the hymn, "What shall the harvest be?" One publican is prepared to fall in with the suggestion on condition that Mr. Waller puts up in a church a notice of his bottled ales. That would be a fair *quid pro quo*. It strikes us, however, that a good many publicans would stick up the verse unconditionally for the £2 a year. More 'cute than the parson, the publican would see a chance of improving rather than diminishing his custom by the clerical oddity.

The new Bishop of London will be pleased to learn from the *Record* that much prayer is needed that his [Dr. Ingram's] appointment will be for the true welfare of the Church.

Says the *Christian*: "The result of Dr. Schmiedel's treatment of the Gospels in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, edited by Canon Cheyne, is that the writings of the Evangelists are not only torn to pieces and scattered to the four winds of heaven as records of fact, but Christendom would be deprived of every shred of faith in the history behind the Gospels."

The latter statement is rather cryptic. What and where is "the history behind the Gospels"? There may be surmise, but that is not history.

De Witt Talmage is certainly the champion liar of the pulpit. That seems a strong thing to say, but read the following from one of his latest sermons published in the current issue of the *Christian Age*: "Of all the unbelievers of all ages not one died well. Some of them sneaked out of life; some wept themselves away in darkness; some blasphemed and raved and tore their bed-covers to tatters. This is the way worldly philosophy helps a man to die." We suppose he would say that Colonel Ingersoll "sneaked out of life," for even Talmage could hardly pretend that the Colonel wept himself away in darkness, or blasphemed and raved and tore the bed-covers to tatters. Talmage is tearing his passion against unbelievers to tatters. When will he learn to tell the truth?

In the Potteries sacerdotalism seems to have acquired a

footing. Young people are invited to confess to the clerical officers of the Church manufactured by Parliament. One of the questions submitted to them is: "Have I put sweatbands and buttons into the offertories?" Are all the lunatic asylums in the Potteries district full?—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

A verger, aged nearly seventy, has been sentenced at Dover to a month's hard labor for assaulting some little girls in the stokehold of Charlton Church.

An ex-army chaplain and former curate of Cholsey Church, Berkshire, has been divorced from his wife. Charges of cruelty and of adultery with a schoolmistress were proved. The rev. gent. offered no defence, having absconded and left his wife with seven children. He wrote his wife a letter stating that for some time past he had got into trouble by betting heavily, that lately everything had gone against him, and that the previous day he backed a horse which did not win. Mr. Justice Barnes asked whether he was acting as a clergyman at the time. Mr. Inderwick replied in the affirmative.

In a vague sort of way, the *Christian Budget* mentions "a letter in an evening newspaper relative to a dreadful event said to have occurred at Devizes, when a woman is said to have exclaimed: 'May God strike me dead if I am not speaking the truth!' and who immediately fell dead in the presence of the bystanders." Well, suppose this story to be true—what of it? Do not people often die of syncope when laboring under excitement? Have not ministers of the Gospel fallen dead in their pulpits while preaching or praying?

This story seems to have moved Mr. James Ellis, of Cedar Lodge, Old Charlton, to write of "an awful event" which happened to a man whom he knew at Child's Hill, Hampstead, about twenty-five years ago. He was well known in that locality, and was addicted to awful blasphemy, and on a certain occasion he said, "May God strike me blind if," etc., and immediately he was struck blind in the presence of the people to whom he was speaking! He was afterwards to be seen on Sunday afternoons preaching with great earnestness and fervor at the corner of Child's Hill and Finchley Road to crowds who had known him. This story, if true, only shows, first, that the man was a believer in God, and secondly that God must have been about as silly as he was to take any notice of such an idiotic utterance.

The *Rock* seems to think that Mrs. Besant may eventually become a Roman Catholic. Referring to the "unintelligent self-renunciation" which in Roman Catholic and High Anglican Churches appeals so strongly to the feminine temperament, it says: "When Mrs. Besant—then Miss Wood—married a curate, was it not with the hope of finding a life in which, as she says in her autobiography, she would be called upon to renounce a great deal of self-will, and which would afford scope for doing something glorious? An inquiring intellect drove her from the Church into Atheism, but temperament again conquered, and she sought refuge in Theosophy—called the selfless gospel. Some people expect to see her a 'Catholic' even yet. At any rate, she has a strong tincture of the 'Catholic' mind."

We thought that Count Tolstoi had already been excommunicated by the Greek Orthodox Church. But, according to a telegram from St. Petersburg dated the 9th inst., the *Zerkowyna Wiedomsti*, the organ of the Holy Synod, contains another announcement which apparently is final. It says that the "Holy Synod has deliberated on the anti-Christian and anti-ecclesiastical teachings of Count Leo Tolstoi, and has deemed it expedient, in order to preserve the peace of the Church, to issue a circular dealing with the heresies of Count Leo Tolstoi." The circular says: "Count Leo Tolstoi, to the grief and horror of the whole orthodox world, has by speech and writing unceasingly striven to separate himself from all communion with the Orthodox Church, and this not only clandestinely, but openly, in the knowledge of all persons. All attempts to dissuade him from this conduct have proved of no avail, and consequently the Orthodox Church no longer considers him as one of its members, and cannot regard him as such so long as he does not repent and become reconciled to the Church."

The new Bishop of London says there are still 180,000,000 people who have no knowledge of the Bible. A pretty sort of a "Divine Revelation" which, after all these centuries, is unknown to 180,000,000 of the earth's inhabitants! The Lord seems to be in no special hurry to have his will known by his creatures. Perhaps he thinks it doesn't much matter. That seems to be a reasonable inference.

Colonel Robert Williams, Treasurer of the Church Missionary Society, advocating renewed missionary effort in China, says he does not think that Christian people will be deterred from responding to the appeal by what has been written in the press. Very likely they won't. He ought to

be able to gauge the extent of their fanaticism. Some people are not to be convinced either by argument or massacre.

It seems that everybody looted the poor Chinamen when Peking was taken, says the New York *Truthseeker*. The niece of Minister Conger, who visited the palace, confesses, in a letter published in the *Des Moines Leader*, that she followed the example of the rest and "brought home a few little things." Here is what the missionaries did, according to Conger's niece: "The Congregational missionaries moved into a prince's palace. It was full of beautiful things, so they have been selling them for the benefit of the mission. We went up there several times, each time finding things in the most out-of-the-way places. In dark, dusty, unused rooms are boxes piled on boxes, and cupboards where we found magnificent pieces of red lacquer, beautiful porcelain, and silks and fur-lined robes till there is no end." On this a correspondent of the New York *Evening Post* comments: "The writer does not mention taking even 'a few little things' here. Probably the missionaries kept better watch than the Russian guards in the other palace."

Church Bells laments the lack of religious training amongst the majority of people—even amongst many who nominally belong to the Church. It says that, "when confronted with an unbeliever or an Agnostic, they are totally unprepared to establish the reality of their faith by an appeal to Scripture, to the Fathers, or to the doctrine of the Church." We should think so. How could anybody establish his faith by appealing to the authority of that which is precisely the thing called in question?

So the now famous—or, as the pious will begin to say, infamous—volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* might as well have been written by contributors to the *Freethinker*. So says the *Edinburgh Evening News*. In a leaderette it remarks that Professor Schmiedel "all but wipes out the Gospels; he leaves as genuine a few sayings of Jesus. Dr. Abbott, though not so sweeping, reduces Jesus to the ordinary dimensions of humanity."

"Thus, at one blow," continues the *Edinburgh Evening News*, "the whole structure of Protestant Christianity falls to the ground. And, in an Encyclopædia containing such views, Protestant professors appear as contributors. Men like Professor Cheyne and Professor Davidson, New College, Edinburgh, who are both identified with the work, might just as well be contributors to the *Freethinker*. Or, to put it another way, disciples of the late Mr. Bradlaugh would be in their proper sphere as contributors to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*."

Strong remarks were made at a recent meeting of the Elswick Burial Board, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on the conduct of the local clergy. It was generally agreed that the clergy and Nonconformist ministers had occasioned no end of inconvenience by their lax attention to the funeral ceremonies they were paid to perform. At the same time a set of formal demands were put in by them, requiring, amongst other things, increased fees for funerals after a certain hour, the discouragement of Sunday funerals, and the imposition of a fine on undertakers who were unpunctual, such fine to be retained by the Board, "or paid to the minister as compensation for his loss of time." Two of these suggestions were rejected, and others modified.

A member asked if the Nonconformist clergy kept funerals waiting; to which another member (Mr. Hope) replied: "I could not say; but, as regards creed, when it comes to £ s. d., you find there is no difference."

The wife of Mr. Barker, of Arlington, in New Jersey, just over the river from New York, charges with assault the Rev. Mr. Keller. She says that violence was committed against her eighteen months ago. Having kept the secret a year and a half, she confides it to her husband, who shoots an eye out of the above reverend gentleman. In the wide discussion which follows in the newspapers male correspondents make some allowance for Barker, while the women stand up for the preacher, asserting, in the first place, that Mrs. Barker most undoubtedly invented the whole thing, and in the second place that she probably assented to the proceeding of which she now complains. One woman, who subscribes herself "A Mother of Three Sons," finds it absolutely incredible that Mrs. Barker experienced what she says she did without her own acquiescence. Another, who is the mother, not only of three sons, but a daughter as well, endorses the first one, and issues the supplement that the challenge must first have come from the lady to the minister. Women are, of course, the best judges of the question raised by the Arlington affair, and if two or three of them agree touching the matter of acquiescence, it is not for a man to say otherwise. My notion has been that they never acquiesce, though I would not oppose a mere theory, such as that notion is, to the long and broad experience of pastors and church workers. They outclass me for wisdom, and, while I may be a promising

amateur observer, I am no professor. Voltaire tells of a good queen who, being averse to entertaining a charge of violence against a worthy knight, took his sword, and, removing the scabbard, kept the hilt-end in motion while she asked the accuser to sheathe the blade. When women get such decisions as these it is generally other women who pass them out. I understand the lady followers of Jesus do not approve of his judgment *in re* the woman who ignored her obligations as a wife. It is as likely as not that Parson Keller did that which was wrong with Mrs. Barker. Still, taking into account all the Arlington women who are handing him bouquets and smothering him with kindnesses, he must be naturally a man of violence if he resorted to force in pursuing his pastoral pleasures.—George Macdonald, in the "*Truthseeker*" (New York).

James Collins, an American Christian, is angry. Somebody has been sending him the New York *Truthseeker*, and he wants it stopped. He also wants an answer to this question—Why did Ingersoll back down when he got the sore throat and thought he was going to die? Questions like that are simply lies in the form of interrogation. An ingenious liar—which James Collins does not seem to be—might go on asking them almost *ad infinitum*. He might ask the following, for instance:—Why did Ingersoll run needles into his wife's arm whenever she mentioned Jesus Christ? Why did he lock his daughters in a room at the top of the house, without food or drink, when they asked to go to Sunday-school? Why did he strike his poor old father for suggesting that there was no good in infidelity? Why did he send for a minister when he took an overdose of poisonous medicine? Why did he drop fifty dollars in a church collection-box when he wanted to win a lawsuit? Asking questions in that way is like riding on the switchback.

"I was visiting at the house of a friend the other day," a lady writes to us, "when I accidentally found one of your most blasphemous papers among the waste paper. I took it away, lest it should be read by others, also to find your address, that I might write to you, to ask how you dare to insult the Holy One, the God who created you, and before whom you will have to stand at the Judgment Day, and give an account of your evil deeds?" The lady rattles on at a fearful rate through four pages of note paper. Hell, devil, fire, and other nice words swarm through the lines. But all this was not enough. The lady encloses some special warnings for Miss Vance. "I would not like," she says, "to witness your last hours on your death-bed." Well, she is not likely to be invited. Her fears are quite gratuitous.

There has been another Peculiar People case at Canning Town. An inquest was held on the body of Philip Horsnell, aged ten months, the son of Eliza and George Horsnell, of 15 Fisher-street. The child died of pneumonia, and was unattended by a doctor. The father of the deceased explained that he did not call in medical assistance because he believed in the Bible and trusted in the Lord. A juror remarked that "That is all bosh," and added: "The Bible says those that are sick need a physician." "I beg pardon, sir," said the witness, "but it says those that are whole need not a physician." When this wrangle over the old Jew Book was ended, a doctor gave evidence, and, as he was unable to say that he could have saved or prolonged life, the jury brought in a verdict of death from natural causes; with a rider to the effect that the parents should be censured, in which the coroner concurred. That is to say, the parents were blamed for relying on God's promise instead of on medical science. Had this censure come from a jury of Freethinkers, it would have been all right; but, coming from a jury of Christians, it merely shows the depth of orthodox hypocrisy.

A Noble Prayer.

I lately came across a perfect curiosity in the praying line, which seems to indicate that the man who made the prayer first deceived the world and himself, and then started to wheedle his Maker! He lived in the last century, representing a certain constituency in the House of Commons, but was expelled from Parliament after a conviction for forgery. All his life he had been known as a man of unctuous piety, and on his death the following prayer was found in his own handwriting amongst his papers: "O Lord, Thou knowest that I have nine houses in the City of London, and that I have lately purchased an estate in fee simple in the county of Essex. I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fire and earthquake; and as I have a mortgage in Herefordshire, I beg of Thee to have an eye of compassion also on that county; and for the rest of the counties, Thou mayest deal with them as Thou art pleased. Give a prosperous voyage to the 'Mermaid,' because I have not insured her, and enable the Bank to meet their bills."—*Essex Weekly News*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

March 24, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—March 17, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, debate with Rev. J. J. B. Coles. April 21, New Brompton.—All communications for Mr. 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. F. DEWAR.—Yes, we well recollect the late Mr. Anderson, whose obituary notice you send us. He was a sterling Freethinker.
- T. H. ELSTOB.—The single volume editions of Shakespeare's plays published by the Clarendon Press, and edited by Aldis Wright, would probably serve you best. They range in price from 1s. to 2s. The notes are voluminous and useful. The text is that of the great Cambridge Shakespeare. The only complete pocket edition, with good introductions and necessary brief notes, is the Dent edition. This is a very pretty set of volumes, at 1s. 6d. or 2s. each, according to the binding. For sheer study, get the plays in the Clarendon Press collection. For sheer pleasure, get the Dent's collection.
- FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Per Miss Vance: W. Elcoat, 10s.; David Watt, 10s.; J. Rider, 2s.; W. Stourton, 1s.; T. Thelwall, 10s.
- MR. SAMUELS, Secretary of the West London Branch, wishes members to note that his address is now 229 Sayer-street, New Kent-road, S.E.
- ALTCAR.—(1) Nobody feels more than we do the loss of the late J. M. Wheeler. He was an invaluable colleague. (2) We doubt whether another selection of his articles would be a sane business speculation. Two such selections—*Bible Studies* and *Footsteps of the Past*—are at present in the market, and sell very, very slowly; which is a reflection on the public rather than on the author. (3) The *Encyclopædia Biblica* will be noticed in our columns by a competent hand. (4) The new Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* is to be annotated, as you will see by the advertisement. You are quite right in saying that, after the lapse of a century, the book should go forth with notes.
- E. PARKER.—See "Sugar Plums." We wish the West Ham Branch all success. Indeed, we have a peculiar affection for it, considering the circumstances of its origin.
- G. CROOKSON.—A weekly contents-sheet shall be sent you. Your name must have been dropped out of the list before the Freethought Publishing Company began to do its own business independently of Mr. Forder. With regard to the other matter, it is not true that Mr. Foote boycotts Sheffield or Barnsley. He will be pleased to lecture in either place if he is invited in the usual way.
- A. J. WHITE.—The delay has arisen because the work is to be enlarged, and the author has had much other distracting work to attend to of late. You need not spend as much as £2 on the book you are in search of on the Bible. You will find the substantial facts in a much less expensive book like Giles's *Hebrew and Christian Records*. The new *Encyclopædia Biblica* is, of course, more up to date. If you want to pay for nicety and precision, get that.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your welcome cuttings.
- P. PERKINS.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Treharne-Jones had such good meetings on Sunday at Aberdare. We note that a strong desire exists for an N. S. S. Branch there, and that persons willing to join it are invited to communicate with you at 46 Cardiff-street. Thanks for the distribution of a large number of back *Freethinkers* at the meetings.
- F. E. WILLIS.—We are obliged to you for your cuttings.
- H. PEARSON.—That story about Colonel Ingersoll and Ward Beecher is a pious invention. Both of them denied it and laughed at it. Ingersoll asked, with characteristic humor, whether it was meant that Christians were intellectual cripples, and that nobody should meddle with their crutches.
- MR. A. W. THOMAS, an American, and a member of the Chicago Bar, is at present on a visit to this country, and he is lecturing this evening (March 17) for the Liverpool Branch in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, taking for his subject "The Limits of Knowledge." The local "saints" should extend a hearty welcome to the American visitor.
- J. HERRINGTON.—What you write is sensible enough, but the question you deal with had better be left at rest for a while. The discussion on Atheism and Agnosticism was enough for one year.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—New York Public Opinion—Edinburgh Evening News—Newcastle Daily Leader—Yorkshire Evening Post—New York Truthseeker—Hastings Mail and Times—Sydney Bulletin—El Libre Pensamiento—Two Worlds—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—Blue Grass Blade—Secular Thought—Lucifer—Southend Telegraph—Torch of Reason—Progressive Thinker—Crescent—Open Court—La Raison.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- 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.

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

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

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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.

Sugar Plums.

OWING to the breakdown of the arrangements for his lectures at South Shields, Mr. Foote had no lecturing to do on Sunday evening. This evening (March 17) he stands aside in order to let the discussion take place at the Athenæum Hall between Mr. Watts and the Rev. Mr. Coles. Mr. Foote will occupy the Athenæum Hall platform himself on the following Sunday.

This evening, Sunday, March 17, Mr. Charles Watts debates at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, with the Rev. J. J. B. Coles. Subject, "Christianity as Taught in the New Testament." The discussion will commence at 7.30 sharp. The Rev. Mr. Coles is a courteous opponent, and we hope the disputants will have a crowded audience to listen to "both sides" of this important subject.

Mr. Cohen had a good audience last Sunday at the Athenæum Hall, and his lecture was highly appreciated. Mr. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (March 17) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. There are special reasons why the local "saints" should do all they can to make these meetings successful.

The better the day the better the deed. Good Friday is to be celebrated by the Finsbury N. S. S. Branch at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W. There is to be a concert and a dance, and Mr. Foote has promised to look in and give a reading. The tickets are 1s. each, and can be obtained of Mr. W. Leat, the secretary, at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, or (we believe) of Miss Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C.

The West Ham Branch has arranged for a "Tea and Musical Evening" on Saturday, April 6, at the Workmen's Hall, West Ham Lane. Tea will be on the tables at 6 p.m. sharp. The tickets are 9d. for adults, and 6d. for children under fourteen. We hope there will be a first-rate gathering. The Branch has asked Mr. Foote to run down and give a reading, and he will try to do so, though he cannot say for certain just at this moment.

The West Ham Branch has re-commenced its out-door propaganda. Mr. Davies is the lecturer to-day (March 17). It is to be hoped that the local Freethinkers will rally round the platform, and bring as many Christians with them as possible.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces Ess Jay Bee's "The Beautiful Garden" from the *Freethinker*. We find this a capital parody as we read it again, with a certain detachment, in the pages of our distant contemporary. The same number of *Secular Thought* reproduces Mimmermus's excellent article on Shelley.

We have received the ninth number of *La Raison*, the new organ of International Freethought, published at Brussels, and edited by Léon Furnemont and Victor Charbonnel. Some of the previous numbers did not come to hand. The present issue contains a very outspoken article on a new Confessional Manual in use at Saint-Sulpice and elsewhere, which contains things that are enough to make a pig vomit.

The *New World*, one of the ablest theological publications in America, has just died for want of support. It was a monthly review, and had only to be purchased twelve times a year; but that did not save it from extinction. "One by one," says the *Boston Evening Transcript*, "the denominational quarterlies have died, the few that remain in the country at large either being subsidised by great denominations like the Methodists or Presbyterians, or by educational institutions like the University of Chicago." This state of affairs, however, is not peculiar to America. "Recent utterances by Scotch educators," the *Transcript* says, "point to a lethargic condition of the Scotch laity, of which closeness of purse-strings against the claims of theological education is a symptom. Few young men are offering to study theology, few gifts adding to the resources of the theological schools are being made, and there are few signs of any life—at least in the Established Church."

Mr. Treharne-Jones, the Church of England clergyman who left his pulpit in South Wales, is lecturing to-day (March 17) for the Birmingham Branch in the Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, and we hope the local "saints" will give him a thoroughly good welcome. We are asked to announce that tea will be provided at the hall at 4.30 for visitors from outlying districts.

The Birmingham Branch has arranged to retain Mr. Percy Ward's services for another season, and a vigorous open-air propaganda is to be carried on in the city and the surrounding district, with Sunday evening lectures in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms. The committee are full of fight, and Mr. Ward is in the same condition; but they sadly confess to being in want of the sinews of war. They have issued quite a pathetic appeal for financial support, which we hope will elicit a generous response. An application has been made to the Secular Society, Limited, but it cannot be entertained until the Board meeting at the end of the month. Meanwhile it seems to us to be the duty of all Freethinkers within twenty miles or so of the Birmingham Town Hall to contribute towards the expenses of the gallant enterprise in the Midlands capital. Donations can be sent to Mr. J. Partridge, secretary, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

Mr. Foote has been invited by the Birmingham Branch to run down and give them a send-off on the first Sunday in April. They begged him to specially oblige them with an open-air lecture in the Bull Ring in the morning. He replied that he had long given up open-air lecturing, and could not at his time of life, and with his heavy work in many directions, undertake to resume it; but he would speak for twenty minutes or half an hour, according to the weather, if they had a morning demonstration. This offer was gladly accepted.

A very big scheme is advertised on the last page of this week's *Freethinker*. We knew nothing about it until the advertisement was sent in, just as we were at our busiest in preparing this number of our journal for the press. Not wishing to commend or condemn in a hurry, we reserve our criticism for another week. Meanwhile we think it right to say—as our opinion is pointedly asked for now, not by Mr. Anderson, but by the promoter—that the project is upon the face of it extremely vague. Mr. Anderson is a wealthy man to be able to spare £15,000, but for all that it would be a great pity to waste his money. Those who regard our judgment in such matters as of any weight will probably suspend their minds until we have the opportunity of stating it with fulness and precision.

"By the Grace of God."

"King, by the Grace of God."—*Pious Flunkeys.*

THE King is King "by God Almighty's Grace":
Of course he is, if God Almighty is;
The strongest, worst, best, feeblest things in space,
Perforce, are fateful phases of His vis.

The Church—a nuisance "by the Grace of God";
The foe of mental freedom, for a fee,
That stalks the school-house children, falsehood-shod,
And kidnaps infant minds, for £ s. d.

I, Snooks, a swindler "by the Grace of God":
A solemn parson, bishop, priest, or pope;
A booking agent to the Land of Nod,
And cash-down dealer in a Heavenly Hope.

I, Jack, a "Ripper" "by the Grace of God";
A silent slayer on the midnight prow
To hack the flesh of hags with murd'rous prod,
And drive their loosened souls in hell to howl.

J. C., a Teacher, "by the Grace of God,"
Of foolish doctrines, now by all ignored;
Of vicious virtues meet to "kiss the rod,"
And yet to break the peace and draw the sword.

A horse is frightened "by the Grace of God,"
And kicks a mother and her child to death;
So "come to me, all ye that work and plod,"
And "liddle children"—when bereft of breath.

The hateful's hateful, "by the Grace of God,"
And haters hate it, by the self-same grace;
Their inter-blaming shows that God—though odd—
Is plaintiff and defendant in the case.

Giv'n God: I'm writing, "by the Grace of God,"
Against the Grace of God, to please His Grace;
The Grace of God thus floats the Grace of God,
As one who breaks his nose to deck his face.

Our fleshly Reason—slave of Logic's rules—
At godly contradictions fairly staggers;
But fleshless Faith accepts, despite the schools,
The mindless message of the heav'nly "Jaggers."

G. L. MACKENZIE.

"The Divine Failure."

(Concluded from page 156.)

THE power that makes for evolution works for all activities; but no man, while the process is taking place, understands it. The man that most and best represents that spirit of change and transition is always the man that is misunderstood. The world, feeling its imperfection, and believing its divine possibilities, must have some one to idealise; so all the world, or a great part of it, applauds Jesus Christ; another part of the world applauds Confucius, another Buddha, another Zoroaster, but no one follows and imitates them, and no one can. Jesus as the ideal man is, and was, fragmentary; he represented but a segment upon the great circle of humanity; he laid all the emphasis upon the ideal, upon the spiritual, upon the impracticable, in order that he might enrich that side of life, and by the very law of his being was forbidden to lay equal emphasis upon the other side of life. If there had not been that man and other men like him to throw all their strength and energy upon the single idea of the spiritual, the world might have forgotten long ago that there was such an element in human nature; and yet I say he was but a fragment, an unperfected man. If all the world had become imitators and followers of the Prophet of Nazareth, progress and civilisation would have ceased then and there; we would have become ascetics, we would have become abject and poor, we never would have built railroads or steamships, nor cities; we never would have emigrated or discovered new countries and added new continents to the map. Stephenson and Fulton were as necessary to the world's life as was Jesus of Nazareth, and the steam engine just as divine as the Sermon on the Mount or the Lord's Prayer. The great compromise was made by the Christian world when, despairing of attaining to the statue of the ideal man, they put in his place a fiction; unable to understand how the life intensely spiritual and altogether indifferent to material wealth, benefits, comforts, and pleasures, how that kind of life could be lived in this world, they put in place of such an ideal the theologic fiction, the Christ, and the Christian world follows the fiction and gives up the actual Christ. It is the simplest matter in the world to conform to the fiction. Our civilisation, our Christianity, all of our modern life, is a sufficient conformity to the fictitious Christ; it is an adaptation, a commercial expediency. A man can follow the fiction of Christ, and do whatever anybody else does; he can by thus following secure his admission into heaven, and at the same time hold on to all of this earth that he can possibly get; he can become one in the great struggle, one in the ceaseless strife, one in the heated and exhausting race for the things of this world. It is, I say, an adaptation; it is the conforming to the fiction of Jesus, not to the actual Jesus. And that is necessary, too. Before one can stand upon the uppermost step they must set foot on every one of the intervening; before the world can follow Jesus, it must follow the fictitious Christ. These powers that are developed under the present form of pseudo-Christianity are altogether necessary. We never could have had the telegraph, nor any of the modern inventions, nor the science of applied mechanics, unless there had been men who forgot everything else, and gave themselves consumingly to the finding out of the one thing. No man alone, but all men together, make the perfect humanity. Jesus on the side of the spiritual, Shakespeare with the dream, and the world of materialistic men on the side of the common work-day things of the world. In this process of development it can but be that we shall manifest one-sidedness.

At the present time the world seems going mad with money hunger, as the New York bishop called it; but that is necessary too. The evil does not lie in the possession of power that great wealth gives; it lies simply in the manner of its use. The great accumulations are as necessary to the lifting up and the betterment of this world as is the spirit of the prophet that was willing to die for man. Both are factors, and these great developments of power have within them the self-correction of their own evils. Some time it will transpire that the power for vast detail and the constant accumulation

will be used and employed not for the mere sake of itself, but for the sake of what may come out of it. Suppose we had in one man the spirit of the Prophet of Nazareth, and at the same time the ambitious spirit of Cæsar, augmented by the power of Attilas or Cræsus, to acquire wealth. What would not Jesus have been if he had been a great industrial organiser? But by our human limitations it was impossible. The man that can die for the ideal will sometime enter into partnership with the man that can amass great wealth; then the race will take rapid strides for good. The men who cry out to-day against the inutility or the impracticableness of the teachings of Jesus are upon the same plane as those who cry out against the iniquity of great wealth; both classes are fragmentary and imperfect; each, judged alone, is a failure. Some time it will be considered the evidence of insanity for a man to gain for himself great wealth, but it will be considered a thing necessary to the best philanthropy to acquire that wealth and use it. So Jesus on the one hand, and for the most part this civilisation on the other, represent divine failures; failures necessary in the progress of development and advancement; failures incidental to the limitations under which we live; failures that mark a passage in the great progress of evolution, and all are necessary.

Our civilisation at the present time is thoroughly Christian after the fictitious Christ, thoroughly theological, and thoroughly imperfect. There are those who dare to dream of the time when man shall so highly esteem the fact of life, and himself as one of its embodiments, that he will not acquire, possess, claim, or enjoy anything at the expense of any other. Life in itself will be to him a thing so divine that its strife and rivalry and antagonism will cease, and every man will believe himself to be, in fact, the brother—the helper—of every other man. This does not mean Communism; it does not mean Socialism; it does not mean indifference; it means simply the new direction of the spiritual energies; it means the attainment of the new ideal; it means that whatever talent or power a man possesses is his and humanity's.

One could not help thinking, during the days of the distinguished musical event in this city, how infinitely better it would have been if those great artists could be looked upon as the people's—as belonging to the public, and not as the exceptional privilege of a comparatively few people who could afford the price of admission. Not, indeed, that the great artists must give their talent; that is no part of the ideal theory; but if the great hall could have been crowded full at a very much reduced price of admission, the singers and promoters would have received more money than they did, and the public would have had the benefit of hearing the world's greatest singers. As it is now, the appreciation of great art is impossible to the people, because they are unfamiliar with it. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, attended and applauded and swore they liked it when they didn't, and all because an education upon that line is impossible under the present conditions. It was the great philosopher of France who said, "Give the people the classics," and he suggested that a public reader be appointed to read Homer's *Iliad* to the populace on the corners of the streets. All of the great things that the human brain has conceived, all of the wealth in the literature of the world, is within the reach of the uneducated, of what are called the common people, if they could become acquainted with it.

The highest attainment is possible for no man who works for himself alone. The best achievement is forever beyond the reach of genius if it is done for its commercial value; but to humanise it, to universalise it, to make it under proper and just conditions the property of all men, is to add to every imagination's flight new power of wings, to every singer and every performer upon any of the planes of art new and higher inspirations. Our ideal civilisation will never come until the divine failures that were necessary in its progress are brought together, and out of the failures the one great success is made. So in our estimate of Jesus let us understand that it was a failure only as it was an unperfected life. Then, as now, no life can quite round the circle. When the great achievement is made, it will be seen that the failure in the first century upon the spiritual side of life, the failure in the nineteenth

century upon the commercial, selfish, money-getting side, both were necessary, both factors in the working out of the great problem, both steps in the ascending way of humanity, and both at last share in the complete triumph which the future will surely bring.

I plead for patience, for faith, for belief in man. I am thankful for the iconoclast, the man who protests, the man who refuses to conform, the man who dies upon the cross or at the stake; but I thank God that there don't have to be very many of them, nor I one. I plead for patience with the man that can number his millions by hundreds; he is necessary too. We may consider it a misfortune of ours that we were not born three hundred years later, but we cannot be held responsible for the time when we did come; I plead for the spirit of patience, of faith in things as they are, because they cannot always remain as they are. They are leading on, they are reaching forward; it is not our philosophy that is to explain the world, it is not our religion that is to save it, it is not our ideal of God by which it is to be justified; those are all limitations that grow out of our egotism and our ignorance. The great world of humanity is wiser than any one, and is working on and working out and working towards the superb future. Let us trust it and co-operate with it. With a spirit of divine discontent let us nevertheless live our day while we are here, getting what good we can, finding cause for gladness, not apologising for the smile nor despairing at the tear, knowing that the cross of the crucified and the selfishness of the enormously rich are both necessary and both temporary. In the great future, when we realise the old-time dream of fraternity, justice, and equality, in that time sure to come, when no man lays a burden upon another, humanity will rise as if it had found the power of wings. We make many of the evils against which we rebel, and much of the suffering against which we protest. The whole world is divine, divine in its potency, and its promise, and in its destiny; and for one, here and now, I own a deep and binding faith in all of it.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Torch of Reason.*

The Tables Turned; or, Royal Christianity.

THE Emperor William bowed him low
Upon the altar stairs,
And prayed for Christian charity
To soften royal airs.

He vowed to love his foes, return
For evil constant good,
Prepared to stand by him who died
Upon a cross of wood.

The organ thundered loud amens
To each sweet royal prayer,
And, as he vowed, a halo seemed
To shine around his hair!

A man strode quickly up the aisle,
Low whispered in his ear;
The worshipper sprang to his feet
With oaths too bad to hear.

China had drunk pure Christian blood!
The news flew o'er the land;
The monarch calls his men of war,
And speaks with outstretched hand.

"The outcast heathen dare to spill
Good Christian blood this day!
But vengeance terrible shall fall,
Vengeance without delay!

"Butcher them with remorseless hand,
My trusty men and true;
No quarter to the yellow skin!
Slay them, whate'er they do!

"My blessing speed you o'er the wave,
Christ's smile shall fill your souls;
Make scarlet with damned Chinese blood
Each river as it rolls."

They sped them on their deadly way
With hearts that blessed their king;
He sought again the altar stairs,
Where misereres ring.

"O Lord, take vengeance on thy foes!"
He cried with fiery zeal;
"Each death-pang of thy slaughtered saints
Let sinners' pockets feel."

Then from the skies a voice fell down
 In accents sweet and low ;
 " They who lay down their lives for me
 My blessedness shall know .
 " My servants win the world by love ;
 They need no royal sword .
 Doth cruel slaughter breathe from those
 Who really love their Lord ?
 " Nay, William, thou art but a child
 In mercy's tender school ;
 Humble thyself, if thou would'st be
 Fit to bear Christian rule ."
 A vision swift of endless hell
 Occurred to William's mind ;
 " By Jove !" he muttered, " even Christ
 Won't be for ever kind !"
 The royal face curled into scorn,
 As still he bent his knee ;
 " How dare," he murmured 'neath his breath,
 " A devil speak to me !"

WALTER K. LEWIS, B.A.

Correspondence.

THE EUROPEAN WOLF AND THE CHINESE LAMB.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Respecting the various reports which have come to hand lately concerning the doings of missionaries and European troops in China, I beg to quote what *some* Christians and Christian journals have to say about foreign missions (especially missions in China), and the said doings of the so-called "Christian" troops in China, viz:—

"In the same city are found English ministers teaching Africans, Hindoos, or Chinese to be sober, honest, pure, unselfish, holy through faith in Christ, and sometimes in the same street English tradesmen, English tourists, English soldiers and sailors, drinking, swearing, thieving, cheating, rioting in all manner of lust and wickedness. How can Christians at home hope to make any headway in the conversion of the heathen while this goes on? Let them begin at the right end, and purify their own country first.....It is a fearful incongruity—aye, and a sorrowful one—to find at work in the same heathen village one Englishman with a whiskey bottle, another with a revolver, and a third with a Bible."—(Rev. J. M. Witherow, M.A., Wallace Green Church, Berwick-on-Tweed; although, of course, Mr. Witherow is in favor of foreign missions.)

"To show how things, as at present conducted, impress the native mind, it needs but to quote, nearly at random, the opinions recently expressed in the daily papers. One of these, for instance, comes from a cultured Chinese merchant, who writes in the *Express*: 'We people of the East don't want your Western religions any more than we want any of your other ideas; yet you try to force them on us. You send us three religions, and the people of each say that the other two are wrong. What are we to believe? You people can have no sense of logic or no sense of humor to do this thing. It is only the lowest and most ignorant of our people that you succeed in perverting from our ancient belief.'"—(*Church Gazette*, October 6, 1900.)

"When the missions of to-day run nearer to those lines, and adapt the Gospel to the people instead of *vice versa*; when Christian Churches cease to kick each other whilst they pray; when in reality, and not in theory only, the Church Catholic loves one and the same Lord, and its brethren also, then it will preach with Apostolic fervor, power, and success, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' Then will the heathen, in the words of Zechariah, say: 'We will go with you, for we have been told that God is with you.'"—(R. Scager, in *Church Gazette*, October 13, 1900.)

"To many agents of the missionary societies there were pitfalls arising from ignorance. Hostility had been aroused because of the wholesale denunciation of ancestral worship. There was a want of elasticity in their methods. Baptism was a case in point, especially adult baptism. In northern China an irreverent crowd gathered to see a woman undergo the rite who had scarcely had a bath before, and, as she gasped for breath, they shouted in derision around. Then there was zeal without knowledge. He mentioned the case of two young American lady workers, who, going to the entrance of one of the principal temples, began to play their concertinas, and to sing 'Come to the Savior, make no delay,' the result being that there was a disturbance, resulting in the destruction of their mission house. Another case of provocation was disrespect for the people. Directly a European gets among Orientals, he puts them on a lower platform. An American lady opened a dispensary, and, failing to attract the women, invited the men, with the result that all the dissolute men of the place crowded, and the authorities had to send her away and close the place."—(*Christian World* report of speech of Rev. Dr. Wenyon, a returned missionary from China.)

"The rest listened to far-off tidings of what was happening in the interior; or drank wine and played cards on Sunday; or refused to visit the sick in the hospitals; or accepted a skulking and precarious sojourn in obscurity and disguise. They surround themselves with comforts, says Mr. Power, squabble for the best house, higgler for wares, and provoke contempt by a lazy life. We are grieved to the heart's core, writes Mr. Sirr, to see so many of the Protestant missionaries occupy their time in secular pursuits, trading and trafficking."—(Rev. John MacLaughlin in "Is One Religion as Good as Another?" referring to some of the missionaries in China, and quoting from "Christian Missions" by Marshall.)

"When we went to the heathen, what did they say to us? You missionaries all contradict each other, but each says that his is the only true doctrine; will you kindly make up your minds what Christianity is, and then we might take it up, or at least judge of it.' The teachers of Christianity were all in confusion, fighting one another—because they forgot the words of Christ, who reminded them that there is one Great Shepherd of the sheep."—(Late Rev. H. R. Haweis.)

"The Russian plan is that of the Middle Ages, slightly modified by a veneer of Christianity, and is accompanied by the violation of women on a scale which leads to the suicide of hundreds of Chinese, till the wells are choked. The savagery of some of the Russian troops is simply barbaric; but there is no nation which can throw stones at another in this dreadful matter."—(Rev. A. H. Smith, author of "Chinese Characteristics" and "Village Life in China," and who was besieged in the British Legation at Peking, referring to the conduct of European troops in China.)

"What can the so-called Christian nations expect after this horrible exhibition of barbarism? They have sown the wind; they will surely reap the whirlwind. The excesses of the Boxers in their maddest moments were apparently no greater, if they were as great, as the rapine and destruction of these barbarians from civilised lands. Who can blame the Chinese for any reprisals which they may hereafter make upon these hordes of white bandits who have overrun their country?"—(*Christian Endeavor World*, U.S.A.)

"There seems to be no doubt that the stories which have from time to time reached this country concerning the frightful barbarity of certain of the allied troops in China are, unhappily, too true. Dr. E. J. Dillon, as an eye-witness, describes scenes which are revolting beyond description. Upon the heels of his article comes a despatch from Japan, in which professed Pagans rebuke the Russians as Christians, for their inhumanities!"—(*The Christian*, January 10, 1901.)

"Is it too sanguine to believe that, when another hundred years have rolled over this wearied earth, the teachings of Christianity will have become so operative among the nations, and civilisation will have got so deep down below the surface, as to make Dr. E. J. Dillon's harrowing account of the unbridled excesses of the Allies in China read like an impossible nightmare?.....But, even with all allowances, the story of the barbarous treatment of the heathen Chinese by the forces of nations that claim to be enlightened must bring a blush to the cheeks of those who have lived in the last year of the nineteenth century, and must make us ashamed at the thought that these things will be read by our posterity. The only consolation is that the English are honorably free from any complicity in the excesses of their allies. Yet the non-Christian Japanese take higher rank even than the English."—(*The Examiner*, January 10, 1901.)

"A more damning indictment against Christendom has seldom been written by mortal pen. It is appalling, and one which will leave an indelible stain upon the memory of all the Governments who were concerned in this atrocious carnival of lust and murder. It is simply appalling to think that the men who have been guilty of these horrible atrocities were despatched with the blessings of the Church, on the sanctimonious pretext of carrying Christian civilisation to the heathen Chinese.....The Bulgarian atrocities were not more sickening than those which Christendom has inflicted upon the unfortunate Chinese who came across their path."—(Mr. Stead in the "Review of Reviews" for January, 1901, referring to Dr. Dillon's article in the "Contemporary Review.")

Sir Robert Hart (although seemingly in favor of the introduction of Christianity into China), in the *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1901, says some of the missionaries took part in the looting. He also says the Chinese are an intelligent, cultivated race—sober, industrious, and, on their own lines, civilised, etc.

Taking all things into consideration, therefore—the massacres of the missionaries, the shady doings of some of the missionaries themselves, the horrible conduct of some of the so-called "Christian" troops in China, and the fact that the Chinese are already civilised—why should the missionaries trouble their heads about going there at all? Why don't the missionary societies leave China alone? If they will persist in sending missionaries there, then let them take the consequences. Besides, the Chinese have the same right, logically, to send missionaries to Europe as Europe has to send missionaries to China. They might try the South and West of Ireland for a start. America and Australia have restricted

Chinese immigration; and China, therefore, should have the same right to restrict the influx of European and American missionaries into China. Could not a petition be presented to the Chinese Government, asking them to pass a law to prevent all missionaries from entering China? Missionary societies at home naturally defend their agents abroad; but then, how do they know *all* that takes place in foreign lands? Do the missionaries tell them *everything*?

If all the details be true as given in Dr. Dillon's article in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1901, and in other reports which have appeared, surely the Chinese for centuries to come will look upon Europeans (including the missionaries) as "foreign devils."

M. ROGERS.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am grateful for your permission to write, and will show this by occupying as little of your space as possible. I begin by saying that in practical affairs we do not get information in the same way as we do in abstract reasoning, such as mathematical. There we advance from step to step and from link to link, each one leading directly to the next which succeeds. But in practical matters we get our information very differently. Here we get it by separate lines of proof, each of which is open to cavil and objection, but which lines of proof offer, in their combined evidence, a demonstration which wise men act upon.

Even so, with regard to God's existence, we have various lines of proof. Thus we have appeals to common sense, such as satisfied Mr. Paine in the quotation I gave. But we have also history, the voice of conscience, the tokens of design all over the world, religious experience, etc. A treatise would be required to do even faint justice to these in their separate and aggregate capacity; I only venture, then, to show somewhat of the strength of the proof suggested by the last-named. Religious experience is a very practical matter to those who have it.

Our faculty of worship and inclination to worship suggest the existence of an object of worship, just as our faculty of loving and inclination to love suggest an object of love. Be the cause what it may, the almost universal history of civilised mankind shows such an inextinguishable tendency to worship a Supreme Being that refraining therefrom positively appears contrariant to human nature.

Religious experience is the great evidence to devout persons of God's existence, through the spiritual intercourse they are enabled to hold with Him. Of this, let it be frankly proclaimed, no proof can be given save assertion and apparent results. And the reason is plain: it is that the manner in which spirit can communicate with spirit is a mystery as inexplicable as how mind can act on matter. If a man were born stone deaf, he could receive no evidence of how neighbors communicate by moving their lips, save bare assertion, and he would be grossly foolish did he not think this sufficient. If, then, the intercourse between earthly spirits be indescribable, we need not be surprised if it be also indescribable when it takes place between man and "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers xxvii. 16).

We have, then, to fall back upon assertion and apparent results. And here we are confronted with the fact that in all quarters of the civilised world numberless men and women profess to hold intercourse with God by prayer and meditation, and the vast majority of them are highly respectable and gifted with average intellectualism. Day by day they are sensible that He is training them for futurity in the way that reason and experience assure them is the best. Verily, it seems incredible that in all lands and ages worthy, rational people should be certain they have intercourse with their Creator, were such an idea not founded on reality. A candid man, who is without this religious experience, should reflect that his lack of information is no disproof of their positive knowledge.

It is useless to urge against Christian experience the difficulties connected with the origin and existence of evil. True Christians know so much of God's mercy, and feel they know so little of the limitless universe, that they are content to wait until all will be made plain hereafter, as is promised in Scripture. Besides, they know that the difficulties connected with any form of Agnosticism are tenfold greater than those connected with Christianity. It is a pity Agnostics do not mentally digest this fact.

Second, for apparent results. Many estimable Christians were once profane and profligate. Now, I may be reminded that some professors are hypocrites; but, I reply, their hypocrisy argues the sincerity of others, even as base coin does the existence of good money. And everywhere are reclaimed evil-doers, who for many years have been good fathers, brothers, and sons. Their happy change, they are gladly acknowledge, arises from the intercourse they are enabled to hold with God in prayer and meditation.

Probability, not certainty, is notoriously the guide of life. I would say, then, to all Atheists who may read these lines: Be guided by the "probability" that there is a gracious God revealing himself to these many millions of religionists; and,

indeed, I do not see how you can come to any other conclusion, unless you think proper to brand them wholesale as knaves or fools. Ask these Christians to tell you how the God they worship may be approached. Then, if you take their advice, you will sooner or later learn the reality of God's existence by having his love shed abroad in your own hearts (Rom. v. 5).

HENRY J. ALCOCK.

P.S.—I hope to send, and trust you will be good enough to insert in your next issue, a brief answer to Mr. Watts and Mr. De Caux.—H. J. A.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. J. M. Christie's knowledge of Alexander Campbell and his opinions is clearly of a somewhat hazy character. He remarks that it was Jesus Christ, and not Alexander Campbell, who founded the "Christian" sect, evidently unaware that Campbell's following adopted that title. "It is also false," he writes, "to say that Alexander Campbell proclaimed the divine right of slavery." In proof of this he appends quotations from letters written in 1847. If he will consult the *Life and Times of William Lloyd Garrison* (vol. ii., p. 78), he will find that Campbell is pilloried by Garrison as one who, in 1836—eleven years before the date of the letters cited by Mr. Christie—"proclaimed the divine right of slavery and the impiety of interfering with it." That Campbell should later, in Edinburgh, have seen fit to adopt a milder tone is no new feature in the career of clergymen, who are not always the most reliable authorities for what their attitude towards reform has been.

C. COHEN.

Obituary.

It is with deep sorrow I have to record the death of William Anderson, late of Bonnyview, Gilmerton, who died at 4, Robertson-place, Jappa, March 1, in his eighty-third year. He died as he lived, a true Freethinker. Of late years, owing to failing health he has not been able to attend our meetings. He leaves a widow to mourn her sad loss, at whose request I was asked to say a service at the house and grave. Mr. R. Brown, president of our branch, being better able than me, did so at the house and place of interment in Portobello Cemetery. It was the first Secular interment at that place, and the service was much appreciated.—JOHN F. DEWAR, Secretary.

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, Rev. J. J. B. Coles (of London City Mission) and Charles Watts will discuss "Christianity as Taught in the New Testament."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Boer and British Methods in Warfare."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "The Indian in America."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Creation v. Evolution."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7.30, R. P. Edwards

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, W. W. Greig, "Socialism and Secularism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): E. Treharne-Jones—11, "Christianity: Pagan, not Jewish"; 3, "Does the Bible Agree with Science?"; 7, "Priestcraft."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, H. T. Muggerridge, "The Solution of the Housing Problem."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen—11.30, "The Significance of Evolution"; 2.30, "Atheism"; 6.30, "Religion and Insanity." Committee meeting at 1.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Tolstoi's Religion."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. W. Thomas (of the Chicago Bar), "The Limits of Knowledge."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, "Tolstoi on Government Persecution and Slavery."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday Evening—Musical and other Recitals.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, A reading on "Last Words on Agnosticism."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 241 High-road, Leyton.—March 17, Glasgow; 24, Manchester; 31, Camberwell.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—April 28, Glasgow.

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Negotiations have already commenced with a view to acquiring a splendid site in a most populous centre, but no final decision will be arrived at pending the response to this proposal.

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The foregoing is subject to alteration by the Board when formed. Gentlemen who would be willing to serve as Directors are invited to write to Mr. WATTS.