

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Was Jesus a Bastard?

AN article in the *Christian Leader* draws attention to a very shocking statement in the new *Encyclopædia Biblica*—a work edited and written by professed Christians, which has, nevertheless, thrown consternation into the orthodox camp. One of the contributors to this work was the late Professor Bruce, who lived and died in the service and pay of the Free Church of Scotland. The article from his pen was far more sceptical than anything he had published during his lifetime. It left extremely little history in the Gospels; no more, indeed, than is accepted by the average Freethinker. But that was not all, nor even the worst. Professor Bruce went out of his way, as some of his critics think, to write a most appalling sentence about "the Savior." "Christ," he said, "was probably the son of a human father, and that not Joseph." At this sentence the *Christian Leader* "shudders." And no wonder, for it is a dreadful descent from the orthodox position. It makes "the Savior" the *supposed* son of Joseph in the worst sense of the word. Instead of being the son of God, he is not even the son of his reputed father. And the assumption is that Mary played off a very nasty trick upon Joseph, or that Joseph was an easy-going fellow who accepted with open eyes the paternity of a child with whom he had no sort of connection.

Professor Bruce's language, according to the *Christian Leader*, is so terrible that it "strikes with the deepest pain every Christian heart." Perhaps so; but this has nothing to do with scientific criticism, which is looking after the truth, while the "Christian heart" is simply looking after its own emotions. If our contemporary will take the trouble to think, it will probably see that Professor Bruce's conclusion is a perfectly natural one in the circumstances. The Gospels declare that Jesus was not actually the son of Joseph. They declare that he was the son of the Holy Ghost. But if he was not the son of the Holy Ghost, according to modern criticism, and not the son of Joseph, according to the Gospels, the only conclusion is that he was the son of someone else—in other words, that he was a bastard.

Christian journalists are seldom acquainted with Christian literature. We cannot assume, therefore, that our pious contemporary is conversant with the writings of Dr. Donne—a man of superb genius, although a divine of the English Church. In his second sermon on the Nativity, Donne says that human testimony is not the ground of the Christian's belief that Christ was born of a virgin. "If God had not said it," he exclaims, "I would never have believed it." That is perfectly sensible. It goes straight to the point. No amount of human testimony would ever satisfy the world that a child was born without a father. Wherever such a thing is believed it is upon another ground. It is held that there is a divine warrant for the miraculous story. "God says so" is the real reason underlying all the sophistries of apologists. And it is to be noted that every religionist trusts to his own "God says so," and laughs at the same evidence for the incarnations of other religions. What really happens is that religionists are trained up from their infancy in a particular faith. It is presented to them as divine, they accept it as such, and go on believing it to the end of the chapter. But when they come across another faith, however much it resembles their own, they laugh it to scorn, and most derisively just where the resemblance is most striking and complete. The Christian,

for instance, laughs at the birth-story of Buddha; and the Buddhist laughs at the birth-story of Jesus Christ. The Freethinker laughs with and at both, and both call him a blasphemer.

Well now, to return to Donne's point, the whole question at issue is this—Did God say so? The orthodox Christian still answers Yes, because he still regards the whole Bible as the Word of God. But the Higher Critics, as they are called, cannot answer the question so categorically. They reject the idea of particular inspiration; consequently, they are not sure whether any special text or story came from a divine or a human source. They incline more and more to regard the inspiration as lying not in the letter, but in the spirit. And the end of this method of criticism is the rejection of every supernatural incident in the Bible narratives. Certainly the Higher Critics have not all reached that conclusion. A hundred motives and tendencies hold them back. But they gravitate towards it by what in the long run is an irresistible impulsion. The Higher Criticism, in short, is but a Church road to Freethought.

Professor Bruce's language is shocking to the *Christian Leader*; though, by the way, it is not really the *words* that are shocking, but their *meaning*. But there is nothing new in what Professor Bruce says. The bastardy of Jesus has been asserted all along by the Jews. It was advanced in the second century by Celsus. The works of that early opponent of Christianity were ruthlessly destroyed by the Christian Church, but passages of them survive in the answer of Origen. Celsus makes an orthodox Jew address Christ in this fashion:—

"You were born in a small Jewish village. Your mother was a poor woman who earned her bread by spinning. Her husband divorced her for adultery. You were born in secret and were afterwards carried to Egypt, and were bred up among the Egyptian conjurers. The arts which you there learnt, you practised when you returned to your own people, and you thus persuaded them that you were God. It was given out that you were born of a virgin. Your real father was a soldier, named Panther. The story of your divine parentage is like the story of Danaë."

It should be added that this Panther was by no means an invention of Celsus. The Talmud says he was Mary's husband. Epiphanius says that Joseph's father was called Panther. John of Damascus says that Panther was Mary's grandfather. He got into the story somehow, and Celsus and the Jews are just as likely to be right as the Christians.

Precisely the same view of the bastardy of Jesus is taken by Count Tolstoi—and we daresay the news will be another shock to the *Christian Leader*. In his work on *The Four Gospels* the great Russian writer, who even regards himself as a Christian although he has been excommunicated by the Holy Synod, deals with the birth-story of Jesus Christ. After quoting the Gospel texts, he says that the real meaning of them is as follows:—

"There was a virgin named Mary. The virgin was with child, but it was not known by whom. Her betrothed husband took pity on her, and, concealing her shame, received her into his house. From her and the unknown father was born a son. The name Jesus was given to the boy."

Tolstoi notices the legends, miracles, and portents of the Nativity, but he says that they are just like the marvels of other religions, and are entitled to just the same credit. "All these passages," he says, "are

designed to be a justification of, from a human point of view, the shameful birth. The shameful birth, and the ignorance of Jesus as to who was his father in the flesh, form the one trait in these verses that has any significance."

It is evident, then, that the only astonishing feature of Professor Bruce's utterance as to the bastardy of Jesus Christ is that it came from a man who occupied a divinity chair in a Christian Church. And the matter is only of importance from a religious point of view. At this time of day, from a human point of view, it is of no importance whether Jesus was the son of Joseph, or Panther, or some other man who cannot be identified. Nor could there be any "shame" attaching to him in the eyes of any rational person. "Who can control his fate?" asks the great poet, and "Who can control his birth?" is a still more staggering question. The greatest boon, perhaps—it is difficult to be sure of these things—that could be offered us would be the power of choosing our parents. But from the nature of the case that is impossible. So we have all to enter the world as we can. We have no choice in the matter, and where there is no choice there can be no virtue and no sin. "Bastard" is a term of law, but as an epithet flung at a living child it is in the last degree cruel and malignant.

G. W. FOOTE.

Rhapsodical Christianity.

MANY and different, indeed, are the views entertained as to what the term "Christianity" really implies. Some regard it as a system full of joy and promises of a happy and glorious future, whilst others recognise it as a scheme pregnant with gloom and threatenings of permanent misery in the "life to come." For centuries the most devout adherents of the Christian faith were bound by its doctrinal teachings, but in recent times most of them have been given up, and its ethical inculcations deemed of primary importance. Then, again, the philosophical believer professes to eschew tradition and to rely upon what he calls the "spirituality of the faith," although it is acknowledged that this "spirituality" cannot be "fully comprehended," as it is a "phase of the invisible forces."

I always read the able weekly contributions of "J. B." in the *Christian World* with interest, although it is painful sometimes to notice how he cramps the legitimate promptings of his liberal mind by still yielding to the demands of the popular theology. It is another instance showing how difficult it is, even with men possessing more than ordinary intellects, to emancipate their minds from the effects of early religious training. Such men have lost all faith in orthodox teachings, yet they expound views which are, from a Secular standpoint, unreasonable. They give up the substance to play with the shadow. This appears to me to be the prostration of reason to faith, and the subjugation of intellectual freedom to the narrow limitations of theology. A striking proof of this was given in "J. B.'s" article which appeared in the *Christian World* of May 30, under the heading of "Whitsun Theology." It is a candid confession of the mystic and incoherent nature of Christianity, and of its lack of harmony with the intellectual requirements of modern times. Yet his article was a plea on behalf of the Christian faith. This but it hardly may accord with the exigency of Christian advocacy, agrees with the true spirit of free and honest inquiry. It is simply a rhapsodical phase of Christianity, by which is meant a confused and emotional statement of personal feeling.

"J. B." commences his article by saying: "Whitsuntide represents a Bank Holiday rather than a Christian festival. On Sunday innumerable sermons were preached on Pentecost, but the main body of the people were out of doors. Modern England takes its Church anniversaries very easily." Just so; and this fact proves how little interest the people take in Christian festivals. Secular associations, not religious fancies, command public attention upon those holidays. This "J. B." admits, and yet he writes: "We shall never outgrow the spiritual significance of Pentecost, though what that

significance is we are yet a long way from fully comprehending." Now, the question is, Where does this alleged "significance" come in? Pentecost was a Jewish festival held in commemoration of the promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai. It is observed by the Christian Church to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Christ's disciples. The most "significant" feature about this descent is that there appeared unto the apostles "cloven tongues"; and, being "filled with the Holy Ghost," they began "to speak with other tongues." Supposing that were so, what has that to do with us in the twentieth century? Even the early recipients of the "Pentecostal blessing" were not much improved by the Holy Ghost and "other tongues," for "contentions," "strife," "indignation," "fraud," and lying were indulged in by St. Paul and other apostles. "J. B." says that Pentecost represents Christianity entering upon a new stage. He writes:—

"We are forced here upon the immense question as to the relation between the Christianity of Christ's own lifetime and the Christianity that followed His death. This has come to our generation as a new problem, and a vital one. Our fathers, whose notions on these points were comprised in a neatly-rounded doctrinal system, and to whom the application of the realistic historic sense to Christian origins was a thing unknown, had no difficulties in the matter. Our age, on the contrary, is asking afresh, 'What is Christianity?' and is puzzled beyond expression to know whether it is to seek the answer in the period before or after the Crucifixion."

Evidently the Holy Ghost did not produce "one accord" as to what Christianity is, for down to the present day nothing but discord obtains as to what is really meant by that term.

"J. B." recognises this difficulty, but so wedded is he to the Christian profession that at the sacrifice of sound reasoning he attempts to cover the difficulty thus:—

"For a living faith such as Christianity is a vital organism, and a root law of all organisms is that of incessant movement, of constant development. A plant grows not simply by evolving what is already within it, but also by taking up and transmuting a thousand things that are outside it. And when we see Christianity, in its progress through the ages, absorbing now from Greece, anon from the farther East, and again from Rome, undergoing a thousand transformations, taking on fresh color and form from every century, we are witnessing simply one of the universal laws of life applied in the spiritual sphere."

Now, the merest tyro in reasoning should see that there is no analogy between the growth of a plant and the transmutations to which Christianity has been subjected. The plant, if left to its natural development, maintains through all its changes its original qualities. Not so with Christianity, for its original character has been entirely changed until its primitive form has disappeared. What Christian congregation, at the present time, either preaches or practises the faith as taught by Christ and his early apostles? Besides, if it were true that Christianity has absorbed so many fresh elements and undergone "a thousand transformations," it cannot be the "divine" system claimed by the Church, but rather an organisation strengthened, as time went on, with human accretions.

According to "J. B.'s" view, the Pentecost ushered in a new phase of Christianity. If this be true, the new was no better than the old. The Holy Ghost failed to reveal any doctrine, any moral sentiment, or any rule of life that the world did not already know. Buddha had preceded the Holy Ghost in furnishing the human race with the very essentials upon which "J. B." should rely for the regeneration of man. Professor Rhys Davids, in his "Hibbert Lectures," writes:—

"The distinguishing characteristic of Buddhism was that it started a new line, that it looked upon the deepest questions men have to solve from an entirely different standpoint. It swept away from the field of its vision the whole of the great soul-theory which had hitherto so completely filled and dominated the minds of the superstitious and thoughtful alike. For the first time in the history of the world, it proclaimed a salvation which each man could gain for himself and by himself, in this world, during this life, without the least reference to God, or to gods, either great or small. Like the Upanishads, it placed the first importance on knowledge; but it was no longer a knowledge of God; it was a clear perception of the real nature, as they supposed it

to be, of men and things. And it added to the necessity of knowledge the necessity of purity, of courtesy, of uprightness, of peace, and of a universal love far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure."

When "J. B." uses such words as "invisible forces" and "unseen" as the special agencies of Christianity, he indulges in language which, to say the least, is misleading. It is not denied that such forces exist, but to pretend to know their nature and to claim them in support of the Christian faith savors more of superstition than of impartial reasoning.

It must not be supposed that the present writer fails to appreciate the general excellence and liberal tone of "J. B.'s" articles. They are usually free from that theological cant which frequently characterises the religious press. For instance, in the very article that has here been commented upon he writes:—

"To expect my neighbor to feel as I do, and to make his feeling a test of his religion, is a monstrosity. It is nothing less than a scandal that religious teachers, from their neglect of the elements of a true experimental psychology, should allow dismal blunderings, with their attendant burdens upon consciences, such as we have been describing, to be still possible in the Christian Church."

These words are as true as they are nobly expressed. It is to be the more regretted, therefore, that the writer should resort to that rhapsodical Christianity so prevalent just now among a section of believers whose intellects forbid them longer to expound the orthodox faith, but who lack the moral courage to consistently follow out the logical conclusions of their convictions.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Problem of the Criminal.

THERE is an old story concerning a discussion that was being carried on in a small debating society on the question, "Does hanging stop murder?" The discussion was pursued at some length, and with no little heat; but it was finally settled in the affirmative by the local humorist, on the ground that very few committed murder after the hanging part of the business had been properly attended to. The humorist's declaration was, as a matter of fact, an epitome of the popular philosophy upon the whole question of criminology. "If a man steals, lock him up; if a man murders, hang him," seems the average person's reflection upon the subject. On very few does it seem to dawn that locking an evildoer up is but a small part, and the easiest part, of the problem to be solved. The real difficulty commences when the locking up has been accomplished, and the question of future treatment has to be decided.

For the great problem of criminology is neither to exact vengeance for injuries inflicted, nor even to strike terror to the minds of the viciously inclined; but, in a word, how and by what means to counteract anti-social impulses by the encouragement of more desirable qualities, or by what methods we can check the operation of what are the principal causes of all crime—a bad heredity, defective education, and an evil environment. Nothing could be more absurd than the general assumption that, by incarcerating a criminal and subjecting him to a certain amount of physical and mental discomfort for a certain definite period, society has discharged its full obligations, and done all that it is rightly within its power to do. Society as a whole can no more shirk the responsibility for the existence of a criminal class than it can avoid reaping the benefit from the presence of virtuous citizens. The criminal is here; his existence is as much the product of our complex social state as the existence of scientist, philosopher, or politician; and our plain duty is to deal with him, not merely with an eye to the welfare of a class, but with a strict regard to his own future welfare.

In thus directing attention towards a more common-sense view of the treatment of the criminal, Dr. Oldfield's book* renders a distinct service to the humani-

tarian cause. Save incidentally, Dr. Oldfield confines his attention strictly to the consideration of the question of capital punishment, and, in arguing for its abolition, he, to my mind, makes out an unquestionably strong case. It is gratifying, too, to find that the case against capital punishment is clearly made out without any unnecessary appeal to sentiment; for, after all, the all-important question in connection with capital punishment is: Does it serve the end for which it exists, or are there other methods that will bring about the desired result in a more effective manner? To these questions it seems to me that a rational sociology can give but one answer. That the penalty of death does not deter from the committal of crime is clear from the fact that it did not deter at a time when capital punishment was inflicted for dozens of offences, many of which are now visited by a slight term of imprisonment only. And if the penalty of death did not deter in the case of theft, which usually results from cold deliberation, can anyone seriously argue that it will deter in the case of murder, which is usually the result of a strong burst of overmastering passion?

Moreover, the argument for capital punishment, on the ground of it being a deterrent, proves rather too much. If it deters in the case of taking life, it should also deter in the case of other offences—some of which are scarcely less serious than that of homicide; and in this case the death penalty should be extended. That it is not extended, but is at present narrowed to two offences—murder and high treason—proves either that people have not faith in it as a deterrent, or that there are other methods that will serve equally well. The simple fact that it has been found necessary to keep criminal executions as private as possible, and this on the ground of the injury to public morals occasioned by their publicity, is, as Dr. Oldfield points out, a strong reason for abolishing the practice altogether.

But, while it is not clear that capital punishment serves to deter others from committing crime, it is quite plain that it fails in what should be the aim of all punishment—the reformation of the criminal himself. You cannot reform a man after he is hanged, and this unfortunate consequence is all the more regrettable, as a far smaller proportion of confirmed or instinctive criminals are found among murderers than among other classes of wrongdoers. It is a matter of common observation among criminologists that the majority of murderers are not of a pronounced criminal type. Prince Krapotkin has pointed out that Eastern Siberia, which is full of liberated murderers, is much superior in tone to other parts of Siberia to which other offenders are exiled;* and this seems to hold good of the general character of murderers when contrasted with other wrongdoers. The fact is, that the actual offence committed, and for which a person is arrested, may give but little indication of the criminal's character, and it is the *character* of the offender with which our treatment should be chiefly concerned. The murderer, as Mr. Havelock Ellis rightly says, "belongs very frequently to the class of criminals by passion, the least anti-social of all, and is at other times frequently the subject of some morbid impulse, epileptic or insane."† There exists far more justification for eliminating by death many offenders who return to our prisons, time after time, with the regularity of out-patients at a hospital, than those for whom this penalty is especially reserved.

We cannot, then, justify capital punishment on the ground of it being a sure deterrent, as the extent to which various offences flourished while it was in much greater operation sufficiently proves. We cannot justify it on the grounds of the necessity of protecting society from people of settled homicidal tendencies; first, because all murderers do not come under that heading, and, secondly, because, even if they did, the end would be as well served by perpetual imprisonment. We cannot say that it creates a keener sense of the sacredness of life, since the law itself gives an object-lesson in the contrary direction.

The conduct of executions in private is a confession that it has no educative effect on the public at large; while to treat it as a policy of revenge is to wield an

* *The Penalty of Death; or, The Problem of Capital Punishment.* (George Bell & Sons.) 3s. 6d. net.

† *In Russian and French Prisons, The Criminal*, p. 238.

argument that will not be openly avowed by anyone whose opinion is deserving of serious consideration. The killing of a man is a confession of weakness, pure and simple. It is an admission that society is not yet civilised enough to deal with its own products in a scientific manner, but must, perforce, adopt the uncivilised method of murdering its objectionable members. It may be a matter of difficulty to suggest some satisfactory substitute for capital punishment, but its continuance is a confession of weakness and impotency with which few thoughtful people can rest completely content.

Readers of Dr. Oldfield's book will, I think, reach the conclusion that it is not so much the difficulty of dealing with homicides in some fashion other than hanging as it is ignorance and rabid conservatism that stands in the way of rational reform. Dr. Oldfield addressed a circular letter to various members of the bar, the bench, and the clerical profession soliciting an expression of opinion on the question of capital punishment. Of the judges, the late Lord Chief Justice, Lord Russell, was the only one who expressed an opinion adverse to capital punishment. Governors of prisons, who were also queried, were prohibited from giving a public opinion on such subjects, although the majority of those questioned expressed themselves, privately, as opposed to the death penalty. This difference of opinion between the judge who views the murderer at a distance and those who study him at close quarters is instructive.

It will not surprise readers of this journal to discover that Dr. Oldfield found least encouragement among the clergy. He "received most courteous replies from nearly every bishop, [but] there was not one who took up any other position than that hanging should be perpetuated." It will doubtless please some devout minds to find that this attitude was in most cases based upon texts of Scripture or religious considerations. "Who-soever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed," was evidently present in the mind of most of these reverend advocates of a policy of mingled brutality and revenge. The Nonconformist ministers, it is only fair to say, for the most part gave an adverse opinion on the question asked, although a number adopted a sitting-on-the-fence attitude, and said "they would gladly hail its abolition the moment it should be found possible to sweep it away."

Dr. Oldfield expresses himself as "grievously saddened" at the results of his inquiry among the clergy. Yet experience might have taught him what to expect. The scientific treatment of the criminal is an impossibility upon spiritualistic lines; and, with very rare exceptions, the founders and developers of a scientific criminology have been Freethinkers. The names of writers such as Helvetius, Beccaria, Bentham, Romilly, and Mackintosh, and, in more recent years, Despine, Ferri, Marro, and Lombroso, are sufficient proof of this. The study of the criminal can only be profitably conducted when we treat him as the product of a disordered organism or of an unfavorable environment, or of both combined. But Christianity, with its doctrine of original sin, the belief in the agency of Satan, and of an immaterial entity inhabiting the body and superior to its laws, was necessarily debarred from taking this view. It produced philanthropists, but not scientific thinkers; and the problems of criminology are not to be solved by district visitors or evangelistic sermons. The orthodox creed has never possessed any rational idea concerning the means of removing crime, and has bitterly opposed all those who have worked for reform. The influence of Paley's chapter on "Crimes and Punishments" stood for years in the way of Romilly and Mackintosh, and if, at a later date, some professed Christians have adopted a more rational attitude, it is, as usual, because the pressure of circumstances has been too much for their continued resistance.

But Dr. Oldfield's book, as I have said, is only one aspect of the much larger question of criminal treatment as a whole; and if once more scientific methods can once be adopted with regard to the general treatment of crime, the method of dealing with homicides will almost settle itself. But with this view of the question I hope to deal in a further article.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Death and the Imagined Hereafter.

MAN has been defined as a creature who has complicated instinct with intelligence, shackled inclination by convention, and imagined so many false gods that he dreads life's best reward—the long sleep. Death has been defined as Nature's last and kindest hint at her omnipotence. These definitions cover a wide ground in their bearing upon the teachings of the Christian religion in regard to the natural dissolution which awaits us all.

Christianity has always presented death in a light far less reasonable than that in which Paganism regarded it. Lessing points to that fact, as other writers have done. The Greek view of death made it the twin brother of sleep, and so in a manner amiable. Christianity increases the terror of death by pronouncing it the wages of sin. "Some philosophers," said Lessing, "have thought that life was a punishment; but to consider death as such was a view which, apart from revelation, could hardly have occurred to the human mind."

Pagan philosophers exhibited no fear of death. When it was said to Socrates, "The thirty tyrants have condemned thee to death," he calmly replied: "And Nature them." There was perfect composure in meeting the much-magnified and misnamed "King of Terrors." A Greek chorus cry, which conveyed even a welcome to death, was: "Know, whatever thou hast been, 'tis something better not to be."

Christianity has contrived to create a crowd of groundless fears in regard to the last scene of all—in which it often happens that the principal actor has arrived at a point at which Nature mercifully wraps him in a semi-comatose mantle. Death-beds would be peaceful enough if they were not assailed by the fears which priestly teaching has implanted. Having in life aroused the gravest apprehensions, the man of God is naturally called in to soothe his victim at the point of death. The Romish priest does this to perfection. Oliver Wendell Holmes recognised this fact. He said in his latest work: "Roman Catholics understand the business of dying better than Protestants. They have an expert by them, armed with spiritual specifics in which they both, patient and priestly ministrant, place implicit trust. If Cowper had been a good Roman Catholic, instead of having his conscience handled by a Protestant like John Newton, he would not have died despairing, looking upon himself as a castaway." No; the Romish Church is quite equal to dissipating at the last moment all the terrors it has previously created; but always with a view to making demands on the surviving relatives for remunerative masses.

The views of heaven and hell presented by the Romish Church are sufficient to account for her supremacy in so many portions of the globe. As a recent writer observes, it was reserved for Catholic Christianity to surpass the worst nightmare of paganism in that mediæval idea which made it possible for Aquinas to write: "The saints in heaven will gaze upon the tortures of the damned as an increase to their happiness." Nietzsche quotes this, and legitimately, for the Church which produced the sentiment still inscribes it in her books as orthodox.

A generation or two ago the death-beds of Christians were haunted with fears of hell-fire. There is reason to believe that many, even now, are disturbed by fears of some undefined eternal condemnation. The Devil, not so long ago, was an ever-present terror. The alarm at these priestly figments of the imagination was expressed in a variety of ways. Take, for example, the following eerie hymn used at Cornish revivals in earlier days, and look at the cheerful prospect it presents to the dying Christian:—

We shall hear the chains all jangling, jangling, jangling,
In that great day,

While the mighty, mighty trumpet shall go sounding through
the vale;

We shall see the graves all opening, opening, opening,
In that great day,

While the mighty, mighty trumpet shall go sounding through
the vale;

Then turn, poor sinner,
And escape Eternal Fire,
For you'll have to stand the fire

In that great day.

Christians have progressed since the time when, in all sincerity and in perfect belief, that hymn was sung. They have now divested themselves of belief in hell by ignoring or explaining away passages in Scripture which were clear enough to Christians during all the centuries of the Christian era preceding this enlightened age. But in a mendacious way they stick to the prospect of heaven, which rests on exactly the same foundation, and is received on the same authority.

"Beyond the hills of death" the Christian views the New Jerusalem, the "city of God whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise." He looks forward to the heaven in which there are many mansions. A charming prospect! This is how Charles Wesley describes it in one of his hymns:—

By faith we already behold
That lovely Jerusalem here;
Her walls are of jasper and gold,
As crystal her buildings are clear;
Immovably founded in grace,
She stands as she ever hath stood,
And brightly her builder displays,
And flames with the glory of God.

The New Jerusalem may rejoice in walls of jasper and gold; but that does not inspire us with an absorbing passion to spend an eternity there. Her buildings may be as crystal clear; but have we not already a Crystal Palace at Sydenham? What is the meaning of the line, "And brightly her builder displays"? What does he display? The concluding line suggests Crystal Palace fireworks.

Seriously, the Christian view of death and the Christian imaginings as to some alleged hereafter will hardly bear the test of rational criticism, being founded in error and upon mere conjecture. The Pagan estimate of death was much nearer to the natural attitude, and the Christian heaven offers no attractions except to people blinded by theological faith.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Apotheosis of Imbecility; or, Letting "God" Down Easy.

THERE is a story from the New York *Sun* entitled "Gans Played it Low Down," which I have read and laughed over till my torpid liver received a benefit. The hero, who was ultimately mortally doused in the river by Arkansas City, is thus described: "Gans were that shiftless that you had to stand over him with a gad to make him move towards anything, except a drink or a square meal. Actually, I don't think he'd a taken the trouble to fall down if he'd happened to slip," and so on. This may be taken to be a good objective description of imbecility in actual personification. As it turned out, it was an assumed imbecility, exemplifying the height and depth and the width of the mimetic and dramatic instinct in man, as in all animate nature. So much the more is it to the point of this homily. Humanity is not given, any more than nature, to have regard to imbecility, even assumed, for the nonce. The law of the survival of the fittest is absolutely unemotional. It is not even concerned to be "moral" when imbecility is concerned. It is simply wiped out, or submerged, in the ordinary course of events. "Providence" winks the other eye the while. Nevertheless, as the world consists mostly of fools, we shall witness as heretofore, painfully, imbecility even in high places. Such an exhibition appears to be to the fore in the capital city of Scotland at the present moment. Alas, that it should be so; but let us rejoice that it is not at the hands of a Scotsman. The country of Scott and Burns and Stewart and Lockhart, and all the glorious retinue of literary luminaries, apparently, could not produce a genius to toe the mark of the "Gifford Trustees." These administrators, over the left, of the will of the late Lord Gifford seem to think that the fund left by his lordship is an auxiliary fund to bolster up vested interests. The lecturer is to be a man who, if he cannot bless, certainly will not ban. Failing to find a man in Scotland fit for the job, they have hailed from the "vasty deep" of America the well-known author of *The Will to Believe*. This genius, in his third lecture,

characterises "religion" as consisting in the "belief that there was an unseen order, and that our supreme good consisted in adjusting ourselves thereto." Again, "This belief and this adjustment were the *religious attitude in the soul*" (the italics are mine). I do not see that the most advanced thinker has anything to say against this, except that it seems rather incongruous for the trustees to pay a man, I believe, about £800 to come all the way from America to say it. If that is a true definition of religion and the religious attitude, one would like to know what on earth the *raison d'être* of three courses of Gifford lectures per annum is. Would society not be more benefited, and the *object of Lord Gifford's will equally well carried out*, if the trustees were to "sell all that they have and give to the poor"? I believe there are some slums even in Edinburgh!

Viewing the "attitude" psychologically, he is reported to have said: "We could act as if there were a God, feel as if we were free, consider nature as if she were full of special design, lay plans as if we were to be immortal, and we found then that *words which had no sense-content did make a genuine difference in our moral life!*" I will be bound to say that there is not a living Scotsman so case-hardened in deceit, hypocrisy, and humbug as to have given utterance to such imbecile words, and especially so before an Edinburgh audience. A training, and life, in an American atmosphere is a necessary prerequisite. The italics are mine, of course, and they are there to emphasize "words" which, if they have any meaning at all, completely give away the case for any "religion" at all except that which, in the most general way, he had already defined, and which we accept as that of a purely natural religion from which the very last vestige of supernatural conceit has been cast out. In the subsequent labored dialectic of the lecture (third) from which these quotations are taken their force and meaning are nowise modified, mitigated, or explained away. Thus towards the end we have this, to wit: "The truth was that in the religious and metaphysical sphere articulate reasons were cogent *only* when our inarticulate feelings of reality had already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion." Quite so! We know all about that. First work up the emotional fake to a point, and then you can get the gaping multitude to believe that the moon is made of green cheese or soft soap; and if they won't, then, at the worst, you can compel them to by a more drastic appeal to their emotions in the shape of a two-edged sword, a fiery dragon, a devil, or—hell! Our ancestors were well acquainted with the little game, but they did not give it away so naively. They did not play "low down," but "high up," and so they have contrived to "keep a hand" into the twentieth century. And when the course of events was too rough upon them, as it often was, they had always a trump card in reserve, in the shape of "Thus saith the Lord." This lecturer, however, has thrown away this trump, to begin with, by admitting the possibility that it is only "bluff," and that the game is only *playing at believing*.

R. PARK, M.D.

The Nick of Time.

Argues that the Nick of Eternity won't find it quite all lavender in the near future.

The Devil looked east, the Devil leered west,
And flapped his wings across his chest.
"I'm growing old and gray," quoth he,
"And as weak and sloppy as charity tea."
The Devil looked pensive, the Devil frowned;
"The game I've played has been solid and sound.
Sure as God is love, I'll be cooked," gasped he,
"If I know how he'll manage to do without *Me*."
Then the Old Chap gurgled; the Old Chap grinned.
"Now! All good Christians that ever sinned
Were tempted and driven to crime by me.
I'm indispensable, don't you see?
And when I'm gone, by the Holy Rood,
They'll all turn suddenly honest and good.
Well! I'm damned to a cinder if I can see
How the parsons will manage to live without *ME!*"

G. GUARDIABOSCO.

God Almighty Told a Lie.

GOD ALMIGHTY hates a "whopper,"
 When 'tis told by mortal man;
 Damns him in a red-hot "copper"
 Made before the world began.
 Sauce for goose is sauce for gander;
 If it isn't, tell me why:
 More than once—I speak with candor—
 God Almighty told a lie.

Says the Biblical romancer,
 God made everything that is—
 Lightning, earthquake, tapeworm, cancer,
 Form distorted, ugly "phiz";
 Gazed on everything created;
 All was good that met His eye.
 If that statement He dictated,
 God Almighty told a lie.

Man, that's born of woman, rash is,
 Such an easy one to snare;
 Adam, made of dust and ashes,
 Stole an apple or a pear.
 Warned before by God the "shirty"
 "In that day" he'd surely die,
 Lived nine hundred years and thirty—
 God Almighty told a lie.

"Why d'ye call me good?" said Jesus;
 "None but one is, that is God."
 Good old slandered Satan, seize us,
 Take us quickly off to "quod"!
 If the Savior's quoted right, He
 Must have "winked the other eye";
 Jesus Christ was God Almighty—
 God Almighty told a lie.

God Almighty murders miners,
 Cares no more for men than kine;
 Drowns the passengers on "liners"
 Like the stolen, "devilled" swine.
 "I will guard my sheep," said "I am,"
 Through His Son—but I reply,
 "Spread the truth from here to Siam—
 God Almighty told a lie."

Jesus said: "My kingdom's coming
 Ere the death of some of you;
 Golden harps you'll soon be strumming
 In the sky so bright and blue."
 Noodles give Him their adherence,
 Scoff at sceptics, scan the sky,
 Vainly watch for His appearance—
 God Almighty told a lie.

God, the Author of Creation,
 Damns "all liars" great and small,
 Damns Himself by implication,
 He's the "author" of them all.
 Sauce for goose is sauce for gander;
 If it isn't, tell me why:
 Many a time—I speak with candor—
 God Almighty told a lie!

ESS JAY BEE.

Two Notable Deaths.

THE death of Mr. Robert Buchanan was not unexpected, and was probably a relief. He was a forceful but not exactly a great writer. His powers were dissipated over too many tasks and in too many directions. But that is only saying, after all, that he lacked the higher qualities of real genius. One who knew him personally says in the *Westminster Gazette* that "he had no love for gods of any kind." In his closing years he railed against the world, which he need not have done if he had formed anything like a philosophy for himself. "It is a badly stage-managed world," he said to this friend about a year ago. "Oh," said his friend, "it will be all right on the night"—quoting from a well-known play. "Not a bit of it," said Buchanan, "it is not rehearsing it needs, but reconstruction." By the way, it was to Buchanan that Browning made the confession that he was not a Christian. Buchanan was not a Christian either. But it was a puzzle to decide what he actually was. One of the intellectual indiscretions of his later years was an absurd attack, in the form of a novel, on the Religion of Humanity. The truth seems to be that Buchanan clung tenaciously to the belief in God and a future life on grounds of prejudice and emotion.

Sir Walter Besant was a more genial figure. Many of his readers regarded him almost as a personal friend. He was intended for the Church, but he took a road of his own, and became a "novelist, essayist, and philanthropist." It would be hard to claim him as an orthodox Christian. There are passages in his essays on the French Humorists and on Rabelais which indicate in what direction his sympathies lay. It should be added that he was genuinely interested in the lot of the poor and unfortunate.

Acid Drops.

M. LABORI's reception by the Hardwicke Society was most enthusiastic. Apart altogether from the guilt or innocence of Captain Dreyfus, there was something splendid in the way in which M. Labori worked as the prisoner's advocate, facing the most terrible opposition and even odium, falling beneath a would-be assassin's bullet, and then recovering by sheer force of a magnificent constitution in time to take a signal part in the last stages of the great drama. It must be admitted, however, that M. Labori's profound belief in Captain Dreyfus's innocence cannot be eliminated from the matter. It was that belief which roused all the ardor and determination of his nature; it was that belief which made him devote so much time and attention to the case; it was that belief which nerved him against the bigoted hatred of the vast majority of his countrymen; and it was that belief which deterred him from taking any payment for his professional services. M. Labori could not allow a mercenary element—however honorable in ordinary circumstances—to mix with his rescue and vindication of a martyr. This fact lifts him out of the category of mere advocates, and ranks him with the volunteer soldiers of humanity.

When the toast of the evening was given, M. Labori clinked glasses with the Lord Chancellor. It was a curious juxtaposition. M. Labori is a man of ideas and of generosity, in the full stream of the modern spirit. Lord Halsbury is commonplace, decorous, old-fashioned, bigoted, and self-seeking. No one can point to a single service he has rendered his country, or to anyone but the members of his own family. He owes his Lord Chancellorship to the fact that he baited Bradlaugh in the law courts for the Tory party, and conducted the Blasphemy prosecutions which failed as against Bradlaugh but landed the editor of the *Freethinker* in gaol.

What a pity it is that Mr. Michael Davitt's hatred of England—which, it must be admitted, is not without reason—should lead him into a most regrettable blunder. Writing to the shifty and truculent M. Rochefort, of the *Intransigent*, Mr. Davitt says that "the English are honoring the great French advocate, M. Labori, not as a leader of the Bar, but as a defender of Dreyfus, and through hatred of France." Mr. Davitt adds that Great Britain, far more than Germany, remains the mortal enemy of France. Now there is no truth whatever, we believe, in this declaration, which only shows that Mr. Davitt's temper has, in this case, impaired his judgment. Moreover, it is odd to see a cosmopolitan like Mr. Davitt sowing seeds of animosity between two nations that ought to live in friendship with each other. Does he hate England so much, and so blindly, that he would like to see her injured even at the expense of another nation that he professes to love? For it is quite certain that France could not inflict injury upon England without suffering as much, and probably a good deal more, herself. It is rather odd, too, to see Mr. Davitt addressing his letter to an adventurer like M. Rochefort, who is always trading in his country's ruin. The two things this charlatan understands are humbug and cash.

Dr. Thomas Bond, the famous Westminster surgeon, committed suicide by jumping out of his bedroom window (on the third floor) into the area beneath. He had been suffering for months from "a painful growth in the stomach," which we presume was cancer; his agony was so great that life became an intolerable burden, and when the nurse left the room for a few moments he gave himself his quietus. Nothing could be more natural. Why should a man—unless he has important obligations to fulfil—drag out to the bitter end an existence that can never be anything but unmitigated misery? Yet the jury brought in the usual verdict of "temporary insanity," and Dr. Troutbeck, the coroner, who was a personal friend of Dr. Bond, said that the morphia he took to deaden pain had no doubt lessened the strength of his mind. Now we take this to be stuff and nonsense. Dr. Bond probably knew quite well what he was about, and was as sane when he committed suicide as Dr. Troutbeck was when he presided at the inquest.

Being at Oxford the other Sunday, Mr. John Morley went to Mansfield College Chapel and listened to a sermon by Principal Fairbairn, the famous and eloquent Nonconformist. Whereupon the *Westminster Gazette* remarked that it was "quite sure that Mr. Morley would find a sermon by Dr. Fairbairn both inspiring and consoling." But the words "quite sure" simply indicate the writer's condition of mind, and have no relation whatever to Mr. Morley. For our part, we can quite understand Mr. Morley's desire to hear a great preacher, without believing that he goes to any place of worship for inspiration or consolation.

The *Westminster Gazette* may be reminded that when Mr. Morley was explaining Mr. Carnegie's educational gift to Scotland, in the course of the speech at Brecon, he regretted that a certain part of the old curriculum was likely to be

neglected. That part was not theology, but the teaching of the "old sages of Greece and Rome," the "masters of the great truths of human nature and human life." This does not look like an inspiration from Dr. Fairbairn or any other preacher. According to Christian orthodoxy, the ethical wisdom of the sages of Greece and Rome was nothing but "beggarly elements," mere gleams of candle-light before the full illumination of the Gospel.

Some of Ibsen's superficial and faddist admirers regard several of his plays as attacks on the institution of marriage. They are mistaken. What he had in view was the purification and elevation of marriage. His own domestic life seems to have been orderly and happy enough. At any rate, we read that now, in what threatens to be his last illness, he is nursed with the greatest care by his wife, who never leaves him day or night, and he refuses to receive help from anybody else. This pathetic circumstance calls to our mind the fine sentence of Jouy: "Without women, the beginning of our life would be helpless; the middle, devoid of pleasure; and the end, of consolation."

Jules Verne, the French scientific romancer, who has charmed so many young people, especially boys, is now writing his ninety-ninth book. It is to be entitled *La Grande-Forêt*, and is to deal with the ape world. M. Verne confides to an interviewer that he is "far from coming to the conclusion of Darwin." For Darwin's ideas, in fact, he says he has "not the least sympathy." But what does that matter? Is not M. Verne taking himself a little too seriously? The world does not want to take its exact science from the writer of ninety-nine books.

The Chief Constable of Birmingham, Mr. Rafter, a recent importation from Ireland, seems to be a fine specimen of a local Dogberry. Recently, in a dictatorial fashion, which was quite beyond the range of his legitimate function, he gave notice that he would stop certain democratic meetings in the Bull Ring. Now he wishes to drive members of the local police force into attending church. He has unearched an 1878 bye-law—as yet uncancelled—which orders such attendance. The Chief Constable recognises that it is impossible, nowadays, that such an order can be enforced—apparently he wishes it were otherwise—but we are told "the Chief Constable makes no secret of the fact that he advocates some amount of Divine worship on the part of his men." We know what such an announcement means when addressed to subordinates seeking promotion.

Payment for church-going is the "latest" in the way of pulpit enterprise in America. Dr. Carnes, of New Jersey, according to the *Daily Mail*, presents every person who attends his Sunday morning services with five cents. The scheme is, of course, successful, and has led to neighboring churches considering the desirability of doing the same.

That oracle of the *British Weekly*, Rev. R. J. Campbell, replies to "A. G. W. (London)," who wishes to know of a book on Apologetics which might be put into the hands of a young man who, through scientific research, has lost faith in the Christian revelation. Rev. Campbell replies: "I am not sure that the reading of controversial literature is ever of much use in correcting a man's point of view about anything"—an obviously absurd opinion. He adds: "The habit of mind engendered by the inductive methods of modern science is not, I am afraid, favorable to devotional sensibility"—which is quite true. "Instead, therefore, of reading up both sides of the question with the instinct of a controversialist, I should recommend him to familiarise himself with the best current Christian literature, and to treat with sympathy the best types of Christian experience he comes across." Surely this is a charming instance of the blind leading the blind.

A Mexican priest, aged thirty-two, named Jesu Esparza, eloped with a girl of seventeen, named Maria Padilla, and carried off also £12,000 belonging to the Archbishop and clergy of Guadalajara, of whom he was treasurer. The priest has been arrested in Madrid, where he called on the Mexican Ambassador to ask him to attest his signature on four bills of £2,000 each on bankers in the city. Both priest and lady are in gaol awaiting extradition.

Dr. Babcock, the pastor of Brick Church, New York, described as "one of the most brilliant and lovable ministers of America," committed suicide at Naples whilst suffering from an attack of Mediterranean fever. Providence does not seem so busy in the world that he had not time to hold his servant back from this act of self-destruction.

"Which would you rather be, a man or a woman, and why?" This question was put to a number of American schoolgirls. "I am satisfied with the way I am," one girl replied, "and it would make no difference if I wasn't." Sensible girl! Half the troubles of life would vanish if we looked at the world in that temper.

The perils of Christian Science in America are being

realised, with the result that there is much popular indignation against its professors. The disciples of Mrs. Eddy in Chicago are accused of spreading scarlet fever, through their fatuity in hiding cases from the knowledge of the sanitary authorities. The public indignation led to an actual riot. Shocking incidents occur.

In a Western town a baby swallowed an open safety pin. The father, a sensible man, was away from home. The mother, a Christian Scientist, not knowing what was the matter, called in the Chief Scientist, who gazed into the child's eyes and thought unutterable thoughts. But this only made the suffering child squall the louder. In a few days the father came home. The poor little infant was nearly dead. In spite of his wife's protests, he bundled the Chief Scientist out of doors, and called a doctor. The child was put under the X-rays, and the trouble was understood. It was too late. Death ensued. And yet such things never stagger the faith of Christian Scientists. In this case they simply claimed that the mother's faith was not strong enough.

Another instance of Sabbatarian bigotry has presented itself. It seems that the entertainment at a South London theatre the other Sunday included a "play without words" by a celebrated French actress. The attention of the County Council has been called to this new development in the Sunday "concerts" it sanctions in the theatres and music-halls holding its licence. The Lord's Day Observance Society are to be credited with the discovery of this shocking desecration of the blessed Sabbath.

A Japanese review has been giving the result of an inquiry into the religious views of the students at the colleges of that country. About a thousand replies were received in answer to questions sent. Sixty-six per cent. of the young men declare themselves to be Atheists. Some two hundred affirm their rejection of all religious belief to be the result of philosophical and scientific studies.

Recent statistics show that there are 143,000,000 Protestants, 98,000,000 Greek Catholics, 230,000,000 Roman Catholics, and 176,000,000 Mohammedans. As it is estimated that there are about fifteen hundred million persons on the earth, and that the numerous sects outside of the four great religions do not contain more than 53,000,000 members, it will be seen that there are 800,000,000 persons who may be classed as heathens.

Now, if God attaches any value to the revelation of his will in the form of Christianity, is it fair that these 800,000,000 persons should live and die in ignorance of it? To suggest that he has left the spread of his Gospel to human effort is absurd, because untold centuries must elapse before the world can be covered. In the meantime millions will be dying without the faintest suspicion that there was ever a Christ or a divine revelation in a Bible. Whether they will be damned or not for their ignorance is a question for the theologians.

Here is some "high falutin'" by De Witt Talmage: "The religion of Ralph Waldo Emerson was the philosophy of icicles; the religion of Theodore Parker was a sirocco of the desert, covering up the soul with dry sand; the religion of Renan was the romance of believing almost nothing; the religion of the Huxleys and the Spencers is merely a pedestal on which human philosophy sits shivering in the night of the soul, looking up to the stars, offering no help to the nations that crouch and groan at the base. Tell me where there is one man who has rejected that Gospel for another, who is thoroughly satisfied and helped, and contented in his scepticism, and I will take the train to-morrow and ride five hundred miles to see him."

It is pretty certain that De Witt Talmage need not travel five hundred miles to find people who have rejected Christianity, and are perfectly content with other systems of thought and of life and duty. He might easily save his railway fare by looking around in his own city.

Rev. Dr. Beet addressed the London Methodist Ministers' meeting the other day on the subject of Old Testament criticism. An attempt was made to prevent the address and the discussion from appearing in the public press, but failed, for reports have appeared. Rev. Allen Rees, in the course of the discussion, said that, whatever historical basis there was in the histories of the Old Testament, there was not a little which was simply legendary or typical.

At the recent International Council of Unitarians one of the speakers, Mr. Graham Wallas, announced, amidst applause, that Christianity could not solve the ethical problem of the relation between the nations, and that it was to Buddhism that they must look for what they needed. There was, so far as the reports go, no dissenting voice.

"There is life after death." The matter is settled at last,

At least it seems so by an advertisement in the *Mexican Herald* of May 25. Rev. Dr. Lee, clairvoyant, life reader, and occult scientist, described (by himself, who ought to know) as the leader and bright star of his profession, declares to the world (in the said advertisement) that there is a future life. And such a great and gifted man must be a very high authority. Without asking a question, he tells people who consult him what they have come for, whom they will marry, what articles they have lost, and where they may find them. He is also good at locating mines and buried treasures. Further, he cures all diseases without medicine. "He is," likewise, "ever ready to assist those with capital to find a safe and sure paying investment." And his "strict faith and religious honesty"—which we hope is not a different thing from common honesty—appear to be guaranteed by the *Washington Post*. Altogether, then, it would seem that scepticism on the question of a future life has no longer any reason for its existence. Any sceptic who holds out against the assurance of the Rev. Dr. Lee, of Mexico, must be very much like the gentleman in the New Testament who would not be persuaded though Moses and all the prophets rose from the dead.

Dr. James G. Paton, the seventy-eight-year-old missionary, who has just set sail again for the New Hebrides to continue his labor of soul-saving, told a number of things to a *Daily Mail* interviewer before he left the old country. Seventy-two of the islands have embraced Christianity, and eight of the islands have become wholly civilised—which is apparently a later stage of development. There are now 100 native evangelists and 18,000 native converts. And all this has been done amongst a population who, fifty years ago, were "all cannibals and savages of the most degraded type." Wonderful, no doubt! But the beauty of the picture is discounted by one fact. The population that was once 200,000 has been reduced by nearly half while the process of conversion has been going on. By the time, therefore, that all the natives of the New Hebrides are converted to Christ, the population will probably be reduced to a baker's dozen.

J. L. Toole once gave a supper to eighty of his friends, and wrote a note to each of them privately beforehand, asking him whether he would be so good as to say grace, as no clergyman would be present. It is said that the faces of those eighty men as they rose in a body when Toole tapped on the table, as a signal for grace, was a sight which will never be forgotten.

Huddersfield has determined that its trams shall run on Sundays. This will, no doubt, observes the *Sunday Chronicle*, lead to the growth of immorality and crime in the town, being not merely evil in itself, but the cause of evil in others.

A most absurd prosecution has been instituted by the Darlington Sabbatarians. A woman holding an off-beer licence sold some sweets the other Sunday during the time her house was open. It was legal to sell beer, but illegal to sell sweets. The police summoned her, but the magistrates had sufficient sense to dismiss the case.

The Liverpool Corporation have refused to allow Sunday music in the parks.

A local preacher at Wellington, New Zealand, has had to answer nine charges of theft and eight of forgery. He seems to have annexed table-cloths, books, and umbrellas, and it is said that in the forgery department the signature he most affected was his revered pastor's.

Lady Florence Dixie said that she skipped the word "obey" in the Church marriage service when she recited the words after the man of God at the altar. A good many more women would like to skip it. Some of them feel, "Oh yes, I'll obey him here, but wait till I get him home." And the same spirit obtains in Norway, where the ladies have been fighting for years to get the word "obey" eliminated. At length they have succeeded, at least partially; for the Staatsrath in Christiania has ruled that the use of the word shall henceforth not be obligatory upon the bride, but "facultative"—that is to say, optional. This is hailed as "a glorious victory." It would be a still more glorious victory if the ladies were to cut the Church service altogether.

Now that the drink question is once more a "burning" one, it is worth while noting some of the secondary effects of prohibition. The closing of saloons can be effected by law, if there is force enough behind it; and the open sale of liquor can be stopped. But the surreptitious sale of liquor goes on all the same; for which reason Colonel Ingersoll said that the greatest objection to prohibition is that it doesn't prohibit. Of course, the stuff sold on the sly is dear and bad, and this may be one reason why the statistics of insanity are so high

in the State of Maine. But this is not all. When alcohol is made so difficult to obtain, it is often the case that recourse is had to other sources of excitement. For instance, in the State of Vermont, according to Professor Grinnell, of Burlington, 33,000,000 doses of opium are sold per month in the drug stores, besides what is contained in patent medicines or prescribed by doctors. This amounts to one dose and a half per day to every man and woman in the State over twenty years of age. There could hardly be a more striking illustration of the truth urged by Mr. Herbert Spencer that the indirect results of legislation are often more important than the direct results—and they are nearly always unforeseen.

Susannah Keech, of Bawtree-road, New-cross, went to see a doctor, to whom she said "I want to go home." The medical man, thinking she meant her New-cross home, advised her to do so. On arriving there she prepared to go to that "home" which the soul-doctors are always recommending without patronising. She asked for a Bible, read a psalm, and then swallowed seven tablespoonfuls of laudanum. The result was an inquest and a verdict of "temporary insanity." Moral—don't read a psalm when you feel queer. Read the *Freethinker* or some other entertaining as well as instructive publication.

The preferment of Swindon, Wilts., has been formally declared vacant in consequence of the vicar, the Rev. Newton Ebenezer Howe, having been convicted of a misdemeanor, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labor.

Pastor Stickney Grant, of New York, has been arguing that animals have souls. Very truly he says: "If we ourselves want another life, 'a second volume,' as Browning calls it, for our own fulfilment, then animals need it even more."

More religious charity in good old tolerant Belfast! There was a Roman Catholic combined Corpus Christi procession in that city on Sunday afternoon. Some ten thousand adherents of the biggest Salvation Army on earth, generalised by the old Pope of Rome, assembled at Malachy's College grounds to march through the principal streets. As the procession was proceeding up Donegal-street stones were thrown from side streets and tramcars, amidst the hooting and jeering of a multitude of true-blue Protestants. The processionists, of course, retaliated, and it took a large force of constabulary a long while to quell the disturbance.

Why on earth cannot the Protestants and the Catholics let each other have a day in the streets now and then? No doubt the Protestant looks upon the Corpus Christi business as flat idolatry. But he is not asked to take part in it, and if others like to play the fool he should shake his head and shrug his shoulders and attend to something more sensible. No doubt, on the other hand, the Catholic regards a Protestant demonstration as an impudent defiance of his God. But he is not asked to take part in it either, and he might as well leave the matter in the hands of the Almighty.

Rev. W. Baer, of Nanaim, has had an exception made in his case. He was medically ordered, as a palliative of special trouble due to a serious accident, either to smoke or take opiates. He elected to smoke, and the Methodist Conference at Nelson has decided that he may go on doing it. But every other Methodist minister in Canada is prohibited from smoking on pain of being severely disciplined. Under the present connexial rules in Canada, Methodist ministers must neither smoke, drink intoxicants, dance, nor go to a theatre. By-and-bye they will be warned off lawn tennis and five-o'clock teas.

The object of these prohibitions is to make Methodist ministers painfully good men, and self-conscious examples to all the brethren. That object, of course, may be achieved, but the ethical result cannot be very beautiful. Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* smoked his pipe, and drank his glass of ale, and wielded a cudgel on due occasion. But is there as good a Christian—or, to put it differently, is there as good a man—among the whole lot of Methodist ministers in Canada? Goodness lives not in formal rules, but in the heart. A man may never smoke, never drink, never dance, and never go to a theatre, and yet be selfish, inconsiderate, and inhuman.

Old Dowie, if we may believe an *Express* telegram, has lost his head at last. From the Auditorium platform in Chicago he made the following announcement: "I am Elijah the prophet who appeared first to Elisha and then to John the Baptist. Now, all who believe me, stand!" Three thousand people stood. Perhaps they thought Old Dowie looked the part. He has hair enough for Elijah, anyhow.

There seems a good deal of method, though, in Old Dowie's madness. He soon got on to the real business. "You must pay tithes and offerings," he said, "into the storehouse of God." Old Dowie is the storekeeper.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 16, Freethought Demonstration, Stratford Grove, at 7 p.m.

To Correspondents.

ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., 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.

GLASGOW READER.—We know nothing of the God of the Universe, but it is not our practice to discuss the views of other Freethought editors.

T. CLARK.—Pleased to hear that you have disposed by sale or gift of twenty-four copies of the new *Age of Reason*. We note your satisfaction at the *Freethinker's* being folded. With regard to the other matter, is it not just possible that there is a little prejudice in your own mind? You seem to forget that we are girding every week at the superstition of our own countrymen; also that we laughed at Lord Roberts for talking about God's assistance in the capture of Pretoria. Surely you cannot mean that President Kruger is to be exempted from even occasional ridicule, because you are on his side in the present struggle. For our part, we recognise no exceptions. It is our duty to attack superstition, and we mean to do so at every point of the compass. For the rest, we must candidly say that you have misread our last week's article. We referred to the "wretched and undignified strife in South Africa," and we said that if God could do anything at all "he might well intervene to bring this unhappy struggle to a close, and restore peace on lines of reason and equity." Do you want something better than reason and equity?

W. HEAFORD.—No doubt Battersea Park would be a good place for evening meetings. We quite agree with you that it is better to go where the crowds are than to nurse less useful old stations under difficulties.

EX-ACOLYTE.—When we said that your letter was "well written" we meant that it was certainly not excluded on the ground of want of merit, but for the reason assigned. Perhaps you will find an opportunity of looking in again later on. You need not apologise for "taking up our time." We are always pleased to hear from our readers. Glad to know that you have ordered half-a-dozen copies of the new *Age of Reason*. If you come up to London for one of the Demonstrations, introduce yourself to Mr. Foote and shake hands. Bring one of your sisters by all means. The more ladies at our meetings the better.

TONYBEE WORTHY.—It was not a printer's blunder, nor even an author's blunder. Mr. Ryan put the assertion that "the angles contained in a triangle are together equal to three right angles" into the mouth of the person supposed to have been convicted of one error and to be starting another. It was assumed, of course, that everyone knew that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles.

G. DAVEY.—Received, and under consideration.

W. MYERS.—We treat the birth-story of Jesus as mythical to begin with. Whether there was any human Jesus at all behind the Gospel legends is a question that cannot, from the very nature of the case, be peremptorily answered in the negative. We incline to the opinion, however, that the Jesus of the Gospels is entirely an ideal creation.

GERALD GREY.—Pleased to hear from you again. The verses shall appear.

R. BROWN.—(1) No, your being a member of the N. S. S. does not entitle you to belong to any Branch, except under the Branch conditions. All the Branches make their own rules and terms of membership. (2) Mr. Foote is not ready to hold a debate with any clergyman. He is always ready to debate with a decent representative of Christianity.

DEMOCRATIC ATHEIST.—The N. S. S. secretary could supply you with some Freethought leaflets for distribution. Apply to Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C. She will give you a gratis packet if you draw her attention to this reply.

J. W. IRVING.—Mr. G. J. Holyoake's *Public Speaking and Debate* might help you. We forget the price, but it is not expensive.

J. G. BARTRAM.—See paragraph. We hope we have caught you correctly.

JAMES NEALE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Moss had good meetings in Victoria Park on Sunday.

R. LAWSON.—Thanks. Will notice it in our next.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Portsmouth Evening News—Sun—Blackburn Weekly Telegraph—Boston Investigator—Crescent—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Neues Leben—La Raison—St. Leonards Weekly Mail and Times—Sydney Bulletin—Hong Kong Daily Press.

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.

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

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

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

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

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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

Special.

THERE is inserted in every copy of this week's *Freethinker* a Prospectus of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, and a Form of Application for Shares.

I hope the readers will not lay this Prospectus and Application Form aside, but keep it and give it their serious attention.

There are many reasons why they should support the Freethought Publishing Company, not merely with good wishes, but with something more substantial.

First of all there is the *Freethinker*. No journal can be sustained, and its circulation promoted, without capital. If it were edited by Omniscience, and written by Archangels, with Satan himself as an occasional contributor to give it an extra flavor, it would still fail unless the business side of it were properly managed. And such management is impossible without resources. Advertising, for instance, is indispensable. It is also expensive. It involves an immediate outlay, for which a return has to be awaited, and often for a considerable time. Now the *Freethinker* already pays its way; subject, however, to the condition that those who work for it are inadequately remunerated for their services. Were money spent in advertising it, it would soon do more than pay its way. It would become a reasonably good property. That, of course, means an increase of its circulation; and that, again, means a more extended propaganda of Freethought.

Personally, I am quite sure that it would pay to spend hundreds of pounds within the next twelve months in advertising the *Freethinker*. I believe the money could be got back from the improved sale, with a future profit from the increased regular circulation.

In the next place, it is necessary to overcome the obstacles to the circulation of this journal arising from the bigotry and indifference of newsagents. This cannot be done, however, by merely writing letters and fussing about generally. It can only be done by a certain business organisation, which depends upon the possession of working capital.

Let me take a case in point. There is a big distributing agency, with representatives all over the country, that will not take and supply the *Freethinker* in the ordinary course of trade. But it happens that two of its provincial representatives, in two different towns, take and supply the paper on their own account. One takes about one hundred copies, and the other about sixty. Now just multiply the average of the two—eighty copies—by the scores of towns where the same thing might be done, and see what an enormous difference it would make in our circulation. Indeed, it is safe to say that by this means alone a very handsome dividend might be secured to the Freethought Publishing Company's shareholders. And the indirect gain—the moral gain—would be a vast extension and quickening of Freethought propaganda and organisation.

Let us turn now to the general publishing—that is to say, of books and pamphlets. This business is one that involves a large sinking of capital; the sale of

what is produced extending over a long period, with a proportionate profit to cover the time of investment. The first thing, then, is a large outlay. Few people have an idea of what this means. Take the new *Age of Reason*, for instance. The production of that work has made a very big hole in £200. That fact will furnish the reader with some idea of the capital that is required to carry on a fair business, with a constant supply of publications.

It is in contemplation to publish other Freethought books as soon as possible. A shilling edition of Büchner's *Force and Matter* would be one of the earliest. This would involve a larger outlay than the *Age of Reason*. But the book would be certain to sell widely at that price. One Freethinker has already written to say that he will take £10 worth for distribution if that splendid work is issued at a shilling. Another volume would be a collection of the best Freethought writings of Voltaire—of course in English. Other things also are awaiting publication, including two or three works which I have been engaged upon myself, and which I should like to prepare for the press in the early future.

When the Freethought Publishing Company was started the idea was that the Freethought party should own the *Freethinker* and the publishing business, and find the necessary capital for carrying them on. What one man could not do, and could not be expected to do, financially, could easily be done by a number on the principle of co-operation. In the circumstances, therefore, it seems to me to be the duty—yes, the *duty*—of every Freethinker who can possibly afford it to take one or more shares in this Company.

Most of those who first promised to support the Company have been as good as their word. A few, however, have failed to redeem their promises. One of these was for a considerable amount, and the loss of it has been a serious disadvantage.

I hope my friends all over the country—all over the world, for that matter—will rally to the support of this enterprise. We have got it (so to speak) on its legs; it is able to stand alone, to look around it, and even to move about; and what we now want is just enough further support to make it really effective.

For ten years I am pledged, and bound, to stand by this undertaking. My life is gradually slipping away. I am no longer young, though I feel very far from old. Before that ten years expires I shall be older than Charles Bradlaugh was when he met his death at the hands of the bigots. Is it vain to wish that I could make the utmost of the rest of my life? Is it selfish to ask my friends to enable me to do so? I am not asking for a fortune. Such things do not come the way of Secular leaders. I am only asking that my own work, and that of my colleagues too, shall be made as fruitful as possible to the "good old cause."

Some of those who hold Shares in this Company could easily increase their holding. I beg them to do so. Many others, who have not yet taken Shares, could easily take some—ten, five, or even one. I beg them likewise to do so. It is not difficult to fill in the Application Form for Shares, not difficult to send it to the Secretary, not difficult to forward with it the application money, and not difficult afterwards in most cases to forward the other instalments as they become due. Just a little trouble, my friends, just a little. Remember that I have had greater trouble myself. Without boasting, I may say, when the occasion arises, that I have done something for Freethought. All I ask of you is to do something too. And to do it now. Don't wait. If you do, you may forget. Act at once. Obey the generous impulse. You will never regret it.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THE first of this season's Freethought Demonstrations took place on Sunday afternoon in Finsbury Park. The weather was beautiful, with a pleasant breeze to temper the glorious sunshine, and the meeting was entirely successful. Mr. Wilson's brake served as a platform, and Mr. Cohen, who would have lectured there in the ordinary course, acted as chairman. His introductory speech was well received, and his audience kept growing at the expense of other gatherings in the vicinity. Mr. Charles Watts followed with an effective address, which at its close was warmly applauded. Mr. Foote followed with half-an-hour's speech, during which the crowd grew into splendid proportions. Miss Vance took up the collection, which was slightly in excess of last year's collection in Finsbury Park. She also sold several copies of the *Age of Reason* and a number of copies of the *Freethinker*. Cheers were given as the speakers drove away on the brake.

Mr. Foote had to force himself a good deal on Sunday afternoon, and was hoarse before he concluded. This was the result of the insomnia which has been troubling him for some weeks, and has recently been very trying. There is only one remedy—rest and sea air, and the doctor advises him to take it at once. As soon as this week's *Freethinker* is done with, Mr. Foote will be off to the seaside for a few days. Unfortunately, it can *only* be for a few days.

Another Freethought Demonstration will take place this evening (June 16) at Stratford Grove on behalf of the West Ham Branch. The speakers will be Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen. Local Freethinkers are requested to make this meeting widely known. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock.

London Freethinkers are desired to note that the N. S. S. Annual Excursion takes place on Sunday, July 7. A special train will convey the excursionists to Dorking—one of the loveliest spots in England. A start will be made at a convenient hour, and a general tea is being arranged for at Dorking at 1s. per head. Fuller details will appear next week. Meanwhile we may state that the tickets—2s. each for adults and 1s. each for children under twelve—will be on sale shortly. They will be obtainable at our publishing office and from Branch secretaries at outdoor meetings.

It is the custom of the Newcastle Branch to hold a Freethought Demonstration on the Town Moor on "Race Sunday," which falls on June 23 this year. The services of Mr. H. P. Ward have been secured for the present occasion. He will speak on the Moor in the evening, and at the Quayside in the morning. Time and subjects will be advertised locally. The *Freethinker* and the new *Age of Reason* will be on sale at the meetings.

It is a pity that Charles Bradlaugh's name is associated with what is now a mere social club in North London. First, the Sunday meetings were dropped for smoking concerts, etc., and now the open-air lecturing at Ridley-road is given up. Overtures have been made by old members to the N. S. S. secretary with a view to having the station kept up. Miss Vance is seeing to the matter, and we may be able to report upon it next week.

Mr. W. Heaford is not a giant, but he seems to possess a good deal of vigor. He has been delivering three open-air lectures on Sunday of late to large and appreciative audiences. Having no engagement, however, last Sunday evening, he went into Regent's Park, and, finding no lecture going on, he borrowed a platform, gathered a big meeting around it, and spoke with "acceptance" for over an hour. Mr. Heaford says that regular N. S. S. meetings should be held there. We agree with him, but unfortunately there are not lecturers enough in the field at present to work any more stations.

A leaderette in the *Edinburgh Evening News* is devoted to a certain aspect of the Twentieth Century Edition of the *Age of Reason*. The writer notes the similarities between Paine's conclusions and those of the Higher Criticism as presented in Mr. Foote's careful Annotations. After giving details, the writer winds up as follows:—"For publishing his views about the Bible, Paine was treated by the clergy of his day as an outcast, and his publisher was sent to gaol. For reproducing the views of Paine, the Higher Critics of today are rewarded with chairs in the Churches. The Secularists may well afford to cease their campaign against the Bible. The Bible is receiving its deadliest wounds from its professed defenders. Its worst foes are those of its own household."

There is good reason for circulating the new edition of the *Age of Reason*. Thomas Paine is still misunderstood and misrepresented. The writer of "Our Handbook" in the *Referee* refers to Paine as working with Voltaire to destroy the comforting belief in a future life. As a matter of fact, Paine believed in a future life, and distinctly says so in the

Age of Reason. The "dreadful" part of that work is its attack on Christianity and the Bible.

One of our subscribers in Burma writes: "The *Freethinker* contents-sheet, which I get weekly, is handed at random to various parties. For the first time in the annals of Burma, to the best of my knowledge, posters with 'A Blood Bath' and 'Is the Queen Saved?' were stuck on the wall of a Jew's shop in a busy part of the town. The posters are still there. One with 'Jesus the Raider' was stuck up in another part of the town. In a week's time it was destroyed, probably by idle children. The *Freethinker* is an intellectual weekly treat. It is 'manna for the hungry soul and to the weary rest.' Please note this somewhere, so that others may do something in their turn to cause the *Freethinker* to become a power in the land."

Humanity for June contains the Annual Report (for 1900) of the Humanitarian League. Under the head of "Publications" we note that "A new edition of *The Shadow of the Sword*, by G. W. Foote, has been widely circulated." All reformers should read the League's Annual Report. It is a calmly-written but inspiring record of work and victory. *Humanity* can be obtained at our publishing office. The League's address is 53 Chancery-lane, London, W.C. We should like to add that the Humanitarian League is very fortunate in having such a capable and devoted honorary secretary as Mr. H. S. Salt, and such an active and versatile manager of press-work as Mr. Joseph Collinson.

What are we Here for?

I HAVE two texts for this morning. One is taken from the thirty-seventh verse of the eighteenth chapter of John, and is in these words: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." My other text came to me on a postal card, and reads: "Dear Mr. Pentecost, at last you have struck an interesting subject—What am I here for? For years I have been trying to find out, but am not a bit wiser now than I was ten years ago. I am often lying awake nights trying to answer the question, and, if you can turn on any lights on the subject, would feel under an obligation for ever and ever."

I take this postal card as a text to show you the difference between the two men. One man, Jesus, when brought before Pilate, had no hesitation in telling what he was here for. He knew what he was here for. The brother who sends me the postal card is in just the opposite position. If he is here this morning, he will probably go away in the same ignorance as when he came, because I cannot tell him that; and if he lies awake enough nights, perhaps he will find out for himself. Jesus says that he came to bear witness of the truth. If the brother who does not know what he is here for is able to hear my message this morning, he will hear, and, if he is not able to hear it, he will go away just as he came.

I should judge the writer of the postal card is not a believer in the Christian theology, but is what we call a Liberal, and has thrown overboard the conventional religious ideas which prevail; and, in passing, I wish to say that, as shown by the postal card, that is one of the dangers of casting off old religious beliefs, or of not having positive religious beliefs. It is a danger to which religious people often direct our attention. They say that as soon as a man leaves the Church and comes to disbelieve the teachings of Jesus, that man runs wild and becomes like a ship without a rudder. The logical outcome of materialism is that it is impossible for us to discover what we are here for. Life is an accident; the whole thing is controlled by chance, and there is no purpose or reason for anything; and, as Professor Büchner puts it in his *Force and Matter*, things occur because they have to occur some way, and this is the way they occur. If we accept that theory of life, there is no way for us to know why we are here. There is the danger in Liberalism that all of the purpose and intention go out of life, and, if we are asked, we are unable to say why we were born. I have met many Liberals in that state of mind, and for five years after I left the Church I was in that state of mind myself. I believe that life is hardly worth living unless a man knows what he is here for. Unless he can say, "To this

end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world," I cannot see any reason why he should continue to live, myself. For five years after I left the Church I did continue to live by a kind of impetus, and the physical shrinking from stopping living seemed to have something to do with it. All through that five years there was no relish or joy of life for me—no satisfaction. Nor do I see how there can be any satisfaction in life to a man who does not know why he is here. Our brother will continue to be dissatisfied until he finds out. In proportion as he is in that state of mind he will never be a joy to himself, and never do anything worth doing. I mean to say, if he is doing good work already, he does know why he is here more than he thinks he does. You must have some kind of a conviction corresponding to the belief of the professionally religious people that you are here for a purpose. You must have some sort of a conviction as that in order to have any inspiration in your life.

I am not going to try to direct your attention as to why any person, individually, is here. I will try to answer the question in a general way. Why are we here? What reason is there for human life on this planet? In answering that question from my point of view, we must, of course, remain as we are, entirely unassisted from without. In other words, we cannot take this Bible and find the answer to that question in it. We cannot say that we are here for the same reason as Jesus said he was here. This is not a question that can be answered by any revelation from without. No man ever got an answer to any question by any external revelation. You are never spoken to from the outside. The Bible says, when Moses was led out of Egypt for the purpose of leading the children of Israel into the promised land, that God and Moses talked face to face. As that story is told it is not true. Moses never saw a God in that way, or heard the voice of God in that way. Nothing came to Moses from out-side of himself. It is said when Jesus began his work he was taken off into a desert and had some conversation with a devil and with angels. No such thing ever happened in that way. It could not happen, because there is no Devil. The existence of God is a matter of definition, but as to the existence of a Devil there is no such thing. There is no kind of a Devil, mystical, real, or apparent. It is said when Jesus was baptised there came a voice out of the clouds, saying: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; believe ye in him." That never happened, because God is not in the clouds, and never speaks out of the clouds. If God speaks at all, it is out of the sunshine. It is possible for you to have a conversation with God as much as anybody ever did. There is no such thing as revelation in the way the Christian Church teaches it. No fact was ever revealed to a person in this world from without. All facts known have been found out and discovered inside of men. What we know we have to find out for ourselves. You must answer this question this morning for yourself; I cannot answer it for you. I tell you by inspiration that there is no such thing as a Devil. You can take that from me as if I were a pope, and go out and believe it without fear of contradiction.

My conclusion is, from observation and from thinking over the matter, that we are here for the purpose of being happy, for the purpose of living comfortable and pleasurable lives, for the purpose of finding peace of mind. Now, how do I arrive at that conclusion? I say, by observation, by thinking, and by experience. So far as I am concerned, that is what I am always trying to do—to be comfortable and happy. A splinter in my finger must come out, because it is a disturbing element there and makes me uncomfortable, and I must get rid of it. If I am sitting in a chair, and that position does not suit me, and for any reason I am uncomfortable, I change my position. I will do something to get myself comfortable. If you are sitting in a chair, and look comfortable, I will go and try to get you to change your position, because it makes me uncomfortable to see you appear to be uncomfortable. I always try to adjust myself so as to be comfortable. If I am in pain, I consult a doctor, or try to cure myself by mental or Christian science. I do something to get rid of the pain.

If I find myself in an uncomfortable state of mind, for any reason at all, the first thing I do is to try to get ease

of mind. If I have a conscientious difficulty, I must get that right in some way. That splinter must come out of my mind. I must be at peace all of the time and happy, if I can possibly be. That is what I am always striving for more than anything else. If I see a man carrying a hod of mortar on his shoulder (which always seems to me an uncomfortable thing to do, and makes my shoulder-bone ache to see him do it), I say that man certainly is not trying to make himself happy. I go and tap him on the shoulder, and say: "What do you do that for?" He says: "Well, I have a wife and baby at home, and I am trying to do something for them." So he endures that pain to get some other happiness. As every tree that blooms and every animal in the forests are seeking their happiness, so I say, as nearly as I can see, the reason why I am in this world is for the same reason.

I am perfectly well aware that view is strongly contested by many people. Some very intelligent people continue the use of the word "duty," which is a word that I have eliminated from my dictionary. That idea is, to mental life, just what a ball and chain is to a slave. There are thousands of persons who still say we are here to do our duty, and not to be happy. When I talk with them, and if we can talk peaceably about it, I generally find they go away with the idea still in their minds that the highest meaning of life is that we should do our duty and not seek happiness. I ask such people to consider whether they are not blind to the fact that the only reason why they do what they call their duty is for the purpose of finding pleasure. The next time you are doing your duty, ask yourself if you would not have been more or less miserable had you not done your duty. Ask yourself if, in doing your duty, which is a word of phariseism, you were not seeking your pleasure. If that question is honestly answered, I think you will come round to my position that the only thing we ever do in life is to seek physical and mental happiness.

HUGH O. PENTECOST.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

Priestianity.

Parsons often say: "As sham coins argue the existence of good coins, so sham Christians argue the existence of real Christians."

But they *don't* say: "So sham Mormon prophets argue the existence of real Mormon prophets, and sham 'spirit-rappers' argue the existence of real 'spirit-rappers,'" etc.

THE counterfeit connotes the counterfeited,
And so hypocrisy implies sincerity;
But feeble folk, with fallacies, are cheated
By foolish parsons' ignorant temerity.

Inferring from a bad coin to a good one
Is using "coin," the *genus*, with propriety;
But Christian fraud—an oft misunderstood one—
Is only but a *species* or *variety*.

A gold-gilt dust-bin doesn't argue gold ones,
But golden things in general, not specific ones;
Yet priests say "No!"—the ignorantly bold ones;
And cunning, lying, anti-scientific ones.

Although the aged man implies the youthful,
An aged swindler doesn't argue youthful ones;
And so, although the lying man implies the truthful,
A lying Christian doesn't argue truthful ones.

Opposed abstractions must imply each other;
But concrete cases oft are non-related ones;
A fact the parsons often try to smother—
The cultured rogues, and mentally belated ones.

A Christian humbug shows his own case merely;
His colleagues *may* be true—some, all, or none of
them;

But other data prove to thinkers clearly
That Christians all are humbugs, ev'ry one of them.

With *bad* coins we're, by *good* ones, made acquainted;
But ne'er with *shamming* Christians, by an *honest* one;
We know they're shams, from Bible portraits painted,
From which we know an honest one's a *non est* one.

O question-begging saints! the priest compels you
To see a *counterfeit*, though *none is genuine*;
The priest, O simple sheep! who buys and sells you,
And rigs a mental barbed-wire fence to pen you in!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Book Chat.

Kith and Kin is the title of a dainty little shilling volume of "Poems of Animal Life," selected by Mr. Henry S. Salt, the honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, and published by George Bell and Sons. Mr. Salt explains in the Preface that his task has been a difficult one, as the material he had to choose from was mostly of a very third-rate order; indeed, he says that "the treatment of animals in verse has been almost as bad as their treatment in actual life." The real poetry of animal life, based upon a perception of the kinship of all sentient existence, may be said (so Mr. Salt affirms) to have begun with the end of the eighteenth century; and it is to be noted that the "true poetical pioneers of humaneness to animals," such as Cowper, Burns, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, are "also the great pioneers of human emancipation." There are a considerable number of humane passages in Pope and Thomson, but the "bookish tone" is objected to in these "philosophic poets," and it is inferred that they were "somewhat lacking in real sympathy and feeling." Mr. Salt begins his selections with a piece from Andrew Marvell, but he might have gone back farther, at least to Shakespeare—a mighty name, which should always be introduced if possible, as it sheds a lustre on all around it.

The best things in Mr. Salt's collection are Wordsworth's. This great poet is often flat and sometimes pedantic, both intellectually and morally; but in his moments of inspiration he rises to a sovereign elevation, and at his very best he assumes a unique power and majesty. His love of nature, too, was perfectly sincere, being founded, not on occasional meetings, but on daily intercourse. And there is an ethical soundness and beauty in his most individual work, which grows in charm as the enthusiasm of youth gives place to the more reflective feelings of maturity. How fine is the last verse of "To a Skylark":—

Leave to the Nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

All the *Freethinker* has to do is to take "Heaven" in the sense of the Ideal, and the concluding couplet still remains full of truth and philosophy. How fine, again, are the last lines of "Hart-Leap Well." One lesson is taught by Nature, both in what she shows and what she conceals:—

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

A thousand sermons might be preached on this text, yet the text itself would be grander than the sermons, for it contains them all in embryo; or we may call it an ethical jewel that might be set in a thousand ways, all displaying, but never creating, its lustrous loveliness.

Mr. Salt's instinct led him rightly (if we may say so) to the noble Whitman passage about the superior equanimity and self-containedness of the "lower" animals:—

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;
No one is dissatisfied, no one is demented with the mania of
owning things,
No one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands
of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

There is a strong touch of Whitman's satiric power in that "respectable." Oh the trouble and pains that men and women give themselves—which children and animals never do—to keep up their *respectability*; plaguing themselves with the thought of what others think about them, though they know all the while in their heart of hearts that the said "others" are, as Carlyle observed, mostly fools.

Mr. Salt explains the omission of certain modern poems from his collection as being due to "difficulties of copyright." Surely the firm of Macmillan & Co. would have allowed a quotation from Matthew Arnold's "Geist's Grave" and "Poor Matthias"—a dog and a canary. The former poem is particularly beautiful, and written in the style of which Arnold had the sole patent; for his work had always this quality, that it could not have been written by anyone else. It was in this poem that the author of *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* gave vent to a probably long pent-up sneer at the very essence of orthodox religion:—

Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

Then there is Browning's "Tray." Would not the publishers let Mr. Salt use it? Certainly it ought to be included in this collection. It is the most tremendous, crushing, ay, and burning, blow in the face ever administered to the vivisectors.

The selection from Emerson is "To the Humble Bee"—not one of his best or most characteristic pieces. The profound and perfect "Each and All" would have been far preferable—unless Mr. Salt was alarmed at the reference to Napoleon.

* * *

We close our cursory notice of *Kith and Kin* by congratulating Mr. Salt on the result (as a whole) of his labor of love. He has brought together from fifty-six poets some ninety pages of sometimes great, and always interesting, "poems of animal life," and the publisher has given the little volume a very dainty appearance. Older people might read it with profit, and it would make a most appropriate (and inexpensive) present to the young folk, who are in the formative period of their lives, and who might be touched to tender issues by the winged words of some poet of humanity.

* * *

Another volume of verse—this time original—is *The Mystery of Godliness* by Mr. F. B. Money-Coutts, published by Mr. John Lane. This volume should have been noticed some time ago, but it is better late than never—at least we hope so. The title suggests a dose of orthodoxy. Mr. Money-Coutts, however, is distinctly heretical. He believes in—at any rate, he postulates—the existence of God, though "the search for God must, from the very nature of the case, be eternal." But all religions, he says, contain "the seeds of heresy, by which they are disrupted," and the essential defect of the Christian religion is the false story of the Fall, on which that religion is based. Such is the poet's position as indicated in his "Argument." Yet his positive creed, if we may call it so, is extremely slender. His powers are chiefly exerted in attacking orthodox ideas, and he does this with argument, sarcasm, and denunciation. His verse has vigor and point, his rhythm and rhyme are generally excellent, and he brings a considerable force of poetic expression to the discussion of themes which rather lend themselves to a more prosaic treatment.

* * *

The poet's own idea of "revelation" is that—

God visits us by Intellect,
And speaks to us in Mind alone.

But this idea is held agnostically after all, for the poet answers in the negative the old question in Job, "Can man by searching find out God?"

We cannot reach the perilous place
When God has survey of the land;
We sha'l not ever see his face,
We shall not ever understand.
Who worship the Eternal, yearn
Eternally; and each advance
Is but a coign from which to learn
A larger range of ignorance.
Though Christian covenanters dare
To hope some day a home to find
And an inheritance more fair
Than this poor plot they leave behind,
There is no promise in their bond
That, when they penetrate this show
Of shadows, they shall gain, beyond,
The Land of Nothing More to Know.

Mr. Money-Coutts devotes some quatrains to that ridiculous, though sensational and successful play, *The Sign of the Cross*, and ends by pointing out that the Christians were slain in the name of one creed, and afterwards slew each other in the name of their own creed—which they would do again to-morrow if they dared. Another warm passage deals with the peaceful zeal of Christendom:—

Your armies pass from land to land,
With scientific murder stored,
That Christ and Mammon, hand in hand,
May leave no region unexplored.
Religion marches (so you boast)
With bayonets fixed and naked blade;
But do you think the Holy Ghost
Is Minister of War and Trade?

* * *

We do not pretend that we have quoted the best things from Mr. Money-Coutts's volume. It contains finer things from a poetical point of view. Our object has been to show his position and draw attention to his work. Our readers will conclude that he is fighting on the right side—as a poet should be.

Christianity and Animals.

I MAY here mention another fundamental error of Christianity, an error which cannot be explained away, and the mischievous consequences of which are obvious every day; I mean the unnatural distinction Christianity makes between man and the animal world to which he really belongs. It sets up man as all-important, and looks upon animals as merely things. Brahmanism and Buddhism, on the other hand, true to the facts, recognise in a positive way that man is related generally to the whole of nature, and especially and principally to animal nature; and in their systems man is always represented, by the theory of metempsychosis and otherwise, as closely connected

with the animal world. The important part played by animals all through Buddhism and Brahmanism, compared with the total disregard of them in Judaism and Christianity, puts an end to any question as to which system is nearer perfection, however much we in Europe may have become accustomed to the absurdity of the claim. Christianity contains, in fact, a great and essential imperfection in limiting its precepts to man, and in refusing rights to the entire animal world. As religion fails to protect animals against the rough, unfeeling, and often more than bestial multitude, the duty falls to the police; and as the police are unequal to the task, societies for the protection of animals are now formed all over Europe and America. In the whole of uncircumcised Asia such a procedure would be the most superfluous thing in the world, because animals are there sufficiently protected by religion, which even makes them objects of charity. How such charitable feelings bear fruit may be seen, to take an example, in the great hospital for animals at Surat, whither Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews can send their sick beasts, which, if cured, are very rightly not restored to their owners. In the same way, when a Brahman or a Buddhist has a slice of good luck, a happy issue in any affair, instead of mumbing a *Te Deum*, he goes to the market-place and buys birds and opens their cages at the city gates; a thing which may be frequently seen in Astrachan, where the adherents of every religion meet together: and so on in a hundred similar ways. On the other hand, look at the revolting ruffianism with which our Christian public treats its animals, killing them for no object at all, and laughing over it, or mutilating or torturing them: even its horses, who form its most direct means of livelihood, are strained to the utmost in their old age, and the last strength worked out of their poor bones until they succumb at last under the whip. One might say with truth, Mankind are the devils of the earth, and the animals the souls they torment.—*Schopenhauer*.

The Trinity Sermon.

'Twas a Doctor of Divinity,
Of erudition rare,
Discoursing on the Trinity
With very learned air.
Setting forth the tangled history,
The doctrine and the "Mystery,"
Involved and very twist-ery,
In theologic plan.
But he failed, indeed, so sadly
To show how Three are One.
One in Three fared just as badly
Before his talk was done.
And you thought: "O what confusion!
Nothing reaches a conclusion
In this logic of elusion;
Let him make it clear who can!"
It was all a contradiction
Of terms, with meaning lost,
And you felt it was a fiction
With words perplexion cross't.
And you said: "How can a thinker
Blind his mind with such a blinker,
Or at such a scheme to tinker,
And stupify his head?"
Yet anathema and statement
Fetter men of thought and sense,
And so, without abatement,
They take this doctrine dense.
Let the force of Truth deny it,
Let intelligence defy it,
To arithmetic apply it,
And the dogma, then, is dead!

GERALD GREY.

Correspondence.

THAT BRIBE MONEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am very sorry that your courtesy and the "intellectual hospitality" of the Freethinkers at the Athenæum Hall which encouraged me to offer a series of contributions to your journal have been so grievously misunderstood by some of your readers.

Mr. Alcock's letter and your own note in your present issue call for a few words from me. There is not a syllable of truth in this foolish suggestion of bribe money. I never had a thought of offering money in order to be admitted as an occasional contributor to your columns. I have too much regard for yourself and for other leading Freethinkers to imagine that, even if I were mean enough to think of offering a bribe, you and your friends would stoop to accept it. No; my challenge was an open and honorable one, and it still holds good, for I cannot believe that this foolish and utterly groundless accusation is entertained by any Freethinker who is worthy the name, or who is "worth his salt"!

J. J. B. COLES.

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.): Closed for the summer.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Stanton Coit, "James Russell Lowell's *Biglow Papers*."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Maurice Adams, "The Human Problem."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. Davies, "The Devil."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "Character and Teachings of Christ"; 6.30, R. P. Edwards, "Heathen Chinese."

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "The Natural History Museum and its Bearing on Christianity."

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. Leavis, "Church and Slavery."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The New Age of Reason."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, A. B. Moss, "The Riddle of the Universe."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "I was in Prison."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, C. Cohen, "How Man Made God"; 3.30, C. Cohen, "Immortality"; 7, F. Davies, "Creed and Conduct."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Odor of Sanctity"; 7.15, W. Heaford, "Is Religion Necessary?" June 19, at 8.15, S. E. Easton.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15 and 6.30, J. W. Cox.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, Freethought Demonstration—Addresses by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Watts, and C. Cohen.

VICTORIA PARK: E. B. Rose—3.15, "Old Trinities—and a New One"; 6.15, "The Religion of the Boers."

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11, in the Bull Ring; 3, near Ship Hotel, Camp Hill; 7, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, "The First Man." Every Wednesday in the Bull Ring at 8; Friday at Nechell's Green at 8, Debate with the Rev. P. J. Cocking.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Plato's *Republic*."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or reading by a local gentleman.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 241 High-road, Leyton.—June 16, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., West Ham. 23, m., Clerkenwell; e., Mile End. 30, m., Hyde Park; a., Finsbury Park; e., Edmonton.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—June 16, Birmingham; 23, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 30, Newcastle-on-Tyne. July 7, 14, 21, 28, Birmingham.

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