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Mr. Lang on Tennyson's Religion.

MR. ANDREW LANG contributes the volume on Tennyson to the "Modern English Writers" series, published by Messrs. Blackwood and Sons. It is charmingly written, of course, for Mr. Lang's light and brilliant touch is proverbial, and in this instance he is animated by a genuine enthusiasm. We do not propose, however, to follow him through his criticism of Tennyson, pleasant as the task might be; we can only deal, at least in this article, with his occasional notes on Tennyson's religion. Not that Mr. Lang himself attaches special importance to this topic. "To one age," he says, "Tennyson may seem weakly superstitious; to another needlessly sceptical. After all, what he must live by is, not his opinions, but his poetry."

Whether there was any originality in Tennyson's ideas depends on what is meant by originality.

"Mr. Harrison argues as if, unlike Tennyson, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley and Burns produced 'original ideas fresh from their own spirit, and not derived from contemporary thinkers.' I do not know what original ideas these great poets discovered and promulgated; their ideas seem to have been 'in the air.' These poets 'made them current coins'.....It is not the ideas, it is the expression of the ideas, that marks the poet."

Mr. Harrison was clearly wrong in point of chronology in asserting that *In Memoriam* was "an exquisitely graceful restatement of the theology of the Broad Churchmen of the school of F. D. Maurice and Jowett." That poem was written between 1833 and 1840. Jowett did not publish anything till at least fifteen years later, Ruskin had not published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, Maurice was a little-known clergyman, and Huxley, Darwin, and Tyndall were unheard of outside their own families. Tennyson had "brooded from boyhood on the early theories of evolution" of Lamarck, the elder Darwin, Monboddo, and others. In November, 1844, he wrote to Mr. Moxon to get him the *Vestiges of Creation* which he had seen advertised in the *Examiner*. "It seems to contain many speculations," he said, "with which I have been familiar for years, and on which I have written more than one poem." There is no escape from Mr. Lang's statement that "The poetic and philosophic originality of Tennyson thus faced the popular inferences as to the effect of the doctrine of Evolution upon religious beliefs long before the world was moved in all its deeps by Darwin's *Origin of Species*."

Tennyson seems from the first to have found the sources of religion within man instead of outside him; in this resembling Newman and other distinguished theologians. Even as far back as 1828-1830 at Cambridge he had voted "No" on the question, "Is an intelligible [intelligent?] First Cause deducible from the phenomena of the universe?" This attitude of mind reappears in *In Memoriam*. There was no proof, but trust and hope, and both invincible. The perplexing questions of science were the "spectres of the mind." Tennyson laid them for himself, and in doing so he has doubtless afforded consolation to thousands of well-meaning readers. But it must be observed that Evolution has gone far since Tennyson performed that feat to his own satisfaction. It has tackled internal as well as external problems, and the result is an explanation of moral and religious ideas, in their origin and development, which leaves the assurances of *In Memoriam* far behind. Not for all, however; not for Mr. Lang. He still finds that poem a book of consolation—"even in hours of the

sharpest distress, when its technical beauties and wonderful pictures seem shadowy and unreal, like the yellow sunshine and the woods of that autumn day when a man learned that his friend was dead."

Mr. Lang is not a blind worshipper. He sees flaws in the idol. Tennyson said that some might act like "the greater ape," but he was "born to other things." Upon which Mr. Lang remarks:—

"I am not acquainted with the habits of the greater ape, but it would probably be unwise, and perhaps indecent, to imitate him, even if 'we also are his offspring.' We might as well revert to polyandry and paint, because our Celtic or Pictish ancestors, if we had any, practised the one and wore the other. However, petulances like the verse on the greater ape are rare in *In Memoriam*. To declare that 'I would not stay' in life if science proves us to be 'cunning casts in clay' is beneath the courage of the Stoical philosophy."

Tennyson's religion, after all, if we may be pardoned for saying so, showed that the religious man has always been seeking after himself and finding it in God. "The life after death," he wrote just before his fatal illness, "is the cardinal point of Christianity." He added his belief that "God reveals himself in every individual soul," and his idea of Heaven as "the perpetual ministry of one soul to another." But the cardinal point is the thing. Man wants to live again, and God exists to satisfy him—is the dot, as the satirist said, to complete his "I." If this be not a fact, but a dream, then is the universe but "a suck and a sell," in the expressive if inelegant words of Walt Whitman.

Yet how the artist in Tennyson triumphed over the seeker after consolation. The book he turned to in his last hours was not the Bible, but Shakespeare. He tried to read it when he could not read, and he died clasping it in his hand. But in all Shakespeare nobody ever derives the least comfort from the thought of a future life. At the worst, it is a terror; at the best, a perplexity.

In dealing with Tennyson's dramas Mr. Lang has occasion to refer to the persecutions of "bloody Queen Mary." It was her misfortune, he points out, that she had the power to execute, on a great scale, that faculty of persecution to the death "for which her Presbyterian and other Protestant opponents pined in vain." Cranmer and Latimer were only treated as they had treated others. "All that is forgotten by Protestant opinion," as Mr. Lang says; but it must never be forgotten by the impartial lovers of freedom. Jeremy Taylor himself could not help noticing it. "For it is most true," he said, "and not amiss to observe it, that no man who was under the ferula did ever think it lawful to have opinions forced, or heretics put to death; and yet many men, who themselves have escaped the danger of a pile and a faggot, have changed their opinion just as the case was altered; that is, as themselves were unconcerned in the suffering."

For the rest, while we are grateful to Mr. Lang for his delightful book on a great artist and a noble personality—for Tennyson was both, in spite of all cavil—we thank him most of all for the large toleration which he displays, and which is none the worse for being founded on good temper and a sense of humor. Tennyson's faith, he admits, is no argument for others—at least, it ought not to be. There is no personal authority in the world of thought. No one is entitled to dogmatise. It is the ignorant who are always cocksure. Even with regard to a future life, Mr. Lang quotes the opinion of "the philosophical Australian black," who said, "We shall all know when we are dead." G. W. FOOTE.

God's Hand.

ATHEISM, says many a preacher, is all very well, but wait until God puts his hand on you, and we shall see how it will help you then! The comment is not very flattering to the deity—particularly as we are told that he is our father, and we are, consequently, his children. Children are, as a rule, not very fearful of their parent's hand resting on them, and when they are it says little that is complimentary of their mutual relations. The warning is chiefly interesting in showing how unreal is much of the modern cant about the love of God, and how deeply seated, in connection with religion, is the element of fear. The savage pictures God as an all-powerful tyrant, of cruel disposition and capricious temper, and when the symbol of parenthood is used it is of a parent who governs more by the rod than by wisdom and intelligence.

I am pleased to say that, with the exception of toothache and occasional colds, God has not been pleased to rest his hand upon me—for which I am duly thankful. Probably he thought charity commenced at home, and so devoted his attentions to his own followers; or perhaps I was overlooked in the crowd, and my insignificance was my protection. But quite recently either God altered his policy, or awoke to the fact of my existence, or perhaps I was next on the list for treatment. Anyhow "God's hand" rested on me, and for nearly a week I had an experience that was—to carry out the simile—painfully suggestive of the hereafter. I was seized with an attack of inflammation of the kidneys—not a *very* bad attack, I was told by a sympathetic friend, although it was quite bad enough for me, and I am willing to take all further stages of the ailment on credit.

For nearly a week I hardly knew what it was to rest, and during that time—or part of it—my religious friends will be gratified to learn, my thoughts did, indeed, turn Godwards. True, my reflections were not very flattering to him, or to his followers; but they *did* turn that way, and I distinctly remember having given utterance, during an extra spasm of pain, to the phrase, "Good God!"—with almost unconscious emphasis on the "good." I also remember saying "Great Scott!"—which was, perhaps, an intuition of the family cognomen of the Holy Ghost, whose name is nowhere recorded. I do not think that I called upon the remaining member of the Trinity; but two out of three will be admitted to be a fair average.

Well, I say it again, because it may be encouraging to religious readers of the *Freethinker*—during that week I thought about God. I thought of what an exquisite instrument for the extraction of pain the human organism is, and wondered what amount of respect I could be expected to have for a Deity—assuming his existence—who could expend his energies in torturing a poor mortal like myself? I had never done *him* any particular injury that I was aware of. True, I was a Freethinker, an Atheist, and, in common with others, did not credit the story that he had created an eternal hell to burn men, women, and children in; or that he had written the tissue of absurdities, obscenities, and falsehoods contained in the Bible; or that he had ever come down from heaven and behaved in an ungentlemanly manner to the affianced wife of a Jewish carpenter, and then bolted back again, leaving her to bear the disgrace alone. But this can scarcely be called doing him an injury; it was rather the reverse, and, if there is a God, and there does arrive a day of judgment, he ought to regard the Freethinkers as his best friends, and provide them in cosy quarters and comfortable rations.

But I was down, and God, as a Christian would say, was on top. He pummelled me, and I had to grin and bear it. I was much in the position of one who is down, with another fellow sitting on his chest, and thrashing him until he cries "Enough!" In such a case I cannot say that I have much admiration for the man who is on top; and I had just as little—or less—for the God occupying the same position. It would be poor sport for a man to wantonly inflict pain; it becomes indescribably vile in the case of a Deity. Imagine a God who can inflict—as we are told he does inflict—excruciating agony upon his helpless creatures; who can

elaborate through centuries such a delicate, sensitive thing as the human organism, and then utilise it as an object of torture, to impress one with his greatness! Greatness! Yes, if there is a God, I suppose it shows power; but what kind of a character, of a nature, must he possess? Let the Christian find words to express his feelings were any human being to behave in a similar manner, and he will have a fair notion of an Atheist's feelings on the subject.

But mine, after all, was a simple case. A few days, and it was all over. I was out of pain, and once more pursuing my usual work. But there are other cases—cases of agony long drawn out; men and women, aye, and children, who for months or years hardly know what it is to spend a day free from pain, who would welcome death gladly, but who are possessed of just enough vitality to linger and provide the "Aristophanes of the Universe" with material for experiment or enjoyment. What of these cases? It teaches us to be more careful of our health in future, we are told. Quite so. But then is it not the faultiness or stupidity of the design that creates the necessity for the care? And would it have been better to have had things so that the constant care would have been unnecessary?

Take a parallel case. For years men and women worked in coal-pits under conditions that meant the certain death of a large proportion of their number. Finally, the Government—or rather the common sense of the people expressing itself through the Government—decided that this condition of things should be altered, and measures were passed to that end. "There you are," says someone triumphantly; "if these people had not been killed, these measures would never have been passed, and employers would never have grown careful of their employees' lives." Agreed again; but would it not have been, on all counts, better if employers had, from the outset, taken proper precautions, and thus obviated the necessity for legislation? Or would it not have been better had the getting of coal been unattended by any danger whatever, and thus have done with the necessity for care on the part of anyone? And in what respect does the case differ with God? With unlimited power and infinite wisdom he has created a structure that is constantly getting out of order, and which may be upset by the slightest change. And the reason for our getting upset is that we may know better in future—that is, that we shall be able to dodge the Deity more effectually!

"Well, but would you have a world without pain and without disease?" one may be asked. To which I reply: "Yes, if it could be arranged." "But it can't" is the retort; "pain and pleasure are correlative terms, and if you abolish one you exclude the other." This is so; but only because the world is what it is, and, being what it is, we pay a price for every pleasure we enjoy. We learn something by suffering, and this, again, is the price we pay for our knowledge. But suppose the world were so constructed that knowledge could be obtained without suffering, that we understood what to do without going through pain as a preliminary process; that, in brief, the end were reached at once, and every man and woman realised our highest ideal of what they should be, would not this be a much more admirable arrangement? There can be no doubt as to the reply from anyone who understands the question. And the measure of our desire that such a state of things should be is the exact measure of our disapprobation of the constitution of things, and, consequently, of the conduct or intelligence of God.

But what of sympathy? Were there no suffering there could be no sympathy, and what then? Well, once more, sympathy with suffering is only rendered necessary by suffering, and we could very well dispense with it if the occasion for its expression did not exist. It is surely a strange apology that God plagues one man with a lingering and painful disease in order to develop the sympathetic instincts of someone else. But if this argument is honestly meant, why find fault with those that are the cause of suffering? Why complain of slum landlords, sweaters, and the like? They are clearly helping God at his work, developing the sympathetic instincts of one class of people by inflicting suffering upon another class. If the Christian who uses this apology really believes in it, he ought to

insert in his daily prayers the petition: "God send us plenty of slums, hard times, and much suffering."

But the plea even as it stands must be accepted with great reservation. Suffering does not by any means fulfil the useful function that religious apologists would have us believe. The effect of suffering on the individual himself is not usually to develop, but to degrade. It does not bring out the higher instincts; it gives fresh force to the lower. It is a matter of common observation that continued suffering makes people selfish, and renders them less careful of the claims of others. Thousands who have been bright, buoyant, social in ease, have become morose, despondent, and unsocial under suffering. There is often left a state of depression from which the sufferer never completely recovers.

This is its effect, in only too many cases, on the individual. So far as its effect on others is concerned, it is not true that their sympathy is *created* by the sight of suffering. It is *excited* by it, and even then, if its contemplation is long and unbroken, its influence as an excitant weakens. Why is it that people can exist, and do exist, amid scenes of squalor and misery that strike a new comer with horror? Only because to them squalor and misery have ceased to wear their forbidding aspect. They have become acclimatised to it; its constant presence has dulled their sensibilities; the stye has succeeded in creating the pig at last. It is for this reason that those who work hardest to reduce the volume of distress in our midst are not such as have been reared amongst it. Had they been born and lived in a slum, its misery and distress would have struck them as nothing unusual and nothing anomalous.

But one can hardly expect careful and exact statements from a religious apologist. He has a bad case and must say something somehow, and if that something will not stand even a hasty examination the fault is ultimately due to the ridiculous hypothesis with which he sets out. After all, I question whether any educated person nowadays seriously believes that it is God's hand that is upon them when they are ill. The phrase is there and it is used, but it is meaningless now, as are many other expressions that have come down to us from the ignorant past. Once upon a time such expressions *lived*, but that was a long time ago; all the purpose they serve now is to remind us, like the various rudimentary organs of man, of an earlier and lower stage of human evolution.

C. COHEN.

Religion and Feeling.

ONE of the commonest sayings—it is not an argument—with which the Rationalist is met is that religion is a matter of feeling; it is too deep for argument, too profound for logic. "You cannot reason a man out of religion" is said over and over again. Now, let us make clear one thing at the start. A man who refuses to reason about his beliefs, in the first place betrays a consciousness of their doubtfulness, for no one refuses to defend by argument a belief he feels is true; but in the second place a man who refuses to reason about his beliefs is out of court. He can neither influence anybody else, nor can anybody influence him. The only way in which one mind can move another intellectually is by reasoning—reasoning of one kind or another. And to say a proposition cannot be reasoned about is virtually to say it is a proposition that cannot be understood. Hence every proposition the terms of which are capable of being understood by the mind falls into one of three categories: it is either demonstrably true, it is demonstrably false, or it is of such a nature that our knowledge does not enable us to determine whether it be true or false, and we remain doubtful.

There is an idea, however, in many minds—an idea even sometimes shared by Freethinkers who have not quite mastered the question—that religion or the theological propensity represents some mysterious tendency that the Rationalist has not exactly explained. A few years ago Mr. Benjamin Kidd wrote a large volume—now, alas, forgotten—to elaborate the thesis that religion was some curious phenomenon, with a special

necessary function, which the scientific sociologist overlooked.

Let us examine, then, how far it is possible to sustain such ideas, and let us locate intellectually, as it were, the basis of this religious feeling. Suppose a man makes the statement that three times ten are thirty, he is making a clear statement, which is capable of being tested. If we find it true, the truth becomes part of our consciousness, and colors all our thinking. So, if a man makes the statement that Mars is inhabited, he is making a definite statement, the terms of which we understand. We may endeavor to test its truth, and we may not succeed, and may be obliged to suspend our judgment as to its accuracy or otherwise. But so far the terms are intelligible. Suppose, however, a man now comes along with the statement that four *molops* are equivalent to two *jungs*, we are face to face with something different. We do not know what a *molop* or a *jung* is; we have no notion what these terms stand for; and so, without further explanation, we can absolutely take no intellectual cognisance of the proposition at all. It may be demonstrably true, if we knew the terms; it may be demonstrably false, if we knew the terms; it may be manifestly doubtful, if we knew the terms.

Now, theological propositions, like all propositions, consist of these two classes: those the terms of which are intelligible and those the terms of which are unintelligible—the "molops" and "jungs" order. Of the latter nothing can be said; they are obviously meaningless. If one cannot dispute them, still less can anyone be really influenced by them. It is perfectly true that, in the theological world, men have grown excited over purely meaningless phrases. By dint of repetition, and the strange influence of multitudes, such propositions as that four "molops" are equivalent to two "jungs" have excited immense enthusiasm, so that even masses of men were hypnotised by them. When, for instance, a man tells us that he has "found salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ," or repeats some similar formula, we know—those of us who keep our heads—that he is hypnotised by a phrase he has frequently heard.

This kind of feeling, then, that connects itself with stereotyped, and often inane, formulas is in part a species of insanity; but, in so far as it is in any way rational, it is based on the belief that the meaningless symbols stand for some deep and vital reality. No man, for instance, primarily believes the doctrine of the Trinity; but some men believe they believe it, and they think—though they cannot possibly understand the terms of the doctrine—they think that somehow, and in some way, it represents some fact; or, at least, they believe that profession of belief in it is vital. There is, in other words, at the basis of all feeling that is not merely insane a belief which, right or wrong, is at least capable of being rendered in intellectual terms. The unintelligible can never arouse real feeling. For instance, the belief that, if certain ceremonies were not gone through in life, a man would in some fashion suffer after death—that belief is understandable enough to be reasoned on. In short, a belief capable of arousing feeling is a belief capable of being argued and understood.

At the back, therefore, of all feeling—all real feeling—there lie propositions which, crude or complex, we can grapple with. Back even of unintelligibility there is some thought struggling for expression, and when we get to the clear expression of the thought we can reduce it to rational terms. Of course, the defect—the cardinal defect—of almost all religion is that it represents inaccurate and muddled thinking, and inaccurate and muddled expression. But, in so far as it is possible to get to accurate expression, it is possible to get to argument.

What, then, becomes of the claim that religion is a matter of feeling, as though feeling had not a rational basis? Our feelings are the concomitants of our beliefs and our knowledge, and when one frankly admits a divergence between the two it is a confession of weakness, and it is the business of men to control their feelings and bring them under the discipline of their reason.

But observe the fatuity of the philosophy—if that name can be given to a proposition which is the negation of all philosophy—which would exalt the

feelings over the reason and make one's undisciplined impulse to believe or disbelieve its own justification. If the "feeling" of the Christian in favor of Christianity is valid, equally valid must be the "feeling" of the Mohammedan in favor of Mohammedanism—or, for that matter, the feeling, the sentiment, as distinguished from the intellectual conviction of the Secularist that both Christianity and Mohammedanism are untrue. All these "feelings" in the terms of the case are equally worthy of credit, but of course the Christian will never concede to other people's feeling the sanctity he claims for his own. It is only *his* sentiment that is sacred. And if anyone else plead his feelings against Christianity—as many of us truly might—he will be met by some proposition as to the essential baseness of the human heart. "The fool hath said in his *heart* there is no god"—that is the constant Christian and Theistic taunt. To which the answer is that many fools have said in their hearts, "If I do not believe, I will be damned." But, as the Rationalist case does not rest on the impulses of the heart, we are not interested in what fools on any side may say in their hearts; it is better to rely on what wise men think.

And here, therefore, we come to the final issue. The claim that religious feeling is sacred, or is something radically different from the feeling that grows up round any conviction, is merely part of the fallacy of the whole religious argument; though it must be admitted that there are many Freethinking poets and novelists who seem to think there is some profundity attaching to religious feeling which does not attach to Atheistic feeling, and that the superstition of a Russian peasant represents something more worthy of respect than the reasoned conviction of a Huxley or a Bradlaugh. For who can say that in any real sense of the word there is less "feeling" on the Rationalist side than on that of religion? Had Bradlaugh no fire in him, or Paine or Carlyle, or any of the line of men who have given their lives to the cause of mental freedom? And why should the enthusiasm for humanity be counted lower than the reverence for phantom gods?

No; all this talk about the sanctity of feeling is one more example of religious or human error. There is "feeling" on all sides in politics and religion. There is Tory feeling and Radical feeling and Socialist feeling, and there is Religious feeling and Secularist feeling and Ethical feeling, and all the rest. Strength of feeling—that is, determination and energy of propaganda—cannot, therefore, be a test of truth. The only test that differentiates these feelings is the amount of reason on which they are founded. If a belief cannot bear the test of reason—of clear and dispassionate examination—it stands condemned.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Delusions Concerning Immortality.—III.

WE frequently meet with the assertion that it is unfair to condemn the theory of personal immortality through lack of knowledge as to what is termed the soul, because, it is said, it is really not known what matter is. Upon this point, however, there is this important difference: that, although we do not profess to explain what matter is in its essence, we understand what the term connotes, and we are familiar, more or less, with the properties, powers, and movements of what is known by that term. The same cannot be consistently urged of what is called the soul. It is true nothing is known of the *essence* of matter, for we have no knowledge of essence, or real self, as apart from qualities or properties; but as a substantive existence, by means of its qualities or properties, matter is wherever being is, and we can recognise it. Matter can be seen and felt; in other words, man is conscious of its existence by reason of his perceptions of its properties, but "soul" as an entity none can perceive. Therein lies the difference; the one can be sensibly recognised, the other cannot. Matter has been defined as "that which exists in space." Professor Clifton, of Oxford, says it "is that which occupies space, and is recognised by the senses." Sir William Thomson observes: "The Naturalist may be content to know matter as *that which can be perceived by the senses, or*

as that which can be acted upon or can exert force." (Quoted by Karl Pearson in his *Grammar of Science*, p. 293.)

The latest and most elaborate statement as to the nature and potency of matter is made by Büchner, in his recently-published work, *Last Words of Materialism*. Therein he states:—

"The scientific research that has taught us the illimitable extent of matter has also given us quite a new and profounder knowledge of its properties. We now know that it has chemical, physical, and electro-magnetic qualities which were undreamed of a few decades ago. But how arduous a task it has been to deliver people from the obsession of the antiquated notion of matter, as something inert and dead, in order to perceive this. Light was held to be a stream of radiating particles; now we conceive it as an undulatory movement of that ether to which they refused the name of matter. Heat was regarded as an immaterial (imponderable) principle that could be conveyed from body to body; we now know that it is merely a vibratory motion of the matter that composes them. Electricity was supposed to be a mysterious fluid, pervading matter; we now know that it also is a movement of the finest particles of matter. In a word, the innumerable properties or modes of motion, which were formerly excluded from the idea of matter because they seemed incompatible with it, are now not merely included in that idea, but are quite inseparable from it and essential to our conception. And this applies with the same force to the organic world as to the inorganic.....to the highest phenomena of life, those of mind and consciousness" (p. 3).

Büchner then gives the following reasons to account for the misconceptions that have hitherto so largely obtained as to what matter really is. He says:—

"Misled by the earlier and narrow conception of matter, we have contended long against the assumption that matter could, in certain conditions and combinations, give rise to the phenomena which we call consciousness and mind; nor is the reluctance yet extinct. Nevertheless, in proportion as our conception of matter gains in breadth and depth, that reluctance is disappearing and giving way to a sounder view."

The position here taken by the eminent German scientist is, no doubt, the correct one. Of course, as he states,

"No one will expect to find in a speck of dust the complexity and constructive force of a particle of protoplasm. In like manner, no one expects to discover mental processes in matter which has not entered into certain combinations and assumed a certain form.Who, in the days before music was invented, and having only the simple notion of wood and metal which his experience gave him, could have dreamed of the heavenly melodies that now flood our concert-halls through the combination of these elements?" (pp. 5, 6).

The scientific discoveries of this age have thrown considerable light upon the relation of mind to matter. Physiological psychology is now recognised as the highest and most certain form of mind study. The old methods of investigating mental operations are no longer looked upon as being of much value, and every person now who desires to investigate mind proceeds along the line of what may be termed the somatic basis of thought—the brain and nervous system. In fact, as George Henry Lewes has stated: "Without a nervous system there could be nothing like what we know as feeling." Samuel Laing observes: "So far as science gives any positive knowledge as to the relations of mind to matter, it amounts to this: That all we call mind is indissolubly connected with matter through the grey cells of the brain and other nervous ganglia. This is positive" (*A Modern Zoroastrian*, p. 140). The position, therefore, is this: No nerves, no feeling; no matter, no mind; no brain, no thought; no organisation, no life; and without organic activity consciousness is unknown.

The fallacies existing concerning personal immortality arise to a large extent through confounding nominal with real existences. For instance, theologians assume that life, mind, thought, etc., are entities. Now, these are not things *per se*, but conditions of matter which result from certain combinations of material parts. Life is not a thing any more than death, and thought is no more an entity than is digestion. The discovery of the correlation of force has completely revolutionised our knowledge as to the nature of thought and mental action. Light, heat, electricity, magnetism, etc., are

now known to be forms of force, and so are life and mind. Professor Huxley has shown the fallacy of supposing life to be an entity. Oxygen and hydrogen unite in certain proportions and form water—that is, the water is the outcome of the union of these elements. So, in certain other combinations, an organism is formed, and the result is life. The life did not pre-exist, for it had no existence at all until the organic body produced it, and then it made the appearance simply as a correlated force. The production of mind is caused in a similar way. What occurs here is a correlation of force—that is, one form of force is converted into another, heat into light, electricity into magnetism, and some one or more of them into life and mind. The origin of mind, therefore, is like the origin of heat or electricity—viz, correlation. The force itself thus correlated was of course eternal in some one or more of its forms, but the particular form in which it is manifested is simply the result of correlation. Nothing is called into actual existence but a phenomenon, having no more permanent individual existence than the flash of lightning or the peal of thunder. We kindle a fire and heat is produced, or we light the gas and the room becomes illuminated; but where was the heat or the light before the combustion upon which it depends was brought about? Certainly not in existence in the form in which it is now seen. When the fire goes out the heat ceases, and when the gas is turned off there is no more light. No one thinks of asking what has become of either, and yet people talk of life as being an entity, and they discuss the whereabouts of mind before and after the existence of organic substance, upon which the whole thing depends.

It is said that matter cannot think; but why not? If thinking be beyond the power of matter, which is certainly something, how comes it within the powers of immateriality, which, in plain common sense, is not anything? All those who say matter cannot think assume the question to be proved. We know that men think, we know that men are material; it therefore involves no contradiction to say that matter thinks, until it has been proved that not matter but something else does. It is a recognised fact that each organ of the body has its special function. Now, ample evidence exists to prove that thought depends upon the condition of the brain, and that in proportion to its development so is the manifestation of intelligence. It is as reasonable to allege that the brain thinks as it is to state the well-known fact that the liver secretes the bile. Dr. David Ferrier, in his *Localisation of Cerebral Disease*, says:—

"That the brain is the order of the mind no one doubts, and that, when mental aberrations, of whatever nature, are manifested, the brain is diseased organically or functionally, we take as an axiom. That the brain is also necessary to sensory perception and voluntary motion is also universally admitted; and that the physiological and psychological are but different aspects of the same anatomical substrata is the conclusion to which all modern research tends" (p. 5).

While it is true that partial injury to the brain may not destroy thought, it is equally true that thinking has never been known to go on where the brain has been totally injured. In support of this statement the following scientific authorities may be cited:—

"Many instances are on record in which extensive disease has occurred in *one* hemisphere (of the cerebrum) so as almost entirely to destroy it, without any obvious injury to the mental powers, or any interruption of the influence of the mind upon the body. But there is no case on record of any severe lesion of *both* hemispheres, in which morbid phenomena were not evident during *every* instance where there exists any corresponding lesion or disease on *each* side of the brain, there we are sure to find some express injury or impairment of the mental functions" (Sir H. Holland's *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, p. 184). "There are no cases on record in which the mental faculties have remained undisturbed when the disorganisation has extended to *both* sides of the brain" (Solly on *The Human Brain*, p. 349).

Dr. Maudsley, in his *Physiology of Mind*, p. 126, observes that he has come to the assured conviction that mind does not exist in nature apart from brain.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Madness of William Blake.

"And worst disease of all—
Blasting the long quiet of my breast
With animal heat and dire insanity."

—TENNYSON, *Lucretius*.

BLAKE's portrait, taken in his later years, betokens, in the large, prominent, beaming eye, an original mind. There was once nobility in the fine forehead, and there is still strength in the chin. The other features are those of a gossiping old woman. It is an utterly reckless and abandoned face: the debauch of imagination, pursued for years without restraint, seems, in the case of the physically temperate and chaste Blake, to have had the same effect on his features as is commonly ascribed to a course of sensuality. Unless the portrait is a gross libel, the subject of it verged on, or was the victim of, madness. That this has been disputed by James Thomson is probably well known. Mr. W. B. Yeats, also, in his introduction to *The Poems of Blake*, has, in the opinion of some, made it impossible any longer to stigmatise Blake as a madman. But it must be remembered that Thomson was, in some of his many moods, intensely visionary, and Mr. Yeats is well known as an exponent of a singularly graceful form of modern mysticism.

Now, it is a trait of the mystic temperament to find profundities where none exist, and it is the easiest thing in the world for men of that type to see in the incoherent ravings of a lunatic divine meanings.

For example, Thomson takes Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, and says that "the ideal Virgin Mother might have sung them to her infant; lambs and doves and flowers might comprehend them. They are alone in our language, which they glorify by revealing its unsuspected treasures of heavenly innocence and purity." The following verses Thomson gives to illustrate his contention:—

I have no name,
I am but two days old.

What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee.

Pretty Joy!
Sweet Joy, but two days old
Sweet, I call thee!
Thou dost smile.
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee.

One is loth to quarrel with any literary judgment of Thomson's, as, without doubt, he was a critic of keen ability; but a simple song of this kind is undeserving of such magnificent adulation as Thomson gives it.

The mystic temperament responsible for the exaggerated estimate of the above childish lyric also caused Thomson to see coherency where others can only see evidences of an unbalanced mind.

"Sirius" follows James Thomson in arguing that to "use at times in a sense special to himself words whose commonly-accepted meaning was often the reverse of his own is surely no sign of madness." Anyone, however, familiar with the vagaries of lunacy well knows that, if this is not a certain sign of insanity, it is often a concomitant of it.

Besides, Blake went so much further than this. He imprisoned himself in his imagination, and, at the kindest estimate, became a mystic and system-monger. With him thought and language had no connection with the thing thought and spoken of, and figures of speech were stereotyped into articles of faith. If we could imagine the eccentric movements of a being unencumbered by the weight of the atmosphere, we might get a material notion of the fantastic evolutions performed by what "Sirius" would admiringly call "the mystic workings of Blake's mind," which the thoughtless would mock at, but which to us give "thoughts too deep for tears."

Turning to the article on Blake in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, we find that it makes no reference to the poet's madness. This omission, which clearly shows that the writer would not even hint at anything

derogatory to Blake, emphasizes the importance of the following excerpts from the article:—

"As a mere child he gave evidence of that visionary power, that faculty of seeing the creations of his imagination with such vividness that they were as real to him as objects of sense, which, sedulously cultivated through life, became a distinguishing feature of his genius. Returning from a ramble over the hills round Dulwich, he said he had seen a tree filled with angels, bright wings bespangling every bough like stars; or, again, that he had beheld angelic figures walking amongst some haymakers.....As a boy, he perhaps believed there were supernatural visions. As a man, it must be gathered from his explicit utterances that he understood their true nature as material creations.....His friend, John Varley, would say, 'Draw me Moses.' Blake would answer, 'There he is,' and draw with alacrity, looking up from time to time as if he had a flesh and blood sitter before him, sometimes suddenly leaving off and remarking, 'I can't go on; it is gone, or it has moved; the mouth is gone.'"

The inference the ordinary reader would draw from passages like the above is obvious.

In the article on Blake in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the writer is more definite. He says:—

"There can be no doubt whatever that he was at different periods of his life under the spell of delusions for which there are no outward facts to account, and that much of what he wrote is so far wanting in the quality of sanity as to be without a logical coherence."

The explanation is simple. The madness of Blake did not prevent him from writing, in his saner moments, some beautiful if simple lyrics, any more than the confinement of John Clare for twenty-two years in a lunatic asylum stayed entirely his poetic faculty.

Indeed, there are many cases on record where men confined as lunatics have produced literary work of merit, an interesting example being Christopher Smart's *Hymn to David*, in which not merely do we find high poetic inspiration, but a conformity to the laws of verse. Dr. Forbes Winslow has himself insisted that the possession of artistic ability is no disproof of insanity, and Dr. Cesare Lombroso, in his epoch-making work, *The Man of Genius*, gives a wealth of instances of art amongst the insane, and quotes extraordinary cases of literary, and even mathematical, ability occurring under the influence of insanity.

Not the least interesting feature of the dispute as to Blake's sanity lies in the fact that, while the writings of his latter days (the prophecies) are condemned as incoherent ravings, his art work of the same period constitutes not a little of his title to lasting fame.

The dreamer, who when a boy saw angels in the hayfield, had when a man visions of such things as only madmen see; but his great power as an artist, throwing over the imaginings of a disordered brain the glamor of a perfect technique, rescued them from the fate of his incoherent and incomprehensible "prophecies," which indubitably marked him as a man who, ever on the borderland which divides genius from insanity, finally drifted over into the company of that sad-eyed throng whose world is peopled with shapes that sane minds never saw.

That those shapes were not always angelic Blake's pictures alone suffice to show; and that the seer of them experienced that multitudinous haunted personality, where moves, not one self-directing Ego in serene consciousness, but a loathsome multitude of conflicting egos crowd one over the other for mastery, none has shown us better than Blake himself when he says:—

Like a fiend in a cloud
With howling woe,
After night I do crowd
And with night will go.
I turn my back to the East
Whence comforts have increased,
For light doth seize my brain
With frantic pain.

"O the pity of it!" A most extraordinary genius. His insanity held him grovelling on the level of Joanna Southcote, whilst under happier conditions he might have aspired to the imperial purple of a Shakespeare or the deathless crown of a Michael Angelo.

MIMNERMUS.

Echoes from Everywhere.

"CHRISTIAN" AGNOSTICISM.

THE *Academy* is among the most readable of the literary weeklies, although it *does* occasionally murder its French—notably so in that most indefensible of journalistic barbarisms, the use of *apropos* instead of *à propos*.

But the *Academy* is never pedantically dull like *Literature*, nor spitefully bigoted like the *Saturday Review*. Generally speaking, it represents a younger and more rational mood. For this reason I am sorry to note its needless concessions to the prevailing superstition. Its reviewer writes with spirit and appreciation upon Thomas Hardy's poems; but why does he allude to the unbelief of the author of *Tess* as "a very beautiful, a very *Christian*, type of Agnosticism"? Is it intended as a compliment to Hardy, or as a plum for the Christians? The writer has blundered badly, in either case.

THE SORROWS OF MARIE.

Miss Marie Corelli is not always hobnobbing with Satan, nor communing *tête-à-tête* with the incorporate. She sometimes abases her soaring soul to the level of the merely human, and distresses her dear little head over such trifling matters as mundane decadence.

This lady has just been illuminating the Edinburgh Philosophic Society (whatever that may be) on the subject of "The Vanishing Gift"—*i.e.*, imagination. She is dimly conscious of an outside world which is not the world of villadom, which remains unmoved by the scintillations of her genius. She feels aggrieved by the existence of people whose mental horizon is not bounded by the conceptions of the Brixton *mégère*—who have "other thoughts than the thoughts of the multitude." She observes "signs of feebleness and decay" in "the constant output of atheistical literature." The fact is that Freethinkers have really no time to fool away upon the transcendental absurdities of *la petite Marie*.

HERESY IN THE "HERALD."

The *Christian Herald* observes that "a stony, waterless region of France has evolved a race of animals that do not drink." It is sad for an Atheist to have to teach a Christian journalist his business; but, however true the above statement may be, "I hold it not honest to have it thus set down." It should be tempered to the Christian lamb in this wise: "The existence of non-drinking animals in the waterless region of France is a beautiful instance of God's providential care in adapting the needs of his humblest creatures to surrounding circumstances" (Psalm xlv. 1). That would be properly irrational and orthodox.

Had not the Prophet Baxter been so busily engaged advancing his 1902 "fixtures" to a safer and more remote futurity, he would certainly have noticed the accident, and severely reprimanded the transgressor. As it is, the paragraph stands in his journal like an oasis of sense in a desert of imbecility.

THE CLERGY AND THE WAR.

The savage stupidity of current Jingoism was well exemplified in Canon Knox Little's memorial service at Kidderminster. It is instructive to note that this spirit has found its most enthusiastic supporters among the clerics, and that the mass of avowed Freethinkers has just as consistently opposed it. The Canon does not conceal his approval, not only of the present war, but of war in general. He is responsible for the nonsensical paradox that "without wars nations could not enjoy true peace." He is paid Chaplain to the Forces—but that's a detail.

Militarism and religion thrive upon the same nutriment, live in the same atmosphere. The Canon upholds the morality of war for precisely the same reason that he upholds the morality of belief. He appeals to vulgar prejudice and passion. While these may sometimes operate for good, their general tendency is for evil; just as virtuous actions find their surest basis in correct thinking.

E. R. WOODWARD.

Religious Mania in Germany.

SOME years ago, when the story reached Western Europe of the sect at Tiraspol, in Russia, who buried their relatives alive, an outcry of horror arose. Now we have here, two hours' journey from Berlin, a case which is hardly less astounding. At the village of Datten, near Forst, in the Lausitz, there is a sect calling themselves Brethren of the Lord, who regard the Second Coming of Christ as immediately impending. The chief of the sect is a peasant named Kaschke, who, with his wife, his daughter, one of his sons, and some other persons, altogether numbering about twenty souls, are in the habit of practising fanatical rites. Last week the clock in their house stopped, and this was regarded as a sign that the Last Day was impending. From that time—that is to say, for a week—the peasant, his family, and three other married women fasted. Suddenly, in the evening, a fearful tumult was heard proceeding from the dark parlor. Out of curiosity, a crowd of persons of both sexes hurried in the direction of the house. By the light of a lantern they saw the daughter, the son, and another girl, completely nude, holding each other, and dancing in the village street, in front of the yard gate. They were singing hymns and shouting and leaping with joy. The peasant himself and the four women were dancing about in the house in the same state. The Burgomaster entered the yard with the intention of putting a stop to the orgy; but he was driven off with clubs, and the whole party then started to go through the village as they were. When the indignant villagers energetically protested they replied: "We are flying upwards; we wear trailing robes of clouds and mist." These lunatics now attacked the villagers, and tried to drag them into the farm-yard. "You also must be angels," they cried. Finally the Burgomaster got together a number of men in front of the house, and when the fanatics again attempted to leave they were received with a deluge of icy water which had been held in readiness in buckets.

This religious madness had already claimed one victim. On the place being entered, the peasant's wife was found lying dead on the floor in her chemise. The other inmates of the house lay around her, gazing at the corpse. Everybody in the village was convinced that the unhappy woman had been killed, and the members of her family did not deny it. When the doctor asked her daughter, "What have you done to your good mother?" she answered: "The Devil did it; but mother will soon wake up again. She is smiling already." The son, on being asked why he had killed his mother, referred to a tract in which the following passage occurs: "God is light; thus he has nothing in common with the sinner. God is love; thus he offers sinners atonement, and stretches out his arms to them. God is light; therefore without shedding of blood is no remission." He added: "Mother was possessed with the Devil, and to drive out the Devil blood must flow. Without shedding of blood is no remission. Without remission, no bliss. God called us. Now the Devil has gone from us. We have atoned, and are now going to heaven." The whole party was at last bound, and taken off to the lunatic asylum.

—Daily News.

Acid Drops.

MR. JOSHUA ROWNTREE, of Scarborough, was one of the speakers at a recent meeting at the Friends' Meeting-house, Mercer's-road, Holloway, to consider "if war is a reasonable method of settling national disputes." In the course of his speech he said that "He had never been tempted to feel ashamed that he was a Christian but once, when he was in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and saw Turkish troops march in to keep rival Christians from attacking each other." If Mr. Rowntree felt ashamed only because of the part played by the Turkish soldiers, it was not a very sublime sentiment; but if he felt ashamed because of the conduct of the rival Christians, then there is just the same reason to be ashamed now, for both Britons and Boers are Christians.

Colonel Philips, addressing a Y.M.C.A. meeting at Exeter Hall, told what the newspaper we saw the report in calls "a pathetic story of the war." It was so pathetic, indeed, that it half choked the Colonel himself, who had to "master his emotion" before he could proceed. The story was this: A young officer was brought into a field-hospital mortally wounded. When told that his case was hopeless, he asked, "Where am I going?" Of course, the nurse couldn't tell him, and the poor fellow soon died repeating that question. Now, for our part, we do not see any special pathos in that story. "Where am I going?" is a question asked by all the hundreds of millions of believers in a future life, and no one is able to give them a satisfactory answer. The only people who are not worried by this conundrum are the Freethinkers. Yet, curiously enough, they are the only people who are generally believed to die unhappy.

Jesse Hawkes, writing to the *Daily News* from Maidstone,

asks the belated question, "Is the Cross played out?" This is in relation to the Rev. C. F. Aked's observation that "in the present condition of things few ministers can afford to do right." There must be something very green in anyone who regards such an observation as a novelty. Did not the great Paley say he could not afford to keep a conscience? And is that article more likely to be found among the smaller fry? As Dryden says:

For 'twas their duty, all the learned think,
To espouse his cause by whom they eat and drink.

Monday's Press reports contained two significant items. One relates to Russia, and the other to France. M. Maxime Gorsky, the Russian novelist, is becoming too popular to please the Government. Being ordered to leave St. Petersburg, he arranged to go to Moscow, where the students assembled to give him a demonstration. But he did not arrive by the train as expected. The carriage in which he travelled had been uncoupled and sent on towards the Caucasus. That is the Russian story. The French story is a little different—and really worse. M. Hervé, Professor of History at the Lycée of Sens, has been suspended for eighteen months, which is virtually a dismissal, as the author of certain "unpatriotic" articles in a local Socialist paper. His "unpatriotism" consisted in maintaining that French soldiers were not better than French citizens; that, if anything, they were inferior, in consequence of the unnatural conditions in which they are compelled to live. Now if the reader will put that Russian story and that French story together, he will be able to understand something of the real value of Continental criticism of England. Those who wish to see peace restored in South Africa should not worry their countrymen too much with that aspect of the matter.

Canon Isaac Taylor's estate has been valued at £12,452 5s. 8d. net. This is another illustration of the blessings of poverty. But we do not care to be too satirical in Canon Taylor's case. He provided Freethinkers with a lot of amusement when he fluttered the Christian dovecotes with his explosive articles on Foreign Missions.

Rev. J. Drummond Taylor, minister of Trinity United Free Church, Saltcoats, died suddenly while engaged in a pastoral visitation. There is no moral. There would have been one if he (Mr. Taylor) had been a Secular lecturer.

"Already matter, old and blind, is tottering from its sovereignty, and is only retained in its place by the vehement efforts of its blind supporters." So says our Spiritualist contemporary, the *Two Worlds*. A few pages further on we read of a Spiritualist gathering at which "about sixty sat down to a potato pie supper." Good old matter! There is a sneaking fondness for it even amongst Spiritualists.

A Christian woman who occasionally writes to the *Boston Investigator* office signs herself "The wife of Jesus Christ," and our contemporary says "it must be quite a long time since she met her husband." But why? She may be "safe in the arms of Jesus" occasionally.

Dr. Hedley, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Newport, in his Advent Pastoral, says that "It is wrong to read books and newspapers which tend to excite the passions." Good! But what about the Bible? Stories like those of David and Bathsheba, Judah and Tamar, and Lot and his daughters, are only to be found in one book that the police do not run down. And that book is strangely called the Word of God. We suggest that Bishop Hedley should begin nearer home.

The male medical staff of Macclesfield Infirmary are all on strike. They object to the introduction of a lady doctor. The governors begged them to reconsider the matter, but they remained obstinate. Then the governors, no doubt in a state of distraction, asked Miss Murdoch Clarke to resign, and offered her a year's salary as compensation. The lady, however, stuck to her guns; she said she was fighting the battle of medical women, and that she would not quit her position unless she was dismissed. These doctors are worse than savages. Even savages let women practise medicine, and some of them do very well with simple remedies. Of course they have some "charm" stuff which is beastly enough, but our "scientific" doctors have their "charm" stuffs, too, such as vaccine and various serums.

Mr. Winston Churchill says he has written five books, as many as Moses, though he does not wish to press the rivalry. We should think not. Moses, if he wrote the Pentateuch—of course he didn't—is responsible for some very brutal stories and dirty yarns. It is reassuring to note that young Mr. Winston Churchill doesn't mean to follow old Moses too closely.

What is the matter at Battersea? At the recent Borough Council election in Latchmere Ward to fill the seat vacant by the death of a working-man representative, Mr. W. Matthews, the voting was as follows: Mr. Hall (Moderate), 719; Mr.

Alton (Progressive), 601; Mr. Morris (Socialist), 12. We hope this does not mean that Mr. John Burns's position in Battersea is threatened. He is not an outspoken Freethinker like the late Charles Bradlaugh, but he is a lot better than a psalm-singing, chapel-opening, orthodox Liberal.

A *Daily News* reviewer refers to the New Testament as the work of "men who wrote in Greek which was not their native tongue eighteen hundred years ago." A couple of commas would have made this a better composition. But let that pass. What we want to know is this. How did the *Daily News* reviewer learn who were the authors of (say) the four Gospels? Most competent scholars are of opinion that the authorship of these documents is a hopeless problem. It is easy enough to say that Greek was not the native tongue of the writers, but how is it to be proved? That they wrote in Greek is certain. That they were grossly ignorant of the Jewish language and Jewish laws and customs is equally certain. Will the *Daily News* reviewer explain? We hardly like to think he doesn't know what he is talking about.

"Suicide Recommended by Secularists" is the heading of a letter in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*. The writer is a William J. Lee; he seems to be connected with the Howth Young Men's Christian Association, and he hails appropriately from "The Burrow." This wretched scribbler seems to obtain all his facts and arguments from one miserable publication, edited in the interest of the higher Christian morality by an ex-convict, who was formerly the "anti-infidel" brother in Christ of another high-toned Evangelist who has since been twice imprisoned, first for debauching young girls, and secondly for bigamy. Out of this publication William J. Lee produces his "proof" that Secularists are the champions of suicide. It is a prose note to James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*:—"Though the Garden of thy Life be wholly waste, the sweet flowers withered, the fruit-trees barren, over its wall hang ever the rich dark clusters of the Vine of Death, within easy reach of thy hand, which may pluck of them when it will." Very beautiful! Far too beautiful for the imbecile bigots who cite it; not one of them having read, or being capable of reading, the great pessimistic poem to which it was attached. But it is poetry, though written in prose—not practical advice to the man in the street. And the poet no more committed suicide himself than he recommended suicide to his fellow men. The fact is, there are comparatively few cases of suicide among Secularists; it is Christians for the most part who rush out of this life, as may be seen by a reference to the reports in the newspapers.

William J. Lee perpetrates a first-rate Hibernicism. "The method," he says, "that Secularism proposes to adopt for making the best of the present life is to leap into the grave, and get out of existence altogether." Is there something in the air of Ireland that breeds these "bulls"? Or is this one due to the natural confusion of a shallow Christian trying to play the philosopher?

Typhoid has been raging for some time in Ashington and Hirst, and the Vicar of Woodhorn, in his Parish Magazine, considers it is due to the "goings on" of the inhabitants. He says that the miners make good wages, yet they "give almost nothing to religion." What they most of all want is "true religion," by which the parson seems to mean going to church, for he calls it "an excellent training in punctuality and cleanliness." For our part, we believe the inhabitants would find it an advantage if they had less jaw from the Vicar and better sanitary arrangements.

Emperor William, in his Speech from the Throne in 1888, said it was one of the tasks of the German Empire to open up the Dark Continent to Christianity. Well, we have some curious details to hand of how this interesting work is being carried on. The famous (or infamous) Dr. Peters was dismissed the colonial service in 1897 for hanging a servant suspected of intercourse with his concubine, and, after many other barbarities, executing the concubine herself. German after German has had to be punished since for cruelties in the Cameroons. Herr Witenberg got into trouble for playfully impaling negroes with his ramrod. Another Christian gentleman, from Cologne, had the habit of pouring petroleum over the hands of negroes and setting fire to it. Merciless flogging and "unbridled immorality practised on native women" seem to be the order of the day. The Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* expresses the mild belief that such acts "can only have retarded the progress of Christianity." But why so? History shows that Christianity was often spread and established in that way.

"Mr. George Muller's five large Orphan Homes at Ashley Down, near Bristol, accommodate about 2,000 boys and girls who have lost both parents by death. The cost of maintenance is £60 every day, or about £23,000 per annum, for the supply of which the directors rely solely on God." So runs a paragraph advertisement in a religious paper. Relying solely on God is good—especially when you let everybody

know you are relying on him. Perhaps, if the information were confined to God, the support would be rather slender.

There is a comical picture in Prophet Baxter's *Christian Herald*—though it is not meant to be comical. A Kaffir is on his knees praying, presumably to God, but apparently to a lion, who seems to be discussing whether it is really his dinner-hour or not. We judge from the letterpress that the Kaffir got the benefit of the doubt.

Mrs. Maddocks (we don't know where she resides) testifies through the *Christian Herald* to the efficacy of prayer. She asked the Lord to give her the strength to wash two blankets, and the Lord did so. "Oh," she says, "we have a wonderful God." Certainly. It must indeed be a wonderful God who passes calmly over famine-stricken India and war-devastated South Africa, and swoops down vehemently somewhere in North London to help Mrs. Maddocks in wrestling with a pair of dirty blankets.

Mr. Bennet Burleigh says that when the Black Watch left Ladybrand for another district the Boer lasses ran after them wringing their hands, and saying "Good-bye, Sandy," "Come back, David," "Think of me, Tom." It was as the departure of a regiment of their own people to the wars. Yes, nature has her own cunning way of ending quarrels, if only the professional mischief-makers would give her a chance. Do what they may, she always get the better of them in the long run.

According to the Bishop of Zululand—at least, according to the *Outlook*—the war is likely to cause a revolution in the religious ideas of the Boers. "The whole village," he writes, "was abandoned; at the last minute, when all was ready, the young men fired their rifles at the cross upon their church, in token of the bitter thought that God had forsaken them. Bred up in the strictest sect of Calvinism, the Boers have, hundreds of them, been filled with the deepest conviction that the Almighty was on their side, and that they were therefore bound to win. The deeper their convictions and the firmer their faith, so much the more complete must needs be the wreck of their belief when they recognise their defeat." If the war makes these brave fellows Freethinkers, it will have done some good, however accidentally.

An elderly cabdriver asked advice of Mr. Mead, the Thames Police Court magistrate. Dr. Thomas, he said, the Medical Officer of Health for Stepney, ordered him to be taken out of his warm bed and removed to a small-pox shelter. He was detained there four days, when it was ascertained that there was no trace of small-pox about him, and he was sent back. On reaching home he found that everything, even his clothing, had been cleared out. Even the cab which he had been in the habit of driving had been taken from his employer's yard, and had not since been returned. In these circumstances cabby wanted to know what he was to do, and where his remedy came in. The magistrate's answer was rather peculiar. He said that Dr. Thomas had, no doubt, some good reason for acting as he did, and even if he was mistaken he was acting for the public good. "If you had happened to have small-pox," Mr. Mead added, "it would have been for your good and the good of the public that you should be removed; so you must not mind being sacrificed for the public good." On the same theory an innocent man might be hung, as it would have been a good thing to remove him if he had been guilty of murder, and it was all for the public good. Mr. Mead's advice is easier given than taken. Those who are to be sacrificed are naturally not as cheerful as those who are to profit by the transaction. On the whole, we fancy we see here an outcome of the Christian idea of vicarious salvation.

A man was taken ill with appendicitis not long ago in the parish of a certain prominent Presbyterian minister of Brooklyn. The patient desired the services of a minister of the gospel, but asked his brother to summon an Episcopalian from another district, saying there was nothing in the Presbyterian prayer-book applicable to his case. The Episcopalian minister remonstrated against intruding upon another's field, but was finally persuaded to attend the bedside of the sick man. The latter explained that he was very ill with appendicitis, and did not think the Presbyterian prayer-book contained anything that would console him. "Why, yes it does," replied the Episcopalian; "you'll find that in the appendix."

An astute clergyman in Camden, N. J., has given orders that the evening services shall hereafter be held with the church darkened, so as to prevent the women from losing their interest in the devotions by the contemplation of each other's new hats and clothes. The scheme may prove quite practical for accomplishing this purpose, but the minister does not seem to have heard of the saying, "Im Dunkeln ist gut munkeln" (Darkness facilitates flirtation). There are other things than the observation of hats that distract the mind from devotions, and many of these other things would be much more encouraged than hindered by darkness.—*Der Freidenker* (Milwaukee).

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 15, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: 11, "Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy"; 7, "Good without God and Happiness without Heaven."

December 22 and 29, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 15, Glasgow; 22, North Camberwell.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 15, Athenæum Hall, London.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for cuttings.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—"Sathanus" was the Devil, and "champing" meant chewing.

J. ELLIS.—This being Mr. Foote's first visit to Liverpool since the recent trouble, there will doubtless be a good rally of the local "saints."

D. KERR.—Thanks for your efforts to promote the circulation of this journal. We did not find all the cuttings useful, as you say; sometimes a matter may be locally interesting that is not so generally; and this applies to England just as well as to Ireland. Occasionally, too, we do not understand the details fully, as persons do who are familiar with them.

R. TRELEASE.—See "Acid Drops."

W. SANDERS.—Thanks; also for cuttings. See "Acid Drops." We have not forgotten our promise to write an article on the Catholic Church and Assassination.

MR. FOOTE has himself been confined to the house with a cold and bad throat since Sunday, though he is rather better now (Tuesday evening), and will doubtless be all right for his Liverpool lectures. Mr. Francis Neale, who has been assisting him on the *Freethinker*, is unfortunately still incapacitated. In the circumstances, therefore, the reader is confidently asked to overlook any shortcomings in this week's issue of the paper.

G. W. B.—The reverend gentleman is not to our knowledge related to the editor of this journal. Pleased to hear you like Mr. Ball's latest articles. He is a real thinker.

FREDERICK RYAN sends us a reply to the letter of F. H. Watts on "The Passing of Swinburne." It arrives too late for insertion this week, but will appear in our next.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your careful article on "The Growth of Roman Catholicism."

E. JENKINSON.—Received and under consideration.

J. C. BURROWS.—We note your wish that the East London Branch members would attend the Sunday evening lectures better. Perhaps they will note it too.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Glad to hear Mr. Watts had good meetings and a hearty reception at Gateshead on Sunday. Sorry to hear, though, that your parcel of *Freethinkers* did not arrive till Monday. We have desired Miss Vance to inquire into the matter and write you.

INQUIRER (Swansea).—Look for answer in our next.

ANDREW BEADLE.—Too late for this week; will appear in our next.

E. S. R.—Perhaps it would be a good idea, as you suggest, to publish a thoroughly cheap edition of *Bible Romances* and *Bible Heroes*, particularly the former, say at a shilling. But this would involve a very considerable outlay, and could hardly be undertaken without some special assistance. Unfortunately, the Freethought Publishing Company, partly owing to one large defection, has less available working capital than it should have. It could easily publish a number of popular Freethought works at popular prices if Freethinkers would only support it more liberally by taking up Shares.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Huddersfield Examiner—Jewish World—Secular Thought—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Boston Investigator—Zoophilist—West Nottinghamshire Observer.

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.

Sugar Plums.

THERE was another capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote spoke under the disadvantage of a nasty cold, but his lecture on "The Beautiful Land Above" kept the meeting thoroughly alive from first to last. Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Dec. 15) at Liverpool. The Branch wanted him to lecture on Monday evening at Birkenhead, but he has to be in London then in consequence of the unusual pressure of his duties on the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Watts delivers three lectures in the Secular Hall, Glasgow, to-day (Dec. 15), and will doubtless have good audiences. We believe it is his first visit during the present winter.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Dec. 15). His subject will be "Christ, Christians, and Christmas."

Mr. W. Heaford visits S. Wales to-day (December 15th) and delivers three lectures in the Town Hall, Porth. We hope the local "saints" will provide him with three good meetings.

Mr. Foote has been invited to the Complimentary Dinner to be given to Mr. George Jacob Holyoake at the National Liberal Club on Saturday evening, December 13. Unfortunately he will be unable to attend in consequence of his engagement at Liverpool. "Unfortunately" in this case is not a merely formal expression.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, has been fixed for Monday evening, January 13, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside, and other leading Freethinkers will be present. The tickets are four shillings each, as usual, and can be obtained of the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.

For a week before last Christmas the London *Sun* was edited by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker. For the same week this year it is to be edited by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake.

We beg to call attention once more to the *Secular Almanack* for 1902. All profit accruing from the sale of this publication goes to the National Secular Society. The editor and all the contributors have given their work gratuitously. That is no reason, of course, why anyone should buy what he does not want. But the *Almanack* is intrinsically worth more than the threepence it costs. We cannot say anything about the editor's article, but all the others are good reading; and the more formal part of the contents must be useful in the course of the year to a large number of Freethinkers.

We have often said that we should like to see the first issue of the twentieth century edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* sold out by Christmas. Ten thousand copies were printed, and we are happy to state that only a few hundred are left in stock. A second issue will have to be got ready in the new year.

A very wonderful shilling's worth is Murray's popular edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. It beats the record up to date. Copies of this epoch-marking work can be bought at the Freethought Publishing Company's office. The price is one shilling net.

The *Leicester Reasoner* for December contains two interesting features: (1) a paper by Mr. Gould with two letters, never before printed, by Huxley on Agnosticism; and (2) a graphic account by Mr. Sydney A. Gimson of his recent visit to the Failsforth Secular Sunday School.

It is a pity, of course, to see discord amongst some of the foremost champions of Dreyfus. This does not imply, however, any real weakening of the opposition to the Church-and-Army reaction in France. Nor does it imply any sort of doubt as to the innocence of Dreyfus. Quite the contrary. "What is important to know," says the Paris correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette*, "is that M. Labori is always convinced of the innocence of his old client, and that since the trial at Rennes new facts have been discovered which will permit, it appears, of the definite proclamation some day of the innocence of the unfortunate Captain."

Mr. Francis Neale's satirical *Freethinker* article, "The Witness-Box," has found its way into the pages of the *Torch of Reason*, a Freethought journal published at Silverton, in far-off Oregon.

Freethought literature will be obtainable in future at South Shields (owing to the illness of Mrs. Lamb) from the secretary, Mr. E. Chapman, 109 Bath-street. Local Freethinkers will please note.

Free Will and Necessity.—III.

WHEN affirming "free will" ordinary people usually mean (1) that we have the power of choice, or of weighing alternatives of action and deciding which we will adopt; (2) that the will is moveable or influenceable by praise and blame and other forms of reward and punishment, and by other appeals to the emotions; (3) that we have powers of mind capable of resisting or overriding or controlling external circumstances; (4) that we have a wholesome sense of freedom and power, and that the feeling of freedom in the exercise of our power of volition is far from being an absolute or unmitigated illusion; (5) that we do as we choose, and we choose as we like, and we call this liberty, since it gives us an agreeable and useful sense of freedom of choice and action; (6) by free will we often mean volition uninfluenced by external force or terrorism, as when we speak of "a free-will offering," or when we say that we do a thing "of our own free will."* Meanings like those just given being rational and acceptable, I think we ought not to be in a hurry to deny "free will," although the popular conception of the freedom of the will also includes some amount of belief in uncaused volition—*i.e.*, in volition which somehow originates or determines itself, and is not due to any fixed relation between cause and effect.

I point out further (what I have said before) that, if there is no free will, nothing is free. If the will cannot be free in any reasonable sense, then thought cannot be free in any reasonable sense. If there is no such thing as free will, there can be no such thing as free thought—which would be an awkward position for a *Freethinker* to take up.

If, moreover, the Necessitarian is going to clear away redundancy or superfluity of assumption, I am not sure that he ought not to begin with his own views. Nature, so far as I can see, is wholly in the Indicative mood. The rest is human imagining. "Must," as well as "can" and "may" and "if," and many allied words and phrases implying either necessity or liberty, merely represent ideas superadded by man, and used, like symbols in algebra, as means of stating and working out problems of conduct or action. If I say that an event *must* occur, I merely emphasize the statement that the event *will* occur, and I mentally depict the emphatic certainty by superadding the idea of compulsion or being bound. This is often convenient or acceptable; but if I wish to be strictly accurate, I do not know that certainty of result really entitles me to assert the existence of overpowering compulsion or constraining necessity. Nature *does*, or *acts*—all the particles and compounds in the universe incessantly display their particular activities or powers or qualities—and that is all, so far as I can see. If there is no spontaneous or self-acting freedom in all this, there may equally be no compelling necessity. *Both* to me represent ways of looking at things. The one is the pleasant way of regarding actions, or the volitions that cause or accompany them; the other is the harsh or unpleasant mode of depicting them. Whether chemical atoms are "free" to unite in accordance with the relative strength of their affinities or attractions for each other, or whether they are *forced* to unite by or in accordance with those chemical affinities, is not a matter over which I should care to quarrel. Neither would I waste my time in disputing as to whether a donkey is *free* to follow the bunch of carrots and shun the whip, or whether his likes and dislikes *oblige* him to seek pleasure and avoid pain. I accept *either* way of representing or coloring the fact; and in each case as it arose I would use whichever view or phraseology best suited my purpose. Similarly I feel at liberty to speak of human volition and human action in either way as proved most

* This sense of spontaneous or unrestrained choice is the first meaning of "free will" given in Murray's new dictionary. The second meaning is "the power of directing our own actions without constraint by necessity or fate." This latter meaning hinges upon the "constraint"; and the constraint depends upon the view we take of the matter. To obey attractions and follow pleasures is, in our eyes, liberty. Only unpleasant influences are regarded as constraint. Choosing a lesser evil to escape a greater is, however, as much entitled to be regarded as liberty of choice as preferring the greater pleasure. On this view of the matter the will must always be free, and necessity ensures liberty.

convenient, just as I can indifferently and without any real inconsistency speak of a drunkard as a "free" drinker and as a "slave" of the beer-pot, and of a libertine or "free" liver as a "slave of his passions," and of elementary education as being at once "free and compulsory."

The belief in fate, destiny, predestination, universal inevitability, fatalism, and so forth, often assumes phases quite as objectionable as the belief in uncaused volition. The word "fate" is derived from *fatum*, spoken or predicted. Defined as "that destiny which foredooms everything and which there is no evading," *fate* is obviously an assumption of a more or less superstitious or occult character, and more or less expressive of a dark pessimistic view of things, in which a feeling of helplessness or despair predominates. When "destiny," in its turn, is defined as "the immutable power by which events are so ordered that they cannot possibly happen otherwise," we are asked to assume the existence of a purely imaginary "power," approximating in some respects to the God of the Christian hypothesis. Even when defined as "pre-appointed lot," such terms as "destiny" or "fate" are vitiated by the animistic and anthropomorphic assumption of a pre-appointing agency of some kind. If this occult semi-personalising kind of tendency be avoided, and destiny or fate be defined simply as "inevitable lot," the conception still ignores the practical uncertainties of life, which are quite as conspicuous as the predictable inevitabilities. If everything happens by natural causation, it seems, indeed, to follow that everything is certain or inevitable, and would be predictable if we possessed infinite—*i.e.*, utterly impossible—knowledge and intelligence. But the interactions of atoms and minds and things in general are so inconceivably and untraceably complicated, and, practically speaking, so uncertain or unascertainable in minute details which again determine greater and sometimes totally unexpected results, that the assumption that all the actions and events of our lives were immutably fixed beforehand in every detail appears to me as unpractical and as fancifully far-fetched as the theoretically demonstrable fact that we move the whole earth if we jump, and shake the whole universe to its centre if we drop a pin. For my own part, I confess that I do not readily adopt the idea that it was certain, before the formation of the solar system, that at an exact moment a certain pope would be choked by a particular fly, that the Fire of London would begin at Pie Lane and end at Pudding Corner, that Frederick the Great would swallow a shoe-buckle during his childhood, and so forth. Let us suppose, however, that we firmly believe that the fate of every hair of our head and the exact history of every atom in the universe were immutably fixed from all eternity and through all eternity. Such a belief or fact would not deprive us of the emotions which are the stimulus to moral action, and it need not affect our conduct for the worse if we take a sensible view of the matter. The event is unknown to us beforehand, except in the general sense in which future results can be foreseen or calculated by us; the future presents itself to us in a conditional or alternative aspect; and the inevitability or certainty is that, on the whole, good work and right conduct will bring their natural rewards in the shape of success and happiness, and that laziness and vice or fatalistic indifference and self-indulgence will produce their natural punishments. If it be inevitable that some indolent or credulous or otherwise foolish persons will allow themselves to fall victims to fatalistic folly, and that more favored dispositions and ideas will, as a rule, survive and flourish under Natural Selection, why should we be so foolish as to let the idea of "inevitability" stupefy our intellect and paralyse our energies? Of the different ways of looking at things, why should we adopt the least servicable and the most mischievous?

W. P. BALL.

"Who made you?" asked the Sunday-school teacher, addressing the little boy from the slums of Boston.

"I dunno," answered the boy, as he scratched the shin of his right leg with his left heel.

"Well, God made you," said the teacher.

"That so?" replied the boy. Then he added: "I guess I kinder heard of that before; but I'm like my old man—I never was good at rememberin' names."

Darwin and Religion.—VI.

ORIGIN OF MAN.

DARWIN'S masterpiece, in the opinion of scientists, is the *Origin of Species*. But the *Descent of Man* is more important to the general public. As applied to other forms of life, Evolution is a profoundly interesting theory; as applied to man, it revolutionises philosophy, religion, and morals.

Tracing the development of animal organisms from the ascidian, Darwin passes along the line of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, marsupials, mammals, and finally to the simians. "The Simiadae then branched off," he says, "into two great stems, the New World and the Old World monkeys; and from the latter, at a remote period, Man, the wonder and glory of the Universe, proceeded."*

Notwithstanding that some specimens of the "wonder and glory of the universe" cannot count above the number of the fingers of one hand, while some of them live in a shocking state of bestiality, Darwin's deliverance on the origin of man was greeted with a storm of execration. "Fancy," it was exclaimed—"fancy recognising the monkey as our first cousin, and the lower animals as our distant relations! Pshaw!" The protesters forgot that there is no harm in "coming from monkeys" if you have come far enough. Some of them, perhaps, had a shrewd suspicion that they had not *not* come far enough, and, like *parvenus*, they were ashamed to own their poor relations.

Anticipating the distastefulness of his conclusions, Darwin pointed out that, at any rate, we were descended from barbarians; and why, he inquired, should we shrink from owning a still lower relationship?

"He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions."†

Thirty years have passed since then, and Darwin's views have triumphed. The clergy still "hum" and "ha" and shake their heads, but the scientific world has accepted Darwinism with practical unanimity. Even Dr. Wallace, who at first hesitated, is now convinced. "I fully accept Mr. Darwin's conclusions," he says, "as to the essential identity of man's bodily structure with that of the higher mammalia, and his descent from some ancestral form common to man and the anthropoid apes. The evidence of such descent appears to me to be overwhelming and conclusive."‡

Now if Darwin's theory of the origin of man is accepted, we may bid good-bye to Christianity at once. But that is not all. The continuity of development implies a common nature, from the lowest form of life to the highest. There is no break from the ascidian to man, just as there is no break from the ovum to the child; and neither in the history of the race nor in the history of the individual is there any point at which natural causes cease to be adequate, and supernatural causes are necessary to account for the phenomena. The tendency of Darwinism, says Dr. Wallace, is to "the conclusion that man's entire nature and all his faculties, whether moral, intellectual, or spiritual, have been derived from their rudiments in the lower animals, in the same manner and by the action of the same general laws as his physical structure has been derived."§

Dr. Wallace sees that this is sheer materialism, and casts about for something to support his spiritualistic philosophy. He assumes three stages at which "the spirit world" intervened. First,

when life appeared; second, when consciousness began; third, when man became possessed of "a number of his most characteristic and noblest faculties." All this is very ingenious, but Dr. Wallace forgets two things: first, that the "stages" he refers to are purely arbitrary, each point being approached and receded from by insensible gradations; and, second, that his "spirit world" is not a *vera causa*. It is, indeed, a pure assumption; unlike such a cause as Natural Selection, which is seen to operate, and which Darwin only extended over the whole range of organic existence.

With respect to his third "stage," Dr. Wallace contends that Natural Selection does not account for the mathematical, musical, and artistic faculties. Were this true, they might still be regarded, in Weismann's phrase, as "a bye-product" of the human mind, which is so highly developed in all directions. But its truth is rather assumed than proved. Taking the mathematical faculty, for instance, Dr. Wallace makes the most of its recent developments, and the least of its early manifestations; which is a fallacy of exaggeration or false emphasis. He also under-rates the mathematical faculty displayed even in the rudest warfare. There is a certain calculation of number and space in every instance. It is smaller in the savage chief than in Napoleon, but the difference is in degree and not in kind; and as the human race has always lived in a more or less militant state, the mathematical faculty *would* give its possessors an advantage in the struggle for existence; while, in more modern times, and in a state of complex civilisation, its possessors would profit by what may be called Social Selection.

Dr. Wallace has discovered a mare's nest. He may rely upon it that the basis of beauty is utility; in the mind of man as well as in architecture, or the plumage of birds, or the coloration of flowers. And we may well ask him these pertinent questions: first, why did "the spirit world" plant the mathematical, musical, and artistic faculties in man so ineffectually that, even now, they are decidedly developed in less than one per cent. of the population; and, second, why are we to suppose a divine origin for those faculties when the moral faculties, which are quite as imperial, may be found in many species of lower animals?

ANIMISM.

Dr. Tylor is not a biologist, but he is one of the greatest evolutionists of our age. His work on *Primitive Culture** is a monument of genius and research. Employing the Darwinian method, he has traced the origin and development of the belief in the existence of soul or spirit, from the mistaken interpretation of the phenomena of dreams among savages, who afford us the nearest analogue of primitive man, up to the most elaborate cultus of Brahmanism, Buddhism, or Christianity. And as Animism is the basis of all religion, two conclusions are forced upon us; first, that the supernatural, in being traced back to its primal germ of error, is not only explained, but exploded; and, second, that religion is a direct legacy from our savage progenitors. Religious progress consists in mitigating the intellectual and moral crudities of primitive Animism; and religion itself, therefore, is like a soap-bubble, ever becoming more and more attenuated, until at length it disappears.

Darwin had written the *Descent of Man* before reading the great work of Dr. Tylor, and his letter to the author of the real Natural History of Religion is worth extracting. It is dated September 24, 1871:—

"I hope you will allow me to have the pleasure of telling you how greatly I have been interested by your *Primitive Culture* now that I have finished it. It seems to me a most profound work, which will be certain to have permanent value, and to be referred to for years to come. It is wonderful how you trace Animism from the lower races up to the religious belief of the highest races. It will make me for the future look at religion—a belief in the soul, etc.—from a new point of view."

"A new point of view" is a pregnant phrase in regard to a subject of such importance. What can it mean, except that Darwin saw at last that religion

* *Descent of Man*, p. 165.† *Ibid.*, p. 619.‡ *Darwinism*, p. 461.§ *Ibid.*, p. 461.* *Primitive Culture*, by Edward B. Tylor, LL.D.; 2 vols.

began with the belief in soul, and that the belief in soul originated in the blunder of primitive men as to the "duality" of their nature?

Darwin has a very interesting footnote on this subject in his *Descent of Man*. After referring to Tylor and Lubbock, he continues:—

"Mr. Herbert Spencer accounts for the earliest forms of religious belief throughout the world by man being led, through dreams, shadows, and other causes, to look at himself as a double essence, corporeal and spiritual. As the spiritual being is supposed to exist after death, and to be powerful, it is propitiated by various gifts and ceremonies, and its aid invoked. He then further shows that names or nicknames given, from some animal or other object, to the early progenitors or founders of a tribe, are supposed after a long interval to represent the real progenitor of the tribe; and such animal or object is then naturally believed still to exist as a spirit, is held sacred, and worshipped as a god. Nevertheless I cannot but suspect that there is a still earlier and ruder stage, when anything which manifests power or movement is thought to be endowed with some form of life, and with mental faculties analogous to our own."*

This is tracing religion to the primitive source assigned to it by David Hume—"the universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious."† In other words, Darwin begins a stage lower than Animism, in the confusion of subjective and objective such as we see in a very young child; although, of course, the worship of gods could not have obtained in that stage, since man is incapable of ascribing to nature any qualities but those he is conscious of possessing, and it is, therefore, impossible for him to people the external world with spirits until he has formed the notion of a spirit within himself.

Darwin was not attracted by that experiential Animism which has such a fascination for Dr. Wallace. In 1870 he attended a *séance* at the house of his brother Erasmus in Chelsea, under the auspices of a well-known medium. His account of the performance is not very flattering to Spiritualism:—

"We had great fun one afternoon; for George hired a medium who made the chairs, a flute, a bell, and candlestick, and fiery points jump about in my brother's dining-room, in a manner that astounded everyone, and took away all their breaths. It was in the dark, but George and Hensleigh Wedgwood held the medium's hands and feet on both sides all the time. I found it so hot and tiring that I went away before all these astounding miracles, or jugglery, took place. How the man could possibly do what was done passes my understanding."‡

The more Darwin thought over what he saw the more convinced he was that it was "all imposture." "The Lord have mercy on us all," he exclaimed, "if we have to believe in such rubbish."

Darwin has not left us any emphatic utterance as to his own belief about soul. "What Darwin thought," says Mr. Grant Allen, "I only suspect; but if we make the plain and obvious inference from all the facts and tendencies of his theories we shall be constrained to admit that modern biology lends little sanction to the popular notion of a life after death."§

Writing briefly to an importunate German student, in 1879, Darwin said: "As for a future life, every man must judge for himself between conflicting vague probabilities."¶ This reminds one of Hamlet's "shadow of a shade." First, you have no certainty, nor even a probability, but several probabilities; these are vague to begin with, and, alas! they conflict with each other. Surely such language could only come from a practical unbeliever.

G. W. FOOTE.

Mabel—"What do you think of the Rev. Dr. Leach's idea—that there will be very few men in heaven?" Maud—"Huh! That might be heaven for him, but it would be hell for us."

God and Co.

[A Tory M.P., in opening a Church bazaar the other day, is reported to have said: "Our battle-cry is, 'God and the Crown!'"

THE pious Tories advertise
Themselves and God,
And lure their dupes to patronise
Their "Land of Nod."
Their trading ad. is "God and Crown,"
A motto that will aye go down
With thoughtless folk, and every clown
That hops a clod.

The Tories think that God is proud
Whene'er he's paid
The compliment of being allowed
To lend them aid.
I wonder how the thing would look
If ordinary tradesmen took
To linking Heaven's Almighty Spook
With stock-in-trade.

Say, "God and 'Keating's'" anti-fleas,
And peaceful nights;
The butterman, with "God and cheese,"
Or "God and mites."
The fruiterer, with "God and figs";
The man who sells play-actor's rigs
Might advertise, "The Lord and wigs,"
Or "God and tights."

The draper's motto, "God and silks,"
Or "God and pins";
The fishman's war-cry, "God and whelks,"
Or "God and fins";
The tom-cat's slogan, "God and tiles";
The burglar's motto, "God and files";
The comic actor's "God and smiles,"
Or "God and grins."

The publican, with "God and beer,"
Or "God and gin";
The Churches, with their "God and fear,"
Or "God and sin."
The grocer, with his "God and jam";
The caterer, with "God and ham";
The lying priest, with "God and damn,"
Or "God and 'tin.'"

The "upper ten," with "God and swells,"
Or "God and snobbery";
Or "God and Church, and gambling hells,"
With "God and jobbery."
There's "God and country"—ours, not theirs;
There's "God and guns," or "God and pray'rs";
With "God and right," for *might* that dares,
Or "God and robbery."

The man who links the name of God
With Crown, or rat,
Has no more logic than a cod
Within his hat.

If God exist, the rest is *nil*;
Not God, *plus* peasant, prince, or pill,
But *merely* God; nor Jack nor Jill,
Nor this, nor that.

The Christmas yarn, "The Prince of Peace,"
Though rather tough,
The Christians gulp with "God and geese,"
And currant "duff."

The priest, whom all but fools despise,
For very shame now, sometimes, tries
To tell no more of pious lies
Than just enough.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Correspondence.

A CRUEL CHRISTMAS CUSTOM.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I, through the medium of your columns, call the attention of the public to the fact that the barbarous custom of placing a live bullock or a number of sheep in a shop, which is hung round with the dead carcasses of other animals, still obtains among a certain class of butchers at this season of the year, in despite of the numerous protests which this and other societies have published from time to time? Such disgusting spectacles, it seems, cannot be brought within the purview of the statute, as magistrates require very strong evidence of physical pain before they will convict; but, all the same, the suffering of such a sensitive animal as is the ox must, under such conditions, be very cute indeed. Is it so much to expect that our local governing bodies will take steps to stop a practice which is at once unnecessarily cruel to the victims and a depraving influence to the bystanders? I believe that they have full power to deal with the matter as a public nuisance.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane, W.C.

* *Descent of Man*, p. 94.

† Hume, *Natural History of Religion*, § 3.

‡ *Life and Letters*, vol. iii., p. 187.

§ *The Gospel According to Darwin*, by Grant Allen, *Pall Mall Gazette*, January, 1888.

¶ *Ibid*, vol. i., p. 307.

Book Chat.

THE *Daily News* pitches into Mr. W. H. Mallock for his "extraordinary imbecilities." This is not in reference to his views on religion, but his views on the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, especially in regard to the alleged "Cypher" by which it is discovered that Bacon wrote, not only the plays of Shakespeare, but also the works of Green, Peele, Marlowe, Spenser, and "Anatomy" Burton. For our part, we are not disposed to step between the *Daily News* and its victim; as far as we are concerned, our contemporary may lay on and spare not. What we wish to observe is that when our contemporary speaks out on its own account it easily rivals Mr. Mallock in the matter of "extraordinary imbecilities." "There is certainly a resemblance," it says, "between the minds of Bacon and Shakespeare." Well, of course, there is a resemblance, for they were Englishmen and contemporaries; that is to say, they resembled each other like Macedon and Monmouth, which both began with an M. But having started in this mild way of non-committal, the *Daily News* goes on to commit itself monstrously. "There is nothing very outrageous," it says, "in the supposition that the same mind might have given birth to the Essays and to Hamlet, and if there were any real evidence for the contention of Miss Delia Bacon and her followers we should be prepared to consider it calmly." "If," it says again, "in the course of twenty centuries, all pre-Victorian literature except the Essays of Bacon and two or three plays of Shakespeare were to perish, along with our literary history, it would be as natural to ascribe both to the same writer as it now is to ascribe the Iliad and the Odyssey to a single Homer."

The man who wrote that might just as well join Mr. Mallock—and Delia Bacon, Ignatius Donnelly, Dr. Owen, Mrs. Gallup, and the rest of the Baconians, who are almost exclusively Americans. England produced Shakespeare, and America is trying to explain him out of existence. America has undertaken (as usual) the bigger job of the two.

Any man who can take Bacon in one hand and Shakespeare in the other, having read them both, and say that they were written by the same hand and display the same faculties of mind, is almost past praying for—from a literary point of view. Mark you, having read them both is a necessary criterion. Catching at occasional words and ideas is futile. Such things were in the air for all men of brains and reading. No, it is the weight of the whole work that must tell. And, judged in that way, is it possible for anyone with even a moderate literary sense to hesitate in his verdict?

Many years ago the present writer pointed out the difference in the styles of Bacon and Shakespeare, and in their ways of thinking. Bacon's style, as may be seen by comparing the first and last editions of the Essays, tended to greater simplicity; Shakespeare's style, as may be seen by comparing the earlier with the later plays, tended to greater complexity. This was really because Bacon's mind did not grow like Shakespeare's. He lacked the creative energy. From first to last he had dignity, but no fire; but the blood of Shakespeare ran hot from *Venus* and *Adonis* to the *Tempest*. His restraint was not that of a cooling nature, but that of a great, patient, and perfected artist. And see how differently they think. Bacon's wisdom of life is open, worldly, and largely cynical; it is that of a very distinguished player in the great game. Shakespeare saw all that just as well, but he saw behind it; perhaps we should say below it—for the difference is really between superficiality and profundity. The great game falls in time; it is the more intimate things of life that outlast and outweigh the more public. When the doom falls on Macbeth, it is the death of his wife, more than the loss of his crown, that fills his mouth with ashes; and when Hamlet is at his last gasps he thinks only of his good name, and "the rest is silence"; but that silence held his love as it was to hold his life—the love that leapt to his lips as he leapt into her grave beside Laertes.

I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

Precisely in their treatment of that very passion of Love, as the present writer observed so many years ago, lies perhaps the most fundamental difference between Bacon and Shakespeare. Bacon's essay on Love is cynical. The man of the world, the well-bred statesman, looked on Love "as the child of folly." To him it was a more or less inevitable nuisance; a tragi-comical perturbation of social life. Shakespeare saw in it the very mainspring of existence; in which he was true to nature—and evolution. Bacon said that Love speaks "in a perpetual hyperbole." Shakespeare knew that too. He said that the lover "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." But he knew more. Behind the hyperbole was the passion that made it, and that was the thing beyond price; not the

"child of folly," but the inspirer, the chastener, the sustainer. "Conscience is born of love," said Shakespeare in one of his sonnets; and this all-profound sentence, this full-inspired oracle, is like a glove flung in the face of Bacon's shallower philosophy.

The present writer was, long afterwards, delighted to see this very point raised in Colonel Ingersoll's splendid lecture on Shakespeare. Ingersoll quoted what Bacon wrote of Love, and added on his own part the simple words, "The author of *Romeo and Juliet* never wrote that." Only nine words. Yet they are enough. To the knowing reader everything is there.

Turning from the greatest of our poets to the greatest of our generals, the magnificent Marlborough, we may remark that by far the most important thing in the world to him was his Sarah; the beautiful, witty, termagant great Duchess, with a feminine brain to match the masculine one of her husband. When he died she opened a cabinet, in which he kept in secrecy all he most valued, and she found a mass of her own hair. Years before, when furious because he had disobeyed her, she had resolved to mortify him; and the rest shall be told in the words of Mr. Fitzgerald Molloy, who has written her Life under the title of *The Queen's Comrade*:—

"Knowing that her beautiful and abundant hair was a source of pride and delight to him, she had impetuously cut it from her head. The shorn tresses had been left in a room through which he must pass, and in a place where he must see them. But he came and went, saw and spoke to her, showing neither anger, sorrow, nor surprise. When he next quitted the house she ran to secure her tresses, but they had vanished, and on a consultation with her looking-glass she saw how foolish a thing she had done. But she said nothing about her shorn locks, nor did he, and she never knew what had become of them until they were found by her among those things he held most precious."

Is it a wonder that the great Sarah asked with amazement if anyone imagined that she could marry another man after having been the wife of John Churchill?

One is reminded of a darker picture, connected with one who stands alone in English literature, as he really stood alone in life. After the death of Swift there was found a lock of Stella's hair. It was enclosed in a paper, on which he had written the words: "Only a woman's hair." Could pathos go further? Is it not more touching than a storm of ejaculations or a deluge of tears? Thackeray moralised over it in his too facile way, but Swift frightened him, and he did not see to the heart of this mystery. Read the "Journal" with its "little language," then read that "Only a woman's hair," and then go your way, sobered and softened, as one who has lighted on an unspeakable tragedy.

Bacon would have smiled at that "Only a woman's hair." Another proof (he would have said) of what he had declared of Love that "in life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury," and that "great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion." Shakespeare would have had quite other thoughts. He would have understood how a lock of hair could be more to a man than the Lord Chancellorship of England.

His Double Dealing.

"Nor long ago," said a travelling man, "I went up the picturesque Kentucky river on a little steamboat which runs from Louisville to Frankfort. By the way, there isn't a wilder or more beautiful stream in the whole country than that same Kentucky river. The boat passes through eight or ten government lochs during the trip. On the boat I encountered a queer old customer—a long-bearded, grizzled Kentuckian, who was full of interesting reminiscences.

"Once on a time," he said, "I made a heap o' money up an' down this little ol' river—a peddlin'."

"What did you peddle?" I asked.

"Keerds," he answered; "playin' keerds an' Bibles."

"That was a queer stock in trade," was my comment.

"How did you happen to have such a mixed up lot as that?"

"I bought it at a auction down t' Loo'sville," he explained.

"The auctioneer lumped 'em, so I had to take 'em! But I got rid of 'em—yes, sirc—ev'ry one of 'em. People along this river is allus wild for playin' keerds; I sold them playin' keerds for 2 dollars a pack. They went off rapid, ev'ry one of 'em, yes, sirc; an' I didn't have nary Bible left on hand, nuther."

"How much did you get for the Bibles?" I asked.

"Laws," the reminiscent Kentuckian explained, "them Bibles went off rapid, too; I give 'em away with th' keerds."

—Chicago Journal.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christ, Christians, and Christmas."
 NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Reminiscences of a Transvaal Uitlander."
 EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, F. J. Gould, "Mother Earth: A Greek Myth."
 EAST LONDON BRANCH (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, A. B. Moss, "How to Spread the Gospel of Freethought."
 WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Miss Zona Vallance, "Equality."
 SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Religion in Poetry."
 WEST LONDON BRANCH (Hyde Park): Lectures every Thursday at 7.30 p.m.; Sundays at 11.30 a.m.
 BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall): 3.45, "Free Will and Fatalism."
 BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, A Concert.
 CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "Equality."
 GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Watts—11.30, 2.30, 6.30.
 LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Vocal and Instrumental Concert.
 LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote—11, "Tolstoi on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy"; 7, "Good without God and Happiness without Heaven."
 MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, William Simpson, "Character and Environment."
 PERTH (Town Hall): W. Heaford—11, "War, Religion, and Human Nature"; 2.30, "Bible Morality: Its Dangers and Defects"; 6, "Methodism and its Attitude towards Unbelief."
 SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): R. Law, F.G.S.—3, "Curious Stones"; 7, "Volcanoes of the Earth and Moon Compared." Tea at 5.
 SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Religion and Labor."

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