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### The Great Ghost.

LONG before there were any kings there were chiefs. Even in the early Feudal days the king was only the chief of the barons, and many centuries elapsed before the supremacy of the monarch was unquestioned and he became really the *sovereign*. It was a process of natural selection. A mob of chiefs could not rule a mob of people. There was a fierce struggle, with plenty of fighting and intrigue, and the fittest survived. Gradually, as the nation became unified, the government was centralised, and out of the chaos of competing nobles emerged the relatively cosmic authority of the Crown.

It was the same in the world of religion. All gods were originally ghosts. With the decline of polytheism a supreme god emerged from the crowd of deities, as the king emerged from the crowd of nobles, and ruled from a definite centre. It was Zeus in Greece, Jupiter in Rome, Brahma in India, Thor in Scandinavia, and Yahveh in Israel. "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God," was an exclamation that sprang from Yahveh's lips (through his priests) when his godship was still in the thick of the competition.

These great gods looked after the interests of their worshippers; gave them long life, good harvests, and prosperity in warfare, if they were true to them, and plagued them like the very devil if they slighted them or nodded to their rivals. According to the Old Testament, when everything went well with the Jews their God was pleased, and when things went wrong with them he was angry. This state of mind survives into our advanced civilisation, where people still talk of "judgments," still pray for good things, and still implore their God for victory when they have a scrimmage with their neighbors.

But this infantile conception has died out of educated minds. Prayer is seen to be futile. The laws of nature do not vary. Providence is on the side of the big battalions. God helps those who help themselves—and no one else.

Long ago, in ancient Greece and Rome, the acutest thinkers had come to the same conclusion. Lucretius, for instance, did not deny the existence of the gods; he merely asserted that they no longer concerned themselves with human affairs, which he was heartily glad of, as they were mostly bad characters. He observed "the reign of law" as clearly as our modern scientists, and relegated the deities to their Olympian repose, so beautifully versed by Tennyson.

The Gods who haunt  
The lucid interspace of world and world,  
Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,  
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,  
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,  
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar  
Their sacred everlasting calm.

Even the savage, in times of prolonged peace and prosperity, begins to speculate on the possibility of his  
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god's having retired from business; for religion is born of fear, not of love, and the savage is reminded of his god by calamity rather than good fortune. This idea has been caught by Robert Browning in *Caliban upon Setebos*, a poem developed out of a casual germ in Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,  
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,  
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch  
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He  
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

But presently poor Caliban is frightened out of his speculation by a thunderstorm, which makes him lie low and slaver his god, offering any mortification as the price of his escape.

There is a good deal of Caliban in our modern multitudes, but the educated are working free from his theology. Science and miracle cannot live together, and miracle and providence are the same thing. How far from us is the good old God of the best parts of the Bible, who held out one ear for the prayers of his good children, and one hand, well rodded, for the backs of the naughty ones. The seed of the righteous never begged for bread, and the villain always came to a bad end. It was the childish philosophy of the "gods" in a modern theatre.

Renan has said that the negation of the supernatural is a dogma with every cultivated intelligence. God, in short, has faded into a metaphysical abstraction. The little ghosts vanished long ago, and now the Great Ghost is melting into thin air. Thousands of people have lost all belief in his existence. They use his name, and take it in vain; when questioned, they merely stand up for "a sort of a something." The fear of God, so to speak, has survived his personality; just as Madame de Stael said she did not believe in ghosts, but she was afraid of them.

When the Great Ghost was a reality—we mean to his worshippers—he was constantly spoken of. His name was invoked in the courts of law, it figured in nearly every oath outside them, and it was to be seen on nearly every page of every book that was published. But all that is changed. To speak or print the name of God is reckoned "bad form." The word is almost tabooed in decent society. You hear it in the streets, however, when the irascible carman calls on God to damn your eyes for getting in his way. There is such a conspiracy of silence about the Great Ghost, except in churches and chapels, that the mention of his name in polite circles sounds like swearing. Eyebrows are lifted, and the speaker is looked upon as vulgar, and perhaps dangerous.

Thus theology gives way to the pressure of science, and religion to the pressure of civilisation. The more use we make of this life the less we look for another; the loftier man grows the less he bows to ghosts and gods. Heaven and hell both disappear, and things are neither so bad nor good as was expected. Man finds himself in a universe of necessity. He hears no response to his prayers but the echo of his own voice. He therefore bids the gods adieu, and sets himself to the task of making the best of life for himself and his fellows. Without false hopes, or base fears, he steers his course over the ocean of life, and says with the poet, "I am the captain of my soul."

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Study of Religion.—I.

THE more closely religion is studied, the wider the survey taken, and the deeper one's researches are, the more certain does it become that anthropology alone can supply a complete answer to the question of its origin. The study of the economic side of history may throw much light upon the competition of sects, and show why certain forms of belief have prevailed; the scrutiny of religious documents may disclose how these have gradually grown up under the combined influence of fraud and folly, and the criticism of doctrines will demonstrate that they are logically untenable and mutually destructive. But when we have done all this we are face to face with the fact that religious ideas are a universal feature in human history, and the critic is bound, if his criticism is to be thoroughly effective, to offer some explanation of the manner in which these ideas came into existence.

The answer that they were divinely given is not only puerile, it is a sheer begging of the question at issue, since it implies the certain existence of the objects of religious belief. And the answer that they are the invention of a cunning few to impose upon the credulous many (an answer which, I imagine, few, if any, ever seriously believed) is too far-fetched to withstand examination. Undoubtedly, religions have been perpetuated largely from motives of self-interest, and the history of Christianity, for example, furnishes plenty of proof that special doctrines have been manufactured for the benefit of an interested hierarchy; but this has to do with the subsequent development of religion, not with its beginnings. At that stage all research shows religion to be a purely normal and, under the circumstances, an inevitable product of the conditions of life. The artificial and consciously-deceptive elements in religion only make their appearance at a subsequent stage of human evolution.

And to understand how these ideas and beliefs came into existence we are necessarily thrown back upon anthropology. Necessarily so. All religions are products of man's ceaseless questionings, hopes, and fears, and it is only as we study mankind in its infancy that we can appreciate the answers to these questionings at their proper value. All studies have led up to the anthropological view of religion, and all have culminated in it. It is anthropology which shows us of what stuff the world's gods and ghosts are made, and enables one to ticket them and arrange them much as a palæontologist arranges his specimens. Nor is the comparison far-fetched. All gods are fossils—psychologic ones true, but fossils all the same. The mind may, indeed, be said to be composed of various strata, even as is the earth itself; and just as the palæontologist, in burrowing into the earth, brings to light the fossil forms of animals that once walked upon the surface, so anthropological psychology helps us to see in the wild and weird speculations of our primitive ancestors the true beginnings of contemporary religious ideas.

At the side of this view of religion all others seem to me of comparative unimportance. Textual criticism, for instance, has its value; but to one who has gone through the anthropological mill it assumes much of the dilettante air of discussing whether Bacon or Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. Once let it be seen that belief in the supernatural is purely a product of human ignorance, and an inevitable product under given conditions, and the important question is not whether the gospels were written in the earlier portion or the later portion of the first, or the first half, of the second century of this era, but What was the mental atmosphere in which the people of those days lived? And it is fair to assume that anthropology has, in the course of two generations, thrown more real light upon the nature of religion than mere literary criticism has done in double that number of centuries.

It is hard, too, not to believe that the clergy for the most part realise the truth of what has been said above. Textual and doctrinal criticism is rapidly becoming common in the pulpit. But few, if any, venture to cross swords with the anthropologist. The reason for

this is evident. So long as the modern taste for inquiry can be satisfied with a discussion of when a particular document was written, or whether a certain doctrine dates from the days of the Apostles or not, there is a good chance of the religious position being conserved by much vague talk concerning the growth of the religious consciousness and similar (usually) meaningless phrases. But suppose it be shown that all religious ideas have their origin in the ignorance of savages, and that this is the protoplasm from which all gods and ghosts and devils have been evolved, what then? And suppose, further, it is made plain that all subsequent religious evolution has been a process of modification of the original position under pressure of advancing culture, how, then, stand all the fine-spun subtleties concerning the yearnings of man after the unseen, or of religion being an inexpugnable element in human nature? The truth of the anthropological root of religion carries with it the practical condemnation of all creeds, ancient and modern.

Dr. Morris Jastrow's book,\* recently added to the serviceable *Contemporary Science Series*, while far from being as thorough as one would wish, is yet a sign of the times, and a promise of a more scientific study of religion in the future than has been the case in the past. Possibly the author might reply to all criticism that his book was not intended as an exhaustive study of any one aspect of the subject, but as an introduction to the study of religion as a whole. This service, it must be admitted, is performed with a considerable degree of success; but when all allowance has been made, there still remain many points upon which a serviceable word of criticism may be said. It is to these, therefore, that I wish to direct the reader's special attention.

One point to be noted at the outset is the constant use by the author of such misleading and ambiguous phrases as "the religious faculty" and "the religious element" in man. Such language is unfortunate, since it serves to set up in the mind, and evidently, too, in the mind of the writer, utterly erroneous ideas. What intelligible or what serviceable idea is set up by asking "how man came to have an *element* in his nature which made him receptive to religious influences"? Or the statement that "A myth-making faculty is the common possession of mankind"? If such language means anything at all, it means that there is a special mental faculty devoted to religion, and that this is quite distinct from other faculties. From a clergyman such language may be expected and tolerated, but it is surely inexcusable in what is intended for a scientific treatise. There is no more a special mental "faculty" devoted to myth, and another to science, than there is one "faculty" for the multiplication-table and another for the differential calculus. All men have the capacity for myth-making, for the simple reason that all men have the capacity for thought. But myth and science are not too *different* mental processes, but two stages of the *same* process. The myth, which with the savage comes into existence quite spontaneously, and, in fact, to a very large degree unconsciously, is, under the conditions of its origin, scientific. The savage who may account for the phenomena of dreaming by the hypothesis of a double leaving and entering the body again at will, is simply framing a hypothesis to account for facts that are to him quite inexplicable on other grounds. And, in so doing, he is acting precisely as a scientist does in referring such phenomena to the action of the brain and nervous system. Both are explanations in terms of existing knowledge, the distinction being that a fuller acquaintance with all the necessary facts discredits the earlier explanation in favor of the later one.

The assumption of "faculties" is as mischievous in religion as it is in psychology.† Just as in psychology

\* *The Study of Religion*, by M. Jastrow. (Walter Scott.)

† "The hypothesis of faculties.....must be regarded as productive of much error in psychology. It has led to the false supposition that mental activity, instead of being one and the same throughout its manifold phases, is a juxtaposition of totally distinct activities answering to a bundle of detached powers, somehow standing side by side, and exerting no influence on one another. Sometimes this absolute separation of the parts of mind has gone so far as to personify the several faculties, as though they were distinct entities" (Sully, *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 26)

the use of the term has led people to speak and reason of the mind as though it were composed of a number of different entities, each independent of the rest, so in religion it has given strength to the belief that there was something in man which demanded religion, and for the satisfaction of which nothing but religion would suffice. There is, however, nothing given to man by religion which cannot as well be supplied from other sources. The very qualities man gives to his gods are only, and necessarily, human qualities; and the feelings satisfied by religious beliefs may be, and are in thousands of cases, appeased by customs and beliefs of a purely social character. What is called the religious element in man is, as a matter of fact, only the social qualities of man with a supernatural covering. Just as every heaven is a transformed earth, and every god a glorified human being, so every religion is at bottom nothing but a transformed sociology.\*

Very much the same kind of criticism may be passed upon Dr. Jastrow's statement that "the religious instinct is, so far as the evidence goes, innate in man." If it is meant that religion is innate in man in the sense that to lose it would be to also lose an important portion of one's manhood, then the obvious answer is that a growing number of people *are* outgrowing religious beliefs without losing anything valuable, either as an individual or as a member of society. Or, if by the religious instinct being "innate" is meant that, under normal conditions, men develop some form of religion—if this is all that is meant, then the statement is only the expression of a simple historical generalisation, and one that is neither profound nor particularly illuminating. In pretty much the same way one might assert that whooping-cough or measles is "innate" in man. All that such a declaration amounts to is that given an uninformed mind face to face with the phenomena of nature, and some sort of supernaturalism is the result. A million savages placed in front of a phonograph would in all probability come to the conclusion that there was a man inside the machine, doing the talking. The unanimity of their decision would not argue its correctness—only that, as the human mind is alike throughout, and as mental processes are alike throughout, under the same conditions the same conclusions have been everywhere reached. This is all that the universality of religious beliefs logically implies. The most pronounced Atheist may cheerfully acknowledge that the religious stage is an inevitable one in the process of human evolution; he may even extend the area of religious beliefs over some portion of the animal world; and may yet find in this, not a disproof, but a confirmation, of his own position; for side by side with this circumstance goes another and not less significant one, and that is that religious beliefs are more powerful where knowledge is weakest—grows less powerful with every advance of culture and refinement.

The use of such phrases is all the more regrettable as Dr. Jastrow sets out with the perfectly sound assertion that—

"Unless human history is to be explained by a thorough study of causes and results, and by an exclusive regard for human conditions, no explanation in the real sense of the word is possible. To have recourse to supernaturalism is to confess our inability to solve the problem on which we are engaged."

This is a sound and admirable rule of working. It is not an explanation at all to drag in the supernatural whenever a difficulty has to be dealt with. "God" did this, or "God" did that, is not an explanation; it is mere verbal fooling. The study of human evolution, if it is to be really profitable and enlightening, must proceed upon the tacit understanding that all its phases are the expression of purely natural and discoverable forces, no matter how complex their manifestation may be. In this task the supernatural is not a help, but a hindrance. Analysis shows that the belief in the supernatural is always a synonym for weakness and ignorance, and historically its prevalence has always been the greatest obstacle to the acquisition of real knowledge.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## A Pioneer of the Third Century.

ONE of the most erudite scholars of the third century, and one who deserves mention as a prominent worker in the early struggle for Freethought, was Porphyry, whom Mosheim terms "a writer of great dexterity, genius, and erudition, as those of his works that yet remain sufficiently testify." It has been said that in early life Porphyry had been a Christian. Whether this be true or not is of little importance; it is not improbable that his early acquaintance with Origen may have led to this assumption. Porphyry was assuredly most bitterly opposed to Christianity. The fifteen treatises he wrote against that religion were doubtless well calculated to arrest the progress of the new faith, at least amongst the educated classes. We can best judge of their effect upon the public mind by considering in what manner they were received by the allied powers of Church and State. The clerical authorities were unanimous in condemning whatever emanated from his prolific pen, while the Emperor Theodosius ordered that all the works of Porphyry should be destroyed; that was by far the quickest way of suppressing early "Infidel" literature, and was also much safer than controversy with such men as Porphyry. The edict of Theodosius against the writings of this Freethought pioneer is cited by Dr. Lardner as "a proof of the great aversion which Christians had for his memory." He was a steadfast champion of intellectual liberty, but a stern foe to priests and priestcraft.

It would have indicated a mind much more disposed to fairness, and much better qualified to institute historical researches, had Dr. Lardner been content to represent Porphyry as he found him, and not to declare that his writings "soon fell under.....general contempt." Of course it may be very easy to take it for granted that Porphyry and his followers *must* have been defeated in argument by their Christian opponents. It has usually been the habit of orthodox believers to assume that they had *the* truth upon their side, and to denounce, without any attempt at reasoning, those who differed from them. It was strikingly so in the third century. Certainly, after all the anti-Christian books had shared the fate of those of Porphyry, there was not much danger in stating that they were erroneous, and readily answered. All Freethought books had been destroyed in order to preserve the credulity of the faithful and the ignorant, who had taken upon trust the alleged truths of Christianity. There is not, perhaps, within the whole range of history a more extraordinary assumption of evidence than that of Dr. Lardner, who, after asserting that we ought to be still "farther confirmed in the persuasion of the truth of our religion" if we find its earliest enemies employing "only weak and inconclusive arguments.....ridicule and calumny," against it, boasts how triumphantly Christianity was enabled to withstand "the virulent pens of keen and witty adversaries, ...the sword of the magistrate, and the clamors of the common people." It may be quite true that the votaries of superstition can claim to have achieved a temporary victory over the Freethought of the age, just as Torquemada and his familiars might have boasted of their triumph over "heresy" in Catholic Spain, because the orthodox method of waging the combat was the same in both instances. The truth is that Christianity required for its establishment precisely the same aid as was found in after years necessary to its preservation—intolerance, fraud, and persecution. It was necessary not only for the clergy to incite their ignorant instruments against the professors of science, but they also had to use every endeavor to prevent the diffusion of ideas and sentiments incompatible with the absurd stories concerning Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. That is why the learned world has had to regret the loss of the "keen and witty adversaries" of early Christianity.

Porphyry's attitude towards the Old Testament was both clear and emphatic. He was opposed to the practice which sought to discover an allegorical meaning, a pre-shadowing of Christ, in the most minute observances of the old ceremonial law. In his "third book against the Christians" he alludes to the "forced inter-

\* This point is well brought out in the opening pages of Guyau's *Non-Religion of the Future*.

pretations" as being absurdly inconsistent—a self-evident fact which the eighteenth century re-discovered, but which was in all probability first made apparent by Porphyry. It appears that this eminent Freethinker possessed a much greater degree of knowledge concerning the origin of many of the books now belonging to the Canon than do some of the critics of our time; for, in his Preface to the Commentary upon the book of Daniel, Jerome says:—

"The twelfth book of Porphyry was written against the book of the prophet Daniel, in which he says it was not written by him whose name it bears, but by another, who lived in Judæa in the time of Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes; and that the book of Daniel does not foretell things to come, but relates what had already happened. In a word, whatever it contains to the time of Antiochus is true history; if there is anything relating to after-times, it is all falsehood, forasmuch as the writer could not see things future, but, at the most, only made some conjectures about them."

Dr. Lardner was so impressed by these statements of the adversary of Christianity that he acknowledged that Porphyry "in his argument displayed all his learning, which was very considerable. Hence, also, we can perceive the difficulty of undertaking an answer to him; for which very few were fully qualified; in which none of the apologists for Christianity seemed to have answered expectations." The immediate effect of Porphyry's attack upon the assumed correctness of the Christian belief in the testimony of Daniel may be estimated from the tacit implication of Jerome as to the possible failure of Porphyry's opponents to convict him of error in his statements respecting Daniel: "The objections of Porphyry against this book are well known from Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinarius, who have written prolix answers to him. I cannot say whether they have satisfied the curious reader." Still more worthy of note is Dr. Lardner's concession of victory to the early champion of Freethought. He says: "In short, Porphyry was a formidable adversary. The public was satisfied with Origen's one answer to Celsus, for we hear not of other attempted afterwards. But against Porphyry, after Methodius wrote Eusebius, and after him Apollinarius—these two last especially very large volumes; and yet all together seem not to have made out a complete answer."

There can be no reasonable doubt as to the skill displayed by Porphyry in attacking the reputed theories respecting the age of the Prophecies. It is scarcely possible for an unprejudiced reader to come to any other conclusion than that Porphyry's position—supported, as it undoubtedly was, by historical testimony—was practically unassailable. Even the bald summary which has been given sufficiently proves that. Jerome, and subsequent professed Christians, regard the words of Daniel as prophetic of the woes and tribulations which would follow in the train of Antichrist; Porphyry, on the contrary, maintains that they only described metaphorically what had already occurred in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and even the celebrated Christian Grotius is frank enough to declare that he is not able to state truly whether the words of Daniel should be taken as referring to the final resurrection, or whether Porphyry's statement be the correct one. If it were the object of this article to show that the orthodox notions of the authenticity and prophetic value of the book of Daniel were thoroughly erroneous, ample evidence from avowed Christian writers of the last decade could be cited in favor of the general position taken by Porphyry. But our aim has been to point out that, as Celsus in the second century exercised the right of freely criticising the claims of Christianity, so Porphyry, in the succeeding century, boldly attacked the pretensions urged on behalf of portions of the Scriptures. He was one of the ablest and most consistent pioneers of that Freethought which to-day is permeating every domain, both of public and private life. In science, politics, ethics, works of fiction, and the domestic circle, theology has lost the sway it once held, and Freethought is constantly increasing its liberating influence throughout all sections of the community.

Amongst the names of the brave pioneers of intellectual liberty that of Porphyry deserves to occupy a prominent place. Crowned tyranny, allied with the machinations of the Christian Church, did its utmost

to render futile the life and labors of this dauntless toiler in the field of human progress; enough still remains, however, to prove that the Freethinkers of the present time are but continuing the work he inaugurated—are but following Porphyry in endeavoring to rid mankind of the mental shackles they have endured for nearly two thousand years. Porphyry was the precursor of Voltaire, Spinoza, and Thomas Paine; and though we may, and do, regret that so many centuries of mental subjection intervened between the first and the last of these, we do not the less honor the memory of Porphyry because Christianity succeeded for a time in partially nullifying the glorious and noble work he had so bravely attempted to perform.

CHARLES WATTS.

## The Bible Creation Story.—I.

No Bible narrative has, perhaps, suffered more misrepresentation at the hands of professing Christians than the Creation story; no other Bible narrative has been so systematically perverted into meaning what the narrator plainly never intended to convey. Yet the story, read without theological bias, is the simplest that can possibly be imagined. It is mainly with the view of showing the misleading character of these Christian perversions that I have selected this narrative for elucidation.

There are, as every unprejudiced Biblical scholar knows, two Creation stories in Genesis, each independent of the other—one in chapter i., the other in chapter ii. In the first story the Creator is stated to have been Elohim (God); in the second he is said to have been Yahveh Elohim (the Lord God). The second story is generally represented by Christian writers and commentators as merely a more detailed account of a portion of the first story (that relating to the formation of man); and, in discussing the Bible statements respecting the creation of the universe, the second narrative is commonly ignored, though, as a matter of criticism, the first chapter of Genesis was composed several centuries later than the second chapter.

Following, then, the usual Christian practice, I will, in the papers upon this subject, confine myself chiefly to the first creation story, though this narrative, as every one knows, is flatly contradicted in several important points by the second.

The writer of the first Creation story, it need scarcely be said, had no ideas connected with the universe and natural phenomena beyond those current in his days; inspiration taught him nothing. In recording as veritable facts the crude absurdities believed in his time, he never, of course, had the faintest idea that at some future day scientific research and general advance in knowledge would prove his narrative to be pure fiction—as is the case to-day.

Before proceeding to notice the Christian perversions of this story it will be necessary, first, to glance at the narrative as the author, in his ignorance and simplicity, relates it.

"In the beginning," commences the writer, "Elohim created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," etc. Here it may be remarked that we learn from the Bible chronology—that is, from a computation of all the different periods of time mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament—that the period which the writer calls "the beginning" was not much more than four thousand years prior to the commencement of the Christian era, or, in round numbers, about six thousand years ago.

The sacred writer having, as we have seen, introduced the subject of his narrative—viz., "the creation of the heaven and the earth"—proceeds to describe in detail the order and manner in which the creative work was done. This work, he tells us, was accomplished in the short period of six days—that is, six solar days of twenty-four hours. The method employed by Elohim was simply to command things to appear, after the manner of professors of legerdemain—"Heigh, presto, come!"—and the objects named sprang into existence forthwith.

On the first day when, according to the story, "darkness was upon the face of the deep," Elohim said "Let there be light," and immediately "there was light." Elohim then "divided the light from the darkness," though how he performed this feat is not stated. From the narrative, however, it becomes evident that the narrator believed that daylight and darkness were substances which, having once been made, were kept confined in separate places, and let loose alternately upon the earth. At dawn the light was sent forth, but towards evening it was called in, and darkness was let out to take its place. It had not been revealed to this writer that light is not a material substance at all, but merely a manifestation of energy, or that darkness is simply the absence of light.

The work of the first day having been completed, the writer says: "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." Now morning is the beginning of daylight, and evening the commencement of darkness; there were, therefore, according to the author of the story, both day and night three days before the sun was created. Day and night, as every school-boy knows, are produced by the rotation of the earth upon its axis, by which motion every portion of the globe receives in succession light from the sun. There could thus be no evening or morning, no day or night, until that great luminary had been created, and this, according to the story, was not done until the fourth day. How, then, are we to account for the fact that light is represented to have been made on the first day, and the sun, the source of light, not until the fourth day? The explanation is simple. The writer did not know—an untutored child does not know—that the ordinary light of day, when the sun is not visible, is derived solely from that luminary. He knew, as does the child, the source of the bright yellow light which flooded the earth when the sun was shining, and which cast dark shadows of objects upon the ground; but the more subdued light which was present in the daytime, summer and winter alike, in rain, snow, or mist, when no sun was anywhere visible, this light he believed to be independent of, and to have no connection with, the sun. Hence his story of the creation of light.

On the second day Elohim made the "firmament"—that is to say, the sky or visible heavens, and he also "divided the waters which were under the firmament" from the waters which were above the firmament." From the latter statement it becomes evident that the writer believed the firmament to separate two large bodies of water; one on the earth's surface, as yet mixed up with the land; the other stored high above the clouds, whence at times, upon the opening of certain windows or doors, a portion was allowed to fall to the earth as rain. It had not been revealed to the author of this story that the comparatively small quantity of moisture which descends as rain is contained in solution in the atmosphere itself, and is not precipitated from an immense reservoir above the firmament.

On the third day Elohim commanded the waters on the earth's surface to be "gathered together into one place"; and, when this was done, he ordered "the dry land" to appear. He also, on the same day, caused the earth to bring forth grass, herbs, trees, and vegetation of every kind.

On the fourth day Elohim made the sun and moon, and "set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night." The light of the sun was, of course, an additional light to the ordinary daylight. On this day Elohim also called into existence a myriad of tiny twinkling things of very little importance, to the creation of which the writer devotes but three words—"the stars also." It had not been revealed to him that these little twinklers are many thousand times larger than this globe, and that their apparent diminutive size is due solely to the immensity of their distance from this planet. He would have opened his eyes very widely had he been told that the sun, which he states was placed in the firmament, just above the clouds, merely to "give light upon the earth," was a million times larger than the globe upon which he was standing, and was more than ninety millions of miles distant. He would have been surprised, further, to have learnt that the great luminary, which he says was made on the

fourth creative day, had been in existence for ages before the "creation" of the earth.

On the fifth day Elohim "created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kinds, and every winged fowl after its kind."

On the sixth day of creation Elohim "made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind." On this day the Hebrew Deity also made man.

Looking back, now, at the work of creation, it will be seen that five out of the six days were spent in creating and fashioning this insignificant globe, a mere speck amongst "created" things, while all the universe, the countless myriads of suns and planets scattered throughout boundless space, was accomplished in one day. This is somewhat analogous to the spending six days in making and shaping one of the pebbles on a certain shingly beach, and then taking but one day to form and fashion all the others—say ten thousand cart-loads of similar pebbles. The writer of Genesis had certainly no idea of the amount of work implied in the innocent phrase—"the stars also."

With regard to the creation of man the narrator states: "And Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him; male and female created he them." Now, this statement, from the Christian point of view, is most important; for it clearly shows that, in the opinion of the inspired story-teller, Elohim was formed and shaped in the exact likeness of a man, with head, trunk, limbs, hands, feet, eyes, ears, and vocal organs. It is a matter quite beyond doubt that the writer was speaking of man's physical form, and of that only.

On the seventh day Elohim "rested from all his work which he had made, and "blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." Here the priestly writer of the first chapter of Genesis shows the cloven foot. The Sabbath, which the Hebrews adopted from the Babylonians, is now represented as a divine institution coeval with the creation of the first man.

This completes the Bible Creation story, which, as every reader must see, is too simple to be misunderstood, even by a child. It is not, of course, true; that goes without saying. The most astonishing thing in connection with it is that one single individual—that is, one having some elementary knowledge of science—can be found to regard it as a divinely-inspired statement of fact. As to the author of the story, no one can think it anything to his discredit that he did not know what nobody else in his days knew. It is only when Christian advocates credit him with knowledge which his own words prove he did not possess that it becomes necessary, in the interests of truth, to take note of his crude statements. ABRACADABRA.

### Literary v. Biographical Criticism.

"The fight of fights is to write!"—HERMAN MELVILLE.

WHILST grateful to both "Mimnermus" and Mr. Woodward for their appreciations of the poets, I am inclined to think that Mr. Woodward, in his admiration for the genius of Edgar Poe, is not so unconventional as he seems to think himself, nor the chorus—a very limited one in size, at least—of literary criticism in the *Freethinker* at all discordant. What, indeed, strikes me most, as characteristic of the different literary *critiques* therein, is their singular unanimity in essentials. I can accept practically all Mr. Woodward's estimate of Poe as a poet and prose writer, differing seriously, if at all, only in the deductions Mr. Woodward makes from more or less cloudy matters of fact about Poe's life—as, for instance, Mr. Woodward's suggestion that the key to Poe's genius may be found in a passion for, say, alcohol or opium. Apart from the conflict of evidence on the point even as to Poe's latter days, there is no atom of either assertion or evidence that he drank or took opium as a boy, and yet his genius as a boy was unquestionable—see his lines "To Helen," and other early poems also. The abuse of stimulants has been a common charge against men of genius or of unusual talent ever since writers of a sober turn of mind (and whose sobriety has offered but a poor substitute for the Platonic frenzy) began to find it profitable to write patronisingly about their betters. Addison, that exemplary Christian, died drunk.\*

\* De Quincey's *Eighteenth-Century Writers* (?).

His *fides achates*, Dick Steele, was certainly, on his biographer's showing, all too seldom sober; Dryden was no water-worshipper, and often got as market-merry as Noah, although his conduct whilst "fou" was never on the scabrous plane of that of the amateur Skipper of the Ark.

But of all the drunken geniuses, whether Christian, Deist, or Pagan, it may be safely averred that they had proved themselves men of genius long ere they were alleged to have proved themselves drunkards—a proof their genius was not due to drink, even if their drinking was due to genius.

And of another thing we may be with greater certainty assured: that where there is one critic equipped for but half-adequately expounding the beauties of a great poet's work, there are a thousand critiques ready, quite as well equipped one as another for settling—in the double sense—his moral character and the particular extent of his appetites; indeed, I myself know a good half-score of smatterers in literature who will "settle" Byron, Shelley, or Burns on the points of sobriety and morals, and who seem at the same time not more fitted to understand the best works of those poets than a man suffering from ophthalmia is fitted to compete for the Queen's Prize at a Wimbledon meeting. I fear the life of the man of genius is to many men a subject of merely prurient curiosity, and is seldom investigated with a view to the more thorough understanding of his creations—the only reasonable object for an investigation, in my opinion. Although it generally happens that only just enough can be reliably known of his life to fix the date of his birth and death, or a few other commonplace facts; whilst quite enough is *unreliably* "known" to send off those who might profitably be studying his works on an endless and useless hunt through the wilds of biographical fiction, fraud, libel, blunder, and misunderstanding.

Generally speaking, I think we, in the *Freethinker*, would do ourselves most honor, show the subjects of our admiration more respect and affection, and be of more service—if of any at all—to your readers were we to keep closely to the works of those men of genius of whom we are moved to write, and abjure the cheap joys of passing necessarily ignorant verdicts on the lives of great men.

To put any of your readers in the way of finding fine works for their delectation is an excellent thing; to send any of them sniffing around the garbage-heaps left by incompetent or malicious critiques, in order to pick out therefrom highly-tainted scraps of slander—

For slander's mark was ever yet the fair—

whether fair in face or genius, as Shakespeare knew, is a search none of us would wilfully help to send any reader on.

This brings me to another point, and I ask: Is not the critic's highest work confined to two main objects—viz., to help to renew reputations that have lapsed from their proper height, and to help to establish reputations not yet made, but which deserve to be made? The first applies almost wholly to the works of those who can no longer hear our praise or blame; the second is confined almost entirely to the works of our contemporaries. This second branch it is which tries the critic's soul. Here we sail new seas, and may help to discover new worlds; hereon is our literary seamanship tried to its utmost; we hold, then, no proper voyager's chart; hereon we risk our own literary reputations in attempting to make those of others. Yet, whilst running the risks, we enjoy the raptures of the adventure, and even in failing may find a measure of success. I would rather bestow one word of deserved praise on a living, unknown writer than a hundred on a writer of established fame. One cheering word to the living soldier of thought or beauty is surely of better service than a myriad such words to the dead! And to end this let me affirm the following: Since the days of Shakespeare there has not been a year in which some man of genius has not been wholly neglected or but inadequately recognised, and that this affirmation holds as true of this year, 1902, as of any other year since 1600. It is this fact that is the scandal of criticism, and it is this fact which proves the verity of Herman Melville's saying, "The true critic is more rare than the great poet."

SIRIUS.

### Surprised the Layman.

A gentleman prominent in one of the State departments had occasion recently to visit New York. Upon his way back he was seated at dinner opposite a gentleman whom, by the cut of his frock, his white tie, and general appearance, he took to be a clergyman. The waiter entered with the dinner ordered by the supposed clergyman. He was a pompous dandy, with a pronounced strut and dignity to give away. Just then the train rounded a curve, and, before the waiter could get off his dignity, the tray was tipped a little, and a bottle of salad oil fell into the "clergyman's" soup, breaking the dish and spattering soup all over his clothes, white tie, and gray whiskers. The clerical gentleman exhibited all the external appearance of having an apoplectic fit, but before he could say a word the waiter gathered up the tablecloth with all its contents, and was out of sight in a minute. The clergyman turned to the Albanian, and emphatically remarked: "My God, ain't he the limit?"—*Albany Argus*.

## Mr. George Anderson and the N.S.S.

MISS VANCE, the secretary, duly forwarded to Mr. George Anderson the resolutions of the National Secular Society's Executive that were printed in last week's *Freethinker*. Of course they were sent to him before publication. One resolution, it will be remembered, called upon him to apologise for his statement that the N. S. S. had issued no balance-sheet during Mr. Foote's presidency; the other asked him to furnish the names of the persons referred to in his pamphlet as having received cheques from him for Freethought purposes connected with the N. S. S. Mr. Anderson, with exquisite taste, all the more exquisite because the secretary is a woman, returned her letter with the following scrawl in the bottom left-hand corner:—

"I don't think your Executive are correct. Please let them *quote* what they complain of, and I will attend to it, and they may omit adjectives.—GEORGE ANDERSON, 4/1/1902."

Miss Vance sent the following answer:—

"DEAR MR. ANDERSON,—In reply to your note I beg to enclose you a marked copy of your pamphlet, which indicates the paragraphs to which the Resolutions refer.—Faithfully yours, E. M. VANCE."

Mr. Anderson returned the secretary's letter again with the following scrawl on the back:—

\* 1—"I have no apology to make. What an illogical Executive you must have. Didn't they see that I only gave my *opinion*!!!!!"

"Resolution No. 2.—'Don't they wish they may get it.' You know I was refused *merely* the *names* of subscribers to Freethought, or thinker. Tell them that I am not the ass that influences them, and that I refuse. I don't ask an apology from them for their impertinence—they know no better."

Mr. Anderson writes what can only be taken to mean that the N. S. S. has never issued a balance-sheet for twelve years. When he is corrected by the secretary he shuffles. When he is asked to apologise by the Executive he says he only stated his *opinion*. No wonder he puts five notes of admiration after that word. They are certainly very appropriate. Then he fancies there is some analogy between his asking for the names and addresses of the subscribers to the *Freethinker* and the Executive's asking for the names of the persons to whom he publicly says he has given cheques to the total of hundreds of pounds for purposes connected with the Society. Finally, he says it is "impertinence" on the Executive's part to ask such a question. Such are the sense and manners induced by a too long reliance on the virtues of a big cheque-book. It would be a waste of words to say more.

## Winter and the Worm.

A PARABLE.

IN my heart's garden—vigil keeping,  
Pausing where sweet forget-me-not was sleeping,  
Hard by the rhizome of proud *fleur-de-lys*,  
I heard the prisoned silken chrysalis  
Singing in long, sad syllables of woe.  
"My *myosotis* sleeps beneath the snow.  
O, may no shadow from the tree-top fall—  
O'er her soft resting-place to writhe and crawl—  
O may her buds ne'er open on the brink  
Of a cold sea wherein her colors sink,  
Seeing their image in the green below,  
And sink for ever, fading as they go."  
"Insect!" I cried, "why this too deep distress?  
Canst tell me why in enigmatic dress  
Thy fancy dons the palest of pale blue?  
Why should'st thou seek to love no other hue,  
While on the wind so many colors glow,  
Seasons for worms and poets change and flow;  
And when the sun-god shakes his drowsy head—  
Lifting the snowy cover from thy bed—  
And when the wind [of Liberty's fair blue]  
Weaves o'er the yellow earth Hope's vernal hue,  
Ah! should'st thou ever spread a gauzy wing  
Above the modest flower of which you sing  
To dally with the purple *fleur-de-lys*,  
Courting her powdered petals with a kiss—  
Neglect, forgot, forget-me-not may lie,  
Her azure stars smile back to Freedom's sky."

GEORGE WOODWARD.

## Acid Drops.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING'S last poem in the *Times* has excited a good many people, and amongst them the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. "We greatly regret," he writes in the *Methodist Times*, "that this great and popular name must henceforth be identified with a policy so anti-civilised and so anti-Christian." This refers to the Conscription. Now we are as much against the Conscription as any man; but what relation has it to Christianity? If an army is raised on the English system, or on the Continental system, how can it possibly matter in the sight of Jesus Christ? There is a great deal to be said on both sides, but nothing of a religious character. There are social evils connected with a voluntary army, and still greater (though different) social evils connected with a conscript army. Behind both sets of evil lies the quarrelsome disposition of mankind, and Christianity has done more to foment that than any other agency on earth.

Up at the World's Fair in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, one of the elephants got troubled with *must*, and went for his keeper, a South African native called Zulu Jack. The big vicious brute got the poor fellow in a corner after injuring him, and would probably have worried and crushed him to death in a few minutes. But an Englishman jumped in and tried to save the Zulu. This he succeeded in doing, and the Zulu climbed out of the box. The Englishman, however, was left behind, and the elephant was making him a substitutionary sacrifice. Then the grateful Zulu went back to rescue his rescuer, which he fortunately effected with some assistance from outsiders.

This story ought to be an eye-opener to those who take the lowest view of all the "heathen," and particularly the "heathen" of Africa. These dark-skinned people are not as black as nature has painted them. They generally have strong domestic affections, to begin with; and they are capable of gratitude and generosity. Let the plain truth be told. Virtue is far from being monopolised by white Christians. Sometimes the "black devils" have even the finest instincts of gentlemen.

Mr. Andrew Lang, in his volume on Tennyson, tells the following true story:—"A British patrol fired on certain Swazis in time of truce. Their lieutenant, who had been absent when this occurred, rode alone to the stronghold of the Swazi king, Sekukoeni, and gave himself up, expecting death by torture. 'Go, sir,' said the king; 'we too are gentlemen.'"

Is not that splendid? Does it not make one surmise that the "native question" could be settled everywhere with a mixture of justice and kindness? Perhaps the Swazi king would have been incapable of doing precisely what the British officer did, with centuries of chivalrous tradition behind him, prompting him to such a magnificent deed, compared with which how tame are most of the actions that win the Victoria Cross! But the Swazi king had at least the magnanimity to appreciate the British officer's grand heroism. He felt it would be vile to hurt such a man. And for that moment, at any rate, the hearts of the white-skin and the dark-skin were warmed by the same noble fire.

A correspondent in the *Daily News*, who hides his identity, sneers at Mr. Joseph Collinson as "the paid secretary of the Humanitarian League." But how on earth can Mr. Collinson's objections to the beating of children in public schools be affected by the fact of his being unable to devote all his time to the Humanitarian League for nothing? Is it to be supposed that the same objections would have a higher validity if raised by the League's honorary secretary, Mr. H. S. Salt, who fortunately is able to work for nothing, and has been doing so with assiduous and splendid devotion for a great number of years? These sneers at "paid" officials of progressive movements are very cheap as well as very absurd. Money enough is paid to the officials of all sorts of reactionary causes. That, of course, is as it should be; the mischief begins when payment is proposed for the diligent labor of men who try to push the world forward. Unless a man has private means, it is perfectly clear that if he gives his whole life to a cause he must derive from it at least the means of keeping himself out of the cemetery. Much more than that he is not wise to expect in the case of progressive movements. Mr. Collinson (a good Freethinker, by the way) probably receives from the Humanitarian League a fifth part of what so clever and industrious a man might easily earn in some commercial occupation.

We let the preceding paragraph stand as substantially valid, although we have learnt since it was written that Mr. Collinson's labors for the Humanitarian League are quite honorary. This is stated by Mr. Salt himself in a note to the *Daily News*.

A good many years ago, when Mr. Foote was billed to

lecture at Wolverhampton, he was sneered at by the famous Rev. C. A. Berry from the pulpit as a "professional infidel." That was one of the reasons why the reverend gentleman could not condescend to reply. Mr. Berry forgot that he was a professional Christian. He also overlooked the fact that he was remarkably better paid than the "infidel" he was flouting. Mr. Foote challenged him on this point. He offered to prove that all the "infidel" lecturers in England did not earn between them the amount of Mr. Berry's salary from his church at Wolverhampton. Of course the professional Christian declined the offer he had provoked.

Miss Walker, of the Lambeth Board of Guardians, was horrified at the workhouse chapel having been used for a concert by the Sunday Union. Some Scotch airs had been sung; which was a profanation of a place only intended for hymns. Miss Walker moved that the chapel should be used exclusively for religious worship. Her motion was carried. Henceforth there will be no Scotch songs in that department of the pauper's palace—unless it be some of the dour old Scotch versions of the Psalms.

Herr Otto Ernst is the author of *Die Grösste Sünde*, one of the German plays recently enacted at St. George's Hall, London. It has been highly praised by the dramatic critic of the *Daily News*, who gives the following account of it: "Wolfgang Behring is a poor schoolmaster and freethinker. He becomes betrothed to the daughter of a rich merchant, but refuses to go through the ceremony of marriage with her in a church. Therefore he persuades her to leave her home with him portionless, and they go into the world to fight the battle of life together. A child is born to them, and for a time they seem completely happy. But Behring is not content that he should be a freethinker himself; he thinks it his duty to preach the gospel of freethought to the world. One by one his means of livelihood desert him—his pupils are withdrawn from his evil influence; the local newspaper, 'a family journal,' dares no longer publish his brilliant articles. Worse than all, his child falls ill and dies unbaptised, and his wife, in a moment of mad despair, reproaches him with its murder. In desperation he goes to beg money of his father-in-law, who gives it only on condition that he will renounce his views publicly. He does so, and worldly prosperity returns to him. But his life is over, his love for his wife has gone, and only returns at the last moment, when they decide to commit suicide together."

This is a frequent tragedy in Christian countries. The circumstances vary, but the essence of the tragedy is always the same; an eager, earnest, and honest soul beating its wings against the iron bars of bigotry. It is a pity that a play like this German one cannot be acted in English. It would touch a sympathetic chord in many a suffering heart.

"We believe," *Reynolds's Newspaper* says, "there are no Atheists now. People say, 'I do not know. The whole thing is full of mystery. I neither affirm nor deny. I want proof.' Such people are called Agnostics." This is rather odd considering that the *Freethinker* is sent every week to our contemporary. There are thousands of Atheists in Great Britain. We could introduce the editor of *Reynolds's* to more than he would care to shake hands with in one evening. Some persons who hold just the same views prefer to call themselves Agnostics. But here comes a curious joke. Some of the most active of them, in association with some of the most fastidious, have lately been instrumental in the publication of two books by Professor Haeckel and the late Professor Büchner. Now the latter was, and the former is, a declared Atheist. It is not the men of the highest intellectual distinction who shrink from that designation.

The word Agnostic, in preference to Atheist, would never have arisen except in England, and would never have been adopted except by English-speaking people. England is reckoned the home of political freedom, but it has always been the home of timidity and compromise in the logic of thought. Büchner himself alludes to this in the chapter on "The Unknowable" in his *Last Words on Materialism*. "The English," he says, "a very practical people, have found a convenient way out of this dilemma [prosecuting science without touching religion], which, if rather vulnerable on the logical side, permitted their scholars to go on their way without any violation of the law of causality, and also without violating religious feelings. It is the distinction between primary and secondary causes; the scientist or scholar has only to occupy himself with the latter, without calling into question the existence of a primary cause, controlling all the secondary ones. His investigations need not extend to this First Cause; it belongs to a province which is reserved for faith, religion, and theology. In this way the English scientist has saved his conscience, without coming into conflict with the religious needs of his time—perhaps even with his own." There is shrewd sarcasm in that last clause.

This compromise led up to Herbert Spencer's "Unknowable"—which is, so to speak, the Agnostic's deity. Huxley

christened it, but its parent was Spencer. "Faith in the Unknowable," Büchner says, "is the distinctive feature of Agnosticism; it is also dualistic and supernaturalist. It divides the world into two distinct existences—the natural and knowable world and the unknowable or mystic region, which either lies beyond nature, or else is interwoven with it, making its clearest and most transparent phenomena seem obscure and enigmatic." The Agnostic clings to the Unknowable as something sacred. But nature is not unknowable, except relatively—that is, in the sense that man is never likely to know everything. Büchner plainly says "it is foolish to seek a cause of the world," for, as he boldly adds, "Existence is a fact, and that is all."

Methodists have always been enemies of the theatre, and discouragers of amusements generally. We are not as much surprised, therefore, as the *Liverpool Echo* at the warning against football issued by the East Denbighshire Circuit of Primitive Methodists. It runs as follows:—"Members.—No person who attends vain worldly amusements—or who wastes his time in public-houses—will be allowed to remain a member of our community. In compliance with this rule the quarterly meeting affectionately requests all our members to absent themselves from all football games, which have the tendency of turning professing Christians aside from the path of duty." This is real Christianity—the Christianity of the New Testament. Can anyone imagine Jesus Christ, or Peter, or Paul, playing football or watching others play it? All professed Christians should honestly answer that question before they rail at those Denbighshire Methodists.

Atheism, being a gospel of despair—at least the Christians say so—ought to drive its votaries into suicides' graves. But it doesn't. Somehow or other it is the Christians who hang, drown, and poison themselves. At the recent inquest on the body of Frederic James Stewart, a returned Yeomanry Scout, who jumped into the Thames off Cleopatra's Needle, his landlady testified that he was "a very religious man." He was very despondent when she last saw him alive, and he remarked to her that "whomsoever God loveth he taketh away young."

England needs nearly fifty thousand more churches. So says a writer in the *Sunday Strand*. In England and Wales there is accommodation for 15,000,000 worshippers, and accommodation is needed for 17,000,000 more. Needed, that is, as provision; but not needed as being required by any rush of church-goers. Before building fresh churches it would be best to fill the existing ones. Many of them are mournfully empty.

The leaders of the German Lutheran Church are growing anxious regarding the shrinkage in the supply of theological students attending the University. More than once during recent years the *Christian World* has drawn attention to this matter. We have shown how young men, who in former years were attracted to the Church, are now eager to enter commercial life, where the openings for industry and talent are more numerous. The recently-published German University Calendar, however, shows the alarming extent which this shrinkage has reached, and places the Lutheran Church in front of a problem which is not easy of solution. Five years ago the total number of Lutheran students of divinity was 2,959. At present the number is 2,380, a decrease of 579, or nearly twenty per cent. Of the seventeen universities with a Protestant theological faculty only three show an increase—viz., Tübingen, in Wurtemberg, 52, Königsberg 2, and Bonn 7. All the others show a greater or less decrease. The most notable decrease is in the University of Greifswald, where the number has sunk from 320 in 1897 to 153 in 1902. Halle, to which is affiliated Martin Luther's old university of Wittenberg, has sunk from 427 to 371 within the same period. Leipsic, despite the presence of able professors, especially in Hebrew, has gone back from 335 to 263. Finally, there is Berlin, where the attractive personality of Adolf Harnack has not been able to prevent a decrease from 376 in 1897 to 287 at the present time. It is, perhaps, worthy of note that the decrease is most apparent in those universities associated with ultra-orthodox traditions—viz., Halle, Greifswald, Leipsic, and Erlangen.—*Christian World*.

The Sunday-Closing people in this country are mostly religious fanatics, but they are assisted by some persons of a less bigoted turn of mind. The latter class should really consider what Mr. Jerome has just been saying in New York. This gentleman was elected District Attorney on the Reform ticket, and he says that he will enforce the law as far as he is able. But he also says that the law forbidding all sales of liquor on Sunday is unworkable. So many people, through inclination or interest, are engaged in evading it. Unless there is a change in the law, and if the present law be properly enforced, Tammany will be back again in a couple of years. Fighting human nature is an impossible task even for a brand-new Reform administration.

Mr. Deakin, of Worcester, who was at the London Free-thinkers' Annual Dinner on Monday evening, showed some snapshot photographs he had taken in India, which illustrate the ways of "Providence," to say nothing of Christian government, in the matter of the famine. One was a perfect walking skeleton of a man—a common sight in the famine-afflicted districts. Another was a ghastly heap of skulls, ribs, and arm and leg bones, waiting to be removed to a place of interment. Such piles of starved-out anatomies were so frequent that nobody took much notice of them. They made us shudder.

Francis Schlatter, the modern Jesus Christ of America, whose divinity is still believed in by a good many persons, including his wife, has just completed a term of three months' imprisonment on Blackwell's Island, New York, for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. The worst thing he suffered there was the shearing of his Jesus Christ locks. He has to grow them again before he can look his part properly. His reputation as a "healer" is meanwhile impaired.

The boy-preacher who came over from America to evangelise the people of Great Britain does not seem to have been very successful here. There was a lot of trumpeting about him at the start, but little has been heard of him since. We suspect there has been money dropped by somebody.

The Hon. A. Holland-Hibbert sends to the *Midland Times* a correspondence he had last year with a professor of Christian Science. This faith-healing gentleman undertook to treat a broken-winded mare for eight shillings the first time and four shillings a time afterwards, or for a guinea a week. No improvement being observable in the mare's condition, Mr. Holland-Hibbert ventured to complain, and he was told that he must have been frustrating the Christian Science method by using "material remedies," or perhaps there was a want of faith on his part. Mr. Holland-Hibbert replied that *his* faith had nothing to do with the case; it was a question of whether the Christian Science professor had faith enough. Finally, the payment was discontinued, and the professor's services dropped with it. The mare is broken-winded still.

Sir Edward Russell, in his new volume entitled *An Editor's Sermons*, makes the following reference to John Stuart Mill in connection with church-going:—"No man of any belief is in as good state of mind and heart when he eschews religious services as he would be if he attended them. The case most clearly perfect of a thoroughly holy Agnostic life—a life not merely sound, but spiritual—is probably that of John Stuart Mill. But when Mill's private life came to be known it was discovered that, though he had not attended any ordinary ritual, he had maintained usages of religious meditation which, though to us odd in their special character, were very real to him, and by him were observed with a faithful tenacity very infrequent among those by whom worship is ignored."

Surely this is a very misleading use of the words "religious meditation." What are the facts? Mill spent the last years of his life near the grave of the wife he had loved so devotedly. It was his habit to hold a sort of subjective intercourse with her—a thing which everyone does every time he thinks of anyone he has loved and lost. Mill never for a moment suggested that he held actual objective intercourse with his wife's spirit. Comte held the same sort of spiritual intercourse with the dead Clotilde de Vaux. In both cases a Positivist might call this "religious meditation," but it is not what Sir Edward Russell, or his readers either, mean by the words.

The Protestant Laymen's Association does not seem to meet with the support that its ambitious title would lead one to expect. Its balance-sheet for the year ending October, 1901, shows an income of £24 14s. and an expenditure of £20 2s. 5d. Its operations appear to be carried on principally in Victoria Park, where it alleges that the "people" in "public meeting assembled" passed a resolution declaring their "disgust and abhorrence of the immoral propaganda of the N. S. S." Accuracy and grammar are not the strong points of this Association. Neither are its manners above reproach, "Thomas Paine, the Drunkard," being the title of one of its Tracts. We might follow suit with "Jesus, the Wine-Swiller," but we refrain.

We see that this noble Association announces a "Great Public Debate between J. Terry, Esq., and a Champion of the National Secular Society." It does not give the Champion's name. Perhaps he has yet to be picked up, and the announcement is speculative. It would be a curious "Champion" of the N. S. S., we fancy, who would stand on the platform of such an Association. All true sportsmen draw the line at certain animals.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 19, 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."

January 26, Manchester.

February 2, Birmingham; 9, 16, 23, Athenæum Hall.

March 2, Glasgow.

**To Correspondents.**

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 19, Bolton; 26, Porth, South Wales. February 9, Camberwell; 23, Liverpool. April 20, Glasgow.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 19, Birmingham; 26, Glasgow. February 2, Athenæum Hall, London; 9, Liverpool; 16, Bradford.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

LOUIS LEVINE (Charleston, U.S.A.).—Your order is attended to by our publisher. Thanks for your good wishes for the new year. Always pleased to hear from you.

W. G. GILES.—It is good of the West Ham Branch to send such a donation to the Neale Fund.

JOHN UMPLEBY.—Very much pleased to have so friendly and encouraging a letter from the most venerable of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, and one who is universally respected. It is good to see a man of your great age retaining such a lively interest in the principles that have commanded his adherence and support for the better part of a century. We highly value your kind reference to our "devotion to the cause of Free-thought," and we hope, in your own words, to go on "battling with the curse of priestcraft and superstition."

OTTO THOMSON (Stockholm).—See "Sugar Plums." We give you a hearty grip of the hand in "the spirit," and wish we could do it in "the flesh."

THE FRANCIS NEALE FUND.—J. B. (per J. Neate), 1s.; West Ham Branch, 10s.; R. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; R. T. Kearey, 1s.; John Sumner, junr., 10s. 6d.; J. G., 5s. *Per Robert Brown*: R. Brown, 3s.; H. Firth, 1s.; B., 2s. 3d.; A. T., H. E. G., G. F., Barry, Agnostic, Whitmore, Campbell, Dodd, George, Bradshaw, Bridges, Calvesbert, Laysell, Lutchford, Loader, Butler, Bryant, Harrod, Rogers, Shaw, Chapman, Flaunty, Goulding, Farley, Kennedy, 6d. each; F. G., J. C., Hoare, A Friend, Stiff, 3d. each—total, £1. David Hughes, 5s.; S. Paul, 2s.; E. Richmond, 2s.; T. J., 5s.; S. Burgeon, 5s.; A. E. W., 7s. 6d.; T. W. Roberts, 2s.; D. A. Lewis, 2s. 6d.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—*Ferula* was the Roman schoolmaster's cane. "Under the ferula," in the passage we quoted from Jeremy Taylor, meant "under the rod" or "subject to discipline"—the *ferula* being shifted, as it were, from the hands of the schoolmaster to those of the magistrate. We hope this clears away your difficulty.

DAVID HUGHES, sending a donation to the Francis Neale Fund, adds a subscription to the (closed) Fund for Mrs. Foote, to which he has been prevented by illness from contributing earlier. "The proceedings of Mr. Anderson against you," he writes, "were mean and vindictive. My Swansea friends, to whom I have spoken on the matter, fully endorse my opinion. We are proud of you as a man and as President of the N. S. S. In the interest of Freethought we hope you will be able to exercise the needful patience."

MR. and MRS. GUAINAZZI.—Thanks for your card and good wishes.

ROBERT BROWN (Charlton).—No doubt this is a bad time for financial appeals. We beg to thank you, however, for the trouble you have taken over the appeal for Francis Neale. With regard to a Branch in your district, Mr. Foote would be very happy, as you suggest, to set the ball rolling with a lecture. What hall could be obtained?

E. M. VANCE, secretary, wishes the addresses of the following members of the Secular Society, Limited, communications to whom have been returned through the post:—J. Stevens, T. R. Linford, G. Ware, W. Cox, and F. Bull; also the addresses of the following shareholders in the Freethought Publishing Company:—A. McLean and R. Lawson.

M. E. PEGG.—Mr. Foote will give a dramatic or poetical reading before his evening lecture at Manchester, if he feels fit after the exertion of the morning and afternoon addresses.

L. W. WILLIS.—We plainly stated that we purposely refrained from discussing outside matters in our rejoinder to Mr. Anderson's "Reply." Since you refer to a certain point, however, we may say that the N. S. S. treasurer named did not make any complaint when he resigned an office which the Executive forthwith abolished. No one ever has stood up inside the N. S. S. and made a charge against the President. Every now and then somebody wants to "boss" the President, finds he can't do it, and goes outside in anger; and most angry men will say almost anything—only they have method enough in their madness not to be too specific.

A. J.—What you desire would be rather out of our way. Thanks for copy of your warm letter to the author of that "Reply."

E. A. C.—Quite a mistake. There was no offence whatever.

TWO CLIFTON ADMIRERS, after reading our long "Rejoinder," are left "breathless with indignation" at a certain person, whom they stigmatise in language which, however true, is not to be repeated here; for the law of libel is a queer thing, and long purses generally get the best of it in "courts of justice."

ENTHUSIASTICUS.—Sorry we cannot oblige. We had no reporter present. Pleased to hear you think Mr. Coles is "very unlike the majority of his order," who are so fond of personality and abuse in dealing with "infidels."

T. W. ROBERTS says our Rejoinder was grand."

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Anglo-Russian—Man—La Raison—Truth-seeker (New York)—Reynolds's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—Leeds Daily News—Yorkshire Evening Post—Free Society—El Libre Pensamiento—New Century—Open Court—Two Worlds—Public Opinion—Progressive Thinker—Freidenker—Daily Telegraph—Crescent—Torch of Reason—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought.

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.**

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures to-day (Jan. 19) in the Alexandra Hall, Liverpool. These are the same lectures that he was previously billed to deliver, when he was prevented by illness from keeping the engagement. The Branch preferred to have no change in the program, and really the subjects are good ones that should draw excellent meetings.

There was another crowded audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when the debate was continued between Mr. Foote and the Rev. J. J. B. Coles, the special subject being "What is Christianity?" The chair was taken by Mr. W. Heaford. Mr. Coles opened the discussion with a speech of half an hour. Mr. Foote followed with a speech of the same duration. Each disputant had two subsequent speeches of fifteen and ten minutes respectively. It is impossible, in a paragraph, to give any idea of what was said in the course of two hours. It must suffice to say that Mr. Coles took a very unorthodox position, and that Mr. Foote had to inquire whether he was justified in ignoring the orthodox doctrines of the Churches, as they professed to be founded on the New Testament. Mr. Coles spoke well, and was listened to most attentively; and at the close of his last speech his obvious sincerity and pleasant urbanity caused the audience to accord him several hearty rounds of applause. As nine out of ten were Freethinkers, this proves that they are fond of intellectual hospitality.

Mr. Heaford occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Jan. 19), taking for his subject "The Meaning of Freethought." We hope he will have a good audience.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, took place on Monday evening at the Holborn Restaurant. A goodly company did justice to the excellent repast which is a matter of course at that establishment. Afterwards there was an excellent musical program, and some brief speeches. Mr. Foote delivered the Chairman's Address, and the Toast of "The Freethought Movement at Home and Abroad" was proposed by Mr. Cohen, and responded to by Mr. Chilperic Edwards ("Chilperic"), Mr. A. B. Moss, and Mr. W. Heaford. Madame Saunders presided at the piano. Miss Nellie Foote and Miss Annie Wilson also gave a bright duet on that instrument. Miss Lydia Prescott, Miss Jenny Atkinson, and Madame Alice Lovoney charmed the company with their beautiful singing; and Mr. Charles Conyers and Mr. Harry Hudson added to the gaiety of the evening with their

humorous entertainments. It was nearly twelve o'clock before "Auld Lang Syne" was reached. Altogether the gathering was a cheerful success.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured on Sunday at the Bradlaugh Club, Bradford. He had two large audiences, and his discourses were highly appreciated. The Club gained several new members.

The Liverpool Branch has an excellent Syllabus from January to May, including courses of special lectures by G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, Charles Watts, J. M. Robertson, and H. Percy Ward. This looks like business. We are glad to see this Branch, in such an important city, showing so much zeal and activity. May it find its reward.

Friends who come from a distance to the Liverpool lectures are informed that they can now be catered for between the meetings at the Hall.

The *Leicester Reformer* for January gives some interesting items from the old minute-book of the Leicester Secular Society of fifty years ago. This minute-book was lost sight of for a long while, and was discovered only a few weeks ago. We are glad to see that the Institute side of the Society seems fairly flourishing. But what is the meaning of the announcement that on Wednesday, January 22, at the general members' meeting in the Secular Hall, the "question of the retention of the Organiser will be submitted to the ballot"? We hope there is no real idea of parting with Mr. Gould. We venture to express our own belief that his loss would be a serious calamity. We don't suppose he is perfect. When we meet the perfect man he will probably be a perfect nuisance. But we do think that the Society would have to search far and long before finding an Organiser so admirably equipped by nature, training, and accomplishments as Mr. Gould. And our view should at least be regarded as an unbiased one; for, although Mr. Gould has occasionally—far too occasionally—contributed to the *Freethinker*, he has never been associated with any of our own efforts in Secular organisation.

With a view to increasing its members' list, strengthening its organisation, and extending its work, the Camberwell Branch is calling a Conference of South London Freethinkers at its Hall on Sunday evening, February 16. It is hoped there will be a large attendance of south metropolitan saints on this occasion. Suggestions are invited from all who have any worth making.

Captain Otto Thomson, the stalwart Swedish Freethinker, sends us a welcome letter from Stockholm. First of all, he says that the members of the Freethought League in Stockholm send us their best wishes for the new year, and their thanks for the work we have done for the cause, which they know is one and the same in all countries. Next he pays us, on his own account, some very handsome compliments, which we would rather not publish, though we appreciate them in a certain way as showing that we have made a favorable impression on the mind of a very gallant Freethinker in a country that has always been famous for its brave men. Finally, he speaks with disgust of the attempt made to ruin us, and with admiration of the Freethinkers who rallied to our support. Captain Thomson adds that Freethought advocacy in Sweden is still very uphill work, but some of the seed sown germinates, and will grow to a harvest.

After a successful social, the Newcastle Rationalist Debating Society (which is an offshoot of the local N. S. S. Branch) inaugurated its second session on Thursday week with an address by Mr. D. R. Bow on "The Boer War." There was a good audience and a capital discussion. The Newcastle friends have a long and varied program before them, and we hope the local Freethinkers will do their duty by putting in attendance as often as possible. The meeting place is in Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, 35 Clayton-street. Lectures, followed by discussion, are given every Thursday at 7.45. Syllabus of subjects will be sent by post on application to the Secretary, Mr. T. H. Elstob, 24 Woodbine-road, Gosforth.

Mr. Francis Neale reports that he is improving, though slowly. He hopes to be able to leave the Infirmary before long, and to enjoy the greater comfort of home life. Mrs. Neale's condition is still far from satisfactory, but what change there is for the better.

They who know still know nothing if the strength of love be not theirs; for the true sage is not he who sees, but he who, seeing the furthest, has the deepest love for mankind. He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness.—*Maeterlinck*.

## Blake's Madness.

A REJOINDER.

"O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"

THE question of Blake's sanity or insanity does not end with Blake. Any attempt to try and prove Blake to be sane has, as a corollary, the justification of many so-called "inspired" religious movements, which have been in reality the product of disordered brains. So that, in further discussing the question of Blake's madness, it is not solely to prove "Sirius's" contention erroneous, but to emphasise the point above stated. Now, a man may have hallucinations, and yet be perfectly sane. But if he intensely believes in the actuality of the hallucinations, if he regards the visions as objective realities, that is a sure sign of madness. Blake believed that the visions which appeared to him were such objective realities. Hence he was insane. He not only had illusions of sight, but of sound. He believed that he had revelations made to him in visions, which he was commanded by celestial voices to publish. He even believed that an art secret, which he himself invented, and which secret died with him, was communicated to him by the spirit of his dead brother. He insisted that his finest poems, which "Sirius" thinks prove his sanity, were dictated by the same disinterested ghost, while the "prophetic" writings, his later works, exhibit every mark of insanity—non-sequaciousness, incoherency, and absolute nonsense. "Sirius" complains that my reference to the later portrait of Blake is unfair, seeing that there exists a much nobler portrait painted in earlier years. But this is the very essence of the argument. Blake was a genius who went mad. The one portrait is the portrait of Blake the genius, the other is the portrait of Blake the madman; and there is as much difference between the early and late writings as there is between the early and late portraits. One of the principal signs of insanity—the one unmistakable sign, in fact—is that the patient has unfounded suspicions that some person or persons, real or imaginary, are trying to do him an injury.

Now, Allan Cunningham says, in his *Life of Blake*, that, curiously enough, the poet believed the spirit of Titian to be the evil genius of Art, and professed to suffer from his persecutors. Turning to the article on Insanity in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, we read that "The delusions of the insane are for the most part characterised by suspicion and fear, and take such forms in the mind of the patient as that spies surround him, and that all his actions are watched. Occasionally delusions of suspicion and fear are connected with persons whom the patient has never seen." For "spies" read "persecutors," and the above passage might have been specially written to fit Blake's case.

It is useless to deny the fact that genius lies on the borderline of insanity. Abnormal brain development makes such enormous demands on the vitality of the individual that there is ever a danger of ultimate breakdown, and subsequent insanity. By this we do not mean that all genius is insanity, which is absurd; but that occasionally the brain of a genius does collapse, as in the case of the unfortunate William Blake.

MIMNERMUS.

## Fire from the Modern Pulpit.

IN equipping that house of worship in Portsmouth, O., with a telephone, and hanging a fire-alarm card on the pulpit, the pastor has shown that he is prepared for one of the leading emergencies in a country town. In places where fires are not frequent the ringing of an alarm arouses general attention and a good deal of incidental excitement, and this is apt to prove a serious interruption to Sunday services. The pastor in question is now prepared to relieve the anxiety of his hearers in short order, and in most instances the services can proceed without the loss of a single listener.

The matter will be managed in a very simple manner. When the alarm bell is heard the pastor at once suspends the service and reaches for his card.

"Did you catch it, Brother Brown?" he inquires of some sharp-eared listener. "Yes, thank you; 2-5-2. That's what I made it. One moment, please. It's at the corner of Darwin-street and Tyndall-avenue. Now I'll call up the fire exchange. Hello. Fire exchange, please. Yes. Is this the fire exchange? What does that box 2-5-2 fire amount to? Farm? Oh, barn? Small fire, eh? All out? What's that? Ten dollars loss? Thank you. Good-bye." Then the pastor briefly conveys this information to the congregation, and the services proceed.

—*Plain Dealer*.

Mrs. Von Blumer—The minister preached the most touching sermon I ever heard. Von Blumer—How much did he raise?—*Judge*.

## The Infamy of the Twentieth Century.

*An Address delivered before the Congress of the American Secular Union by*

L. K. WASHBURN

(*Editor of the "Boston Investigator"*).

THE great evil, the great tyranny, the great curse of the world is religious superstition, and the great work of the world is to destroy it.

If I understand the purpose of our Freethought movement, it is to free the human mind from the baneful effects of theology. Freethought stands for mental anti-slavery; its goal is the emancipation of the race from clerical domination. There are many evils in society, many reforms worthy of man's noblest efforts. *We* have chosen *one* evil to combat, *one* reform to advocate—that evil which springs from religious superstition, that reform which comes through its destruction. In our efforts the poor man is not arrayed against the rich man, nor the working-man against the capitalist; but the honest man is arrayed against the priest.

Freethinkers do their own thinking, and Freethought is that thought that is neither frightened into man nor scared out of him. The man who is free must help to free others, and the scattering of free thoughts is the way to liberate the human mind. Because *we* have freedom as a birthright, or as the result of a happy environment in our youth, we are not to say to those who are still in chains: Get out of bondage if you can. We are to break the shackles that bind them.

This land is filled with Bible-slaves, with men and women whose minds were poisoned in their youth with the religious notion that the Bible is the word of God. This superstition is the mother of all the others. The whole dirty brood was hatched in this nest.

The superstitious survival that the Bible is the word of God is due to the magnificent defence of this falsehood by the Christian Church for hundreds of years. Had the Christian Church expended as much money, as much time, as much labor in defending the truth as it has in guarding and protecting falsehoods, the Bible would long ago have taken its proper place upon the shelves of human literature, and the dogmas born from its pages would have fallen into kind oblivion's ample grave. The supreme doctrine of Christianity is that of the Bible's divinity. Without that every creed in Christendom would become a dry and withered weed. Every Christian church has this doctrine for a foundation; every Christian belief draws sustenance from its breast; and every minister and priest get their salaries from its pocket.

An Irish lad was asked to describe a snake. He said: "A snake is all head but his tail." The Bible is the head of Christianity; all the rest is tail.

Take away the notion that the Bible is the word of God, and Christianity is a ladder without any rungs.

When that superb revolt against Roman Catholicism, headed by that martial monk, Martin Luther, began, a new child of liberty was born to humanity; but when that revolt, which overthrew the divinity of the Romish Church, set up the divinity of the Christian Scriptures, it substituted a new tyrant for an old one. The Bible was enthroned above the Pope; the text was made authority, instead of the interpretation of the text.

The so-called Protestant reformation established the dogma of the Bible's divinity, but placed the book in the hands of private judgment. That was its doom. There is always difference of opinion where men are allowed liberty to express their thoughts. Luther and his fellow-reformers never dreamed that the divine character of the Christian Scriptures could be doubted. They thought that God's wisdom, that God's love, that God's providence was mirrored in its pages, and that reading its words would carry conviction to the mind.

Calvinism asserted the infallibility of the Bible, and declared that every word of it came from the lips of God, and that all of it—good, bad, and nasty—was designed for reproof and correction. The Calvinistic frame of mind did not reign undisputed a great while. First, one dogma founded upon some verse of the Old or New Testament was denied, and then another. The Trinity was disputed by Servetus, but he never attacked

the divinity of the Scriptures as a whole. Total depravity was repudiated, but those who opposed this barbarous doctrine stuck to the Bible as God's word. Hell was rejected as unfit for the faith of savages, but those who condemned its cruelty still preached the divinity of Christianity's Bible.

One dogma of Calvinism after another has been outgrown, but the giant superstition that the Bible is the word of God continues to befoul the intellectual air.

Four centuries ago the common spectacle in Europe was a heretic tied to a stake, with priests and monks lighting a fire around his limbs. Then it was thought that the dogmas of the Church could only be saved by painting the sky with the charred body of a brave unbeliever. Three centuries ago Christianity meant banishing men and women for preaching that God was better than the Church pictured him, and for pleading for toleration. Two centuries ago Christianity meant catching negroes in Africa to make slaves of them in America, and chasing old women in Europe to hang them as witches. To-day it is a dissolving faith, and we risk nothing in saying that there is not a congregation of Christians in the world that accepts the creed of its Church. The situation is this: There is no one idea of God upon which Christians agree; no one idea of Jesus upon which Christians agree; no one idea of the hereafter upon which Christians agree; no one idea of the Bible upon which Christians agree—in other words, Christians cannot agree among themselves as to what constitutes Christianity.

It is almost a hopeless task to discover the real faith of Christians. One believes one thing, and another something different. There are scores of Christian sects and denominations. The Methodist coat will not fit the Baptist back; the Presbyterian trousers will not go on the Universalist legs; the Roman Catholic shirt is too small for the Unitarian neck; the Quaker cravat does not suit the Episcopalian collar; and so it goes.

Did Jesus teach one faith, one religion? If so, in which Christian Church can it be found? Who is the true follower of Jesus, and which one of his professed disciples knows Jesus for what he was, and can place his finger on the precepts and doctrines which he taught?

One evening a lot of hunters were sitting around the fire in a hotel office in a small village in Massachusetts. They all had dogs. The conversation turned on the intelligence of the various animals of their owners. First one, and then another, related what his dog had done, or could do. One of the party—beside whom lay an English setter—had said nothing. He took in what the others related, but did not seem astonished at any of their stories. When all the others had finished, he proposed that they should put the dogs out of the room, haul off their boots and throw them into a closet in a heap, and then let in the dogs one at a time and see if either would bring out his owner's boots. One after another the dogs came in and went into the closet. Some brought out the wrong boots, some came out with nothing in their mouths, until only one dog was left that had not made a trial. This was the dog owned by the hunter who had proposed the test. He opened the closet door, spoke to the old setter, and said: "Donald, bring me my boots." The dog nosed among the leather for awhile, then scratched on the door, and was let out. He had one of his owner's boots in his mouth. He went in again and brought out the other. That dog knew his master's boots.

About one hundred Christian sects have gone to the New Testament to find the religion of the person they call their "Lord and Master." One has found "baptism by immersion" as the essential feature of this religion; another has found "justification by faith"; a third, "predestination and election"; a fourth, "apostolic succession"; a fifth, "transubstantiation"; a sixth, "trinitarianism"; and so on, through the list. Now, is there any Christian sect that found the "Golden Rule," or the answer which Jesus made to the young man who wished to know what to do in order to inherit eternal life? It looks to us as if none of the followers of Jesus knew his boots; for, if they have not brought out boots which he never wore, they certainly have not brought out his best ones.

(*To be continued.*)

### The Bishop's Pastoral.

My priests, attend. All things decay,  
And even gods will have their day  
If not at seasons mended ;  
Hence we must sometimes patch and scrub  
The god by whom we earn our grub,  
Lest *his* career be ended.

Give ear to me, that I may show  
How one may bluff such folk as know  
Not Greek from Mary's freckles.  
Men know the Father by his Word ;  
If *that* seem truthless and absurd,  
Then good-bye God (and shekels).  
That Word, alas, is full of flaws ;  
Be thankful, then, my priests, because  
'Tis writ in foreign lingo.

Hence, we may freely (hem !) translate—  
That is, you know, right up to date—  
The ancient book may bring, O.

Great pains ye must, my priests, bestow,  
For he may give away the show  
Who wrongly annotateth.  
Touch up each foolish text, till it  
Is proved to mean the opposite  
Of what it clearly stateth.

Replace the Sermon on the Mount  
By quite a different account  
Of Jesu's exhortations ;  
Give way to pressure secular,  
But don't forget *improvements* are  
(Yea, swear they are) *translations*.

Let dazzling flights of rhetoric  
Conceal what queer arithmetic  
Abounds in Bible history ;  
But if these tactics fail to "kid,"  
With bated breath your flock forbid  
To probe "this Holy Mystery."

When excavators excavate,  
And dig up bricks of ancient date,  
Beneath your wing O take 'em.  
Show how their records, line by line,  
Corroborate the Book Divine  
(And if they don't—why, *make 'em*).

Keep Satan in the background quite,  
And only trot him round at night  
To make bad children tremble.  
Don't mention him before adults—  
Uproarious merriment results.  
Don't drop him, but dissemble.

Tone down the fieriness of hell,  
Explaining that it means a spell  
Of mental worry, merely.  
The Larger Hope must not refuse  
Turks, Buddhists, Atheists, and Jews  
(I'd like to damn them, dearly).

But strive to fill them with a sense  
That something awful—weird, intense—  
Will grip 'em when life closes  
If they won't hear us parsons prate,  
And dump hard cash upon the plate  
That's shoved beneath their noses.

When doubters quote a Bible bit  
That's only for the dust-bin fit,  
From impious censure screen it.  
Don't give the Holy Book away—  
Benignly smile, and sweetly say,  
"The Bible doesn't mean it."

Explain blood-guiltiness divine  
By allegories superfine,  
Ingenuously twisted ;  
And whitewash all defiling marks  
On chaste and holy patriarchs  
Who acted as they listed.

And never, O my priests, recant  
When unbelievers, jubilant,  
Leave you no leg to stand on.  
Observe (with unction) : "Friends, you're wrong ;  
*That's* what we've argued all along,  
Your thesis *you* abandon."

E'en should the weapons of your foes  
Excoriate your very nose  
(My words are metaphorical),  
Don't knuckle under, I repeat,  
There's always this secure retreat—  
"It's merely allegorical."

The Book will soon be like the coat  
That someone patched till not a mote  
Remained of the former garment.  
'Twill be absolutely the Word of Man  
When we've cobbled and patched it all we can  
To baffle the infidel "varment."

But to each undiscerning clod  
Proclaim it still the Word of God—  
A literal translation—  
Lest folk, my brethren, smell a rat,  
And find us out. O brothers, that  
Were literal Damnation !

C. D. STEPHENS.

### A Vision of Progress.

I DREAMED that on some planet like our own  
Man had for certainty at last found out  
There was no God. All possibility  
Of faith had shrivelled into nothingness.  
The secret of the Sphinx at last was told ;  
The universe had no more mystery  
Wherewith to enmantle its magnificence.  
Knowledge reigned victor ; from minutest life  
To lordliest, she had solved the Why and Whence.

Ten thousands, crying in horror and dismay  
"There is no God !" slew misery and despair  
By the same stab, leap, bane that slew themselves,  
Till all the lands reeked red with suicide.

But myriads more (so marked I in my dream)  
Dared to live on, desired it, and communed  
Thus with their own souls : "Die, if so you must ;  
Humanity is with immortality  
Still wedded ; right and justice, truth and love,  
Shall be our deity. Tear our churches down ;  
Too long their spires have pointed to a lie.  
Far holier temples than their holiness  
Are built invisibly, yet palpably,  
By mutual pity, fellowship, and help."

Years passed like minutes in my dream. I saw  
Life grown a sanctitude of high resolve,  
Centred in one divine democracy,  
With Now and Here its region of reward,  
Not fabulous hereafter. And I saw  
Death utterly dispeopled of its dreads,  
Ghosts, legends, fantasies, and menaces.

Then, in my dream, I said to my sad heart :  
"Knowledge hath told this world there is no God,  
Yet left it LOVE and cast out FEAR of death.  
Surely such boon of unexampled peace  
Were worth a million vacuous creeds and prayers !"

—Edgar Fawcett, in the "Conservator."

### A Few Gems.

THE supreme endeavor of wisdom is only to seek in life for the fixed point of happiness ; but to seek this fixed point in renouncement and farewell to joy is only to seek it in death. He who moves not a limb is persuaded, perhaps, that he is wise ; but was this the purpose whereof mankind was created ? Ours is the choice—whether wisdom shall be the honored wife of our passions and feelings, our thoughts and desires, or the melancholy bride of death. Let the tomb have its stagnant wisdom, but let there be wisdom also for the hearth where the fire still burns.—*Maeterlinck*.

If an offence come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed.—*Thomas Hardy*.

Men help each other by their joy, not by their sorrow. They are not intended to slay themselves for each other, but to strengthen themselves for each other.—*Ruskin*.

I will never deal with the dealers in damnation while I can hear cursing and swearing gratis in the stable-yard.—*Landor*.

I believe it to be true that a feeling of humanity will ultimately prevail. What I fear is lest at the same time the world should become a great hospital consisting of sick folk and their attendants.—*Goethe*.

The old orthodox asked in his ferocious way : "Is there anyone here who denies the existence of a personal Devil ?" A meek young man in the back of the house arose. "Young man," thundered the parson, "do you declare before this audience that there is no personal Devil ?" The young man bowed his head. "Look up, young man. Look me straight in the eye and answer my question." The young man raised his eyes, and, after surveying the parson's grim visage for a while, said he must admit that he was mistaken.—*Exchange*.

Scene : Birmingham. School examination for juniors.—Visiting Clergyman—Now, my lads, who made the world ? Young Boy—Mr. Chamberlain. Visiting Clergyman—I'm very sorry indeed, my lads, for such ignorance ; you ought to know God made the world. Chorus of Boys—Yah ! Pro-Boer.

Correspondence.

"THE PASSING OF SWINBURNE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. F. H. Watts's last letter is interesting in one respect. Of course, I know the *Freethinker* does not publish the discussion of political issues in its columns. The bearing of Freethought on politics, however, is a general question which I should like to discuss at another time. But, in the present instance, it is interesting for once to deal with the kind of reasoning and temper manifested by those Freethinkers who support the present war. I shall take up Mr. Watts's points one by one, with the promise that this is the last letter I shall write on this subject.

In his first letter Mr. Watts challenged my statement that "there is never a story of a British reverse but it is accompanied by some whine about 'Boer atrocities.'" He asked me if Dr. Leyds had conveyed this "interesting item" to me, or whether I had culled it from a Continental paper. I answered by quoting a message from the *Times*, the chief British newspaper—a message copied into many other newspapers, and typical of most of the accounts from the seat of war appearing in the British press. Mr. Watts now replies by telling me that I "only quote the message of a newspaper correspondent." Most of the accounts, I presume, in the British newspapers are written by correspondents.

As to Lord Kitchener's charge of "wanton murder," it referred to train-wrecking, in cases where he thought no military advantage could be achieved by the enemy, and it appears to have included the affair at Waterval; at any rate, he did not except it, though it was the most prominent instance of train-wrecking before his despatch was written. As a matter of fact, train-wrecking—all train-wrecking—is as legitimate an act of warfare as the cutting of telegraph lines, or any other act which renders the occupation of the country difficult or impossible for the invader. The trains in the Transvaal are not being run in the Boer interest; they are carrying despatches, munitions, stores, etc., for the British, and their obstruction and derailment would be attempted by any army defending its territory in like circumstances. The childish nonsense of dictating to the Boers what they ought and ought not to do in the way of military defence is a comment on the intellectual condition to which militarism has reduced the English people.

Against the expression "fiendish ingenuity," used by me in reference to the prison camps, Mr. Watts quotes phrases from Lord Rosebery and others as to the exemplary conduct of the army in the field. Incidentally, I may remark that, even on that point, these testimonials carry very little weight, since neither Lord Rosebery nor Sir H. Campbell Bannerman nor Sir E. Monson had any first-hand knowledge of the matter. They are only saying what they think "patriotic." But, in reality, Mr. Watts is under a misapprehension. I never attacked the soldiers in the field. I attack the men who sent them there and set them their task, and it is cowardly to defend the policy by pleading the bravery of those who are only its instruments. The private soldier may, or may not, be brave and humane; but he is only an instrument in the hands of his superiors, and those superiors are only instruments in the hands of the Government. The Government either orders or sanctions their measures. It is the Government that must be held responsible, and it is the Government I attack. We have not yet reached a military dictatorship in England; and Lord Kitchener and Lord Roberts are still only the servants of the Government, not its masters. Let those who are in favor of the policy, say, of sending ten thousand little children to their deaths, at least have the courage of their callousness, and let them not seek to evade the issue by irrelevantly telling us how humane are the British officers.

Mr. Watts asks me what authority I have for stating that he regards Dr. Leyds as an "incarnation of untruth." This seems an example of the proverbial short memory of the politicians who share Mr. Watts's views. In his first letter he asked me, Did Dr. Leyds convey a certain item to me, or had I culled it from the Continental press? the implication presumably being that Dr. Leyds and the Continental press were untrustworthy, otherwise the remark was meaningless. And Mr. Watts knows, or ought to know, that it is part of the war-case that Dr. Leyds has bought up, or subsidised, half the press of Europe and America.

I am next told that Mr. Watts does not understand the phrase, "hypocritical callousness," applied to his own attitude. We have now figures showing that eleven thousand Boer children have died in prison camps. In face of this, Mr. Watts asked me if I had ever known such "tenderness and mercy." This, by the way, in the course of a letter protesting against extravagance of language! It seems we are only now to be extravagant in brutality, and only to grow passionate in depriving a little nation of its liberty. Well, I describe Mr. Watts's attitude as one of callousness. But it is more. To be callous is bad enough; but to deck your callousness out in fine names, and call it "tenderness," I describe as "hypocritical callousness"; that is the sense in which I used the phrase which has so troubled my critic.

In conclusion, Mr. Watts, in the stock manner, tells us that he "hates and detests war as much as any man"; that, of course, is merely the ordinary Jingo pose. Mr. John M. Robertson has more than once pointed out that the verses from which the word "Jingo," as describing a political attitude, was culled began:—

*We don't want to fight,  
But, by Jingo, if we do.*

A gentleman who "hates" and "detests" war, but is prepared to approve the squandering of thousands of lives, of £200,000,000, of the devastation and ruin of a flourishing community, in order that a few thousand British citizens might the more easily throw off their citizenship, is not much of a help in the promotion of a sane national policy. After all, an ounce of practice is worth many pounds of such pious professions. FREDERICK RYAN.

A VOICE FROM JAMAICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was about writing to cease my subscription to the *Freethinker*, when I unexpectedly saw my name among notices to correspondents in your issue of November 24, just arrived. My health forbids my return to England, and I, therefore, cannot hope to offer letters as I used, and for whose insertion I thank the Editor very cordially. I also thank you for the punctuality wherewith the *Freethinker* has followed me to Jamaica.

Permit me to inform Mr. Brown I never tried "to save souls through the *Freethinker*." I tried to refute misrepresentations of Scripture, and, in the opinion of myself and friends, I was never allowed the attempt without being entirely successful. But these refutations did not prevent a repetition of the blunder. Thus I pointed out in one letter that Christ never taught poverty was a blessing, especially quoting Mr. Watts. No attempt was made, or could be made, to refute me, yet this error is constantly reiterated in the *Freethinker*. Here is an honest challenge. Will any one of your writers dare to repeat the statement and give the passages on which he finds it? In such case, should I receive the *Freethinker*, I will by return mail (D. V.) demolish the slander a second time.

At present we are surrounded by mysteries. There is much light, and much darkness. Some few choose the darkness, and here is an explanation of the *Freethinker*. Its writers and admirers are merely occupied in manufacturing reasons for sticking to their absurdities. They are like lawyers, inventing arguments for rotten causes, which they are pledged to support.

As the Editor has been good enough to insert many letters from me, I should be thankful if he allowed the insertion of this. I only wonder a man of his great ability does not recognise he is fighting a hopeless battle. It is very suggestive that the vindictive and cowardly attempt to make him bankrupt should have sprung from one who detests Christianity. Talk is cheap; still, I will say that I would have sent my own subscription to the fund for Mrs. Foote, but that its avowed object was to enable the editor of the *Freethinker* to carry on his melancholy campaign with greater energy than ever. HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

ACHILLES AND THE TORTOISE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should certainly say that the solution given by W. P. Ball in your issue for January 12 is correct. As a matter of fact, all the world knows that the tortoise would be overtaken, and quite speedily too, by Achilles.

The problem, as put forth by Zeno, is a paradox in words, and the philosopher made the mistake of assuming that, because the human brain can *conceive* of a space being divided into an infinite number of parts, the space was infinite also. The space between the two competitors is finite, and quickly gets less and less until there is no space at all between them.

Achilles and the tortoise are level. I believe Zeno set forth several other propositions of a similar class; but, whatever trouble they may have presented to some metaphysicians, they present none to mathematicians. W. P. Ball's statement, that '9 = 1 exactly, I cannot accept.

For ease of working in arithmetic we are allowed to assume that; but, as a matter of fact, it is not so. This particular recurring decimal never reaches 1 exactly, although that is the *limit* or *goal* to which it more and more approaches; nonetheless, it never quite reaches that *goal*, not in finite time or infinite time.

For instance, let us examine '9999, etc.

$$\begin{aligned} '9 &= \frac{9}{10} \\ '99 &= \frac{99}{100} \\ '999 &= \frac{999}{1000} \\ '9999 &= \frac{9999}{10000} \end{aligned}$$

And so on for ever if you like; but your vulgar fraction never becomes exactly 1 in value. If it could, a fraction would equal a whole number, which is an evident absurdity.

HEAD MASTER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

## LONDON.

(Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post card.)

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, W. Heaford, "The Meaning of Freethought."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, E. B. Rose, "Belief not the Safe Side."

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, R. P. Edwards, "Folk-lore as an Aid to Religious Study."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow Road): 7, Philip Thomas, "The Ethical Mission."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Stanton Coit, "George Fox."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, J. McCabe, "Hypatia."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (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.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): C. Cohen—11, "Social Evolution and the Struggle for Existence"; 3, "Darwinism, Religion, and Morals"; 7, "The Necessity of Atheism." January 21, Annual Soirée.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club, Victoria Buildings, 17 Little Horton-lane): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Ghosts."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, H. O. Newland, "Sentiment and Science in Morality."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; Open discussion; 6.30, Social meeting in Commemoration of Burns and Paine.

HULL (No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Smith.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote—11, "Tolstoy 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, J. Mayho, "The History of China Missions."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Annual and Quarterly Meeting; 7, Lecture or Reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Lecture Arrangements.

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—January 29 and 30, Debate at Preston. February 2, Sheffield. March 16, Liverpool.

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