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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Gore.

SOME will think that we ought to apologise for the sanguinary heading of this article. But we are really not swearing, nor using any other form of bad language. It is not our fault that the gentleman who is at present causing so much excitement in the religious world is called GORE. It is not his fault either. A child takes his name from his father without reference to his future occupation; thus Mr. Peace becomes a burglar and a murderer, and Mr. Gore a famous Christian preacher.

Canon Gore is trying hard to get confirmed, consecrated, and installed as Bishop of Worcester. Probably he will sink down in his diocese, like other bishops, as a mere local wonder; and the "Protestant" party are not well-advised in their opposition to his advancement. They are giving him a splendid advertisement, which will greatly increase his notoriety and influence. After all, he is by no means a great man. We have read a good deal of what he has written, and we are unable to detect the slightest sign of genius. Take away his ritualism, his asceticism, and his celibacy, and what is left? Nothing but a moderate cleverness, and a smooth way of saying very little. If he had to depend upon his writings, instead of his clerical eccentricities, his fame would be of a very modest description. Read a page of Newman and then a page of Gore, and you will feel the difference (if you are capable of feeling it) between genius and mediocrity.

But as the "Protestant" party are making such a tremendous fuss over Dr. Gore's elevation to the see of Worcester, we may as well hear what they have to say. The Church Association has issued a manifesto on the subject. Some portions of it are of no interest to outsiders. Dr. Gore may have preached opposition to Bishops when they are in opposition to the progress of High Churchism; he may have taught something very like transubstantiation; he may be as great an upholder of Confession as any priest of the Catholic Church; he may believe in the value of incense and other religious stimulants; he may sail right up to the wind in the matter of the Mass; he may be a member of a monkish community pledged to poverty and celibacy. But this is all of domestic interest. Anyhow it does not concern *us*. We should neither grieve nor rejoice if Dr. Gore were to follow the Gospel as far as Origen, and not only practise celibacy, but make it impossible that he could ever practise anything else. What we propose to notice is the charge of heresy. This is a matter which outsiders can appreciate.

The Church Association's manifesto gives some extracts from Dr. Gore's article on "Inspiration" in *Lux Mundi*, which prove that he "advocates the destructive errors of what is called 'Higher Criticism.'" Now what are these destructive errors? They are the veriest commonplaces of scientific Biblical criticism. Moses did not write the Pentateuch. The Priestly Law was made up and ascribed to him centuries afterwards. Jonah, Daniel, and Job are dramatic compositions. Jewish history before the time of

Abraham is mythical. The story of the Fall is an allegorical picture. Such are the mild heresies that are denounced in the most vehement language by the Church Association. "Canon Gore's *Lux Mundi*," the manifesto says, "is likely to do more harm than Paine's *Age of Reason*, because put forth by a bishop of the Church. It is worse than even Romanism, because the Pope leaves us the Bible as God's Word written, though he puts it under lock and key; whereas Canon Gore's book destroys our belief in the Bible itself." This is not very elegant English. Nevertheless we can see what the writer is driving at, and why the Church Association regards "the appointment of Canon Gore to a bishopric" as "the most fatal blow given to the Church since the Reformation," and "not only to the Reformation, but to Christianity itself."

This is stupid enough to be honest, as it is pious enough to be logical. These "Protestants" want to stand in the old ways, just as if they were not flooded by the advancing tide of thought. They fancy that knowledge can be kept out by paper barriers, that facts can be abolished by denunciation, that the policy of the pursued ostrich is the height of sound wisdom. We need not say that they are mistaken. It is quite impossible to restore the Bible to its old position. The "Protestant" party would be broken, routed, and annihilated in any open encounter with the forces of Freethought. The High Church party have adopted safer tactics. They are like the Boers who dress in khaki. Their methods are "slim." They cause confusion, and it serves their turn. By admitting what they see can no longer be denied, by putting on a cheerful air of sweet reasonableness, by pretending that their borrowed teachings as to the Bible are their own honest discoveries, they persuade a number of people that it is not necessary to leave the Christian Church, that the truth about the Bible can be held within it; and thus they save the one all-important attribute of the Bible—namely, its Inspiration. As long as that *word* is retained, however it may be defined or understood, the trick is done and the cause is saved—at least for the immediate future.

There is one sentence in this manifesto which shows the extreme simplicity of these Church Association Protestants. "If Jonah and Daniel," they say, "are only dramatic representations or allegorical pictures, why should not Samson and Jephthah, Elijah and Elisha, Joshua and the walls of Jericho, be the same?" Ay, why not? Disbelieve the whale story, and the story of the hungry lions and the inedible prophet, and how will you believe that the walls of Jericho fell flat at the sound of the trumpets? True, the trumpets were of *brass*, and blown by *priests*; but even then the story is too thin for a modern credulity. Take warning then. Be wise in time. Did not De Quincey argue that murder was bad because it led to theft, lying, and Sabbath-breaking? So the man who gives up Jonah and Daniel ends by refusing to go to Jericho.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Study of Religion.—III.

THE study of religion is more difficult than would otherwise be the case by the fact of its having been always bound up with aspects of life with which it has no necessary connection. In the general mind there exists but a very hazy sense of discrimination between casual and causal connections, and that two things have usually been associated is generally considered proof of their inseparability. It is inevitable that this should be so. The course of evolution is from the indefinite to the definite, and distinctions that are quite commonplace to the educated mind of to-day would have been almost meaningless to people in a much earlier culture-stage. And at the beginning religion is so intimately bound up with all phases of life that it is almost impossible to disassociate them. Only as society develops does one branch of life after another slowly separate itself from the sphere of the supernatural; first asking but to be left alone, next claiming the status of an equal, and, finally, asserting the authority of a superior.

The confusion of necessary with accidental relationships is strongly apparent in connection with religion and ethics. Organised religions fight hard against having such an important—and profitable—field as human morality withdrawn from their control, and the loss is greater with modern than with primitive peoples. Mark Twain's Yankee at the court of King Arthur suggested, after he had dethroned Merlin in the good graces of the king, that the old magician might still be allowed to run the weather and suchlike trifles; and had religion been robbed of its command over ethics in an earlier generation, there would still have been the world of physical phenomena for it to control. But physical phenomena are now completely emancipated from religion, and as social growth tends to concentrate attention upon ethical character and to treat theological speculations as more or less waste of time, religious organisations strive with all their energy to retain the post of directors of morals, since they can no longer parade as the controllers of the physical universe.

Dr. Jastrow is quite correct in pointing out that primitive religions have no connection whatever with morality, and also that "it is man's ethical sense that exerts an influence upon his beliefs, and not *vice versa*. We cannot conceive man ascribing ethical qualities to his gods until he himself has proceeded far enough along the line of moral development to have established for his own guidance some ethical principles, however simple they may be." The savage has no more moral respect for his gods than he has for his chief—probably not so much. He begins to worship his imaginary deities from fear, not from moral reverence. The moralisation of religious beliefs belongs to a much later and more critical stage of evolution. While the gods are always magnified men, they are not perfected men. Early religions are an *extension* of human nature, so to speak, and not an idealisation of it. It is, in fact, substantially correct to say, with the author:—

"The various rites practised by primitive society to ward off evils, or to secure the protection of dreaded powers or spirits, are based primarily upon logical considerations. If a certain stone is regarded as sacred, it is probably because it is associated with some misfortune or some unusual piece of good luck. Someone, after sitting on the stone, may have died; or, on sleeping on it, may have had a remarkable vision. Taking, again, so common a belief among all peoples as the influence for good or evil exerted by the dead upon the living, and the numerous practices to which it gives rise.....it will be difficult to discover in these beliefs and ceremonies the faintest suggestion of any ethical influence. It is not the good, but the powerful, spirits that are invoked; an appeal to them is not made by showing them examples of kindness, justice, or noble deeds, but by bribes, flatteries, and threats."

No one who studies the conditions of savage life can question the truth of the above quotation. And, bearing this in mind, it is difficult to find justification for the author's further contention that religion "pays the debt it owes to ethics by stimulating the ethical sense of maninnate ethical sentiment is strengthened by being brought into connection with the will of the gods..... The union of ethics with religion has produced the feeling in the human race of the sanctity of the indi-

vidual." It is difficult to argue against such *obiter dicta* as these; one can only say that all we know of the history of religion goes to prove the exact reverse. Dr. Jastrow himself points out how religions gradually run to seed in mystical mummeries and senseless ceremonial, and the proof is ample that there are few things that will so sadly confuse a man's sense of right and wrong as religious beliefs. Moreover, the religious motive is, as he has pointed out, originally fear; and how it can be held that the introduction of the element of fear of supernatural agencies, and the consequent feeling that these powers must be placated at all costs—how it can be held that these elements have helped to clarify man's moral sense is puzzling to understand.

It is clear that no such help to ethics comes from primitive religions. A very large percentage of the practices amongst savages that most shock European sensitiveness may be traced to religious sources. And in modern European history the Christian Churches have been, on the whole, a non-moral—often an immoral—influence. The truth of the matter is expressed by Dr. Jastrow in the statement that it "is necessary to bear in mind that the advance in religious thought begins with those members of the community who are intellectually superior. It is they who first recognise the contradiction between standards of conduct evolved in a natural way and views held about the gods, and who bring about an ethical transformation, more or less effective, in their beliefs." Exactly; it is not the religion that purifies the man—it is the man that purifies the religion. All religions, beliefs, doctrines, rites, and ceremonies undergo modification and refinement as the result of intellectual or social pressure from the outside. The best men of every generation are usually better than their gods, and it is they who are responsible for whatever improvement the conception of deity undergoes. And as with gods, so with doctrines. A society in that stage of development where slave-owning is normal finds nothing repulsive in the slave code of the Old and New Testament. When a change in social or economic conditions occurs, slavery is denounced as repugnant to the principles of true religion. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" commands the support of myriads of believers; the growth of knowledge, by disclosing the real cause of supposed demoniacal possession, wipes it out of the minds of all religious people. Heresy-hunting, once regarded as a solemn service that man owes to God, becomes more and more objectionable under changed conditions. The doctrine of eternal damnation undergoes a precisely similar transformation. And in all these cases, and many others that might be named, it is not religion quickening and strengthening man's sense of right and wrong, but the gradual modification of the intellectual and social environment, which renders such conceptions altogether unsuitable and repulsive.

The true function of religion in history is not stimulation, but conservation. Every religion has its roots, and its only living period, in the past. It is impossible to ever think of a religion such as Judaism, Christianity, or Mohammedanism being born to-day. These religions all exist to-day because they were here yesterday. They took their origin in mental and social conditions that cannot be repeated, and every advance, every fresh conquest that man gains over nature, is removing us further from the conditions that give religion life. It is for this reason principally that every organised religion fights against reform as long as it can. It is only the expression of the principle of self-preservation, and the modifications in their teachings are always the smallest concessions they feel bound to make to forces that they are powerless to overcome.

There is a curious slip made by Dr. Jastrow in the suggestion that "culture is, to a large extent, an offshoot of religion. The various arts and sciences are linked in their origin to religious beliefs and to the mental stimulus that emanates from them." The sentence is worth noting because it illustrates the fallacy I have been dealing with above—that of mistaking a casual for a causal connection. The only possible grounds for regarding the arts and sciences as an offshoot of religion is that their differentiation as distinct branches of human effort is comparatively late. And the only reason for treating religion as the parent form is that it is the overshadowing factor in the life of

primitive man. But surely there is not here sufficient reason for such a conclusion? Let us take the writer's own illustration of his statement. "Medicine," he says, "though the most materialistic of the sciences, is at its origin the profession of the priest *par excellence*. To the priest the people came for relief from human ills, and he grants it by virtue of his closer touch with the gods and his control over the evil spirits which are supposed to cause the ills and worries of human flesh. The priest prescribed the magic formulas which would drive the evil spirits out of the body of the sufferer. He accompanied the utterances with medicaments or salutary advice, the efficacy of which was dependent upon the proper performance of incantation rites."

So far, good. No one will dispute that in early times the priest monopolised medicine, as he did many other things. But how can this be said to have given birth to medicine? The function of the priest, as priest, is, as Dr. Jastrow himself points out, "essentially that of a 'go-between' between the Deity and the worshipper." Does Dr. Jastrow believe that the incantations cured disease? Certainly not; and, therefore, the priest, as priest, and religion, as religion, could have had nothing whatever to do with medical science. Any herbs or natural curative agencies used by savage medicine-men are no more to be counted to the credit of religion than the making of a good pair of boots by a Presbyterian bootmaker is to be counted to the credit of the Westminster Confession. So far, then, from religion nursing medical science into existence, its influence serves to discover the effective agencies by a number of superstitious and useless ceremonies, and afterwards to stand persistently in the road of any attempt to propound a rational theory of the nature and treatment of disease.

It is curious, too, bearing in mind much that the author says in other parts of his book, to come across the assertion that "Christianity is so closely bound up with modern civilisation that its perpetuity is assured even against the inroads of current thought." The connection of Christianity with much that goes to make up modern civilisation may be admitted, but the connection is certainly not as close, nor the influence so overwhelming, as it was, say, during the Middle Ages; nor does it require very much reflection to see that the connection, such as it is, is rapidly breaking up. Besides, all great religions have been more or less bound up with the existing civilisations. The pagan religions were bound up with the civilisations of antiquity, and the Mohammedan religion is still bound up with the civilisation of Turkey. And in these cases the connection was, and is, much closer than that existing between Christianity and the civilisation of any European state. Yet the religions of antiquity have disappeared, it is not claimed that the perpetuity of Islamism is assured, and it is impossible to see why any distinction should be made in the case of Christianity.

A more scientific conclusion would be that all religions are bound to ultimately pass through the same stages of dissolution and decay. A sudden break there certainly will not be, but a gradual decadence there is bound to occur. Christianity is not, any more than other religion, secure against the inroads of modern culture and fearless criticism. Already the specific doctrines of Christianity are discredited with the best minds of Europe. Even where they are held in name, they are trimmed and refined and reinterpreted out of all likeness to their former selves. And what has happened, and is happening, to doctrines must sooner or later happen to fundamental religious ideas. Scientific methods applied to all departments are fast taking all power from the hands of the gods and reducing them to mere nonentities. And even though anthropology were silent, and we were ignorant of the genesis of the god idea, people could not for ever continue to worship a deity who does nothing. But we are not ignorant of the genesis of religious ideas. We can see with greater and greater certainty that the only real foundation for religious conceptions is the combined fear and ignorance of our savage ancestors. The more religions are studied the more certain does this become, and Dr. Jastrow's book, with all its faults, may do much to drive this lesson home to thoughtful minds.

C. COHEN.

Christ and Mohammed.

It is not uncommon for Christian ministers, while they extol the claims of their own faith, to depreciate and misrepresent all other religions. The supposed followers of Jesus are so fanatically wrapped up in the religion of the Cross that they appear to be oblivious to any good that may be found in other theological systems. I have just been reading a verbatim report in *The Christian World Pulpit* of a special sermon by the Rev. Samuel Horton on "The Religion of the Future," in which Christianity is credited with nearly all the good that has been accomplished since its inception; and prophetically it is stated that the future greatness of all nations depends upon the recognition and practice of the teachings of Christ. The fallacy of these allegations is, no doubt, too apparent to the readers of the *Freethinker* to require any lengthy refutation. The reverend gentleman himself laments the little influence his religion has had upon the nations, for he says:—

"Jesus Christ has never yet had his chance in the world, but it is coming.....The pulpit is losing influence, and the minister is preaching to empty pews, because we have confined ourselves to a very limited class of subjects, and have quietly ignored three-fourths of life as being outside our jurisdiction. As Jesus Christ looked the men of his time in the face who were robbing the widow and the fatherless, and for a pretence made long prayers, He exclaimed, 'Woe unto you, hypocrites!' But some of us are looking men in the face, Sabbath by Sabbath, who are putting the gold into their pockets wrung by oppression and wrong from the poor, large dividends obtained from shares in breweries and distilleries, rent from unsanitary property, or the spoils of a system of commercial gambling."

Now, this indictment is not by any means favorable either to the potency of the influence of Christ or to the effect of his teachings upon those who profess to accept them. It is, indeed, strange, if Christ be a part of the Godhead and has had the aid of his omnipotent Father, that he "has never yet had his chance in the world." What human father who was worthy of the name, and who had the power to act differently, would thus treat his son? Two thousand years have passed during which millions of devoted adherents of Jesus have done their best to assist their "Lord and Master" in securing a "chance." To the same object untold wealth, supreme military power, and unstinted devotion have been given, and still we are told his "chance" has not come. Surely there must be that which is wrong somewhere. True, we are informed Christ's chance "is coming," but when? Nowhere, at the present time, are there any indications that he will be more successful in the future than he has been in the past. On the contrary, the fact is evident that his most enthusiastic admirers constantly ignore both his example and his teachings. Even the Rev. Mr. Horton is not too sanguine upon the future chance of his idol, for he says: "We regard with some suspicion this cry, 'Back to Christ,' lest it should become the rallying word for new division and strife." This is rather rough upon the boast of the "calm influence exercised by the 'Prince of Peace.'"

The reverend gentleman's strongest specimen of orthodox fanaticism and erroneous statements is to be found in his reference to "those older faiths which have satisfied the spiritual cravings of men for centuries past, some of which were venerable with years when Christianity was yet in its cradle." He continues:—

"These old faiths exhibit all the symptoms of senility and decay. They have lost touch with the growth of modern civilisation; grey hairs are upon them. They have had their day, served their purpose, and must soon cease to be. They have no power of recuperation. Brahminism and Buddhism are dying at their roots.....Mohammedanism has been wedded to cruelty and oppression; its garments are dyed red with the blood, not of its own Apostles, but with that of the victims of the vilest form of tyranny and oppression. A few more Armenian massacres, and, for the sake of the peace of the world and the advancement of the race, the nations will rise and overthrow the throne of the prophet who has ever made faith to be the slave of power. It is written not only in the Book of God, but across the pages of history, 'that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

This is a fair sample of the lack of sound reasoning

which generally characterises pulpit utterances. Supposing the statement to be correct that the "old faiths exhibit all the symptoms of senility and decay," cannot the same be said with truth of Christianity? Why, the whole burden of Mr. Horton's sermon was a condemnation of the Church for not attending to the national and civic wants of the people, and he specially mentions ten reforms which he admits are much needed, but which Christianity has failed to supply. It is a well-known proverb that "people who live in glass houses should not throw stones." Therefore, exponents of the Christian superstition should not make charges against other similar faiths that can be urged with equal force against their own. If "Brahminism and Buddhism are dying at their roots," the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are practically dead. The basis of orthodoxy was the belief in the Bible God, the fall of man, the existence of a personal devil, and the reality of hell, with its material fire, wherein the "lost souls" were to live "for ever" after leaving their earthly abode. The belief in these once thought essentials of orthodox Christianity no longer survives amongst the principal advocates of the faith. Where is the intelligent believer in Christianity now who will defend the God of the Old Testament? Personally, I have not met such a person for years. The history of the human race disproves the alleged fall of man, while science has shut up hell, and philosophy has killed the devil. The so-called Christianity of to-day, so far as it is practical, is a secular system built upon the ruins of a defunct theology.

The rev. gentleman's attack upon Mohammed betrays an unpardonable lack of knowledge and a very narrow and bigoted spirit. Talk of Mohammedanism's garments being "dyed red with blood," what of Christianity? Its history is one of cruelty and massacre. Let the reader consult the writings of Buckle, Lecky, Professor Dick, Dr. Priestley, Earl Russell, and Mosheim, and he will find it recorded that the history of the Christian faith has been one of bloodshed, oppression, and persecution. If it were true "that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword," the chance of certain Christians dying a peaceful death is very remote. What does Mr. Horton say to the records of the Albigenses and the Waldenses; the persecution of the Huguenots, the St. Bartholomew's massacre, the Sack of Magdeburg, the story of the Low Countries, the suppression of the Catholics by Henry VIII., the butcheries of Drogheda and Wexford, and the depopulation of Mexico? These are but a few of the many instances which could be cited of the inhuman manner in which Christians have acted towards their fellow beings. When will the adherents (in theory) of Christ adopt his advice—namely, "Cast out first the beam out of thine eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye"? "We must not," says Bosworth Smith, "judge of a religion by its perversions or corruptions; and it is as fair to take Turkish despots, and maniac dervishes, and Persian libertines, as types of the Mohammedan life, as it would be to take Anabaptists, or Pillar Saints, or Shakers, as types of the Christian life."

I hold no brief for Mohammed; but Christians are not the persons who can consistently find fault with him. Like all religious enthusiasts, he, at times, acted in defiance of all reason; but Christ did the same. In my mind, there is no doubt that Christ was vastly inferior as a general reformer to the Prophet of Arabia, while those who shared the latter's religious views did considerably more to encourage all the agencies of civilisation than did the believers in the Cross. There is, without doubt, something marvellous in the conquests of the Arabs, and it is little wonder that the children of the desert saw, or thought they saw, in this rapid progress the finger of Allah. In order to thoroughly understand the influence of Mohammedanism upon Europe, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the progress of Christian monasticism and of its immediate results. The one object of the monk was to separate himself as much as possible from the earth and the things thereof. Spreading north, south, east, and west, the system, originally confined to Egypt and Syria, acted like a virulent cancer upon the lives and habits of the people. Beside the cell of the solitary hermit and anchorite, content to dwell in caves and to perpetrate frightful acts of self-torture, the monastery was established. In

the East the monks were idle and good-for-nothing fanatics. Intellectual pursuits were not encouraged until a comparatively late epoch in monastic history, and it is not surprising to find that before the Mohammedan invasion there was not a trace of science to be found in the whole of Europe. Ignorance and superstition are rarely, if ever, found apart. Conversely, it may be said that superstition can only exist where ignorance is in the ascendant. Science means knowledge; the cultivation of science is, therefore, always accompanied by the decay of superstition. The state of Europe before the Saracenic invasion was, to all intents and purposes, barbaric; the only places in which anything was found beyond mere semi-savage aggregations of men being the somnolent and ascetic monastic establishments. Suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, the Christian world found itself shaken almost to pieces by a new and strange element, of which it had had no previous cognisance. Soon after the introduction of this foreign element it became, as it were, metamorphosed, the warriors of the Koran becoming transmuted into the soldiers of physical science.

It is not intended in this article to represent Mohammedanism in any other aspect than that of a figment evolved from either the scheming or the diseased brain of an Oriental enthusiast; but I affirm that in some respects it stands conspicuously pre-eminent among other theological fictions as that which has not only offered the least impediment to human progress, but as a simple Deism, under the shadow of which philosophers, scientists, physicians, and Freethinkers have been enabled to attack and undermine the towers and citadels of the city of superstition.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Bible Creation Story.—III.

THE next matter to be noticed in connection with the Christian perversions of the Bible Creation story is the absurd apologetic contention that the word "day" (Heb., *yom*) does not mean a literal day of twenty-four hours, but a long geological period of many thousands—if not millions—of years. This is gravely asserted in the face of the following precise Bible statement:—

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. *Six days* shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.....for in *six days* the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. xx. 8-11).

Of course, if the word "day" signifies a geological age in the first chapter of Genesis, it must have the same meaning in this passage; for in the latter the same Hebrew word is used, and the time spent in "making" the universe is distinctly stated. But here our Bible reconcilers, driven into a corner, are constrained to admit that the six "days" on which man is permitted to work do not mean epochs, but natural days. The misrepresentation, then, takes the following form: In one and the same paragraph the period "six days" is mentioned twice; in one case the word "day" means a solar day of twenty-four hours, in the other case it means an age comprising hundreds of thousands of years. Moreover, in this same paragraph, the Jews are commanded to work for six days, and to rest on the seventh day, *because* the Creator had set them the example by once doing so himself.

But in the Creation story itself the author's meaning of the word "day" is clearly apparent. When, on the fourth day, the sun and moon are made, Elohim is represented as saying: "And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for *days* and years." Again, two verses further on, the Creator is said to have appointed the sun "to rule the *day*"—that is, the illuminated portion of the twenty-four hours, or the period of daylight. There can thus be no doubt as to what the writer of Genesis meant by "day."

The primary meaning of *yom* is brightness, shining, splendor; hence sunlight or daylight. It is easy to understand how, when several successive "daylights" were spoken of, the term came to include the night also or the whole period of twenty-four hours. The word "day" in the Hebrew Scriptures has three meanings—(1) the period of daylight; (2) the natural day of

twenty-four hours; (3) some future time, which may possibly include many days. But never in a single instance does the word signify a period embracing thousands of years. This will be made clear by a few examples:—

Gen. i. 5: "And God called the light *day*."

2 Sam. iii. 35: "While it was yet *day*."

Gen. xxxix. 10: "She spake to Joseph *day by day*."

Job iii. 3: "Let the *day* perish wherein I was born."

P's. cxix. 164: "Seven times *a day* do I praise thee."

Jer. xvi. 19: "In the *day* of affliction."

Eccl. vii. 14: "In the *day* of prosperity be joyful, and in the *day* of adversity consider."

Is. ii. 11: "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that *day*."

It is the last class of examples—those in which the word "day" refers to some future time—which has suggested to Christian advocates the misrepresentation we are now considering. But in all such passages, though the day predicted may be distant, the word "day" itself has not the signification of an immense period of time. The last example, for instance, simply means: "The Lord alone shall be exalted *when that day comes*." That "day," when it arrived, might be succeeded by other days of exaltation; but this does not affect the question. The same may be said of "the day of the Lord," "the day of vengeance," "the day of destruction," etc. Such expressions as "the day of prosperity," "the day of adversity," "the day of affliction," etc., denote, no doubt, a longer period than a literal day. In these cases the plural form of the noun would be more correct, as in the following examples:—

P's. xciv. 13: "Give him rest from the *days* of adversity."

Job xxx. 27: "*Days* of affliction have come upon me."

The singular form is doubtless more striking and more poetical, which will probably account for its frequent use; but even in the most exceptional of these cases the duration of the "day" is limited to a small portion of a man's life, and never approaches to anything like a geological age.

I have lying before me a large volume of 714 pages, entitled *The Evolution of the Universe*, by W. W. Howard, who, amongst other matters, endeavors to demonstrate that the Bible creation story favors evolution—that is to say, the author skilfully twists the narrative into meaning whatever he pleases. Dealing with "the creative day," he says (p. 483):—

"How these periods of creation can ever have been regarded as days of twenty-four hours is not easy to say.....On the face of the record in Genesis is the meaning that the days, in a scientific aspect, are geological, not geographical. The Hebrew word *yom* is the best that could have been employed to describe these creative periods with God as the Creator.....The word *yom* is used with great latitude in the Bible.....In the fifteenth verse of the twenty-third chapter of Isaiah we read: 'And it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years.' The word *yom* here clearly signifies a long time, of which seventy years would be a small fraction."

This is a fair specimen of the complete assurance with which all kinds of misrepresentations of Scripture are made. The passage upon which Mr. Howard bases his contention, and of which he has quoted only a part, reads as follows:—

"And it shall come to pass in that *day* that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the *days* of one king; after the end of seventy years it shall be unto Tyre as in the song of a harlot."

Here, it will be seen, the mention of "the *days* of one king" proves that the writer of the passage did not attach the meaning to the word "day" which Mr. Howard has given to it. After predicting in the preceding fourteen verses the ruin and desolation of Tyre at some future time, the would-be prophet says in effect: "And when that *day* comes, Tyre shall cease to be a great city of merchants for seventy years—that is, during all the *days* of the life of a king"—a statement in accordance with Ps. xc. 10: "The *days* of our years are three score and ten." Now, in the passage cited by Mr. Howard, since all the *days* in the life of a king are stated to amount to seventy years, it is evident that *one day*—the day upon which the fulfilment of the prophecy was to commence—could not possibly signify "a long

time, of which seventy years would be a small fraction." The seventy years, it is obvious, were not included in the "day" at all; they merely *dated* from that day.

"On the face of the record in Genesis," says this Christian advocate, "is the meaning that the days, in a scientific aspect, are geological, not geographical." It is truly wonderful how some persons are able to discern scientific truths in such a crude and unscientific narrative as that in Genesis. Now, if there be one thing more than another which absolutely proves that the author of the Creation story meant a natural day of twenty-four hours, it is the sentence repeated after the work of each period of creation: "There was evening, there was morning, one day"—"There was evening, there was morning, a second day," etc. The ancient Hebrews reckoned their day from sun-set to the following sun-set; hence "the evening and morning," or darkness succeeded by daylight, constituted one day. And that this was the author's meaning there cannot be the shadow of a doubt.

Says Mr. Howard again: "The events described in the second and third day's record prove that it denoted a vast lapse of time. The word could not possibly have been used to signify twenty-four hours before the fourth day, as the sun's light only made such a thing possible then. That it has not this meaning when applied to the events of this fourth day is clear from what took place on it."

Here, indeed, is a choice sample of Christian apologetic reasoning. Science proves that the earth's development into its present condition—which the Bible narrator describes as the work of the second and third days—was a gradual and slow process, which must have taken ages upon ages of immense duration to have attained. This fact being incontrovertible, it is gratuitously assumed that the Bible account of the Creation is correct, and, such being the case, the word "day" must necessarily signify a vast period of time. In other words, because science proves the sacred writer to have been hopelessly wrong, therefore that writer could not have meant what he said. By this convenient and delightful method any Bible fiction can be reconciled with known facts. All one has to do is to first ascertain the teaching of science, and then to interpret the Bible narrative in accordance with it—which Mr. Howard has done.

"The word *day*," says this Bible reconciler, "could not possibly have been used to signify twenty-four hours before the fourth day, as the sun's light only made such a thing possible then." If this gentleman had said "could not have been *correctly* used," he would not be making statements at variance with facts, for the inspired penman *has* used the word in that sense, and this no less than seven times. Not only has the sacred writer done this, but the truth of his story has never been seriously questioned until comparatively recent times, and the reason for the change is not far to seek. The employment of the terms "evening" and "morning," as already stated, places the inspired writer's meaning beyond all doubt; for they are never used in the Hebrew Scriptures, either together or separately, in any other sense than the beginning or the end of a solar day. And this fact clearly proves the misleading character of the Christian perversions.

The well-known Christian apologist, the Rev. Dr. Kinns, has written a work on *Moses and Geology* in which he interprets the days of the Bible Creation story as "indefinite periods of time." In confirmation of this view he cites the concluding words of Psalm xciv. 8—"in the *day* of temptation in the wilderness." Here, he contends, is an example in which the word *yom* stands for forty years. Had the rev. gentleman used the Revised Version, he would have seen that the passage reads "in the day of Massah in the wilderness," and had he turned to Exodus xvii. 17 he would have discovered that the reference is to one particular day when the Israelites murmured because they had no water, and that the place where they thus "tempted" God was named "Massah" (temptation). In the Authorised Version a proper name has been translated. Dr. Kinns has taken the day, upon which the ancient Jews "tempted" the Lord by asking for something to drink, as representing the whole period of forty years during which that nation is said to have been wandering in the desert.

Book Chat.

MR. H. G. WELLS, whose *Anticipations* is so much talked about, has all along been playing the part of a scientific speculator and prophet. We fancy, however, that he over-estimates the human capacity (including his own) of seeing into the future. So many able men in the past have said what was coming, and so many have been mistaken. Still, although prophecy, as George Eliot observed, is the most gratuitous form of error, it is one of the safest to indulge in; for, in most cases, the prophet is dead, and beyond the reach of abuse and missiles, when the event falsifies his prediction.

* * *

Mr. Wells lectured at the Royal Institution recently on "The Discovery of the Future." The newspaper reports we have seen are not a sufficient basis for a criticism of his discourse. But there are two points that stand out clearly enough, on which we will say a few words. Mr. Wells emphasised the truth, the *old* truth now, that "the adequacy of causation is universal," and that therefore "the future is just as fixed and determined, just as settled and inevitable, just as much a matter of fact, as the past." Towards the end of his address he expressed a disbelief as to the importance of leading men, and stated his own view that if, by some juggling with space and time, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, William the Conqueror, and Robert Burns had all been changed at birth, it would not have produced any particular dislocation of the course of destiny. Of course it would not. Nothing could dislocate the course of destiny. That were a contradiction in terms. But to say that the course of things would have been just the same without the operation of any special factor is to say what nobody knows, and what on the face of it contradicts the law of universal causation. A spark of fire may be called an insignificant thing, but if it falls on a barrel of gunpowder and causes havoc and massacre, it may be a very important thing. When those barrels of gunpowder were laid under the Houses of Parliament, with the object of blowing up the Protestant King and his Protestant Lords and Commons, there could have been no catastrophe without a little fire to cause an explosion. Ever so little would do, but that little was absolutely necessary. It would not, scientifically speaking, have been the *cause* of the explosion, but it was an indispensable *part* of the cause. In the same way, it may be argued that great men are indispensable. They fulfil their part in the world-drama under the same law of universal causation as the masses play their part. Certainly it would *not* be the same thing without them. And, after all, is it not a waste of time to talk about what might have happened if Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, and Robert Burns had never been born at all, or had been born at other times and places. They were born where and when they were born. To the man of science that is an end of the matter. But the dreamer insists on being heard. Very well then, let us have a chat with him.

* * *

Take the case of Robert Burns. Last year no less than 38,760 pilgrims visited the lowly cottage in which he was born. That is more than the pilgrims to the birthplace of Shakespeare, who numbered 31,784. Burns is not, therefore, a greater than Shakespeare. Such a method of appraising genius is ridiculous. Besides, even in the matter of mere numbers, there is a reason why Burns should be more attractive than Shakespeare—particularly to Scotsmen. A lyric poet will always beat a dramatic poet in popularity. He is nearer to the common heart of man. Moreover, the Scotch are a people scattered to the ends of the earth, and when they visit the land of their birth they go to that "sacred" spot in Ayrshire. For in this case there is really no competition. England has other great poets besides her greatest, but with Scotland it is Burns first and the rest nowhere. Now let Mr. Wells consider. Will he say that Scotland would have been just the same without the genius of Robert Burns? Why, it lights and colors the whole inner life of the nation. It may be replied, of course, that Burns only expressed what other men thought and felt. Yes, but that gift of expression makes all the difference. A dog bowing his head in dumb grief over his dead master is pathetic

enough; there is a world of sorrow in his poor speechless heart; and little more can be said for the average human mourner if left to himself. But a poet who can write a "To Mary in Heaven"—to say nothing of the poets, whether in prose or verse, whose great utterances on death and grief have sounded through the ages—throws a beautiful light into the blackness of the sepulchre, opens the fount of bitter-sweet medicinal tears, and by the divine might of sympathy lays his hand like a soothing god upon the throbbing heart, until it works again in harmony with the brain, and love's old smile softens the rigorous face of death.

* * *

The way to estimate great men is to fancy the past without them, and our inner life without their influence. Nor is Mr. Wells the man to sneer at this criterion in his heart of hearts. He knows as well as we do—may be better—that if men travel the whole world, and sail the very ocean of air, and participate in unheard-of advantages of practical science, every one of them lives his life after all inside his own skin.

G. W. F.

An African Religious Centre.

WHAT UNADULTERATED RELIGION IS LIKE.

REUTER'S correspondent with the Arco expeditionary force gives the following account of a famous native religious centre:—

"The approach to the Long Ju Ju is through dense bush, which gradually becomes thicker and thicker until one arrives at the entrance of a deep, oval-shaped pit, seventy feet deep, sixty yards long, and fifty yards wide. One then climbs down the precipitous sides of the rock into a narrow gorge, and into running water, up which one wades, passing under two fences, until one finally comes to a place where the water comes out of the solid rock in two big streams, which unite below a small island, on which are two altars, one made of many trade guns, stuck muzzle downwards into the ground, and topped with skulls, the other being of wood, and supporting more skulls, bones, feathers, blood, eggs, and other votive offerings to the Ju Ju, including the head of the last victim. Over the rock, where is the source of the water, is a roof of human skulls with a curtain, the top part of which is composed of clothes, and the lower part of native matting, screening the rock, and hanging just short of the water's edge. The lower portions of the rock, composing the other sides of this crater, are draped with mats only. On the left of the entrance, centrally situated and opposite the island, has been hewn out of the rock a flat-topped ledge for sacrificial purposes. The water, about twelve inches deep, is full of tame, grey-colored fish, about two feet in length, with long suckers and glaring yellow eyes, which have a most bizarre appearance as they glide noiselessly through the clear water in the dim light of this charnel-house of fetish lore, which is roofed with densely intertwined creepers. These fish are regarded as sacred. On the left of the exit lies another pile of human skulls and other relics of Ju Ju rites, and on the right the last sacrifice—a white goat, trussed up in the branches of a palm tree, and starving to death.

"The Long Ju Ju is probably the best known and most powerful religious centre in West Africa, and is visited from hundreds of miles by natives of all sorts and conditions. It is impossible, at present, to get full and accurate details from the people of the ritual which has been in vogue for centuries in this gloomy cave of savage superstition—firstly, because they are afraid, and, secondly, because the priests have yet to be captured. Everything which is sacrificed—such as cattle, goats, fowls, etc.—must be white. The High Priest of the oracle, who, it appears, is swathed in clothes, is usually out of sight, and addresses the pilgrims in impressive monotone, having previously been made cognisant of every detail concerning the supplicants and their disputes by means of a sort of fetish Freemasonry, which certainly extends as far as the limits of Southern Nigeria. The conducting of a visitor to the Ju Ju is usually a somewhat lengthy process, and when he arrives in its proximity he is led by a circuitous route, and finally marched in backwards. It would seem to be a fair estimate to put the number of pilgrims down at about 500 annually, all of whom pay dearly for the advice or decree which is vouchsafed to them. Probably the number of human sacrifices does not reach a total of fifty per annum, whilst about 200 people are sold into slavery, and the remainder are allowed to go away free."

It is told of an old hen that, after the Methodist preacher had eaten and gone, she was heard to say that one of her sons had "entered the ministry."

Come Out in the Open.

COME out in the open! Stand forth in the light!
Look facts in the face!
To hug one's illusions, take refuge in flight,
Crouch low in the shadow and cover the sight,
Are little men's ways.

Come out in the open! Stand forth in the light!
And fear not to look!
What seemed so mysterious during the night
Will shed all its terrors when plain to the sight,
Like print in a book.

Come out in the open! Stand forth in the light!
Dispute not with facts!
Exchange faith for knowledge and fancy for sight.
Make this thy religion: "What seems to me right
Shall order my acts."

Come out in the open! Stand forth in the light!
View all undismayed!
Dread palsies the soul; superstition is blight;
But knowledge guides mortals to live life aright,
And die unafraid.

—Miles Menander Dawson.

Acid Drops.

THE Bishop of Winchester preached at the Queen Victoria Memorial Service at the Frogmore Mausoleum. His lordship is evidently a good courtier. He began by referring to the late Queen's as "the most noteworthy life in English history." Which is about the most colossal piece of sycophancy we ever encountered. Later on the Bishop referred to the Empress Frederick who was unable to attend her mother's funeral owing to her own fatal illness. "They are reunited now," he said. But how does he know that? We were not aware that the Bishop of Winchester had access to the visitors' book in either department of the next world. Or has he received a tip from the old gentleman at Rome who is supposed to hold the keys of heaven and hell?

Queen Victoria was very old at her death, and she must have been pretty tired; she ought, therefore, to be at rest now. But some of the High Church clergy, including the priest of St. Matthew's Church, Westminster, have been celebrating solemn requiems for the repose of her soul. We hope these celebrations are not necessary. Probably they are only got up by the clergy in the way of business.

Sir John Leng, M.P., being asked by the Bishop of London to attend a dinner on behalf of St. John's Foundation School for the education of poor clergymen's sons, sent that Right Reverend Father-in-God a letter advising the Church of England to follow the example of both the Established and non-Established Churches of Scotland. It appears that the parish ministers of the Established Church of Scotland—and there are nearly a thousand of them—have average incomes of £300 a year, in addition to their manses. The Free Church ministers do not average quite so well, but none of them are in the position of the poor Church of England curates, who are reported to be glad to receive even second-hand clothes. Considering the revenues, derived from sources created by Acts of Parliament, with which the Church of England starts, and the inordinate incomes of its dignitaries, it is scandalous that begging has to go on continually for the "poor clergy."

Some of the objectors to the new Bishop of Worcester were vehement, not to say rowdy. When the official statement was made that he was a fit and proper person to be "a father in God," the angry cry was raised, "You mean father in the Devil." How they love one another!

The confirmation of Canon Gore as Bishop of Worcester was opposed on more grounds than one. Want of orthodoxy was alleged on the strength of his article on Inspiration in *Lux Mundi*; also his tendency to ritualistic practices that savor of Popery. The latter quarrel is purely domestic; let the Churchmen settle it amongst themselves. The former quarrel may be taken notice of by outsiders. We beg to assure the opposers of Canon Gore that his heresy, if it be such, is really of a very mild character. He merely admits as much as cannot be denied by any decently-informed student of the conclusions of scientific Biblical criticism. If opposition to him succeeded on this ground, the Church of England would be delivered over as a spoil to the Rationalist.

The action against the Jesuits who have come over from France, in consequence of the stringent new law relating to Religious Associations, does not promise to succeed. The magistrate who was applied to refused to grant a summons, and it is unlikely that the higher courts will intervene. Certain sections of the Catholic Emancipation Act are, however, as clear as daylight against these Jesuit settlers. The following summary is taken from the *Daily Telegraph*: "Section 34 of the Catholic Emancipation Act, under which magisterial proceedings have recently been taken against three priests of the Jesuit order, is not the only one which could form the basis of a legal discussion. Section 28 requires every Jesuit or member of other religious order of the Church of Rome within the United Kingdom at the time of the passing of the Act to sign and deliver to the clerk of the peace of the county a notice containing particulars as to his name, age, place of birth, and place of residence. Any Jesuit or member of a religious order not complying with this requirement is liable to forfeit and pay to the King £50 for each calendar month he has remained in the United Kingdom without delivering the notice. Section 29 declares that Jesuits and others coming into the realm are to be banished; Section 30 enables natural-born subjects being Jesuits at the time of the passing of the Act to return to this country to be registered; Section 31 empowers Secretaries of State to grant licences to Jesuits to come into the kingdom for a period not exceeding six months; Section 32 requires that an account of all such licences shall annually be laid before both Houses of Parliament; and Section 33 makes it a criminal offence to admit any person to become a member of the Order of Jesuits, or other religious order, or to aid or consent thereto, within any part of the United Kingdom. Section 34 says that any person who is admitted or becomes a Jesuit is guilty of a misdemeanor, and must be banished for the term of his natural life."

These parts of the Catholic Emancipation Act are being treated as obsolete, apparently on the ground that they have never been put into operation. But if they were directed against Freethinkers instead of Jesuits we should probably hear that a law was never obsolete until it was repealed. Circumstances alter cases.

Sir Robert Anderson, late Assistant Commissioner of Police in London, and head of the Criminal Investigation Department, is now enjoying a period of dignified and comfortable preparation for kingdom-come. He is a very pious gentleman, who has written several books on religion. According to the *Christian*, he also dabbles in verse, and a sample is given of his poetical accomplishments. Here is one stanza, neither better nor worse than the rest:—

Safe in Jehovah's keeping,
Led by his glorious arm,
God is himself my refuge,
A present help from harm.
Fears may at times distress me,
Griefs may my soul annoy;
God is my strength and portion,
God my exceeding joy.

The best friends of Sir Robert Anderson can hardly call him a poet after that.

Dr. Frederick George Lee joined the Roman Catholic Church not long before his death. He was a man of gifts and oddities. One of his dreams while he was in the Church of England was that he was fated to bring about a union of the principal Churches in Europe. This was madness enough for one lifetime. But he was also a Jacobite, and used to pay honor to the memory of that Royal martyr, Charles the First, who formerly had a day's celebration all to himself in the Prayer-book.

We notice that Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, M.P., has died after an operation for appendicitis. Madame Brandt, a young and promising German actress, who died a few days ago, had also undergone an operation for appendicitis. Such cases are instances of the suffering and mischief caused by the vermiform appendix, a blind intestine which is the shrunken remains of a prolongation of the cæcum. A useful organ in some of the lowlier ancestors from which our species was evolved, it is in man a standing disproof of the design theory. Its only use, as a surgeon sarcastically observed, is to give a fellow an extra chance of dying. It forms a kind of trap for catching seeds, cherry-stones, or other hard substances, which then set up inflammation, and cause disease or death. Its presence as a useless and mischievous rudiment in man and the anthropoid apes is explicable only on the theory of Evolution.

What a curious old clergyman is the Rev. Gustavus Hopton Scott, rector of Gringley-on-the-Hill, Nottingham. He barricaded his vicarage against the representatives of the Bishop of Southwell, who wanted to assess the amount of the dilapidations. Being brought up before Mr. Justice Wright, he pleaded a lot of things, including Magna Charta, much to

the bewilderment and amusement of the court. But his chief point was that he had taken his oath of obedience to the Bishop of Lincoln, and he refused to recognise the Bishop of Southwell, to whom he had, so to speak, been handed over "like a chattel." Mr. Justice Wright pointed out that it was only a question of dilapidations, not a question of oaths and spiritual jurisdiction; and the old-fashioned man of God left the court exclaiming that its order was "against Magna Charta." He seems to have Magna Charta on the brain.

Canon Hensley Henson is, we believe, the gentleman who once opposed Mr. Foote after a lecture at the Hall of Science. He was fair and courteous enough, but he does not oppose Secularist lecturers now. He has got on in the world—we beg pardon, in the Church—since then, and bids fair to rise still higher. Even the Wesleyans seem to be rather fond of him. He has just been addressing them at Wesley's Chapel on "Reunion through Intercommunion." We read that his remarks were "sympathetically received." But we do not suppose that the Wesleyan ministers will go beyond sympathy, as Canon Henson's proposal seems to be that the Church and Dissent shall work up to the situation of the lion and the lamb—the lamb inside.

Officials of the Charities Department of the Borough of Brooklyn are investigating the charge of Anthony Gehl that his six-year-old daughter, Francis, was cruelly beaten while an inmate of St. Joseph's Home, a Roman Catholic institution in Astoria. The child's body is covered with bruises on each side of her back. She declares that one of the sisters at the home beat her frequently with a strap. The doctor who examined the girl declared that the bruises resulted from continual beating with a flat instrument. The cruelty practised by the celibate women called sisters towards children is notorious, and is believed to have a physiological cause not unconnected with their mode of life.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

When the holy quacks make an outcry for moral training in schools they mean theological, not moral. Their cry, like themselves, is a false one—absolutely false. They do not care for morality; morality would destroy their trade and war's root and branch; morality would make it impossible for men to become priests and parsons, and would drive those out who had unwittingly entered the false profession. When the clergy become moral they must cease to be clergy—they must cease to teach theology, and cease to corrupt children by theological putrefaction and Bible garbage. At present they are vile enough to cram children, as far as they are able, with the vile sweepings of Western Asia at its worst periods and worst states. These sweepings, gathered up in one heap, and labelled "Holy Bible," to cheat their dupes, they are anxious to cram down the throats of the children, in order to destroy or to paralyse their moral nature, and thus make them slaves and champions of their holy and most villainous "causc." But, note, I pray you: I myself will favor the endowment of any and every sect that can prove that its God exists, that Jesus Christ was a historical person, that the New Testament was written by men who knew him, or that Christianity is either moral or useful to a community or nation. Nobody can say that that is not a fair offer; but I shall never be called upon to fulfil my promise, for the conditions cannot be complied with, and the clergy are fully alive to that. Indeed, it is just marvellous that any educated man can be found who will countenance so arrant a sham as Christianity, unless his moral nature is rotten.—*Joseph Symes*, "*Liberator*" (Melbourne).

The Rev. J. G. Greenhough, the well-known Leicester preacher, has been visiting Australia, and we understand that he met with a very gratifying reception there. But he does not give a rosy account of the prospects of Christianity at the antipodes. Here is a striking extract from a letter he forwarded to the *Christian World*: "Yet I cannot help fearing that the religious sentiment is less strong, or, perhaps, less widely diffused than in England. Churches abound; the noble edifices which have been built for the worship of God bear striking witness to the self-sacrificing willingness of the people. Most of them are busy hives of Christian industry. The congregations are alive to their calling, and nearly all the ministers with whom I have come in contact are burning with a fine zeal and incessant in labor. But the habitual neglect of worship and the number of non-churchgoers among all classes, high and low, are more apparent and more distressingly significant than our home experience shows. The hosts of people who make Sunday a day of pleasure, games, and excursions affect the eyes of a reverent Englishman with surprised pain, and the feet which are hastening to the House of God are but a small proportion of those which are moving to other goals."

In a well-known London thoroughfare the other day we saw a procession of sandwich-men. Some of them, perhaps, had eaten a *Reynolds'* Christmas dinner, and a few looked as if they had never eaten a dinner since. They were poor,

pinched, ragged, down-at-heels unfortunates in this beautiful Christian civilisation. Still, they were fit for something. They had not been able to save themselves, but they could be made use of in the salvation of others. Every poor devil's back-board contained a pious exhortation to Londoners. It was a Bible text, printed in big bold letters—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Some tender-hearted Christian, no doubt, had obtained the services of these bits of social wreckage for next to nothing a day; and a walking misery between two evangelical boards was advertising the way to happiness in kingdom-come. The satire was so exquisite that we could not help grinning; besides, it was one of those things that you *had* to laugh over, if only to avoid crying.

We followed the dozen lost advertisers of salvation for a little while, and presently they turned into a side street. Three or four of them could not resist the invitation of an open public-house door; and, folding up their "Seek the Lord" poster-boards, they went in to get a little relief from the holy monotony of their peregrination in the shape of a half-pint of swipes. And really if they had stopped there and got beastly drunk we could have forgiven them—yea, unto seventy times seven. Considering their condition, and the strange use they were put to, they might have sung with old Omar Khayyam, if they had only known of him in Fitzgerald's golden rendering:—

Ob, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

Their forbidden wine was only "four-half," but what does that matter? There was enough "insolence" to drown, anyhow.

The Midland Clergy Corporation met recently in the Library of Lambeth Palace, and listened to an address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who remarked that more colleges like Lightfoot Hall, Birmingham, were wanted, because the supply of clergy was diminishing, and they were in some doubt about being able to fill up the vacancies in the ministry. This is the most constant sign of the Church's decadence, and all the money in the world will not stave off the inevitable doom. Christian Churches of every kind are perishing—slowly, it may be, but surely—of the same dry rot.

"Providence" cannot even look after the safety of its own houses. Wednesfield Parish Church, about two miles from Wolverhampton, has just been burnt to the ground, the cause of the fire being most prosaic—the overheating of the warming apparatus.

The Abbé Guerin, the French prelate whose trial was referred to in last week's *Freethinker*, has since been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for obtaining large sums of money by false representations.

Rome has answered in the negative the appeal as to whether it would be valid to hear confessions by telephone. Those who have sins to confess must get hold of the priest's ear. Sometimes it is a pretty long one. And sometimes it must want a lot of cleaning out, considering what is poured into it.

America produces more than the usual percentage of simple-minded Christians who obey the Bible literally—that is to say, honestly. According to the New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, a young married woman in Tennessee has just died as the result of plucking out one of her eyes in obedience to the Gospel injunction. In what way it "offended" her is not stated.

There is a row in the Dutch Hollow Reformed Church, near Goschen, in New York State. The pastor asked for more kerosene lamps to be placed in the church, but the trustees declined to incur the expense. He then stated that the youthful members of his congregation took advantage of the dim religious light to "salute one another with a holy kiss." We suppose the holiness of the kisses was open to doubt. Hence the pastor's alarm, and his cry, like that of the dying Goethe, for "more light!"

The child of strict parents, whose greatest joy had hitherto been the weekly prayer-meeting, was taken to the circus by his nurse. He was full of its delights when he came home. "Oh, mummy," he exclaimed, "if you once went to the circus you'd never go to a prayer-meeting again in all your life!"

The Bird—Mamma, do society people ever go to heaven? Mamma—They don't have to, Elizabeth, darling; it is not expected of them.—*Town Topics*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 2, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broadstreet, Birmingham: 11, "The Way to Peace, and Lord Rosebery's Program"; 3, "Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage"; 7, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven."

February 9, 16, and 23, Athenæum Hall.

March 2, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 9, Camberwell; 16, South Shields; 23, Liverpool. April 20, Glasgow.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 2, Athenæum Hall, London; 9, Liverpool; 13 and 14, Blackburn; 16, Bradford; 23, Birmingham. March 2, Athenæum Hall; 9, Aberdare, South Wales; 16, Pontypridd.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

B. STEVENS.—Try to be less egotistical and more polite. The Darwin articles were not a "rehash" of our pamphlet, but a reprint of it, as we stated by way of introduction to the first instalment.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. TRRHARNE-JONES.—Always much pleased to hear from you. We quite understand that "lack of funds is the main reason" that you do not "have these revivals" oftener in South Wales.

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph. It is a great pity that South Wales cannot be worked more effectively. We should like to see a Welsh Freethinker put down a substantial cheque for a vigorous propaganda throughout the Principality, or at least in its chief centres of population.

A. J. Y.—Pleased to hear you were so delighted with Mr. Foote's lecture on Sunday evening. Thanks for your good wishes. The slight huskiness you noticed is the fag end of a very bad cold. Probably it will soon disappear. If it does not, a rest will be necessary. Three lectures in one day are a heavy strain on the greatest strength, especially if the lecturer throws himself into his work, and trusts not merely to mental preparation, but also to the inspiration of the hour. With regard to the other point, we are glad to hear that you find Freethought spreading amongst the people you meet in daily life—and you must meet many of all classes.

J. M.—Yes, Mr. Bradlaugh did take the Oath after his long parliamentary struggle. A new Speaker, Mr. Speaker Peel, refused to allow any interference when Mr. Bradlaugh went up to the table to be sworn. He took the oath and his seat, and was never challenged again. But he was not satisfied with that. He introduced and carried an Oaths Act authorising affirmation instead of swearing, not only in parliament, but in all other places. By the way, it is a mistake to say that Mr. Bradlaugh was expelled from the House of Commons. He was prevented from entering.

E. CHAPMAN.—Pleased to hear the ball is to be set rolling again at South Shields.

H. IRVING.—We have not seen *The Cigarette Smoker*. It has not come in our way. If it does, we will refer to passages you indicate. Glad to hear that "Book Chat" "always appeals" to you.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—Always ready to oblige. We do not count it a trouble.

T. JOHNSON.—Goldsmith's *History of Rome* is pleasantly written, but of little value nowadays. We do not think it is still published. Second-hand copies are occasionally to be met with for a shilling or two.

D. FRANKEL.—Sorry you seem to take offence where none was intended. We have given your Branch more paragraphs than any other Branch in London. But paragraphs alone will not procure you audiences. You must attract people in some way; *how* is a problem for your own solution. Certainly we meant no reflection on the lecturers you engage; they are good enough to draw much larger audiences than you can accommodate. What is lacking is for you to find out in your own locality. We are too ignorant of the special conditions to hazard a guess.

S. NEWMAN.—Thanks. Fairly well, but a bit weary.

A. W. HUTTY.—See this week's list. It is quite right to cross cheques.

A. G. LYB.—The best cheap edition—in fact, the only one—of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam is Macmillan's, published at 2s. 6d. in the Golden Treasury Series.

THE FRANCIS NEALE FUND.—J. M., 1s.; M. G., 5s.; S. J., 5s.; W. McLean, 10s. 6d.; W. Mumby, 10s.; Mrs. Daniel Baker, £1; R. H. Side, 10s.; J. E. Stapleton, 2s.; G. Newman, 2s. 6d.; Jeannie W. Hutty, 2s. 6d.; Major Maxwell Reeve (per C. A. Watts), £1.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Newsagent and Bookseller's Review—Truthseeker (New York)—Sydney Bulletin—Boston Investigator—Huddersfield Examiner—Public Opinion (New York)—Crescent—Secular Thought—Lyttleton Times—Lucifer—Essex Weekly News—Liberator—Torch of Reason—Progressive Thinker.

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.

OWING to the downfall of snow, the streets of Manchester were unfit for locomotion on Sunday. The cars were running only in the central parts of the city. Many persons who attended Mr. Foote's lectures had to walk two, three, or four miles in very unpleasant conditions. Naturally the audiences were somewhat affected, but the evening meeting, at least, was wonderfully good under such disadvantages. The hall was quite filled except for a few unoccupied seats in the front, and the audience was warm, and even enthusiastic, in spite of the cheerless weather. Mr. Foote's visit is generally utilised by the Branch for one of its special collections. The collection taken up on Sunday was for the N. S. S. General Fund.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day for the Birmingham Branch in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broadstreet. It is to be hoped the weather will be decent. Mr. Foote's last visit to Birmingham, when he lectured in the Town Hall, was marked by a fierce tempest, which lasted all day, and caused even New-street to be deserted. A repetition of such weather this time would be positively shabby.

"Chilperic's" lecture at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening was highly appreciated by an improved audience. Mr. Cohen occupies the platform there this evening (Feb. 2), taking for his subject "The Passing of the Gods." There should be a large meeting.

Mr. Watts delivered three lectures at Porth on Sunday. There were good meetings, larger than on previous occasions there—and the lecturer was warmly applauded. Several persons attended from distant places in spite of the inclement weather.

The East London Branch holds its Annual Meeting at 3.30 this afternoon (Feb. 2) at the Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney. In view of the lengthy nature of the Agenda, and to enable members to stay for the evening lecture by Mr. Moss, a substantial tea is being arranged for at sixpence per head. Mr. Frankel, the secretary, 25 Osborne-street, Whitechapel, would like to hear from those who intend to participate in this function, in order to make the necessary preparations.

The East London Branch's Balance-sheet for 1901 is, in a certain sense, a pathetic document. Such a lot has evidently been done with such slender resources. And we see that the Branch contemplates opening a new lecture-station at Poplar. The spirit, indeed, is willing, if the pocket is weak. We wish the gallant East-enders all success in their spirited efforts.

Secular Thought (Toronto) is one of our most welcome exchanges. But why does it reach us so irregularly? One of the latest numbers to hand reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "God and Gold" from the *Freethinker*. It is pleasant to our editor to find readers in this way in Canada.

Mr. H. Percy Ward holds a debate in the Temperance Hall, Leeds-road, Bradford, on Monday and Tuesday evenings (Feb. 3 and 4) with Professor R. B. D. Wells. The questions to be discussed are "Is there a God?" and "Was Jesus Christ a Wise and Moral Teacher?" We fancy it is a long time since the last good debate in Bradford. This one should be of service to the Freethought cause.

We are very much pleased to hear that the Leicester Secular Society has decided, by a substantial and satisfactory majority, to continue Mr. F. J. Gould's engagement as Secretary and Organiser. It was a test vote, and now it is

over we hope there will be a universal settling down on the lines decided. Differences of opinion are natural, and often healthy, in a world like this—though we are told it is otherwise elsewhere. But when the difference is threshed out it is well to shake hands all round and work away heartily and harmoniously at the common task—which is greater than any of us.

Mr. Cohen had capital meetings and a first-rate reception at Glasgow on Sunday. His friends will have an opportunity of hearing him in London this evening (Feb. 2).

The South Shields friends have at last succeeded in obtaining the use of a suitable hall for Sunday meetings. It is the Victoria Hall, in Fowler-street, a few minutes' walk from the railway station. Mr. Watts has been engaged to lecture there on Sunday evening, Feb. 16.

Mr. Francis Neale writes to us from the Infirmary that he feels a slight improvement in his condition. We hope it will soon develop into a decided change for the better. We should be delighted to see him "at large" again. His detention at the Infirmary is something like an imprisonment, as visitors are still not allowed in consequence of the small-pox scare.

The Half-yearly General Meeting of the West London Branch will be held on Thursday, Feb. 6, at "The Victory," Newnham-street, Edgware-road.

Our "Bargains."

SOME friends have misread our "Bargains" advertisement. Perhaps the fault is ours. Anyhow, we will try to make the matter clear. Take the half-crown parcels, for instance. Thirty per cent. discount is allowed off the list price in this case. Books and pamphlets, therefore, to the list value of 3s. 7d. should be selected. Books and pamphlets to the list value of 8s. 4d. should be selected for the five-shilling parcels; and to the list value of £1 for the ten-shilling parcels. This should be plain enough. We hope to see Miss Vance bombarded with orders calculated on this simple basis.

We may add that a considerable number of slightly soiled books and pamphlets have been turned out in the recent stock-taking. They are quite good enough for distribution, and it is desired to dispose of them at exceedingly low prices. They are worth the attention of friends who can call at the shop.

The Cross at Constantinople.

JANUARY 19 is the Greek Epiphany, when the ceremony of blessing the waters takes place. Early in the morning, after a service lasting all night, processions leave the Greek churches, wending their way through slush and snow to the water's edge. The procession is headed by choir-boys, chanting and carrying the banners of the church, followed by a priest in full robes, bearing a small wooden cross. Then come all the officiating priests in their full dress, which is one mass of gold embroidery, with the sacred vessels, emblems, and icons of the church. Round them, stolidly indifferent to the procession, the weather, or anything else, tramps a fully-armed Turkish escort, wrapped up in sheepskin coats, and a huge crowd of people bring up the rear. Having arrived at the water's edge, the escort forms a semicircle facing the sea. Inside stand the priests and the church attendants, and the banners are planted in the water. After some prayers for the Sultan and a short service, the officiating priest throws the small cross as far as he can into the sea, and immediately twenty or thirty young men spring in after it, and a tremendous race takes place. At last one seizes it and brings it back to the priest, who receives it with great reverence, and holds it up for the crowd to kiss. As soon as possible the procession reforms and goes back to the church, and the blessing of the waters is accomplished.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Some ideas there are that lie beyond the reach of any catastrophe. He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities of every-day life. And therefore, come happiness or sorrow, the happiest man will be he within whom the greatest idea shall burn the most ardently.—*Maeterlinck*.

Though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature.—*Thomas Hardy*.

Taking Life too Seriously.

THE GLOOMY VIEW OF THIS WORLD WHICH WE OWE TO RELIGION.

ANY belief, having once become general, becomes also imperious. It acquires authority through the numbers of its adherents. What is accepted by the many is believed by the many to be true. People love to be with the majority. It minimises responsibility; it inspires confidence; it gives courage to the timid; it flatters the vain. The egotist may say: "The multitude believes as I do; therefore the multitude is right." The weak and wavering may say: "I believe as the multitude does; therefore I cannot be wrong." Thus widely-held beliefs extend more widely still. Thus they increase and resist change. The belief of the majority erects a defence of respectability, behind which, in safety, the unthinking, the frivolous, the zealots, may hurl their weapons of contumely and scorn at those who differ from the majority. The infidel, the heretic, has been the man who disagreed with the multitude. From the Galilean's time, through all the ages, the infidel has been the man with opinions of his own.

We are indebted to religion for a profound and subtle pessimism. Religion has been founded upon the glorification of sacrifice and the apotheosis of sorrow. There never was a religion that possessed the element of humor. The prophets are represented as long-bearded, solemn men, unacquainted with the joys of life. It is part of the business of the priest to look uncomfortable and sad, and be compelled to go away from home to have a good time. Children are taught to look with especial reverence upon the well-meaning, sweet-souled, but deluded, women who garb themselves in mimic chains and sackcloth, and go about as the perpetual murderers of joy for Christ's sake. Life is represented, from the religious view-point, as being evil in its origin and tragic in its end. If all that religion has said about life be true, no sensible man would take the chances of being born if he could have talked with a preacher beforehand. Death is represented by religion as an unspeakable tragedy; rhetoric, imagery, and imagination have been taxed to represent its terrors; deep rivers flowing darksome into night, the precipice, the abyss, the stroke of the doom of judgment, the black coffin, the black hearse with black plumes, the black horses with black trappings, everything black and forbidding—such is the cheerful environment which the Christian religion has thrown around death. The Maker of the world has been represented as infinitely unattractive; as a world-maker he was a failure; a pair of innocent and guiltless human beings, together with a snake, robbed the Creator of a world; then the Maker of all became the avenger, the destroyer; he summoned to his aid floods to drown, pestilence to wither, disease to devour, and fire to consume—all in vain as far as the betterment of the world was concerned. Then, in order to save something from the infinite wreck, he made a desperate resolve to try once more: disguising himself as man, he came into the world, and was impaled upon a cross until dead; he died for the world he had made and lost. Such is the marvellous story religion has told about the Infinite. In whatever direction we look there is the same gloom, the same pessimism, the same unspeakable despair.

The teachings regarding life, being born, dying, the world, the future of God—are all full of shadow. There is nowhere any laughter or light or cheer or joy; everywhere terror, anguish, fear and pain, threats, forebodings, and mutterings of wrath to come; and all this because religion has been founded upon sacrifice and pain. The sombre thread carried by the religious shuttle may be traced in many and widely different patterns. The spirit of gloom and pessimism is in perpetual conflict with the hope, with the cheer, and with the gladness of the world. The young man is elaborately told that there is no chance to-day for the young man. Great combinations of energy and capital have reduced the industrial and commercial world to a machine, and the best he can hope to do is to become a cog in some wheel. The young men, ambitious and struggling to acquire an education, are solemnly informed that the college men are failures in this world's

affairs ; that it wants practical men ; that if they wish to get on in this world they would better leave the college hall and get out and study the great life of man and the world. Over and again men and women who have made shipwreck of hope and happiness and love rise up to encourage the world with the statement that there is no such thing as happiness in this world ; marriage is a desperate failure ; over and again solemn philosophers seriously argue the question whether or not life is worth living. Look where we may, we find the same gloom.

The microscopist takes his instrument, and after years of study gives the cheerful information that the air and water, fruit and vegetables and meat, are absolutely teeming with countless million forms of life. He takes a particle of grape sugar and puts it under a powerful glass, and if you look at it you think that to eat that would be equivalent to eating a menagerie. A drop of water under a microscope makes one almost resolve not to drink water lest he have sea serpents. The telescope tells no more reassuring story. The scientists have figured out the rate of evaporation of the water from the surface of the globe as compared with the amount of water the globe contains, and find, or pretend to find, that if the present rate of evaporation continues the time will arrive when all the water of the globe will be exhausted ; then all life must perish, the entire earth become a barren desert glowing like a furnace. Other scientists find, or pretend to find, the amount of heat coming to this planet from the sun, and, after computing the amount of heat the sun possesses, find a time in the future when it will be exhausted, and then the earth, receiving no more sustaining heat from the central orb, must perish, the world be frozen solid to the centre, a globe of death glistening with frost. And still there are others who pretend to find that the old world's orbit is gradually inclining towards the central orb ; that it is showing signs of hesitancy, and they find ground for predicting that at some future moment this globe, bearing its burden of life, will plunge headlong into the sun and be consumed. Science has been infected with the disease along with religion.

There is yet another phase of the sombre view ; it is to be seen in the reformers of modern times. Some people, impatient with the slow moral progress of the world, appeal to Legislatures ; having exhausted their claims or their influence with Providence, they appeal to the Congresses and Legislatures to enact laws to bring in the reign of justice, righteousness, and love. Still others, impatient at the slow movement of Legislatures and the doubtful operation of laws, take the tomahawk themselves to usher in the kingdom of peace and goodwill. Everywhere may be seen signs of the dubious feelings that tend towards, or border upon, despair. Few are sounding the note of gladness, of hope, of possible joy. All of this habit of pessimism and despair is traceable directly or indirectly to the influence of religion, out of whose teachings has come the mischievous habit of taking the world too seriously.

From the view-point of religion, not only God, but life itself, is tragic and a failure. It begins with a curse and ends with a doom. There is nothing in it to inspire. This interpretation of life grows out of the pessimism that all religion has rooted itself in. There are some things to be considered about life that go strongly towards destroying the old persuasion. In the first place, it does not have to be accounted for ; it can no more be accounted for than can the origin of anything. Within the mysteries, insoluble and past finding out, lie the beginnings of all things. With matter, with intelligence, with the universe, life has its origin, and that does not destroy the fact that it is part of a great plan. We are no more responsible for the life we live—that is, for the individual fact of life—than we are for the facts of the universe or of the world. We are here as life, not simply as witnesses of it, not simply to philosophise about it ; we are it, we are life. We do not choose it or plan it, it wasn't a matter of volition with us, it was thrust upon us. There is no reason, no sense, in looking upon it from a religious standpoint and counting it a miserable tragedy born with a curse and swiftly speeding on to an infinite doom. Philosophy does not break down if it fails to account for the origin or the outcome of life. The great fact is life

here and now ; the business is not to save it for some other world, or to explain its mysteries before it began to be ; the great business is to make life life, to enlarge, extend, and fulfil it, to bring it up to the highest possible measure of its possibilities, to instil into it and extract from it the secret and solace of happiness and of joy, not to think only of the external thing of being saved, to be saved for some other world, to be redeemed from some past curse. To conceive of it as being continued for ever under the immanent hand of death is to destroy much of its energy and power. Nothing can make it not to have been.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*The Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENT.

[With a view to broadening the scope of the *Freethinker*, and thus to widen its interest for its readers, we have decided to open an Independent Department, in which other questions may be treated than those that come within the settled policy of this journal. Such questions—especially political ones—may be of the highest importance, and yet questions on which Freethinkers may legitimately differ, and on which they ought not (as Freethinkers) to divide. Our responsibility, therefore, in this Department only extends to the writers' fitness to be heard. Freethinkers may thus find in their own organ a common ground for the exchange of views and opinions ; in short, for the friendly enjoyment of intellectual hospitality. Writers may be as vigorous and uncompromising as they please, as long as they are courteous and tolerant.—EDITOR.]

The Freethought Movement and Politics.

A RECENT controversy in these columns suggests a question as to the bearing of Freethinking on politics, which it seems profitable at the present moment to briefly discuss. Before setting out, however, it is well to come to an understanding as to the real object of ridding men of supernaturalist beliefs. Is it merely to substitute one academic proposition for another as a matter of purely intellectual interest? Or do we seek to clear away supernaturalism because it acts as a hindrance to the realisation of the fullest and happiest life for the whole community, because it directs the energies of men into either useless or mischievous channels, instead of towards the political and social reforms that are needed to make life more worth living for the mass of the people? Personally, I can hardly understand any Freethinker, worthy of the name, hesitating as to the answers to such questions. The Freethought movement is a practical movement. It is not a Bacon-Shakespeare affair on which nothing practically hangs, and on which it does not matter two pins which side you take. No one would get up an organisation for pressing the opinion that Bacon wrote the plays. The clearing away of supernaturalism, on the other hand, is a preliminary to political and social progress—is, in fact, a phase of political and social progress. We do not endeavor to make men Freethinkers for the fun of changing their opinions. Nor is it merely for the purpose of spreading abstract truth—though truth of any kind is to be desired. We really seek to rid men of the theological incubus in order that they may be more efficient thinkers and workers for progress in every sphere. The Secularist, therefore, sows the seeds of progress, and should expect a healthier and more democratic growth of opinion as the result of his labors. And unless we adopt the absurdity that politics in general is a matter of tweedledum and tweedledee, this growth of opinion must have a political effect. There are, of course, political disputes that are of trifling interest, and many politicians who are triflers ; but back of these lie problems that are vital. In fact, politics, truly understood, means the science of securing the maximum of happiness for the people. And that maximum of happiness cannot be equally secured by each of two diametrically-opposed policies. Any enlightenment of the community as a whole must, therefore, have a corresponding political effect. To say that a more scientifically-educated community would simply contain the same proportion of Democrats

and Conservatives, of Socialists and Militarists, would be merely to argue that no such thing as political progress is possible at all. And I should be sorry and utterly disheartened to find that, say, a nation of Rationalists merely carried on the old disputes in the old way, without the slightest advance in political knowledge. I should expect to find them carrying on their disputation with more science—which is simply to say that that policy which was the more scientific would tend to gain in adherents and in influence. The general tendency of Freethought work, therefore, must be to help the more scientific side in politics, since Freethinking in general simply stands for the principle of reflection and accurate thought.

Though I have thus sought to establish the proposition that Rationalism has a political value, it must not be supposed I am arguing that Rationalist organisations should become political clubs, notwithstanding the fact that at a number of points the Freethought movement comes into direct contact with politics and has always been identified with certain policies. The education question, the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church, Sunday observance laws, blasphemy laws—with these and with a number of other political matters the popular Freethought movement comes into immediate contact. These, however, are particular cases, and, in general, of course, it is right and proper for Secularist bodies to attend to Secularist work. To ask people who are organised for one object to undertake another is to destroy the basis of organisation. And all co-operation in public things becomes impossible if we must agree with a man in everything before working with him for anything. It would obviously be ridiculous to ask a football club to leave aside football and become a vegetarian society. It is well for each organisation to attend to the objects for which it is formed. And the influence of Freethought on politics must, in the main, be educative and indirect.

But there are limits, in my view, to this neutrality. There are times when it seems difficult for Freethought Societies to keep out of politics without incurring a charge of moral cowardice. And the present seems one of them. England at this moment is passing through a crisis in which its whole character is likely to be changed—a crisis which carries with it the menace of conscription, and certainly carries with it the prospect of enormous financial and political burdens for posterity. No one proposes that Secularist Societies should spend their time discussing the details of a Light Railway Bill or a Water Purchase scheme. But to compare the present war to such matters is virtually to proclaim one's own political and moral blindness. And when a Freethinker complains that, by denouncing this war and its makers, we are "wrecking" Rationalism, it must be respectfully answered that he has missed the entire significance of the Freethought movement, and is ignorant of the practice of almost every leading Freethinker in the past. What kind of Freethinker is it who takes umbrage at the open discussion of his opinions? And what kind of Freethinker is it who resents the denunciation of a war of conquest, waged, at crippling cost, against a little nation afar off? Frankly, such people are only half Freethinkers. As between a man who merely rejects the Mosaic cosmogony, and stops there, and, say, a Christian who is politically and socially alert and active on the side of peace and progress, I would infinitely prefer the latter; for, if there is one thing which we ought to find as the distinctive mark of a freethinking or Rationalist community, it is the reign of reason—the readiness to settle disputes by arbitration, and not by force. One of the commonest charges brought by Freethought writers and speakers against Christianity is, and was, that that religion has been responsible directly and indirectly for a vast deal of war and bloodshed in the world's history. But with what consistency can any Freethinker blame Christianity for encouraging the appeal to force if he himself does nothing to discourage such an appeal? For my part, I think the stoppage of the present war, and the restoration to the Boers of what should never have been taken from them, as legitimate a work for Freethinkers and Secularists to promote as, say, secular education; for the longer the present state of affairs lasts, the more will be produced an atmosphere in which all thinking will become impossible. Already

free speech on political questions has almost disappeared in England. And, if there is one thing which has always been jealously guarded by Freethinkers, it is freedom of speech and of the Press; and, whenever these have been menaced, Freethinkers have rallied to their support, even though in the particular instance they did not agree with the actual opinions sought to be suppressed. They acted on the ground, firstly, that free expression of opinion is necessary to preserve the moral and political health of the community; and, secondly, on the ground that, if one opinion be banned to-day, another may be banned to-morrow.

But now we are told by some that to work for peace, to protest against militarism, to argue for justice to another nation, to protect free speech—we are told that to do these things is to "wreck" Rationalism. Well, I have a higher opinion of the Rationalist movement than that it is such a hothouse plant; and I do not believe that Freethinkers are such desperately touchy individuals that they will run a hundred miles from any such propaganda. But, if there are any Freethinkers so delicate, our business is to educate them, not to whittle down our own courage to suit their tender susceptibilities. Secularism is not a cult, with a ritual to be carried on in gilded temples, away from the haunts of men, and into which no whisper of a living question may enter; if it were, it would be no better than the moribund Christianity it is displacing. As a cult, apart from action, Secularism would fail, as all mere cults tend to fail; allied to the cause of progress in politics and social organisation, it will triumph, and become part of the mental and moral equipment of the race.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Mr. Woodward, "Mimnermus," and "Sirius."

ALAS, my poor mother-tongue! I have indeed used it badly, or Mr. Woodward could not have believed that I intended any of the unpleasant, but not untrue, charges made in my last contribution to these columns against malevolent critics, to apply to him. Will Mr. Woodward accept my apologies for having unwittingly misled *him*? My thoughts were of real traducers, such as Griswold, who, with his "feculent flux" of malice, sought to destroy the reputation of Poe as man, thinker, and poet; of the maligners of Marlowe, Shelley, Keats, Burns, Chatterton, and of hundreds of other fine poets and brave thinkers. I do not hope to soon find a fairer reviewer than Mr. Woodward, to whom I have already expressed, and not as a mere *façon de parler*, my gratitude; I regret my misfortune in having for one moment caused him to think my attacks were other than general, and were in the slightest way at all directed against *his* critical methods. I cannot, however, consider my charge against many critics, of "writing patronisingly about their betters," as in the least bit "silly," when I recall the unctuous pharisaism of the "unco guid," to say nothing of the Tartuffian pity which such a creature as Griswold expressed for—Poe! Neither do I feel happy in witnessing a great mind wounded in the house of his friends, as in the case of Blake charged with madness by "Mimnermus." Why on earth does "Mimnermus" want to make out that Blake was mad? Why? Blake was never in an asylum, nor ever the subject of *de lunatico inquirendo* whilst alive.

Blake left much unpublished work of a chaotic character; but I insist that he knew that it was not proper for publication, though good to keep for reference, because containing many thoughts and images that, as an artist, he might find of use for future work. Let Blake be judged by what he published and by his life, and not by those memoranda left unpublished at his death, and never intended, as far as is known, for publication. As for Blake's visions, he knew them for such, and distinctly stated that they were but creatures of his imagination, and that, often, *at will*, he could so exert his imagination as to call up the very visions that he could not always retain long enough to record fully in verse or with pencil. What is claimed more than the assertion of a power, strong in rare men, of defining with wonderful distinctness their fancies or the creations of their imagination? What, indeed, is this power other than a very clear inspiration instead of a blurred or cloudy one? A sane man may have visions, but he knows them for that which they are, and so did Blake. The insane man is one that has visions and cannot distinguish them from, but confounds them with, or mistakes them for, facts.

The ability to visualise conceptions clearly marks the great artist. Turner saw what he was going to paint before he got to work, and could have produced no really great imaginative landscape without that ability; his conceptions did not arise bit by bit as he worked, but were clear before he put brush to canvas, and their very clarity was his inspiration.

So with Blake. But "Mimnermus" suggests that all seers of visions were mad, and, *ergo*, all founders of religions were mad, because all visionaries. Permit me to say that I don't see how that suggestion helps us as Freethinkers or as critics. If every founder of a religion had been as sane as Jeremy Bentham, their religions would be just what they are to-day—a mass of irreconcilable contradictions, and as vulnerable to criticism fully as much as though their originators had all dwelt in Bedlam. Whether Buddha, Lao-tse, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed, Luther, Johanna Southcote, the prophet Smith, or Emanuel Swedenborg were sane, or madmen all, our position as sceptics in reference to their teachings is one and the same. If those teachings succumb under intellectual examination, what on earth does the sanity or the insanity of the teachers avail?

Laplace may have been mad; but the truths of his theories and hypotheses depend on evidence, not on any question of Laplace's mental degeneration. So, also, with Buddha and the rest.

I quite admit that I am not amazed at Cowper or Coleridge or Clare or a score other poets and writers who have been actually *under restraint* as madmen being called insane. On the other hand, when men who have passed their lives so sanely as Blake, and have neither been charged with lunacy nor placed under restraint for it, have "the slanderous stain of madness" charged against their memory, I am constrained to protest, and to appeal for some check on this disposition to sully the fame of the great dead with a charge that they escaped during life, and which cannot be proved now; which, at best, is but a matter of opinion, and at worst is a calumny of a particularly objectless, yet objectionable, kind.

Until the stigma of insanity becomes accepted as one that may be justly fixed on every human being; until we accept the dictum that "'Tis a mad world, my masters!" literally, and the charge, by its very universality, becomes unmeaning, I, for one, cannot resist a feeling of repugnance whenever I hear this charge brought against those who escaped it in life. Nor does this dwelling on the incidents in the little-known intellectual lives of great men, rather than on the beauties of their well-known or easily to be well-known works, satisfy such poor critical instinct as I possess. Shakespeare wrote a "Mad Song," and so, also, did Blake; but that these great artists could vividly imagine the true characteristics of a mind o'erthrown is to me a proof of their genius, and not evidence that, because they had this marvelous insight into insanity, they were mad themselves, or any whit less sane than Lombroso, who also professes to understand *dementia*, but is not yet called a madman. SIRIUS.

P.S.—As to Blake's suspicions, these were not unfounded. Stothard cribbed his "Canterbury Pilgrimage" from Blake's much bolder and original design. Fuseli, I think, helped himself *liberally* from Blake's fount of invention, and Cromek certainly did Blake a serious injury; but *quantum sufficit*.

Correspondence.

"THE PUZZLE OF THE INFINITE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to W. P. Ball, I beg to state that I was fully aware of the so-called *proofs*, and other similar *proofs*, for they are generally given in most arithmetical text-books. Nonetheless, they are arrant nonsense. They are worthy to be placed with the dozens of statements *proved* by these schoolmen centuries ago, and which we all know now never were true and never will be.

As in the case of "Zeno," we had to discover where the false reasoning came in, which led to a conclusion which all the world knew to be absurd, so we must do the same in this case.

In the first place, the expression 10 times .9 is impossible. There is nothing in the actual world to correspond to it. In the world of real number it has no existence. We cannot even have 2 times .9, much less 10 times .9, for once .9 alone requires all eternity for its operation.

On paper these expressions simply represent *conceptions* in the brain of the mathematician on a par with "Zeno's" conception of infinite space for ever lying between Achilles and the tortoise. And so, whatever may be the result of "an ingenious piece of subtraction" or any other operation on paper, that result is worthless. For in mathematics, as in all other subjects, our symbols on paper must represent real existences in the world of number, and our operations must represent something that can be actually performed in that world, or else our results are wholly unreliable.

Whatever may be done on paper by *suitably arranging* symbols representing *mythical* conceptions in a mathematician's head can be, to us, no guide when dealing with real numbers.

I hope it is not going to be in mathematics what it has been in some other subjects—*viz.*, if facts are contrary to the theories or proofs, so much the worse for the facts. There is

plenty of room for reform in the "proofs" and statements placed before our students in the exact sciences. Tradition and authority have too much sway even here.

And when, by suitable manipulation, we have *proved* a thing *true* which we know to be false, let us have the candor to say that the *proof* is false, and expugn it from our text-books.

I must also take objection to the phrase, "less than the least possible quantity." It is not less than, etc. It differs from one by a very small quantity: nonetheless, that "least possible quantity" has a real positive existence in the realm of number, and is greater than nothing.

One book, at least, that I know has the common sense to say that .9 does not exactly equal unity: it is entitled *Arithmetical Theory*, by F. K. Cracknell, B.A., published by Brown & Son, Hull, and the point is dealt with on p. 44.

I will say, in conclusion, I am rather pleased to see "mathematics" figuring in a paper which I have taken since 1881.
HEAD MASTER.

THE PUZZLE OF THE INFINITE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In order to meet the objection that the infinite series of fractions represented by decimal nine recurring is never completed, I should like to add a final proof to those that I have already given that decimal nine recurring equals one. I ask "Head Master" to observe the two forms which the answer to the following problem may assume:—

Problem.—If Achilles walks 10 times as fast as the tortoise and the tortoise is 9 yards ahead, how far will the tortoise have gone when Achilles catches it?

By simple arithmetical methods which "Head Master" acknowledges to be correct, we easily find that the tortoise will have moved 1 yard when it is overtaken, since it will have traversed this distance while Achilles has moved 10 yards, and both will then have reached the same point in space. But by the puzzling method which introduces an infinite series of diminishing fractions, we observe that the tortoise will have moved $\frac{9}{10}$ of a yard at the moment it is caught. For while Achilles, by walking 9 yards, reaches the starting-point of the tortoise, the tortoise moving $\frac{1}{10}$ as fast as Achilles will have traversed $\frac{1}{10}$ of a yard. When Achilles reaches this point, the tortoise will have moved a further $\frac{1}{100}$ of a yard. And so on until, when the tortoise is overtaken, it will have moved $\frac{9}{10} \times \frac{1}{100} \times \frac{1}{1000} \times \frac{1}{10000} \times$, etc., of a yard. Now, this infinite series of infinitely-diminishing fractions is identical with .9999, etc., which is written as .9. The two answers to the problem—namely, 1 and .9—are both correct, and must be identical in value, since the tortoise cannot be caught twice over or in two different places. It is not true, as alleged by "Head Master," that the goal or limit is never reached either in finite or in infinite time. In the case before us, the goal or limit is really and actually reached in a few seconds, and the part of the series which is so difficult and puzzling to minds that cannot grasp infinity is summed up by nature and fact with the rapidity of a flash of lightning.

I allege that the following facts are obvious:—(1) That the tortoise is caught at the moment when it has completed all the distances represented by the infinite series of fractions written as .9. (2) That the tortoise is caught when it has moved exactly 1 yard. (3) That .9 and 1 are, therefore, exactly equal in value.
W. P. BALL.

The Chaplain's Self-Restraint.

An English chaplain quarrelled with the captain of a ship on the way to South Africa because the captain refused to let him hold a service in the saloon. The captain regarded himself as the priest of his own ship. Winston Churchill, who tells the story, found the chaplain tramping the deck in anger. "And what did you say to him?" asked Mr. Churchill, sympathetically, when he had heard the story. "Oh, I said nothing at all," answered the chaplain, with a splendid show of self-command; "but I may tell you that any other clergyman in the Church of England would have told him to go to hell."—*Manchester Guardian*.

Helping the Orphan.

An American tourist, passing through a Scotch town the other day, came across the oldest inhabitant, out of whom he thought he would take a rise. Going up to the native, the tourist said: "I have some news for you, Sandie." "Well," says Sandie, "what is it?" "The Devil is dead." "What is this for?" asked the tourist, but handed the tourist a penny. "What is this for?" asked the tourist. "Oh," says Sandie, "it is the habit in our country to assist the orphans."

Before we can bring happiness to others, we first must be happy ourselves; nor will happiness abide with us unless we confer it on others.—*Maeterlinck*.

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, C. Cohen, "The Passing of the Gods."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, Convezazione.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 2.30, Annual members' meeting; 7, A. B. Moss, "The Wonderful Century."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road): 7, Washington Sullivan, "The Religious Aspects of Poetry."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Stanton Coit, "Hereditry and Progress."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "John Wesley."

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): G. W. Foote—11, "The Way to Peace, and Lord Rosebery's Program"; 3, "Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage"; 7, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven." 6.30 to 7, Musical Selections. Tea provided at the hall between the afternoon and evening lectures.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): 7, J. F. Doyle, "Other Worlds than Ours." Limelight views.

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe—12, "Christianity and the Fall of Rome"; 6.30, "The Essence of Religion."

HULL (No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7.30, Members' Meeting.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, "Cosmic Evolution."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Will Phillips, "The Secularist's Waterloo."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "Did Jesus Christ ever Live?"; 7, "If a Man Die, shall he Live Again?" Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading; 8, Arrangements for Mr. Watts's lecture.

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—February 2, Sheffield. March 16, Liverpool.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

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