

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXII.—No. 8.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1902.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A Dead World.

The Transit of Civilisation from England to America in the Seventeenth Century. By EDWARD EGGLESTONE.

How far are we removed from the time of His Most Gracious Majesty King James the First? About three centuries, someone may reply. The answer is wrong, wholly wrong. We are farther away from the people of his day than we are from the people who listened to the disputations of Socrates, or gave ear to the orations of Cicero. Indeed, if it were possible to revive a citizen of each period and plant them in one of our modern centres of civilisation, it is highly probable that the ancients would feel the more at home. The more modern would, in all likelihood, spend his time lamenting the degeneracy of the age in adopting such ideas as those current in astronomy, biology, or sociology; the others would, with equal likelihood, feel surprised that we had not forged further ahead.

In truth, time is a clumsy instrument by which to measure the distance between periods of national life. Fifty years in Europe may be fully the equal of a cycle in Cathay; and wide as the gap is between ourselves and the inhabitants of old Rome or ancient Athens, that between us and our seventeenth-century forefathers is wider still. Our conception of life is altogether different to theirs, our outlook is from a quite distinct standpoint. Practically, we are living in a new world, a world that is almost wholly the growth of the last two and a-half centuries; and while it is a matter of extreme difficulty to adequately realise how great the difference is, and perhaps impossible to quite throw ourselves back into the earlier period, yet it is at least instructive to make the attempt, particularly when we have such a good guide and counsellor as in the present instance.

But with even such a valuable guide as Mr. Egglestone, it is not easy to put ourselves in the position of our seventeenth-century ancestors, and to adequately realise the nature of "the mental furniture which the early English emigrants took on board ship with them" when they set out for the New World. To the average man of education of those days—and it is with this class that Mr. Egglestone deals—the old order of things was scarcely disturbed. Sun, moon, and stars were still little globes of fire hung out for the service of men, and controlled by angels. Comets and meteors were visible messengers from God, and all knowledge of right and wrong was based directly upon revelation. As the author remarks, "The interest in astronomy was mainly practical"; people studied the stars because they thought they directly influenced human affairs, even Tycho Brahe and Kepler gaining a part living by casting horoscopes. Writers affirmed that comets dried up the moisture of nature, and so produced draught and pestilence. Others believed they were warnings only, while a third class said that they were both "effectual and significant." It is a long journey from such views to those now held, and yet it is but a brief couple of centuries since such teachings were accepted as demonstrated truths.

What strikes one most in running through Mr. Egglestone's book is the number of opinions that have been held concerning animate nature, which a very little observation might have shown to be altogether erroneous. It is easy to see how people came to believe that insects, etc., were generated by putrefaction, and to appreciate the extension of this generalisation so as to include such beliefs as that of wasps having their origin in decayed apples or pears, minnows

in foam, and carp in sluice. All these were simple errors of observation; but how came all the legends of a basilisk hatched from a cock's egg brooded by a toad, of the unicorn with a horn eight to ten feet long growing out of his head, of the salamander enduring fire, of men metamorphosed into wolves, and of swans that sang before dying? All these stories were related by high authorities with the utmost gravity, and are good examples of the manner in which the most absurd legends may be perpetuated from generation to generation once they have the stamp of authority set upon them.

Religious superstitions naturally grow with great strength in such an environment. As Mr. Egglestone says: "The world invisible, as conceived in every age, is a reflection of the familiar material world; the image is often inverted; it may be exaggerated, glorified, distorted; but it is still their own old world mirrored in the clouds of heaven." Even as the dignity of men was measured by the number of retainers maintained, so God's dignity had to be kept up by thousands of angels, who, to quote Milton—

At his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.

These myriad angels had anything but a lazy time. They had to keep the crystalline spheres moving, to keep the lights of heaven burning, and, in addition, the angels, those "strange concussions of the earth," and "direful prodigies in the skie." Hall, in his *Invisible World*, says Mr. Egglestone, "relates that one philosopher was stricken dead for venturing to reason about thunderstorms. It was angelic agency that caused a corpse, in that believing age, to bleed when touched by the guilty hand of the murderer. Angels gave warnings and revelations by dreams, by mental impressions, and by apparitions; and they even fought for men against the spirits of the under-world." All these things the writers of those days knew partly by intuition and partly by metaphysical demonstration, while for all opposition there was the good old-fashioned religious argument of the prison and the scaffold.

The darkest chapter in Mr. Egglestone's book is naturally that relating to witchcraft. In America, as in England, the slightest peculiarity of face or figure, the possession of knowledge above the average—particularly unusual ability to cure disease—was enough to open one to a charge of sorcery; and prosecution and conviction were, in the majority of instances, synonymous terms. In 1654 a shipmaster met with such a storm as only "the malevolence of witches" could get up. The crew selected an old woman of suitable appearance, examined her "with strictest scrutiny, guilty or not guilty," and hanged her out of hand. One very neat woman walked several miles over dirty roads without soiling her clothes. "I scorn to be drabbled," she said, and she was hanged for her cleanliness. Even as Simpson was denounced by the Scottish clergy for proposing to mitigate the pains of childbirth by the use of chloroform, so every midwife who sought to alleviate the agonies of her patients by the use of little quackeries was denounced as a witch. "Our people," says one writer, as late as 1718, "are still as fond of a witch trial as they are of baiting a bear or a bull." A witch was tried usually by having thumbs and toes tied together, and then thrown into the water, to see if she would float; but there were other, and far more horrible, tortures than this. Batches of five, ten, and fifteen people were executed at the time for witchcraft, the sightseers coming for miles to witness the spectacle; and, as is usual with epidemics, mental

or otherwise, the belief grew stronger as a result. In such an environment all argument against the belief was useless. Indeed, arguing against it was only looked upon as a further proof of Satanic agency. Even the circumstance that "the poor Turks had not a demoniac among them" was a proof positive that their religion was false, the Devil sparing his own. This chapter is a fine commentary upon the doctrine that civilisation is advanced by the influence of religion. Doubtless, too, under cover of the charge of witchcraft or sorcery, opportunity was taken to suppress any heresy that existed, and it is not always recognised how much religion owes its perpetuation to this cause. It resulted in a careful weeding out of sceptically-inclined intellects, and an equally careful cultivation of a credulous and superstitious type. Indeed, until very recent times, it was not unusual to find outbreaks of heresy preceding a revival of activity against witches and sorcery.

In a chapter on "Weights and Measures of Conduct" we have an interesting description of the moral habits and rules of the early American settlers. Life was strictly monarchical and aristocratic. The duties of the people were to those in authority—to God, to the king, to the magistrate, or social superior. Gentlemen by birth ought to be preferred in fees, honors, offices, before the common people." Their word was to be taken before that of a common man or woman, and Puritan preachers exhausted all their eloquence in preaching obedience to the "powers that be." It was wrong for humble people to dress in fine clothes, because Scripture declared that "they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses." Criticism of magistrates was an offence of the gravest magnitude; and one woman—a Mrs. Oliver—was punished for this offence by having her tongue pinched for half an hour between a cleft stick.

As usual, monarchy and divinity went hand in hand, and the attitude of men towards magistrates was a reflection of their attitude towards Deity. The punishments for offences against the authorities were on all-fours with the punishments for blasphemy. There were the same croppings of ears, slittings of noses, whippings at the cart's tail, etc. Even women belonging to the Quakers were whipped, half-naked, through the public streets. Gambling was prohibited—not on the ground that gaming was wrong, but because casting lots was a divine institution, formally sanctioned in Scripture; it was profaning the institution by using it on ordinary occasions. Strenuous efforts were made to enforce Sunday observance. Says Mr. Egglestone:—

"He who did not go to church on Sunday must 'lye neck and heels'—that is, with chin and knees drawn together—the following night, and be reduced to slavery for a week. If this did not take the Atheism out of the culprit, a harsher penalty was visited on succeeding offences.....'Studying any bookes of science, but the Holy Scriptures and divinities.....with all grosse feeding and all talking about worldly things,' was also forbidden.On the Sabbath, cattle might not be pastured in the common field where they would have to be watched, food must not be prepared, nor must one pay a visit or walk the streets, except to meeting, nor might one stay at home without fear of fine or whipping-post.....In New Haven, in 1647, a young man was sent to the whipping-post on Monday for not going to church on Sunday, and two brothers were beaten for visiting young women on Saturday after sunset.....Of rest the Puritan mind had no conception. It was a technical term that included the attending to public prayers, to sermons of still greater perplexity, interspersed with home exercises to fill up the time and banish repose."

We have only space for a brief notice of Mr. Egglestone's account of the medical notions that prevailed in the seventeenth century, although it forms one of the best outlines of the famous doctrine of "signatures" that we have seen. It was a period when medical writings bristled with "sympathies," "humors," "virtues," "antipathies," and the like. If a patient suffered from pains in the breast, a wild cat's skin placed thereon formed an effectual remedy. Pulverised butterflies, crickets, and grasshoppers, with all kinds of animal excreta, were highly esteemed as remedies:—

"The wild woods were full of creatures whose values were written upon them in the language of signatures....."

The bark of the board pine was naturally good for the skin; rosin gathered on the bark was good for outward application; turpentine, procured by incisions, was excellent to heal wounds and cuts. Green pine-cones, with a corrugated surface, were good to remove wrinkles from the face.....The familiar kidney-bean was good to strengthen the kidneys.....The French thought that the mottled eggs of the American turkey bred leprosy, but the English colonists thought that the similar eggs of the turkey-buzzard were able to 'restore decayed nature exceedingly.'"

Want of space prevents one dealing with the many other excellent features of Mr. Egglestone's book. In his discussion of the land laws, educational customs, the folk-lore and literature of the period, he has brought together a mass of information for which all real students will feel profoundly grateful. Superstition of all descriptions dies hard; but when we remember that the customs described by Mr. Egglestone were in full force a brief two and a-half centuries ago, there is in the reflection a sufficient curative for all the despondent tendencies to which we may be subject.

C. COHEN.

Materialism Vindicated.

"MERLIN" is the pen-name of one of the ablest journalists and most popular novelists of the present day. He is also the writer of those excellent articles which appear weekly in the *Referee* under the heading of "Our Handbook." To me it is a great pleasure to peruse these literary productions. They deal with a variety of subjects, and although, as a rule, they are critical, they are written in such a fair and masterly manner that they command admiration even from those who differ from the writer's conclusions. He avows his opinions with commendable candor, and he never panders to popular prejudices; while he treats the views of his opponents with courtesy and respect, which, unfortunately, is not always the case with critics of unpopular theories. A marked illustration of this fact was offered in his articles upon "The Mystery of Life" and "The Use of Evil," which appeared respectively in the issues of the *Referee* dated February 2 and 9. Here "Merlin" makes an attack upon what he understands is Materialism. His opposition, however, is not that of the vulgar theologian, but the expression of a philosophical dissident. It affords me, therefore, all the greater pleasure to endeavor to ascertain what force (if any) there may be in his objections to the Materialistic theory.

Before replying to these objections, it may be pointed out that many of "Merlin's" statements, which have no direct bearing upon Materialism, indicate that he has a mind free from orthodox dogmatism, and that he is a thorough believer in mental freedom and impartial investigation. For instance, he writes "that no higher intellectual duty is now recognised than is involved in the fight against pretended authority in such matters [as to the consideration of the purposes of God]. The doctrine of intellectual liberty is vindicated. Bigotry is not dead, but its fangs are drawn. Superstition is not yet eradicated from the minds of men, but we are licensed to make escape from it without incurring social pains and penalties. Opinions go free of the old toll of axe and stake and thumbscrew, and even of the modified troubles of imprisonment and fine. It has come to be seen that the devoutest of minds are not necessarily those which unquestioningly accept the teaching of authority, but those which bend themselves seriously and fearlessly to the search for truth wherever it may be.....If God is good, predestination is a lie. If predestination were a truth, God would be a demon." These are truths frankly expressed, thereby showing that, however much "Merlin" is compelled to yield to emotional instincts, instead of depending upon the dictates of reason, he has the critical faculty largely developed, and that he has no hesitation in honestly recording his dissent from what are regarded by many as religious teachings. It is a noteworthy sign of the progress of Freethought to find such liberal sentiments appearing in an extensively read public newspaper like the *Referee*.

My principal objection to "Merlin's" articles, to

which I am now referring, is that he appears to have an erroneous conception of what the philosophy of Materialism really is, and also that he demands from it what no system or theory in the world can supply. He says:—

"But the idea of Deity—and of one Deity—is rooted. The school of Materialists, who seemed at one time as if they were going to swamp us all by mere force of an authority as little tolerable as that of their elders, the theologians, has closed in blank fiasco. Their pretence of having explored the universe was reduced to the fact that they had made a more or less intimate acquaintance with certain microscopic atoms of our own microscopic part of it.....But the Materialists are mostly dead, and the best of them have recanted. There is something beyond their ken, and they have learned to know it."

Now this savors more of theological assumption than of logical statement. The alleged "idea" of God is not one, but many; still, as a matter of fact, does an idea of God actually exist? Is it possible to have a notion of that of which nothing is known, either of itself or anything that may be thought analogous to it? I should like "Merlin" to give us his supposed idea of a Deity, and state what knowledge he has of such a being. I am not speaking of belief, which is very different from knowledge. Let this fancied idea be described, if it can, and then I venture to allege that the description will be either anthropomorphic or beyond human conception. In fact, "Merlin" practically says this, for he admits:—

"We can never have done with the man-made God, because we cannot get outside our own limitations, and it does not seem unnatural to believe that the Deity is much beyond our highest conceptions, however we may soar. There is no logical reason why we should accept a Monotheistic creed as against the old Persian belief in rival and equal influences of good and evil; but faith is not a birth of logic, and its forms are geographically defined."

It is misleading to confound the Materialism of to-day with the crude theory which in former times bore that name. So far from Materialism being dead, the general complaint among theologians is that this age is becoming more and more Materialistic. Science, philosophy, ethics, and even politics, have a somatic basis instead of a so-called spiritual one, as in former times. Who are the "best of them" (the Materialists) who have "recanted"? What they have done is to give the term a more philosophic meaning. Of course, most Materialists admit "there is something beyond their ken," but what that something is they do not profess to know; and "Merlin" does not attempt to supply the information. Is it not a fact, as stated by Professor Tyndall, that "all we see around, and all we feel within us..... have their unsearchable roots in a cosmical life.....an infinitesimal span of which is offered to the investigation of man"?

It is too common a practice to misrepresent Materialism, because its opponents do not appear to clearly understand what it is. Professor Fiske, in his *Cosmic Philosophy*, says:—

"Persons who worship nothing but worldly success, who care for nothing but wealth or fashionable display or personal celebrity or sensual gratification, are loosely called Materialists. The term can therefore easily be made to serve as a poisoned weapon, and there are theologians who do not scruple to employ it as such against the upholders of philosophic opinions which they do not like, but are unable to refute" (vol. ii., p. 433).

Even that which I regard as the very crude and imperfect Materialism of the past was more practical in its teachings than the fantastical idealism which sets reason at defiance and ignores the lessons derived from the study of the operations of natural law. In his *History of Materialism*, Lange observes:—

"The sober earnest which marks the great Materialistic system of antiquity is perhaps more suited than an enthusiastic idealism, which only too easily results in its own bewilderment, to keep the soul clear of all that is low and vulgar, and to lend it a lasting effort after worthy objects" (p. 47).

By Materialism is meant, in my judgment, the belief that the universe is self-existent, and that its operations are carried on by natural forces without the intervention of any so-called spiritual power; that the functions of life and sensations arise out of matter; that combination, form, and force are the inseparable characteristics of material existences; that all knowledge comes

through the senses; that the essence of things is the sum-total of their properties; that creation, as that term is usually understood, has no sanction in science; and, finally, that life is merely the outcome of the elaborate co-operation and reciprocal action of chemical and physical forces. Such, in a few words, is the groundwork of Materialism. Upon these its theory is based. Perhaps some would prefer to use the word "Monism" to indicate the philosophy here set forth. But, after all, "what's in a name?" To me, that which the name represents is of far greater importance.

It is urged against Materialism that it does not explain the why and wherefore of existence; that it leaves problems still unsolved. This is quite true; but can "Merlin" name any theory that *can* explain everything, or that can solve all the mysteries of nature? To hope for something we do not possess affords no solution to the problems of the future. Granted, as "Merlin" states, that hope gives consolation; that, however, is no proof that the hope will be realised. Moreover, all sincere belief imparts some kind of consolation. Even the victims of the dire superstitions he so forcibly and justly condemns derive comfort from their delusions, but would "Merlin" defend the perpetuation of those superstitions on that account? I think not. Truth alone should satisfy the intelligent mind, and hope should have a reasonable foundation. Let the opponents of Materialism, as here described, show that it deprives them of one reality of life, or that any other theory solves a problem which cannot be explained by the philosophy of Materialism. For my part, I readily admit there *may be* much "behind the veil" of which we know nothing, but there is also much that is self-evident to our senses which affords us scope for investigation, and which supplies materials for the highest gratification. Personally, I object to try to catch the shadow, and to neglect the substance. According to Materialism, we can walk with steady steps where the pathway is clear, and when the road along which we travel is well marked out; but beyond that point we must be careful how we advance. Where certainty prevails in the field of knowledge, we are entitled to speak with the authority which indicates no doubt; but when we arrive at the point where science is silent and nature dumb, we bow our heads in reverence before the inscrutable mystery of the universe, and we wait for further light. Should the time ever arrive when that light will come, we will gratefully hail its approach and walk by the luminous power of its beams; but if it never appears, we shall not be ashamed to confess our ignorance on matters where knowledge cannot be obtained.

The destiny of man will no doubt always be an all-absorbing theme to the inquiring mind. Of one thing we may be sure: that the best way of judging of the future is by a study of the past, for the same laws are ever in operation. It is not difficult for us to form an opinion whence man has come, and from that we may infer the goal that lies ahead for him. As an individual he was born, and as such he will die. What lies beyond the tomb no mortal man can possibly discover, for knowledge cannot penetrate the realms of darkness where death reigns supreme. The matter must therefore remain in uncertainty. With these facts before us, modesty bids us not to dogmatise about matters of which at present we know nothing. As the poet well said:—

No mortal man, however keen his eye,
Can into Nature's deepest secrets pry.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Book of Job.

In pre-scientific days it was supposed that Job was the earliest composition in the Bible. The author ventures to discuss questions of the power and goodness of God, without specific allusion to the Mosaic legislation; therefore it was supposed that he must have written before Moses compiled the Pentateuch. The wealth of Job is described as being in his flocks and herds, and therefore it was supposed that Job must have lived a life like that of the early Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. For these and other reasons, which were agreeable to the ecclesiastical mind, the Book of Job was credited with an immense antiquity, and placed at the beginning of the poetical books of the Bible—before the Psalms, which were fondly ascribed to David, and before the Proverbs, which were credited to Solomon.

But the Book of Job is not singular in its lack of explicit reference to Judaic religion; the same fact is found in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which, like Job, form part of the "philosophical" literature of the Old Testament; and, although Job's references may not be specific, he certainly seems to be acquainted with the Mosaic legislation. Thus xxii. 6 condemns the oppressive taking of pledges, as in Exodus xxii. 26, 27; while xxiv. 2 complains of removal of landmarks, like Deuteronomy xix. 14; and in xxxi. 26–28 Job fears he will be proceeded against by the Judges if he venerates the sun or the moon, apparently in allusion to the enactments of Deuteronomy xvii. 3–7.

The patriarchal ideas of Job are quite refuted by the poem itself. The twenty-fourth chapter describes people who are not in the nomadic stage, and speaks of "the populous city"; while xxix. 7 recalls the time "when I went forth to the gate unto the city, when I prepared my seat in the street." So that it is a very superficial criticism that supposes the work to have been written by people leading a nomadic life like that of the patriarchs or the Bedaween.

Thus both the points of the commentators break down upon examination. We cannot infer that the book is pre-Mosaic, and we cannot infer that it was written before mankind habitually dwelt in cities. Canon Driver tells us that "the language of Job points to a relatively late date. The syntax is extremely idiomatic; but the vocabulary contains a very noticeable admixture of Aramaic words, and (in a minor degree) of words explicable only from the Arabic." In matters of philology we are, of course, dependent upon the opinions of scholars. The ordinary reader cannot always appreciate the points of arguments drawn from language; but we can at least rely upon the assurance of such an eminent scholar as Dr. Driver that in Job we have a very late work of Hebrew literature.

In the days when the Book of Job was supposed to conserve an actual history it was thought sufficient to point to the geographical names in it to show that the work was not a product of the Jewish mind. But such a theory is a perfectly gratuitous one; for the author of a work of fiction could place his characters in any country that suited him. Hebrew romancists had no scruples about inventing names, as we may see in the books of Daniel and Esther, which contain names that have puzzled generations of scholars who would not accept the obvious explanation that these names were the arbitrary inventions of the writers. The author of Job, however, has not availed himself of this privilege to any extent, for only two of his names are perfectly unintelligible—namely, *Bildad* and *Zophar*, which have no meaning in Hebrew, or in any other Semitic language that we are acquainted with. The geographical names present no difficulty. For Uz and Buz the author of Job is indebted to Jeremiah xxv. 20–23. The Temanite was a native of the place now called Teima, in the north-west of Arabia; the Shuhite came from Shuah (Genesis xxv. 2); while the Naamathite came from Naamah, in the tribe of Judah (Joshua xv. 41). With regard to the personal names used, the first, of course, is that of Job himself. This was not a common one, for the Job of Genesis xvi. 13 is spelt differently, and appears to be a textual error for Jashub. The meaning of the word *Job* is not very clear. The most fully accepted idea is that it is derived from the Hebrew אָוִב, and that it means "the penitent," or "the pious"; and we can get no better explanation by turning to any other of the Semitic languages. Ezekiel xiv. associates Noah, Daniel, and *Job*—otherwise the latter is not mentioned in any other part of the Old Testament; and if the references in Ezekiel are later interpolations (Daniel was not written until 165 B.C.) we are left free to suppose that "Job" was an invention of the writer of the book, to designate his "pious" hero. *Satan* is an undoubted Hebrew word, and was only introduced into Arabic by Mohammed. *Eliphaz* is good Hebrew ("God of strength"), and also occurs in Genesis xxxvi. 4. *Elihu*, "God is he," is a common

Jewish name (see 1 Samuel i. 1; 1 Chronicles xxvi. 7, etc.). *Barachel*, "blessing of God," is also good Hebrew. *Ram*, "high," is another Jewish name (see Ruth iv. 19, etc.). *Jemimah* is the only distinctively non-Jewish name in the book; it is Arabic, and signifies "dove." *Keziah* is the "cassia" of modern commerce, which is also mentioned in Psalm xlv. 8—"All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." *Keren Happuch*, "horn of paint," is so decisively Hebrew that the merest tyro in the language could not suppose it belonged to any other branch of the Semitic family. *Keren* is the ordinary word for a horn; and we know that horns are very common receptacles for various things. We have the powder-horn, although powder-horns may be made of other material; and our fathers kept their wealth in money-horns, and drank from drinking-horns. *Puch* was used by the Jewish beauties to paint their eyes with. Jeremiah employs the same word in iv. 30, "Thou enlargest thine eyes with paint"; and it also occurs in 2 Kings ix. 30, where it is related that Jezebel "painted her eyes." The *ha* of *Happuch* is the Hebrew definite article, which does not occur in that form in any other Semitic language. The reader will, therefore, probably agree that the names in the Book of Job point more clearly to a Hebrew source than to any other. With the exception of *Jemimah*, where the names cannot be explained by Hebrew, they cannot be explained by any other of the allied tongues.

That the author of Job possessed no knowledge of Gentile affairs cannot, of course, be maintained. We have only to consider his nationality, and the sources of his inspiration. The first two chapters seem to imply acquaintance with Greek ideas. For the picture given of Yahveh sitting in heaven, with the "sons of God" around him, and discussing the affairs of mankind, is exactly like the picture of Olympus given in Homer. Both in Homer and in Job the gods sit light-heartedly up above, and dispute and wager with one another about the doings of mere mortals beneath; and in both authors the divine caprice causes undeserved disaster to fall upon innocent individuals. Men are looked upon as mere pawns in the game; or, as Shakespeare puts it—

Like flies to wanton boys, so are we to the gods.
They kill us for their sport.

The idea of the heavenly council as portrayed by the author of Job is quite un-Hebraic; and, if he copied it from Homer, he must have lived at a time when Greek literature was no longer a strange thing in Israel—that is to say, somewhere about the second century B.C.

But all these questions are, so to speak, external. The real thing to be studied is the philosophy of the book; and it is to be observed that this philosophy is a thing which arises naturally from the Jewish ideas contained in the Old Testament. It is the continual doctrine of the Hebrew writers that those who act according to the laws of Yahveh will attain prosperity. In Deuteronomy xxviii. it is laid down that if the nation behaves righteously, Yahveh will bless it; but if he is forsaken, he will punish it; and this is repeated in Leviticus xxvi. In the first Psalm the same thing is said of the individual (as also compare Jeremiah xvii. 5–11, and other passages; more especially the Book of Proverbs). If, therefore, righteous persons suffered, it must be because of some sin that they had committed, or their ancestors—an idea that also comes out in the Gospels (Luke xiii. 1–5; John ix. 2). But the experience of life totally contradicted this. Israel was overthrown by the heathen, even when it was most zealous for the laws of Yahveh; and individual experience was to the same effect, for the pious often suffered while the ungodly triumphed. The problem puzzled many of the Old Testament writers; Jeremiah xii. 1 asks, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" and Psalm lxxiii. describes the envy of the righteous at the prosperity of the wicked. Some comforted themselves with the reflection that the prosperity of the ungodly was shortlived, as in Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36; or that the wealth of the unrighteous would be eventually inherited by the justified, as in Psalm xlix. 10. The Book of Job discusses the same problem from a different point of view. The prologue in the first two chapters is intended to show us that Job's sufferings were really meant as a trial of his righteousness; but, of course, this fact is hidden from Job as well as from his friends,

and they all discuss the matter without relation to it. The friends are made to trot out all the stock arguments, and Job refutes them. In its original form the Book left the question of the retributive righteousness of Providence unanswered; for, of course, the work was concluded at xxxi. 40, where we still find: "The words of Job are ended." But a later and more pious writer endeavored to justify the ways of God by the speeches of Elihu, and then introduced Yahveh as the irresponsible autocrat who did what he chose by his own power, and forced Job to confess that he had no warrant for criticising the divine ways, which were really beyond his comprehension.

As Job discusses problems that were in the minds of the Old Testament writers, there is no need to look abroad for the authorship of the book; not to mention that, as already remarked, the author betrays a close acquaintance with Hebrew literature. Thus Job vii. 17 is manifestly a parody of Psalm viii. 4; Job xiv. 11 is a loose quotation of Isaiah xix. 5; and Job iii. 3-10 is an expansion of Jeremiah xx. 14-18. Proverbs xiii. 9, "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out," is the text of Bildad in Job xviii. 5, 6; but Job xxi. 17 asks bitterly: "How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?" Other allusions to Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations might be pointed out; but perhaps enough has been said to show that the Book of Job is an indubitable product of Jewish thought and Jewish soil.

CHILPERIC.

Lord Bacon on Atheism.

THE pedants will be down upon us for speaking of Lord Bacon. It is true there never was such a personage. Francis Bacon was Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England. But this is a case in which it is impossible to resist the popular usage. After all, we write to be understood. The pedants, the heralds, and all the rest of the tribe of technical fanatics, rejoice to mouth "Lord Verulam." But the ordinary man of letters, like the common run of readers, will continue to speak of Lord Bacon; for Bacon was his name, and the "Lord" was but a pretty feather in his hat. And when his lordship took that splendid pen of his, to jot down some of his profoundest thoughts for posterity, did he not say in his grand style, "I, Francis Bacon, thought on this wise"? You cannot get the "Bacon" out of it, and as the "Lord" will slip in, we must let it stand as Lord Bacon.

Lord Bacon was a very great man. Who does not remember Pope's lines?—

If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.

But his bardship was fond of wielding the satiric lash, and that spirit leads to exaggeration. Bacon was not the meanest of mankind. Pope himself did things that Bacon would never have stooped to. Nor was Bacon the wisest and brightest of mankind. A wiser and brighter spirit was contemporary with him in the person of "a poor player." The dullards who fancy that Lord Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare have no discrimination. His lordship's mind might have been cut out of the poet's without leaving an incurable wound. Some will dissent from this, but, be it as it may, the styles of the two men are vastly different, like their ways of thinking. Bacon's essay on Love is cynical. The man of the world, the well-bred statesman, looked on Love as "the child of folly," a necessary nuisance, a tragi-comical perturbation. Shakespeare saw in Love the mainspring of life. Love speaks "in a perpetual hyperbole," said Bacon. Shakespeare also said that the lover "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." The poet knew all the philosopher knew, and more. What Bacon laughed or sneered at, Shakespeare recognised as the magic of the great enchanter, who touches our imaginations and kindles in us the power of the ideal. Exaggeration there must be in passion and imagination; it is the defect of their quality; but what are we without them? Dead driftwood on the tide; dismantled hulls

rotting in harbor; anything that awaits destruction, to give its imprisoned forces a chance of asserting themselves in new forms of being.

Bacon was not a Shakespeare; still, he was a very great man. His writings are a text-book of worldly wisdom. His philosophical force is almost proverbial. Nor was he wanting in a certain "dry" poetry. No philosophical writer, not even Plato, equals him in the command of illuminative metaphors; and the fine dignity of his style is beyond all praise. The words drop from his pen with exquisite ease and felicity. He is never in a hurry, never ruffled. He writes like a Lord Chancellor, though with something in him above the office; and if he is now and then familiar, it is only a slight condescension, like the joke of a judge, which does not bring him down to the level of the litigants.

The opinions of such a man are worth studying; and, as Lord Bacon is often quoted in condemnation of Atheism, we propose to see what he actually says about it, what his judgment on this particular theme is really worth, and what allowance, if any, should be made for the conditions in which he expressed himself. This last point, indeed, is one of considerable importance. Lord Bacon lived at a time when downright heresy, such as Raleigh and other great men of that age were accused of, could only be ventilated in private conversation. In writing, it could only be hinted or suggested; and, in this respect, a writer's *silence* is to be taken into account—that is, we must judge by what he does *not* say, as well as by what he *does* say.

Some writers, like Letourneau, the French ethnologist, have gone to the length of arguing that Lord Bacon was a Materialist, and that his Theistic utterances were all perfunctory: as it were, the pinch of incense which the philosopher was obliged to burn on the altars of the gods. This much at least is certain—Lord Bacon rarely speaks of religion except as a philosopher or a statesman. He is apt to sneer at the "high speculations" of "theologues." There is no piety, no unction, in his allusions to theology. He looks upon religion as a social bond, an agency of good government. It is impossible to say that he took a Christian view of things when he wrote: "I have often thought upon Death, and I find it the least of all evils"; or when he wrote: "Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark; and, as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other."

Lord Bacon has an essay on Atheism, which is significantly followed by another on Superstition. The latter is seldom referred to by religious apologists, but we shall deal with it first.

"In all superstition," he says, "wise men follow fools." This is a bold, significant utterance. Fools are always in the majority, wise men are few, and they are obliged to bow to the power of the multitude. Kings respect, and priests organise, the popular folly; and the wise men have to sit aloft and nod to each other across the centuries. There is a freemasonry amongst them, and they have their shibboleths and dark sayings to protect them against priests and mobs.

Perhaps the story of Balaam is a subtle anticipation of Lord Bacon's dictum. It was the ass that first saw the angel. Balaam only saw it afterwards, when his wits were disordered by the wonder of a talking donkey. Thus the prophet followed the ass, as wise men follow fools.

Superstition is worse than Atheism, in Lord Bacon's judgment; the one is unbelief, he says, but the other is contumely; and "it were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him." He approves the saying of Plutarch, that he "had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man as Plutarch, than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born"—which, on the part of Lord Bacon, looks like a thrust at the doctrine of original sin and infant damnation.

With his keen eye for "the good of man's estate," Lord Bacon remarks of superstition that, "as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men":—

"Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were

not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men; therefore Atheism did never perturb States; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no farther, and we see the times inclined to Atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many States, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of government."

By "civil times" Lord Bacon means settled, quiet, orderly, progressive times—times of civilisation. And it is rather singular that he should pick out the age immediately preceding the advent of Christianity. Whatever fault is in Atheism, it is no danger to human society. This is Lord Bacon's judgment, and we commend it to the attention of the fanatics of faith, who point to Atheism as a horrid monster, fraught with cruelty, bloodshed, and social disruption.

Coming now to Lord Bacon's essay on Atheism itself, we find him opening it with a very pointed utterance of Theism. "I had rather," he says, "believe all the fables in the legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind." The expression is admirable, but the philosophy is doubtful. When a man says he would *rather* believe one thing than another, he is merely exhibiting a personal preference. Real belief is not a matter of taste; it is determined by evidence—if not absolutely, at least as far as our power of judgment carries us.

"A little philosophy," his lordship says, "inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." The reason he assigns is, that when we no longer rest in second causes, but behold "the chain of them confederate, and linked together," we must needs "fly to providence and Deity." The necessity, however, is far from obvious. All the laws, as we call them, of all the sciences together, do not contain any new principle in their addition. Universal order is as consistent with Materialism as with Theism. It is easy to say that "God never wrought miracles to convince Atheism, because his ordinary works convince it"; but, as a matter of fact, it is the God of Miracles in whom the multitude have always believed. A special providence, rather than a study of the universe, has been the secret of their devotion to "the unseen."

Lord Bacon drops below the proper level of his genius in affirming that "none deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that there were no God." This is but a milder expression of the incivility of the Psalmist. It is finely rebuked by the atheist monk in the play of *Sir William Crichton*, the work of a man of great though little recognised genius—William Smith.

For ye who deem that one who lacks of faith
Is therefore conscience-free, ye little know
How doubt and sad denial may enthral him
To the most timid sanctity of life.

Lord Bacon, indeed, rather doubts the existence of the positive Atheist.

"It appeareth in nothing more, that Atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this, that Atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the opinion of others: nay more, you shall have Atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects; and, which is most of all, you shall have of them that will suffer for Atheism, and not recant; whereas, if they truly think that there is no such thing as God, why should they trouble themselves?"

Although Lord Bacon was not the "meanest of mankind," there was certainly a lack of the heroic in his disposition; and this passage emanated from the most prosaic part of his mind and character. "Great thoughts," said Vauvenargues, "spring from the heart." Now the heart of Lord Bacon was not as high as his intellect; no one could for a moment imagine his facing martyrdom. He had none of the splendid audacity, the undaunted courage, the unshakable fortitude, of his loftier contemporary, Giordano Bruno. So much truth is there in Pope's epigram, that his lordship was capable at times of grovelling; witness his fulsome, though magnificent, dedication of the *Advancement of Learning* to King James—the British Solomon, as his flatterers called him, to the amusement of the great Henry of France, who sneered, "Yes, Solomon the son of David," in allusion to his mother's familiarity with David Rizzio. And in this very passage of the essay on Atheism we also see the grovelling side of

Lord Bacon, with a corresponding perversion of intelligence. Being incapable of understanding martyrdom, except under the expectation of a reward in heaven, his lordship cannot appreciate the act of an Atheist in suffering for his convictions. His concluding words are positively *mean*. Surely the Atheist might trouble himself about truth, justice, and dignity, all of which are involved in the maintenance and propagation of his principles. But, if the closing observation is *mean*, the opening observation is *fatuous*. This is a strong word to use of any sentence of Lord Bacon's, but in this instance it is justifiable. If an Atheist mistrusts his own opinion, because he talks about it, what is to be said of the Christians, who pay thousands of ministers to talk about their opinions, and even subscribe for Missionary Societies to talk about them to the "heathen"? Are we to conclude that an Atheist's talking shows mistrust, and a Christian's talking shows confidence? What real weakness is there in the Atheist's seeking for sympathy and concurrence? It is hard for any man to stand alone; certainly it was not in Lord Bacon's line to do so; and why should not the Atheist be "glad to be strengthened by the opinion of others"? Novalis said that his opinion gained infinitely when it was shared by another. The participation does not prove the truth of the opinion, but redeems it from the suspicion of being a mere maggot of an individual brain.

Lord Bacon then turns to the barbaric races, who worship particular gods, though they have not the general name; a fact which he did not understand. More than two hundred years later it was explained by David Hume. It is simply a proof that monotheism grows out of polytheism; or, if you like, that Theism is a development of Idolatry. This is a truth that takes all the sting out of Lord Bacon's observation that "against Atheists the very savages take part with the very subtlest philosophers." We may just remark that the philosophers must be very hard pressed when they call up their savage allies.

Contemplative Atheists are rare, says Lord Bacon—"a Diagoras, a Bion, a Lucian perhaps, and some others." They seem more than they are, for all sorts of heretics are branded as Atheists; which leads his lordship to the declaration that "the great Atheists indeed are hypocrites, which are ever handling holy things, but without feeling; so as they must needs be cauterised in the end." This is a pungent observation, and it springs from the better side of his lordship's nature. We also have no respect for hypocrites, and for that very reason we object to them as a present to Atheism. Religion must consume its own smoke, and dispose of its own refuse.

The causes of Atheism next occupy Lord Bacon's attention. He finds they are four: divisions in religion, the scandal of priests, profane scoffing in holy matters, and "learned times, especially with peace and prosperity." "Troubles and adversities," his lordship says, "do more bow men's minds to religion." Which is true enough, though it only illustrates the line of the Roman poet that religion always has its root in fear.

It will be observed that, up to the present, Lord Bacon has not considered one of the reasons for Atheism. What he calls "causes" are only *occasions*. He does not discuss, or even refer to, the objections to Theism that are derived from the tentative operations of nature, so different from what might be expected from a settled plan; from ugly, venomous, and monstrous things; from the great imperfection of nature's very highest productions; from the ignorance, misery, and degradation of such a vast part of mankind; from the utter absence of anything like a moral government of the universe. Only towards the end of his essay does Lord Bacon begin business with the Atheists. "They that deny a God," he says, "destroy a man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and, if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature." This is pointed and vigorous, but after all it is a matter of sentiment. Some prefer the fallen angel, others the risen ape. Lord Bacon, like Earl Beaconsfield, is on the side of the angels. We are on the other side. A being who has done something, and will do more, however humble his origin, is preferable to one who can only boast of his fine descent.

Finally, his lordship takes the illustration of the dog,

to whom man is "instead of a God." What generosity and courage he will put on, in the "confidence of a better nature than his own." So man gathereth force and faith from divine protection and favor. Atheism therefore "depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty." But this is to forget that there may be more than one means to the same end. Human nature may be exalted above its frailty without becoming the dog of a superior intelligence. Science, self-examination, culture, public opinion, and the growth of humanity, are more than substitutes for devotion to a deity. They are capable of exalting man continuously and indefinitely. They do not appeal to the spaniel element in his nature; they make him free, erect, noble, and self-dependent.

On the whole, we are bound to say that Lord Bacon's essay on Atheism is unworthy of his genius. If it were the only piece of his writing extant, we should say it was the work of one who had great powers of expression, but no remarkable powers of thought. He writes very finely as a strong advocate, putting a case in a way that commands attention, and perhaps admiration for its force and skill. But something more than this is to be expected when a really great man addresses himself to a question of such depth and importance. What, then, are we to conclude? Why this, that Lord Bacon dared not give the rein to his mind in an essay on Atheism. He was bound to be circumspect in a composition level to the intelligence of every educated reader. We prefer to take him where he enjoys greater freedom. Under the veil of a story, for instance, he aims a dart at the superstition of a special providence, which is an ineradicable part of the Christian faith. Bion, the Atheist, being shown the votive tablets in the temple of Neptune, presented by those who prayed to the god in a storm and were saved, asked where were the tablets of those who were drowned. Bacon tells the story with evident gusto, and it is in such things that we seem to get at his real thoughts. In a set essay on Atheism, a man of his worldly wisdom, and unheroic temper, was sure to kneel at the regular altars. The single query, "Why should they trouble themselves?" explains it all.

—Reprinted.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Last Word on Blake.

"But men may construe things after their fashion,
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves."

—SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar*.

"Madness in great ones must not unwatched go."

—SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*.

BUT for one circumstance I had said my last word on the Blake controversy. That circumstance is the imputation to me, by "Sirius," in the security of a debater who supposes his opponent cannot reply, of an assertion I never made; which alleged assertion, in the fashion of one who makes a man of straw, "Sirius" proceeds to demolish.

He says: "First I shall try to transfix the assertion of 'Mimnermus' that Blake in his old age wrote *nothing but* drivelling nonsense." Now, I said that in Blake's young days he wrote magnificent poetry, and in his old age some of the most drivelling nonsense ever put on paper. The "*nothing but*" is pure invention on the part of "Sirius," and quite alters the meaning of the quotation. Nor could "Sirius" reasonably imagine me saying such a thing, as in the very article from which he misquotes I distinctly pointed out that madmen often did write sane things, and cited as an example Clare's fine swan-song written in his mad old age. That Blake expressly wished to have his later writings destroyed shows that he had moments of sanity. "Sirius" says Blake wrote clear and simple letters to Linnell and other friends, and therefore was sane. One must suppose "Sirius" to be lamentably ignorant of the elemental facts of alienist science to use such an argument, as it is the commonest knowledge that mad people have sane periods, as instance the homicidally mad sister of Charles Lamb.

Nor is "Sirius" more happy in his display of physiological dialectic. He says that the state of a man's liver cannot possibly influence his philosophy,

cannot determine whether he will be a pessimist or an optimist. Now what *does* determine a man's optimism or pessimism? A man with a cheerful temperament in viewing the world is more likely to seize on those phenomena in his survey which make for optimism. A man with a melancholy temperament is likely to seize on those which make for pessimism.

The facts for both theories are alike available for the one as for the other. But with the same facts of life to work from, one man becomes an optimist and the other a pessimist. The data are the same, but the spectacles through which they are viewed are different. One pair is fitted with rose-hued glasses, and the other with grey.

There's nothing good or ill
But thinking makes it so.

Now, how does the liver affect temperament? Physiology has made great advances in the last two thousand years, but even the ancient Romans knew better than "Sirius," for their word "melancholia" comes from the two Greek words—*melas*, black; and *chole*, bile; black-bile, indicating that they possessed a knowledge of the fact that when bile, instead of being excreted by the liver through the gall ducts into the duodenum, becomes re-absorbed into the blood, a nervous irritation is set up, resulting in melancholy. This, as a matter of physiological knowledge, is what actually takes place in biliousness. The nervous system, in which is included the brain, becomes poisoned, and under such circumstances a man has neither a sound body nor a sound mind. The unsound liver poisons the otherwise sound mind. It makes it view the facts of life out of due proportion. It renders the outlook on life dark and gloomy. If the patient be an ordinary individual, he becomes subject to fits of melancholia; sometimes, be it noted, resulting in insanity. If he be a philosopher, he becomes a pessimist. "Sirius" says that Von Hartmann had a digestion like a horse, and was a greater pessimist than Carlyle. "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" Does Sirius seriously suppose that a melancholy temperament cannot arise from any other cause than bile poisoning. In Hartmann's case, as in that of Schopenhauer, his mental outlook was doubtless due to some defect of brain. Because Hartmann and other pessimists had sound livers, it by no means follows that they had sound minds. The fact which "Sirius" genially supposes to be a vital thrust is that Rousseau was a dyspeptic, and yet an optimist. An average schoolboy of fourteen might have reminded "Sirius" that dyspepsia is not biliousness. It has to do with the stomach and intestines, and not with the liver. A man may be a martyr to indigestion, and yet have a perfectly sound liver. His food may digest badly, but his liver may quite normally and satisfactorily perform its duties. In such a case the blood does not get flooded with bile, and the brain does not get poisoned with it, and the man remains an optimist. "Sirius's" physiological arguments, as applied to mental science, are as confused as Blake's latter-day symbolism.

"Sirius" also seems to think that, because Blake habitually used words out of their accepted meaning, this was a proof of genius, and not of insanity. Blake had the richest language in the world from which to draw words to construct his images. The translators of the authorised version of the English Bible used some 8,000 words. Shakespeare used 20,000. With still another 30,000 words at his command, what need for Blake to call black white, to name grave gay? None but the promptings of insanity.

In conclusion, I cannot resist paraphrasing a paragraph in "Sirius's" last article, slightly altering it to make it true.

If we consider the almost personal character of Blake's symbolism, how largely he provided his own special pantheon, and how he turned topsy-turvy many of the thought images of his and our time, we shall naturally conclude that he *saw* things upside down, and that the topsy-turvydom of his writing was but the natural expression of the inversion of his mind.

MIMNERMUS.

The practice of self-restraint and renunciation is not happiness, though it may be something much better.—*T. H. Huxley*.

Acid Drops.

WE hear that the important treaty of alliance between our country and Japan is objected to by certain pious Christians, on the ground that Japan is a heathen power. They shake their heads over so ungodly an alliance, and fear that it will provoke divine judgments. Statesmen, of course, pay no attention to such nonsense.

The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Cambridge on Saturday, and addressed two meetings as president of the National Temperance League. When he "strongly urged" a crowded audience of undergraduates to beware of the "terrible curse" of intemperance we may be sure he did not quote the Scripture text which says, "Let him drink, and forget his poverty" (Proverbs xxxi. 7). Neither would he refer to Deuteronomy xiv. 26, where the Lord favors the consumption of "strong drink." He might, indeed, but of course he did not, assure his hearers that, from the teetotal point of view, the Christian religion is inferior to Mohammedanism, which strictly and effectually prohibits the use of intoxicating liquors, while Christianity permits their free use, and even—as at the communion table—enjoins believers to partake of wine, which is asserted to be, actually or figuratively, the blood of the Son of God.

At High Wycombe a confectioner and tobacconist named Jacob Popp was, for the fifth time, fined thirty shillings, including costs, for Sunday trading. The Mayor said it *seemed* like persecution; but the magistrates had to enforce the law. We are glad to hear that Mr. Popp's Sunday business has greatly increased since the police commenced this persecution.

Providence has been sending some terrible earthquakes to convince the inhabitants of Trans-Caucasia of his power and goodness. At Shemakha, the flourishing town which has suffered most from the shocks, the dead bodies of about 200 persons were dug out of the ruins in a single day. Hundreds more, it is believed, are still buried, and excavations are being carried on, though with great difficulty and danger, as the shocks are of frequent occurrence. The survivors are encamped outside the remains of the town.

According to later telegrams, the town is now almost completely destroyed, only about a dozen houses being left standing. Thousands of persons have perished. Twenty-five thousand of the inhabitants are without food and shelter. The sufferers are mostly Mohammedans, so that Christians may feel thankful that Providence is afflicting the enemies of Christ more than his friends. Church and mosque, however, have alike been destroyed, so that Providence displays some amount of impartiality after all.

An East-end clergyman, generally known as ex-monk Widows, has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labor for "improper conduct" with a boy aged fifteen. Prisoner had previously suffered ten years' penal servitude for similar practices. An impostor nearly all his life, he never was a monk, as he pretends, but merely a member of a choir of a church at Toronto, where he was sent to goal for "misconduct." Widows is exceedingly popular with his congregation, who believe that he is the victim of Roman Catholic plots. The women of his flock are his most ardent supporters. He often preached in Victoria Park.

A carnival dance of choir boys is to be seen every year in Seville Cathedral as a portion of divine service. The performers are handsomely attired in red silk doublets slashed with gold and relieved with white sleeves and sashes. They carry red and gold hats trimmed with ostrich feathers. Red and gold streamers hang from each shoulder. The dance takes place just below the steps leading to the altar, and in the presence of the archbishop and the black-robed prebendaries and purple-trained canons. Lively music accompanies the movements of the dancers, who click their castanets and join in various songs of praise, as they go through the various figures of the dance. All this operatic work is repugnant to the religious feelings of Protestants, who forget how vigorously David danced before the ark in attire, or rather lack of attire, which in modern days would speedily lead to arrest by the police in the interest of public decency.

Next Sunday, at Berkeley Chapel, Mayfair, the preacher's subject will be "Do you believe in the Devil?" The *Daily Chronicle* regards this as a "sensational" announcement. If people really believed in a devil nowadays, the inquiry would be regarded as a perfectly rational and proper one.

The Christian Mission Society is lamenting the serious falling off in the number of clergymen offering their services

for foreign missionary work. Lack of men, and not of money, is spoken of as "the real deficit." The Council which acts for the United Boards of Missions for the provinces of Canterbury and York is making a similar plea for men.

An American Heretic.

PROFESSOR CHARLES W. PEARSON, of the North-western University of Chicago, a Methodist institution, has summoned up sufficient courage to avow his disbelief in miracles. Among the stories of the Bible that he regards as mythical are the following: "The passing of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego through the fiery furnace. Moses dividing the Red Sea. The feeding of Elijah by the ravens. Elisha's raising of the dead. Christ's walking on the water. Christ's multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Christ's raising of the son of the widow of Nain." He followed this up by saying that the "dogma of the infallible Bible is the besetting sin and golden calf of the idolatrous worship of the Churches. It will be objected that this is the Infidel's view of miracles. What then? Wise men will accept the truth from any source. If Christians were more ready to learn from Infidels when the Infidels are right, there would be soon less of Infidelity in the world." An attempt was made to discipline him, but failed. At a ministers' meeting Rev. F. A. Hardin said of him: "If I had the power and ability I would skin that man, salt his hide, and tack it up on the barn door before the ordinary preacher could sharpen his jack-knife." He further indicated the desire to "see him stood upon his head and his ears filled with vinegar until he would come to his senses." Mr. Hardin is undoubtedly orthodox.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Moral Sense.

If it be true, as our daily experience teaches us, that the moral sense gains in clearness and power by exercise, by the constant endeavor to find out and to see for ourselves what is right and what is wrong, it must be nothing short of a moral suicide to delegate our conscience to another man. It is true that when we are in difficulties, and do not altogether see our way, we quite rightly seek counsel and advice of some friend who has more experience, more wisdom begotten by it, more devotion to the right, than ourselves, and who, not being involved in the difficulties which encompass us, may more see the way out of them. But such counsel does not, and ought not to, take the place of your private judgment; on the contrary, among wise men, it is given and asked for the purpose of helping and supporting private judgment. I should go to my friend, not that he may tell me what to do, but that he may help me to see what is right.

—*W. K. Clifford.*

Shakespeare in Rome.

SENATOR MARIOTTI and Deputy Succi, who may be said to represent the most liberal elements in the Italian Legislature, have set on foot a movement in favor of erecting a statue of Shakespeare in Rome. The idea, it is said, originated in a desire to counter-balance the effect produced by the Emperor William's present to the city of a statue of Goethe; but the proposal meets with great favor, it being thought fitting that the three greatest thinkers of modern times—Goethe, Shakespeare, and Dante—should be represented by their effigies amidst the remains of Rome. The initiators of the project say that the erection of the statue will also be a means of showing England that the Italian people are grateful for the decision which preserves to Malta the tongue of Dante. A committee has been formed for the promotion of the scheme, and is presided over by Count Colonna, Mayor of Rome.

Statues of brass or marble will perish, and statues made in imitation of them are not the same. But reprint a thought a thousand times over, carve it in wood or engrave it on stone, and the thought is identically and eternally the same, unaffected by any change of matter. If the thing produced has in itself the capacity to become immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as our consciousness of existence, is immortal also.—*Thomas Paine.*

Who first told Joseph's dream to the world? Did Joseph, who believed the lie, or the angel, who told it? No person need say a thing to prove his or her stupidity after publicly confessing to faith in the miraculous conception of Jesus.—*L. K. Washburn.*

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 23, Liverpool. March 2, Camberwell. April 6, Sheffield; 13, Bradford; 20, Glasgow.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 23, Birmingham. March 2, Athenæum Hall; 9, Aberdare, South Wales; 16, Porth.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

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

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

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Personal.

I WAS too sanguine last week. I expected to be able to bring this week's *Freethinker* up to the usual character. But I was very much deceived. I had committed a too common fault in under-estimating the strength of my enemy. Since then I have been undeceived. I have been fighting a very hard battle in my bedroom. I am fighting it still as I write these few lines on Tuesday afternoon (Feb. 18). I think I am winning, and my doctor thinks so too; but I am utterly unfit as yet for any sort of work; indeed, my doctor says that there will not be much fitness of any kind in me until I have recuperated at the seaside. Meanwhile I have to cancel (or postpone) all lecturing engagements. It will be several weeks, I imagine, in the most favorable circumstances, before I can possibly resume my platform duties.

A cheerful prospect every way—even financially! But the leaders of Freethought have always had to bear burdens. They are sometimes depicted as wallowing in wealth, but they have very rarely enjoyed more than a hand-to-mouth existence.

Certainly the *Freethinker* looks very odd without its "Acid Drops," "Sugar Plums," and "Answers to Correspondents." A few "Drops" have been sent in this week by my old friend and former colleague, Mr. W. P. Ball. By next week, if I am still unfit for such work, I must see what arrangements can be made for a temporary distribution of it amongst several hands. My readers can rely upon my doing my best; and, for the rest, I must throw myself once more upon their indulgence.

Without inflicting upon my readers all the details of a sick chamber, I may just say that my chief difficulty—after the first fierce attack of the influenza and bronchitis was repelled—has been brain-fag and over-taxation of the heart. I came to this battle in a state of partial exhaustion. My doctor reports that my heart is sound, but had been reduced to functional feebleness by the generally "run down" state into which I had worked myself. This is gradually being rectified, but I shall have to be very careful of my health and strength for a considerable time. If I were a Bishop, or even a Mr. Price Hughes, I might go off to some sunny clime for rest and change, and study how to keep out of heaven by the aid of the funds of my diocese, or the purses of the wealthier members of my congregation.

A word in conclusion to my correspondents. I must ask them to be patient. All their letters shall be answered, or otherwise dealt with, as soon as possible.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

OWING to his continued serious illness, Mr. Foote was unable to be at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and in his absence the Rev. J. J. B. Coles accepted the invitation sent him by Miss Vance, and delivered an interesting address on what, from his point of view, are "The Mistakes of Free-thinkers in their Criticism of the Bible." In his usual courteous manner Mr. Coles suggested that many Free-thinkers were so convinced of the purely mythological or legendary character of the Bible narratives that they did not give sufficient attention to the discoveries of archaeologists.

Mr. Coles also expressed his belief that evolution was not sufficient to account for the deplorably sinful condition of the world at large, which he believed to be due to man's corruption of God-given truth. Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. Thurlow, Mr. Schaller, and Mr. Pack offered effective opposition, and Mr. Coles ended by an appeal that further consideration might be given to the points he raised.

In the absence of Mr. Foote, the Athenæum platform will be occupied this evening (Jan. 23) by Mr. W. Heaford, who will take as his subject "The Conflict between Religion and Morality." Mr. Heaford's last address here gave so much satisfaction that we hope to see a large gathering.

The South Shields friends had a very successful meeting in the Victoria Hall on Sunday last to hear Mr. Watts's lecture on "Freethought: its Nature and Progress." Mr. Watts also named a little girl, the daughter of Mr. James Fothergill, the Branch treasurer. The chairman, Mr. Aarstadt, announced that the Branch was in correspondence with Mr. Foote for an early date, and also that they had offered to make arrangements for the Society's Annual Conference on Whit Sunday.

It is rather late to note the fact, but Mr. C. Cohen lectures in the Labor Hall, Hopewell-street, Gloucester, on the evenings of February 20 and 21. No Freethought lectures have been delivered in Gloucester for over twenty years, so the meetings are something of an event, and should attract attention. Gloucester is the city which gave Mr. G. J. Holyoake the opportunity of writing his somewhat prematurely-named *Last Trial for Atheism*. It is to be hoped that the present meetings will have no such sequel.

Mr. Cohen, on February 26th, also closes the course of lectures now being delivered at the Workmen's Hall, West Ham-lane, Stratford. His subject is "The Necessity of Atheism," and it is militant enough in tone to secure a good audience.

Animism.

"It is unquestionably true that the first trace of all conception of a supernatural being is the conception of a ghost."—HERBERT SPENCER.

"Let the ghosts go. We will worship them no more. Let them cover their eyeless sockets with their fleshless hands, and fade for ever from the imaginations of men."—COLONEL INGERSOLL.

THE late Professor Huxley, in his essay on "The Evolution of Theology," remarks:—

"It is a matter of fact that, whether we direct our attention to the older conditions of civilised societies in Japan, in China, in Hindustan, in Greece, or in Rome, we find underlying all other theological notions the belief in ghosts, with its inevitable concomitant, sorcery; and a primitive cult in the shape of a worship of ancestors, which is essentially an attempt to please or appease their ghosts. The same thing is true of old Mexico and Peru, and of every semi-civilised or savage people who have developed a definite cult; and in those who, like the natives of Australia, have not even a cult, the belief in, and fear of, ghosts is as strong as anywhere else."

Huxley calls this deification of ghosts *Sciotheism*, but its underlying principle is known as Animism.

Animism, or belief in spiritual beings, is, in the words of Dr. E. B. Tylor, "the groundwork of the philosophy of religion from that of savages up to that of civilised man." It is the outcome of that earliest analogical reasoning which concludes external objects to be animated by a life similar to our own. To a man in

his wild state the same life appears to stir in everything, in running water, in trees, clouds, and animals—the idea being confirmed by temporary departures, as in swoon or sleep. From the appearance of men, living and dead, in dreams, it was inferred that man had a phantom likeness of his body, separable from it, so as to appear to others at a distance, and continuing to exist and return after the body was dead. From the supposed reality of dreams arose the supposed reality of ghosts, spirit messengers, whence resulted all kinds of imaginary supernatural beings.

Dreams mainly account for the soul theory. That men have unsubstantial images belonging to them is inferred also in other ways by savages who have watched their reflections in still water, or their shadows following them, or have seen their breath as a faint cloud, vanishing, though one can feel it is still there. In the barbaric theory of souls, life, mind, breath, shadow, reflection, dream, and vision come together, and account for one another in some vague, confused way, that satisfies the untaught reasoner. The Zulus so identify soul and shadow that they assert a corpse does not cast a shadow. This may remind us of the mediæval superstition that one who sold his soul to Satan lost his shadow. Dante has the idea that the power of casting a shadow is the distinct property of the living.

Schoolcraft tells us that North American Indians think "there are duplicate souls, one of which remains with the body, while the other is free to depart on excursions during sleep." The only distinction made between sleep and death is that sleep is a temporary, while death is a permanent, absence of the soul or spirit. According to Crantz, Greenlanders believe "the soul can forsake the body during the interval of sleep." Thomson says New Zealanders believed "that during sleep the mind left the body, and that dreams are the objects seen during its wandering." In Fiji and Borneo it was believed that the spirit of a man who still lives will leave the body to trouble other people during sleep. A traveller in equatorial Africa remarks that if you ask a negro where is the spirit of his grandfather, he says he does not know, it is done. But if you ask him about the spirit of his father or brother, who died yesterday, he is full of apprehension; he believes it generally to be near the place of burial. So vividly present is this conception of spirit survival that among many tribes the hut, kraal, or village is removed to a new and distant site immediately after the death of one of the inhabitants.

Among the Tipperahs, if a man dies away from his home his relations stretch a thread over all intermediate streams, so that the spirit of the dead may return to his own village, it being supposed that spirits cannot cross running water without assistance (Sir J. Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, p. 240). The Karens have a similar practice arising from the same notion, a trace of which may be found in Burns's *Tam o' Shanter*. The Utes in North America dispose of the dead they fear by putting them under water to prevent the return of their spirits. In West Africa a widow would duck herself under water to get rid of her husband's spirit, and then feel free to marry again. Ducking under water is still a charm to get rid of disease, and, indeed, a very salutary one.*

In some European folk-lore, a sleeper must not be turned lest the spirit should miss its way back to the mouth. The legend of King Gunthram tells how, as the king lay asleep in his faithful lieutenant's lap, the servant saw a serpent issue from his lord's mouth, and run to the brook. But it could not pass, so the servant laid his sword across the water, and the creature ran along it and up into a mountain. After a while it came back and returned into the mouth of the sleeping king, who, waking, told how he had dreamt that he went over an iron bridge into a mountain full of gold. (Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i., 442.)

Notions of transmigration naturally follow the animistic conception of the soul. Sir A. C. Lyall (*Natural History of Religion in India*, p. 23) tells how, when the news of the death of a high official reached

the Sepoy guard at the main gate, a black cat rushed out. The guard presented arms to the cat as a salute to the flying spirit of the powerful Englishman, and the coincidence took so firm a hold that the practice continued whenever any cat passed.

The Brazilian Indians say that the souls of the brave become beautiful birds, feeding on pleasant fruits; but cowards are turned into reptiles. All the world over we find the idea of souls residing in animals, and their ability to change their forms. The bear the savage meets in the woods is too cunning to appear as a man; but "he could an he would." Hence savages talk seriously to animals, alive or dead, propitiate them, and ask pardon when it is their painful duty to kill them, so that their spirits may not return to trouble them. So the woodman, pioneer iconoclast, who still performs his mystic rites, when he cuts down a tree asks permission, offers sacrifices, and provides a green sprig to stick into the stump when the tree falls, that there may be a new home for the spirit.

Hundreds of fairy tales are occupied with stories of transformations and changelings; and fairies are but relics of earlier spirits. In his *Science of Fairy Tales* Mr. E. S. Hartland enters into these, dealing particularly with the variants of the swan-maiden. In a form of these stories found in the Shetland Isles we may, perhaps, trace their genesis. An inhabitant beheld a number of the sea-folk dancing by moonlight on the shore of a small bay. Near them lay several seal-skins. He snatched one up—the property, as it turned out, of a fair maiden, who thereupon became his wife. Years after one of their children found her seal-skin, and ran to display it to his mother, not knowing it was hers. She put it on, became a seal, and plunged into the water. A similar tale is found on the Gold Coast and among the Dyaks of Borneo. It is apparent that such a legend might grow from some man looking for a loved one drowned, and seeing a seal at the spot. When we read that an Eskimo widow would not take walrus-flesh because her drowned husband had turned into a walrus, we see this is the explanation. Animals, sometimes trees and plants, and sometimes sun, moon, and stars, are taken as ancestors, and the mythic ancestor becomes the totem god of the tribe.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

The Bible Creation Story.—VI.

SINCE commenting on the Christian perversions of the word "created" in the first chapter of Genesis, I have come across a "prize essay" on the Sabbath by the Rev. Brewin Grant, in which, towards the end of the work, the author devotes three chapters to the six days of creation. The Bible record, this gentleman declares, is "not in any way affected by any geological facts or speculations about the age of the earth." The historical periods and events relating to this globe, as narrated in Genesis, may be summed up, he says, in three words—Creation, Desolation, and Reformation.

The origin of the universe, according to this interpreter, is recorded in the first sentence of the narrative: "In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth"; which statement, he contends, includes the creation of "the sun with its light," and the moon and stars. Some ages later, he says, there came a long period of desolation, which preceded "the reformation and re-inhabitation" of the world. "Before and during its occurrence, the main geological processes were continued and completed; storing the earth not only in the fossil remains of living creatures that preceded this state, but filling the earth's coal-cellars by successive submerging of forests and other vegetable materials to form condensed fuel, latent heat for the future service of mankind. All this is no part of the six days' work, but leads up to it, and prepares for it." Finally, according to this Bible reconciler, some six thousand years ago there was a re-formation of the earth in six days—that is, six solar days, as recorded in Genesis, and as stated in the Fourth Commandment: "For in six *days* the Lord made heaven

* "If you can interpose a brook between you and witches, spectres, or even fiends, you are in perfect safety."—Note to Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

and earth," etc. The enumeration of the six days' work is then given as follows:—

"First day, the re-introduction of light; not its formation, nor its creation, but its admission into the atmosphere whence it had been excluded.....Second day, the fuller clearance of the air, or opening of the expanse, to make the heavens visible; not to make, nor to create, the visible heavens—the creation of the heavens is recorded in the first verse.....Fourth day, the complete clearance of the atmosphere, so that the sun's disk might be visible in the daytime and the moon and stars visible at night; not creating these, but giving or appointing them again 'to shine upon the earth,' whence their rays had been excluded during chaos.....This re-formation, or work of the week, is not to be confounded with 'the creation of the heavens and the earth.' They are different stages and different processes.....It is enough to notice the last words in consecutive history, from the original creation down through the six days' formation—'rested from all his work which God had *created and made.*' These are two distinct things, as may be seen in the margin, which gives the literal rendering of the Hebrew 'created to make.' This means that he had originally created the material 'for to make' it into any fashion afterwards, as it should please him in his progressive manifestations.....It was from not seeing this difference.....that Professor Tyndall quoted, evidently as Biblical, 'the creation of the world in six days'.....The six days' work is *never* called 'the creation of the heavens and the earth' in the Bible."

The last statement is, in one sense, true; for, apart from the narrative in Genesis, the exact period occupied in the creation is only once named in the Bible. This is in the Decalogue (Exod. xx.), where it is adduced as a reason for resting on the seventh day—"in six days the Lord *made* heaven and earth," etc. Here the word "made" is employed, not "created," and it is upon this fact the Rev. Brewin Grant relies to convict Professor Tyndall of ignorance. Readers will, no doubt, have noticed that the whole mass of misrepresentation in Mr. Grant's essay turns upon the respective meanings which the Biblical writer attached to the words "created" and "made" in the first chapter of Genesis.

As previously stated, it is gratuitously asserted by Christian perverters that "created" signifies the bringing of something into being which did not previously exist, and that "made" means merely the shaping or fashioning out of pre-existing material; hence the first sentence in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," is interpreted as recording the origination of all the world-stuffs now composing the universe, while the six days' work is said to mean only the forming and fashioning out of the material previously created. Now, it is obvious that if it can be shown that the Bible writer employed the words "created" and "made" as interchangeable terms for one and the same process, the Creation story, as expounded by the Rev. Brewin Grant, will be demonstrated to be nothing less than a systematic perversion of the sacred text—which, we shall find, is undoubtedly the case.

Now the only way to arrive at the correct sense in which the two words mentioned are employed in Genesis is to compare the plain and obvious meaning which the writers clearly intended them to convey in other passages of the Old Testament where they are used. From these passages I select the following examples, which have a direct bearing upon the subject under discussion. The words to be noted in these examples are three: "created" (*bara*), "made" (*asah*), "formed" (*yatsar*).

Gen. ii. 7: "And the Lord God *formed* man of the dust of the ground."

Gen. v. 1: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have *created*.....for it repenteth me that I have *made* him."

Is. xliii. 7: "Every one that is called by my name, whom I have *created* for my glory; I have *formed* him; yea, I have *made* him."

Is. liv. 16: "Behold, I have *created* the smith that bloweth the fire."

Jer. i. 5: "Before I *formed* thee in the womb I knew thee."

Ezek. xxviii. 15: "From the day that thou wast *created.*"

Is. xlv. 7: "I *form* the light, and *create* darkness; I *make* peace, and *create* evil."

Gen. i. 1: "In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth."

Ps. cxxiv. 8: "The Lord who *made* heaven and earth."

Ps. cxxxiv. 3: "The Lord.....even he that *made* heaven and earth."

Gen. ii. 4: "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth when they were *created*, in the day that the Lord God *made* earth and heaven."

Is. xlv. 18: "He is God, that *formed* the earth and *made* it.....He *created* it not in vain, he *formed* it to be inhabited."

Is. xliii. 1: "Thus saith the Lord that *created* thee, O Jacob, and he that *formed* thee, O Israel."

From the foregoing examples two points are placed beyond doubt—(1) that the three Hebrew words, *bara*, *asah*, and *yatsar*, are employed interchangeably as synonymous terms to denote making or fashioning, without regard to material; (2) that the word *bara* is not used to express the "making out of nothing," any more than either of the other terms. Man, we are told, was "formed" out of dust, yet he was also "created" and "made." Every Jew was likewise created, formed, and made. Jeremiah was "formed"; the smith was "created." Israel was "formed"; Jacob was "created." Like man, the earth is said to have been formed, made, and created. The writer of the Psalms, extolling the power of the Creator, says "even he that *made* heaven and earth." In this passage, it is plain, the whole process of creation from beginning to end is clearly implied.

Next, it may be observed, the last two passages in the foregoing list are examples of one of the chief characteristics of Hebrew poetry—synonymous parallelism—which consists in repeating the same idea in synonymous terms. Thus the following two lines have precisely the same meaning:—

*The Lord that created thee, O Jacob,
He that formed thee, O Israel.*

Here we have three pairs of synonyms—"the Lord" and "he," "created" and "formed," "Jacob" and "Israel." So, also, the two statements, "He *created* it not in vain, he *formed* it to be inhabited," have the same meaning; as have, again, the statements in the preceding passage (Gen. ii. 4): "When they were *created*, in the day [they were] *made.*" The Hebrew writers, in repeating the same ideas in a slightly varied form, introduced many synonymous words and phrases which they considered served to render the composition more elegant or poetical. And this practice accounts for the construction of the sentence cited by Mr. Grant—"work which God had *created and made*"—which signifies precisely the same as the words in Is. xlv. 18, "that *formed* the earth and *made* it." The latter sentence does not mean that the earth was first "formed" and afterwards "made"; it is merely a case of repetition or parallelism.

Mr. Grant says, again: "The six days' work is *never* called 'the creation of the heavens and the earth' in the Bible." As already stated, the exact period occupied in the creation is only mentioned once, and then for a special purpose. This the rev. gentleman knew perfectly well. But, though the six days are not mentioned, the work of those days is spoken of as "creation." Witness the following:—

Ps. cxlviii. 3-5: "Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light; praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens..... for he commanded, and they were *created.*"

Here is a clear reference both to the work of the six days, and the method employed in that work—"Let there be a firmament," etc.; "Let there be lights in the firmament," etc. There is no such command in verse 1—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The latter, as I have more than once stated, is merely an introduction to what follows. The six days of creation were "in the beginning." Professor Tyndall was therefore perfectly correct in what he said about the Creation; it was the Rev. Brewin Grant who was wrong, and who must have known, when writing his "prize essay," that he was perverting the Scriptures.

One more example of the use of "create" and "make," and I take leave of the subject:—

Is. lxxv. 17: "For, behold, I *create* new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come to mind."

Is. lxxvi. 22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will *make*, shall remain," etc.

In the first passage the Lord tells his servant Isaiah

that he is about to create "new heavens and a new earth"; in the second he refers to this proposed work again. In one case the process is indicated by the word "create," in the other by "make," thus clearly showing that the two words were considered synonymous. In the first of these two passages, also, we have another example of parallelism—"shall not be remembered" and "shall not come to mind."

Enough, and more than enough, has, I think, been adduced to make it clear beyond all question that the interpretation given to the word "created" by Christian advocates is a gross perversion of the sacred text. And thus falls to the ground the grand and imposing structure erected by the Rev. Brewin Grant. That gentleman's ridiculous interpretation of the whole narrative—a primeval creation, followed by a period of desolation, and the latter by a new generation produced by re-formation—is a conglomeration of misrepresentation evolved from his own fertile imagination, and concocted for the sole purpose of reconciliation.

ABRACADABRA.

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.]

Spencer's Political Ethics

IF we were to distinguish centuries as geologists distinguish periods—by their most characteristic products—the century that has just closed would be fully entitled to rank as the era of Evolution; for undoubtedly it is the growth and evolution of the doctrine of Evolution that constitutes the most pregnant fact in the history of "the wonderful century." The opening of the century saw the doctrine of special creation supreme in nearly all departments of knowledge—supreme even though one here and there called its validity and worth into question. The Bible was still the repository of divine wisdom, to which the bulk of the people professed to look for guidance, and to which they went for an account of the world's origin and early history. Natural history was still the storehouse from which the theologian drew instances of design wherewith to confound the rash and inquiring sceptic. Social phenomena were an illustrated catalogue of God's achievements; and geology, with its theory of cataclysms, gave still further proofs of divine working to all who already believed, and who were seeking for additional confirmation of their prejudices. Astronomy alone stood aloof from theology, although even here the "creative wisdom" still maintained a sort of unofficial position in the text-books.

But the latter half of the century was to witness a marvellous transformation in the whole region of human thought, the complete discomfiture of the doctrine of special creation, with the triumphant vindication of an opposite view of the universe and of man. Already, at the very beginning of the century, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, in the shape of Lamarck's writings, had appeared, which was to develop rapidly into proportions terrifying enough to the theologian, but full of promise to all who regard the acquisition of knowledge as an indispensable instrument of progress. And, not to mention a number of minor efforts, by the middle of the century, Lyell's demonstrating that precisely the same physical, chemical, and thermal forces at present moulding the surface of the globe had always been in operation, and were adequate to explain all past terrestrial changes; Darwin applying the principles of the indefinite birth-rate of animal life and its infinite variations, combined with the limited nature of the food

supply and the never-ending competition of animal forms; and Buckle applying the same principle of development by natural law to human society—had effectually conducted Deity to the boundaries of the universe, and politely declined his services for the future.

But greater than any of these I have named, greater because in a sense he contained in himself the essence of all these generalisations, was the subject of the present criticism, Herbert Spencer. He alone of all the men of the century worked out a comprehensive and coherent system of universal evolution. In this respect Spencer stands without a successful rival in the world of thought. Spots upon the sun there are, of course, and some of these I shall have to indicate later. But the comprehensiveness of the Synthetic Philosophy is enormous, the range of thought and power of analysis almost dazzling, and we can safely say that all really successful criticisms of Spencer must be more or less based upon principles of his own teaching. His errors lie in certain conclusions and inferences, rather than in main principles.

With Mr. Spencer's philosophy in general we are not now dealing; all that we are concerned with is the validity of his description of the nature and function of government, and with his strictures upon the effects of governmental action in the past and present, as well as its probable effects in the future. And here one can venture on the statement that his later socio-political writings have gone far towards justifying the dictum that great thinkers often commence as revolutionists and end as reactionists. It is to be expected that a man whose literary labors cover a period of about sixty years will see good reason for modifying his opinions on many subjects, but no student of Spencer up to 1860 or 1870 would have expected him to so far modify or even repudiate some of his earlier opinions on sociology as he has seen fit to do. The enthusiastic exponent of Land Nationalisation in 1851 became its bitter opponent in 1880. Nor has he anything to say of a substantial nature to account for the change. His main reasons are the difficulties attending the retransference of the land from individuals to the community, and that many have invested their legitimate earnings in the purchase. And against these objections we may simply put Mr. Spencer himself. Dealing with these very objections in 1850, he wrote:—

"It behoves such to recollect.....that in this matter of land tenure the verdict of morality must be distinctly *yea* or *nay*. Either men *have* a right to make the soil private property, or they *have not*. There is no medium.....Whether it be expedient to admit claims of a certain standing is not to the point. We have here nothing to do with considerations of conventional privilege or legislative convenience. We have simply to inquire what is the verdict of pure equity in the matter. And this verdict enjoins a protest against every existing pretension to the individual possession of the soil, and dictates the assertion that the right of mankind at large to the earth's surface is still valid—all deeds, customs, and laws notwithstanding.

".....No doubt great difficulties must attend the resumption, by mankind at large, of their rights to the soil.....But with this perplexity and our extrication from it abstract morality has no concern. Men, having got themselves into this dilemma by disobedience to the law, must get out of it as well as they can; and with as little injury to the landed class as may be. Meanwhile we shall do well to recollect that there are others besides the landlord class to be considered. In our tender regard for the vested interests of the few, let us not forget that the rights of the many are in abeyance, and must remain so as long as the earth is monopolised by individuals. Let us remember, too, that the injustice thus inflicted on the mass of mankind is an injustice of the gravest nature.....To deprive others of their rights to the use of the earth is to commit a crime inferior only in wickedness to the crime of taking away their lives or personal liberties."

The quotation is a lengthy one; but it saves a deal of argument, for, seeing how ably Mr. Spencer answered, by anticipation, his own arguments, there is little reason for others to do so in addition.

The main portion of Mr. Spencer's position is, however, centred in his views of the nature of government, and of that of the mutual relations of society and the individual; and it is with the validity of these conceptions that his later teaching on sociology either stands

or falls. And here his whole system professes to be based upon his famous law of equal liberty, first propounded in *Social Statics* (1850), and remaining substantially unaltered in later editions. This runs as follows: "Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." This is propounded as a rule for individuals, although, as an acute American critic has pointed out, what he really had in his mind was the relation of the *State* to the individual, and what he really meant was, in plain English: "The State has no right to interfere with the conduct of the individual, except where the individual trespasses upon the liberty of another individual."

Probably not many would raise an objection to a bold rule of this description, although a very strong complaint may be made concerning its ambiguity. For it is just what constitutes an act of aggression, or an infringement of another man's liberty, that creates most of the difficulties we have to deal with; and Mr. Spencer does little to help one out of the trouble. "Government," he says, "becomes more and more the servant to those essential pre-requisites for individual welfare." Agreed, but what are these essential pre-requisites for individual welfare? Are they, as he appears to think, limited to the actual defence of person and property? Hardly. My next-door neighbor conducts himself in such a manner as to directly endanger my person or property, and I, not having enough strength or inclination to punch his head, appeal to the State for protection, and in doing so have Mr. Spencer's full approbation. Again, my neighbors refuse to educate their children, thus allowing them to grow up without the ability to discharge their social functions properly, and so cast a burden upon the shoulders of the remaining social units, or by building unsanitary houses spread disease around, and I once more appeal to the State for protection and assistance. And this time Mr. Spencer cries "Tyranny!" tells me that I am trying to make men moral by Act of Parliament, or preaching the iniquitous doctrine that it is one person's duty to bring children into the world and another person's duty to look after them! Why this distinction? Where is the line to be drawn, or what reasoning is there that will justify State interference in the first case that will not also justify interference in the second? Surely it is not possible to limit attacks on person or property to direct physical aggression? On the contrary, it is plain, when one studies the matter, that the slum landlord who takes advantage of the accident of position which compels people to live on certain areas, or the man who by superior cunning or shrewdness or cunning or mental trickery takes advantage of others and reduces them to beggary or misery, is committing an act of aggression just as surely as though he met his victim in a dark street and demanded his possessions at the point of a revolver.

The truth is—and a very strange truth it is, dealing with the creator of the Synthetic Philosophy—that Mr. Spencer seems somehow to have ignored the fact that in the process of evolution the form of aggression naturally and inevitably changes. This will be seen more clearly when we come to deal later with other aspects of the subject; but at present it is enough to note that the survival of the fittest, which is brought about chiefly by physical fitness in early stages, is secured by mental fitness at later stages. And in this respect the trickiness of the Stock Exchange speculator, who creates a "corner" in a necessary commodity, or the shrewdness of a property-owner who, seeing that people must, from various causes, live in certain localities, raises rent, is the exact counterpart of that stage of social evolution in which physical force was the chief thing necessary to secure survival. It is the same acquisitive type, modified to suit the requirements of a changed environment.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

While a healthy body helps to make a healthy soul, the reverse is yet more true. Mind lifts up, purifies, sustains the body. Mental and moral activity keeps the body healthy, strong, and young, preserves from decay, and renews life.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30 W. Heaford, "The Conflict between Religion and Morality."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. McCabe, "An Analysis of Religion."

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, F. A. Davies, "Shakespeare the Sceptic."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road): 7, Stanton Coit, "The Ethics of George Fox the Quaker."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "Karma and Heredity."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Miss Z. Vallance, "Does an Ethical Society take the Place of a Church?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, West Ham-lane, Stratford, E.): February 26, at 8, C. Cohen, "The Necessity of Atheism."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Mr. C. Cohen—11, "Freethought: Past, Present, and Future"; 3, "What Christianity Owes to Woman, and what Woman Owes to Christianity"; 7, "The Passing of the Gods."

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open Discussion; 6.30, Social Meeting.

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

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Watts—11, "Agnosticism and Atheism: Which?" 3, "Bilchener's Last Plea for Materialism"; 7, "Freethought: its Nature and Growth." Tea provided.

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): H. Percy Ward—3, "A Defence of Atheism"; 6.30, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Exist?" Tea at 5. February 24 and 25, at 7.30, Debate between Will Phillips and H. Percy Ward on "Secularism or Spiritualism."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Evening in Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading; 8, Correspondence, etc.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—February 23, Manchester; 24 and 25, Debate at Manchester with the Editor of the *Two Worlds*. March 16, Liverpool. April 13, Glasgow.

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