

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXII.—No. 22.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 1902.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.—EMERSON.

The N. S. S. and Education.

At the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society I proposed and carried a motion which I believe to be worth the very serious consideration of all Secularists, and, indeed, of all educationalists, as providing the only satisfactory method of coping with the difficulties now facing us in Great Britain in connection with education. That resolution affirmed four principles as marking the basis of an educational policy. First, Universal School Boards; second, Secular Education; third, Free Education; and, fourth, Payment of cost exclusively from the National Exchequer. My object in writing this article is to enforce these principles upon the attention of as wide a circle as is possible.

First let me point out that, while the National Secular Society has never lost sight of the value of education as such, and of the value of the principle of secular education in State schools as the only method of securing efficiency and justice all round, it has lacked a certain definite working program. Our position has hitherto been of a general character, but the time has now come when, I believe, we should, as a body, place a more detailed policy before the public. To affirm the principle of secular education in and out of season is a good and almost invaluable work, particularly when, as experience shows, Nonconformists and others are willing to sell their adherence to a just principle for party or sectarian gain. But, as things go, our only chance of securing secular education in State schools is either by converting the majority of people to avowed Secularism, or by taking advantage of the jealousy of the sects. The latter is necessarily a precarious method, particularly as there is a growing tendency among the sects to combine on certain broad issues; and the former is such a slow process as to put it outside the range of practical politics, to use a current phrase.

Now, I believe the four principles enumerated above are calculated to advance the cause of secular education; first, by educating the people along the right lines of educational reform, and, secondly, by removing a great many of the surreptitious and indirect supports received by religious education from the State. A word or two upon each of these four items will, I believe, make this plain.

1. *Universal School Boards.*—So far as elementary education is concerned, we have two sets of schools in England and Wales. There are Board schools supported by the State and controlled by the State, and Voluntary schools, also supported by the State to all practical intent, but controlled by individual churches or chapels. The result of this condition of things is obvious to all who concern themselves with the subject. The primary object of all Voluntary schools is religion. It cannot be anything else, or the Board schools would serve equally well the purpose of all. The concern of the Voluntary schools is definite religious instruction, and so long as this is secured their end is served. Now I do not wish to question the perfect legitimacy of this object *under fair conditions*, but I do question the legitimacy and the wisdom of the State establishing Board schools, and, at the same time, to endow and maintain another set of schools whose avowed object it is to

check and stultify the work of School Boards as much as is possible. Religionists offer themselves as candidates at School Board elections for no other observable reason, and when elected on the Boards their general policy is to hinder the development of the work of the Board as much as possible.

I do not make any exception in this matter on behalf of Nonconformists. It is a pure political accident that makes these rather more gentle than Churchmen in their behavior towards School Boards, but, if the latter were out of the way, the conduct of dissenters would be every whit as bad as their fellow Christians; and, even as it is, there is often not much to choose between them.

Now, the only way of securing a really efficient education, and, at the same time, to put a close to the rivalry of these two sets of schools, is by the simple method of the State establishing schools wherever there are children to be educated. As the State has undertaken the work of education, let it carry out the work thoroughly and consistently. It is not doing this by saying we will set up a school if the inhabitants of a district desire it, or we will be content if they establish another kind of school where the *minimum* of efficiency is reached. In declaring for the State control of education we have affirmed the principle that education is a far too important a matter to be left to the judgment of a handful of people in a particular locality. And it is absurd to rest content with a minimum efficiency. It is the maximum that we should aim at, and, in resting content with less, we are simply sacrificing the future welfare of the child and of the State to the ignorance or sectarianism of a district.

This does not, of course, mean the forcible suppression of Voluntary schools. No real Freethinker desires this. It only means that the State shall provide all over the country schools which offer the best possible education to the children of the country. If people desire schools of another character, let them be at liberty to build them and maintain them on their own entire responsibility, and at their own cost. If they are content with an inferior education for their children when a better is at hand, we may regret it, but I do not see how we can prohibit it, so long as a fairly decent education is provided; but I do not imagine that many parents would act in this manner. There is, to my mind, very little doubt that the establishment of universal School Boards would soon place a first-class education within reach of all, while Voluntary schools would soon be limited to the fulfilment of their fundamental purpose—that of religious instruction.

Free Education.—This seems to me to follow logically from the principle of compulsory education. Moreover, elementary education has been more or less free ever since the matter was taken in hand by the State. It has only been a question of what proportion of the cost of educating children should come directly from the pockets of their parents and what proportion should be contributed from the rates, or from the national exchequer. And experience has so forced upon us the necessity of enlarging the amount contributed from the latter source that, for all practical purposes, free education obtains in the majority of our State schools. The only serious argument against free education is that it pauperises the parents. And to this the answer is twofold. First, as parents never have paid the *whole* cost of education, the pauperisation is as great when a portion of the cost is paid by the State as it is when the whole is paid; and, second, there can be no possibility

of pauperisation when all the schools are free throughout. There can only be pauperisation when one class receives more from the State than another class; but, once education is made free to all alike, pauperisation is out of the question.

Payment of Cost Exclusively from the National Exchequer.—The first consideration that may be urged in favor of this is the very obvious one, that education is more than a local concern—it is a national one. This statement would have held good even in the days when communication between different parts of the country was of the most limited description, and when men and women grew up and died without moving far from their birthplace. And it is still more forceful now, when methods of communication, intellectual and physical, are so numerous and so much utilised. Probably there was never a time in the history of the world when education was so vitally necessary as at present; and it is a piece of suicidal folly, in view of all the facts of the case, to allow educational efficiency to be more or less determined by petty parochial considerations. Children are not being educated for the purpose of playing a part in the life of a particular village or town only; they are also being educated—or should be educated—to play a part in the larger life of the nation; and therefore the whole question of education requires to be lifted out of the area of parochial life into that of national life.

But there is one other consideration which should come with special force to Freethinkers. The schools of this country at present draw their financial supplies from two sources—the rates and Government grants. But, while the Voluntary schools derive nearly the whole of their revenue from Government grants, they are necessarily debarred from the imposition of a special local rate such as is levied by School Boards. How the advocates of Voluntary schools turn this situation to their own advantage is well known. The bogey of an excessive School Board rate is kept constantly before the public; in places where Boards do not exist their formation is prevented by the prospect of a heavy rate being held before the ratepayers, and improvements in the Board schools frustrated by the same method of attack. It must, therefore, be borne in mind that the present financial arrangement supports the Voluntary schools while injuring the Board schools, and thus gives an opportunity for sectarian bigotry to stand in the way of a more complete and more efficient system of education. On the whole, there is hardly any rate paid less willingly by the English people than an educational rate, and it is surely the height of unwisdom to allow the bugbear of increased rates—a cry worked for all it is worth by the enemies of School Boards—to stand in the way of the children of the State obtaining a more efficient education. Let the whole of the expense be borne by the national exchequer, and we shall have ceased to unduly favor the enemies of School Boards, and have taken one great step towards securing the maximum of efficiency in our public schools.

Secular Education.—I have left this to the last, not because it is of smaller importance than any of the other principles I have been dealing with, but because they are suggested as means by which sectarianism may be stripped of its surreptitious and illegitimate supports, and the eyes of the public opened to the real questions at issue. And it is also well to bear in mind that, while the course of events has identified the policy of secular education with the National Secular Society, the justification for this policy does not rest upon the soundness of the anti-theological opinions held by that body, but upon the broad ground of social justice to all, believer and unbeliever alike. The Secularist has not the slightest wish to force upon the rest of the people of this country views in which they have no faith, nor compel them to pay, through the medium of a school rate, for the instruction of children in beliefs which they repudiate. We submit that there are certain things which we all—Christian and non-Christian—hold in common, and that our plain duty is to use the State schools for the teaching of such subjects as we are all agreed are essential to the creation of sound citizenship, and leave those subjects that are sectional in character to be taught at the expense, and on the responsibility, of the section that believes in their value.

The case for secular education rests, in brief, upon the manifest injustice of any other policy. So long as

an education rate exists, it is unjust to teach the beliefs of one section of the community with money raised from the taxation of all. It is also unjust, and contrary to the spirit of modern political thinking, for the State to select any particular religion and act as its patron. The plain function of the State is to concern itself with secular affairs, and to leave theological beliefs alone. A very large part of past evils may be traced to the State having neglected this plain rule of action, and very many of our present evils may be shown to be a heritage from these times. And, finally, it is unjust to the children themselves. Whatever we may think of theology, no one will claim that it is of the nature of an exact science. We do not, as in scientific matters, put on one side a steadily increasing body of teaching as being settled beyond all dispute, and on which all agree. In theology the *whole* is open to dispute, and is the subject of never-ending controversy. Theological opinions undergo rapid and fundamental changes in the course of a single generation, and, bearing these things in mind, it is little short of a crime to go on teaching to children doctrines that are the subject of hot dispute, and which the next generation may see rejected altogether. It is an outrage upon the innocence and confidence of a child, and saddles it with conceptions of life which it often has to unlearn at great cost in its after career. Let us be content with teaching children *how* to think, without being quite so eager to teach them *what* to think, and so mistake the repetition of formulas and phrases for instruction. Above all, let us leave the selection of speculative and highly questionable theological beliefs until each is old enough to understand what they are selecting. If religion stands this test, well and good. If it does not, then let it go the way that all shams and unrealities ought to go.

Very much more might be said concerning each of the principles touched on above. I have said enough, however, to indicate their importance, and to show that it is only on these lines that a solution of the educational difficulty can be reached. One thing is certain: so long as we allow religion in State schools the present difficulties will continue. The ultimate object of all the clergy, dissenting and established alike, is to capture the children in the interests of church or chapel. Their zeal for education is all subordinate to this, and, so long as the law gives them an opportunity to interfere in the educational work of the country, we shall have it more or less neglected, and the attention of the public monopolised by sectarian bickerings and animosities. The exclusion of religion from State schools is only the logical application of the doctrine of the separation of Church and State. The State that has no right to teach religion to adults, has still less right to teach it to children. Had Nonconformists been honest in the application of their principles, secular education would now be an established fact. Experience has shown, however, the wide difference between affirming a principle in face of opposition and carrying it out in practice when there is something to be gained by its neglect. In this matter the dissenting bodies have shown themselves willing to sacrifice all principle to sectarian interests, and, this being so, it remains for those who have the educational welfare of the country at heart to place affairs on a more equitable and satisfactory footing.

C. COHEN.

John Baskerville.

FREETHINKER AND TYPOGRAPHER.

SOME new information has come to hand in regard to the final disposal of the remains of a great typographical inventor and an inveterate opponent of the priests—a man who left this inscription for his tomb:—

STRANGER,
BENEATH THIS CONE, IN UNCONSECRATED GROUND,
A FRIEND TO THE LIBERTIES OF MANKIND
DIRECTED HIS BODY TO BE INHUMED.
MAY
THE EXAMPLE CONTRIBUTE TO EMANCIPATE THY MIND
FROM THE IDLE FEARS OF SUPERSTITION
AND THE WICKED ARTS OF PRIESTHOOD.

There seems to be little dependence to be placed upon the good intentions of people to whom you leave specific directions (and legacies). They apparently please them-

selves. So Baskerville, whom an ignorant Midland newspaper recently spoke of as "Poor Baskerville," has had his remains removed to the Christ Church catacombs in Birmingham, and thence, recently, they have been moved elsewhere.

The present writer remembers attending, a few years ago, a Parliamentary Committee in the House of Commons when the question of removing Christ Church, Birmingham, and its catacombs came on for discussion on a Bill remitted by the Speaker. There was then no reference to the only striking fact—viz, that in these catacombs remained the body (removed against his expressed will from unconsecrated grounds) of John Baskerville, an artist in typefounding in this country, an early inhabitant of Birmingham—Joseph Chamberlain's home—and not even a nominal Unitarian, as J. C. is, but an inveterate foe of Christianity.

It is worth while recording in a Freethought journal what has lately happened to the remains of this distinguished Freethinker. The remains—"mortal" remains the local press call them, but the man himself never believed or hoped for any other designation of his body or allusion to his "soul"—have been moved about in a most extraordinary manner. They have been buried and exhumed and re-buried oftener, perhaps, than any other being in the world.

No man has ever been credited with such a bewildering variety of burying-places. Historians have given him as many graves as Homer had traditional birth-places. He died in 1775, and in his will he left specific instructions that he was to be placed in a specially-constructed conical-shaped building at the corner of Easy-row, Birmingham. He had always eschewed religion as mere superstition, and his contempt for ritual was so deeply implanted that he made provision against being put in consecrated ground.

According to these requests he was at first buried, and his coffin placed in an upright position. There it remained until 1821, when the cutting of an arm of the canal brought the coffin to light. The question then was, What was to be done with it? Baskerville's bearing in life did not predispose the clergy to offer him any "honors" in death, and, finally, the remains found their way into a packing room in the neighborhood.

Years later the body was traced to a plumber's shop, and again it disappeared after having been on view for some time. The clergy ostensibly refused to have anything to do with the corpse of an "aggressive Atheist," but surreptitiously the churchwarden of Christ Church took upon himself to place the coffin in the Catacombs. The secret burial subsequently set the antiquarians of the district by the ears, and the Catacombs were opened. The interior leaden coffin was likewise examined, and again the restless Baskerville was put back in the tomb. Once more did the grave give him up, and for the third time was the hater of consecration buried in a consecrated vault.

At one time it was supposed that he had been buried in Court costume, but investigation established that this was a fallacy. So much for the post-mortem adventures of John Baskerville. Before daylight dawned the other week, and while the world still slept, a series of hearses began to arrive at the churchyard gate. The coffins were placed on trollies, silently placed in the hearses, and carried off to find resting-places, north, south, east, and west. The bodies that were claimed were re-committed to the earth individually, but the others were placed in a catacomb, forty feet deep, in the Warstone-lane Cemetery, and that is where Baskerville reposes.

Baskerville lived a practical life—he gave an impetus to typography which no one at his time seemed skilful enough to do—but, apart from his chief occupation, he strongly leaned to Freethought, and to his last day denounced the clerics who were in his time trying to do so much in the way of spiritual despotism and the persecution of heretics.

In personal appearance Baskerville, though rather short, was a man of distinguished presence. He was courtly in manner and dress, and he used to ride about the town in a carriage with cream-colored horses. In later years he saw the necessity for some more effective motive power than that which was then in use, and, as

Watt had not then completed his double-acting rotary steam engine, Baskerville spent much time in trying to improve the action of windmills. At his own request he was buried on his own estate, Easy Hill, the epitaph written by himself being placed on his tombstone. But he could not be left alone. He was carted away, and his remains have since fallen into the hands of clerics, and had all the vicissitudes of location to which we have alluded.

Baskerville House, in which he resided, shared the same fate as those of Hutton and Priestley in the riots of 1791; but his remains were not removed until 1821, when the property was disturbed to make a wharf. The coffin was carefully removed to the shop of a glazier in Colmore Row and the remains exposed to view. They were apparently those of a man under the middle height, with handsome face and figure, and seemed little the worse for their forty-six years' interment. They were afterwards, it is said, deposited in the grave of his wife in St. Philip's Churchyard. How they found their way to Christ Church catacombs, New-street, is a mystery.

When John Baskerville died in 1775, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, his type and matrices were sold to a literary society in Paris for £3,700, the purchasers making good use of them by printing a complete edition of the works of Voltaire.

The attitude of Baskerville towards the prevalent superstition may be gathered from remarks in his will. After enjoining his executors to bury his body in unconsecrated ground (which did not happen after the removal of his remains from his own estate at Easy Hill) he said: "I have a hearty contempt for all superstition and the farce of consecrated ground." "I also consider revelation (as it is called), exclusive of the scraps of morality casually intermixed, to be the most impudent abuse of common sense that was ever invented to befool mankind."

These are words which may be repeated to-day with special emphasis.

His typography was extremely beautiful, uniting the elegance of Plantin with the clearness of the Elzevirs. In his italic capitals he stood unrivalled. Such freedom and perfect symmetry are in vain looked for among the specimens of Aldus and Colinaeus.

Beaumarchais, who was the purchaser of Baskerville's types and matrices, printed at Kehl, between 1785-9, a splendid edition of Voltaire's works in seventy octavo volumes.

It seems a pity that a man's bones and ashes may not, when once deposited, be allowed to rest in peace. The great mind of Shakespeare was disturbed by the apprehension of removal or interference, whence his anathema directed against those who might interfere with his remains. Baskerville had no end of vicissitudes after he was dead, and the worst feature of it is that his remains were captured by the clerics, for whom he had an undying, but by no means an irrational, hatred.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity and Mohammedanism.—I.

THE leading exponents of the Christian religion have recently been exceedingly active in preaching sermons in which the praises of Christianity, as being superior to all other religions, are vehemently proclaimed. It is difficult to understand, if the religion of Christ is better than all others which have flourished in the world, that a good and omnipotent God should have withheld it so long from his subjects; and, further, when it did appear, that a knowledge of it should have been confined to comparatively few of the human race. Moreover, to-day, after two thousand years of propagandism, it is known of only by one-third of the inhabitants of the world, and even amongst those who now profess to believe it the vast majority manifest an utter indifference to its teachings. To those who are at all acquainted with the history of the great religions of the world, this boast of Christians as to the unique character and influence of their faith is as groundless as it is absurd. That the claim has no foundation in fact is evident, inasmuch as religions which existed prior to Christianity

were as noble and lofty as, and some of them more practical and extensively believed in than, the religion of the Cross. The boast is absurd, because there is nothing of any ethical value to be found in the New Testament that cannot be cited from systems of faiths which preceded that which is set forth in the Christian records.

To me there appears to be no doubt that Mohammedanism, which originated six or seven hundred years after Christianity, is, so far as its political and scientific influence is concerned, greatly in advance of the present orthodox faith, and may even be considered superior in many other respects to the religion of either Moses or Jesus. It should appear clear to the impartial mind that the simple Unitarianism of the Arabs was easier to believe than the Christian plurality of Deity or Deities, and afforded greater scope for human progress and development than Christianity, for the reason that the only important doctrines of Mohammed were those which proclaimed the existence of Allah (God) and that Mohammed was his prophet. Beyond these dogmas Mohammedanism permitted, and even encouraged, the pursuit of knowledge, and carefully refrained from condemning any source from which its adherents sought to obtain either wisdom or happiness. This cannot be said with truth of Christianity. The Mohammedanism as represented by the Arabs must not be confounded with the Islamism of the Ottoman, or Turk. The professed Christians of the present time are not more widely separated in their nature and modes of thought from the Christians of the Dark Ages than was the Saracen from the Osmanli. The one was enlightened, mild, studious, and tolerant; the other is, and ever has been, from the day of his first appearance under the walls of Byzantium, blindly ignorant, cruel to a degree, and brutally disposed towards the races whom he had subjected. The former used his belief in the Koran as an agent of civilisation; the latter has attached to Mohammedanism a ferocious bigotry which has done much towards stigmatising the mild system of the Prophet of Mecca. The Christian author, Dr. G. M. Grant, writing on behalf of Christianity, says:—

“It has been declared by apologists that Christianity succeeded by appealing to moral forces, whereas Mohammedanism sanctioned the use of the sword, and promised Paradise to all the faithful who died in battle. But Christendom did not scruple to use all the weapons of the civil power as soon as it was permitted to lay hands upon them. There was a wonderful change in its attitude after the conversion of Constantine. Subsequently, Charlemagne's arms had more to do with the conversion of the Saxons than the preaching of missionaries had. And down to very recent times appeal has frequently been made to the Bible for authority to draw the sword against the enemies of God and the Church. Besides, are we to say that those who fought under the sign of the Cross did not believe in heaven and hell—often a very material heaven and hell—as well as those who fought under the Crescent. On the other hand, it is quite certain that Mohammed won the absolute support of the first converts and swordsmen by first gaining their hearts. The proper question to ask, as Carlyle pointed out, is this: How did Mohammed get his sword? And when gotten, how did it happen that tribes—chaotic and ignorant—captured strong fortresses, and defeated legions of Rome that had conquered the world?” (*The Religions of the World*, pp. 26 and 27).

Christians talk of the personal influence of Jesus over his followers; but, as the above author alleges, the only explanation of Mohammed's marvellous success, which was greater than that ever achieved by the Prophet of Nazareth, was his personality and his immense influence over those who believed in him. This was the man whom Dr. Grant candidly admits “founded the religion that has once and again threatened to sweep Christianity from the earth, and that still commands the absolute homage of more millions of human beings than are included in all the Protestant Churches put together.” As J. W. H. Stobart, B.A., states in his work, *Non-Christian Religious Systems*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: “Judged by the smallness of the means at his disposal, and the extent and permanence of the work he accomplished, no name in the world's story shines with a more specious lustre than that of the Prophet of Mecca. . . . Judged by the standard of human renown, the glory of what mortal can compare with his?” (p. 228).

It is not my desire to represent Mohammedanism in any other light than in that of a figment evolved from either the scheming, or the mania-led, brain of an Oriental enthusiast; still, I feel compelled to say that it stands conspicuously pre-eminent among other theological fictions as that which has not only offered the least impediment to human progress, but as a simple Deism, under the shadow of which philosophers, scientists, physicians, and Freethinkers have been enabled to attack and undermine the towers and citadels of the city of superstition. It sheltered the Freethinkers who followed in the steps of Averroes Maimonides, protecting them from the unreasoning bigotry which would fain have sacrificed the disciples of freedom to its hatred. It permitted its chief rulers to undertake researches which Christianity regarded as impious; in a word, it shook to their centres both political and sacerdotal Christendom, and taught the world that its cherished gods and saints and sacred things were but so many bugbears to frighten the human mind. When Mohammed propounded his feigned revelation, the world was not prepared to accept a system of pure negation. Christianity had fallen into a slough of foulness and corruption, and had marred the ancient philosophical systems. Instead of inquiry, blind and fatuous unquestioning belief had become general; and, in a society thus degenerated, Freethought would probably never have obtained a hearing. “Nothing,” wrote Professor Maurice, “could have raised the Byzantine Christianity out of the abyss into which it had fallen but such a voice as that which came from the Arabian cave.” It is to be regretted that this voice did not declare the principle of Freethought unfettered by any theological restrictions. But it did not; the better part of Mohammed's nature, like that of Christ's, was injuriously affected by his religious notions, although his Nestorian teachings respecting the existence and unity of God were much in advance of the views previously entertained in reference to the deities. Moreover, he was not entirely free from sharing in the evils of his time. In this particular he resembled Jesus, who was not morally and intellectually strong enough to protest against the errors and evils of his day. According to the New Testament, Jesus lived at a period when the belief in the possession of devils, and in the then approaching end of the world, was generally indulged in, and when slavery and poverty existed on every hand. Yet he did not condemn one of these errors and evils. It is to be regretted that Mohammed gave his sanction to polygamy, which was one of the worst drawbacks of his teachings, although in this particular Mohammedanism is not inferior to Christianity, which, *per se*, has had little or no effect in changing the system of polygamy for monogamy. Many passages in the New Testament tend rather to dissuade from marriage altogether, and St. Augustine himself declares that there is no flagitiousness or criminality in polygamy in those countries where it has become a legalised institution.

In reference to slavery, we do not find that Christianity in any degree ameliorated the condition of the slave for many centuries. Mohammed, however, according to his biographers, did his utmost to promote the manumission of slaves. In his time slavery had taken deep root among all contiguous peoples. It is clear that he sympathised with the unhappy condition of the slaves. Why, then, it may be asked, did he not forbid to any of his disciples the possession of chattels of human flesh and blood? A similar question may be urged with greater force in reference to Christ, who is said to be a part of the Godhead, and therefore had greater power than Mohammed, who professed to be only human, and consequently limited in power. He appears to have been afraid to do more than soften and assuage the evils of slavery. His teachings extended over a period of twenty years, during which he learned to recognise that servitude was an institution which was both morally and economically indefensible. But it was the outgrowth of many centuries, and he seemed to have thought that a scheme of complete and immediate emancipation would have been too violently subversive of society to have succeeded. Bosworth Smith says:—

“Mohammed did not abolish slavery altogether, for in that condition of society it would have been neither possible nor desirable to do so; but he encouraged the

emancipation of slaves; he laid down the principle that the captive who embraced Islam should be *ipso facto* free; and, what is more important, he took care that no stigma should attach to the emancipated slave in consequence of his honest and honorable life of labor. As to those who continued slaves, he prescribed kindness and consideration in dealing with them. 'See,' he said in his parting address at Mina, the year before his death—'see that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye yourselves wear, for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be tormented.'

Thus, it will be seen that, so far, Mohammedanism is in no way very inferior to Christianity.

Next week I will endeavor to show that the influence of Mohammed has been equal to, if not greater than, that of Jesus.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Diminution of Paul.

MANY of the important figures in Bible history resemble many modern poets. They have a great reputation for a while; their brilliance gradually fades; and at last even the second-hand bookshops disdain their poor relics. That the figure of Jesus should thus lose its pristine magnificence is not to be surprised at. His biography is so crowded with stories which are obvious myths (obvious, that is, to modern critical eyes) that the Jesus-legend was sure, sooner or later, to suffer immense reduction, if not total evaporation. But we should scarcely have expected the apostle Paul to undergo a similar process of diminution. He seemed fairly sure of his permanent statue in the gallery of realities. Even experienced controversialists had come to look upon the main facts of his career as well ascertained, and the cruellest of us had become accustomed to sparing four of his alleged epistles as genuine—*Romans*, *Corinthians* (i., ii.), and *Galatians*. And here comes the third volume of Dr. T. K. Cheyne's *Encyclopædia Biblica* to upset all our calculations. This recently-issued volume contains an article on Paul by Professor W. C. van Manen, and the Professor all but robs us of Paul himself, and completely robs us of his supposed epistles.

When we come to examine the work of criticism for the past century we find that Paul was threatened many years ago by the terrible Germans and other Continental scholars. In 1792 somebody questioned the genuineness of the letters to the *Romans*, *Ephesians*, and *Colossians*. In 1798 the *Thessalonian* epistle was attacked; in 1804 *Timothy* and *Titus* were in danger. But the famous Baur, of Tübingen University, made up his mind (and a good many other people's minds, by the force of his example) to the conclusion that Paul the apostle did really write the epistles known as *Romans*, *Corinthians* (i. and ii.), and *Galatians*. I have certainly held that view myself. But this new *Encyclopædia* has mercy on nobody and nothing.

The late Dr. Edwin Hatch was not very orthodox. He leaned to the ideas of Baur. But, when he wrote his account of Paul in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1885, he gave a long and circumstantial story of the apostle's life, only gently hinting that some people had doubts as to certain epistles and certain alleged events. But Professor Manen takes a long stride beyond. He looks sternly on the Pauline epistles, and not only flings *Timothy*, *Titus*, etc., out of the window, but even the four epistles which Baur had put aside in an inner chamber, never to be touched by Rationalist hands. He is also very hard on the book of *Acts*, which he considers to have been written about 130-150 C.E. (Christian era). He does not believe much that the book of *Acts* tells, but he regards it as useful because it shows us what people thought about Christianity a hundred years after the origin of the religion.

Professor Manen is of opinion that there really was a man Paul, whose doings and preachings are recorded, with all sorts of exaggerations, in the book of *Acts*. This Paul was an artisan-preacher, who at first opposed the religion of Jesus, and afterwards adopted it, and then advocated it in a long series of missionary travels. This Paul did not greatly differ in religious conceptions from the other disciples; nor did this Paul write epistles of any consequence—at least, the book of *Acts* has no reference to such literary activity.

Well, then, who wrote the "Pauline" epistles?

Professor Manen says Paul did not. He adduces a parallel case. Even beginners in New Testament criticism know that John, the fisherman and apostle, is not now considered as the writer of the Fourth Gospel, which is usually called *John*. The Fourth Gospel teaches a mystical and philosophic doctrine which the fisherman never hints at in the first three Gospels. In the same way, argues the Professor, there was a Paul—an ordinary primitive believer, who travelled about preaching the Gospel in the style of Peter or John or James. But afterwards a new school of Christian theology arose (perhaps in Syria, perhaps in Asia Minor), which developed the system of ideas embodied in the so-called Pauline epistles. This new system set aside the old idea of Jesus the Messiah, and represented him as Christ, the Son of God; it set aside the idea of obedience to the law of Moses, and urged Christians to obey only the inward law of the Spirit; it set aside the need for circumcision and religious ceremonies, and asked for spiritual exercises and acts of faith; it set aside the claims of the Jews, and made the Gospel free to all the Gentiles. Professor Manen says that all this new system was built up by religious thinkers of a period which he roughly indicates as either the close of the first century or the beginning of the second. It is true the Pauline epistles allude to various events in the life of the apostle. Possibly the writers took the incidents from a lost book, the *Acts of Paul*, which may also have been used by the author of the book of *Acts*, now included in the New Testament.

Several facts are pointed to by the Professor in proof of his theory. One is that the Epistles are mostly addressed to societies, as, for example, the Epistle to the Romans, which is addressed "to all that are in Rome, beloved by God, called to be saints"; and it would seem strange that an apostle of eminence should send his important religious essays to all and sundry—a mere indiscriminate crowd. Another fact is that, so far as early Christian history informs us, no particular impression appears to have been made by the reading of these significant documents. The Romans, and Corinthians, and Ephesians, and the others, are not recorded to have taken any particular notice of these remarkable writings. Another curious circumstance is that the first witnesses to the existence of the Pauline Epistles were persons subsequently classed as heretical—that is to say, Gnostic, such as Basilides, Valentinus, and Heracleon.

Have the Pauline Epistles, therefore, any value at all? Professor Manen says Yes, in this sense—that they give us a vivid summary of the doctrines held by a certain early Christian school, a set of thinkers who endeavored to improve upon the first crude theology of the disciples of the early half of the first century.

Let me say that I find considerable difficulty in accepting the Dutch Professor's theory. That somebody should write an epistle and pretend it was by Paul is simple enough. In my opinion, several of the so-called Epistles of Paul are thus concocted. But in the four Epistles which Baur passed as veritable compositions of Paul I see a characteristic energy, sincerity, and emotion which strike me as clear signs of a vigorous personality behind. Still, it would be stupid to dogmatise on a question so complex. Apart from the merely literary issues involved, one is forced to reflect on the cloudiness of the whole of the persons and events connected with Christian origins. You are confronted with reasons for thinking that Jesus was not an actual personage. You hear excellent arguments for dating the Gospels long after the time fixed by the orthodox Church. You meet with distinguished scholars who, like Professor Manen, reduce the once colossal Paul to a quite commonplace figure. And all the Christian apologists massed together cannot re-assure us. They may succeed in convincing us that this or the other critic has made a mistake; but they do not succeed in clearing away our certainty that all the early Christian "history" is uncertain. Human affairs have come to a pretty pass if we must needs stake our social and moral interests on the truth of a creed on which Canon Cheyne's *Encyclopædia Biblica* throws elaborate and learned suspicion. For my part, I prefer to trust in the living human reason than in the water-logged vessel of a Scripture which yields a plank to every wave of criticism.

F. J. GOULD.

Pious Employers.

IN these days of Limited Companies and big Combines it is not often that one has to have religious qualifications to enter the service of these bodies, but in Manchester things are different. A certain firm in that city, having their works amongst the slummiest of slum property, recently advertised for a stenographer, and the following is a faithful record of the interview which took place:—

Would-be Employer: Good morning.

Would-be Servant: Good morning.

W. B. E.: Ahem! Let me see. You have been employed at J—'s so long?

W. B. S.: Yes, sir.

W. B. E.: Are you interested in religious work of any kind?

W. B. S.: No, sir.

W. B. E.: You are not connected with any place of worship, then?

W. B. S.: No, sir, I am not. But I should like to point out that I did not anticipate having to reply to questions like this when seeking a situation.

W. B. E.: Quite so. You see, however, we are extremely particular about this. We believe that, if we get God-fearing men, we shall get men who are not eye-servers—men of principle, who will do their work as in the sight of God.

W. B. S.: You may be able to do so, but I should like to say that there are a large number of men of principle and integrity outside the churches as well as in, and, if I may say so, I claim to be one.

W. B. E.: Have you belonged to a church at all?

W. B. S.: Yes; been an attendant at church and Sunday-school for over twelve years.

W. B. E.: Why did you leave?

W. B. S.: Because I saw enough in the church to disgust me, that is why I left it.

W. B. E.: What do you interest yourself in at evening, and on Sunday?

W. B. S.: Well, I decline to answer that question. It is simply a private matter what I do in my spare time, and is not your business.

W. B. E.: Yes, I know I should not ask these questions, but, as I have said, we are very particular in these matters. Well, there is no other question I can ask you.

W. B. S.: No; it is perhaps as well; for, if I obtained the situation, and you found my opinions were heterodox, there would, perhaps, be friction.

W. B. E.: Good morning.

W. B. S.: Good morning.

This is perfectly authentic, and is given as nearly verbatim as the actual applicant can give it. It may also be noted that the applicant was a young Socialist stumper and Agnostic in the bargain, so the worthy man—a J.P., by-the-bye—caught a Tartar for once.

There are one or two questions one would like to ask the worthy gentlemen of this type, and this man in particular. Is the making of ten per cent. in accordance with their vaunted principles of Jesus? Were his workmen—chemical workers, be it noted—paid above £1 a week, and were they God-fearing? One would think not, seeing the hell-holes in which they lived. Further comment is needless.

Acid Drops.

THE United Free Church of Scotland will not, apparently, have any more heresy-hunts within its borders. The Assembly at Glasgow recently spent six hours over the case of Professor George Adam Smith, who was charged with expressing heretical views in a book lately published by him. Principal Rainey moved, and Professor Orr seconded, a motion, "That it was not the duty of the Church to institute any process against Professor Smith." This was eventually carried by 534 votes to 263—a decisive majority of 271. The mistake of turning out Dr. Robertson Smith is not to be repeated. He was simply turned loose *unmuzzled*. The Church has grown warier since then. Instead of turning out its clever and learned sons, it simply begs them, for the sake of their dear old mother, to draw it as mild as they can.

Professor George Adam Smith naturally had a part of that six hours' debate himself. In the course of his "defence" he said that "He believed in the Bible as the revelations of God to sinful man." When the Bible is knocked to pieces, and largely ground to powder, it is still a "revelation." Keep up that pretence and all is still right—including stipends. For the word "revelation" is like that blessed word Mesopotamia; it has a soothing effect on the general religious mind, and it enables the "Higher Critics" to do the trick without leaving the Church.

It was just as well, on many grounds, that the Church of Scotland did not indulge in the luxury of hunting out a heretic. One reason is that the Church is already suffering heavy internal losses. According to the report of the Sabbath

Schools' Committee, there is a discouraging decrease in the number of teachers, which has fallen four hundred in two years. Nor is this all. The report of the Committee on Probationers states that there is a lamentable decrease in the number of students for the ministry, which has fallen fifty per cent. in the last ten years, so that now the supply is much below the demand. At this rate the Church of Scotland will be played out soon enough. It need not take the trouble to get rid of a single minister. Every one is wanted, especially if he has any brains worth speaking of; for the truth is that it is precisely the young men of brains who turn their backs on the ministry, and resolve to earn their bread by some more honest occupation. Telling lies for a living is not a cheerful prospect to a young man of energy and intelligence.

Reviewing a new book entitled *The Spiritual Mind*, by the late Principal Roberts, the *Daily News* politely rebukes his attack on Agnosticism. The author describes it as "a refuge for the lazy, the flippant, the frivolous, the sensuous, the desponding, and an asylum for the morally insane." The reviewer asks, "Why the sensuous, and why, above all, the desponding?" Then he points out that John Stuart Mill, Darwin, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold were "inmates of this asylum."

The *Vegetarian* is, in a way, an odd sort of a paper. It advocates the principles indicated by its name, but it does so in the name of God and the Bible, and its editor hails from the Congregationalist Memorial Hall in Farringdon-street. Now the Bible is anything but a vegetarian book, and the Bible God is a sort of a cannibal. At the very outset the Bible represents God as being approached by two worshippers. These were the first two men born in the world—for Adam was not born, but manufactured. Their names were Cain and Abel. The former was an agriculturalist or market-gardener; the latter was a shepherd. Each built an altar on which he offered a gift to the Lord. But the Lord, instead of treating them equally, since each offered what he had, turned up his divine nose at Cain's peas and potatoes, and greedily accepted Abel's roast lamb. Then there were ructions, as was natural. This bloody quarrel was the first in the world, and it was entirely caused by the Lord's preference for meat over vegetables. Indeed, he would not even have a mixed diet; it was meat first and last, and vegetables nowhere.

All through the Bible we have the smell of meat—often very underdone. The Bible God's temple at Jerusalem was a perfect shambles, reeking with blood, and echoing with the groans of slaughtered animals. And when we come to the New Testament we find all the sanguinary characteristics of the Old Testament gathered up and sublimated in the disgusting doctrine of salvation by the Blood of Christ. Altogether, to use the words of Othello, it is "Blood, blood, blood!" from one end to the other of "Holy Writ."

Yet it is in the name of this God and this Bible that our contemporary advocates Vegetarianism. No wonder that such a logical journal sees some subtle connection between Spanish bull-fights and the Continental Sunday, and advises Englishmen to hold on to their good old-fashioned and miserable Sabbath. One wonders though, after all, what on earth (or elsewhere) the Sunday question has to do with Vegetarianism.

Many Christian people affect to pooh-pooh the Higher Criticism as having no practical bearing upon Christian belief. To these may be commended the following observations in a *Church Times* review of Dr. Angus Mackay's *Churchman's Introduction to the Old Testament*: "It is one of those books which seem to take up that most unsatisfactory position about the Higher Criticism, that it is really quite an indifferent matter to the Churchman whether its hypotheses are true, or the reverse; or rather that the Bible is much more valuable to the Churchman now that it has been turned inside out; which seems to us very much as if a man were to say to one, who believed himself in possession of a genuine picture from the pencil of Raphael, that the fact of its being proved to be a much later forgery, by one who posed as Raphael, did not in the least detract from the value of the painting—it was equally beautiful, whether it was painted by Raphael or not. No one can say that the Higher Criticism, supposing its hypothesis could be verified, leaves the Bible as it was before, as regards its intrinsic value. To begin with, the whole scheme of a graduated preparation for Christ through patriarchs, law, and prophets is completely reversed, and a good deal of the New Testament has to be read with mental reservation."

In the kindest possible way, the Bishop of Ely has given a "general dispensation" to his diocese from fasting on Friday, the 27th, and Saturday, the 28th, June. A Church paper—the *Rock*—says: "We regret to note that the opportunity has been taken by two or three bishops to issue gratuitous general 'dispensations' from fasting during the Coronation festi-

ties. This assumption of power is significant of the trend of Episcopal opinion."

The Sultan does not believe in miracles. He recently sent his Chamberlain to the Greek Patriarch to inform him that he had doubts about miracles, and to request him to put a stop to the pilgrimage to the island of Marmora.

A famous Ohio Senator, a man of wealth and sagacity, recently received the following letter: "On the top of Mount Ararat there is still preserved, buried amid eternal snow, Noah's Ark. I am organising a company to dig it out, and bring it to the United States. You can help me to make a lot of money if you will go into the scheme. The original Noah's Ark, I can assure you, would be the best paying attraction in the St. Louis World's Fair." Needless to say, the worthy Senator still sits tight over the matter.

Dr. Dowie's daughter recently died in great pain from accidental burns. The Zionite Elders prayed for her with great fervency, but without avail.

We do not wish to exult over the frailties of professing, or even professional, Christians. We merely mention such cases from time to time in order to keep alive a sense of the truth that the extravagant ethical pretensions of Christianity are all nonsense. It is in this spirit that we refer to the case of the Rev. James Anderson, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Whitehaven, who has just been found guilty by an Ecclesiastical Court of drunkenness in church, and of indecent conduct with a blind girl formerly in the choir. This clerical offender is actually seventy-eight years old! Fancy what an outcry would be raised if a Secular lecturer were found guilty by a responsible Court of similar offences! But no particular outcry is raised when a parson goes wrong. The thing is unfortunately too common.

The deacon of the Argyle Congregational Chapel, Bath, has been fined £5 and costs for cruelty to his son, aged nine years. The child broke a glass, and the father, acting apparently on Solomon's advice, beat him cruelly with a cane when he was in bed, causing the neighbors to complain to the R.S.P.C.C., who prosecuted.

The caretaker at a mission church in the Borough was sent to gaol for three months for robbing the contribution box. A detective had to conceal himself under the altar to arrest the pious caretaker red-handed.

"We have had too little rain," writes the sub-agent of the Bible Society in Hunan, "and the people are now praying to their gods for it. The other day a man, supposed to be devil-possessed, was carried through the streets in a chair followed by an idol to 'pray down' the rain, but no answer came. Then one evening the people assembled in the temple, and, making a hole in the plaster of which the idol was made, they put in a live scorpion and closed up the hole. At the same time, they beat their drums and made their invocations with redoubled vigor. The scorpion was put in to bite and wake up the god."

This is related by the Bible Society agent as illustrative of the superstition of the heathen. But he forgets that there is a set form of prayer for rain in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer. Given a god who can withhold rain until his creatures rebel, there is surely nothing so very extraordinary in taking steps to wake him up if, presumably, he is asleep. It would tend to considerable ease of mind on the part of Theists if they could believe, like the heathen, that their god—or rather gods, for there are said to be three of them—go to sleep at times. This would be an easy explanation of the catastrophe of St. Pierre and St. Vincent.

The stipendiary of the Staffordshire Potteries dismissed, with some rather caustic observations, a recent prosecution of Emma Burkrole Mountjoy, "a palmist, phrenologist, and physiologist." She had taken the precaution to post up in her room conspicuous notices to the effect that in any statements she made she had no intention to deceive or impose upon anyone. The stipendiary said he could not congratulate the prosecution in this matter. While he would keep poor people from being defrauded, one could not help noticing that philanthropic and religious institutions employed these palmists at bazaars, etc., in order to raise money for their benefit. Instead of sending out persons to detect these people, who openly advertise their business and who deceived nobody, he thought the police ought to commence with those he had indicated.

At many of the recent May meetings of religious bodies there have been congratulations made on the progress during the year. By the side of these we may place the statements of the Bishop of London, who, the other day, described the metropolis as "nominally Christian, but largely Pagan."

The Sustentation Fund of the Scottish United Church is in a bad way. The income has fallen off, and the decrease

at the end of eleven months amounted to more than £6,000. The causes of this decrease are, according to the official report, various. The "general dulness of trade, war relief subscriptions, anti-unionism, and irritation due to the 'Higher Criticism,' have all had their part."

A weekly paper, alluded to in the *Daily News*, is responsible for the following report of a schoolboy's idea of the Coronation ceremonies:—"It is the priverledge of the lord mare," the boy wrote, "to wash and dress the king the day he is crown, the archbishops of canterberry will ask the king to say an oath, and when he has done this he will wash the feet of 12 poor peepul and rise up an ointment king." Funny, is it not? Still, the boy's account is quite as sensible as the performance. There is even a certain felicity in his use of the word "ointment." Perhaps he had seen it in the Old Testament.

By order of King Alfonso, a Santiago court-martial has acquitted a young soldier who refused to kneel at Mass. The sentence asked for by the prosecution was three years' penal servitude!

The Lord struck the tower of Bramham church with lightning the other Sunday night, and so damaged it that it was deemed unsafe to hold the evening service in the church.

A missionary named Lindfield, while on his way from Tongaland to be married, was killed by a crocodile.

Volcanic eruptions are no respecters of persons—or buildings. The huge basalt towers of the cathedral at St. Pierre have been pulverised, and the walls hurled to the ground. Crowds of poor wretches sought safety in the holy edifice from the fiery ashes of Mount Pelée. But the sanctity of the building was no protection against the blind, indifferent action of natural forces. The people inside the cathedral shared the doom of those outside. Those who fancy there is a divine intelligence mixed up with such disasters should ponder the fact that the only person rescued from the ruins of St. Pierre was a negro prisoner confined in an underground dungeon. If this black culprit knew his business, after the fashion of the white-chokered gentlemen in the "Providence" line of business, he would go about preaching that the Lord had burnt down the city in order to set him free. It is one of the clearest cases of divine interposition on record.

The recent tornado in Texas swept away a hundred houses and three churches in one town. No divine discrimination here, either. One thing befell common dwellings and gospel-shops.

Civilisation has made *some* progress during the last hundred and fifty years. England was shaken up a bit by earthquake shocks in 1750, and the quack doctors did a good business in special "earthquake pills." We don't see them advertised to-day.

Under the Clergy Discipline Act, the Bishop of Ely deprived the Rev. Algernon Sweet of his living as vicar of Cowlinge, Newmarket. Rev. Sweet had been convicted at the Newmarket Sessions of persistent cruelty to his wife, who obtained a separation order. Mr. Justice Joyce has decided that the Bishop's action could not be maintained, as "persistent cruelty" was not the same thing as an "aggravated assault," and that an order by justices for a judicial separation is not the same thing as a decision in the Matrimonial Court. So that, pending appeal, Rev. Algernon Sweet remains the vicar of Cowlinge.

Mr. Moody, we are told, never passed the Bible Society's offices in Queen Victoria-street without taking off his hat. If Mr. Moody had had any brains beneath his hat, he would have thought the reverential act quite unnecessary. The *Evangelical News* observes that "the difficulty concerning the Bible to be used in June has been one of the first Coronation surprises, and the fact that the King is not to use a copy of the Bible Society's true Bible is the more strange because the King himself laid the foundation of the Society's offices in Queen Victoria-street." It is, indeed, rather strange. Has the King now arrived at the conclusion that the Society's Bible is not the "true Bible"?

Rev. Arthur Mursell, speaking of the work of George Tinworth, the sculptor, says: "There seems a satire in an artistic touch by which a secret may be told. The same hand has been at work on two blocks of terra-cotta—the one in Clapham, the other at Northampton. On a bold bas-relief in the great hall of the Stockwell Orphanage, C. H. Spurgeon stands with head uplifted and with eye dilated, and the finger of the raised right hand pointing towards heaven. On a pedestal in the open square of Northampton stands out the burly form of Charles Bradlaugh, posed in an attitude of appeal; but the right hand is stretched out, not lifted up, and the finger points down upon the earth. Was it intentional or fortuitous that the artist should have set

forth this contrast? Spurgeon might be exclaiming, could the stone take voice: 'Behold the Lamb of God!' Bradlaugh might have been launching forth the bitter sneer which I have heard him use: 'I cannot follow you Christians; for you try to crawl through life upon your knees, while I stride through mine on my feet.' The finger pointing to heaven has a pious sound about it, but it is a little absurd when we remember the diurnal revolutions of our little planet.

Sir Henry Thompson, Bart., F.R.C.S.M.B., Lond., etc., has reprinted by request his essay on "The Unknown God," which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* for March. He refers in it to the progenitors of man as "anthropoid apes," and he says "the astronomical discoveries which man's own unaided labors have achieved demonstrate beyond all possibility of doubt that the so-called Mosaic records [of Genesis i.] are quite untrustworthy." Then he says of the Power, who or which is the author of the universe, "nothing can be truly known but by the study of the phenomena around us." For "among the rising and future generations of the educated classes many are certain to have their eyes opened to the fact that no supernatural revelation has been made to man." We commend these remarks of the eminent surgeon to the attention of the devout.

Speaking the other night at the City Temple, the Rev. Bernard J. Snell observed that "pulpits that sneer at evolution and the Higher Criticism are not the defenders of the faith that they would fain think themselves." Such pulpits, he held, produced "infidels." There is some truth in this, though pulpits do not usually "sneer" at evolution and the Higher Criticism. If they notice them at all, it is usually to express alarm or a polite and distant unconcern which is obviously unreal.

"Honest thought and stalwart," said the Rev. Snell, "is not only our privilege, but our duty. The mischief is that in our churches so many will not think. The only heresy is a mean, narrow heart; the only infidelity is unfaithfulness to one's best self."

Cycling accidents happen to clergymen the same as to other mortals, which rather shakes the notion that there is a Special Providence who might at least be expected to take care of the men of God. The Hon. Rev. L. W. Denman, rector of William, Hitchen, sustained concussion of the brain by a fall from his tricycle, and the Rev. John Brack, vicar of St. Luke's, Skerton, has sustained severe personal injuries by a collision whilst cycling.

Archdeacon Hamilton has been writing some of the usual religious tommy rot about the effect of sermonising in gaols on the prisoners. He talks of "an almost magic influence" on the minds of the inmates; of faces beaming with "new hope and joy"; of the "silent attention" and "keen expression on the whole sea of faces." Sometimes anything is welcome in a life of enforced monotony, and there are times—fortunately they are infrequent—when even listening to a parson's discourse may be a relief. But the poor devils in our prisons can hardly help themselves in the sense of exhibiting any choice. They are an easy prey of the sky pilots who write in the outer-world, where they can hardly be contradicted, imaginative accounts of quite fictitious conversions. The expressions of the prisoners themselves, if the prisoners could be informed and consulted, would be more expressive than polite.

Here is a piece of pious invention about Robert Browning. Curious, is it not, that these things do not come out until a man is dead and cannot contradict them except by the general tenor of his work which remains. Browning would have indignantly repudiated the following story, which is now told of him when his lips are silent in death: "Some years ago he told his neighbor at a dinner party that, on his way home to dress, he had stopped to hear an open-air preacher in Hyde Park. The man was developing Freethinking theories, and, at the moment Browning arrived, was emphatically inveighing against the possible existence of God, and defying his hearers to disprove his arguments. 'At last I could stand it no longer,' said Browning, 'so I asked him to get off his tub and to let me get up and try to answer him. He did so, and I think,' he added modestly, 'that I had the best of it.'" Modestly he proclaims that he had the best of it. This is exactly what a Christian Evidence lecturer would do in the face of a quite opposite result, but it won't do to put such words into the mouth of a man like Browning, who was not given to this sort of pious lying.

A remarkable Church dispute is disturbing the little village of Rampton, in Cambs. Recently the rector (the Rev. Evelyn White) erected a side altar in the church against the wishes of many parishioners. One night, after the church had been locked up, the south aisle window was removed, the building entered, and the ornaments on the table taken away. The rector, in a letter, protested against this "unwarrantable, unauthorised, and illegal interference." The parish warden

(Mr. C. E. Ivatt) has published a rejoinder severely condemning the rector's conduct in setting up a side altar, and stating that the rev. gentleman can have the cloth, cross, and candlesticks if he promises not to again erect the table.—*Daily Telegraph*.

What a pretty quarrel, after nearly two thousand years of the "only true religion"! Christianity may have been meant to save the world; it could never have been intended to promote common sense.

"D. D." means Doctor of Divinity. In some cases it should mean Darned Duffer. Lafayette College, Eastern Pennsylvania, appears to be ready to grant the degree to a clerical gentleman on the ground of his "godliness and ability," if he presents a ministerial recommendation. The Rev. Andrew Mearns, secretary of the London Congregational Union, being asked to furnish the said recommendation, declined to do so. The applicant was a good man, but the rest was very doubtful.

The Shah of Persia has shown himself to be quite as absolute as the Pope. He was to have gone to the Vatican for an audience of the Pope, but he could not be received as a guest of the King of Italy, and it was suggested that he should start from some Legation or Embassy accredited to the Pontiff—the Belgian Legation for choice. The Shah was so annoyed by this sort of "etiquette" that he declared he would not go at all. And he did not. It is said that the Vatican authorities are mightily shocked by "such high-handed treatment." Perhaps they looked forward to the Shah's kissing the Pope's big toe.

The *Belfast News-Letter* prints a letter signed "W. Corrigan, Hamilton-road, Bangor," in which the late boating accident at Killarney is attributed to the desecration of the Sabbath. Sunday pleasure-seekers are taught that "the very elements combine to assert the authority of the God of nature and grace." But does not this make God a very bad school-master? Ordinary teachers do not drown their pupils in the course of instruction.

"The last thing that a believer remembers on earth is Jesus." This is the only true sentence we have discovered in a tract entitled *Heaven, and How to Get There*, by S. M. Haughton, Mutley, Plymouth. Yes, the last thing that a believer remembers on earth is Jesus. They remember his name, and that is all. They never think of putting his teaching into practice. Even when he says an obviously good thing they leave it to the Freethinkers. "Swear not at all," he said; yet if you go into a court of justice you will hear Atheists affirming and Christians swearing. This is one instance, and we could give more. Indeed, you are right, Mr. Haughton. You have hit upon the truth for once.

"Blessed be ye poor," said Jesus Christ. "Nonsense!" cry the Cromer Coronation Committee. There were two proposals for celebrating the King's Coronation and spending £125. One was adding another clock face to the Parish Church tower, which has two clock faces already; the other was erecting a cottage for the benefit of the aged poor inhabitants of the town. The Committee chose the clock face. Of course the aged poor will not have the cottage. But then they have the *blessing*. And what more can they expect on this side of heaven? Were they to ask for more, they would have as much *face* as the Cromer church clock.

Confirmation should not be too long delayed. If the Church doesn't confirm youthful Christians as soon as possible, it may be too late and lose them altogether. The Bishop of London, replying to a correspondent, says he sees no reason why a child of eight or ten should not be presented. By-and-bye little Christians will be confirmed two years after baptism, as soon as they can lisp the word "Jesus," or cry "Christ" when they suddenly come upon a pin.

The "Kingston Religious Fund" has been established by the will of Thomas Kingston, of River House, Cambridge, who died in January at the age of ninety-six, and left £89,198 behind because he could not take it with him. £83,000 is devoted to what the newspaper reports call "Low Church purposes." Thomas Kingston was very anxious about the *Low*. Perhaps his anxiety was rather overdone. We daresay the religion taught by his money will be "low" enough. A lot of it will go to keep missionaries.

Rev. E. A. Wilson, of Williamsport, Pa., U.S.A., is too advanced for his congregation. He issued a circular advertising a social gathering. "There will be a kissing party," he said, "a sparking society, honeymoon opera, Wild West bazaar, etc. All husbands and wives and young men and ladies will exchange companions to enjoy their supper." Somehow or other the congregation did not catch on to this Saint David invitation, and the man of God had to declare the social off in order to escape a mobbing.

The business of the Freethought Publishing Company, including the publication of the FREE-THINKER, is now carried on at No. 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Mr. G. W. Foote's Engagements.

June 8, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 1, Masonic Hall, Camberwell.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 1, m., Ridley-road; a. and e., Victoria Park.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

H. WALLER.—Please don't send your Lecture Notice in the form of a note or letter. It only gives trouble to the compositors or somebody. Model your notice strictly on the lines of the printed announcement.

J. REID.—In the first five lines of your Christian epistle you refer to Mr. Cohen as "an illiterate and irreligious Jew" and "an unscrupulous and apostate son of Israel." We did not take the trouble to read the rest of your communication. It went into the waste-basket. While you are mending your manners, and learning to appreciate the truth, you might usefully reflect—when you have a moment's leisure—that Jesus Christ and all the Apostles were "apostate sons of Israel."

E. J. HIRST.—Thanks for your trouble in sending us the cutting, but we like such things rather more up to date. This particular letter has already been replied to in the *Referee*. The writer was accurate, however, in asserting that the Protestants hated and persecuted science just as much as the Catholics.

J. HERRINGTON.—Letters to ordinary newspapers from the pen of Freethinkers are a good form of propaganda, but we cannot find room for them in the *Freethinker* too. They are only useful in the journals for which they are written.

T. ROBERTSON, secretary of the Glasgow Branch, writes: "We have just closed a fairly successful session, although the latter part of it was somewhat quiet. We undoubtedly suffered through your not being able to lecture in February as arranged. You see, we get 'crowded houses' when you come, and these give our attendance a fillip which we feel for some time afterwards. So long life to you."

W. F. RAINFORD.—Your name is entered on the list of intending subscribers to the complete *Ingersol*. We hope to make a definite announcement next week.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Many thanks for the trouble you have taken in the matter.

GERALD GREY.—In our next.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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A Letter—and a Reply.

Now that the N. S. S. Conference is over, with its demands upon my time and attention, and its further demands upon space in the *Freethinker*, the opportunity arises to deal with Mr. Watts's letter, which had necessarily to stand over.

Since the issue of last week's *Freethinker* I have received another letter from Mr. Watts. It was meant for publication, but I had to return it to him, and for several reasons. In the first place, I had one letter of his already in hand; in the second place, I had written nothing that called for a reply since he wrote it; in the third place, his rejected letter, while referring to other matters, did not explain and justify the vague accusations he had gratuitously thrown out against some person or persons unnamed, who had inflicted upon him (as he said) "studied slights" and "super-session," and made him the victim of "mischievous

influence." As I have not the slightest wish to misrepresent him, or do him a shadow of injustice, I will state that he suggested he might say what he meant by these words to a committee of disinterested gentlemen. My answer was that he deliberately chose to make his accusations publicly through the medium of the *Freethinker*, and that, as far as I was concerned, the proofs would have to be public too, and through the same channel. Week after week Mr. Watts was invited to explain and justify his accusations. Week after week he kept silence. Only when I told him he would not have another opportunity did he break that silence, and then he said nothing to the purpose. His object, I have no doubt, was to work into print the other portions of his letter, which were irrelevant to the real points at issue between us.

I now print Mr. Watts's letter *in extenso*:—

DEAR MR. FOOTE,—

Although you are wrong as to particulars in what you say upon my note which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*, I have no desire to prolong the controversy between us, beyond offering the following corrections. A continuation of disputation would probably seem to the public like colleagues in altercation, which neither of us should desire.

I will now give the facts in public, which, in substance, you have already had personally from me; this, I hope, will show that I did not act "a double part." Before the misunderstanding between you and Mr. Anderson arose, that gentleman asked me to look about to see if a hall could be obtained in London for regular Secular lectures, and, if one could be found, he would consult with the N. S. S. as to what could be done. In this he kept his word, for, as you say, when it was thought a hall had been found, Mr. Anderson wrote asking the National Secular Society what it "was prepared to do?"

I never paid a visit of inspection to the Athenæum Hall. On one occasion I called upon the proprietor at his place of business to inquire about his Albert Hall, which was then advertised for sale, but I did nothing further in the matter.

I took no part in the "Freethought Institute project." I was never consulted by, nor did I give any opinion to, those who had the project in hand. I had no "serious interest in its success," except that which should be felt by all Secularists at the prospect of the progress of our movement. Neither did I attend one of the business meetings of the promoters of the scheme. The "informal meeting" you mention took place at Johnson's-court, and when it was nearly over, being on the premises, I went into the room to shake hands with a friend who had to leave; but I took no part in the proceedings.

As to what you say "represented in private" about me being "the resident lecturer of the Institute," I can only observe that no such proposition was made to me, and whatever was done, I say most emphatically, was without my "sanction."

These are the facts of the case, and it is to be hoped that this matter will now end so far as the public is concerned; for, as you write of yourself, "I do not like quarrels or wranglings."

CHARLES WATTS.

My rejoinder shall be as brief as I can make it. But it is bound to be longer than Mr. Watts's communication, for he is concealing and I am revealing. It is easy to be brief by being cryptic (though offensive) and refusing to explain yourself. But such brevity is no virtue. Nor do I like "altercation." Yet there are worse things than that. My dear old friend and loyal colleague, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, was quite capable of altercation. When he had an attack of "nerves" he could talk warmly. He withstood me to my face on several occasions—sometimes wisely, and sometimes very unwisely. But I loved him always, because he had a heart of gold, and was incapable of falseness and treachery.

Mr. Watts refers in his second paragraph to information which I have had "personally" from him. He therefore gives me liberty to speak on that point, which I might not have had otherwise.

Now let us take that Athenæum Hall matter first. I stated that Mr. Watts went to the proprietor behind my back to inspect the place with a view to its purchase by someone. Mr. Watts replies that he did not visit the Athenæum Hall; he merely called upon the proprietor to inquire about the Albert Hall. Ordinary readers would fancy the Albert Hall was a good way off. It is at the back of the Athenæum Hall; both are parts of the same premises, and there is a door of communication between them. Moreover, the Albert Hall never was for sale independently of the Athenæum Hall. Further, I repeat that Mr. Watts did go with the proprietor and inspect the whole premises.

I have already said that I learnt of this visit of his accidentally. He now practically admits that he was looking round on Mr. Anderson's behalf. When I taxed him with it, he told me a very curious story. He said he meant to give me a surprise. A millionaire American friend of his had commissioned him to inquire for a hall in London. His rich friend would be back again from America in six months, and then he would probably buy a hall and present it to us. I did not believe this Munchausen story. It was one of Mr. Watts's ways of trying to throw me off the scent of his intimacy with Mr. Anderson.

This incident did not take place "before the misunderstanding" between Mr. Anderson and myself. That "misunderstanding"—if this is the right word—began at the end of 1899. Mr. Watts's visit to the Athenæum and Albert Halls was in the summer of 1900. He really ought to recollect the date of the commencement of that "misunderstanding." He will remember how he used Mr. Anderson's name to a certain third person, how that third person thought it a duty to put me on my guard against both of them—and all that followed. It was *after* the "misunderstanding," when Mr. Anderson was ready to do me a mischief, that Mr. Watts was hall-hunting for him.

Mr. Anderson has his lucid intervals. He certainly did write to the N.S.S. about a hall that "Mr. Watts had found." I have said so, and I have said that it was in the wilds of Tottenham. But the N. S. S. was not offered the money to buy it with. The whole thing, in short, was a bit of fooling. But it served to show the Executive how much Mr. Watts was in Mr. Anderson's confidence; and most of them remembered the fact as the play developed its critical situations.

Now as to the Freethought Institute project. Mr. Watts repeats that he took no part in it, and had no personal interest in its success.

Mr. Watts's colleagues on the N. S. S. Executive were nearly all satisfied that he *was* implicated in that project. They had no technical proof, but they saw plenty of circumstantial evidence all pointing in one direction. Eventually I learnt that Mr. Watts had been present at an informal meeting of the promoters of the project at Johnson's-court—which is *his* place of business as well as his son's. What happened was this. A provincial Freethinker, coming to London, was invited to call at Johnson's-court and talk the project over with Mr. Anderson. He did so, and there were four persons present at the interview besides himself. One of them was Mr. Anderson, and another was Mr. Charles Watts. When I asked Mr. Watts if he had any explanation to offer, after having caused me to write in the *Freethinker* that he had never been consulted, he replied that his presence at that informal meeting was *accidental*. He happened to be on the premises, and he was asked into the conversation. He did not deny that he was present all the time. Now he asserts that he merely went into the room to shake hands with a friend who had to leave. Is he calculating on the fact that I cannot mention the "friend's" name without a betrayal of confidence? That gentleman did not know there was anything to conceal, and what he told me he confirmed in writing. Mr. Watts saw that letter. I sent it him at the writer's suggestion. Being a person of scrupulous honor, he wished Mr. Watts to see precisely what he had written. At the same time he hoped he might not be the innocent cause of widening the breach between us. But he did not minimise the substantial facts, and Mr. Watts did not dare to contradict him.

Mr. Watts denies that he was to have been "the resident lecturer of the Institute." Any representation to that effect was without his knowledge or sanction. Well now, the person who made that representation was the principal promoter of the scheme, whom Mr. Anderson had commissioned to advertise and launch it; and that person was Mr. Watts's own son.

There was no harm in Mr. Watts wishing to be the "pastor" of such an Institute. The harm was in his pretending ignorance before his colleagues on the N. S. S. Executive.

It may be asked *why* he should pretend such ignorance. In the first place, it would hardly look well to be aspiring to the pastorship of an Anderson Institute just at the moment when Mr. Anderson was

pursuing the President of the N. S. S. into the Bankruptcy Court. In the next place, the project was launched in a most insulting manner as far as the N. S. S. was concerned. The Society was contemptuously ignored. Not only was the project carefully concealed beforehand from the N. S. S. officials, including myself, but even when it was launched there was no sort of communication made to them; not so much as one of the circulars was sent to the Secretary. The whole thing was engineered by persons outside the N. S. S., and none of them really friendly to it. That is why Mr. Watts could not openly be associated with the project. Moreover, until it succeeded, he was still deriving most of his income from association with me.

Now I have not gone beyond the scope of Mr. Watts's denials. What I said before, and what I have said now, he has forced from me. I had to repel his accusations. I had to show that *in public*—which is the only thing I am concerned about—I had treated him, not with "studied slights," but with much forbearance. I have been as reticent as possible. I have not even dealt with some of the pretended "slights" which he has not been above talking about.

And now I have to say a word about the Watts Testimonial. Mr. Holyoake writes that he thought he asked more of me than merely to print his circular letter. He is mistaken. He did not. He did not even refer to the subject when I saw him at Brighton—the very day, apparently, on which he posted to me at the *Freethinker* office. Still, I can appreciate Mr. Holyoake's anxiety in the matter, although I do not recollect that he was ever anxious about any trouble of mine. What I cannot appreciate is a letter from Mr. George Anderson on this subject. An appeal from him to me, and in this case, is one of the oddest things conceivable. I have also to regret that the N. S. S. has been treated rather cavalierly again. I have further to regret that Mr. Watts himself has made it so hard for me to plead as I would once have wished to on his behalf. I am not built to play the hypocrite. I cannot pretend to feelings I do not possess. It is impossible to forget, what others have noticed, that the one conspicuous man in the N. S. S. who said nothing when the President's ruin and disgrace were being sought was Mr. Charles Watts. Yet I will carry my mind back over the past two or three unfortunate years, during which an old man's money has been a source of corruption; I will remember the long previous years of Mr. Watts's advocacy of Freethought—an advocacy that can never, from the nature of the case, bring worldly fortune; I will hope, for the sake of *auld lang syne*, that the subscription which is being raised will be sufficient to set him up in the business (whatever it may be) that is contemplated as the security for his old age. I am far from wishing to stand between Mr. Watts and anyone who desires to join in a practical acknowledgment of his life-long work for Freethought. I therefore repeat the announcement that the Secretary of the "Watts Testimonial Fund" is Mr. Theodore Wright, 17 Clifford's Inn, Fleet-street, London, E.C., and the Treasurer Mr. Alfred Sumner, Bryngwyn, Muswell-road, Muswell-hill, London, N.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, is one of the dates on which the Athenæum Hall, in Tottenham Court-road, is reserved for the use of the proprietor. London friends will please note this fact, and do go to the hall expecting to hear a Freethought lecture this evening. On the following Sunday evening (June 8) Mr. Foote will commence a special series of lectures, which will be duly announced in next week's *Freethinker*, and advertised in other directions.

Mr. Cohen had another fine audience in Victoria Park last Sunday. There was also a good collection, and a good sale of Freethought literature. Every copy of the *Freethinker* was cleared out, and the run continued on the Twentieth Century *Age of Reason*. To-day (June 1) the Sunday evening lectures begin in Victoria Park. Mr. Cohen takes the platform at 6.15. East London "saints" will please note.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces "Ess Jay Bee's" verses from our columns—we mean the particular verses

that offended the great Dan Leno. They will add to the gaiety of Canada. No doubt *Secular Thought* will also reproduce Dan Leno's letter and our reply.

A meeting will be held at the Bradlaugh Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford, this afternoon (June 1) at 3 o'clock, for the purpose of organising a Branch of the National Secular Society. Local "saints" are earnestly requested to attend.

The Glasgow Branch holds its Annual Excursion to-day (June 1). Brakes leave the foot of Queen-street at 10 a.m. for Weass Hill, near Howwood, one of the loveliest parts of Renfrewshire. The price of the tickets is very moderate—two shillings for adults and one shilling for children between seven and fourteen. Excursionists will have to bring their own provisions, but tea and milk will be included in the price of the ticket. We hope the Glasgow "saints" will have a large party and a good time.

In 1900 there were 301 cremations performed at Woking. In 1901 the number fell to 273. This is explained by the Cremation Society's Council as owing to the high death rate in the early part of 1900 and the low death rate throughout 1901. The deaths in London were 8,000 less in the latter than in the former year. It is evident that the prejudice—the religious prejudice—against cremation is breaking down; for a new crematorium is now in course of erection at Golder's Green, Finchley, and will be opened this year. Cremation will then be easier as well as less expensive, as mourners will be able to attend the funeral to the very end without an excessive loss of time. Practically a day has to be given to a funeral at Woking, which is forty miles from London.

Count Tolstoi, the famous Russian author and Christian Anarchist, appears to possess a very tenacious vitality. He is always dying and never dies—much to the sorrow of the Holy Greek Church, in whose side he is a perpetual rankling thorn. After his attacks of influenza and pneumonia, which nearly carried him off a month or two ago, he is now reported to be ill with typhoid fever. No doubt the Holy Greek Church is growing more cheerful.

"A Maker of Lenses."

Whose remembrance yet
Lives in men's eyes, and will to ears and tongues
Be theme and hearing ever.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Cymbeline*.

THE seventeenth century seems to us moderns to bear the taint of monstrosity. If it be true that the world has not even yet been able to get rid of barbarity, how bewilderingly offensive that century must have been to a humane man. Yet in it lived a philosopher, the sanest and sereneest that mankind has, perhaps, ever seen.

Benedict Spinoza was born in 1632, at Amsterdam, of a Jewish Portuguese family. He early gave signs of a reflecting mind and an independent spirit, which a scanty education only excited to new efforts. The instruction of the rabbins dissatisfied him, and he determined to examine for himself. Persecution inevitably followed his scepticism. He was calumniated and accused before the Synagogue. He refuted the accusations with calmness, in spite of menaces on one hand, and zealous attempts at conversion on the other. The threats and the blandishments having proved futile, he was excommunicated, with words horrible and flatulent. He received the sentence with his customary equanimity; but henceforth his Freethought became aggressive. Under the baptism of these curses Spinoza was born again. The Jews still persecuted, and even attempted to murder him. Meanwhile he continued his investigations, at first following the teachings of Descartes, as his principles of the Cartesian philosophy show. For support, he employed himself in grinding optical glasses. Through the intrigues of the Jews he was banished from Amsterdam by the magistrates for several months, and retired quietly to the house of a friend. He then went to Rynsburg, in the vicinity of Leyden, and to Voorburg, near the Hague, where he devoted himself, for three or four years, to philosophy. At length he settled permanently at the Hague. Here he published his two works—the *Principles of the Philosophy of Descartes*, and a *Treatise, Political and Theological*.

In the latter he shows that not only freedom of thought can exist without danger to public peace and virtue, but that it must necessarily stand or fall with them. When death came, it came as he would have wished, allowing him to be up and conversing with his landlord on the very Sunday (February 21, 1677) in

the afternoon of which he passed away. He died of consumption, possibly accelerated by the inhalation of glass-powder.

We have alluded to the barbarity of the seventeenth century. In England, a year after the birth of Spinoza, Prynne, the author of *Histriomastix*, a work directed against various public amusements, was condemned by the infamous Star Chamber

"To stand in the pillory at Westminster and Cheapside, and to have one of his ears cut off at each place, to pay a fine of £5,000 to the King, and to be imprisoned for life."

Sixteen centuries of the "religion of love" had obviously failed to teach men the meaning of common humanity. Men were not indifferent to Christianity; they had too much of it. In no field in the preceding century were men more active than in the domain of religion. In England, Protestants and Catholics hanged, and burned, racked, and tortured each other with pious zeal. The Continent, from Spain to Friesland, was torn by strife as deadly as it has ever witnessed. The soil of Europe was like a sponge soaked with the blood of thousands of the martyrs of Christian bigotry.

Holland, despite her enemies, was, indeed, something of an oasis in Europe. The Dutch were the first to assert that human institutions and human allegiance to Governments are to be interpreted and maintained by their manifest utility, and that men and women were not the private estate of princes.

Spinoza's philosophy, though preceded and in a sense originated by Cartesian study, shows very plainly a separate creativeness. As Dr. Martineau truly says, "Spinozism is anti-theistic."

Here we touch the strength of his system. It seems to us so modern to say there is no more hell and no more heaven at one time than at another. It seems redolent of the twentieth century to announce that good is as inevitable as evil. But to say that there is neither good nor evil is to seem to stand for a moment outside the world, passionless; a figure intimate with man and remote from him, as the fabled god of the theologians. "We do not know that anything is certainly good or evil, excepting that which actually conduces to understanding, or which can prevent us from understanding." Thus at one blow does Spinoza demolish the concept of good and evil, and the thirsty demand for reverence by priests on behalf of an imaginary deity. Nietzsche ran into the Christian temple, and smashed the altar. Spinoza, centuries before, was decorously sawing away at the pillars as though he were a carpenter called in for repairs.

The highest lesson which life is capable of affording is surely the lesson inculcated by such lives as that of Spinoza, whose value is quite independent of the worth of any literary product such lives may leave behind them. For, merely regarding a man's work, there are always, and always must be, differences of opinion. This is especially the case with the efforts of the iconoclast, the bringer of new things, the militant thinker who conducts his campaign in the domain of religion, already the scene of a hundred hard-fought battles. The last lesson the bulk of humanity will ever learn is that finality in anything is impossible, and most impossible of all in the realm of thought. A hundred systems have had their day, and ceased to be; but the establishment of the last is always final in the belief of the generation which has grown under its influence; the approximate truth of the day is to it the eternal verity which shall witness the extinction of the stars.

If, among the multifarious threads of Spinoza's thought, we search for one quality that may inspire us, we should, perhaps, find it in courage. He dared to follow his reason through good and evil report; so that in this age, thanks to Spinoza, man has shaken off a very large amount of superstition. His watchword might have been Carlyle's, "Fear nothing but fear." Spinoza had the courage to pursue reason wherever it might lead. He dared to see things for himself, with his own eyes. He refused to rest satisfied with any second-hand rule, opinion, or authority, and, by his courageous resolve to launch into unknown waters, he made an imperishable name. He stands, amid the group of splendid figures the seventeenth century has added to the interminable frieze of history, the unquestioned peer of the noblest and the best—this maker of lenses.

MIMNERMUS.

Wanted—a Sane Democracy.

THE other week I drew attention to the interesting Chinese puzzle of Mr. W. M. Crook, who sought to suggest that every Atheist who politically agreed with him was a Christian in disguise, and that every Jingo Christian was a bold, bad Atheist. Since then my attention has been directed to another curious Christian, Mr. Morrison Davidson. Mr. Davidson, of course, is always with us; but in *Reynolds's Newspaper* for April 27 he is moved by a certainly remarkable phenomenon to write a noticeable article, headed "Wanted—a Democratic Church."

Mr. Davidson's articles are certainly unique. He must be a terror to the compositors, not to say an impossibility for the "lino" operator, for he exhausts every fount of type open to him, so that his lucubrations, in print, are variegated enough for any taste, whilst he so often reaches the *crescendo* of small capitals that one has now ceased to be greatly moved, and is inclined to turn up the nose at a paragraph set in mere italics.

Let it be granted, however, that Mr. Davidson had some excuse this time for losing his equilibrium. A Christian minister—Dr. R. F. Horton to wit—has actually, so the report runs, agreed to allow some criticism of his sermons by his congregation on one Sunday in the month. The story is scarcely credible; a clergyman positively allowing discussion once a month—not once a year, mark, but actually once a month—twelve times in the year. One instinctively feels there is some misunderstanding. Still, Mr. Davidson quotes the paragraph, verbatim, from the *Daily News*. If things move at this rate the Archbishop of Canterbury may, every five years, hold a discussion on Christian brotherhood, in the *London Times*, with Dr. Gore. And really the foundations of civil society would not long stand such shocks.

At any rate, the shock, for the present, is enough to send Mr. Davidson quoting some excellent Secularist passages from Winstanley, and generally enthusing over Dr. Horton for his wonderful departure. And, in the exuberance of his spirits, Mr. Davidson goes on to tell us how "Christ Himself" held debates with the Doctors of the Law, and how the same doctors behaved with courtesy to the Wonderful Boy—with a capital W and a capital B.

Having, however, in the course of his article, belabored most of the prominent professional Christians for their warlike proclivities, Mr. Davidson, towards the end, essays, in a couple of paragraphs, to concisely sum up the work and the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism, as contrasted with the work and influence of Christianity. And it is here the nondescript neo-Christianism of Mr. Davidson shines forth:—

"At the door of the Buddha and Confucius may be laid three-fourths of the stagnation as of death by which the Farther East has, for so many long centuries, been so sorely afflicted. Buddhism, in its essence, is mere Philosophic Pessimism, of which the inevitable outcome has ever been the arrest of all true Progress, wherever it has laid its enervating hand.

"Nor has it been otherwise with Confucianism. Its founder was an Agnostic to the finger tips, and a Conservative and *laudator temporis acti* of the most fatal description. He edited the Chinese Classics and set his unfortunate countrymen a-munching at them, and for twenty-four long centuries they have been worrying over the dry bones, with what results the whole world beholds to-day."

These paragraphs are in themselves characteristic of Mr. Davidson's type of mind. He thinks it sufficient disparagement of Confucius to say that he was "an Agnostic to the finger-tips," though he knows that probably fifty per cent. of his readers are in the same plight, and further knows, if he knows anything, that those from whom democratic politics draw most support would doubtless be described by him as Agnostics too—of course, in polite society we never speak of Atheists, of whose existence, indeed, we only faintly hear. In both paragraphs, it will be noted, Mr. Davidson speaks of "long centuries." A century, one had supposed, was just a hundred years—neither more nor less. Whether a hundred years is a longer period in the Farther East than in Europe, or whether Christ-

tian centuries are shorter things than Buddhist ones, is not clear, though, if the amount of "worrying over the dry bones" of ancient Scriptures is any mark of length, the Christian centuries ought, in all conscience, to be long enough.

Mr. Davidson, in season and out of season, has been attacking the Christian Churches for their apathy, their glorification of armed force, their indifference to all real political progress. In view of such criticism one might well ask what can be the value of a religion of which the most representative organisations are what Mr. Davidson constantly declares them to be? Yet, having attacked "official" Christianity because of its fruits, Mr. Davidson turns round and attacks Buddhism and Confucianism because their fruits are different. Mr. Davidson, in this mood, disparages China. Now, many European travellers and observers praise Chinese civilisation highly, and declare it in many respects superior to that of Western Europe. The notion that China is savage or uncivilised is held only by the utterly ignorant and illiterate. Has Mr. Davidson read, for instance, M. Eugène Simon's *La Cité Chinoise*, or such a book as Mr. Lynch's War Correspondence, recently reviewed in these columns? Defects and vices Chinese civilisation undoubtedly has; so has every civilisation the world has ever known. Recently, however, China, the peaceful, China which in her whole history has hardly ever been guilty of aggression against a neighbor (a fact which in itself speaks volumes for her social organisation), recently China has been ravaged and pillaged by Christian Europe. And Mr. Davidson condemned the ravaging and the pillaging. Now he talks of the "true progress" to be found in Christianity, and pities China for her "stagnation." Well, what does Mr. Davidson want? Does he want China to imbibe some "true progress" from such founts as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes or Canon Knox-Little? He condemns Europe because it is warlike, and China because it is peaceful. And whilst the vices of China are properly to be laid at the door of Buddha and Confucius, the vices of Europe it would be flat blasphemy to lay at the door of Jesus. Such is the logic even of your "democratic" Christian.

This, for instance, is Mr. Morrison Davidson's concise testimonial to Christ:—

"But with the Christ it is altogether different. In his teaching are to be found potent elements of true progress entirely lacking in the doctrines inculcated by the Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. The Buddha laid the greatest stress on mooning *contemplation*. Christ, on the contrary, even discouraged prayer and made *action and conduct* the test of duty. *My father worketh hitherto, and I work.*"

Well, all one can say is that if Jesus discouraged prayer and laid stress on conduct—was, in fact, a primitive misunderstood Secularist (and Mr. Davidson personally vouches for it), then, on Mr. Davidson's own showing, Europe never has been, and is not now, Christian. How, then, can it be pitted against China as an example of the "true progress" which Christianity produces? How, in common sense, can a community, which for hundreds of years has openly flouted and disregarded a given doctrine, be held up as showing the virtue to be derived from what it rejects?

Probably Mr. Davidson's lapses are not worth much further pursuit. But one may be permitted to inquire how such cranky and inconsequential leading as is here discussed can help the democracy to that sane outlook in philosophical things which must accompany sane action in political things. Take all this fuss about a democratic church. Mr. Davidson and minds like his as dearly love a church as the typical Englishman is said to dearly love a lord. When Dr. Horton proposes to deliver lectures and permit discussion, Mr. Davidson goes into ecstasies. But what will have happened more than Freethinkers, Radicals, and Socialists have been doing for very many years? Has Mr. Davidson ever praised Freethinkers as he now praises Mr. Horton? And does he think it a great credit to Christianity that a single Christian minister should consent to do, once a month, what Freethinkers have been doing always for generations? Is that part of the "true progress" of Christianity—to follow, at a considerable distance, the example of non-Christians? The fact is that those like Mr. Davidson who, whilst loudly condemning the professors of the creed, are always trying to rehabilitate the creed itself, are largely undoing with one hand the

work of emancipation they accomplish with the other. Much more than the need of a democratic church there is wanted—a sane democracy. FREDERICK RYAN.

The Rights of Animals.

"Réponds-moi, machiniste : la nature a-t-elle arrangé tous les ressorts du sentiment dans cet animal, afin qu'il ne sente pas ?"—VOLTAIRE.

THE history of human progress is marked by the destruction of barriers. The primitive savage is essentially an individualist; his ideas are centred in himself; he regards his fellows as his natural enemies, always to be distrusted, occasionally to be injured, but never as partakers of his egoistic joys, never as possible recipients of his beneficence. But as his knowledge widens his prejudices disappear, and he learns that his own interests are bound up in the interests of others. Thus from the family is evolved the tribe, from the tribe the nation. In the onward course of development there must come a time when the instinct of nationality will also vanish, when humanity will be no longer divided by frontiers, when instead of a narrow patriotism there will be universal solidarity, and civilised peoples will recognise in foreign populations not rivals to be exterminated, but common sharers of a common happiness, regarding as their proper aim the good of all and the ascendancy of none, and consigning their national flags to their museums of antique relics, with the weapons of war they symbolised.

But one great barrier will yet remain untouched. The selfish notion that animals exist merely for the convenience and comfort of mankind has been crystallised in the ignorance of a barbaric past, and unhappily occupies a too prominent place in the mentality of today. The idea that animals have *rights* does not occur to many people, and, if it did, would be scouted as too preposterous for serious consideration. Let us see how far such an attitude is justified, or whether it is justified at all.

No one denies the rights of *man* in theory, although the principle is often denied in practice. Such rights can rest on nothing but identity of interests, and every argument against extending them to the lower animals must proceed upon the assumption that this identity is wanting. Thus we find that many writers have endeavored to prove a radical disparity between themselves and the brutes. Aristotle claimed pre-eminence for humanity because it was ticklish! Seneca declared that animals could not confer benefits, and lacked the passion of anger. Thomas Aquinas denied them the finer senses. Racine thought that man was distinguished by the power to gaze upwards. On the other hand, many profound thinkers have maintained that no real disparity existed. David Hume wrote an essay, entitled *On the Reason of Animals*, in which he gave numerous instances of their sagacity. Jeremy Bentham declared that there was no "insuperable line," and, in maintaining the rights of animals, acutely observed: "The question is not 'Can they reason?' nor 'Can they think?' but 'Can they suffer?'" James Freeman Clarke states his view in a passage worth quoting:—

"Animals can reason, remember, imagine; they have conscience, and are capable of the feeling of wrongdoing; they have the love of approbation, and are pleased with praise; contrivance, and can adapt means to ends; pride which can be wounded; a sense of reverence for man as a higher power, in which is the germ of religion, and a sense of the supernatural."

But the most eminent and the most conclusive testimony comes from science. Charles Darwin lived long enough to see the triumph of his theories. The great naturalist, in his *Descent of Man*, has demonstrated beyond the possibility of question that there is no single faculty of man that is not possessed in some degree by the lower mammalia; that the difference between man and the brutes is a difference of degree, but not of kind. And this fact is now generally recognised in the world of biology.

Although the question of man's relation to the lower animals has not occupied anything like the attention it deserves in the dogmatic systems of the world, it is pleasant to recognise that some of the most developed beliefs have inculcated kindness to animals. It will be interesting, before considering the subject from a closer

standpoint, to glance briefly at the influence of the more prominent religions.

It is a principle of the Hindu faith to treat all animals with kindness. The Brahmin is forbidden to kill a worm, or even to tread upon a blade of grass; he must not injure anything that lives. Buddha recognised souls in insects as well as in animals. According to a Buddhist legend, he on one occasion gave his body as food to a starving tigress in order that she might nourish her young. His command, "Thou shalt not kill," applied to all living creatures, and his followers were even urged to establish hospitals for the relief of sick animals. One of these institutions is thus described in Parson's *Travels*:—

"This account excited a desire of visiting the Banyan Hospital, as I had heard much of their benevolence to all kinds of animals that were either sick, lame, or infirm, through age or accident. On my arrival, there were presented to my view many horses, cows, and oxen in one apartment; in another, dogs, sheep, goats, and monkeys, with clean straw for them to repose on. Above stairs were depositories for seeds of many sorts, and flat, broad dishes for water, for the use of birds and insects."

Zoroaster, the Persian philosopher, taught that certain animals were sacred, but advised that others should be exterminated. According to Herodotus, the ancient Egyptians believed in the sanctity of all quadrupeds, and it is certain that many creatures were thus regarded in Egypt; we know that the cow, for instance, was sacred to Isis.

The doctrine of transmigration undoubtedly tended to elevate the status of the brutes in the eyes of its adherents. It was taught by Brahma and by Buddha. It was a part of the religion of Egypt, and was held by Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Plato among the Greeks. It was a feature of the Neo-Platonists, of the Jewish Cabbala, and the Arab philosophers. Even Origen, one of the early Christian fathers, accepted it; and the Gnostics, like the Manicheans and the Druids, included it among their articles of faith.

Allied to the doctrine of transmigration is the idea that animals possess immortal souls. This belief is not confined to Pagan or pre-Christian times. Richard Dean, curate of Middleton in 1768, maintained that, "as brutes have accompanied man in all his capital calamities (as in the Deluge, in famines, and in pestilences), so will they attend him in his final deliverance." Dr. Barclay, in his *Inquiry*, pleads that, for aught we know, brutes may be immortal, "reserved as forming many of the accustomed links in the chain of being, and, by preserving the chain entire, contribute in the future life, as they do here, to the general beauty and variety of the universe—a source not only of sublime but of perpetual delight." Matthew Arnold makes the absence of this belief a matter of reproach to the early Church.

"It should seem," he says, "as if the primitive Christians, by laying so much stress upon a future life in contradistinction to this life, and placing the lower creatures out of the pale of hope, placed them at the same time out of the pale of sympathy, and thus laid the foundation for the utter disregard of animals in the light of our fellow-creatures."

It would, of course, be out of place here to do more than touch upon this rather metaphysical subject. It may, however, be said, without irrelevance that, in view of the identity of qualities and organism, there is scarcely an argument for human immortality that does not apply with equal force to the lower animals.

Though it is undeniable that many religious systems have tended in some degree to extend the scope of human sympathy to the non-human species, particularly as evinced in the doctrine of transmigration, it would be disingenuous to ignore the reverse side of the picture. Even in those instances where the teachings of religious leaders are characterised by the greatest humanity their followers often sadly deviate from their ideals. The devotees of the kindly Confucius sacrifice some seventy thousand animals during the year in which they celebrate his memory. The idea of blood sacrifice, with its inevitable attendant cruelties, has wrought havoc with the most enlightened systems of worship, poisoning whatever good they may contain, and too often petrifying the finest feelings of humankind.

E. R. WOODWARD.

(To be concluded.)

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.): No lecture.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, W. M. Salter, "The First Thing in Life."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Charles Watts, "Robert Owen."

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 3.30, Members' Meeting.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies; 6.30, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, J. Ramsey.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N.S.S.): 7.30, R. P. Edwards.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.): Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.15, C. Cohen.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. A. Davies.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (The Bradlaugh Institute, Victoria Buildings, 17 Little Horton-lane): 3, Organising a Branch of the N. S. S.

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): June 1, Annual Excursion.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): No lectures during June, July, and August.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—3, "Priestcraft and the Government's New Education Bill"; 7, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secularist Platform." Tea at 5.

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