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# Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

*Suffering is no duty, but where it is necessary to avoid guilt, or to do good; nor pleasure a crime, but where it strengthens the influence of bad inclinations, or lessens the generous activity of virtue.*—DR. JOHNSON.

## The Next Move.

THE daily bulletins concerning the King's health continue to be so favorable that sanguine persons are already prophesying that the Coronation will take place very shortly. Even the grave and reverend *Westminster Gazette* says "it is now believed that the great function may be carried through before the close of August." This belief, of course, may be well or ill founded. Still, the case is one of great uncertainty. There is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip, and there may be yet another slip twixt the King and the Coronation. Not that we wish for it; we are only reproving a certain rashness on the part of the public vaticinators.

Whether the Coronation comes early or late, the clergy will surely not let it be taken without a preparatory Thanksgiving. That is the next item on the program. King Edward will have to go to St. Paul's Cathedral and participate in a service of thanks to God for his recovery. Nothing will be said on that occasion about the doctors. They will have done their work and received their rewards. It will then be the Lord's turn, and the clergy will see that he gets all the credit. For his reputation, like their existence, is parasitical. He takes all the glory of other persons' successes. The failures he leaves to their own account. It is, indeed, on this very plan that Christianity is constructed. Man is left to share all his sins with the Devil; but all the good in him is ascribed to the grace of God. Every time it is heads poor man loses and tails the Deity wins.

We expect to find the clergy working that Thanksgiving for all it is worth. It will give a much-needed lift to their profession. They will receive a certificate of the efficacy of prayer, signed by the King, and countersigned by the British nation. And if they cannot trade profitably for a good while on that basis, they must be very degenerate representatives of the clerical interest.

Religion is worship, and worship is prayer. Piety is a lively sense of favors to come. All over the world, and under every form of faith, this is the everlasting verity. The old story told by Dr. Tylor goes to the root of the matter. A missionary in Africa set up a little iron chapel, with a little bell on the top. One day he was ringing the bell for the morning service, and one of his "converts" came by at that moment. "Aren't you coming in?" asked the missionary. "No," said the convert, "I don't want anything just now."

Someone has sent us a copy of a Roman Catholic organ, the *Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. It contains a department headed "Petitions," and another headed "Thanksgivings." These are described as "only a few" out of the "thousands" that reach the

Editor. Not one of them is accompanied by a name and address. The only place mentioned is "Tipperary," and the petitioners and thanksgivers sign themselves, "A Grateful Child of Mary," "A Hopeful One," "Hannah," "Three Orphans," and so forth. We suppose the registry of their names and addresses, with other particulars, is kept in the beautiful land above. They pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for some favor—a good situation, or the recovery of a sick relative; and if their prayer is answered they drop a "thanksgiving"—together, we hope, with something more substantial—to the *Messenger*. If their prayer is not answered they say nothing. And thus the game goes on to the comfort of the faithful and the profit of the Church.

Such victims as these are an easy prey. Even the King is not a difficult one. He cannot help himself. If he were to pooh-pooh the clergy, and refuse to take part in a thanksgiving, he would only be fighting against the common interests of imposture and privilege—in which his own interest is included. But there is nobler game to be run down. We may instance Mr. Chamberlain. After starting a new form of entertainment—for him, and reviewing a company of black soldiers from West Africa, he meets with a cab accident, and spends his sixty-sixth birthday in hospital. Now the accident might have been a good deal worse; it might even have been fatal. We may look upon it as a "mercy" that the Colonial Secretary is still alive. True, his wound is described as "not dangerous," but who can be sure of such things? There is clearly room for prayer; yea, and for thanksgiving afterwards. We suggest, then, that the clergy should try to tackle Mr. Chamberlain. He would be a splendid catch if they could only land him. And now that he has lost a lot of blood he may be amenable. Perhaps the Archbishop of Canterbury is too old for an enterprise like this, but the Bishop of London is younger and more ambitious. He might take Mr. Chamberlain in hand, induce him to show at least a little connivance, get up a special service of prayer for his perfect recovery, and, finally, drive him in triumph to the Cathedral. It would be a splendid stroke for dear old Mother Church, and it should really be attempted.

Mr. Chamberlain's thanksgiving service should precede the King's. It would serve as a rehearsal. The royal affair might then go through without a hitch.

Meanwhile it is to be noted that illnesses and calamities are a golden harvest for the clergy. They live upon other men's misfortunes. The happy do not need them. That is why they preach the religion of sorrow. Every man's misery is their opportunity. They work upon man's mortality, and trade upon his fear of death. Were he immortal he would laugh at them; as it is they can afford to laugh at him.

The King's illness, in particular, has been a god-send to the soul-savers of every denomination, though especially to the parsons of the State Church. By voicing the general desire for his recovery, by battering the ears of the Almighty with their loud petitions, by representing every improvement in his condition as the result of divine intervention, and, finally, by securing that he shall publicly return thanks to God in one of their joss-houses, they have shown themselves what we always said they were—past-masters in the art of deception and imposture.

G. W. FOOTE,

## The Value of a Future Life.

THE first instalment of what promises to be an interesting series of articles on the question of human immortality appears in the current issue of the *Contemporary Review*. The article is from the pen of the well-known lady writer, Madame Emma Marie Caillard, and, like many religious writers, she is somewhat alarmed at the indifference of the general public to this belief—an indifference shown in practice rather than in theory, since there is no lack of people who would endorse the belief if the question were put to them—and is convinced that if people only held this belief *in a proper manner* it would exert a profound and beneficial influence on our lives this side of the grave. Well, there is much virtue in an "if," and all that it amounts to in this connection is the somewhat circular statement that, if people cast their belief in a future life into a helpful form, then it would prove beneficial—which, as the old song says, "no one can deny." Looking at the matter, though, with an eye to facts rather than fancies, there is much evidence for the assertion that the belief in a future life has usually had anything but a beneficial influence on life this side of the grave. Had the reverse of this been the case, a large portion of human history would be much pleasanter reading than it is at present. Belief in a future existence and improvement in this would then be contemporaneous facts, and the strength of one's convictions in one direction might be taken as a rough indication of one's activities in the other.

Needless to say, this is not the story that history has to tell. From savage times down to the present, some of the most degrading beliefs, the most barbarous customs, and most stupid social regulations, such as the wholesale destruction of slaves on the death of a chief, the practice of suttee, the witch hunts and heresy hunts of the Middle Ages, may be cited as being either the direct outcome of, or largely influenced by, the belief in immortality. Place the Christian *theory* as to the benefits of this doctrine alongside the actual *results*, and the balance will be seen to be on quite the wrong side of the account.

In antiquity no two nations stand out with greater prominence, and to no two nations are we moderns more indebted, than Greece and Rome. One was as supreme in the world of intellect as was the other in the world of practice. And, allowing for difference of time, no two Governments have, on the whole, been carried on with greater regard to the general welfare of the people under their care. Certainly they were better in this respect than other nations of the ancient world. Yet neither of these people, as Mr. Gladstone was forced to admit, had any real, living, believing in a future life. There was a formal belief existent on the subject, and the afterworld does figure in Greek and Roman literature. But it seems to have been generally regarded as a species of celestial House of Lords—a place to which once useful national servants were sent, but to which no one who was worth troubling about was really anxious to go. It was a promotion that was equal to being cashiered.

The belief in immortality only became a vital force with the introduction of Christianity; and how the nations of antiquity sank steadily lower and lower to the point of extinction after its establishment is a story well known to all who know the history of the ancient world. And, although it is not now necessary to say that Christianity was one of the causes of this decline, accurate as the statement is, it is plain that the belief was not beneficial enough to save ancient civilisation, or even to arrest the rate of its decay. Nor did European civilisation show any marked tendency towards further development until the weakening of religious belief, consequent upon the inroads of Mohammedan science and culture, and the revival of ancient learning, to be followed by the scientific discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And since then one may lay it down as a sound generalisation that the periods during which the social forces have been most operative for good have been those in which the belief in human immortality has been weakest.

Madame Caillard, it is almost needless to say, differs radically from this conclusion. She says:—

"A real living belief (not a mere intellectual acquiescence) in the continuity of individual human life has issues of infinitely greater importance to society at large than those which it debates with such fervor and heat. ....If death is indeed no break in life, but merely an entrance into different conditions of life, this fact of itself should weigh immensely in education. Before it could do so, however, public opinion in favor of its practical importance would have to be created. At present what public opinion is brought to bear on the subject leans all the other way. To think much of life beyond the grave is supposed to unfit us for work in the world as it is. Could we realise [the truth of a life beyond the grave].....it would save the artist and the author from prostituting talent to win the poor meed of contemporary or posthumous fame.....It would rob bereavement of its keenest pangs.....It would set free even under actual conditions an amazing amount of human energy and capacity which are at present stunted by the overhanging fear that whatever the individual cannot accomplish before death is, so far as the individual is concerned, incomplete."

This may be fair rhetoric, but it is poor logic, and still poorer psychology. It may be admitted that if we could make the belief in a future life useful, then it would be—useful; but human nature would have to be differently constituted to what it is for that to become generally the case. As I have said, such has not been the result in the past, and it is difficult to see how, from a theoretical standpoint, an infinity of life can make life more valuable. There are many uncertain things about this question of life and death, but it seems to me that one of the few certainties is that life owes its value to its terminability, not to its infinite duration. A man who possessed illimitable wealth, wealth that was beyond the possibility of exhaustion or destruction, would hardly be the one to receive with gratitude a lesson of how to save money; and, reasoning by analogy, it would seem that the conviction that life does end at the grave, that the possibility of rectifying mistakes, of redressing injuries, and of removing error, ceases at death, is far more likely to breed carefulness in the expenditure of energy and to act as an incentive to endeavor than the conviction that a whole infinity of existence still lies before us.

Besides, it is simply not true that people are haunted by "the overhanging fear" that if we cannot accomplish our work before death it is useless; nor is it desirable that it should be so. Here and there people may be in this condition, and when this is the case the course lies with the Christian doctrine of immortality on behalf of which Madame Caillard is pleading. It should always be borne in mind that this morbid fear of death, and equally morbid dwelling upon what may come after death, is essentially a Christian product. There is nothing like it in the old Roman or Greek civilisations. Pagan literature and Pagan philosophy treat death as a mournful fact, the sad parting of friends; but it has none of the morbid terrors with which theology has surrounded the question. It is essentially a product of Christian teaching, and the satisfaction derived from a belief in a future life is simply the antidote provided by Christianity to weaken a disease with which it has itself inoculated the people.

The psychological point that Madame Caillard has lost sight of is that our desires and our beliefs are not opposite and independent things, but two sides of the same thing, and are bound to accommodate themselves one to the other. It may appear to the one who believes in a future life that without it life loses much of its charm, but the one who is destitute of the belief sees no greater charm about the conception than he does in the fairy tales with which his childhood was amused. Several hundreds of millions of Buddhists find no consolation whatever in the doctrine of personal immortality, and their testimony on the one side is quite as valuable and quite as conclusive as the testimony of Christians on the other. And the Atheist who dissents alike from the mystical self-annihilation of the Buddhist and the continued personal existence of the Christian finds that his emotions are in turn schooled into line with his convictions. True, men long for life, and it is well that they should; but a very little reflection and examination shows that the life longed for is life here, not life elsewhere. True, again, religious teachers have, consciously or unconsciously, been shrewd enough to translate this longing for life into a longing for immortality on the other side of the

grave, but careful analysis soon discloses the source of the confusion.

And how far is it true that the belief in immortality robs bereavement of its pangs? Do we find that Christian parents part with their children, Christian husbands with their wives, or Christian friends with each other, more cheerfully than do non-believers? I should be sorry, indeed, to say that they did. Some of the wildest outbursts of grief may be witnessed at a Christian graveside, and the grief of parting seems not at all lessened by the belief that the lost ones are now in heaven. And, even at a later date, there is the same sad note struck when speaking of the dead, when it is plain that time alone has been the cause of the moderation of grief, and not any particular conviction as to their continued existence. It is the snapping of old associations, the loss of the loved voice, of the familiar footstep, that gives us the pathos and tragedy and pain of death, not the feeling that the grave ends all; and this pain is certainly not lessened by theological shibboleths.

A great deal of Madame Caillard's reasoning rests, as is usual in such cases, with a statement of the very plain fact that, even though the world as we know it may have been designed by Almighty Wisdom, there are grave imperfections that human wisdom can easily discern. It is easy to discern such flaws in the cosmic structure, and natural to complain about them; but to take these flaws and utilise them as a triumphant argument in favor of another life wherein they are smoothed out is, to say the least of it, unscientific. This world is not constructed to suit our sense of what ought to be, and we have no right to assume that any other is fashioned on any different lines. If there is another life—a mighty "if," this—we are logically bound to think of it as similar to this one; and as it must, therefore, show the same kind of faults, the reason for its existence disappears. At any rate, if one may put it bluntly to a lady, it is simply childish to use our dissatisfaction with life here as a positive basis on which to erect our belief in a life hereafter.

Apparently insensible to these considerations, Madame Caillard devotes the larger portion of her paper to this aspect of the question. She says:—

"Under present conditions—even when, as human experience goes, they are most favorable—man never appears to himself to attain the true zenith of his powers. There is always a beyond, were this or that limitation—perhaps the universal one of the shortness of life—removed.....Again, there is the injurious effect on others than the individual concerned which this individual limitation occasions. The statesman who is lost to his country's councils just when she is most in need of him; the mother who is snatched from the children at an age when they chiefly require her care, and the loss of whose tender watchfulness in early years is felt to the end of life; the father whose counsel and ripe experience would have been invaluable to the son just setting forth on his career.....social regeneration is no panacea for these things. It cannot secure to the individual the certainty that his powers shall ripen to their full development; that work which he has undertaken shall be accomplished; that his life shall last long enough to shelter, till shelter is no longer necessary to the lives dependent on him; that the desires either of affection or intellect shall come even near to satisfaction."

Well, it is regrettable that this should be so, but how, in the name of all that is reasonable, can this be transformed into any presumption in favor of a future life? And how, even if we grant the validity of the conclusion, can it alter the undesirability of the present arrangement? Assume that the mother is living beyond the grave while her child is on this side, the child is still destitute of the maternal care, and will still feel to the end of its life the care it needed at the beginning. The loss to the nation is precisely as great when a sage statesman dies, whether he lives again or not. Clearly no continuation of life elsewhere can alter the loss to either society or to the individual. Life here must be valued on the grounds of what it is here, and not as to what it may be elsewhere. We admit its imperfections and deplore them; we admit also that, if man lived ten times as long as he does usually live, and were ten times as wise as he usually is, it might be better all round. But this offers no presumption in favor of immortality; it is only an argument against the bepraised wisdom of deity and the perfection of his works.

Exaggeration seems almost inseparable from the religious constitution, and anyone who carefully studies the quotation just given will admit that much of the case is overstated. It is true that social regeneration cannot guarantee that each one shall see the full accomplishment of any work he undertakes; but then there are very few who take a great work in hand who are at all deterred by this consideration. We all feel that we should like to do more than we are able to accomplish; but we are at the same time content if we do something towards the realisation of our ideal, leaving it to those who follow to push on the work further, while the certainty that before long the tools must drop from our hands has the effect of inspiring us to renewed endeavor while we are able to use them. People, if let alone, really think but little about death or a life beyond the grave. It is the activity of religious propagandism that keeps this question so largely before the public. And with this propagandism, if we seriously ask ourselves the question how much or the twenty-four hours in each day we spend in thinking about a life beyond the grave, we shall probably be surprised at the answer. Even the clergy themselves spend but little time, I imagine, thinking about the subject, although they spend a deal of time thinking that other people ought to think about it. But, in the main, man feels, whether he consciously realises it or not, that he is part of the social structure, and he is realising with increasing clearness that his interests are bound up with it. And so he pursues his work, not with the "overhanging fear" of death, but with the unspoken assurance that his work will continue when he is gone, and finding satisfaction in the doing while he is alive to bear his share of the burden.

But the essential question about such a belief as that of immortality is, Is it true? and to this Madame Caillard does not address herself. This is the all-important question, because immortality can bring no comfort and no consolation to anyone unless we believe it to be true. You cannot comfort a mother who has just buried her child with the statement that the child still lives, unless she believes it to be true; nor can you cheer man under any of the circumstances described by Madame Caillard unless the belief appears to him to be solidly based. Anyone may pretend to believe, but no one can derive consolation from the belief unless it be genuine. Therefore, the real question is not whether the belief is comforting, but whether it is true. And, ultimately, the last question involves the first, because, as I have said, our desires and feelings accommodate themselves to our beliefs, and it is for this reason that people find, and will continue to find, comfort and consolation in the most varied and contradictory conceptions of life and its duties.

And when we get down to this fundamental view of the subject, the question is practically decided for us by anthropology. There can be little or no doubt concerning the veracity of this belief to such as have mastered all that modern science has to say about its origin and history. Just as man's gods are but a magnified picture of himself, so his heavens are but distorted or inverted images of earth. His "soul" is but a rarefied descendant of the primitive ghost, his longing for life an outcome of the struggle for existence, which placed a premium upon such as had this desire most developed. And neither man's conception of a soul nor of a future life affect for the better our view of this life. That has to be taken on its own valuation, with the cradle and the grave as the practical limits upon which to base our estimate. To the healthy mind, it is enough that life is; enough that we can make that life better or worse as we neglect or utilise our opportunities for good; and he who realises this much will find enough of consolation to face its trials and reverses, without calling in the aid of a sickly philosophy or an unreasoning superstition.

C. COHEN.

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All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any deprivation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.—Dr. Johnson.

## Missionaries and their Dupes.

AMONG the prominent failures of modern times, probably none has been more ignominious than the fraud termed "Foreign Missions." Vast sums of money have been expended, and much valuable time has been wasted, in the endeavor to force upon the "heathen" abroad a religion which its professors at home can neither understand nor practise. With few exceptions, the men who are sent to preach the Gospel in foreign lands are of limited knowledge, with weak intellects and strong imaginations—men who could not succeed at home, and, therefore, were sent to far-off countries, where they disturb the minds of those who, in many instances, possessed a religion and exemplified a devotion thereto far superior to Christianity and the fidelity shown by its adherents. These men, as the Rev. Sydney Smith once said, "deliberately, piously, and conscientiously exposed our whole Eastern Empire to destruction for the sake of converting half-a-dozen Brahmans, who, after stuffing themselves with rum and rice, and borrowing money from the missionaries, would run away and cover the Gospel and its professors with every species of impious ridicule and abuse." "The Hindoos," continues the same rev. gentleman, "are a civilised and moral people.....We believe that a Hindoo is more mild and sober than most Europeans, and as honest and chaste.....In astronomy the Hindoos have certainly made very high advances.....As manufacturers, they are extremely ingenious; and as agriculturalists, industrious. And it is to this highly-cultured people that we send ignoramuses to teach vicarious atonement and eternal torture. And they laugh at us. Can they help it? They have a Gospel more august than ours, and a Christ of their own; traditions grander and more awe-inspiring than any of which we can boast; miracles more marvellous, and prophets more majestic. And they ridicule ours."

Of course, it is not here meant to impugn the motives of these orthodox fanatics. Unfortunately, however, the history of Christianity too conclusively proves that men with the best intentions generally are, when under the influence of theological fanaticism, capable of the worst of crimes. In this practical age, men judge by their actions and not by their intentions. If we apply this criterion to the missionary enterprise, we shall discover it to have been a curse instead of a blessing to the human race. Carlyle once said that a man's true work or duty is that which lies nearest to him. So it is with a nation. Its first duty should be to its own people before looking abroad. Let professed Christians put their own houses in order before undertaking a similar task for other people. We have thousands of heathens in the dens and courts of our great cities who require some kind of "conversion" far more than the Hindoo or African does. If the reader would go through the slums of Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and even London, he would find that there is plenty of work to do in civilising our city Arabs without going to Fiji, or to any other far-off land. It may be, not unreasonably, looked upon, perhaps, as the duty of a highly-civilised nation to do somewhat towards aiding the progress of less-favored peoples. But when this idea takes the form of sending out men to offend the prejudices and outrage the religious beliefs of other nations, it is, to say the least of it, a futile and foolish idea. If we had done more in the shape of dealing justly with the so-called "heathen," instead of, as has mostly been the case, inoculating them with our vices, there might have been some good done. It is not by Bibles, homilies, liturgies, doctrines, and creeds that the progress from savagery to civilisation can be achieved.

The *Christian World Pulpit* for June 18 last contains a sermon by the Rev. Dr. J. Guinness Rogers upon "A Missionary Church." It is a plea for the "servants of Christ" to obey his command to "preach the Gospel to every creature." The greater part of the sermon consists in extolling Jesus for what he did not do. "He taught," says the rev. gentleman, "not only by words but by deeds, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps." This is the language of orthodox enthusiasm, not the voice of historical truth. In mis-

sionary work abroad, as in home affairs, the example of Jesus is never followed, except in isolated cases here and there upon the part of a poor victim of mental disorder. The supposed command from Christ which is said to sanction the missionary enterprise is found in that admittedly spurious passage which reads: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). But it is evident from another command, attributed to the same person, that he did not intend that "all the world" should be preached to; for, when he sent forth his twelve disciples upon a mission of propaganda, they were told not "to go into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matthew x. 5). Besides, missionaries to-day never attempt to follow the instructions Christ is reported to have given to those he sent forth. They were commanded to provide "neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor script for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves" (Matthew x. 9, 10). Now, very few of the "self-denying" missionaries at the present time would start upon the "Lord's mission" under such circumstances. On the contrary, they insist upon having not only plenty of money, but other articles of a most dangerous kind. Therefore, as far as Christ is concerned, there is no authority for this sham and delusion termed "Foreign Mission." He never intended, if the Gospels are correct, that his faith should be universal; hence we read: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matthew xv. 24); "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 9); "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew xxii. 14).

From a practical utilitarian standpoint, Dr. Rogers admits there is no reasonable justification for Foreign Missions. He says: "It is true that the work of Foreign Missions is an idealism which has neither force nor purpose in it except for those who are strong in faith. It is, in fact, the noblest venture of faith. It would be a waste of strength to sit down and reason with a critic of missions on the cold bases of mere reason. The whole position is changed as soon as we introduce the element of faith." This is so, for blind faith and submissive credulity are indispensable to the perpetuation of the missionary fraud. Let reason be brought to bear upon the question, and the hollowness of the enterprise will be at once perceptible. Now, any system that depends for its success upon a faith that is not based upon experience deserves an unmistakable condemnation. To exploit the Foreign Mission scheme is simply to pander to the credulity of those who are too ready to sacrifice their reason to the delusive fascinations of theological faith. Do the men who preach the good of missions really believe what they preach? Would not the women who are moved to tears by melodramatic tales of little dark boys and girls who die without Christ do better to use their tears on the sooty visages of the offspring of the slums of their own country? And do the prattling little ones, who have to take an early choice between spending their pennies in sweets and going to hell, and putting them into the missionary box and going to heaven, really understand, in the latter case, why they give their coppers?

In a very able article on "Missionary Work in India," by Captain Osborne, which originally appeared in the *Theological Review*, the writer, although strictly orthodox, admits that, as a rule, missionaries are virulent sectarians, condemners of what they call "secular learning." Speaking of the spirit in which the work is carried on, he observes:—

"It is hardly too much to say that there is no attempt made to convert the Hindoo from his idolatry to the worship of the living God, but only to make him a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, an Independent, a Roman Catholic, or a Church-of-England man. The ministers of the various sects absolutely *fish* for one another's converts, and these reproduce among themselves the spirit of dissension and animosity which they have imbibed from their teachers. It is absurd to expect that in such ways as these we shall break the chains of fatalism and superstition which bind our subjects in the East."

South Africa has been a prolific field for missionary fraud. Long before the outbreak of the recent war the editor of the *Kimberley Daily Independent*, at that time

one of the most influential journals in South Africa, wrote:—

"There is something wrong in the manner in which the missionaries have been in the habit of administering their doses of religion. Missionary work has failed miserably hitherto, and matters in connection with it appear to be growing worse instead of better.....We may as well say at once that we look upon Church missions as hopeless—indeed, they have been proved to be hopeless by their want of success for years past. We have a large and constantly-moving population here, who are entirely ignorant not only of anything approaching a Christian creed, but of many points affecting their own physical and moral well-being. They live huddled together like pigs, without the slightest regard to sanitary laws.....The Church is, or at least appears to be, powerless to improve the moral condition of our native population, and seems now to have tacitly determined to let things take their course.....We do not think the Church equal to the work.....An intelligent medical man would do more practical good by giving the natives clearly to understand what is good for them and what is not; why they should observe cleanly habits, and avoid the reckless immorality which is one of the chief scourges of our native population, than a clergyman could do by endeavoring to instil into their minds a faith or creed, or, in fact, any series of dogmas, which their intellect is wholly unable to grasp."

Looking at the results of foreign missionary work generally, I, in common with many Christian writers, am bound to pronounce it a complete failure. Have the missionaries reclaimed, or have they the remotest chance of reclaiming, the four hundred millions of Chinese, the more than three hundred and forty millions of Buddhists, the hundred and sixty millions of Mohammedans, who regard Christianity as an impudent, a foolish, a clumsy imposture? The New Zealander will take as many New Testaments as the missionaries please, and, after using them up for gunwadding to shoot his neighbors and the missionaries, will, like *Oliver Twist*, politely ask for more. The Chinese will tell the missionaries that most of the precepts of the New Testament were stolen from the Vedas of Confucius, and that Confucius, who preceded Jesus by five and a-half centuries, taught a morality as lofty, and lived a life as spotless, as that of him who said: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

CHARLES WATTS.

## The Origin of Belief in a Soul.

THE province of Tenasserim, in British Burma, is separated from the Shan States of Siam by the Thongyeen. This river, running from south to north for two hundred miles, marks the boundary-line of British territory.

The valley formed by the river is narrow, nowhere more than thirty miles in breadth. Closed in to the east and west by steep and rugged chains of mountains, covered with dense forests, traversed by numerous cross-spurs jutting from the mountain-walls on either side, the valley is isolated, wild, and savage. Its only inhabitants are Karens, chiefly of the Sgaw tribe, a nomadic race of mountaineers, wild in habits as the animals of their forests, avoiding intercourse with strangers, changing their dwellings year by year, seeking only liberty to pass their lives in their own wild way. Religious ideas among the Karens are necessarily in the very initial stages of evolution. Hence, during the five years I have passed amongst them I was much interested in noting the origin and development of their beliefs.

Spencer, Lubbock, Tylor, and other writers, have arrived at the conclusion that the widespread beliefs as to the existence of soul apart from, and independent of, the body, and of its continued existence after the death of the body, have had their origin primarily in dreams.

That this is true, actual proof was offered to me more than once during my intercourse with these wild Karens. And here let me state that nothing is more conducive to the shaking of inherited religious opinions than the living in daily companionship with savages. Again and again in the crude notions of the savage mind, beliefs most sacred to Theists, and deemed by them of

supernatural origin, are shadowed forth in startling fashion. One cannot but see in what mists of error, from what wrong interpretation of natural events, most, if not all, religious beliefs have arisen.

Here is an incident, occurring in one of my wanderings in the Valley of the Thongyeen, that brought vividly before me the origin of the belief in the existence of a soul, and of the belief in the soul's immortality.

If I could but describe the scene! Much of the force of the lesson learnt that day rose from the reality of the surroundings—the thrilling consciousness of being brought face to face with the undeveloped savage mind, struggling through the shadowy and vague terror of mysterious though natural events to some explanation of them, satisfactory to the shallow intellect.

I was encamped one night at the entrance of a wild, rocky gorge near the source of the Thongyeen river. Hard by lay a small, temporary Karen village. Night had set in before my tent was pitched. As time wore on, the sounds from the village died out, one by one giving place to a tropical stillness. The night was pitch dark and cold, and I sat by the camp-fire reading. All my followers and servants were asleep. Suddenly the breeze bore to me a long, low, mournful sound from the direction of the village. I ceased reading, and listened. The sound died away, then rose again, swelling into the wild wail of the Karen lament for the dead—very weird, very solemn, in the stillness of the deep forest. Around, giant trees cast black shadows on the ground. The light from the camp-fire gleamed fitfully along the dark aisles narrowing between their buttressed trunks. No beast, no bird, no insect voice broke the profound silence. But for the wail of the mourner all nature might have been dead as the bemoaned.

My thoughts turned to the mystery of death, and to the belief in a life hereafter. Did death end all? Was the beautiful hope of meeting again the dear one lost on this earth only a tender dream? The ingrained belief of ages, the hopes that have descended to us from a long line of ancestors struggled with doubt, strengthening that vague instinct of the mind which whispers that this life is not all-in-all, but has its completion in a life hereafter.

Thus thought wrestled with thought, and sleep was long delayed that night.

In the grey dawn of the next morning, while it was yet dark, beneath and across the shadow of the trees I saw from my tent's open door two figures glide swiftly by my camp, taking the road that led up the side of the steep hill forming one side of the gorge near which the camp lay.

A Karen and his wife. The former, a broad, stalwart, athletic young fellow, went first, carrying in his hand a light half-spade, half-spear, much used by this people, and a basket slung over his back. In the basket lay rigid and still a baby form swathed in rags. The mother paced behind silent and sad, with bowed head and eyes raised only now and then to cast a half-terrified, wondering, sorrowful look at the face of her dead child.

When they had passed out of sight under the solemn arches of the forest, I followed at some distance, catching now and again a glimpse of them as they wound their way up among the rocks. Up, up they went, nor paused nor drew breath until they had arrived at the crest of the hill. Here, laying down the basket, the young Karen fell to digging a shallow grave in the shade of a clump of bamboos that bent gracefully, darkening a little patch in the sunlit ground. The mother stood by silent while the grave was made. In silence she saw her child lowered into it. Then the maternal instinct that woman shares with tigress, deer, and bird—with all her sisters in Nature's great family—broke forth. She bent down with a wild and moaning cry, and convulsively snatched her child to her heart again. The man spoke to her. Not harshly—gently. These Karens are kind to their wives. Soon her sobs ceased, and she gave the child back. Hastily the father placed it again within the grave in the shadow of the bamboos, covering it with earth. Then the sun rose over the hill, and a rich burst of light fell upon the lonely grave and the stricken forms of the mourning parents. A gentle breeze rustled among the tree-tops—

Many a bird was singing in the forest around; nature was as ever cruelly joyous; or was she thus for comfort's sake? *Quien Sabe?*

I had waited at some distance, and, as the day grew stronger, saw that this new grave was not the only one upon that lonely height.

On my right was a mound on which lay the betel-box, the pipe, the haversack, and "dah" (or chopper-knife) that in life had been his who lay beneath. I turned to rest on the trunk of a fallen tree, when I heard the sound of footsteps. The childless man and woman were passing. I knew the man, and I spoke to him. He had often been my guide in former visits to his village. He stopped. His wife passed on. I asked—tenderly, I hope—as to his child. What was the cause of death?

"Fever." Then he squatted down, drew out his pipe, filled and lit it.

"Whose grave is that?" I asked, pointing to the mound with the betel-box and "dah."

"One of the men of my village," he replied; "he died some months ago."

"Why do you leave his betel-box, haversack, and 'dah' on the grave? What use can it be to him?"

"It is our custom."

"But why?"

"His 'lah' (spirit) will require them."

"But you see his 'lah' has not taken them. They are still there, and they are rotting away."

"Oh, no!" Very promptly. "What you see are only the forms of the things. Their 'lahs' have gone away and are with the man's 'lah.'"

"Where?"

"In another world below this."

"And so people's 'lahs' after death go to another world and work as in this?"

"Yes; and if they had no haversack, and no betel-box, and no 'dah,' how would they get on? How could they cut down forest and cultivate rice for food if they had no 'dah'?"

He added, after a pause:—

"So our people say, but I don't know. I am ignorant. I am only a poor jungle fowl."

"But," I persisted, "how do your people know that it is all true—that the betel-box, the haversack, the knife, and other things, have 'lahs,' or even that the man has a 'lah'?"

The Karen was silent for awhile. Then he said:—

"My child is dead—his body is buried there. It cannot move and go about; yet I know that in my sleep he will come to me. He will speak, and I shall speak to him. It is not his body, but his 'lah,' that will come. So also I lost an axe long ago. It fell in the forest somewhere. I could not find it, but in my sleep I have seen its 'lah' and have held it in my hand." He paused and went on. "It must have a 'lah,' for iron and handle have rotted away long ago, yet I held them last night in my hand."

"Then the 'lah' lives independently of the body?"

"Yes. Our people say so."

I was silent. Here among these savages I saw how the germs of belief in a future life are laid, from what delusion they spring.

Then looking back to the far-off times, when the ancestors of our own now civilised race were savages with minds as undeveloped as that of the savage before me, I saw how from the mystery of dream appearances rose the belief in the dual nature of things. I saw how this belief, extending first to all things animate and inanimate, came in the slow evolution of man's intellect, by the elimination of the grosser and cruder portion of his thought, to hold at length only of living things.

No profound thought, no deep insight into human nature, is needed to trace along general lines its further development.

Man, in his selfish egoism making himself the centre of all nature, has deemed that he alone is thus favored and raised above the rest of the universe.

Moreover, it is a belief that with all its uncertainties has an intrinsic attractive beauty in the hope it gives to man that love and happiness will last beyond the grave.

Above all—fatalest of all, it is a belief that offers to the craft of the priest, power over his fellow man.

Thus, flattering to man's self-love, useful as an engine of power, affording an easy explanation of mysteries in

life and death, this belief in a soul really rising in "the mists and shadows of sleep" has come down to us as god-revealed from on high.

C. T. B.

### Monsieur Parle.

IN ze chambre which I rest in, someone I discovered zère, Black his vestmong, black his chapeau, also black his shining hair.

"Bong-jour," says he, sweetly smiling, "parley-frongsay, chair mossoo?"

An' I say, "Yes, sare," in Eenglish, "but not such good French than you!"

So he bows an' smiles (oh, charmong!) an', here-there, his eyes he roll,

An' he says his daily labor is to "elevate ze soul."

One to me has kindly sent him, sinking sat I *might* soobscribe To ze fun' for buying Bibles for ze Bouilleanflayem tribe.

"Name of pipe!" I cry, "oh, nevaire! know you not I'm Infé-del?"

"Truly, mossoo, je swee farchey," dit-il, "car vous gotahell! *Est is certain—God has spoke it—you shall march to warmest hell!*"

Oh, we talk an' kept at talking; I him could not comprehend,

An' he know not of *my* meaning—zat I know from start till end.

But he gives me freely cinquante—feefy tract between my arms!

"Lizzie first," says he, "zis boondle—lizzie zen ze Book of Psalms."

Zen I sank him for ze kindness, an' I make him see ze door; An' I burn his leaves of folly, for zis sort I know before:

"*Loove ze Farzer, loove sweet Jésus.....Pierre zen weel twist ze key*

(*En attendant, mes chers amis, give, oh give your cash to Me!*)

Me, I love not zese slick creatures, paid one fairy tale to tell;

Sousands do wizout "believing," an' zey manage véry well; In zeir leeving, in zeir dying—oui, zey manage véry well!

JOHN YOUNG.

### Acid Drops.

GOD and the doctors have triumphed. By their harmonious co-operation they have saved the life of the King. How much credit is due to the two different factors in this case, no one is able to determine; but there are some persons wicked enough to say that God's share is really inappreciable. One thing is certain: the doctors never mentioned their divine partner in their bulletins. They did not even let his name appear in front of, amongst, or below their own. They steadily ignored him from the first bulletin after the operation to the one in which they declared that their august patient was out of danger. Probably they regarded the "divine healer" as a particular friend of the clergy, and did not wish to poach upon the preserves of another profession. And it must be allowed that the clergy have been making the most of those preserves during the King's illness.

While the King's doctors were fighting hard for his life, and quite ignoring the Deity in the heat of the struggle, it was rather odd that a number of other doctors took part in a special intercessory service at St. Paul's Cathedral. These medicine-men belong to the Guild of St. Luke—the third Evangelist having, as tradition says, been a physician; and also, as another tradition says, an artist. The members of this Guild are all supposed to be good Christians. Whether the Lord Jesus Christ would own them, however, is at least open to discussion. Certainly their methods (outside church) bear very little resemblance to his. They laboriously diagnose a patient's malady, carefully prescribe for him, vigilantly watch the changes and fluctuations of his condition, and painfully bring him round again, in some cases, to a reasonable state of health. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, simply looked upon the sick man, and said: "Take up thy bed and walk." And the man got up and waltzed round with his four-poster.

We daresay this Guild of St. Luke is worked by the clergy, although its members belong to another profession. Now that so much is heard of science, it is good business to get some "scientific men" to go to church—if only once a year, on the anniversary of the Guild of St. Luke. Not that the average doctor is very much of a scientific man, but he is a great deal more so than the average minister, and the public are able to recognise the difference. From a commercial point of view, therefore, it is a capital advertising dodge to get a mob of doctors under the dome of St. Paul's. It

reassures the people who have heard of some sort of opposition between religion and science, and it is a regular slap in the face to the sneering "infidels." Surely, if doctors go to church, patients need not hesitate to follow their example.

It need not be supposed, though, that there is any love lost between doctors and clergymen. They were always at enmity with each other, and may be so still in spite of a superficial reconciliation for the sake of mutual advantage. Careful readers of the Bible will recollect that "physicians" are generally spoken of in its pages with hatred or contempt. It is recorded as a species of crime on the part of King Asa, for which he seems to have been punished by the shortening of his life, that in his sickness he "sought not unto the Lord, but unto the physicians." In the New Testament there is the story of the woman whom Jesus healed of an unpleasant disorder, who had tried all sorts of remedies, and had "suffered much of many physicians." What a sanguinary sneer at the gentlemen who pretend to cure the sick by natural agencies! We commend it, together with the story of King Asa, to the attention of the Guild of St. Luke. It will show them what the parsons really think of the medicos.

The Intercession prayers offered by the clergy for the King's recovery remind one of the story of what occurred in a district of California during a prolonged drought. The country had been suffering from want of water for a considerable time, and at last, when climatic conditions seemed favorable, a series of prayer meetings were held asking for rain. Sure enough, the rain came. Highly elated at the result, a number of religionists waited upon the only Freethinker in the place to point out to him the advantages of prayer. "Are you sure the rain came in answer to your prayers?" queried the sceptic. "Certain of it," was the reply. "Wouldn't have come, if you hadn't prayed?" "No." "Well, all I can say is," retorted the unbeliever, "you are a mighty mean lot not to have prayed a month ago." One feels that it would have been far more sensible for the clergy to have asked God to *keep the King well*, until after the Coronation was over at least, than to have interceded on his behalf after his illness had upset all the arrangements.

The Isle of Man is a very beautiful place, but its inhabitants did not make it. They are chiefly remarkable for the way in which they thrive on visitors in the summer, and the way in which they piously serve the Lord (at a cheap rate) during the winter. It must be said of them, though, that they produced Mr. Hall Caine. What that production is worth it must be left to posterity to decide; that is, if posterity troubles its head about the problem. Meanwhile we note that Mr. Caine is a member of the Manx Parliament, and that this body is worthy of him. On one and the same day it thanked Almighty God for enabling the doctors to save the life of King Edward, and sent a letter of condolence to the family of Lord Henniker, the late Governor of the Island. It did not occur to them to wonder why the doctors were not enabled to save the life of their Governor. But people do not *think* in these matters—not even Manxmen.

It is rather curious that the King should be robbed by illness, or "Providence," or whatever it is, of his Coronation show, at least for the present, and that the first great procession through London after the war will be in honor of Lord Kitchener. But is not this, after all, as it should be? One need not be disloyal to ask what particular work the King has ever done in the world. Lord Kitchener, however, has always been a hard worker. His reputation is one of the few that have been distinctly heightened by the war in South Africa. He has shown himself strong and able both in waging war and in making peace. Less showy than some other generals, he has greater powers and more valuable qualities; and it is an unusual stroke of the fitness of things that "our man of men," as far as the war is concerned—yes, and the peace too—should be the first to receive a popular ovation.

Our grave and pious contemporary, the *Daily News*, came out with a shocking editorial headline on Monday morning. "Feeding the Five Hundred Thousand" was the title of its second leading article. There was a suggestion in it of one of the miracles of Jesus Christ, who fed five thousand persons by multiplying a few loaves and fishes. Fortunately the King's guests in London had not to wait for such a performance, their food being provided in the ordinary way by non-celestial caterers. Still, we regret our contemporary's profanity, and hope it will not grow hardened in misdemeanor.

Some of the King's guests were by no means the poorest of the poor. Visitors at some of the dining halls were surprised at the "respectability" of the diners. "Tradesmen's wives," one newspaper said, "and members of families in receipt of fairly good incomes were numerous, while the very poor of the district for whom the feast was intended were conspicuous by their absence." The showy dresses and other

finery of the female feasters were often the subject of comment.

We have another bone to pick with the *Daily News*. We thought it was a peace journal, but relates with evident appreciation the story of a disloyal man at Yarmouth who made an uncomplimentary reference to the King, and was immediately attacked by a young fellow standing by. "A gallant young champion of the King" our contemporary calls the loyalist who answered a word with a blow. Evidently that is all right at Yarmouth which is all wrong in South Africa.

The Pope assisted, in the French sense of the word, at a dining function on Sunday in connection with his Jubilee. According to report he was in good form. We are told, indeed, that his physicians find he has improved both in health and spirit during the past year. Now thereby hangs a suggestion. Why should not God work a miracle in the Pope's case to prove the divine claims of the Catholic Church? By keeping the Pope alive beyond the bounds of natural longevity—say for another hundred years—the Lord would demonstrate which is his true Church, and settle the hash of all the pretenders, including our good old Church of England. Of course we are not trying to dictate to the Almighty. We are merely throwing out a hint.

The *Christian World*, the principal organ of Nonconformist Christianity, is still protesting "against the State-endowment of sectarianism, whether in church or school," and asserts that "as our national education is reformed and developed there must be a gradual elimination of sectarianism." These are brave words; but inasmuch as the *Christian World* is still in favor of keeping the Christian religion in the State schools, they are words only. So long as Christianity is not the religious belief of *all* the people of this country, it must remain sectarian, and to advocate its retention in the schools is to advocate sectarianism. This is the simple logic of the situation. Secular education is the only just and equitable arrangement—not because it *is* secular education, but because it is the policy which will give justice to all, without inflicting injury on any.

At the coroner's inquest on the Peasenhall tragedy one of the witnesses deposed that he saw and heard the murdered girl, and the man who is under arrest for murdering her, together in a chapel one night. In the course of their conversation, which he overheard, reference was made to the girl's reading of the Bible, and to a certain text which was appropriate to what they were doing. What that text was did not appear in evidence, as a question relating to it was stopped by counsel; but it may be guessed that it was one of those orientalisms which make the Bible so unfit for general reading.

There is nothing new under the sun. At the exhibition of antiquities unearthed by Professor Flinders Petrie, on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund, there is a "Panama hat," beautifully made and in excellent condition. It dates from the time of the Ptolemies. We may add that this exhibition is now open at University College, Gower-street, London, W.C.

Mr. Balfour is supporting the Education Bill loyally and vigorously—that is, when he condescends to be vigorous. It is pretty clear, however, that he is simply doing the clergy what they think a good turn, and doing it only because they are such a tower of strength to the Tory party throughout England. In his heart of hearts he appears to be laughing at both Churchmen and Nonconformists in their anxiety to get the better of each other. Take the following passage from his reply to a Nonconformist deputation the other day: "He thought the old controversies about the existing formulas really represented to a large extent controversies which were dead, battlefields which had become only of historic interest, and that there were arising new religious problems due to the growth of science, criticism, and knowledge, which would require all the skill, all the learning, and all the charity of the churches adequately to combat." To borrow the title of Mr. Balfour's well-known book, it is the very *foundations of faith* that are now in danger. The questions between the Church and Dissent sink into insignificance by comparison.

A celibate clergy have certain advantages over a married clergy. They are regarded with greater awe by the laity, and the absence of domestic ties makes them the more devoted to the Church. This idea—which is not a very recondite one—occurred to Mr. W. G. Finch, of Orchardcroft, Battle, who communicated it to the Bishop of Ely. "If our pastors," he wrote, "were to realise the expediency of being unencumbered by the worldly cares and responsibilities inseparably attached to the married condition, they would be enabled to devote themselves with single-hearted zeal to the fulfilment of the duties of their sacred office in accordance with apostolic model—forsaking all to follow Christ." The Bishop's reply was canny. While admitting

that unmarried clergy might be able to live cheaper and work harder, he said it was "also obvious that there are some drawbacks to such a system, and many difficulties in carrying it into effect."

Some of these "drawbacks" and "difficulties" are sufficiently serious. Judging by history and human nature, it is pretty clear (for instance) that a celibate Black Army will require certain indulgences, just like a celibate Red Army. "You can keep priests from having wives," said a plain-spoken old nobleman to Henry VIII., "but can you keep wives from having priests?" Ay, there's the rub! Even an unmarried Church parson, on being recommended by his medical man to "take a wife," answered, "With pleasure, doctor; whose do you propose?" That's the sort of thing you have to reckon with. Honest men leave their homes to earn a living for their households, and in their absence a lot of demure-looking but dangerous clerical tomcats go prowling round. Then the Confessional gets set up, and every frail female—whether in act or intention—is placed at the mercy of these uncaped servants of the Lord.

"Thank God!" says "Nunquam" in the *Referre*. But he doesn't mean anything by it. It is only one of his stock exclamations. Mr. Blatchford believes in a God about as much as we do.

Vanini, condemned to be burnt alive as an Atheist, was led out to the place of execution, and on catching sight of the stake he exclaimed "My God!" "You admit there is a God, then?" said a bystander. "No," answered Vanini, "it is only a fashion of speech." "Thank God!" is only "Nunquam's" fashion of speech. It is not a very good one, nor has it the excuse of Vanini's.

A correspondent has sent us a cutting from the *Totnes Times*. It purports to be an extract from some gushing utterance on Christianity by "Hugh Black," who is probably a professional exhorter. In the course of his flattering observations on that religion, he says that "It solved the problems of the old world, and will solve our problems." Well, the prophecy is worthy of the history, and the history of the prophecy. We should like to know *what* problems of the old world were solved by Christianity. We are not greedy. A single instance will suffice. We should also like to know *when* Christianity is going to solve the problems of the modern world. Very magnificent promises have been made on its behalf. By what date may we expect one of them to be redeemed?

There is a very melancholy letter in the *Keighley News*. It is from the pen of Mr. H. C. Shackleton, who tells how his offer of a copy of the "Life" of the late Charles Bradlaugh was refused by the committee of the Steeton Mechanics Institute. This refusal will not affect the reputation of Charles Bradlaugh; it has already affected the reputation of the Steeton Mechanics Institute.

Mr. Seddon, the Premier of New Zealand, is rather an explosive gentleman. Sometimes he discourses battle, murder, and sudden death; at other times he attends religious meetings and roars like any sucking-dove. Down at St. Helens he went to the parish church and addressed the Men's Bible Class. Amongst other things, he told his hearers that our Empire was sound because we were a God-fearing people. He forgot to add that we eat New Zealand mutton. That ought to interest Mr. Seddon, and probably does interest him, a great deal more than our taste for religion.

Now that the King is out of danger—or rather out of immediate danger, as the doctors said—the newspapers are making very "previous" announcements of another attempt at the Coronation. "It is understood," one organ said on Monday, only two days after the favorable bulletin, "that the date of the Coronation will be made public in the course of a few days." There is also to be "a general day of thanksgiving for his Majesty's recovery," but the date of that function "has not yet been chosen." No doubt the Lord will receive due notice.

The medical and nursing attention given to King Edward is not available for all his subjects. Mr. Francis Samuel Thomas, aged seventy-four, in the service of the London County Council, was taken suddenly ill while walking with his daughter on Clapham Common. He was removed to Bolingbroke Hospital, where he died. At the coroner's inquest it was stated that the cause of death was an abscess around the vermiform appendix.

The newspapers say that this vermiform appendix is a mystery, but it is no more a mystery than any other rudimentary organ in the human system. It is simply a relic of an intestinal extension which flourishes in the ruminants. In

man this extension has been aborted down to very small dimensions. What remains of it is perfectly useless. It serves no purpose whatever, but it is a frequent cause of fatal mischief. "Providence" left off work too soon, like a builder who leaves a joist protruding into a fireplace, which causes the house to be burnt down.

"Providence" has been active (or inactive, according as you look at it) in America. Heavy rains have done such damage in the great grain belt that eight million bushels have been destroyed already, and further disaster is threatened. Not more than a quarter of the crop will possibly have a chance to mature in the North-West.

"Master Willie Powell, the Boy Preacher," as the advertisements call him, has revisited Cardiff after an absence sufficiently lengthy to allow strangers to settle in that town in numbers enough to form a new audience for this young aspirant to Holy (money) Orders. The absence was long enough for many inhabitants to have forgotten this little prodigy; but "Willie" has returned, as of old, after an interval of sufficient length to have turned him into something other than a preacher or a "boy." When this young gentleman first received public notice, some seven years ago, he looked a fairly old "boy"; but he has this week turned up again in the preaching line with the good old "boy" prefix to his name. It is really wonderful how a close crop, a clean shave, and knee breeches prolong youth; and isn't it marvelous how some people like to be humbugged?

The paralysed man, named Wilson W. Dunlap, who used to drive about Philadelphia and New York in a Gospel wagon, and whose monomania was the conversion of Jews to Christianity, has recently died. Publicly he was a Christian philanthropist; privately he was a money-lender, and made a fortune loaning money to employees on assignments of their salaries. He evaded the law against usury by compelling the borrower to renew the loan each month, for which he charged a four-dollar notary fee. Having got rich through this form of robbery, he bequeathed his estate of a half million to his sister, to be used for the spread of the "true knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Rev. W. C. Talmot, of Portsmouth, protests in the name of God against Sunday tramcars. When the reverend gentleman gets used to them he will wonder why he made such an ass of himself. He and his congregation will probably find the Sunday tramcars useful before very long.

Taking the opportunity of the King's illness, the Rev. W. E. Peters, of St. Savior's Church, Guildford, preached a sermon on "The Finger of a Forgotten God." We are glad to say there was nothing in it about that dirty old dust-of-Egypt miracle. The reverend gentleman was nothing more than foolish—which is a pardonable offence in one of his profession. He appeared to think (if we may use that word in such a connection) that King Edward was a sort of national scapegoat, bearing on his back (or his stomach) the sins of all the people of Great Britain. Even as far away as the Soudan offences were detected of which the King pays the penalty. "Missionary enterprise," the reverend gentleman said, "was officially prohibited within Khartoum. In that very city the memory of that magnificent and Christian officer, General Gordon, had been perpetuated by a college for education, but it was Christless." This is a hit, of course, at Lord Kitchener. It was he who asked for £100,000 to institute a Gordon College, and he who refused to allow any Christian proselytising within its walls. It is he, therefore, who should be punished for the "Christless" character of the Gordon College, and not poor King Edward, who had as much to do with it as the man in the moon.

The late King Humbert, of Italy, paid the Emperor Francis Joseph, of Austria, a visit in 1881, on the formation of the Triple Alliance. That Alliance still subsists, but the Emperor has not yet paid a return visit to Rome. He is afraid of offending the Pope.

When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war. So says the proverb. But when parson meets parson then comes the tug of marriage. So it was found by the Rev. Henry Holditch Thomas Cleife, rector of Harslington, near Yeovil, who has obtained a decree nisi against his wife in the Divorce Court, the correspondent being another man of God, the Rev. Arthur Bingham. Parson Bingham was a curate at Parson Cleife's, and seems to have made violent love to Mrs. Cleife in her husband's absence. A secret code of correspondence between the enamored curate and his lady-love was found in her jewel-box. Erotics and piety seem to have been curiously commingled.



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

To Correspondents.

**CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.**—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

**C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.**—July 13, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. 20, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. 27, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. August 3, m. and a., Victoria Park. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

**"REASON."**—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter; also for your efforts to extend the circulation of this journal. Our greatest difficulty lies in the bigotry or indifference of newsagents—wholesale and retail. If we received common justice at the hands of the trade our circulation would soon double or treble.

**A. WEBBER.**—See "Acid Drops." The writer quoted is not of much distinction; not even we believe in the religious world, which has its own standards.

**E. E. KITCHENER.**—We do not remember hearing of you as a Freethought worker before.

**TOM PACEY.**—Glad to hear you are so pleased to see Mr. Foote's pen in evidence again in the *Freethinker*. His health is so much improved that he is able to work with some pleasure, but it will be necessary for him to recuperate his energies for the heavy winter's work which undoubtedly awaits him.

**H. WALLER.**—Pleased to learn that the Ridley-road lecture-station is still being worked, and that Mr. Pack had so good and appreciative an audience on Sunday. We hope Mr. Cohen will have a fine meeting to-day (July 13).

**S. TYE.**—We have devoted a paragraph to the reverend gentleman's sermons. It is difficult to do more. Criticising him is too much like fighting a cloud.

**W. P. BALL.**—Many thanks for cuttings.

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—Progressive Thinker—Suffolk Chronicle—Two Worlds—Liberator—Truthseeker (New York)—New Age—New Century—Yorkshire Evening Post—Sydney Bulletin—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Crescent—Portsmouth Evening News—Blackburn Weekly Telegraph—Secular Thought—Keighley News—The Daily Dispatch—Advertisers' Review—Leicester Reasoner—Health Reporter—Blue Grass Blade—East Kent Times—Free Society—Lucifer.

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.

**SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:**—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

**MR. FOOTE** has ceased lecturing for a time, partly to give his throat a good rest with a view to restoring the quality of his voice, and partly to get rid of other relics of his late serious illness. What he really needs is a good long holiday, and he hopes to take it very shortly.

Just at present Mr. Foote is busy superintending changes in connection with the affairs of the Freethought Publishing Company. The Company's new premises are admirably adapted to business extensions, and the first of these is the setting up of a printing room, where the "copy" of the *Freethinker* will be put into type by its own compositors. Hitherto the Company's printing has been done out of doors. Henceforth it will be done inside. Other developments will be announced in due course.

The last number of Mr. Symes's *Liberator* to hand from Melbourne contains a reprint of Mr. Cohen's article on "Rhodes's Religion." Mr. Symes reports that the *Liberator*

was winding up the eighteenth year of its existence. Weekly issues to the number of 934 had appeared. The number should have been 936, but on two occasions the paper was not issued for want of money. Our gallant old friend and colleague doubts whether any man ever ran a paper for so long a time on so little money and with so little literary help from others.

Since the above paragraph was written we have received a later copy of the *Liberator*, in which Mr. Symes expresses a fervent hope that Mr. Foote had recovered his health and strength. "Ess Jay Bee's" verses on Dan Leno were also reproduced from our columns.

The Glasgow Branch has decided to form an orchestra, and invites friends of the movement who are musicians to offer their services. Instrumentalists are most needed. Names and addresses should be sent to John F. Turnbull, 168 Raeberry-street, who will supply further information.

The *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph* publishes some interviews with "oldest inhabitants." One of these is our veteran friend Mr. John Umpleby. He is eighty-seven years of age, but he has energy enough to protest against the "fuss" made over King Edward. Blackburn has grown from something like a village to a very large and important town in Mr. Umpleby's lifetime, and he thinks that fact a great deal more important than any "court news." Nothing is said in the interview about our veteran friend's Freethought. Had the interviewer taken him on that topic he would have got something racy for his paper. Mr. Umpleby has a pretty satirical wit of his own.

The Liverpool Branch holds its Annual Picnic to-day (July 13). There will be a drive to Burton Woods through twenty-four miles of the best Cheshire country, and on arrival at Burton a knife-and-fork tea will be provided. The brakes leave Woodside at 2 p.m., and the tickets are 3s. 6d. each. Friends who intend joining the party are requested to advise the Secretary as soon as possible. Address—Mr. Tom Pacey, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool.

The *Leicester Reasoner* for July affords a good example of sound toleration. On one and the same page Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, president of the Leicester Secular Society, and Mr. F. J. Gould, its secretary and organiser, express quite opposite views of a letter in the previous issue by Mr. J. A. Fallows; the said letter being a criticism of Secular organisation and methods. The general contents of this publication are up to the usual level of brightness and interest.

The Sunday evening concerts in Ramsgate Park are championed by the *East Kent Times* against the attacks and misrepresentations of the local Sabbatarians. Our contemporary suggests, however, that the concerts should begin at 8 instead of 7.30. We suppose this is intended to let the churches and chapels have the first pull on the public. But why should they have it? Why not have fair play all round?

Mr. Swinburne is to contribute a signed article to the *Quarterly Review* on Charles Dickens. The great novelist was a Christian of a sort; he had the "charity," perhaps, without the "belief." The great poet, who is also a great critic, is a thorough-going Freethinker. An article from his pen on such a subject should be fascinating.

Chang Chih Tung, the Viceroy of Hupeh and Hunan, is now the leader of the Reform Movement in China. We understand that he is a man of great intellect and enlightenment, and entirely free from superstition. He is founding a new University at Wu-Chang, which is to be presided over by Dr. W. A. P. Martin. This is one of the symptoms of a movement that is probably destined to affect very seriously the future of China. And it must be remembered that China is a nation that includes a quarter of all the world's inhabitants.

Mr. Labouchere often adds to the gaiety of the House of Commons. He did so the other day in supporting Mr. Channing's amendment to Clause IV. of the Education Bill. The following brief report of his speech is taken from the *Daily Telegraph*:—"Mr. Labouchere asserted that the State should confine itself to secular education, and had no right to give any religious instruction whatever. One of the greatest humbugs ever palmed upon Dissenters was what might be called the School Board religious teaching in this country. He was at Eton, and he received undenominational religious teaching there. Once a week the class went before a master, and a boy read a text from the Greek Testament. Immediately the master shuddered. 'What Greek!' he exclaimed. 'What would Thucydides have said under the circumstances?' (Laughter.) He did not know what Thucydides would have said; but that was all the religious instruction he got at Eton. (Renewed laughter.) It was quite equal to the undenominational teaching of the Board schools. Mr. Goddard, Mr. Balfour, and himself were really the only three logical men in the House. (Laughter.)"

Mr. Labouchere's reference to the Eton master's bad opinion of the Greek of the New Testament reminds us of Mr. Swinburne's reference to the authorised version of that part of the Scripture as being translated from canine Greek into divine English. It is generally admitted that "the penmen of the Holy Ghost" wrote almost the vilest Greek that is extant. And it is the opinion of some that their sense was on a par with their language.

### Early Christian Frauds.—V.

AFTER concocting a number of fabulous histories of Christ, and publishing them as works composed by apostles, some of the Christian forgers conceived the idea of drawing up a report of the trial of Jesus, such as they believed *might* have been written by Pilate to the reigning emperor. From the conception of the idea to the actual composition of the document was, as Lipsius says, "a mere step." This report appears to have been written before the appearance of the Gospel of Luke, for the pious forgers represent Pilate as transmitting it to the emperor *Claudius*. Had they had the least acquaintance with the Third Gospel, they would have learnt from it that all the events narrated in the public ministry of Christ were said to have taken place in "the reign of Tiberius Cæsar" (iii. 1). Pilate was governor of Judæa for ten years (A.D. 26-36) in the reign of *Tiberius*; *Claudius* reigned from A.D. 41 to 54.

In one of the forms of the *Acts of Pilate*, which, as we have seen, was in the hands both of Justin and the author of the First Epistle of Peter, we find incorporated a copy of this forged "Epistle of Pontius Pilate to the Emperor *Claudius*." This report commences:—

"Pontius Pilate to *Claudius* his king, greeting. It has lately happened, as I myself have also proved, that the Jews, through envy, have punished themselves and their posterity by a cruel condemnation. In short, when their fathers had a promise that their God would send them from heaven his Holy One, who should deservedly be called their king, and promised that he would send him by a virgin on earth; when, therefore, while I was procurator, he had come into Judæa, and when they saw him giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers, curing the paralytics, making demons flee from men, and even raising the dead, etc."

This precious epistle, in which Pilate is represented as a believer in Christ, and in which he is made to record his own condemnation, bears the evidence of its Christian origin in every line.

In another Christian forgery—the *Acts of Peter and Paul*—Peter is represented as saying to the emperor Nero: "But if thou wishest to know, O good Emperor, the things that have been done in Judæa concerning Christ, take the writings of Pontius Pilate sent to *Claudius*, and thus thou wilt know all." The emperor, we are informed, followed this excellent advice. "And Nero ordered them to be brought, and to be read in his presence, and they were to the following effect: 'Pontius Pilate to *Claudius*, greeting.'" [Then follows the forged Report—"It has lately happened, as I myself have proved, that the Jews, through envy," etc.]

As might be expected, this early Christian forgery is quoted and referred to by later Christian writers as a genuine document. Eusebius, for instance, says in his *Ecclesiastical History* (ii. 2): "Pontius Pilate transmitted to Tiberius an account of the circumstances concerning the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the report of which had already been spread throughout all Palestine. In this account he also intimated that he had ascertained other miracles respecting him, and that, having now risen from the dead, he was believed to be a god by the great mass of the people," etc.

Eusebius also refers to the work of an earlier writer, Tertullian, who, having read the Gospel of Luke, named Tiberius as the emperor to whom Pilate's report was sent. This writer says (Apol. v.): "Tiberius, accordingly, in whose days the Christian name made its entry into the world, having himself received intelligence from Palestine of events which had clearly shown the truth of Christ's divinity, brought the matter before the senate," etc. The emperor, Tertullian states, desired to have Christ recognised as a god; but the senate, having no knowledge of that personage, rejected the proposition.

Referring to the darkness which was said to have appeared at the Crucifixion, the same writer says (Apol. xxi.): "Those who were not aware that this had been predicted of Christ, no doubt thought it an eclipse. *You yourselves have the account of the world-portent still in your archives*. . . . All these things Pilate did to Christ, and now, in fact, a Christian in his own convictions, he sent word of him to the reigning sovereign, who was at the time Tiberius."

In one of the versions of the forged Report of Pilate this "world-portent" is thus described:—

"And at the time that he was crucified there was darkness over all the world, the sun being darkened at mid-day, and the stars appearing; but in them there appeared no lustre; and the moon, as if turned into blood, failed in her light. . . . and they saw below them a chasm of the earth, with the roar of the thunders that fall upon it. And in that terror dead men were seen that had risen. . . . And there were very many *whom I also saw* appearing in the body. . . . majestic men appeared in glorious robes, an innumerable multitude, whose voice was heard as that of a very great thunder, crying out, Jesus that was crucified is risen. . . . And many of the Jews died, swallowed up in the chasm, so that on the following day most of those who had been against Jesus could not be found."

This is "the account" which Tertullian says was written by Pilate to the emperor, and was still preserved in the Roman archives. Its statements prove that there was no limit to the credulity of the early Christians. But, assuming that an official report of the trial of Jesus had really been sent to Tiberius by Pilate, it is perfectly certain that neither Tertullian nor any other Christian of his day could have had access to it. There cannot be the smallest doubt that the document to which this writer referred was one which he had seen and read, and which was then in circulation amongst the Christians.

Another notable Christian fraud is the forgery of an epistle from Pliny the Younger, Proconsul of Bithynia, to Trajan, with that Emperor's reply (about A.D. 112).

Now, it is evident that, were these two letters genuine, their contents could not possibly have been known to the members of a persecuted sect, as that of the Christians is stated to have been. Yet we have evidence that the full text of both was known to Tertullian (A.D. 198), and, later on, to Eusebius and to Jerome. Eusebius, in his *History* (iii. 33), quotes Tertullian as saying:—

"For Plinius Secundus, who was the governor of the province, having condemned certain Christians and deprived them of their dignity, was confounded by the great number, and in doubt what course he should pursue. He communicated, therefore, the fact to Trajan, the Emperor, saying that, with the exception of their not being willing to sacrifice, he found nothing criminal in them. He stated, also, this: That the Christians arose with the sun, and sang a hymn to Christ as to a god; and that, for the purpose of maintaining their discipline, they prohibited adultery, murder, over-reaching, fraud, and all such crimes. To this Trajan wrote in reply, that the Christians should not be sought after, but when they presented themselves they should be punished" (Apol. ii.).

Those who consider the epistle genuine should be asked to explain how Tertullian became acquainted with the contents of two private letters—one in the hands of the Emperor Trajan, the other in the pocket of the governor of Bithynia. Or, even supposing that Trajan returned Pliny's epistle with his rescript, how did the Christians manage to get copies? But, setting aside ridiculous speculations, there cannot be a doubt as to the source. As in the case of the Report of Pilate to Tiberius, Tertullian derived his information from a forged document in circulation among the Christians of his time.

The next Christian fraud deserving of notice is likewise a letter and a reply; but, in this case, one of the forged documents is represented as written by Jesus.

Eusebius tells us (*Ecclesiastical History*, i. 13) that the report of Christ's "wonder-working power" having been "proclaimed abroad among all men," a certain king, named Abgarus, "who reigned over the nations beyond the Euphrates," and who was "wasting away with a disease," sent one of his servants, named Ananias, with a letter to Jesus, asking that great thaumaturgus to come and heal him. The letter commences: "Abgarus, Prince of Edessa, sends greeting to Jesus, the excellent Savior." The writer then goes on to say that, from the reports which had reached him of the wonders wrought

by Christ, he had arrived at the conclusion that that personage was "either God himself come down from heaven, or the Son of God," etc. To this letter Jesus wrote the following reply, which he despatched by the bearer:—

"Blessed art thou, O Abgarus, who, without seeing, hast believed in me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not believe, and that they who have not seen me shall believe and live. But, in regard to what thou hast written, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that I should fulfil all things here, for which I have been sent. And after this fulfilment, thus to be received again by Him that sent me. And, after I have been received up, I will send to thee one of my disciples that he may heal thy affliction, and give life to thee and to those that are with thee."

It is further stated that, after Christ's ascension, Thaddeus was sent by the apostle Thomas to Edessa, where he healed the King and everyone who suffered from disease or affliction, and by these wonderful cures was the means of converting the whole kingdom to Christianity.

These two letters, Eusebius tells us, were "taken from the public records of the city of Edessa," where they had been preserved from the time of Abgarus to his day. "There is nothing," says this historian, "like hearing the epistles themselves, taken by us from the archives, and their style, as they have been literally translated by us from the Syriac."

These epistles, if we could believe Eusebius, are genuine historical documents. They are, at any rate, supported by stronger and more direct evidence than the Gospel narratives. The latter are merely stories recorded by second-century editors without any indication of the source whence they were derived. We know no more who concocted the first primitive Gospel (which is often spoken of as the Common Tradition) than we know who invented the stories in the Arabian Nights.

As regards the letter of Jesus to Abgarus, one matter is beyond question: it enunciates the true Christian doctrine of blind, unreasoning faith. Belief without evidence is commended—"Blessed are they who, without seeing, have believed." Such credulity was considered by the early Christians meritorious. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, writing to his friend Autolycus, says (i. 13):—

"Then as to your denying that the dead are raised—for you say, 'Show me even one who has been raised from the dead, that, seeing, I may believe'—First, what great thing is it, if you believe, when you have seen the thing done?"

Just so; there could be no credit in giving credence merely to the testimony of the senses. The Christians deserving of the highest commendation were those who, like Tertullian, believed a thing to be "absolutely true" because experience and reason proved it to be "manifestly impossible." ABRACADABRA.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held on Thursday, July 3; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beach, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, T. How, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, and the Secretary. The cash statement was presented and adopted. The Benevolent Fund Committee of last year were re-elected, with the addition of Mr. W. Leat. Messrs. Samuels and Leat were elected to audit the monthly accounts.

The resolution re the Education Bill, passed at the Conference, was discussed, and Mr. Cohen was asked, with the assistance of the President, to draw up a circular for distribution.

Eight new members were admitted: To the parent Society, 2; West Ham Branch, 3; Finsbury, 1; Birmingham, 2.

After hearing a final report from members of the Branch, it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. Roger, seconded by Mr. Gorniot, that the West London Branch, as at present constituted, be dissolved, and a new one formed.

Mr. Schaller called attention to a statement affecting the whole of the Executive, which had appeared in a recent number of the *Freethinker*, in a letter from Mr. Charles Watts. After some discussion, in which the majority of those present took part, Mr. Moss moved and Mr. Heaford seconded: "That this Executive give notice to Mr. Watts to be present at a special meeting, at a date suitable to himself, to explain paragraph 5 of his letter to the *Freethinker* of June 22, brought to the notice of the Executive by Mr. Schaller." This being carried unanimously, the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

### Free-Will and Necessity.

"Others apart sat on a hill retired,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;  
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

—MILTON.

WHATEVER Freethinker ventures to express views such as this paper sets forth is sure to meet with sneers and ridicule from the orthodox, who will also, most assuredly, try to turn his principles against himself. What then? Truth is truth, and its weakest friend ought never to feel ashamed of it. Besides, Christians of every denomination are shut up, by the logic of their position, to believe that absolute necessity prevails throughout the physical and moral world. The Calvinist avows this belief in his creed, though he endeavors to escape its logical conclusions when contending with the Arminian. There can be no doubt that Calvinists are necessitarians; for, if all things are foreseen and foreordained, then nothing could, nothing ever can, happen otherwise than it does. If it is foreseen, it must happen; if it does not happen, it was not foreseen. But the Arminian, or freewiller, though on one point more logical than the Calvinist, is equally at sea upon another point not less vital. For an Almighty God must have all power; his creatures are mere marionettes, engines made and worked by the Creator, merely exhibiting his power in the semblance of personal and spontaneous actions. God's power is the *only* power, if he is all-mighty; and, therefore, all that is done is done by himself. This view—and it cannot be controverted without repudiating Christianity—tells with equal force against Calvinist and Arminian, as does also the foreknowledge of God. Given a being of infinite knowledge, he knows everything, every act, every motion from eternity to eternity, as the pulpits phrase it; and that which he foresees must, in its own time and place, occur. Prophecy lands those who believe in it on the same necessitarian shore; for the God who predicts knows all the circumstances beforehand, and his own power, physical and moral, is the only force concerned in the event.

I mention these points just to ward off unjust blows and to silence dishonest or unfair criticism; to show that, whoever has the right to complain of my views, the Christians have no such right, either on physical or moral grounds.

As this paper follows up principles advanced in two former articles—viz., "Personal Identity" and "Ethics and Personal Identity," the reader is asked not to complain too severely if he finds here a repetition of some ideas previously expressed. The nature of the case renders such repetition unavoidable, though I hope it has been kept fairly within bounds.

Most people, whatever their creed, practically assume that the human will is free. Even fatalists, Calvinists, and necessitarians generally praise and blame, reward and punish, human actions, just as if people could do as they pleased, and were absolutely free in their desires and deeds. There may be less inconsistency and absurdity in that than at first sight seems possible. Truth does not show itself all at once; and popular conceptions are generally incorrect, especially those relating to moral questions. It is not my intention to defend any absurdity which I recognise; nor can I reasonably hope for perfect success where great and wise men have so seriously and repeatedly missed their way. Still, I am of opinion that necessity constitutes no bar to morality, and that people may be as rationally rewarded or punished under its reign as under that of free-will. Indeed, I am not sure that necessity may not be consistent with freedom, though many would scout the supposition as insane. Be it so. Necessity certainly does not destroy or prevent the will; does it destroy or prevent its freedom? A careful and honest investigation may enable us to return, at least, a dispassionate answer, if not an adequate one.

What is necessity? The word is French (*nécessité*), derived from the Latin (*necessitas*), unavoidableness, inevitableness, fate, destiny. Dr. Ogilvie thus defines the English word: "That which cannot be put off..... that which must be, and cannot be otherwise; or the cause of that which cannot be otherwise; irresistible power; compulsive force, physical or moral." We need

a fuller explanation of the term; and the correctness or incorrectness of our explanation must depend upon the views we hold respecting nature or the universe. If we regard all material things and forces as creatures of an infinite God, then necessity resolves itself into nothing but the divine will, or into God himself. With this as our starting point, the universe is necessary—that is, could not have been otherwise, but must be precisely thus, only because God willed and made it such. If we consider the universe as consisting of indefinite quantities of matter and force (whatever these names mean), which are inseparable, and have always existed, and have always acted and reacted as at present, then we must conclude that the phenomena of nature could not have been otherwise than they are, solely because their eternal elements are just what they are. To be sure, when the subject is fully examined, the Theistic and Pantheistic position equally lose themselves in the same conclusion; for an eternal God must be a necessary being equally with an eternal atom, and could not have been in any particular different from what he is. And thus we find that philosophy, whether it travels by the theological or the scientific route, arrives ultimately at the same goal, the goal of absolute necessity, a necessity co-extensive with the universe itself, that never for one moment, in any spot, relaxes its reign.

Matter and force are eternal. What their real nature may be I know not. They are first principles; and first principles admit of no possible explanation. Though we cannot explain their nature, though both matter and force may possibly be one thing, it seems impossible to doubt that chemistry and physics have demonstrated that neither matter nor force can be created or destroyed; and the conclusion seems inevitable that that which cannot be created cannot be destroyed, cannot be increased or diminished in quantity, must be eternal, and, as to its elements or primal nature, unalterable. If this be not true, then we seem still to have no real science or philosophy. Groups of facts, united by empiric bonds or extemporised principles, do not constitute a science. The groups of facts are no doubt united by some *natural* principle; when we are sure we have found that, we have a science. If matter and force be not eternal and unalterable in their qualities, then philosophy has no foundation, and science is, at best, but a record of observation and experience.

But if matter and force are eternal, so must their qualities be. For a thing cannot exist, would not be the thing it is, unless its qualities were present; and there seems no occasion yet for the inquiry as to whether matter or force may ever have changed in their qualities. If matter and force and all their qualities be eternal and unchangeable, their every phenomenon must be necessary, and could not have been otherwise. The phenomenon is, in fact, no more than a particular exhibition of those two: it has no separate, no independent existence; it comes and goes, but its elements remain essentially the same, no matter what appearances they may from time to time assume.

As far as the physical world is concerned, the doctrine of necessity seems so clearly established that even religious people no longer resist it. The time is practically gone by when God "held the winds in his fist and the waters in the hollow of his hand"; when "clouds arose and tempests blew by order from his throne." The departments of physical nature were formerly under the absolute control of supernatural powers and agents; now no part is thus controlled. The lightning is no longer left in the hands of any deity, for the very clergy run up lightning-rods to protect God's own temples from the stroke of his own thunderbolt. We need no better proof that theology is dying, that science and art are supplanting it, that necessity is now conceded to those departments of nature which in former days were specially subservient to the whims or exigencies of Deity. For even the popular mind finds order—that is, necessity—in precisely those fields where divine caprice held its most unlimited sway. Men have now lost the power to pray for or against astronomical events. Who, with an almanack before him, could entreat his heavenly father not to send an eclipse or a conjunction of planets? Who could pray against the return of a periodic comet, or even invoke the aid of Deity against the influence of an unexpected one? Can the mathematician pray about his figures

and numbers; the chemist about his weights and measures, his mixtures, elements, and compounds; the musician about his notes; the builder about his materials? The truth has been mastered that no power can make  $2 \times 2 = 5$ , nor cause a triangle and a circle to coincide; that no power can produce water out of anything else than oxygen and hydrogen; that no brick or stone can be converted into wood; that the notes of the diatonic scale cannot change their essential qualities. Even the weather and disease have almost escaped from the grasp of the priesthood, and their total emancipation cannot be long delayed.

JOSEPH SYMES.

(To be concluded.)

## "Come Unto Me!"

"AND, coming, be at rest!" But does it turn out so? In the pursuit of comfort from an imaginary personage, do we not find ourselves wholly deluded? Is the promise fulfilled? Do the cares, the woes, the trials, the errors of life drop away from us and disappear as we fancy ourselves reposing on a portion of a certain very capacious "bosom," which is said to offer unlimited shelter and relief to millions?

Or, rather, is not all this supposititious relief and comfort a delusive fiction? Is it not a fancy of hope in the anxious heart, trusting to alluring words, but never finding them verified? Again, is not all this false talk about the "washing away of sins" through the "atoning efficacy" of a certain "precious blood" (now much less vaunted than formerly, thanks to Buddhism and enlightenment), is it not most delusive? How can we evade our personal responsibility for actions done by trusting to an unreal, metaphorical application of a fictitious thing? And in all our worries, sorrows, anxieties, are we helped one bit by saying, "I lay my sins on Jesus," or by "looking off" unto that certain person, now extinct all these centuries as an individual entity, and laying everything on him? It is a mean way of evading personal responsibility. And yet so many thousands—aye, millions—are deceived into thinking that if they can only establish some mystical, spiritual, personal relation with this fictitious being, or, as they say, lay hold on his "merits," they will be perfectly secure, entirely happy, and absolutely at rest.

We do not quarrel with any who voluntarily cherish this fiction if it satisfies them, nor do we seek to deprive them of any comfort they may derive from it, imaginary and absolutely unreal as it is. Many love a delusion, and would not be convinced of its fallacy if they could. "You can't tell me," said a country woman to a friend, "that there critter ain't alive!" pointing to the locomotive. It was "alive" to her.

But others are not misled. Others find these fables of faith pure fictions, baseless imaginations, beguiling falsehoods. Repugnant to reason and denied by fact, they cast them aside with other charms, incantations, superstitions, and supernatural dependence. They have learnt that, if you are to come unto *anyone* to give you rest, it must be to Humanity itself. Human hands alone can help you; human words and acts alone can bless you; human deeds alone can be of service to you. Want, necessity, or sorrow receives no aid from the invisible and unreal. The visionary, the enthusiast, the devotee, may fancy a supernatural refuge and aid; enthusiasms and ecstasies may aver some demonstration to the excited imagination. But it is intangible. The devotee realises at last that these signs are the effect of his religious excitement—perhaps aroused and fed by others. On reflection, he can see that he has been the dupe of emotion—over-persuaded to believe in a falsehood.

"Celestial communion" is said to follow after earnest prayer, whereby a supernatural telepathy is supposed to be established between the divine and the human, as it were. Yet it is all on one side. He who prays does not know if his prayers are heard; he fancies that they may be, and often enthuses himself into a state which he regards as realisation. But it is as thin and more intangible than moonshine.

Self-reliant, self-poised, man needs no supernatural voice, nor any echo from the archaic past, calling

"Come unto Me!" Let humanity be the one beautiful ideal, the one compassionate figure, that with loving, outstretched arms welcomes all who are seeking for true rest. It is the tender, gentle, loving father or mother who alone can console the child; it is the affectionate friend who alone can comfort his beloved but troubled comrade or companion; it is society which alone can compensate for wrongs, or repair injustice, or honor worth, or grant "forgiveness of sins." The voice of *human love* in temple, shrine, mart, or dwelling, and oftenest in the home, in life's adversities, perplexities, and griefs—it is this, and this only, that can answer our aspirations and our needs. This alone can truly say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest!" Seek in your own heart, and among those who love you, for "the peace which passeth all understanding."

GERALD GREY.

Book Chat.

In the current number of the *Fortnightly Review* Mr. W. H. Mallock continues his series of articles on "Science and Religion at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century," and subjects Father Gerard and his book, *Evolutionary Philosophy and Common Sense*, to a severe but well-deserved castigation. There is not much in Mr. Mallock's criticism that will be novel to students of the question; its interest lies chiefly in the fact that the critic is himself a Roman Catholic, but who is shrewd enough to see, and honest enough to say, how weak religious defences are. Mr. Mallock shows pretty conclusively that Father Gerard's criticism is based partly on a misrepresentation and partly on a misunderstanding of the doctrine of evolution. What he does is "not to demolish any error or any doctrine of the Darwinians, but either passionately to uphold some truth which they themselves assert, or to tilt at some crude piece of nonsense which is not asserted by anybody."

To the last class belongs such a statement as that "the whole scientific world has now abandoned, tacitly or openly, all that was essential to Darwinism." To which Mr. Mallock makes the obvious reply that such a statement is wholly untrue. What he does mean is that the scientific world ought to abandon it; but, unfortunately for Father Gerard, the day has passed when scientific workers took their marching orders from the Church of which he is a member. And, as Father Gerard admits that "the history of life on the earth has been a history of evolution—that is to say, the scheme of vegetable and animal life, as we know it, has been gradually unfolded in a progression of types from lower to higher, the same general lines of structure being elaborated to greater and greater perfection," it is evident, added to his admission that *inorganic evolution* is a demonstrated fact, that he has admitted substantially all that the evolutionist requires.

For his own part, Mr. Mallock asserts: "That all living things have been developed by a natural process from a common primitive origin is a fact attested by so overwhelming a mass of evidence that our belief in it is untouched by the incompleteness of our present knowledge of its details."

Dealing with the question of the character of deity as inferred from natural phenomena, Mr. Mallock raises a much-needed protest against selecting one class of facts and ignoring all others. The evils and imperfections in nature are as patent as the more attractive and the more beautiful aspects of phenomena. "Who," he asks, "has been able to discover in the history of the world, as a whole, any consistent scheme of just and benevolent government, by which individuals invariably receive their deserts, and are placed in the circumstances most favorable to their highest moral development? What man in his senses will maintain that such an event as the earthquake of Lisbon, if it were possible to impute it to a king and to regard it as evidence of his character, would fail to show that his character had elements in it of the idiot or the blackguard?.....If we are simply and honestly inferring (God's) character from the facts, and if some of these facts suggest, as they no doubt do, that he is great, good, all-wise, all-benevolent, and so forth, other and more numerous facts suggest, with equal force, that he is blundering, capricious, cruel, and, in spite of his power, contemptible; and the former facts, instead of diminishing the damning force of the latter, do but add to it; for if the former prove that God, when he chooses, can be so clever and so kind, the stupidity, the cruelty, and the carelessness which are concurrently proved against him by the latter prove him to be doubly bad, because he is capable of being so much better."

Mr. Mallock's conclusion is that science, "in the principles from which it starts and in the conclusion to which it leads, is essentially non-religious. It not only fails to support

the essential doctrines of religion, but, as is every day becoming more apparent, it excludes them." A perfectly sane conclusion, only one wonders what room there is for the writer's own Theism after these admissions.

It has been often pointed out in these columns that Christian apologists, in attributing the downfall of old Rome to the prevailing institution of slavery, were inventing a cause in order to cover the fatal influence of their own creed on ancient civilisation. Mr. J. C. Tarver, in his just-published *Tiberius the Tyrant*, indirectly supports this view by the following remarks upon the question:—"The institution of slavery did not demoralise the ancients in the same way that negro slavery is said to have demoralised the Americans, or colored slavery in general to demoralise white men; it was a totally different institution. In this, as in all other details of ancient history, the memory of the bad, the sensational, the exceptional, is preserved; the normal conditions are forgotten; and, as it is much easier to declaim than to inquire, the essential but unobtrusive features of any particular institution escape notice. On the whole, the action of slavery in ancient times to civilisation was beneficial to civilisation, and the essential dismemberment of the Empire was not due chiefly to the existence of slavery. The races who broke up the Empire themselves recognised slavery, and it was long before agricultural slavery disappeared from England."

*Apropos* of this question it may interest some of our readers to learn that some forty years ago George Henry Lewes contributed an article to the *Cornhill Magazine* in which he attempted to show upon what little evidence—practically none at all—the stories of the Emperor Nero's cruelties and infamies rest. He took the four chief crimes with which Nero was charged—namely, the murder of Britannicus, of his mother, of his wife, and of the burning of Rome, and showed that the evidence was generally untrustworthy, and sometimes "even childish in its absurdity." No contemporary witness was found for any of these crimes, nor did either Seneca or Burrhus, even when condemned to death, retort with any charges against Nero. The sole witnesses for the stories are Tacitus, who was six years old when Nero died, and who has by very recent writers been much mauled as to his general trustworthiness; Suetonius, always a collector of gossip, who wrote forty years after the death of the Emperor; and Dion Cassius, who lived some century and a-half later. Not very reliable witnesses upon which to rest a case.

Nor are the "facts" cited by these writers in confirmation of their stories beyond question. Britannicus died suddenly. This is unquestionable, but, as he was epileptic, the cause seems near at hand. The story that he drank a glass of poisoned wine and dropped down dead immediately is so far unbelievable that the poisons that operate in so few seconds were not, so far as we are aware, known to the ancients. Tacitus does relate a number of other details, but their very presence in the pages of a writer who could have had no first-hand knowledge is in itself an element of suspicion. The stories of the murder of Nero's wife and mother are equally hazy and suspicious, while the story of their having protected themselves by taking antidotes is ridiculous to all who know ancient science and the nature of poisons.

As to the burning of Rome, Lewes shows that Nero was absent from Rome when the fire occurred, that he had previously taken elaborate precautions in Rome to protect the people from the ravages of fire, and at his own expense. He also cites many other actions which were of a kind hardly to be expected of one of the character of Nero as he is usually depicted. It is also curious, as Lewes points out, that the people of Rome should have quietly submitted to having their goods and houses thus destroyed, and that not one of his contemporaries should have charged Nero with the crimes, or have made the charges immediately after his death. Lewes' view, if sound, disturbs a great many time-honoured beliefs; and he was a careful reasoner, and a good judge of evidence.

The author of *Helen's Babies* tells the following curious story of a passage in one of Ruskin's works:—"I worked for the Harpers in my youth, learning with them the printing business. Well, one day they gave me the manuscript of a book of Ruskin's to set up. It was *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, or *The Stones of Venice*, I think. At any rate, it contained a long passage in praise of the work done in the world by the great artists—by the poets, the sculptors, the musicians, the architects, the painters, and so on—and I, for mischief, changed one word in this passage. I substituted for 'painters,' 'printers.' Of course, I thought the proof-reader would catch the error; my idea was that we should all have a little laugh at Ruskin's eulogy of the printer along with such fine fellows as the musician and the poet, and that then the types should be set right again. But somehow my wilful blunder missed the proof-reader's eye, and in that and every following edition for many years it appeared. Hence, thousands of Americans have admired the perception and the originality of Ruskin in praising so highly the work of the humble printer, thanks to me."

Here are one or two good stories concerning Mark Twain that have recently crossed the Atlantic. His reply to a request for an autograph was: "Mark Twain replies by typewritten letters to requests for his autograph." A New York paper prints a part of one such reply: "To ask a doctor or builder or sculptor for his autograph would be in no way rude. To ask one of these for a specimen of his work, however, is quite another thing, and the request might be justifiably refused. It would never be fair to ask a doctor for one of his corpses to remember him by."

\* \* \*

His method of approaching his prospective father-in-law on an important question was equally characteristic. "I say, Mr. —," he drawled out, "have you noticed anything particular between your daughter and myself?" "No," was the reply. "Well," said Mark, "you will very soon, if you keep your eyes open." After the marriage his father-in-law presented him with a share in a paper of which he was the proprietor, and also a house. On receiving the deeds of the latter, the giver was quietly informed that he could visit them any time he liked, and stay over night.

## 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.): Closed during July and August.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.). Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, F. A. Davies.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N.S.S.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies; 6.30, E. Pack.

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

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

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Family"; 6.15, Mr. Heaford, "Secularism."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. Heaford.

### COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (opposite Bradlaugh Institute): H. Percy Ward—3, "Bible Lies"; 7, "Was J. C. a Wise Teacher?" July 14, at 8, "Malthusianism." July 17, at 8, "Why I Reject Christianity."

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

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 7, Mr. G. Berrisford.

### Lecturer's Engagements.

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