

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

*On parent's knees, a naked new-born child,  
Weeping thou sat'st whilst all around thee smiled;  
So live that, sinking in thy last long sleep,  
Thou then may'st smile while all around thee weep.*

—FROM THE CHINESE.

## The King and God.

THE great Coronation farce is drawing to a close. Soon after this article meets the readers' eyes the curtain will be rung down, the performers will be disrobing, and the spectators will be streaming home. What the performers think of the spectators, and what the spectators think of the performers, will not appear in the newspapers. The conventional platitudes and unctuosities will be printed. Nobody will talk sense or truth. It will be all fireworks and "God save the King."

One public figure will be out of the last act of the farce. Lord Kitchener has stolen off quietly to India. Were real kings wanted, instead of sham kings—strong, able men, instead of hereditary nothings—he would be the most eligible person in Great Britain. What a pity he did not go West instead of East! One who said little, and every word to the point; one with a profound knowledge of affairs, and a natural gift for dealing with his fellow-men; one with a sure eye for facts, and an immense capacity for work; one without a touch of vanity, and by common consent as honest as the daylight; this is almost the ideal man to send over to Ireland, not to override the people's wishes, but to find (with them) the practical way out of the trouble of centuries.

But to return to our sheep—as the French say. On Saturday—after we go to press, though before our date of publication—the King and Queen will drive into the City and home again by way of South London. Those who wish to bask in the sunshine of the royal countenance will enjoy their opportunity. They will find it cheap this time. Seats can now be had for the price of an old song. The first fine careless rapture is gone. It is impossible to bring back the loyal ecstasy of June. The psychological moment went by, and the psychological moment never returns.

On Sunday the King will take another drive. Accompanied by the Queen and other members of the Royal Family (capitals, please), he will attend a Thanksgiving Service (more capitals, please) at St. Paul's Cathedral. There is to be a "small procession," but nothing very "loud." For did not "Providence" humble the King's or the nation's pride in June? And is it safe to offer another provocation? His Majesty, however, will be met at the west door, at the top of the great flight of steps, by the Bishop, the Dean, and the Canons Residentiary; a procession will then be formed with the Lord Mayor, bearing the pearl sword, immediately preceding the King and Queen; and the whole troupe will appear before the Lord in a highly distinguished and effective manner.

The two Psalms selected for the service are the thirtieth and the hundred and eighth. The former opens as follows:—

"I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up,  
and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord,

my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.  
O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:  
thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to  
the pit.

We presume this will be regarded as the King's address to Jehovah. Certainly he has been spared from the "grave" and the "pit," which mean precisely the same thing. In other words, he has had his trip to heaven postponed. He would rather not take it while the royal yacht holds out for better excursions. He has a good taste in personal enjoyment. "If you want a good thing keep near me," might be his motto. But he is obliged to adopt something more "respectable." So absurd is the divinity that doth hedge a King.

It must be admitted that the Lord has let a good many go down into the pit since he reprieved King Edward. Some of them, too, were of much more importance to the world. Zola, for instance—a great writer and a noble man—might have been saved from that absurd death by suffocation, and allowed to complete the work of his genius. Nor should humbler instances be overlooked. How many a breadwinner's life has been cut short disastrously since the month of June. How many widows and orphans have been cast amongst the wreckage of society. Why, O why, should the Lord be careful of kings and careless of poor working men? We thought he was no respecter of persons. Yes, that is the text; and the flunkey Thanksgiving Service is the commentary.

The Bishop of London is to be the preacher at this Thanksgiving Service. He was done—by "Providence"—out of the five minutes that he was to have had for a sermon at the Coronation. But now he is to have his revenge. "Providence" will have to put up with it, and the King will have to listen. It is to be presumed, however, that Dr. Ingram is courtier enough to "cut it short." God will think twice, a French lady said, before he damns a gentleman of quality; and the Bishop of London will think twice before he inflicts a long sermon upon his King.

We read of provision to be made at St. Paul's Cathedral for all sorts of persons, including pressmen, who are all sorts in themselves. But we see nothing about provision for the King's doctors. It was they, and not the ghost behind the curtain, who kept him out of the "pit." Everybody with a grain of common sense knows that if it had not been for their skill and attention, backed up by the finest nursing and other adjuncts that could be had for love or money, all the prayers in the world would never have saved King Edward from becoming a corpse. An operation was absolutely necessary, and that particular operation has only been practised for a few years. Not so long ago, even the doctors and the parsons together could not have saved the King's life. And prayer was just as efficacious then as it is now. It is science that has improved.

Probably the King himself knows why he is still alive. But his position is an awkward one. He must satisfy the clergy or make them his implacable enemies. The performance at St. Paul's Cathedral must therefore be gone through. When it is over we dare say no one will be happier than himself. "That's ended, anyhow; let's have a drink." We guess he will say something like that at the finish.

G. W. FOOTE.



### Catastrophes and the Moral Order.

IN the last issue of the *Freethinker* I called the readers' attention to Professor Lodge's noteworthy article on "Science and Faith," contained in the first number of the *Hibbert Journal*. The same number also contains a symposium, consisting of three articles, on "Catastrophes and the Moral Order," by Professor G. H. Howison, of the University of California; Rev. R. A. Armstrong, of Liverpool, and the Rev. R. F. Horton, of London. In a foreword to the public the editors express the policy of the *Journal* to be that of providing an open platform for the discussion of religious beliefs and opinions. The *Journal*, we are informed, is to "exhibit the clash of contrary opinions. No attempt will here be made to select the views of concordant minds. Rather will controversy be welcomed, our belief being that the encounter of opposites kindles the spark of truth."

So far the program *sounds* well; only one would have been more impressed by it had the editors selected a number of men who represented radically opposing views to discuss the question. I do not know what sort of a religionist Professor Howison would call himself, but he is certainly a Theist. Mr. Armstrong is a Unitarian, and Mr. Horton a peculiarly rabid evangelical Christian—one who distinguished himself a little while since by suggesting that anyone who did not believe in immortality ought to be expelled human society. So that, evidently, the writers were selected with some sort of an eye to their opinions; and the talk about the "clash of contrary opinions" does not mean much after all. The discussion is to be limited, apparently, to such as believe in the fundamentals of religions. Those who do not may "clash" elsewhere than in the pages of the *Hibbert Journal*. There the fight is to be conducted with dummy guns and tin swords, lest some of the combatants should be injured in the contest.

Now, a real and thorough discussion of this question would be of considerable interest, and of no little educative promise; for it lies at the root of much of the anti-Theistic belief that now exists. Many people who would pass unnoticed the purely intellectual difficulties surrounding Theistic beliefs are pulled up sharply by a fact or a phenomenon that jars on their moral sense. The sight of good men suffering unjustly, the overwhelming of saint and sinner alike in some natural catastrophe, or the sight of children born into the world suffering from some form of hereditary disease, is calculated to make the otherwise thoughtless pause, and ask, How is it possible to reconcile these things, not with the existence of a God, but with the existence of a God whose character is worthy of admiration or of worship?

And the difficulty is one that increases with human development. Primitive religions hardly knew the problem. God was in the nature of an irresponsible despot—if he dealt well with man, so much the better; but if he did not, man had no more right to complain than he had to revolt against the orders of his chief. What the gods willed was what man ought to do and be; and, although man's conception of God's will was always modified by the operation of natural selection, it was an unconscious, not a conscious, modification. St. Paul's declaration that the potter makes one vessel to honor and another to dishonor, and that we are only as clay in the hands of the potter, gives us the primitive conception with tolerable fidelity. It is only at a very much later stage of development that people begin to feel that, after all, if the potter wanted his pots better than they actually are, he should have made them better; and that to first of all make them, and then damn them for being as he left them, is to show both bad workmanship and bad temper. Anyhow, a potter is not justified in endowing his pots with nerves, and then racking them with pain as a method of exhibiting his power.

The three writers I have named had been given as a text for their articles the eruptions in the West Indies in May last—a disaster which, besides crushing the lives out of thousands of people, in all probability crushed God out of the minds of thousands of others. Professor Howison, who leads off the discussion, rightly points out that to Atheism, Naturalism, or Materialism, there is no enigma of evil to solve. Evil and good face the Atheist as conditions of the universe in relation to human or animal organisations. They have no existence apart from this. In itself an earthquake is no more evil than a summer shower; the deadly coal gas no more evil than the perfume of a rose. These and similar things only become good or evil when we bring a sentient being on the scene, capable of being made better or worse by their presence. But nature itself is neither moral nor immoral; it is profoundly *amoral*. The Atheist has simply to deal with the phenomena as facts, and *his* only problem is how to so obtain a mastery over human forces that life may be made profitable to all.

But while seeing that the "Problem of evil" as such, has no existence for the Atheist, Professor Howison drops into a piece of current theistic cant in asserting that for the Atheist, as he "owes no duty to the unconscious force which nature is," there is always the release of suicide, and that "it must be admitted that the solution by naturalism or by Atheism is, after all, at the cost of confessing that evil is the master of life."

Professor Howison is evidently laboring under the delusion that there can be no other source of duty than that derived from some extra-natural or some extra human power. The truth is that the only legitimate source of duty lies in the human nature around us, and of which we are an integral portion. A man's sense of duty to his fellows, his friends, his family, often keeps him struggling along, when he would otherwise feel inclined to give up in sheer despair. And not only is the feeling of responsibility to self or others the grounds of the Atheist's sense of duty, but there is no other source of duty possible, or rationally conceivable. Duty, unless we play fast and loose with the meaning of the word, involves reciprocal responsibilities. I have a duty to my fellows and they to me, for the simple reason that we are both, to use Leslie Stephen's phrase, cells in the social tissue, and both may be made better or worse by the other's conduct. But if there is a God, I have no duties towards *him*. He does not need my advice, and he does not require my assistance. Duty, in such a conjunction, is an absurdity.

And how, or in what way, does Atheism admit that evil is the master of life? The phrasing is, on the Professor's own showing, illegitimate. Atheism does not recognise evil, *per se*, it only knows it as a natural fact, evil in relation to human existence. Accurately, the utmost that could be said would be that Atheism recognises that the conditions of life are not favorable to there being a balance of pleasure, either now or in the future. This would be the correct way of phrasing the thesis, but it would not be true for all that. For neither Atheism or Atheists as a body teach anything of the kind. It is, indeed, one of the commonest of Atheistic teachings that while human life *under certain conditions* may not be worth the living, yet the improvability of life is the real task of man, and our power to improve is exactly proportionate to the development of our knowledge of ourselves and the universe around. Evil, in short, is to the Atheist, want of adaptation to environment, and a better adaptation is brought about by two means—unconsciously by the slow action of natural selection, and consciously by the steps taken by man to create the conditions favorable to the development of a higher type of human life.

As a matter of fact, the doctrine that evil is the master of life is a characteristically Christian one. That the world was given over to the Devil was one of the earliest tenets of the Christian Churches, and it is the one that has been the most persistent during the history of Christianity. What was the hermit



life of the Dark Ages, the establishment of monasteries and nunneries, the religious austerities, which filled Europe with so many thousands of emaciated, unwashed, semi-insane "saints" but expressions of this belief? And the same belief was at the foundation of the Puritan suppression of theatres and other enjoyments. Theatres and the like were not banned by the Puritans *because* they were "lewd places," they were lewd *because* they were places where people enjoyed themselves. And to be happy, to laugh, to love the smell of the sea and the perfume of the flowers, to prefer the music of a master to the unmelodious hymns of a conventicle, were proofs positive that one was enamored of the world and in the clutches of the Devil. It is *quite* Christian to take one of your own discredited doctrines and saddle with it an opponent who will not be given, in the same place, the right of reply.

Having disposed of the Atheist in this manner, Professor Howison next turns to the Theist. How can he reconcile evil in nature with the being of a God? is the puzzle to be solved. Well, according to the Professor, if we accept the view that God controls and produces all that is, it cannot be solved at all. Every attempt to harmonise evil with the existence of God, as the Theist usually conceives God, has failed, he tells us, and is foredoomed to failure:—

"I am well aware of all the old familiar excuses—the cheerful chirping about 'alls well that ends well,' backed up by the solemnities of prophecy concerning 'the eternal weight of glory' in reserve for the saints hereafter.....But all these excuses are void; they all suffer from the same fatal oversight.....love cannot ignore the individual in behalf of any course but his own.....the ending well can never atone for injustice, for fury uncontrolled, nor can discipline or chastening go to the point of inflicting torture. All these excuses, moreover, ignore the complete confusion in natural catastrophes of the saints with the sinners. And worst of all, they are everyone saturated with that fatuous optimism which reduces evil to 'good in disguise,' and so begs the question by denying that there *is* any evil."

Professor Howison's own solution of the problem is a species of modified Zoroastrianism, so far as one can make head or tail of a few sentences towards the close of his article. The fatal mistake, he tells us, "is the attempt to unite (the) universal efficient causality of God with His essence of Love." God creates the world, but the evil in the world is to be derived from "minds other than God." "It cannot be eternal love that bursts forth and scorches and suffocates from a Mont Pélée, engulfing a whole civil community in indiscriminate annihilation," and, therefore, "the origin of evil should henceforth be referred to whatever else is real in the world, or in the making of the world, not to God." Or, in plain language, when we find facts at variance with our theology, we must not give up the theology, but simply narcotise our minds with the meaningless formula that God as love, and God as cause, are two quite distinct things.

And to this only one criticism is necessary. God, as Creator, is responsible—immediately or mediately—for all that occurs in his creation. The "minds other than God," to which we are to refer the evil in the world, are as much his creation, or as little, as any other natural force. It is really too late in the day for a University teacher to write as though the human mind were something absolutely separate from and independent of other parts of nature. What any man's mind is like is the result of the evolution that has preceded him—not merely the human evolution, but also the animal evolution. And this, again, is linked on to the whole cosmic process by the same species of gradation. And if God—possessing wisdom, power, love—is at the back of all as the efficient cause, then he is responsible for all that occurs in the working out of his plan. Professor Howison is severe enough on those who use the "old familiar excuses" in defence of *their* Theism. They are mere phrases, and are dismissed as such. Is his own apologetic, with its stultifying advice that "God should be so conceived, and his relation to sentient

beings and to nature should be so explained," that we may get a result that harmonises with our beliefs, any better? If we *must* resort to this mental degradation, why try a *new* method?—the old one is already effective enough.

With Messrs. Armstrong and Horton I will deal next week.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## International Freethought: Geneva, 1902.

THE International Freethought Congress, which met at Geneva in September, was a signal success. Four hundred delegates, sent from nearly every nationality, and representing no less than 3,000 Rationalist organisations, took part in the proceedings. The Swiss Republic gave us the splendid hospitality of the University of Geneva. More than twenty members of the French Chambre des Députés were present, besides such distinguished Belgian M.P.'s as M. Furnémont, the General Secretary of the International Freethought Federation, and M. Demblon, the member for Liège. The Grand Orient of France was specially represented by M. Morin.

All the great European nationalities were represented, England alone, with its one single delegate, seeming to flaunt in the face of the world its proud insular aloofness from the general movement making for international brotherhood.

In striking contrast to the land of Darwin and Bradlaugh, Spain stood forth surrounded by the multitude of its Freethought organisations, stretching forth their helping hands to the nations of the north, and crying out warm words of encouragement to the men and women of other lands who spend their lives in the glorious struggle for the liberation of the human mind from the yoke of priestcraft. Over 1,000 Spanish Freethought Societies sent in their adhesion to the Congress. It was a surprise and a delight to all of us to see the heaps of despatches of sympathy addressed by the Freethinkers of Spain to their brethren of all nations assembled at Geneva. The Spanish delegates were among the most interesting personalities at the Congress. Their intelligence and enthusiasm give the lie to the stupid notion that Spain is effete and doomed for ever to writhe under the heels of Holy Mother Church, or of any of the schismatic daughters of the divine dame.

The Congress lasted four days. Its public meetings took place in the Grand Hall of the University, whilst the ten commissions appointed by the Congress carried on their deliberations in the various spacious rooms attached to the University buildings.

The subjects set down for discussion, after preliminary examination by the Commissions *ad hoc*, were as under:—

- I. The relation between Freethought and Positivism.
- II. The practical means of combating the spirit of authoritarian despotism manifesting itself in various countries.
- III. The development of Freethought ideas in the minds of children, viz:—
  - (a) In those brought up in a particular religion;
  - (b) In those brought up outside all religious influences.
- IV. The means of awakening in women an interest in the Freethought movement.
- V. What are the defects inherent to the morality ascribed to "Christ"?
- VI. The doctrine of Evolution and the dogmas of religion.
- VII. International action against the religious Corporations.

At the inaugural meeting on Sunday, September 14, the chair was taken by Professor Hector Denis, of the University of Brussels. His opening address was a masterpiece of eloquence, one of the noblest vindications of Freethought ever made. After this M. Charbonnel, the valiant editor of *La Raison*, read to us a letter specially addressed to the Congress by M. Gabriel Séailles, Professor at the Sorbonne,



It was a magnificent allocation on the province of Freethought, and profoundly moved the Congress. In the evening a large public meeting, attended by upwards of 1,200 people, took place at the Bâtiment Electoral. Many eloquent speeches were delivered, notably those by the Count de Renesse, MM. Hubbard, Charbonnel, and Furnémont, and Mdme. Gatti de Gamond. It was significant of progress in the realm of thought that in the city of Calvin the boldest impeachment of superstition was always greeted with enthusiastic applause.

On the Monday the Commissions began their labors, which involved amongst other things the perusal and discussion, point by point, of the various reports and memoirs presented to the Congress by Societies and individuals upon the various questions referred to the Commissions for deliberation and report. In the afternoon, M. Hubbard, the deputy for the Basses-Alpes, was elected to the chair. In the evening M. Furnémont went over to Lausanne, and spoke for more than two hours to an audience of not less than 1,000 people at the splendid hall at the Maison du Peuple, whilst the various Commissions remained at Geneva, and sat till an advanced hour preparing their conclusions for presentation to Tuesday's meeting.

On Tuesday M. Fernando Lozano, the editor of *Las Dominicales*, the brave and genial organiser of innumerable Freethought Societies in Spain, took the chair. His burning words in reprobation of the dastardly murder of Servetus, perpetrated by that odious bigot Calvin, will linger long in our memories. After the meeting the Congress assembled outside the University, and solemnly placed a floral crown upon the bust of Carl Vogt. Dr. Meslier, the Deputy de la Seine, traced in superb language the life-work of the great *savant*. When this moving ceremony was concluded the members formed themselves in procession, and marched for about three-quarters of a mile to Rousseau's Island, beautifully situated on Lake Lemman, in order to pay the meed of their homage to the great Jean Jacques. Some 800 people were now grouped around the statue of the Man Immortal; and, amidst subdued silence, M. Charbonnel placed the wreath of flowers at the feet of the philosopher. Then Madame Belene Sarragua spoke, in Spanish, an earnest address in commemoration of Rousseau's influence in promoting the education of children; and, after M. Hubbard had, with equal skill and felicity of expression, translated this for us, M. Demblon summed up in inimitable language the whole spirit and tendency of Rousseau. We shall never forget that speech. The orator was simply overwhelmed with congratulations upon his splendid improvisation.

In the evening a big audience, consisting of some eight or nine hundred people, gathered at the Brasserie Handwerck, to hear the foreign delegates speak, each in his own language. It was a cosmopolitan assembly. The chairman, M. Furnémont, was a Belgian, and introduced the speakers in French; Ida Altmann, the German delegate, spoke her native tongue; William Heaford was invited to speak in English; M. Arcangelo Ghisleri spoke in Italian; and M. Sarragua, a Spaniard, gave a delightful address in French. To a large number present all these languages were sufficiently familiar to enable them to follow the various speeches. Babel for three hours, and no confusion!

Two meetings were held on Wednesday. The morning meeting took place under the presidency of Ida Altmann, and the afternoon president was Dr. Arcangelo Ghisleri, Professor of History and Philosophy. In the evening a banquet of more than 200 covers wound up the labors of the Congress. Amongst the speakers were Sebastien Faure, William Heaford, M. Ghisleri, M. Zervaès, M. Lozano, M. Beauquier (Deputé du Doubs), M. Demblon, and, last but not least, MM. Furnémont and Fulpius.

To M. Fulpius, the devoted President of the Genevan Freethought Society and editor of *La Lumière*, the brilliant success of the Congress was largely due. He has labored untiringly for the

advancement of Freethought in Switzerland, and to his organising skill the comfort of the delegates and the colossal success of the Congress are largely due.

Geneva is intended to be the vestibule of Rome. On September 20, 1904, the next International Freethought Congress will meet in the Eternal City under the very nose of the Pope. Active preparations are now being made on the Continent in view of that epoch-marking event. New Societies are being planted in every part of France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, and everywhere an active propaganda is being conducted with the view of marshalling under the flag of Freethought the emancipated children of liberty and reason. It is earnestly hoped that when that great day of assize opens the Freethinkers of England will be found adequately represented at Rome, and that, in preparation for that event, early arrangements will be made to secure that the activities and energies of British Rationalism may shine forth in the eyes of the Freethinkers of all countries with the lustre that befits a great people embattled for a great cause.

Let others stay behind who care or dare: I intend to go to Rome in 1904. WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### "In the Name of the Prophet"—Lies.

"John P.  
Robinson, he  
Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee."  
—LOWELL, *Biglow Papers*.

NONE of the evangelists profess to give an exhaustive account of the acts of the Ever-Blessed Wielder of the Jack-Plane. St. John concludes his imaginary biography by saying:—

"There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."

It must be confessed that Tradition does make startling demands even on the faith which is nurtured on the fairy-tales of the Gospels.

The Icelanders thus account for the origin of the golden plovers which fly about and utter a cry which seems to the listener to be "*dyroin*"—glory. When Jesus was a child he and some of his companions amused themselves one Sabbath by moulding clay in the shape of birds. A Sadducee took them harshly to task for the profanation, and destroyed the images. The majority of the children began to cry; but Jesus waved his hands over the broken treasures, and from the fragments of senseless clay rose living birds, which soared towards the sky, and have ever sung notes of praise. The story on which this is founded, and which Longfellow alludes to in the *Golden Legend*, occurs in the apocryphal book, the *Second Gospel of the Infancy*, piously attributed to St. Thomas. The passage is worth quoting at length:—

"1. When the child Jesus was five years of age, and there had been a shower of rain which was now over, Jesus was playing with other Hebrew boys by a running stream; and the water running over the banks stood in little lakes.

"2. But the water instantly became clear and useful again; He having smote them only by His word, they readily obeyed him.

"3. Then He took from the bank of the stream some soft clay, and formed out of it twelve sparrows; and there were other boys playing with Him;

"4. But a certain Jew, seeing the things which He was doing, namely, His forming clay into the figures of sparrows on the Sabbath-day, went presently away and told his father Joseph, and said:

"5. Behold thy boy is playing by the river side, and has taken clay and formed it into twelve sparrows, and profaned the Sabbath.

"6. Then Joseph came to the place where He was, and when he saw Him, and said, Why doest thou that which it is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-day?

"Then Jesus, clapping together the palms of His hands, called to the sparrows, and said to them: Go, fly away, and while ye live remember me.



"8. So the sparrows fled away, making a great noise.

"9. The Jews, seeing this, were astonished, and went away, and told their chief persons what a strange miracle they had seen wrought by Jesus."

From the *First Gospel of the Infancy* it would appear that the divine Boy performed a similar miracle in his seventh year, astonishing his playmates by making clay figures of asses, oxen, birds, etc., walk, fly, eat, and drink, according as he commanded them.

"When at length the boys went away and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them: 'Take heed, children, for the future, of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.'"

Tradition, that "lying jade," says that the ass has borne a cross on its back ever since the Savior made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, "sitting on an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." We strongly suspect that this discovery was not made in Judea, nor even in the early years of Christianity. We think, rather, that we are indebted for it to some lover of mysticism in the Ages of Faith; some genius like the man who first elaborated the dogma of the most Holy Trinity, and who tried to make a religion out of the multiplication table.

According to Didron, the praises of the Cross were sung in the ninth century in like manner as people celebrate those "of a god or of a hero"; and right reverend and right ignorant Fathers of the Great Lying Church did not fail to remark that its figure was "engraven in the productions of nature, seen in the works of men, in the position of inanimate objects and the gestures of the living." Joyful indeed must have been the heart of the early Christian who, gazing on the coat of an ass, was first struck by the fact that the markings were cruciform.

That indefatigable antagonist of popular error, M. Salgues, has in vain ransacked the works of ancient and modern naturalists to find anything which countenances the superstition that the honor conferred on the ass of Bethpage left hereditary traces.

Pliny, who wrote early in the vulgar era, and who has noted many asinine peculiarities, makes no reference to any change in the livery of the donkeys of his time. We are tempted to decide that the belief in question was not universal, when we learn that a manuscript, preserved at Sens, on "The Feast of the Ass," makes no mention of the story. Had he scribe been familiar with the legend, it would have furnished him with admirable material for the extension of his panegyric on a much-abused animal.

Attention being once called to the evidence of Christianity supplied by the ass, it is natural to suppose that religious men would not neglect to make use of it in their encounters with Freethinkers. It is to be hoped that it proved a more effective weapon in the hands of some than it did in those of the Abbé who endeavored to subdue the Atheist Boindin. The pious Abbé had brought all ordinary controversial weapons to bear against the Atheist without avail, and, when almost in despair, suddenly broke in, "Well, M. Boindin, will you deny that since the day when our Blessed Savior made His entry into Jerusalem on an ass, they bear a cross on their backs? What will you answer to that argument? "Very forcible," replied Boindin, "turn round, if you please."

Among the *materia medica* of the Fen District are found hairs cut from the cross on a donkey's shoulders. They are considered an infallible cure for ague, when worn next the skin.

"What!" says some quizzical reader, "any one restored to health by the instrumentality of an ass." "Yes!" in the motto of the homœopaths, "like cures like!"

This truly Christian science would not commend itself to the doctors of to-day. Yet these poor men erred in relying too much on Biblical Ignorance. Christian Apologists always protest that the Sacred Volume was never intended to teach science. And

they are right. The "King of Kings" had no pretensions to exact knowledge. His mathematics would disgrace a fourth-form schoolboy, his geology is very stupid, his history almost entirely imaginary, and his zoology is too funny for words.

In natural history proper not the veriest tyro, the most myopic bungler, could confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet the creator of Linnæus blundered about the hare chewing the cud.

It was reserved for worms of the dust like Cuvier, Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin, to clear out the Augean stable of the Divine ignorance, and to create the science anew.

In the Sacred Zoological Gardens all the animals are worthy of Baron Munchausen. By all means let us throw our text-books away and let us learn our science from the childish pages of the Holy Bible. Where else can we find a talking snake, a lodging-house whale or a pigeon correspondent? Where else are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrices, and the "worm that never dies?" Where, oh where, are the bedevilled pigs, the four-legged fowls, the unicorns, the cherubim, and the oratorical ass of Balaam? Where else is the bloater with a savings bank in his inside? And where else shall we find the wonderful menagerie of the Apocalypse?

A liar for the glory of God once said the Bible was the source of England's greatness. If he had said England's ignorance he would have been unconsciously nearer the truth.

MIMNERMUS.

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### The Great Author.

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THE first and greatest author was God Almighty himself, the author of Creation. What had he done before he turned author? Nothing at all, as far as we know from the book, save subsist in self-sufficing perfection. Why, then, did he turn author? We can learn no reason except that he wanted to set forth his power and glory, and make all his works praise him for ever. Thus his authorship sprang from some defect and want in his perfect nature; if he wrought for honor and glory, he no longer sufficed unto himself. He created the heaven and the earth in six days, and doing so much in so short a time seems to have "scamped" a great deal of the work. When he looked on all that he had made he found it very good; every author fancies his work very good when just completed, and while he still glows with the heat of composition. But we very soon read that it repented him, and grieved him at his heart, that he had done the last day-and-a-half's work, the finishing quarter with the liveliest touches, the very head and crown of the whole. He found this portion so bad that he washed almost all of it out, a doleful liquidation in bankruptcy for an author. The washed-out part he did again, but not a bit better than before. In fact, the ultimate section, to which all the remainder of the work was subsidiary, turned out so bad that he sacrificed the life of his only son in a vain attempt to improve it; a sacrifice which shows that even the most benevolent of beings, possessed by the mania of authorship, will stick at nothing in trying to promote the success of his works.

—James Thomson (B. V.).

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### Tithes.

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Andoniram Podge kept a hired man,  
And he fed him on cabbage and beans  
Which he kept cooked up in an old tin pan,  
Along with some pig-weed greens;  
And he made him work from the break of day  
Till the sun took its final lurch,  
And docked him then of a quarter of his pay,  
That his savings might go to the Church.

—Exchange.

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Ethel, a Columbus five-year-old, heard her mamma say that there wasn't a match in the house. That night, when mamma heard Ethel's prayers, the tot concluded by saying: "And please, God, send us a box of matches. Amen." "Why do you ask God for matches, Ethel?" asked the mother in surprise. "Coz," replied Ethel, "didn't Aunt Ruth say that matches wuz made in heaven?"



## Acid Drops.

We are not entering into the sphere of party politics when we protest against the new policy of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Wyndham, under which Irish members of parliament, for what are really political offences, are sent to prison like felons with hard labor, and condemned to the plank bed and bread-and-water diet. This is a question of common ethics. It is one upon which every citizen should have his personal opinion, quite irrespective of the party he happens to belong to. We have *our* opinion, and it shall be expressed. We say that this new policy is a scandal to the British government and an outrage on civilisation. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Wyndham may both be gentlemen according to conventional standards. Very likely they are so in all the ordinary relations of life. But in this particular case they are acting the part of cowards and bullies.

It is very easy to censure the unparliamentary conduct of an Irish member of parliament who rushes up to the Treasury Bench and shakes his fist in Mr. Balfour's face. We regret it as much as anyone else, for such scenes play the game of reaction. But what can you expect when men are treated with injustice and indignity? You deny a man a hearing in his own land and his own constituency; you put him in prison for what every sensible and candid man knows is a purely fictitious crime; you have a fresh sentence of imprisonment hanging over his head; and when he turns up at Westminster in a brief interval between two disgraceful incarcerations, you assume airs of outraged virtue and prevent his being heard there too. Is it any wonder that the man loses his patience, and his head with it? Is it surprising that he is wrought up to a fit of desperation, in which his one burning motive—penetrating or overleaping all obstacles—is to meet his oppressor face to face, and at least tell him what he thinks of him? Human nature is human nature, and it is the non-recognition of this fact that is the hopeless feature of the eternal tragedy of the British government in Ireland. Our statesmen cannot and will not understand. They are always wielding force against indestructible sentiments. And they are always surprised that they wield it in vain.

We hate the misgovernment under which Irish members of parliament are sent to prison like common felons for what at the worst is only a political offence. At the same time, we cannot help feeling a certain mild satisfaction at the thought that William Redmond is one of the victims. This gentleman went out of his way to mix himself up with a bit of purely English business in 1882. It was he who asked Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary, why steps were not taken to prosecute the *Freethinker*. Steps afterwards were taken, and our Editor enjoyed a twelve-months' taste of Christian charity in Holloway Gaol. William Redmond is now enjoying a six-months' taste of the same treat—prison clothes, plank bed, and all. Perhaps his own sufferings under an odious law will make him more considerate of the rights of others. That is all the harm we wish him.

The dear *Daily News* again! It gives the heading of "The Negation of God" to its leading article on the Tory government's policy in Ireland, especially in relation to the Sergeant Sheridan case. As a representative of Atheism we beg to say—"Declined—without thanks." Why should the Christians try to shoot their rubbish and refuse on the Atheist's doorstep? Those most responsible for the present state of things in Ireland are all Christians.

Dr. Clifford is still at it. He has been orating against the Education Bill at Devonport, and the *Western Morning News* reports him as saying: "As the historian Hume said, it was to the Puritans that England owed its liberty." Hume never said anything of the sort, and Dr. Clifford ought to know it by this time. After asking him *where* Hume said so, and receiving no answer, we went through Hume's *History* and showed what he really did say about the Puritans. Dr. Clifford should remember that the *Daily News* is not the only paper in England. The *Freethinker* has readers, a good many of them take an interest in public affairs, and they may inform their Nonconformist friends that Dr. Clifford is not telling the truth.

Lord Rosebery is like all the other "distinguished" politicians (including Mr. Chamberlain) with regard to "secular education." "I suppose," he said in his City Liberal Club speech, "the ideal, logical, and philosophical view of education is that the State should be solely responsible for secular education, and that the Churches should be responsible for religious education. But that is not practicable in this country." Quite so. And it never will be prac-

ticable while those who believe in it run away from it every time it should be supported. This is one of the meanest aspects of public life in England. The "ideal, logical, and philosophical view" always finds many distinguished friends in France. In this country, however, it is nearly always looked upon with derision or abhorrence.

Mr. G. Lane Fox, speaking at a Primrose League meeting in Manchester, said that "Dr. Clifford was doing the work of the Devil." He also said that "If the schools were secularised there would be nothing to prevent children growing up Atheists, except for the fear of the policeman." This is a most delicious muddle, and we prefer to leave it as it is. But we must observe that Mr. Fox misunderstands Dr. Clifford on one point. That gentleman does not want to secularise the schools. He wants to keep religious education in them—provided it is the sort he approves.

Church and Chapel both play at this game of compliments. A Churchman says Dr. Clifford is doing the work of the Devil. A Chapelite, Mr. Howard Evans, Chairman of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation, speaking at the Caxton Hall (Westminster) meeting, said that the Education Bill was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. How they love one another!

"Who could trust a grown-up man who had never been taught his duty to God?" This question was asked by Mr. George Lane-Fox at a Primrose League meeting in Gainsburgh. We wonder if this is a subtle allusion to Mr. Jabez Balfour or the late Mr. De Cobain of Belfast. It can hardly refer to Mr. John Morley or Mr. Herbert Spencer.

Mr. Lane-Fox went on to say that the cleverer a person was the more dangerous he was to his fellow men if he had no religion. This is a point that ought not to give the speaker too much anxiety.

At the Falkirk Burgh Court, during the trial of an assault case, one of the witnesses, named James Barr, stated that he was a Freethinker, and that the Court had got the better of him by making him take the oath. "Do you believe in God?" asked the accused's agent. "What God? If you are going to debate Atheism I will meet you on a public platform," was the reply. Bailie Bogle said the question was not a pertinent one. "What is an Atheist?" asked the agent, later on. "A man," the witness said, "who neither denies nor affirms that there is a God." "That is not an Atheist at all," interposed the Bailie; "that is an Agnostic." The evidence was then proceeded with. "Agnostic" was oil upon the troubled waters. The very agent was overcome by such a respectable word. Still, the honest witness in the box knew very well he was an Atheist; that is, according to etymology, he was "without God" in the world.

"Non-Tolstoyan" writes to the *Daily News* to the following effect. A young man, the son of a friend of his, joined "The Brotherhood Church," whose members have "about twenty acres of land on which they profess to live and carry out as far as they can the teaching of their high priest." This young man's sister, a girl of sixteen, went on a visit to the colony a short time since, and last week her father received a card bearing this announcement:—

"What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder.—JESUS.

"At the Brotherhood Church meeting the non-legal marriage of.....and.....was sanctioned, 11-10-1902."

This is a pretty sort of game in the name of Jesus. If the woman in the case were twenty-five there would be less to be said. She would be old enough, presumably, to take care of herself. But a girl of sixteen! Almost a child!

This is not Tolstoy's teaching, however. It must be said, in common fairness, that he teaches men and women not to marry, nor to have anything to do with each other sexually. All sexual relations, he says, whether out of marriage or in it, are sinful. We cannot hold him responsible, therefore, for all the doings of "The Brotherhood Church."

The South London Mayors, Aldermen, and Councillors have put their heads (and all that therein is) together, and excogitated an address to the King. They remind him that "the application of medical and surgical science has resulted in the complete recovery to health of your Majesty." This is clumsy composition, but it is somewhere near the truth. They go on to say, however, that they "humbly pray that your Majesty may be so sustained, strengthened, and preserved for many years." What a jumble! Do the worthy Mayors, Aldermen, and Councillors of South London actually believe that medical and surgical science derives any of its efficacy from their prayers? Probably not. It is



more likely that they followed their instincts in drafting that address. They put in a plum for the doctors, and a plum for the clergy, on the principle that both ought to have a turn. Besides, a reference to both would please the King.

George Parsons, aged twenty-five, a plumber, of Chippenham-gardens, West Kilburn, was charged at Marlborough-street Police-court with "holding a meeting in Hyde Park otherwise than in an orderly manner." According to the evidence, whatever it was worth, the prisoner incited his audience to sing "Early in the Morning" to drown the voices of a religious audience near by engaged in singing a hymn. Presently he lost all control over his own people, and was taken into custody in order to prevent a breach of the peace. The prisoner denied that he had done anything to create disorder, but the magistrate bound him over to be of good behavior in the future.

George Parsons was speaking from the "Rational League" platform. What is the Rational League? We hear a good deal about Rationalism nowadays—from the people who used to be always talking about Agnosticism. Is this Rational League one of their latest activities?

How difficult it seems to be for Christians to be accurate! Someone has sent us a copy of the *Newcastle Weekly Journal* containing "Reflections on Present-Day Life," by the Rev. Silas Hocking. This gentleman refers to Voltaire as "without faith either in God or immortality." Every person who has read Voltaire will recognise the absurdity of this description. It is true that the great Frenchman did not believe in immortality. But he did believe in God. He wrote in favor of Theism. He even said that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. He rebuked his friends—such as Diderot and D'Holbach—for their Atheism. Yet the Reverend Silas Hocking (it must be the Silas!) tells the British public that Voltaire was an Atheist.

Mr. Hocking blunders along like—well, like a Christian. He says that "if a man is never brought beneath the influence of the Divine power he will remain as he was born, and applaud Voltaire's assertion that this is the worst of all possible worlds and that life is not worth living." We suppose this is a muddle-headed allusion to *Candide*. Mr. Hocking can hardly have read it. If he has, he is incapable of understanding satire. *Candide* is bright and brilliant ridicule of the Leibnitzian theory that this is the best of all possible worlds. But ridiculing optimism does not prove one a pessimist. Voltaire's conclusion, *Il faut cultiver notre jardin* is the practical gospel which Zola preached in a later generation.

This ignorant critic of Voltaire doesn't even appear to understand Dr. Johnson, who wrote in English; yes, in English, Mr. Hocking, so that there is no excuse for your finding him unintelligible. "Voltaire and Dr. Johnson," we are told, "each essayed a task—the one to prove that this was the best of all possible worlds, and the other that it was absolutely the worst." We presume this is an allusion to *Rasselas*. Now the man who can read *Rasselas*, and conclude that Dr. Johnson wrote it to prove optimism, is really past praying for. All one can do is to shrug one's shoulders and pass on.

Sir John Gayer was Lord Mayor of London in 1647. In his younger days he was shipwrecked on the coast of Africa, where he knelt down and thanked the Lord for his preservation. While he was on his knees a lion trotted up, smelt round him, and then stalked off, leaving him unmolested. This was clearly a case of "Providence" to the kneeling Englishman, though the lion's account of the matter might have been different. Perhaps the animal didn't like his attitude—or his flavor may have been objectionable. But the kneeling Englishman's view of the case prevailed, and in memory of his deliverance he bequeathed £200 for the relief of the poor on condition that a commemorative sermon be preached annually at St. Katherine Cree Church. This "lion" sermon has just been preached by the Rev. A. B. Boyd-Carpenter, vicar of St. Olave's.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Church Times*: "WANTED, a Stout Pony to do a country clergyman's work." Is this an admission that a country clergyman's work often requires more legs than brains? In many cases a donkey would do as well.

Boer generals seem to have been as mixed a lot as British generals. General Viljoen, in his lecture at Queen's Hall, said "Among the Boer generals were many whom Nature had intended for parsons, and others who could have earned

a living in any London music-hall as clowns." General Viljoen doesn't appear to have a high opinion of parsons.

Mr. Charles Hill, secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association, has been interviewed by a *Daily News* representative. He states that he wants to put down Sunday trading. Between the lines it is easy to read that he would like to put down Sunday trains, Sunday buses, Sunday cars, and Sunday everything else except preaching and psalm-singing. He says that the Act of Charles II. is good enough in its way, but it requires strengthening. The fine, for instance, should be raised from 5s. to £5. We suppose this would be too much for the Sabbath-breakers who shave, sell lollipops, or distribute tobacco. But why does Mr. Hill devote his attention to the poor small-fry? Why not tackle the rich and mighty? It is a contravention of the Act of Charles II. for a coachman to drive his master or mistress on a Sunday. Why not begin by applying the law in that direction?

Mr. Hill is anxious to see the Sunday excursion trains stopped. Why leave London, he asks, on the Lord's Day? Are there not many beautiful parks and gardens—25,000 acres of them—in the metropolis? But if the hot and dusty Londoner must get away to the country or the seaside for a day now and then, let us agitate for a whole day's holiday every fortnight for all employees. Yes, but *meanwhile*, Mr. Hill? Hadn't we better make use of the Sunday until we get that other day? And, after all, is one holiday a fortnight quite equal to one holiday a week?

Being asked by the interviewer if he would not use a bus or a cab on Sunday, Mr. Hill replied, "Only in the case of sickness, fire, or other urgent necessity." What nonsense is this! If buses and cabs were only used on Sunday in such cases, it would not pay to put them on the streets at all, Mr. Hill could only get on a bus to fetch a doctor, or see a sick friend, on the Lord's Day, because Sabbath-breakers make it profitable for these conveyances to be running.

Foxes, when beset with fleas, take to the water and drown their tormentors. Charles Baxter tried to get rid of his devils in the same way. Thinking he was "possessed" by them, he jumped into the Grand Junction Canal at North Hyde, Southall. But a bargeman fished him out, and a policeman took him in charge. It is not stated what became of the devils.

Dean Gregory, of St. Paul's Cathedral, is known for his hatred of Board schools and "all that therein is." Perhaps this accounts for the following notice being stuck up outside the Cathedral: "The Confirmation on Saturday, October 25th, will be on Saturday, October the 18th, at 11.30 a.m."

"We can forgive the limping sentences when the speaker is in deadly earnest." So says the *Daily News* reviewer of a new volume of sermons by the Bishop of London. What a fine compliment to Dr. Ingram's literary capacity!

Mr. Herbert Spencer has a poor opinion of the multitude. "I think it probable," he said, "that if you were to ask ninety-nine people out of one hundred whether they would take daily a spoonful of cod-liver oil, or read a chapter of my *Principles of Psychology*, they would prefer the cod-liver oil."

The same authority (the *King*) says the report is not true that Mr. Spencer is a vegetarian. He once tried vegetarianism for about a year. "At the end of that time," he says, "I went over all I had written during the year and consigned it *in toto* to the fire." Tennyson also gave vegetarianism a trial, but was glad to fall back upon his beefsteak again. Judging from the lines in which he refers to his experiment, the vegetarian diet gave him a clear but a weak head. There seems to be a considerable variety of experience on this subject.

The lot of Jack Cooke, the "boy" preacher, has fallen in pleasant places. He has been adopted by a millionaire. Hallelujah! The "boy" will now be in a position to shake hands with the dear Bishops and other wealthy followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth.

At the Bristol Diocesan Conference a Mr. Hartland Wright made a mild sensation by denouncing Sunday recreation and Sunday excursions. He spoke of the trippers as returning "in many cases" in a state of intoxication. This is very sad. One thing may be said for the few excursionists who forget themselves. They are all right again on Monday! But the maudlin imbeciles who get spiritually "intoxicated" in the gospel-shops never do recover.



General Kritzinger, who narrowly escaped judicial murder under military law (administered by his opponents) in South Africa, is at present in England. An interviewer describes him as "a tall, fine, massive man, with a pleasant and ready smile." He appears to be as pious as the rest of his countrymen. "Who is preaching at the City Temple?" he asked. His special wish was to hear Dr. Temple and Mr. Meyer.

A young woman at Tottenham applied for a summons against her husband for persistent cruelty. She had only been married a month, and her husband had knocked her about every night since the wedding. He had even gripped her by the throat and threatened her with a razor. "I can't go back to be killed," she said. But the Bench dismissed her application as "premature." We suppose she must wait until she is killed.

The Harvest Festival Season is now at its height. Whether the harvest is good, bad, or indifferent, the clergy will have their festivals. If there is insufficient corn it is always possible to smother the church with greengrocery fresh from Covent Garden.

Friday has always been considered as an "unlucky" day by superstitious people. It is all a mistake. A statistician has added up all the accidents in a single year and ascertained that Monday is the worst day. Sunday, it seems, has the best record. We wonder what becomes of those thousands of people who the clergy tell us are killed by their Heavenly Father for Sabbath profanation.

The Bishop of London has been telling the workmen of Northampton (who were represented on this occasion by a few old women of both sexes) that they made slippers in his old parish of Stepney. If the workmen had really been present they might have reminded his lordship that his share of the business was merely to wear "those golden slippers."

Mr. Fordham, the North London magistrate, continues to show his inability to understand a "conscientious objection" under the Vaccination Act. It is all the same whether he grants an application or refuses it. He talks nonsense either way. Last week we dealt with his ridiculous catechism in the case of a refusal. Since then he has granted an exemption—also after a catechism. The applicant said he had had one child vaccinated, and it suffered from very bad eruptions afterwards; he had kept another child unvaccinated, and it remained perfectly healthy; and he wished to keep the third child in the same condition. Whereupon the magistrate said, "I am satisfied that you have a conscientious belief." What he meant, of course, was a *reasonable* belief; or, at least, a belief for which there was some sort of evidence. But that has nothing to do with the Act. And it is the Act, and the Act only, that Mr. Fordham has to administer.

Jews in Russia are not allowed to become Christians without the permission of the Minister of the Interior. What simplicity! If a Jew becomes a Christian he *is* a Christian; with or without *anybody's* permission. Still, we don't think the Minister of the Interior has to consider many applications. Jews have always been hard to convert, and placing obstacles in the way is a work of supererogation.

The priests are still omnipotent in Ireland. Look at the action of the Nationalist party. It is reported that they will no longer vote for a Bill emanating from a Government which coerces them. But they dare not vote against it because it serves the turn of the Roman Catholic Church in England.

Divorce is not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. What God hath joined together man must not put asunder. Nevertheless there are ways of getting a dispensation from the Pope if you have money or influence enough. This fact has been the undoing of Madame Civet, of Paris. She parted with 60,000 francs to a priest who undertook to procure her a decree of divorce from the Holy Father; and the priest introduced her to a banker who swindled her out of nearly £30,000. The banker has absconded; the priest is in custody.

More "violent scenes" have occurred in the French Chamber of Deputies in consequence of the Premier's firm administration of the Associations Law. M. Combes declared that the fractious conduct of some of the religious establishments had been instigated by the political enemies of the Republic. On a division his policy was endorsed by a majority of 329 to 233.

"The eminent professor of one of our near-by Universities to whom most church hymns are 'simply doggerel,' has received unexpected backing from a presbytery in Mississippi, which by solemn overture has requested the General

Assembly of the Southern Church to change and amend Cowper's hymn about a 'fountain filled with blood.' These Mississippi Presbyterians don't like it. They seem to have been a good while finding it out. But if they don't like it, why don't they let it alone? One of the papers from Nevada, containing an item about a man who stood up in the centre of the village church and shot himself while the choir was singing, was gravely informed by an Eastern contemporary that 'down East,' when they did not like the singing, they just got up and went out. They did not think it necessary to commit suicide. We hope our fellow-Presbyterians down South will do nothing 'rash.' They haven't got to sing the hymn if they don't like it."—*Chicago Interior*.

Whistling girls are becoming popular in American churches. At Danbury, Connecticut, the other day, a girl whistled "The Angels' Serenade" while a couple were married. Shade of St. Paul, what is the Christian world coming to?

"How I became an Agnostic and how the Lord saved me," was the title of a lecture by Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., at Exeter. The performance took place in the Wesleyan chapel. Three-fourths of it, we are informed, was a very detailed account of his private business transactions—salaries, examinations, etc. One half the remainder was about the Pentecostal League. The other half was about the advertised subject. Mr. Harris thanked God for one thing. His intercourse with the Agnostics had made him an abstainer. But he got no other good from them. They misrepresented the Bible and induced him to disbelieve it. But the Lord's hour came, and his infidelity melted away. Then the trouble began. During the ten years he was an Agnostic he was "without sin or temptation." Within three minutes of his conversion he was tempted to lie and cheat for a few pence. The explanation was that the Devil was beginning to show him attentions. Since then the Devil had left him alone. For the rest, he assured his audience that serving Christ paid. That was a good thing. If they gave up £100 a year to serve Christ, they would be sure to get £300 a year some other way. Mr. Harris maundered on in this fashion till the end; and, on the whole, it is pretty clear that his conversion (if it ever took place) was no great loss to Agnosticism.

Mr. Reader Harris was followed by the local secretary of the Pentecostal League. This gentleman said that Exeter was truly in want of an outpouring of the Holy Ghost. A few days previously they were having a holiness meeting, and two ladies came to the door, thinking it was a concert. On finding their mistake, they asked for the Rev. Mr. Somebody, who had not arrived. "Oh, very well," they said; "please tell him we are going on to the circus." Yes, the Holy Ghost is evidently wanted there. It is also just so evident that the local secretary of the Pentecostal League is simple enough for exhibition.

American Freethought papers often contain references to the political power of the Roman Catholic Church, and the way in which its Cardinals and Archbishops exercise influence upon the President at Washington. In view of these references, a fresh significance attaches to the fact that the one member selected by President Roosevelt on the Coal Strike Commission is the Most Reverend Dr. John L. Spalding, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Pretoria, Illinois. Dr. Spalding is likely to be appointed Archbishop of Chicago in succession to the late Archbishop Feehan.

### Philosopher and Philanthropist.

Searching an infinite Where,  
Probing a bottomless When,  
Dreamfully wandering,  
Ceaselessly pondering,  
What is the Wherefore of men:  
Bartering life for a There,  
Selling his soul for a Then,  
Baffling obscurity,  
Conning futurity,  
Usefulest, wisest of men!  
Grasping the Present of Life,  
Seizing a definite Now,  
Laboring thornfully,  
Banishing scornfully  
Doubts of his Whither and How:  
Spending his substance in Strife,  
Working a practical How,  
Letting obscurity  
Rest on futurity,  
Usefuler, wiser, I trow.

—J. K. Stephen, "Lapsus Calami."



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, October 26, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: 3, "Marie Corelli's Miraculous Masterpiece"; 6.30, "Zola the Atheist: his Life, Death, and Funeral."

November 2, Sheffield; 9, Camberwell; 16 and 23, Athenæum Hall; 30, South Shields. December 14, Leicester.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 26, Athenæum. November 2, Athenæum; 9, Birmingham; 16, Leicester; 23, Liverpool.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

"OLD SUBSCRIBER" thanks Mr. Mann for so full and valuable a reply to his query, and the editor of the *Freethinker* for granting so much space.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings. They are a great help to us.

J. G. STUART.—Glad to have your encouraging letter. Send on the paper by all means. We like to see such things. It was a pleasure to meet you and yours at Glasgow, and especially pleasant to know that both the ladies are interested in Freethought. The mistake you refer to shall be rectified.

T. FISHER.—You will see that we have made use of the matter in "Acid Drops." Thanks for your trouble. We reciprocate the good wishes of yourself and wife. You must indeed feel lonely in such a city, where it can hardly be expected that Freethinkers would swarm. Perhaps a few could be induced to foregather by a notice in the *Freethinker*, but someone would have to take the responsibility locally.

W. A. VAUGHAN writes: "I have to-day finished reading the *Defence of Freethought* by Colonel Ingersoll. It is a splendid publication, and I hope it will be largely circulated. No Freethinker, especially those new to the Freethought cause, should miss this intellectual treat, which is now offered for so small a price as fourpence."

G. W. E. asks us "if Mr. Charles Bradlaugh was ever defeated in debate on Freethought subjects." This is rather an innocent question. Possibly the Christians think Charles Bradlaugh was defeated every time. Probably the Freethinkers entertain a different opinion. Frankly, the question is one we cannot answer, and that never ought to be put. A debate is not a prize-fight. Its object is not to see which disputant can knock the other out. When the chairman calls "Time" in a debate, it is not to bring his men up to the scratch, but to make one of them sit down.

T. H. DUKE.—Too late for this week. Shall appear in our next issue.

"PRO BONO PUBLICO" asks why so many missionaries are sent to the heathen. Why not send them to South Wales? "Last Saturday," he writes, "while walking down one of our streets, I saw a fight between father and son. In the struggle the father fell to the ground, and the son proceeded to kick and jump upon him in a most brutal manner, causing him serious harm internally. A crowd of men and women seemed to enjoy this disgraceful sight. Yet they would all call themselves Christians."

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. R. FRENCH.—There are several translations of Marcus Aurelius. The two best are the one in Elizabethan English by Casaubon and the one in Victorian English by Long. The former is now included in Dent's "Temple Library," the latter is obtainable in various editions. Epicetetus was translated, or rather paraphrased, by Mrs. Carter in the eighteenth century. A better edition is Long's—valuable for the notes as well as the text—in Bohn's Library (5s.).

ONLY a few pounds are required to make up the £50 we want for the Camberwell Branch. We sent them a substantial payment on account to meet their pressing liabilities, and we should like to take the full balance in our hands when we lecture for them on Sunday, November 9. The Fund will be closed by then in any case, and we shall print the Branch's acknowledgment.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freethought Magazine—Torch of Reason—Glasgow Herald—Progressive Thinker—Open Court—Boston Investigator—Two Worlds—Royal Standard—Truthseeker (New York)—Newtownards Chronicle—Freidenker—Humane Review—Colne and Nelson Times—Retford News—Fermanagh Times—Daily Record—Edinburgh Evening News.

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.

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### Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Oct. 26) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. For the present, at any rate, he is not taking more than two meetings in one day. There will be no morning lecture, therefore, on this occasion. Mr. Foote hopes to meet a strong rally of his South Lancashire friends in the afternoon and evening. This is his first visit to Manchester since his late illness. For that reason he has not returned a definite "Yes" to the request that he would give a poetical or dramatic reading before the evening lecture. It is probable that he will do so, but not certain. The circumstances of the hour will decide.

There was another large audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Church, Chapel, and Children." A very fair proportion of ladies followed the lecture with evident interest and appreciation. The applause at the end was very marked from all parts of the meeting. Some questions were afterwards answered.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Oct. 26). His subject will be "The Church Congress: a Study in Religious Absurdities." No doubt he will have a good meeting.

Freethinkers in that district will please note that Mr. Foote has arranged to deliver two lectures at Sheffield on the first Sunday in November. The announcement is made in this pointed way because he has not visited Sheffield for some years, and those who wish to hear him might be annoyed at missing this opportunity.

It is proposed to remove the Liberal University from Silvertown, Oregon, to a more central position in the United States. A situation is contemplated in Kansas City. A building erected by the Young Men's Christian Association in 1887 at a cost of \$124,000 can be purchased for \$85,000—\$30,000 payable on January 1, and the balance to stand at 5½ per cent. interest. The Board of Directors are satisfied with the location, and a strong effort is being made to raise the requisite money for the purchase. "To have a Y. M. C. A. building converted into a Liberal University," says Mr. Paul W. Geer, the secretary, "would be a strange turn in affairs."

Mr. J. F. Haines, the East London Secularist veteran, has some good long letters in the *East London Observer* on the Vaccination question, with special reference to the Report of the Medical Officer of Stepney. We gather from a letter signed "Tom the Tinman" that the Vicar of St. Stephen's has been standing up for compulsory vaccination. That, of course, is only fair. State Religion ought to support State Medicine. "Tom the Tinman" more than hints that some of the leading anti-vaccinators require "a knowledge of the Gospel." But perhaps they know it too well.

Our old friend and colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes, as we see by the latest number of his *Liberator* to hand, is not quite certain that he will remain at Melbourne. He says he may "go to England next year"—but he is not resolved. "The only things that keep me here," he writes, "are the goodness and friendship of a very few persons—the *Liberator*, whose circulation is on the increase—and the dislike I feel to running away from a difficult task and an undesirable place." Victoria has long suffered from a want of prosperity, and the Freethought movement has been affected in consequence. Mr. Symes has had a long and stiff battle at the antipodes. A change would do him good. We hope at least that he will be able to visit the old country. It would give us an opportunity of seeing him once more. Our last meeting with him took place in Holloway Gaol nearly twenty years ago. We could not shake hands with him then, owing to the prison barriers. It would be a pleasure to grasp his honest hand again.

Two very notable additions have been made to Messrs. Macmillan's admirable series of *English Men of Letters*. Mr. Leslie Stephen writes on "George Eliot," and Mr. Herbert Paul on Matthew Arnold. We are pleased to notice that no attempt has been made to conceal the freethinking opinions of these great writers.

Rev. Dr. Joseph Silverman, a New York rabbi, in his New Year's sermon, eulogised Zola in the following terms:—"Zola spells for Israel that type of manhood that is equivalent to the heroism of conviction and the martyrdom of faith. He is the author of the revision of the famous Dreyfus case, and will be immortalised in the annals of France and of Israel as the champion of the victim of hate and prejudice. To the Jew no name is dearer, no memory sweeter, no record



holier, than that of Emile Zola, the man of unparalleled courage."

Abraham Lincoln, the greatest of American Presidents, was certainly a Freethinker—though we cannot expect the Christians to advertise the fact too extensively. A monument to his mother has just been raised at Lincoln City, Indiana, and the Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune* gives a description of it and a short account of Abraham's early days. "One of the questions that has never been settled in the locality," it says, "is what Lincoln's religion was. Back in Kentucky, Thomas Lincoln was a Free Will Baptist. In Indiana he was a Presbyterian and later a Campbellite. Nancy Hanks was a Free Will Baptist all her life. Just what Abraham was no one around here ever knew to a certainty." Of course not. Having no religion, he professed none.

*The Humane Review* (E. Bell, 6 York-street, W.C.) for October is an interesting number. It opens with an anonymous article on "The Poems of John Barlas," a true poet whose "life that was already overcast by failure and misfortune has now for some years been wholly darkened by insanity." The extracts given suggest the desirability of a complete edition. Among the other contents we note "A Visit to the Antwerp Zoo" by G. C. Williamson, showing how much they are ahead of us in their treatment of animals over there; and "The Secret of the Mountains" by H. S. S.—a fine and noble piece of writing. This magazine, which is published quarterly at one shilling, should find plenty of readers.

*The Haltwhistle Echo* printed a good letter from Dr. J. G. Stuart on the Education question. Another letter has since appeared, signed by J. Leake, who, as a Nonconformist, advocates "secular education" in the public schools. He suggests that the ministers of religion are too lazy to teach the children themselves, and want the school-teacher to do it for them. We see that another letter from Dr. Stuart is promised. It is pleasant to find a local paper showing an example of intellectual hospitality to some more pretentious journals.

A town's meeting on the Education Bill was held in the Municipal Hall, Colne. There was a lot of riotous Nonconformist talk, but the chairman—Mr. D. J. Shackleton, M.P.—took a sensible view of the religious difficulty. He pointed out the delusive character of the Conscience Clause for all concerned, and then said that "the teaching of sectarian doctrines should be taken out of the hands of the teachers entirely," and that "a portion of the day might be devoted to the teaching of religion by any denomination that had children in the school supported by rates." This is not quite an ideal arrangement, but it is far preferable to the present system.

The members of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Water-colors have given the lead to the Corporation of Glasgow in the matter of the Sunday opening of the art galleries. They have decided, by an overwhelming majority, to open their galleries in Sauchiehall-street to the public on Sundays from two o'clock till five. No charge will be made for admission, and no Sunday labor will be employed. The members themselves will attend to the exhibition.

There are other signs of progress in Scotland. Professor Martin's lecture in Tolcross Halls (and on the Sabbath too!) is described by the *Edinburgh Evening News* as "little else than sentimental Agnosticism." Yet it was delivered under the auspices of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

The Freethought Publishing Company's supply of the Dresden Edition of Colonel Ingersoll's works will soon be exhausted. Those who want to secure a set should make early application.

Colonel Ingersoll's lecture, *Take a Road of Your Own*, has long been out of print. The Freethought Publishing Company are producing a complete edition, well printed, at the low price of one penny. It will be on sale in a few days.

### All Right, Anyhow.

The story of a Scotchman who attended a funeral which lasted two days, is told by Norman E. Mack, of Buffalo. On the second day, having imbibed too freely, he rose and proposed the health of the bride and groom.

A friend urged him to sit down, saying, "This is not a wedding; it is a funeral."

"Well," retorted the Scotchman, "whatever it is, it's a grand success."

### An Appeal to Nonconformists.

[This appeal was sent in the form of a letter to a London Radical newspaper. It was declined insertion under the curious plea of "pressure of matter regarding the Education Bill." Freethinkers can guess what that means.—EDITOR.]

MAY I beg to be allowed to express through your columns my regret that Nonconformists and all who profess and call themselves Radical fail to see that the only way to secure all-round justice in educational matters is to allow nothing but secular subjects to be taught in State-supported schools?

As long as the teaching of theology obtains therein, sectarian strife will hamper the progress of education, as it is doing now. A long as Nonconformists instruct Anglican children in religious matters, and Anglicans impart religious instruction to Nonconformist children, how can we hope for peace?

We are told that "Bible-teaching" in Board Schools is unsectarian. How can it be? The different Christian sects all build their varying doctrines on the Scriptures, and these same Scriptures are expounded in the schools by persons of different religious views. Now, however conscientiously a teacher may endeavor to avoid sectarian bias, his own doctrinal belief is bound to influence his exposition. I have, for instance, on my staff, a teacher who habitually refers to Jesus Christ as a mere man. This is hardly unsectarian religious instruction; yet I do not care to check this teacher (who is a Nonconformist), as I might thereby interfere with his conscience. Not long ago I had to ask another member of my staff not to teach his class that snakes used to walk around on their tails before the Eden episode.

Such subjects as the latter (who handles ordinary subjects most creditably) tell their classes when I am beyond earshot, I am afraid to conjecture. But of what is an intelligent electorate thinking, to allow a precious half-hour or so of school time to be daily wasted in "education" of this description?

Some Sacerdotal genius has invented the term "Godless Board Schools." This is a fine expression for insertion in election addresses for the purpose of misleading the unreflective, and stirring up the *odium theologicum*, but—what does it mean? Why not our "godless" General Post Office, or our "godless" Continuation Classes?

Those who shudder at the idea of a "godless" Board School have completely mistaken the *function* of the school, which is to train, develop, and store the mind of the child, and to create in him a thirst for knowledge; and just as a locomotive or a reaping machine is none the less a perfect instrument for being "godless," so the efficiency of the Board School will remain unimpaired when theological instruction is eliminated from the curriculum.

If Board Schools are at all anti-Christian, as some assert, this must be because religious subjects are taught therein. The Scripture lesson is absolutely the only opportunity for the discussion of religious topics. Forbid their introduction altogether, and the religious opinions of your child are safe. *Compel the teacher to expatiate on theology*, and if the seeds of doubt be thereby sown in your child's mind, blame the Scripture lesson.

It is popularly supposed that the people of this country will not have purely "secular" instruction at any price, but I believe that parents would accept this great principle to-morrow if they were not stirred up to resist by their pastors and masters of all denominations. Since I commenced to teach, some 2,000 children have passed through my hands, yet I have never known a parent anxious about his son's religious education. Many a parent has, however, made to me this earnest and saddening appeal: "Bring my boy along with his learning. I know now what it means to be without it."

The matter is capable of an easy test. School registers are, as a rule, called *before* the Scripture lesson commences, and children must then attend, or be marked absent. Now, let the register be called *after* the Scripture Lesson, and allow parents to send their children for religious instruction or not, as they please. Or, better still, let the Scripture lesson commence at 11.30 a.m., and allow all parents desirous of doing so to withdraw their children at that time from school. The intensity of the public yearning for religious instruction might then be accurately gauged.

It may be that some are under the impression that "Secular Education" implies instruction in the principles of Secularism. Let me hasten to assure such that there is no Secularist worthy of the name who would not as strenuously resist the teaching of his own philosophical principles in the schools as he now objects to the introduction of the religious opinions of others.

"But," say some, "there are children whom the Gospel would never reach if they were not 'got at' in school." This amounts to an admission that Christianity as a persuasive influence is a failure, and that children must be



converted by compulsion. Those who advance this plea should go a little further, and compel adults also to receive religious instruction or be fined.

It is deplorable that the Churches, with their vast influence and wealth, cannot manage to devise a means of instructing the rising generation in religion without having recourse to the intolerable meanness—not to give it a worse name—of appropriating public money for that purpose.

Two points alone should be sufficient to impel consistent Nonconformists to espouse the cause of Secular Education:—

(1) To devote money raised from the entire community to a religious propaganda amounts to a *State endowment of religion*, a principle which is supposed to be abhorrent to all lovers of religious freedom.

(2) The compulsion to give religious instruction constitutes a *religious test*, from whose vigorous and almost universal pressure no non-Christian teacher can hope to escape.

Nonconformists justly claim that their children are excluded from teaching in *some* State-supported schools, yet these same Nonconformists help to inflict an identical religious disability on the children of their non-Christian fellow-citizens, who are excluded from *the vast majority* of elementary schools in this country.

It is infamous that a man, who may be a consummate teacher, and a potential centre for untold good, should be debarred from entering the teaching profession because of his religious convictions.

The action of the majority of Nonconformists in this crisis is, to me, incomprehensible. They profess to be anxious to safeguard the conscience of the citizen, yet they wish to outrage that conscience by the continuance of religious tests. They desire to irrevocably fix on the limbs of others those fetters which they loathe and dread themselves. They cry, "Keep out the priest!" yet they hold the door open for him to enter the schools.

Let me, a Secularist, earnestly appeal to Nonconformists for fair play. Let me beseech them to believe that it is not necessary to be a Christian in order to lead a clean and upright life. Let me beg of them to remember that Nonconformity and Radicalism are not convertible terms, and that many of the truest Radicals are to be found in the ranks of the "unbelievers."

And, sir, let me ask all friends of education, and especially those who are of my opinion with regard to Secular Education, not to be afraid of speaking out, for education was never in such danger as it is at this moment.

HEAD MASTER.

## The Merchant of Venice.—II.

SHYLOCK THE JEW THE ONE NOBLE CHARACTER  
DEPICTED IN THE PLAY.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS.

(Minister of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Mo.)

ANTONIO, the arrogant, proud persecutor, is now helpless and humble. He boasts no more; his courage is clean gone from him; he becomes abject, and begins to whiningly talk of death. And now the man Shylock disappears. He is no longer only the individual Jew; he has become the incarnation of his people. It is not of himself he thinks; it is of his race. It is not the vulgarity of a personal revenge he seeks; it is the great and splendid dignity of a retributive justice that he attempts to exact in the name of his suffering kindred. He has been hated, he has been persecuted; and why? For no other reason than that he is a Jew. But a Jew is human, and Shylock says:—

"Hath not a Jew eyes, hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it will go hard but I will better the instruction."

It is not the Jew Shylock speaking; it is the universal Jew, the silent who has found speech, the

long-suffering and dumb whom circumstance has bid open his mouth and plead for retributive justice. But there comes a hint and suggestion of the personal. Few great characters can at all times be great enough to be entirely self-effaced. Now and then the individual, the peculiar, the personal shines forth. When they were on the way to the trial from the gaol, Shylock, referring to Antonio, whom the gaoler is leading along, says: "This is the fool that lent out money gratis." That was the personal Shylock; that was the very characteristic of the man. He could but hold in contempt the Gentile, not because he was a Gentile, but because he had that little sense and discretion to make a gift of the use of money.

And now comes the trial. For a moment, for a brief moment, Shylock triumphs. Armed with the bond and equipped with the knife, he awaits the order of the court to cut off the pound of flesh. Even the Duke of Venice is a suppliant before the despised Jew. He pities Antonio and pleads for mercy from Shylock. He does not so far forget his inveterate hatred of the Jew but that he insults him even while he pleads. He says to his friend: "I am sorry for thee; thou art come to answer a stony adversary, an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity, void and empty from any dram of mercy." He did not know that that was the description of all the Gentile world with respect to the Jew. For one brief moment Shylock triumphs. Bassanio pleads and offers six thousand ducats for the three, but Shylock replies: "If every ducat in six thousand ducats were in six parts, and every part a ducat, I would not draw them; I would have my bond." And here again Shylock the man rises into the transcendent incarnation of retributive justice; he stands as the restrained indignation of the sufferings of a people. The red mouths of countless wounds made by Christian knives in Jewish flesh find language on the lips of this proud, unbending Jew. And now comes Portia, the woman of whom Fanny Kemble said, "She was, and is, the ideal woman." And now comes Portia, admired and applauded by her generation and by the generations since. Nothing could be more astonishing, more fill the thoughtful mind with surprise, than that this heartless woman should receive the applause of a thinking world. She introduces her astounding performance by a hypocritical homily on mercy:—

"The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath; it is twice bless'd; it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes; 'tis mightiest in the mighty; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown."

And thus with soft and specious words of tenderness, of mercy, and of pity, Portia begins. She feigns an offer, too, of mercy, to Shylock; offers him in the name of the Court thrice the ducats held; reads them the bond, acknowledges the forfeit, and proclaims that Shylock may cut off the pound of flesh from nearest the merchant's heart. "The Jew shall have all justice," she exclaims; "therefore, prepare thee to cut off the flesh; shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less nor more, but just a pound of flesh; if thou cut'st more or less than just a pound, be it so much as makes it light, or heavy, in the substance, or the division of the twentieth part of one poor scruple; nay, if the scale do turn but in the estimation of a hair, thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate." Never was there a more subtle, specious, and damning perversion of the letter of the law to evade and destroy its spirit and intent than this made by Portia. Denied the penalty, Shylock now offers to take the payment of the ducats. This he is denied on the ground of having once refused mercy in the open Court. He then seeks to go, but is restrained by the same Portia, who again juggles and twists the law and makes the bond, whose terms Antonio himself prescribed, to constitute the attempt of an alien against the life of a citizen of Venice. Such an attempt was punishable by having one-half of the goods of the man that conspired confiscated to the State, the other half given to the intended



victim, and the life of the conspirator to be held at the mercy of the Duke. Thus, having robbed, humiliated, and put under the penalty of death this Jew, Portia received the applause of her people, and stranger still, receives the applause of Christendom. It can only be explained by the inveteracy of prejudice—the senseless, wicked prejudice against the Jew. Even the children upon the street have a term of contempt, and I stand here to say that every intelligent, justice-loving Gentile parent ought to see to it that his children are so instructed, and their sense of justice so awakened, that they themselves should see that it is an offence against good morals, obnoxious to the principles of justice, and odious to all the canons of good breeding and good taste for the Gentile children ever to use the word “Sheeny.” And this was Portia, the woman of whom Jessica said, “Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match and on the wager lay two earthly women, and Portia one, there must be something else pawned with the other, for the poor rude world hath not her fellow.” Yet this Portia, this lamb, became a wolf, this fair flower a nettle, this beauty a beast, this virgin bride a monster, through the prejudice and intolerance of religion. Hatred for her was a duty, persecution was piety, and injustice to the Jew a means of grace. Shylock, the man whose name has been for all these thoughtless centuries a synonym for avarice, cupidity, cruelty, and greed, Shylock the Jew was the one honorable character in the play.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### Milton.

MILTON, as a personality, is a classical expression of the Old English Nonconformist ideal. (I use the term “old” to contrast it with the later Nonconformist movements of Pigott, Wesley, Booth, or Sankey.) Milton was also a great poet, but on his literary qualities I shall only touch in passing. Primarily he was a Protestant Nonconformist, an old Puritan of the Stuart days. The first period of his life brings us to 1640, to the verge of the Civil War; this is his educational and classical period. His grandfather was a Roman Catholic, and Keeper of the Forest of Shotover, near Oxford. His father had turned Puritan, been disinherited on that account, and then earned his living as a scrivener or lawyer in London, where John Milton was born in 1608. The father was a man of keen intellect, thrifty, and successful in business, and fond of music and literature. His mother was a Bradshaw, and widely known for works of almsgiving and benevolence. Several Puritan divines helped in John Milton’s tuition, and at St. Paul’s Grammar School he was well grounded in Latin and philosophy. “From my twelfth year,” he says, “I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight, which was the first cause of injury to my eyes.” At Cambridge, Milton was renowned for scholarship and poetry, but was not popular with the majority of the undergraduates, who were mostly idle barbarian sportsmen from country houses. He was a strong Puritan, and hated the ritualism of Laud, and the very conception of written creed and sworn test was obnoxious to his independent mind, “perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take orders must subscribe himself slave, and take an oath, without which, unless he took with a conscience that he could relish, he must either straight perjure or split his faith.” In a letter to a friend, written at the age of twenty-three, he defended his love of learning and dreaming, in that he was only slowly moving toward manhood and inward ripeness. “All is, if I have grace to use it so, as ever in my great Taskmaster’s eye.” Here is displayed the earnest individuality and the self-consciousness so characteristic of Milton throughout. In 1632 he retired to his father’s newly-bought country house at Horton, near the Chilterns, where he composed the poems “Allegro,” “Penseroso,” “Comus,” and

“Lycidas.” In “Lycidas” he displays a vehement feeling *versus* the feeble clerics of the State-church of the day, who followed Laud and King Charles and neglected “the Pilot of the Galilean Lakes.” After the death of his mother he travelled to Italy, where, he says, “I contracted the acquaintance of many truly learned men,” among whom was Galileo, “a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican lecturers thought.” A great scholar of Naples excused himself for not being “able to show me the farther attentions he desired in that city, for that I would not be more silent in the matter of religion.” Milton closes his story of his grand tour by informing us that “I lived in all those places where so much license is permitted, free and untouched by any kind of vice and profligacy.” He now settled in Aldersgate-street, London, and maintained himself by taking pupils and literary work.

This brings us to the second period of Milton’s life, from 1640 to 1660, wherein he battles with voice and pen for Puritanism, the Commonwealth and Cromwell. He tells us he decided that he was called to lay aside his garland and singing robes for a time, and clothe himself in the garment of controversy, hoping some day to return to poetry when the nation shall have “enfranchised herself from this impertinent yoke of prelacy, under whose inquisitions and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish.” In 1641 he wrote a huge book called “The Reformation in England, and the causes that hitherto have hindered it.” In this book he inveighs against Ritualism, “stones and pillars and crucifixes, and the table of communion standing like a walled platform upon the brow of the quire, fortified with bulwarks and barricaded to keep off the profane touch of the Laicks.” Another book of the same year attacked Prelatical Episcopacy, as in no way apostolical. Five Puritan clerics had written a book called “Smectymnus.” Bishop Hall had attacked this work; Milton now attacked Bishop Hall. In intensity, in harsh bitterness, in their absolute conviction, and in their unhistorical dogmatism, these works are characteristic of old Nonconformity. Speaking of his fierce attacks upon Hall, “I suppose,” says Milton, “it will be nothing disagreeing from Christian meekness to handle such an one in a rougher accent and to send home his haughtiness well besprinkled with his own holy water.” He takes for granted that Puritan ideas are all “platformed in the Bible,” and that the constitution of the Church “be already set down by Divine prescript.” He speaks of the Bishops as a “tyrannical crew, and corporation of imposters,” “warning their unctuous and epicurean paunches,” “capable only of loaves and belly cheer,” and yet among these was the pious Andrews, and a little later Bishop Ken. “A man shall commonly find more savory knowledge in one layman than in a dozen of cathedral prelates.” Milton’s dogmatic narrowness and ignorance of history make him regard as absolute fraud, robbery, and impurity every institution but Puritanism. It is inconceivable to him that any Episcopalian can be actuated by sincere motives, while the Anglican Liturgy and the patristic authors he abuses as an “old drag-net, undigested heap and fry.”

By this time he had reached the age of thirty-five; he felt that he needed a helpmate and a house-keeper, and he somewhat hastily married Mary Powell, of Forest Hill, near Shotover, Oxford. This incident is one of the worst in his career; it displays in all its ugliness his intense self-consciousness and egoism. In the dull little house in Aldersgate-street Mrs. Milton complained that “no company came to her, and she often heard her nephew cry and be beaten,” while he complained of her as a “mute and spiritless mate”—as “one whose muteness hid all the natural sloth which is really unfit for conversation,” and as an image of earth and phlegm. It never occurred to him that she might have said the same of him. Evidently he expected that any woman—the first that occurred to him—would be



only too glad to negate her own life and devote it entirely to worshipping, drudging for, and cheering his noble self. Mary had come from a royalist family, and a romping household of eight young children; and how could she be expected to dance and sing in the presence of such an austere Pharisee? What makes the matter worse is the fact that out of this one incident he developed a theory of divorce, which he viewed entirely from the male point of view, and so founded a system of ethics upon personal convenience and utility. He refused to regard the subject from the point of view of society, of the children, or of the woman. Divorce for incompatibility of temper is no doubt right enough; but society is not bound to assent to the view that it is desirable because some male egoists are disappointed in their hasty marriages. In 1644 appeared one of Milton's finest works, *Areopagitica*, a speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, in which he demanded the rights of free speech, free press, free meeting, and free formation of judgment, and poured contempt upon those who believe things because their pastor or the Assembly of Parliament so determine for them; men who, "unable to bear the burden of religion, commit it to some divine of note, and then go away, to trade all the day without their religion." This book is filled with fine passages, but does not confront the two most specious arguments on the other side—the one that most men and women have not the time nor the brains to form accurate judgments on any matter beyond their shop and home, and the other that specialised science and methodised experiments and observation are more trustworthy guides to truth than private prejudice or sectional public opinion. The growth of the method of inductive science in our century has shown private judgment to be generally only private prejudice, and has made all these old controversies more or less out of date. After a few years' separation, Milton's wife returned to him, and in London his two daughters were born.

In 1649 he wrote his book—*The Regicides*—in favor of calling to account a tyrant or wicked king, and, after due conviction, of deposing him and putting him to death. In this same year he was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State, with a salary of about £300 per annum. In this capacity he conducted the foreign correspondence of the Cromwellian Government, and defended its action in a series of pamphlets which breathe the intense dogmatism, the austere isolation, and the one-sided convictions of his passionate nature. The book, *Eikon Basilike*, which had won popular sympathy to the slaughtered king, he attacked with the utmost fierceness, as "a conceited portraiture drawn out to the full measure of a masking scene, and set there to catch fools and silly gazers." Abuse is his main argument against the king—"the superstitious rigor of his Sunday's chapel, and the licentious remissness of his Sunday's theatre"; and against the Presbyterians—"their pulpit stuff hath been the perpetual infusion of servility.....and their lives the type of worldliness and hypocrisy." The Dutch grammarian, Salmasius, entered the fray, and, as Dr. Johnson said, "as Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius' life; and both, perhaps, with more malignity than reason." His manner of controversy, then, is a bad one—to flatter one's own passionate nature by taking for granted that all opponents of one's own views are knaves and fools, and in every way to be abused and insulted. His admiration for Cromwell was natural.

Milton was not a democrat; he was, like Thomas Carlyle, an aristocratic republican. He despised the people—"the credulous and helpless herd begotten to servility"; it was the government of the wise and capable that he desired—"the supreme power should be vested in the best and wisest of men." Cromwell, certainly, was a most capable and unscrupulous statesman; but Milton did not realise the force of historical sentiment and prejudice which made the continuity of the Protectorate impossible. In his

theological tracts he worked out arguments in favor of Disestablishment, Toleration, and Disendowment, though his polemical zeal forbade him to allow Popery and idolatry to be tolerated. He praises the simple manners of the Commonwealth leaders, "who live soberly and walk the streets as other men," as opposed to those of a kingdom and a court, whose "king must be adored like a demigod." In all these controversial works we see the characteristics of the Puritan, his thoroughgoing idealism and hate of compromise, in that he is determined that ideals shall be realised here and now, on this earth, coupled with the intense Hebraic Pharisaism—self-confident, absolute, and dogmatic—so easy then, so difficult to the historical and critical temper of our days. There is no persuasiveness, and little practical statesmanship, in Milton; but when he rises to the loftiness of an abstract idea, then his imagery and style expand grandly to the occasion. We must remember, too, that the ideas of Milton have powerfully influenced the older Nonconformity and the older Liberalism of England, and also the Puritans of New England; and the growth of republican forms and Congregational Church life in America owe something to his opinions and writings. "His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart"; but this star sent its light decades later into many Churches and nations. He is a whetstone that sharpens the few who are born stoics, and tempers them to a finer edge.

At the end of one of his books Milton appeals to God in the following words:—

"O let them not bring about their damned designs, that stand now at the entrance of the bottomless pit, expecting the watchword to open and let out those dreadful locusts and scorpions to reinvolve us in that pitchy cloud of infernal darkness, where we shall never more see the sun of Truth."

The worst that he feared took place; the old order in Church and State was welcomed back with orgies of frenzied excitement by the foolish multitude, and England, under Charles II., fell into the lowest depths of clerical and dynastic plotting, inefficiency, and shame. Milton had now a chance of realising the precepts of his own stoicism—"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven; what matter where, if I be still the same?"

Fallen upon inglorious days, he lived in retirement, petted by his third wife and by a garrulous Quaker called Ellwood; and, in his blindness, he dictated to his daughters the poems, "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," and "Samson Agonistes." The theology of these poems is Hebraic in feeling. God is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, a magnificent dictator, isolated, austere, and forensic. Jesus is not the simple teacher of the Third Gospel; he is the delegate and magistrate, and Pauline substitute for man the sinner. Milton's theology is Arian, and there can be no doubt that these poems, widely read in Baptist and Unitarian churches, helped to lead the old Dissenters into Unitarianism. In his old age Milton attended no church or chapel. "Haughtiness and self-esteem," says a contemporary, "made it impossible for him to learn from others. He had a certain severity of mind, not condescending to little things." Such a person is more praised from a distance than loved or studied; but, as a tower of lofty and uncompromising individuality, he is one of the great ones of which the nation is justly proud.

J. A. FALLOWS.

A Bishop was travelling in a mining country, and encountered an old Irishman turning a windlass which hauled up ore out of a shaft. It was his work to do this all day long. His hat was off, and the sun poured down on his unprotected head. "Don't you know the sun will injure your brain if you expose it in that manner?" said the good man. The Irishman wiped the sweat off his forehead and looked at the clergyman. "Do ye think I'd be doing this all day if I had any brains?" he said, and then gave the handle another turn.



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

## LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Church Congress: a Study in Religious Absurdities."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A. B. Moss.

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, Special S. D. F. lecture.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Harrold Johnson, B.A., "The New Religion of Self-Respect."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30. Debate between G. Maycock and R. P. Edwards.

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tunstall-road, Brixton-road, S.W.): 7, W. Platt, "Simplicity."

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7 p.m., J. W. Ramsey.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell) 7, Joseph McCabe, "The Ethics of Faust."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Miss Vallance, "Ibsen's Borkman."

## COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, 3, "Civilisation and the Native Races"; 7, "Paganism, Christianity, and Atheism."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, Minstrel Entertainment by Members of Dramatic Society. To be repeated on Tuesday, the 28th, at 8 p.m.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class. Mr. Glen, "The Sex Question"; 6.30, Robert Park, M.D., "Light, Sight, and the Organs of Vision," with Lantern Illustrations.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. M. Robertson, 11, "The Survival of Monarchy"; 3, "The Future of the Lower Races"; 7, "The Sacrificed Savior—God."

LEICESTER (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "Marie Corelli's Miraculous Masterpiece"; 6.30, "Zola the Atheist: his Life, Death, and Funeral."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Oct. 30, A. W. Hildreth, 7.45, "Socialism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "The Education Question."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Secularism: the True Philosophy of Life"; 7, "The Gospel According to Darwin." Tea at 5.

## LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—October 26, Sheffield. November 4 and 5, Parkgate: Debate; 12 and 13, Liverpool: Debate with G. H. Bibbings; 16, Liverpool; 25 and 26, Bolton: Debate with G. H. Bibbings. December 7, Failsworth; 9 and 10, Staleybridge: Debate; 11, Pudsey; Debate with Rev. W. Harold Davies; 21, Glasgow.

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