

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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A good deed is the best prayer. A loving life is the best religion.—INGERSOLL.

Why Ingersoll Was Born.

SOME weeks ago we commented on the protest of a Scotch-American minister of the Presbyterian persuasion, hailing from Cincinnati, against the association of Burns and Ingersoll at the famous Alloway Cottage. Ever since a controversy has raged in the *Ayrshire Post*, and the friends of Ingersoll have certainly given a good account of themselves. The controversy is now closed "by order," but not without some (presumably) editorial notes on the subject. These notes we propose to criticise.

The worthy editor says it is "very sad" to find "men of good intellect, superior in most respects to their brethren, rejecting Christianity." But it is just their brains that mislead them. If they had less they would believe like their neighbors. Or as the editor puts it:—

"It is just their strong intellect which leads such men into the labyrinths of doubt, where they lose their bearings, and, in their efforts to get out of the slough of despond, get a crick in their necks, which makes them ever afterwards walk with their faces averted from the hope and the beliefs which make life worth the living."

This mixture of metaphor is almost worthy of the Irishman who felt a storm brewing, smelt a rat, and promised to nip it in the bud. The lightning change from the labyrinth of doubt to the slough of despond is particularly admirable. But the point we wish to press is this. Why should a strong intellect lead a man into labyrinths? It was not the men of strong intellect who were ambushed in the South African war. The men of strong intellect ambushed the other fellows. Perhaps the editor means, amidst all his confusion, that the majority of people have not brains or courage enough to doubt the faith of their fathers. If that is what he means we quite agree with him. We have then to ask him why he thinks that *his* hope and *his* beliefs are the only ones that "make life worth living." Does he really believe that Scotland is the happiest country in the world? Does he fancy there is no joy in the absence of the Presbyterian religion? Does he imagine that men and women never smile in countries where predestination is unknown? Does he suppose there is no laughter in lands where everlasting torment has never been preached? Does he think that the Atheist finds life not worth living because he has lost the hope of a lackadaisical heaven and the fear of a frightful hell?

When will Christians learn that this "sadness" of unbelief is but evidence of their own lack of imagination? They cannot put themselves in the other man's place. They are unable to take his point of view. They fail to realise his prospect. They have only to look about them with open eyes to see that Atheists are not miserable. If they looked a little further they would see that some of the happiest people in the world live right outside Christendom. There is at least as much happiness in Japan as in Ayrshire, and more happiness in

Burmah than in England. Yes, and more morality too.

But to return to our sheep—as the French say. We do not complain of the editor calling Ingersoll an Atheist. He *was* an Atheist. His last lecture was one of the strongest expressions of Atheism we know of. But why call him a "rank Atheist"? He was not an old goat. He was not even an unwashed elder. It is not recorded that he gave off any offensive effluvium. Then why "rank"? Why do believers always try to get a dirty adjective in front of the substantives that apply to unbelievers? How would they like it if unbelievers kept on talking of "filthy Christians"? We daresay they would find even "silly Christians" most objectionable. Then why not take a thought and mend?

O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!

We take exception also to the words "coarse and unfeeling" being applied to Ingersoll. Evidently the editor has not read Ingersoll for himself. He is depending on hearsay. That indeed is his only excuse. And it explains his asking why Ingersoll went about opposing the Bible and Christianity, and what he had to offer in the place of what he wanted to destroy. Ingersoll opposed the Bible and Christianity because he believed them to be false. What he offered in their place was the truth; the truth of science and the truth of humanity. He thought curing a man of the disease of superstition was some good, even if you did nothing else; for it left the man in possession of mental health, and he might be able to do the rest for himself.

The editor calls Christianity at the worst "a harmless belief." He forgets that Ingersoll did not think it so. Ingersoll thought it a curse as well as a falsehood. It was clearly, therefore, not his duty to obtain a permit to lecture from the *Ayrshire Post*. And as to his "making his admirers pay dearly to hear him," that only means that he was a great successful orator. Nor is it a fact, we believe, that Christian preachers live on nothing. They cost this country alone some twenty millions a year.

But the cream of this editor's jocularly is to come. After premising that "the ways of the Omnipotent are strange and past finding out"—which we can well believe—he hazards the conjecture that Ingersoll was a "necessary tool in the hands of the Almighty" for a certain design. And what was it? Why, to give Christians, like this worthy editor, an opportunity of looking over the "idiosyncrasies of their goings." This is not an illuminating expression. We take it to mean that Ingersoll's function in life was to polish up the Christians, to make them better Christians, and to help them to walk straighter in the narrow way to heaven. That is what Ingersoll was born for. He was sent into the world to do gentlemen like the *Ayrshire* editor this good turn; and taken out of the world to be burnt in hell for having succeeded.

It seems odd that an ordinary Christian should think a man like Ingersoll was sacrificed for his poor personal benefit. But the oddness disappears on closer examination. The Christians believe that God himself died for them, and nothing in the way of vanity is impossible after that.

G. W. FOOTE.

England's Mental Wastage.

ONE of the faults of human beings, it is often said, is that they do not think enough. This may be true, but a far greater truth is that they do not think about the right things or along the right lines. The amount of mental energy that a man puts into the perpetration of a swindle is often enough to make a fortune in a legitimate manner. One man wastes his mental energy on calculations concerning the probable winner of the next race, when he might be thinking about some better method of local government or land ownership. Another reads trashy literature instead of good books; while another exhausts himself in thinking over problems that are either of no importance whatever, or of comparatively little value. There is plenty of mental energy in society; what is needed is that it should be directed to the right subjects and employed in a proper manner. Mental indolence is a sad social fact, but mental misdirection is a far greater and more serious one.

Two prominent Christian clergymen have been recently lamenting the manner in which our mental resources are allowed to run to waste, but, apparently, without the least consciousness of how far their own class and their own creed are responsible. The first, the Rev. James Brierly, says:—

“Speaking broadly, the English for generations have been an uneducated people. We are only now beginning dimly to realise what that means. There is no wealth-producer comparable to the human mind. There is no latent force which hoards in itself such illimitable possibilities. Niagaras roaring through the ages, the potencies of winds, of earth currents, of steam, of electricity, are nothing as power generators compared with the vibrations of brain cells. Niagara may run to waste for ever, and the loss would be a trifle compared with the loss where the mental force of a nation, for however short a period, is allowed to remain untapped.”

This is a teaching with which, in the main, Freethinkers will not quarrel; nor will the complaint of Canon Samuel Barnett, that people seem on strike against thought, and that our greatest danger lies in our mental indolence, rouse any serious dissent. The only curious thing is, as I have said, that these grumblers should not ask themselves why it is so, or fail to realise that this phenomenon is, in part, a portion of the harvest that Christianity has sown.

Let us face, first of all, the simple but indisputable fact that clear thinking is one of the most costly qualities, and plain, honest speaking one of the most expensive habits that anyone can possess. The man or woman who runs counter to popular prejudice must be prepared for all sorts of indignities and persecutions. This holds good of all department of life, but it applies with special force to religion. The man who dissents here must be prepared for at least social ostracism, at most for slander, misrepresentation, and actual violence. This is the story, in varying degrees of severity, of every man or woman who has ventured to step out of the beaten ruts of religious teaching, and seek for truth on his or her own responsibility. Every opprobrious epithet that malice could invent or bigotry perpetuate have been used against those whose only offence has been that they differed from the crowd. And this is not only past history, it is present experience, although happily the experience is not now quite so bitter as of old.

Is it possible for religion—above all, the Christian religion—to evade responsibility for this? Was there ever a great religion that paid less attention to the ethics of intellectual culture than Christianity? Impossible, for it is a subject that is almost, if not quite, ignored by Christianity proper. It plays no part in the alleged teaching of Jesus, and so far as the Churches have touched the subject it has been with the object of restraining and regulating intellectual activity, not with the object of stimulating it. As Lecky puts it, “An elaborate process of mental discipline, with a view of strengthening the critical powers of the mind, is utterly remote from the spirit

of theology.” All the natural tendencies were denounced by the early Church as sinful, but the bitterest invectives of all were reserved for the special vice, the pride of the intellect. It was intellectual pride that brought Lucifer from heaven to hell, and the thirst for knowledge was enough in the eyes of true believers to damn anyone, no matter what his other qualities might be. And as the Churches commenced so they have all continued. The type of mind they have all blessed has been the credulous, believing kind. The type they have all cursed has been that which doubted, enquired, criticised, and demanded proof as the condition of assent. No one has ever yet heard of people being turned out of church or chapel for not knowing enough. We have all heard of people being expelled for knowing too much.

Here, then, lies the responsibility of Christianity. Having a control over human nature such as no other organisation ever has possessed, it deliberately and systematically used its energies for the express purpose of crushing a legitimate taste for inquiry and criticism. New views in science, in religion, and in sociology have been met with the force of wealthy Christian organisations, and either crushed out of existence or terribly hampered in the area of their usefulness. The thinker, the investigator, the discoverer, the reformer, was suppressed; the foolish, the timid, the cowardly preserved. The race is today what past centuries of Christian rule have made it; and if we now find an amount of mental indolence and obliquity, that acts as a serious obstacle to social reform, the responsibility lies properly with those who have for so long directed the course of the human intellect.

So much for one aspect of the subject; now for another. Whatever disinclination for thinking people show may, in large measure, be fairly attributed to their Christian antecedents and surroundings. But, beside this disinclination for thinking, there is an enormous misdirection of mental energy always going on. Mr. Brierly, in the passage quoted, complains of this national waste, and, writing with the object of discrediting the clergy of the Established Church, fails to see how accurately it describes the influence of the Christian clergy as a whole. Mr. Brierly himself is one of a clerical army of some 50,000 men, and the questions with which these people, as clergymen, are vitally concerned, necessarily involve mental wastage. Pick up the report of any religious gathering, or take up religious newspapers, and one finds hours and columns spent discussing questions of vestments, lights, incense, images; whether Dissenters are Christians, or whether Protestants have a right to the title of “Catholic”; are the English clergy in the line of apostolic succession? etc.—all questions interesting enough to sound (or unsound) believers, but questions which *per se* are not of the slightest social value to anyone else.

But one need not go so far as this, because the case is strong enough without this last very safe assumption. Let these questions be of some value, which I neither believe nor admit, the fact remains that there are other questions of greater value still. The problem of education, as Spencer reminds us, is not whether some knowledge is useful and other knowledge useless, but *what* knowledge is of most worth. Man has but a limited measure of time and a limited amount of energy; and therefore the whole rule of right guidance is to learn the more valuable lessons first, and leave the less important ones for subsequent mastery. And, whatever be the value of those questions about which professional theologians are eternally squabbling, it is certain that questions of sanitation, hygiene, social and political economy, are of greater importance still. Yet, while the existence of the evils of overcrowding, sweating, non-sanitation, and general ignorance are passed by with a comparatively mild protest, the country is passionately warned that its existence depends upon adopting this or that view concerning inspiration, auricular confession, or similar topics.

Nor does it weaken the argument to admit that

there are many intelligent men engaged in this religious campaign; on the contrary, it strengthens it. If *all* the clergy were incurable fools, and all those who listened to them ditto, comparatively little harm would be done. Folly in the pulpit could then harangue Stupidity in the pew, and the two thus engaged would be far less injurious socially than interfering in current affairs. The regrettable feature is that many of those thus engaged are men of intelligence and ability, and the social evil is therefore all the greater. Let one imagine what would be the social result if all the intellectual energy men put into theological questions were devoted to subjects of immediate practical interest, or if the money now spent on the maintenance of this army of religious preachers, and in buying up scholarships for the defence of this or that religious doctrine, were devoted to the maintenance of an equal number of social and scientific missionaries, devoted to no party but that of the common welfare of all, and aiming at nothing but the spread of enlightenment.

And in addition to the waste of intellect on the part of the professional classes, there is the waste on the part of the lay portion of society. Thousands of people will put plenty of energy in the organisation of a mission to "bring people to Christ," but how much energy will they show in the matter of bringing people to a polling-booth or to a right consciousness of social questions? Why, in a large number of cases it is their boast that they take no interest in such matters, they are concerned only with the soul's welfare. This, say the clergy, is due to their conviction that the immortal welfare of a man is the more important of the two. Rubbish! It is due to the age-long Christian teaching that interest in this world's affairs was a sign of moral depravity. Just as the Churches neglected the culture of the intellect, so they discouraged the development of the social consciousness. The great difficulty in the path of the social reformer is that he has to practically create a conscious interest in social matters. The religious preacher has an audience that has been prepared for him, the social or scientific teacher is as a voice crying in the wilderness; and for this he has, again, to thank the combined influence of the Churches, past and present.

It is this, indeed, that constitutes the great crime of Christianity against humanity. Its burnings and slaughterings and persecutions, one might agree to forget, if their consequences ended in the prison or at the stake. But they did not. While it was crushing out one mental type, it was perforce creating another. As it placed a tax upon quick wits and independent speech, it thereby placed a premium upon dullness and timidity of character. Here, as elsewhere, we are the children of our ancestors, and if it is necessary for Canon Barnett and the Rev. Mr. Brierly to lament that people are mentally indolent, and that the nation's mental resources have been, and are, being wasted, one may reasonably inquire whether, all things considered, we could fairly expect any other result?

Primarily, this fostering of an anti-social or non-social type by Christianity was due to the tendency of all Eastern religions to develop the ascetic character. But there was a secondary, and a by no means unimportant cause. All religions, all Churches, as they reach positions of power and wealth have served, and do still serve, as the guardians of vested interests. The wielders of despotic power, the holders of privilege, have always found their best friend and staunchest ally in religion. It was to their interest that a lively social consciousness should *not* be encouraged, and equally to their interest that mental activities, which must find some outlet, should exhaust themselves on religious questions. It is for this reason that we find scepticism and reform, religious belief and stagnation, always contemporaries. It is this lesson that the "leaders" of society have learned and appreciated. When the people have learned the same lesson equally well, we shall not be far from the dawn of a new day.

C. COHEN.

The Old Order Changes.

"The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."—TENNYSON.

"If in manhood you extend the bounds of knowledge your son may mount still higher than *you*."—GOETHE.

IN former ages the abstruse questions of philosophy were the property of scholars. The printing press has altered that. With the facilities now given for the acquisition of books every one can become more or less a scholar. The old faith in the dogmatism of a master is gone.

The consciousness of this knowledge weighs like a nightmare upon the priests. They watch the progress of Rationalism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun.

The Biblical theory of the creation and fall of man, once universally accepted as the basis of the Christian religion, is dying. Geology, first among the sciences, gave it a treacherous stab. For years the priests and their dupes strove to prove that the wound the theory received was a mere scratch, that everything could be harmonised, that Science and Religion were brothers. But, like Geraint, the knight who bled secretly beneath his armor, the wound was there. The theory was tottering to its fall, when the arrival of Charles Darwin with his theory of evolution gave it the final blow and stretched it in the dust.

Man must now reverse his beliefs. Not from the perfect to the imperfect, but from the imperfect to the perfect runs the cosmic chain, or as Spencer phrases it, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Whether we go back to the fish, or, farther still, to a mass of nucleated jelly, or confine ourselves to a more immediate ancestor, we can no longer believe in the descent from a perfect pair of beings. Adam and Eve are indeed driven out from their legendary garden, not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by Charles Darwis with a steel pen. The Satanic snake has vanished also. He has vanished to the limbo of other myths, and can survive only as a memento of past ages, with other deities and demons of the childhood of nations.

"Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, Man, was born."

With merciless logic, science advances step by step. In vain the guardians of the shrine cry out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Science is inflexible. Truth alone she seeks, and under her banner she must go on, conquering and to conquer.

The theologians of to-day have to tread warily in intellectual discussion. They no longer presume to any knowledge of the real being of God. They will have no positive definition of a deity at all. They indulge in speculation concerning "that something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," the "categoric imperative," and other similar claptrap. They are in reality afraid of the self-contradictory absurdities of an obstinately anthropomorphic theology. They now tell us that God is an omniscient mind. This is the last vestige of that barbaric theology which regarded Deity as a vigorous but uncertain old gentleman with a beard and an inordinate lust for praise and propitiation. The modern idea is as unreasonable as the one it has replaced. To adapt the argument of H. G. Wells*—"A mind thinks, and feels, and wills. It passes from phase to phase. Thinking and willing are a succession of mental states which follow and replace one another. But omniscience is a complete knowledge, not only of the present state, but of all past and future state; and, since it is all these at any moment, it cannot pass from phase to phase. It is stagnant, infinite, and eternal. An omniscient mind is as impossible, therefore, as an omnipresent moving body—which, as old Euclid would say, is absurd. It is but the natural and inevitable result of any endeavor to define the indefinable."

* *Anticipations*, cap. ix.

That is the essential weakness of religious speculation. The theologian, unlike the scientist, never launches out into the deep. He always hugs the shore, always timidly seeks shelter under the shadow of the land, whilst the bolder Freethinker ever directs the prow of his barque towards the illimitable ocean.

Two generations have seen the consummation of the most tremendous intellectual development of modern ages. The theory developed by Charles Darwin and elaborated by Herbert Spencer is, as regards philosophy, the most momentous of any that has ever been propounded. Under the seemingly harmless deductions lies the dynamite which has blown into atoms the theological nonsense which satisfied our less educated forefathers.

Woe—woe.
Thou hast destroyed it,
The beautiful world,
With violent hand;
It tumbles—it falls abroad.
A demi-god hath shattered it to pieces.

So sang the spirits to Faust. The world of dreams and shadows is, indeed, gone. Not all our regrets, nor all our wailing, can ever now restore the old childlike faith, when mists of ignorance veiled the world before Man, when he gathered the flowers of superstition which filled the dales, when he had nothing and yet enough, no dissatisfaction with Illusion, no longing after Truth.

MIMNERMUS.

Christian Consolations.

"I know of but few Christians so convinced of the splendor of the rooms in their Father's house as to be happier when their friends are called to those mansions than they would have been had the Queen sent for them to live at court; nor has the Church's most ardent desire, 'to depart and be with Christ,' ever cured it of the singular habit of putting on mourning for every person summoned to such departure."—RUSKIN.

"I find that when a Christian loses a friend the tears spring from his eyes as quickly as from the eyes of others. Their tears are as bitter as ours. Why? The echo of the promises spoken eighteen hundred years ago is so low, and the sound of the clods upon the coffin so loud, the promises are so far away, and the dead are so near."—INGERSOLL (*The Dying Creed*).

We are often told that Christianity offers a consolation to the bereaved, in the belief that they will meet with their loved ones again in another world.

Even if this were true, it would not constitute an argument for the truth of Christianity, for a Freethinker cannot believe in a thing simply because it is a comforting belief, any more than he can disbelieve in evolution because it shows us that, instead of the universe being created exclusively for his benefit, man is merely an incident in the evolution of a very minor planet, wheeling round a very minor sun, which existed millions of years before his appearance, and which will in all probability revolve in its orbit for millions of years after his extinction.

But those who are at all acquainted with Ecclesiastical biography know that the consolations of immortality often fail when brought to a practical test. It is not very long ago that Dr. Parker broke down in the pulpit after the death of his wife, even going to the extent, if I remember rightly, of doubting the existence of God. A greater than Dr. Parker has also borne witness to the failure of religion to console him in bereavement. Martin Luther, on the death of his daughter, Magdalen, wrote to his friend Jonas:—

"You will have heard that my dearest child is born again in the eternal kingdom of God. We ought to be glad at her departure, for she is taken away from the world, the flesh, and the devil; but so strong is natural love that we cannot bear it without anguish of heart, without the sense of death in ourselves. When I think of her words, her gestures, when she was with us and in her departing, even Christ's death cannot relieve my agony."*

Far from depreciating these outbursts of grief, we sincerely sympathise with them, and Luther's strong

* Kostlin's *Life of Luther*. Cited in *Contemporary Review*, August, 1883.

love for children constituted the best side of his character. We merely cite them to show that, in the face of death, religion is not the anodyne it is generally represented to be.

"But," it will be asked, "has the unbeliever any consolation in the loss of his loved ones?" Yes; the unbeliever has one consolation—he has the consolation of knowing, as he looks upon the sufferings of his beloved ones, that

"There is no God; no Fiend with names divine
Made us and tortures us; if we must pine
It is to satiate no Being's gall.

We bow down to the universal laws,
Which never had for man a special clause
Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate."

He has not to reconcile his belief in a Heavenly Father, who is all loving and all powerful, who nevertheless permits, if he does not cause, suffering, which, if inflicted by any human being, would call down the execration of mankind. He knows that Nature—whose child he is—is neither cruel or kind, neither moral or immoral, neither just or unjust. It is a consolation to the Atheist to know that there is no malignant intelligence behind nature, dealing pitiless blows on his loved ones from "behind the veil," and knowing this, the Atheist submits to the inevitable without bitterness.

The believer says he has the consolation of knowing that he will see his child again in heaven—of course, every believer is sure that he will get there if no one else does—but the Atheist has no wish to dwell for all eternity under the control of a being who has permitted the torture of his child in this world, and who gives no guarantee that he will not repeat the process on the other side.

Professor Huxley was an unbeliever in a future life; he also suffered the loss of his eldest child when only four years old. He records the birth of the child with much joy in his journal under the date New Year's Day, 1857. Four years later he wrote in a blank space below the entry on the same page:—

"And the same child, our Noel, our first-born, after being for nearly four years our delight and our joy, was carried off by scarlet fever in forty-eight hours. This day week he and I had a great romp together. On Friday his restless head, with its bright, blue eyes and tangled golden hair, tossed all day upon his pillow. On Saturday night, the fifteenth, I carried him here into my study, and laid his cold, still body, here, where I write. Here, too, on Sunday night, came his mother and I to that holy leave-taking.

"My boy is gone, but in a higher and a better sense than was in my mind when I wrote four years ago what stands above. I feel that my fancy has been fulfilled. I say heartily and without bitterness—'Amen, so let it be.'"

Charles Kingsley wrote a letter of sympathy on the occasion, and urging the consolations of immortality. In his reply, which is too long to reproduce in full, he says:—

"As I stood behind the coffin of my little son the other day, with my mind bent on anything but disputation, the officiating minister read as a part of his duty the words, 'If the dead rise not again, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I cannot tell you how inexpressibly they shocked me. Paul had neither wife nor child, or he must have known that his alternative involved a blasphemy against all that was best and noblest in human nature. I could have laughed with scorn. What! Because I am face to face with irreparable loss; because I have given back to the source from whence it came, the cause of a great happiness, still retaining through all my life the blessings which have sprung and will spring from that cause, I am to renounce my manhood, and, howling, grovel in beastiality? Why, the very apes know better; and if you shoot their young, the poor brutes grieve their grief out, and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge."

Huxley goes on to absolutely repudiate "the hope of immortality or of future reward, and adds:—

"I can honestly say that for these fourteen years such a consideration has not entered my head. No; I

* *City of Dreadful Night*.

can tell you exactly what has been at work. *Sartor Resartus* led me to know that a deep sense of religion was compatible with the entire absence of theology. Secondly, science and her methods gave me a resting-place independent of authority and tradition. Thirdly, love opened up to me a view of the sanctity of human nature, and impressed me with a deep sense of responsibility."

And he concludes:—

"If in the supreme moment when I looked down into my boy's grave my sorrow was full of submission and without bitterness, it is because these agencies have worked upon me, and not because I have ever cared whether my poor personality shall remain distinct for ever from the All from whence it came and whither it goes."²

Huxley submitted to the inevitable "without bitterness," knowing that there was no intelligence in nature responsible for the death of his child; that no Almighty Father lounged on his throne, surrounded by legions of angels eager to do his bidding, who yet regarded passively the child's battle for life against the destructive violence of the fever, until the last sigh and the last breath had been wrung from the little body.

And is not the belief that there is no other life in which we can condone for any cruelty we may commit here an incentive to make us kinder to those around us? As George Eliot well said:—

"Nay, it is conceivable that in some minds the deep pathos lying in the thought of human mortality—that we are here for a little while and then vanish away, that this earthly life is all that is given to our loved ones and to our many suffering fellow-men—lies nearer the fountains of moral emotion than the conception of extended existence. And surely it ought to be a welcome fact, if the thought of mortality as well as immortality be favorable to virtue."³

Let us so act that, when the parting comes, we cannot reproach ourselves with the thought that we might have made our lost ones happier. The kinder we are the less we shall have to regret, and time will heal those wounds which neither religion nor philosophy can minister to at the moment of our loss.

Let us remember, with Renan—"We often read on antique tombs: 'Courage, dear such an one; no one is immortal; Hercules himself is dead.' The consolation may be slender; it is nevertheless real. Marcus Aurelius, dear friends, was superior to all of us in goodness, and it satisfied *him*."⁴

WALTER MANN.

The Bible Barred Out of Nebraska Schools.

A TELEGRAM from Omaha, Nebraska, announces that the Supreme Court of that State on October 9 handed down a decision in a suit which has been before the courts for several years, and which will prevent the reading and studying of the Bible, the singing of hymns, and the reciting of prayers in the public schools of the State. The suit was brought by Daniel Freeman, of Gage Co., who objected to his children attending a school where religious exercises are taught or practised. The question involved was as to whether the exercises objected to were religious and sectarian, and the decision affirms that they were both. The section of the State Constitution bearing on the subject forbids exercises by a teacher in a public school, in school hours or in presence of the pupils, consisting of Bible readings, the singing of hymns, or praying, in accordance with the doctrines, beliefs, or customs or usages of sectarian Churches. Daniel Freeman, the complainant, is the original homesteader of the Union, having taken out Homestead No. 1 many years ago. Nebraska is to be congratulated on possessing such an able and brave champion of liberty of conscience, and such an enlightened Supreme Court. Religion has hold enough upon the credulous masses, without being aided by the judge, the policeman, and the school-master.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

* *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*. By L. Huxley. (Macmillan.) Cited in *Literary World*, November 23, 1900.

† *Essays*, p. 352. We take the opportunity of calling attention to the new edition of the *Essays with Theophrastus Such*, in one volume, published by Blackwoods' for two shillings (Warwick edition).

‡ Preface to *Feuilles Détachées*.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Born iv. Aug., MDCCXCII.; Died viii. July, MDCCCXXII.

JUST over the Surrey border, on the old coach road from London to Horsham, a turning to the right, close by the thirty-fourth milestone from Westminster Bridge, leads to the old-world Sussex village of Warnham; and, farther on, past the village, the lodge and the avenue gate of the manor house of Field Place abut on the right-hand side of the way, close by the modern hamlet of Broadbridge Heath, which has sprung up, with all its ugliness, two miles from Horsham, on the turnpike to Pulborough and Arundel. Field Place is the birthplace of Shelley. Once more a scion of the immortal house occupies the old home, and once more a descendant of old Sir Bysshe "drives the pace;" for Sir John Shelley, of Field Place, answered not to a magisterial invite to Crawley the other day respecting furious motoring, "the usual and costs" following. In 1811 it took Percy a night and a day to reach York by the coach from Gracechurch-street, when he eloped with Harriet Westbrook to marry her in Edinburgh; and slow, surely, must have seemed the journey. At what a pace would he have motored!

However, matters appear to progress tardily enough in the district of the poet's ancestors, Horsham being perhaps pretty much the same as in Shelley's day, while Warnham probably has altered not at all. True, the Bluecoat boys from the dismantled Christ's Hospital in Newgate-street, with their fine pile of red buildings, occasion the blending of modern surroundings with the dress of the period when Edward the Sixth was king; but, otherwise, the vicinage of the Shelley demesne contains most of the undisturbed rambling grounds of little Percy. By permission, not, however, readily obtainable, the house may be viewed, including the bedroom in which the poet began his chequered life. Over the fireplace in this room his full name, date of birth, and the following lines are inscribed:—

"Shrine of the dawning speech and thought
Of Shelley, sacred be
To all who bow where Time has brought
Gifts to Eternity."

A mile from the house the village of Warnham nestles in a quiet valley; the church dates back, according to the records, certainly to 1247, and it contains a little chapel—the "Shelley Chapel"—several members of the family being interred here. The floor of this apartment has now been boarded over, and gravestones, which were presumably removed from the chapel, recline behind the organ in the church proper. Highly interesting are the church's manuscript records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, covering the bygone centuries, and affording quite a study in the evolution of caligraphy. For all time one of twelve baptismal entries under "1792" will appeal to the curious:—

"Sep. 7th. Percy Byshe, son of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley. Born August 4th, 1792."

A second *s* in "Bysshe" has been interpolated, but whether at the time or subsequently there seems to be no evidence. Memorial tablets, erected by the parents, perpetuate the memory of Elizabeth and Hellen Shelley; also of Charles Bysshe Shelley, here described as "grandson of Sir Timothy and Lady Elizabeth Shelley." Poor little chap! It was not respectable to mention his parents—Percy Bysshe and Harriet Westbrook Shelley; and hence, with all the sacred family paraphernalia of the lady-chapel, Shelley himself is—I was going to say—ignored. Not so, however; for a sign of the lifting of prejudice, a harbinger of the appreciation of the coming ages, manifests itself in fashion so simple as to be in striking, pathetic contrast with its mural surroundings; just a small bough of a tree—faded now with the evaporation of the sap—and attached thereto a label, inscribed thus:—

"I cut this sprig from the laurel bush growing over Shelley's grave.
"C. J. LUCAS.
"Rome, 20 March, 1899."

Regretting that which seemed a studied omission from the family tablets, one's heart yearned with gratitude at Mr. Lucas's graceful tribute; and instantly the mind recalled that fearfully grim incident which a modern biographer has transcribed from Trelawny. It is the cremation scene following upon the recovery of the body from the blue Mediterranean:—

"The wine and the oil and salt made the flames glisten and quiver. So intense grew the heat from the white-hot iron and the fires which encompassed it, that the atmosphere became tremulous and wavy. Higher and higher the flames arose, now sombre with smoke; now, when with them the sun's light was interfused, glowing with strange gold. The corpse had become a dark indigo color, and at last fell open, laying bare the heart—which on a sudden impulse Trelawny snatched forth, burning his hand severely as he did so. Slowly the skeleton became calcined, till almost nothing was left save some few fragments of bones.....At last all was over. The ashes of the dead, having been placed in an iron box, were conveyed to Rome. Here they were finally buried at a spot in the Protestant Cemetery, selected and purchased by Trelawny. *Around Shelley's grave Trelawny planted several cypresses and laurels, among whose branches the thrush now calls at morn, and whence in the evening the song of the nightingale is heard.*"

One biographer (Smith) states that the heart only remained buried in Rome, the ashes being preserved at a seat of the Shelleys—Boscombe Manor, Christchurch, Hants. Had not the piratical running down of the *Ariel* terminated the life of England's sweetest singer, it seems not unlikely that Sir Percy Shelley, Bart., as he would have become, might have found a last resting-place in Horsham Church, since his father, with augmented fortune, appears to have adopted this and discarded that at Warnham. The memorials in the old church, prettily situated on the banks of the Arun, which bounds Horsham, possess an interest as exhibiting—or, rather, as suppressing—the poet's pedigree. The following refers to his grandparents and father:—

Sacred to the memory of
SIR BYSSHE SHELLEY, BART.,
Of Castle Goring, in this County,
Who died January the 6th, 1815,
At the advanced age of 83 years.

And of

MARY CATHERINE, his wife,
Daughter and heiress of the Revd. Theobald Michell,
Of this Parish,
Who died November the 8th, 1760,
Aged 25 years.

Also of

MARY CATHERINE, their daughter,
Who died July the 26th, 1784,
Aged 25 years.

Their eldest son,

SIR TIMOTHY SHELLEY, BART.,
Erected this tablet,
1830.

Eight years had elapsed since the poet's death, and there was no reference to him. But yet more significant appears the absence of allusion to Percy on the companion tablet to his father and mother:—

Sacred to the memory of
SIR TIMOTHY SHELLEY, Bart.,
Who died April the 24th, 1844,
Aged 91 years.

His widow, ELIZABETH SHELLEY, caused this Tablet to be erected, as a lasting testimony Of her love and respect for him while living And of the regret she feels for his loss.

"My soul hath longed for thy salvation:
And I have a good hope because of thy word."
—Psalm 119, verse 81.

ELIZABETH LADY SHELLEY,
Relict of the above.
Died the 21st August, 1846.
Aged 83 years.

At the other end of the church, to the left of the altar, a brass plate on the wall indicates the position of the family vault of Sir Timothy and Lady

Elizabeth. Of this, however, no outward trace remains. Lastly, under Sir Bysshe's imposing tablet a slab of white marble has been let into the wall. It measures about 18 ins. by 12 ins., and looks comparatively new; the heading of this article quotes the inscription, which, in turn, is an excerpt from that on the tomb at Rome.

Castle Goring, mentioned on the Sir Bysshe stone, stands amid beautiful sylvan scenery, four miles from Worthing, on the Arundel high road. It appears to have owed its inception to the status acquired by Bysshe when George the Third conferred the baronetcy for certain political services. The Somerset family now occupy the old mansion. For another memento of the poet we must go much farther west, right through the New Forest to the country of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and to Christchurch, the Twinham of the ancients, under whose venerable priory the Stour forms junction with the Wiltshire Avon. The church here has developed from the priory founded in 1250. It contains some fine monuments, one by Flaxman; but, of all, that by Weekes to Shelley, at once attracts the visitor. Shelley's second wife, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, is associated with it—a figure of surprising loveliness, almost as beautiful and as fragile as the subject typified, and, like Shelley's poetry, appealing to the innate susceptibilities of intelligence and beauty. The untimely death of Keats occasioned the finest elegiac poem in the language, and what was composed to his friend is, in turn, applied to the author, the fortieth stanza of the *Adonais* being engraved on the memorial:—

"He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn."

We cannot always account for impressions; unbidden they come, and, welcome or not, they often come to stay; and, somehow, a sight of this monument wrought an impression impossible to dispel. Although the image doubtless allegorised something of the sculptor's fancy, yet I could not help thinking that it represented the struggling, drowning Shelley; and, applicable as the eloquent lines are to Shelley himself, it seemed that they were inappropriate to him and the figure as well. It will be remembered that, after the wreck of the yacht, a volume of Keats, hastily doubled back in the pocket, contributed to the identification, and from this it has been assumed that one of Shelley's last thoughts was of *Adonais*. In imagination I found myself again in Upper Italy, on the shores of the Ligurian Sea; and, as it were, I saw the *Ariel*, sped by the land breeze from the port of Tregorn; the threatening storm breaks, the frail craft is struck, and—here is the stanza for the monument:—

"The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."

W. B.

A Needless Labor.

After waiting many a weary day to revenge himself upon a Lion for some unconsidered manifestation of contempt, a Skunk finally saw him coming, and posting himself in the path ahead uttered the inaudible discord of his race. Observing that the Lion gave no attention to the matter, the Skunk, keeping carefully out of reach, said:—

"Sir, I beg to point out that I have set on foot an implacable odor."

"My dear fellow," the Lion replied, "you have taken a needless trouble; I already knew that you were a Skunk."

—Ambrose Bierce.

Acid Drops.

THE Canadian authorities had at last to take forcible steps to prevent the harmless but fanatical Doukhobors from committing suicide. Their march towards Winnipeg, with the two-fold object of Christianising the world and meeting Jesus, was getting too dangerous. The cold was increasing, and a sudden drop in the temperature would have carried them off wholesale. The mounted police, therefore, assisted by two hundred citizens, put the Doukhobors on board a train and started them back to their own settlement. The poor fanatics offered passive resistance, putting their arms round each other, and refusing to move. They were pulled apart, however, and carried one by one to the train, the doors of which were guarded, to prevent them jumping out and killing themselves. Some were injured in the process, but none of them very seriously.

One can quite understand how these fanatics would fare at the hands of half-civilised police and soldiery in Russia. They would be lashed and kicked, and knocked with the butt-end of rifles, and prodded with bayonets, and given "hell" generally. Canada, however, is not Russia, and the poor creatures are treated with kindness and consideration. But they will have to stop their vagaries. No country can tolerate a swarm of tramps, even if they wander about in the "sacred name" of religion.

The Doukhobors, having arrived at Yorkton, where they met their womenfolk, are being driven towards their villages. They move sullenly, and declare that they will return and continue their search for the Messiah. Evidently the Canadian authorities have a very awkward problem to deal with.

This trouble with the Doukhobors may help to show us the sort of trouble the Roman government had with the primitive Christians. It was not in this world, as Gibbon said, that they expected to be either useful or happy; and the Gallios of the Roman Empire found them an intolerable nuisance.

The religious world, or at least the Church of England part of it, is still tremendously stirred up by the "heresies" of Dean Fremantle—the gentleman who wants to get rid of all the miracles of the New Testament, including the miraculous birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many of the faithful would like to see him turned out of the Church. But that is a difficult and expensive process. The *London Globe* prints some notes on the subject under the head of "Clerical Blasphemers." A correspondent of the *Times* states that a friend of his was ordained by the late Bishop Lightfoot "with the fullest knowledge that he totally disbelieved in the Virgin birth." The *Guardian* declares that Dean Fremantle's teachings will "drive men either into scepticism or into Romanism." The *Church Times* says that he "loosens all the bands of orthodoxy," and sighs because he is "entrenched behind impregnable fortifications of legal tenure." Evangelical Lord Nelson calls upon the Dissenters to defend orthodoxy, and affirms that "to permit such men" as Dean Fremantle to "remain in our Church" is a "mere mockery of religion." The *Church Review* is filled with "unspeakable sadness," and is certain that he can only end in "avowed unbelief." Altogether the fat is in the fire, and there is a lot of sizzle and smell.

Dr. Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London, while not assuming that Dean Fremantle is correctly reported, declares that if he is so he is certainly in the wrong. "If such teaching is correctly reported," he says, "I repudiate it in the name of the Christian Church." That settles it.

Another would-be heresy-hunter is the Rev. R. Raggett, of St. Luke's Church, Newcastle. This gentleman waxes hot against the domestic "infidel." He wants to know "what action is to be taken to purge the Church of such a man," and declares that his "continuance in office is a shame and a disgrace to the whole Church of England." Go it, Raggett! Let the fur fly! 'Tis a fine spectacle for the ungodly.

King Edward, we read, does not attend the whole of "divine service" at Sandringham. He walks in just in time to hear the sermon—which, we suppose, has to be judicially brief. But it is the prayers and hymns that constitute the principal part of public worship, and in neglecting these the King is practically showing how much he would like to let religion drop altogether. He cares a great deal more, we guess, for his Sunday evening musical parties.

The Rev. G. E. Rogers, a Sussex vicar, owns up frankly to having preached borrowed sermons, and says he means to continue the practice. He demands to know if a singer is expected to compose his songs, or an actor his plays, or a musician his music. Why then should a parson be expected to preach his own sermons? He fulfils a useful function if he acts as a sort of a slot machine. You drop in a penny and you get a good stock sermon. And as long as it is a good one, what does it matter who composed it?

This practice of reading classic sermons was recommended by Addison in one of his Sir Roger de Coverley papers, and his advice seems to have been taken if we may judge by an old story. A well-read man dropped into a strange church and was struck by the familiar sound of certain passages. "Ah," he said to himself, but loud enough to be heard by others, "that's South, that's Barrow, that's Taylor, that's Tillotson." "Turn that man out," cried the irritated parson. "Ah," said the stranger, "that's his own."

The report of the approaching retirement of M. Pobedonostseff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod in Russia, gives the dear *Daily News* an opportunity of indulging in one of its characteristic flights of fancy. Of course it scorns the Procurator's "cold, calculating bigotry," and thanks God that such a religious tyrant is only possible in Russia. But what is this tyrant's crime? He has simply carried out the little game of the English Nonconformists to the full extent of his greater opportunities. The Nonconformists say that Christianity—that is, Nonconformist Christianity—is too good a thing to be left out of the public schools. M. Pobedonostseff said it was too good a thing to be left out anywhere. If it was good for children, surely it was good for adults. That is how he looked at the matter; and, whatever else we may think of him, we must admit that he was logical.

There is something more than a conspiracy of silence with regard to Secular Education going on in the press that represents the Nonconformists in the present struggle. A few weeks ago we printed a most admirable letter by a "Head Master" that had been refused insertion in a *London Radical* daily. A similar letter from the same pen has just been denied admission in the *Portsmouth Evening News*. This paper is supposed to be Radical, but it seems to be a mere partisan organ of the Nonconformist Conscience. After declining to insert the letter just referred to, it printed in big type an extract from an insignificant organ of anti-infidelity in London, setting forth that Secularism had no acquaintance with truth, virtue, and morality, and was particularly offensive to "good-living people." This is fair-play as it is understood in certain journalistic circles. To stigmatise it in perfectly accurate language would be to emulate the verbal performances of Jesus Christ during his last visit to Jerusalem. What we prefer to do is draw the attention of Portsmouth Secularists to the true character of this supposed organ of justice, liberty, and progress.

Mr. Balfour reproaches the Nonconformists with having a superstitious veneration for the Cowper-Temple clause. Under its shadow, he says, they have invented almost a new orthodoxy. This is true as far as it goes, but the whole truth of the matter includes the reason for the Nonconformists' policy. The fact is that the Nonconformist leaders stick to the "unsectarian" platform because it is the one that best serves their interests in the competition with the Church of England. They feel that sectarian teaching, in the majority of cases, would mean Church teaching.

Mr. Bryce, who followed Mr. Balfour, said that if the Education Bill, with Clause 9, were carried, there would be complete secularisation of the schools in thirty years. If this be true, the sooner the Bill becomes law the better.

The following "examination" between an Inspector of Church Training Colleges and a student is distinctly good:—

Question: What instruction have you had in religious knowledge?
 Answer: None.
 Question: By whom was it given?
 Answer: By the Vicar.

The Lord Chamberlain has refused to license two new plays; one by Mr. Houseman on *The Nativity*, and the other by Mr. Walter Stephens on *Paradise Lost*. The ground of refusal is that these plays are concerned with Scriptural characters. But how about *Herod*? Is not Herod a Scriptural character? Yet he has been personated on the boards by Mr. Tree. What the Lord Chamberlain means is probably this—that the prejudices of orthodox Christians must not be affronted. For this is a Christian country—particularly on Sundays.

How far Christianity softens people's feelings when they find a good opportunity of gratifying "the devil" in them, is shown by the reports of the lynching of a negro at Corinth, Mississippi, for the murder of a white woman on Sunday, September 28. These reports (circulated by the Howard Association here) are from the *Ficksburg Herald* and the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. Ten thousand people are estimated to have watched this negro being burnt to death at the stake. Trainloads of excursionists came in to enjoy the spectacle. Women were present in considerable numbers, and fathers and mothers lifted up their infant daughters to see the performance. When the victim was chained up his clothes were torn off and distributed in pieces as mementoes of the occasion. The match was then applied to the combustibles, and what followed shall be told in the language of the *Appeal*:—"As the fire kindled, and the flames leaped higher, the crowd yelled with keen delight. Curses were heaped upon the poor wretch. The enthusiasm became contagious, and spread throughout the vast throng. Only the more passive citizens, who stood afar off, failed to cheer. Men danced around the pyre, like savages of old going through some tribal ceremonial. The fire began to touch the wretch's flesh. Then, with a shriek that could be heard a long way off, he struck at the flames as if he could with his hands keep them off. Again and again he shrieked, and each time the cry of pain was answered with shouts of joy or loud imprecations from the mob. The scene following then is simply indescribable. It was 3.35 o'clock when the fire was started, and at seventeen minutes to four o'clock he had ceased to move."

Clarke, the negro victim, to the last "moved his lips in prayer," and was "heard to call on his Savior and his mother." The Yahoos who burnt him for a holiday worshipped the same Savior. How this Christianity makes men love each other.

Accuracy was never a virtue among the clerical fraternity. We saw a letter from one of them the other day in a morning newspaper, complaining that he and his brethren did not want any more criticism, as they suffered from too much of it already. From complaint he passed on to sarcasm. "Ah," he said, "Voltaire on the Mistakes of Moses is all very well, but what also is wanted is Moses on the Mistakes of Voltaire." We suppose the reverend gentleman has heard of a book called *Some Mistakes of Moses*, and also that it was written by Voltaire. Of course the author was Colonel Ingersoll.

We have not heard so much lately of the great Mrs. Carrie Nation, who goes about in America trying to put down the drink trade with a hatchet. It was reported some time ago that she meant to pay England a visit. If she had that intention she has evidently changed her mind. Perhaps she was told that the English police are not like the American police in their tenderness for a woman wielding a hatchet on other people's fittings and furniture. Anyhow, she is still on the war-path in the land of her nativity. The latest news of her is that she was in the Black Diamond express accident outside Jersey City. Not being badly hurt, she shook herself together, and resumed her efforts in the sacred cause of temperance. Doctors brought brandy for those who were badly injured, but they did not reckon on Mrs. Carrie Nation. She smashed bottle after bottle, and they had to dodge her to give the sufferers a "reviver."

Mrs. Carrie Nation is a Christian. She is even a noisy Christian. But what a difference there is between her and the "Master." He turned water into wine. She wants to turn wine into water.

"Wherever the sun rises," an American paper says, "there is heard the matin song of the Salvation Army. Wherever the sun sets is heard its drum-beat. Wherever men suffer and sorrow and despair exists; wherever children moan and hunger, there are the disciples of William Booth. The man's heart is big enough to take in the whole world."

We don't wish to dispute that William Booth can "take in" the whole world. What we wish to observe is this—that the more moaning and hunger, and suffering and sorrow and despair there is in the world, the worse it is for the reputation of Christianity. It pretends to have come to redeem the world, yet it is always begging us to note how little has really been done in that direction. What a terrible record of wasted opportunities is the history of this pretentious faith!

Mr. Wilson Barrett means to support Christianity—while Christianity supports him. After *The Sign of the Cross* comes his new play, *The Christian King*, on which he lays his heavy melodramatic hand on Alfred the Great. The poor monarch, being long dead, cannot protect himself against

being introduced in Mr. Barrett's show. He is made to spout "fine" sentiments in all sorts of striking positions. Even the *Daily Telegraph* critic is obliged to observe that the unfortunate stage king "shares somewhat too obviously the opinions and the sentiments of certain prominent politicians of our own day."

The Paris correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, relating a chat he had with M. Navetat, the sous-brigadier in the police force who hunts down motor-car offenders on his motor-cycle, mentions that he accidentally ran down a motor-car thief. The following details, supplied by M. Navetat, are rather amusing: "The owner's wife, who is a very devout lady, in the hope of recovering the lost property, illuminated a candle in honor of Notre Dame"—and here he hesitated. "Of Notre Dame de la Victoire," I suggested. "No, it was not she. Now I have it. It was in honor of St. Anthony of Padua, and to the end of her days she will firmly believe that it was the 'cierge' which did it."

Mrs. Eddy, the Christian Science high priestess in America, is reported to have accumulated a fortune of considerably over a million dollars. These "spiritual" movements are generally profitable to the people who run them. Somehow or other, humbug and quackery always pay better than truth and sense.

Loss of health and sleepless nights caused an elderly Jersey lady, Miss Edith Elizabeth Simonton, to commit suicide. She left a letter stating the facts, and adding, "Better endure punishment hereafter than live in misery and hate to see each day dawn." A sad case. But the poor lady was evidently not an "infidel," and religion did not support or console her.

The Muse of Brotherhood.

I AM the Expectancy that runs:

My feet are in the Future, whirled afar
On wings of light. If I have any sons
Let them arise and follow to my star.

Some momentary touches of my fire
Have warmed the barren ages with a beam:
There is no peak beyond my swift desire,
There is no beauty deeper than my dream.

I make an end of life's stupendous jest—
The merry waste of fortunes by the Few,
While the thin faces of the poor are pressed
Against the panes—a hungry whirlwind crew.

I come to lift the soul-destroying weight,
To heal the hurt, to end the foolish loss,
To take the toiler from his brutal fate—
The toiler hanging on the Labor Cross.

I bring to men the fine ideal stuff
The young gods took to build the spheres of old:
The fire I send on men is great enough
To burn the iron kingdoms into gold.

I hold the way until the bright heavens bend—
Until the New Republic shall arise,
And quick young deities again descend,
To bring their gifts to MAN with joyous cries.

I lead the Graces and the Winged Powers:
The world the Anarchs build I will destroy,
For I will storm upon its demon towers
With wind of laughter and with rain of joy.

And at the first break of my Social Song
A hush will fall upon the foolish strife,
As though a joyous God, serene and strong,
Shined suddenly before the steps of life.

EDWARD MARKHAM.

The Returned Californian.

A Man was hanged by the neck until he was dead.
"Whence do you come?" Saint Peter asked when the Man
presented himself at the gate of Heaven.

"From California," replied the applicant.

"Enter my son, enter; you bring joyous tidings."

When the Man had vanished inside, Saint Peter took his memorandum-tablet and made the following entry:—

"February 16, 1893. California occupied by the Christians."

—Ambrose Bierce.

Voltaire spoke highly of Haller, and then was told he was very magnanimous to do so, as Haller spoke in quite a contrary way of him. "Perhaps," remarked Voltaire, reflectively, and after a pause, "Perhaps we are both mistaken."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, November 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Religion in its Last Ditch: with Reference to Mr. W. H. Mallock's Apology."

November 23, Athenæum Hall; 30, South Shields. December 1, Newcastle; 14, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 16, Leicester; 23, Liverpool.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- T. ELSTON.—The mistake was a mild one, and had been corrected before we received your notification. Thanks all the same. See also "Sugar Plums. Lecture Notices should be sent weekly. We cannot extricate such things from letters. It simply means having to write them out ourselves.
- C. D. S.—We have found the correspondence interesting from a pathological point of view. The Conservative M.P. in question is quite hopeless, and we hardly think he is worth our attention. You did him too much honor in writing to him at all.
- R. AXELBY.—We have forwarded your letter to "Magister" who will of course reply.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Pleased to hear Mr. Cohen had good meetings at Birmingham; also that Mr. J. A. Fallows took the chair in the afternoon and met with a hearty reception.
- J. WILLIAMS.—Thomas Paine did not turn towards the fireplace when dying, and exclaim, "I would rather be consumed in that fire than meet God face to face." We have heard many old lies about Paine's last hours. This seems to be a new one. The reverend gentleman who told it should be asked whether he borrowed or invented it. If he borrowed it, he is a reckless second-hand liar; if he invented it, he is endowed with an imaginative genius that ought to carry him far in "The Great Lying Church."
- E. PARKER.—Much obliged.
- J. G. STUART.—It was an American joke that slipped in by accident. It wants explanation over here, and ceases to be a joke in such circumstances. Thanks for the other hint, and for the paper.
- R. B. MIDDLETON.—We are glad to see such "profanities" creeping into the press. They help to weaken the inherited, conventional reverence for Christianity. We hope your expectations will be realised on November 30.
- A. S. V.—Shall appear. It is impossible to answer your question. The Catholic Church knows it is watched nowadays and is wary.
- T. E.—You say you would like more aggressiveness in some of our articles. Others occasionally say we are too aggressive. It is impossible to please everybody, and foolish to try. If you enjoy most of what you read in the *Freethinker*, why not be satisfied with that? We are glad to know you so enjoyed reading our *Book of God*. It was at least very carefully written.
- W. P. BALL.—We are deeply indebted to you for your weekly batches of well-selected cuttings.
- S. BARKER.—We thought the matter was clear enough, but it seems we were mistaken. The £200 subscribed by the late Mr. John Downing was publicly acknowledged at the time in more than one number of the *Freethinker*. The subscription was for a special fund; and the cheque, although payable to Mr. Foote, went straight into the Society's bank account through the Secretary. Mr. Downing's letter, some months afterwards, expressing a wish that the subscription could be used wholly or in part for Mr. Foote's benefit, was not shown to those who would have had to decide the point. It was better, in the circumstances, to be grateful for Mr. Downing's kind consideration, without attempting to carry his intention into effect.
- F. R. PHILLIPS writes that the Mr. McDowall, of West Ham, referred to in our last issue as a candidate for the Town Council who posed as a pious opponent of the *Freethinker*, is a local jerry-builder and estate agent. He gained the seat he sought by 1,253 votes to 702 polled by the Socialist candidate; but there is nothing to chortle over in this, as the previous election figures were 1,217 to 466. This means a reduction of 400 in the reactionary majority. So the *Freethinker* cry didn't do the Progressives any harm after all. Apparently quite the contrary.
- E. WARNER.—We met Mr. Waldron in public debate at New Brompton and again at Camberwell. He has since debated with other Freethought advocates. We see no particular reason for debating with him again, unless he is put forward as their representative by a *bonâ fide* Christian Society of something more than indifferent local celebrity. A "challenge" from the chance chairman of "Mr. Waldron's meeting in Hyde Park" is not good enough. Besides, there are several speakers on the Freethought side quite capable of settling Mr. Waldron without sending for the N. S. S. President. We hope you understand. More might be said, but it would only be unpleasant.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Haltwhistle Echo—Progressive Thinker—Ayrshire Post—Chicago Record-Herald—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Edinburgh Evening Dispatch—Newtownards Chronicle—Torch of Reason—Railway Times—North Devon Journal—Free Society—Blue Grass Blade—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought.

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.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Nov. 16). His subject will be "Religion in Its Last Ditch: with Reference to Mr. W. H. Mallock's Apology." Mr. Mallock's new book on *Religion as a Credible Doctrine* is worth more than a passing notice. He is a very able writer, and Mr. Foote will try to show what his plea amounts to. Religion seems to be in a bad way if an advocate like Mr. Mallock can say nothing better on its behalf. London Freethinkers should advertise this lecture amongst their friends and acquaintances.

There was quite an old-time crowd at the Camberwell Hall on Sunday evening when Mr. Foote lectured on "Beyond the Grave." A good many persons had to stand at the back. Mr. Roger, the Branch president, who took the chair, congratulated all concerned on the improvement shown in every way during the present season. The prospect was immensely better than it was twelve months ago. Fortunately, too, the Branch was in a better financial position in consequence of the N. S. S. President's having come to its aid. Mr. Foote had undertaken to raise £50 for the Branch, and had succeeded—an announcement which was hailed with loud applause. They wished they could have the President more frequently amongst them, but they recognised that he had many other calls upon his attention. Such a meeting as the one he saw before him was an encouraging sign and gave a new hope for the future. Thus far the chairman. Mr. Foote then addressed the audience for nearly an hour and a half amidst a running fire of laughter and cheers. His peroration was enthusiastically applauded.

Mr. C. Cohen delivered two lectures for the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch on Sunday. His audiences were the largest seen in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms for some time. The chair was taken in the afternoon by Mr. Fallows, the Secularist and Socialist who recently captured a seat on the Town Council. Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (Nov. 16) in the Secular Hall, Leicester.

The National Secular Society never expected to affect the present struggle between Church and Chapel over the Education Bill. It was just as well, therefore, to wait until the country was thoroughly roused, before issuing the Manifesto that was resolved on at the Annual Conference. Mr. Cohen has drawn this up, with some slight assistance from the President; it has been adopted by the Executive, and will go forth in the Society's name. At the end of it there is to be a collection of utterances by distinguished persons in favor of "secular education." Those by Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Rosebery, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Thomas Burt, the Rev. Dr. Watson ("Ian Maclaren"), and Dr. Parker are already in hand. Our readers throughout the country may be able to assist us in adding to the list. We shall be obliged if they will send us any further utterances of the kind by public men or women. And the sooner the better, as the manifesto is to be issued forthwith. It is already in type.

While the wrangle is going on here between Church and Chapel over the Education Bill, it is pleasant to see Lord Kitchener opening the Gordon College at Khartoum. He asked the British public for £100,000 to found this Institution. He got the money, and his idea is now an accomplished fact. Few "conquerors" cherish such projects for the benefit of the people they overcome. Lord Kitchener, being a practical man, resolved to have no religious difficulty, so he

warned off the missionaries and proselytisers. What he wanted there, and meant to have, was education and not religious squabbling. On Saturday, November 8, he formally opened the College that his genius and humanity had raised up in the "waste Soudan." And what a refreshing change was his speech after the long-winded platitudes of our politicians! Every word to the point, and the meaning as clear and obvious as the muscles of an athlete. The fixtures and appliances of scientific laboratories for the Gordon College have already been shipped from England, and Lord Kitchener has appealed for £2,000 to build and equip a boys' gymnasium.

We omitted to give Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's declaration in favor of secular education in the course of his late address to the General Council of the Scottish Liberal Association at Ayr. It is not too late now. Here is the passage referred to:—"I confess to you that I myself have always been, and remain, an unrepentant sinner in the matter of education. I have always been in favor of, in the old days, compulsory education, and, being compulsory, that it should be free—and also that it should be secular. It seemed to me in those days that if you carried a provision forcing a man to send his child to school, you could not at the same time make him pay in the way that you had done before, and you must free it of all taint of conscientious division of opinion. That is my original doctrine, and remains my doctrine still."

Newcastle-on-Tyne friends, who used to deal with the veteran Peter Weston, should note that Mrs. Watmough, newsagent, of Newgate-street, supplies the *Freethinker* and other publications issued from our office. We are informed that she does a good business in such literature.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces "Mimmermus's" article on "Animals in Heaven" from our columns.

The Freethought Publishing Company has received a large consignment of an eighty-page pamphlet, entitled *Facts Worth Knowing*, from America. They are forwarded through Mr. Farrell, the late Colonel Ingersoll's publisher, on behalf of a wealthy lady Freethinker, who presents them for distribution in this country. The pamphlet is well printed on good paper, and contains matter from the pens of some of the leading Freethinkers of the United States, including Ingersoll, Pentecost, Washburne, and Roberts (of the Church of this World). It is meant for free distribution, but the Company's expenses must be covered. Nothing less, and nothing more. A charge of one shilling per hundred copies will therefore be made. The cost of carriage (in addition) will be sixpence per hundred for London applicants, and one shilling per hundred for provincial applicants. We may mention that a parcel of one hundred copies will weigh about fifteen pounds. "Saints" who want a hundred for free distribution will please forward 1s. 6d. if they live in London and 2s. if they live in the country. There ought to be hundreds of applicants during the next week.

Branches or other Societies wishing several hundreds or a thousand (or more) copies of *Facts Worth Knowing* for distribution should apply to Miss Vance at our publishing office. Special terms will be made in each case according to circumstances.

The Freethought Publishing Company has also received a large consignment of "Ingersoll Gems" from Mr. Farrell. These "Gems" are three in number, and are all beautifully lithographed on cardboard fit for framing. No. I. is entitled "Life." It contains a fine prose-poem by the Colonel, with a very pretty portrait of himself nursing his grandchild upon his knee. The little thing is in long clothes, and looks up to granddad with one of those old expressions of which only infants are capable. No. II. is "The Declaration of the Free"—Ingersoll's noble Freethought poem which was published during the last few years of his life. This has a very artistic border with appropriate mottoes. No. III. is "The Creed of Science," containing the whole pith of Ingersoll's gospel in a brief compass. The bordering of this is very elegant. We may add that each "Gem" bears a facsimile of Ingersoll's signature.

These "Gems" are sold for two shillings each in America. They are offered by the Freethought Publishing Company for SIXPENCE each in this country. The postage is one penny each in addition. Freethinkers would do well to buy these "Gems" and have them framed. They would look attractive on the wall, and friends and acquaintances might be attracted into reading what would give them a good idea of the higher spirit of Freethought.

The Dresden Edition of Ingersoll's works is not obtainable at present. The Freethought Publishing Company has cleared out the consignment it had from America. Another consignment will not be ordered on speculation; but a supply will be obtained, if possible, to meet any demand from would-be purchasers who have missed the first opportunity. A few such customers have already applied for sets. If there are any more they should communicate with the Company at once.

The Secular Almanack, issued by the National Secular Society, is to be merged in *The Secular Annual*, which is in preparation and will be published as soon as possible at the price of sixpence. The Calendar and all cognate matter will be dropped, and the N. S. S. and similar matter will be brought within about half a dozen pages. The rest of the periodical will be reading matter of interest at any time during the year. Such a change as this is highly necessary. There were few Almanacks in the old days when the N. S. S. first issued one. Now they swarm on every side. Moreover the Calendar inevitably became monotonous. When a thousand progressive names were included it was not easy to add to their number without introducing others of inferior celebrity. We believe the change will be generally appreciated as soon as the *Secular Annual* is in circulation.

Christian Evidence Reasoning.—III.

ANOTHER choice sample of Christian Evidence reasoning is furnished by a sermon preached by the Rev. William Cuff, pastor of Shoreditch Tabernacle, who on July 28, 1901, took for his text, "He saved others: himself he cannot save" (Matt. xxvii. 42). In attempting to demonstrate the reality of the miracles alleged to have been performed by Christ the rev. gentleman argued as follows:—

"Did you ever notice what striking and wonderful testimonies were borne to Jesus Christ at the cross? They all come from outsiders, from his bitter enemies.....Listen to the record. 'Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save.' Brethren, we want no other testimony, for this is eloquent with power and with truth.....We ask for no other sort of testimony to the purity and the power of the God-head of Jesus Christ than this which was given at the cross by his strongest and most relentless foes.....If it had been possible for any man round that cross to have said, 'No, he never saved anybody,' it would have been said then. But every man was dumb, every tongue was silent. Those very men who said it had seen him do it. These are the men who had been watching him everywhere up to the time of his death.....And what do men say now? I mean outside men, unconverted men..... These outside men know that Jesus Christ saved others. They cannot deny the facts of history any more than you or I can.....We do not like the history of Queen Mary and her reign. But we cannot deny it—it is handed down to us.....So also, right down the ages the testimony of those men round the cross will stand against unbelievers and sinners of every hue. That surely is good enough for you." (The italics are mine).

What are we to say to this species of reasoning? One can scarcely imagine a popular London preacher, one accounted a second Spurgeon, telling his congregation that we have the testimony of the Jewish priests, scribes, and elders, who lived in the time of Pilate, to the alleged fact that Jesus Christ had travelled about Galilee and Judæa "saving others," that is, healing all kinds of diseases, as narrated in the Gospels. And this testimony, he says, is that of men who "had seen him do it." It seems never to have dawned upon this muddle-headed preacher that the words which an author puts in the mouths of characters that figure in his story cannot be evidence of anything—save only of the ideas and degree of talent which distinguish the writer. We have not, as every thinking person knows, the testimony of a single priest, scribe, or elder to any of the alleged facts recorded in the Gospels. All we possess is a threefold account of a number of supposed incidents and events, copied and compiled by three unknown editors from pre-existing stories whose authors are unknown.

Because the original concoctor of the Crucifixion

story has put in the mouths of imaginary Jewish priests and scribes, whom he represents as mocking Jesus, the words, "He saved others," etc., this rev. gentleman therefore supposes that we have the testimony of real priests and scribes, who lived about A.D. 30, to the genuineness of the miracles alleged to have been wrought by Christ. And, furthermore, because the concoctor of the story has not (for obvious reasons) represented anyone as denying that Jesus "saved others," the statement placed in the mouths of these legendary priests and scribes is therefore assumed to be true—as true as the historical events in the reign of Queen Mary. The Gospel miracles are actually stated to be "facts of history," which the "outside men, the unconverted men" know to be historical. As a matter of fact, these "outside men" know nothing of the kind; neither does the Rev. Cuff himself.

It is really amusing to be told that "if it had been possible for any man round that cross to have said, 'No, he never saved anybody,' it would have been said then."

An average school-boy would be able to tell this unreasoning preacher that, at the very most, we possess but the testimony of one person, Matthew; but that if this writer should turn out to be merely an editor who took his account from an earlier Gospel, we have not even the testimony of Matthew. And this is exactly how the case stands. Let us now look at the accounts of this fiction in the first two Gospels:—

MATT. XXVII. 39-42.

"And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself.....In like manner also the chief priests mocking, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save."

MARK XV. 29-31.

"And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself.....In like manner also the chief priests mocking, among themselves with the scribes, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save."

Now, it is admitted by all Biblical critics that the First and Second Gospels in which these two accounts appear were not written, at the earliest, until more than thirty years after the events therein described. Moreover, according to the orthodox view, the author of the First Gospel was Matthew, an apostle, who wrote all he remembered of what he had seen and heard during Christ's ministry; while the author of the Second Gospel was Mark, the companion of Peter, who committed to writing what he remembered of the preaching of that apostle. It is further asserted that these two evangelists, writing independently and without seeing each other's papers, produced the First and Second Gospels in their present form, just as we have them now; and that if the quotations of any second century writers do not verbally coincide with the present text, it is because those writers quoted from memory.

Bearing these alleged facts in mind, if we now compare the two foregoing accounts of the mocking of Jesus at the Crucifixion, we shall perceive that these accounts are *not* independent, that they are, in fact, but one account, composed by one and the same writer.

No two persons, writing independently, could possibly describe the alleged circumstances in exactly the same words—as we find to be the case in these two Gospels. It is perfectly clear that either Matthew copied from Mark, or Mark from Matthew; or that both Matthew and Mark drew their accounts from a pre-existing Gospel. Taking (for various reasons) the latter view as the more probable, it will be seen that Matthew has added to the more primitive narrative the words "and elders;" and that to the same narrative Mark has added the words "Ha" and "among themselves." If we strike out these additions, we have the text of the earlier Gospel—whose author and date of composition are unknown. Matthew and Mark were merely second century editors, who gave to the Christian world two

revised versions of an older Gospel, which afterwards became known as the Gospels "according to" Matthew and Mark. Thus, we do not even possess the testimony of these two editors to the truth of the events they record.

Again, according to the Gospel narratives none of the disciples were present at the Crucifixion, the only followers of Jesus being some women who "stood afar off"—evidently too far removed to hear what was said at the cross. Yet, some thirty or forty years after the event, one of these absent disciples is said to have written the account in the First Gospel, and the companion of another absent disciple is credited with the composition of identically the same account in the Second Gospel. This so-called evidence, the Rev. Cuff says, is good enough for him and his congregation; they want nothing more. These uncritical Christians are easily satisfied.

Another Christian Evidence reasoner of the Paley type is the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, who in the columns of a Christian Evidence journal which has ceased to exist, wrote as follows:—

"For Christ's resurrection there is overwhelming testimony. There is first the witness of the honest doubter, Thomas.....There is the testimony, secondly, of the Apostle John.....There is the honest testimony, thirdly, of the Apostles, who were also eye and ear and hand witnesses to his Calvary wounds and risen bodily condition," etc.

These statements, and many others of a similar character, I commented on at some length at the time; so I pass them now without further remark. I will only say here that I have every reason to believe that this reverend gentleman is still suffering from the conviction that we have the "honest testimony" of the eleven apostles, including that of the "honest doubter," Thomas, to the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that this "honest testimony" is contained in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

The last example I shall cite in proof of the employment of Paley's methods by modern Christian apologists is that of the Rev. Prebendary Shelford, who on April 6, 1902, delivered a public address on the "Evidences of the Resurrection." After a short introduction with respect to the possibility of miracles, the preacher at last arrived at the conclusion that the resurrection of Christ "becomes a matter simply of evidence"—a statement which no one is likely to controvert. This point reached, the rev. gentleman proceeded to adduce what he believed to be evidence for this miraculous event. His presentation of this evidence, as reported in a local newspaper, was as follows:—

"What evidence have we that Christ did rise, though it seems to us impossible? The evidence is from different sources.....Our Lord appeared to a great number of disciples, not once, not twice, but over and over again. He appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden.....He appeared to the twelve (?) who were gathered together in an upper chamber.....He appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus.....He appeared again among the twelve (?) and revealed himself to the doubting disciple Thomas.....He also appeared to 500 brethren afterwards, etc.Could they all have been mistaken? Some people say 'Yes'.....Well, it is a very difficult thing to get a large number of persons—500 brethren at once—to believe in a lie.....But is it not inconsistent to suppose that men would sacrifice their lives for the sake of a lie? If it were not true that Christ rose, why did the apostles submit to all the pain and misery and persecution and martyrdom that they went through?..... Consider, too, that these men were good men, men far above the common in the excellence of their characters," etc.

Here we are treated to a sample of all Paley's favorite arguments—the impossibility that the Apostles could be deceived, their fearlessness of death, their steadfastness under persecution, their high moral character—and last, but not least, the most convincing reason of all, that Christ "appeared to a great number of disciples, not once, not twice,

but over and over again." We thus once more arrive at the extraordinary conclusion that if the Gospel accounts be correct, the miracles recorded in those narratives are historical, followed by the corollary that under such conditions there could have been no deception.

It goes without saying that by this convenient apologetic method any one may "prove" almost anything—the historical character of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, for instance. In the latter case, to employ the words of the rev. Woffendale, "there is overwhelming testimony." We have, first, the unimpeachable testimony of the great dramatist, Shakespèare, who has "honestly" recorded the fact; secondly, we have the "honest testimony" of Bernardo and Marcellus, who saw the Ghost on the platform of the castle (scene 1); thirdly, we have the equally "honest testimony" of the honest doubter, Horatio, who informed Hamlet of the fact (scene 2); fourthly, we have the solemn affirmation of Marcellus and Bernardo to Horatio that they had both twice seen the Ghost; fifthly, we have a second solemn affirmation of Horatio to Hamlet to the same effect; sixthly, we have the superlatively "honest testimony" of Hamlet himself, who could not have been deceived, for he was accompanied by Horatio and Marcellus, who also again beheld the apparition (scene 4); lastly, we have the "honest testimony" of the Ghost itself, who spoke to Hamlet, and removed all element of doubt by the plain and unmistakeable words: "I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain term to walk the night," etc. The testimony by so many witnesses is not in the nature of things open to doubt. The Ghost was seen, not once, not twice, but many times, and to the witnesses variously grouped. "Consider, too, that these men were good men, men far above the common in the excellence of their characters." Thus, according to Paley's approved system of reasoning, which is now everywhere followed by irrational Christian apologists, the Ghost in *Hamlet* is proved to have been as real a person as the risen Christ. We may even go so far as to say that we have *more* evidence for the historical character of the apparition in Shakespeare's world-renowned tragedy than for that of the resurrected Jesus; for in the former case all the accounts of the appearances of the Ghost are in perfect agreement, whereas in the narratives of the resurrection of Christ the accounts are of so conflicting a nature that they completely neutralise each other, and furnish no evidence at all.

Further examples can scarcely be needed to prove that an important and well-known characteristic common to the whole class of present-day Christian advocates is that they, one and all, have not the faintest idea as to what constitutes evidence.

ABRACADABRA.

Cremation.*

I.

I BELIEVE that the practice of burning the dead belongs distinctively and almost exclusively to the Aryan race. There is ample evidence of its having prevailed among all the great branches of this stem, while among all other peoples, save a few scattered tribes of American savages, it has either been vehemently abhorred, or only resorted to in grave emergencies, when the unsanitary nature of their funeral arrangements forced itself fatally upon their attention. Aryan influence acting through Buddhism has introduced cremation among a few Mongolian and Iranian peoples, just as Semitic influence, always hostile to it, has, by means of Christianity and Mahometanism, succeeded in repressing it throughout the greater part of the Aryan world. In reverting to it we are throwing off one of the evil

results of our Semitic inoculation, and that is perhaps the true reason why the idea is so strenuously combated by those in whose blood the Jewish virus is still fermenting. As the Aryans are unquestionably the race of "light and leading" on all the practical affairs of life, the proof that cremation is one of the primæval characteristics of their social system may not be a matter of mere curiosity, but may perhaps be reasonably held to imply a presumption, however slight, in its favor.

It is impossible to do more than indicate the evidence as to the uncommonness of cremation among non-Aryan peoples. To state it in detail would be to give a complete account of the funeral customs of the world. The coffin-ships which carry cargoes of dead Chinamen from California and Australia to mingle with their mother earth, bear witness to the mania for inhumation among the Mongols. A certain sect in Japan is said to burn its dead, but the overwhelming majority of the people adheres to burial. The Siberian tribes expose their dead. Among the Tartars of Central Asia burning is common, but in the very nursery of the Aryan race, Aryan influence may fairly be presumed. No Semitic race is known to have burnt its dead. "The Mussulman believers," says Sir Thomas Browne, "will never admit this fiery resolution.....The Jewish nation, though they entertained the old way of inhumation, yet sometimes admitted this practice. For the men of Jabesh burnt the body of Saul; and, by no prohibited practice, to avoid contagion or pollution in time of pestilence, burnt the bodies of their friends (Amos vi., 10)." Of the Egyptian burial customs it is needless to speak. The Carthaginians, like their brethren of Palestine and Phœnicia, buried their dead. Innumerable and fantastic as are the general customs of the savage races of Africa, we do not find among them a single instance of the use of fire, and the same may be said of Polynesia and New Zealand. Some Australian travellers state that they have seen natives burn their dead, but it may fairly be questioned whether the ceremony was not culinary rather than crematory. It is certain that some Australian black fellows eat their dead, not so much from an absolute liking for the flesh of their relatives, as because they hope in this way to prevent their ghosts from haunting the living. The immense majority, however, neither burn nor eat, but simply expose their corpses. In North America occur the few real exceptions to the rule I am trying to prove. Even here tribes who burn their dead are now very rare, but cremation seems to have been the almost universal usage of the ancient Aztecs. In South America, on the other hand, cremation is absolutely unknown. The Incas of Peru were embalmed like the Pharaohs of Egypt, and a peculiar method of encasing the corpse in plaster seems also to have been adopted.

We have thus shortly "surveyed mankind from China to Peru," and found in the Mexicans the only non-Aryan race of any note in history among whom cremation has been in general use. Let us now glance at the Aryan peoples.

The great Indian branch of our parent stock continues to this day the practice of cremation save where Mahometan conquest and conversion has counteracted ethnic tendencies, or where the religion of Zoroaster has inspired such reverence for fire that it is held to be soiled by contact with mortality. Following the westward stream of Indo-European migration, we find the funeral pyre wherever our race has set its foot. Recent events in Wales have reminded us of the existence of cremation as an institution among our Keltic predecessors—the forefathers of some of us—on the soil of Britain, and Cæsar bears witness to its prevalence among their brethren in Gaul. Equally clear is the testimony to its universal employment among the Slav tribes from Bohemia to the Ural mountains. An Arab ambassador who travelled in the region of the Volga so late as the tenth century of our era describes vividly the crematory ceremonies then in use. Thus we see that two out of the four great westward-

* This Essay was first published nearly twenty years ago in Mr. Foote's monthly magazine, *Progress*. The writer of it had reasons for not signing it with his name. Those reasons are, of course, still respected. But there can be no harm in giving a new generation of readers the opportunity of making acquaintance with such an admirable (and useful) composition.—EDITOR.

sweeping races brought the practice with them from their Asiatic home, or at any rate developed it in prehistoric times. As to the two remaining races, the Græco-Italian and the Teutonic, the evidence is more than abundant. Classic literature swarms with allusions to cremation and all its apparatus—the pyre, the unguents, the libations, the spices, the urns, in some cases the victims offered up to the manes of the deceased. “Not to derive the same from Hercules,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “noble descriptions there are hereof in the Grecian funerals of Homer; in the formal obsequies of Patrocles and Achilles.....confirmable also among the Trojans from the funeral pyre of Hector, burnt before the gates of Troy, and the burning of Penthesilea, the Amazonian queen.” The practice of burial co-existed, indeed, with that of cremation, and was perhaps equally common. Socrates expressed indifference as to which method should be adopted for disposing of his body. An attempt has been made to show that cremation was not indigenous among the Romans, but was introduced through Greek influence towards the close of the Republic. Sylla is said to have been the first of the Cornelian gens whose body was burnt, and in his case the object was to secure his remains from indignities similar to those which had been heaped upon the corpse of Marius. Be this as it may, it is certain that cremation is mentioned and provided for in the Twelve Tables. It may have fallen into disuse in the intervening centuries, but it was, nevertheless, an ancient institution of the Roman people. Among the Teutons the testimony is equally clear. The Germans of Tacitus burned their dead. All the mythology and folk-lore of Germany and Scandinavia is full of references to cremation. Baldur the beautiful and his wife Nanna were laid on a pyre on board ship, “Hringhorn,” which sailed blazing out into the ocean, while Odin and all the gods watched mournfully from the cliffs. Sigurd the Dragon-slayer and Brynhild (the Siegfried and Brunnhild of Wagner) shared one great pyre. Scandinavian tradition attributes the introduction of cremation to Odin, the mythic conqueror who led his hordes to the north, from Asgarth on the banks of the Don. Before his time, it states, mound-burial was the order of the day. There is no question that burial in tumuli, like that to which we owe the wonderful Sandefjord Viking-Ship, now in Christiania, prevailed contemporaneously with cremation, but the evidence of its earlier origin is quite wanting. The legends which attribute the invention of a social institution to some national hero, as in this case to Herakles or Odin, are of no historic value. Unless it can be proved that the Central Asian plateau from which our nomadic forefathers descended was ill-supplied with fuel, or otherwise unfavorable to the practice—and this is improbable, as it exists there to this day—we cannot avoid the conclusion that cremation is one of the primæval institutions of the Aryan race. How else, I repeat, can we account for the fact that it has at one time or another prevailed from the Ganges to the Guadalquivir, from Cape Comorin to the North Cape, wherever the Aryan languages have been spoken, while among other peoples it is either unheard of or practiced only as a rare exception?

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANS GAVE HIM THE BELLY-ACHE.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—How these Christians love one another is well exemplified by (a) the Education Bill controversy; (b) the annual pilgrimage of a horde of semi-barbarous, fanatical, and howling ruffians to Bethlehem on the occasion of the feast of the Holy Fire. Irony cannot be more finely pointed than when the statement is made that at these disgraceful riots bloodshed and murder is only prevented between members of the conflicting sects by the activity of armed Mohammedan soldiery; and last, but not least, by the following delicious

paragraph, culled from the *Daily Chronicle* of recent date, with reference to the then cannibal inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands: “Though Spaniards, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, negroes, or Arrowaks were all meat to them, yet these Caribs seem to have shown an interesting preference for certain nationalities. Davis, for instance, in his *History of the Caribby Islands*, tells us that ‘The Caribbeans have tasted of all the nations that frequented them, and affirm that the French are the most delicate, and the Spaniards are hardest of digestion.’ Laborde, also, in one of his jaunts in St. Vincent, appears to have overtaken, on the road, a communicative Carib, who was beguiling the tedium of his journey by gnawing at the remains of a boiled human foot. This gentleman only ate Arrowaks. ‘Christians,’ he said, “gave him the belly-ache”!’

With the exception that it is evident this latter had had some experience of the relative flavor and digestibility of members of the various Christian races and sects, since he preferred Arrowaks to them, and that one is tempted to think that something must be rotten in the State if, even after the processes of club or spear, cauldron or oven, mastication and deglutition, the fragments of Christians’ flesh are so antagonistic to each other as to disturb the digestive function progressing in the paunch of a cannibal, further comment is needless.

MEYNELL.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I have looked up the authorship of the “Gospel History and Doctrinal Teaching Critically Examined” at the British Museum, and am able to satisfy you that “Mankind, their Origin and Destiny,” is not a paraphrase of the title of the book by J. P. Lesley, “Man’s Origin and Destiny.” They are two distinct books by different authors. “Man’s Origin and Destiny, from the Platform of the Sciences,” by J. P. Lesley, was published, as you show, by Trübner in 1868; but “Mankind, their Origin and Destiny,” first saw the light in 1872, and has no other clue to its authorship than the imprint on the title-page, “By M.A. of Balliol College, Oxford.”

There are two J. P. Lesley’s in the Museum Catalogue, the first being a Congregational minister of Boston, Mass., who is responsible for “Sermons on the Rule of Faith,” published in 1849, and who is therefore not our quarry. The author of “Man’s Origin and Destiny” was Joseph Peter Lesley, who was Librarian of the American Philosophical Society, to whose catalogue, published in 1863, he contributed a preface. There are sixteen entries to his name in the Museum Catalogue, all dealing (with the exception of “Man’s Origin and Destiny”) with subjects of a geological interest.

There are no other works accredited to “M.A., Balliol, Oxford,” besides “The Gospel History” and “Mankind, their Origin and Destiny,” although there may be others under a different signature.

Perhaps the author himself is a reader of the *Freethinker*, and may feel inclined to disclose his identity, or, failing that, may refer us to other works of his of a cognate character, which, with the aid of a little ratiocination, would render the secret an open one—to the initiate? I have an idea that the author is C. M. Wilson, M.A., who wrote on Agnosticism some years ago. I seem to have a vague recollection of seeing on a bookstall a thick pamphlet, the author being given as C. M. Wilson, M.A., author of “Mankind, their Origin and Destiny.” I wonder if that stray shot hits the bull’s-eye?

B. STEVENS.

VIVISECTION AND MATERIALISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. W. P. Ball, is mistaken in supposing that, in using the epithets “Utilitarian” and “Materialistic” to describe the arguments commonly used in defence of vivisection, I was referring to Freethinkers. By the word “Utilitarian” I meant the idea so widely held by all sorts of people at the present time that if anything be supposed to be useful it is therefore justifiable, and by “Materialistic” the notion held by various scientists and others than animals are “things”—not sentient beings—and that (as a certain experimenter put it) their cries are no more indicative of pain than the sounds produced by striking the keys of a piano.

J. H. THORNTON.

A Dilemma.

“Do you take this man to be your wedded husband?” asked the justice of the peace.

“I don’t know whether to do it or not, squire,” said the young woman, wiping her eyes. “He’s got the money from me to pay for the licence. I don’t like to marry a man of that kind, and yet I hate to see \$2 wasted.”

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 ATHENEUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Religion in its Last Ditch: with Reference to Mr. W. H. Mallock's Apology."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell) 7: E. B. Rose, "The Settlement in South Africa."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. O'Dell, "The Ethical Aspect of Immortality."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

NEW WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Monthly meeting will be held at "The Victory," Newnham-street, Edgware-road, at 8.30 on Thursday, November 20.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell) 7, Bruce Glasier, "The Religion of Politics."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Bruce Glasier, "The Socialist Movement."

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, Councillor Walter Godbolt, "A Municipal Mixture." (A review of his fight for West Ham.)

GLASGOW (Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class. Mr. Allan, "Elementary Botany"; 6.30, J. S. Hill, "History of the Subjection of Women."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 11, "The Gospel According to Charles Darwin"; 3, "Christianity before Christ"; 7, "The Holy Bible; Divine Revelation or Human Production?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Tom Swan, "England's Folly and England's Punishment."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "Problems of Labor and Politics from the Laborer's Standpoint"; 8, Lecture arrangements.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Mr. Dyson, "The Man after God's own Heart."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—November 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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