

THE Freethinker

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If any can convince me of an error, I shall be glad to change my opinions; for truth is my business, and right information hurts none. He that continues in ignorance and mistake is he that suffers harm.—MARCUS AURELIUS.

Christianity and Woman.

CHRIST has been no savior of the world in respect to the condition of woman, which is one of the best criteria of civilisation. The ordinary Christian, seeing polygamy prevail beyond the borders of Christendom, and monogamy within them, imagines the difference is due to Christianity; and his clerical guides, who know better, confirm him in the delusion. Here again it is obvious that religion only consecrates the established social order. It sanctions polygamy in the East and monogamy in the West. Christianity found monogamy existing, and did not create it. Greeks, Romans, and even Jews, in spite of the Mosaic law, had become monogamists by a natural evolution. Polygamy was illegal in the Roman Empire at the advent of Jesus Christ. Nor did any disturbing influence arise from the conversion of the Northern barbarians, for monogamy existed among the Teutonic tribes, who held women in high honor and esteem, and allowed them to participate in the public councils.

Had monogamy not prevailed before the triumph of Christianity, it is difficult to see in what way the new faith would have established it. There is not a word against polygamy, as a general custom, from Genesis to Revelation. Jehovah's favorites were all polygamists, neither did Christ command the marriage of one man with one woman. The Mormons justify polygamy from the Bible, and the United States government answers them, not by argument, but by penal legislation. Concubinage is also justified from the Bible. The more a man is steeped in the Christian Scriptures, his sexual and domestic views become the more patriarchal.

Christianity, indeed, has been woman's enemy, and not her friend. Christ's own teaching on sexual matters is much disputed. His language is very largely veiled and enigmatic, but it gives a strong plausibility to the opinion of Count Tolstoi, that sexual intercourse is always more or less sinful, and that no one who desires to be Christlike can think of marrying. St. Paul's language is more precise. He plainly bids men and women to live single; only, if they cannot do so without fornication, he allows of marriage as a concession to the weakness of the flesh. Essentially, therefore, he places the union of men and women on the same ground as the coupling of beasts. Further, he orders wives to obey their husbands as absolutely as the Church obeys Christ; coating the pill with the nauseous reminder that the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man.

Following Christ and Paul, as they understood them, the Christian fathers lauded virginity to the skies, emphasised woman's dependence on man, and treated her with every conceivable indignity. Their language is often too foul to transcribe. Let it suffice to say that they were intensely scriptural in

thought and expression. Taking the story of the Fall as true, they regarded woman as the door of sin and damnation. Logically, also, they saw in the birth of Christ from a virgin, a stigma on natural motherhood. Under the old Jewish law, every woman who brought forth the fruit of love was "unclean." This sentiment survived in the Christian Church. It was deepened by the miraculous birth of Christ, and strengthened by contact with the great oriental doctrine of the opposition between matter and spirit; a doctrine which lies at the root of all asceticism, and is the key to the sexual morbidity of all the creeds.

These are debateable matters, and it is easy for Christian rhetoricians to find ways of escape by subtle methods of interpretation. The Bible becomes in their hands "a nose of wax," as Erasmus said, to be twisted into any shape or direction. Plain matters of fact, however, are not so easily perverted; and an appeal to history will show that Christianity lowered, instead of raising, the whole status of women.

Principal Donaldson (and it is well to take a clerical authority) is the author of an important article in the *Contemporary Review* for September, 1889, on "The Position of Women among the Early Christians." It is very unflattering to Christian vanity, and it has been answered by *silence*. "It is a prevalent opinion," says Principal Donaldson, "that woman owes her present high position to Christianity, and the influences of the Teutonic mind. I used to believe this opinion, but in the first three centuries I have not been able to see that Christianity had any favorable effect on the position of women, but, on the contrary, that it tended to lower their character and contract the range of their activity." He points out that at the dawn of Christianity women had attained great freedom, power, and influence in the Roman Empire. "They dined in the company of men," he says, "they studied literature and philosophy, they took part in political movements, they were allowed to defend their own law cases if they liked, and they helped their husbands in the government of provinces and the writing of books." All this was stopped by Christianity. "The highest post to which she rose" in the Christian Church "was to be a door-keeper and a message-woman." A woman bold enough to teach was in the eyes of Tertullian a "wanton." The duties of a wife were simple—"She had to obey her husband, for he was her head, her lord, and superior; she was to fear him, reverence him, and please him alone; she had to cultivate silence; she had to spin and take care of the house, and she ought to stay at home and attend to her children."

Sir Henry Maine had previously observed, in his remarkable *Ancient Law*, that Christianity tended from the first to narrow the rights and liberties of women. Not Roman jurisprudence, but the Canon Law, was responsible for the disabilities on married women that obtained in Europe down to the present century. The personal liberty conferred on married women by the middle Roman law, in Sir Henry Maine's opinion, was not likely to be restored to them by a society which preserved "any tincture of Christian institution." Married women, however, in every civilised country are now rising into a position of legal independence; and this is but a revival of

the best Roman law, which prevailed before the triumph of Christianity.

It must be a remarkable fact, to any thoughtful Christian who is interested in the great problem of woman's emancipation, that the most strenuous advocates of her rights during the past century have belonged to the sceptical camp. The first striking essay on the subject was written by Condorcet. It was Mary Woolstonecraft, the wife of William Godwin, and the mother of Mrs. Shelley, who wrote the first important essay on the subject in England. Shelley himself was an ardent champion of sexual equality. His poignant cry, "Can man be free if woman be a slave?" expresses the very essence of the question. Jeremy Bentham, Robert Owen, and John Stuart Mill are a few of the names in the subsequent muster-roll of custodians of the high tradition; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that Mill's great essay on *The Subjection of Women* marks an epoch in the history of social progress. Let it be added that the Freethought party has steadily upheld the banner of common rights, making absolutely no distinction in position or service between men and women. The Christians are but slowly and timidly following in the wake of a party they affect to despise.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Faith of the Future.

SPECULATIONS concerning the future are usually attractive, and, in the main, useless. Almost any such work that one may pick up is marred by one fundamental flaw. It projects the present into the future either by way of placing man as he is in an entirely new environment, or by way of creating a new man for the existing environment. The result is a scientific anachronism. Environment and organism are inseparable in fact, and whatever development the future may witness will arise as the gradual and continued interplay of the two factors. It may be conceded that a knowledge of the future is both conceivable and probable, but it depends upon two factors. First, a knowledge of the forces determining human nature, and second, upon the assumption that these forces will hold good in the future as in the past. The last assumption seems wholly justifiable. All investigations into the workings of nature have hitherto failed to disclose any new forces at work. The fundamental principle upon which modern theories of physics and biology rest is that the forces moulding the inorganic and organic universe are the same in kind as they were thousands of years ago, and that they will be the same thousands of years hence. And in actual practice the theory works out well enough. On this principle astronomers are able to fix the position of any of the heavenly bodies years, and even centuries, ahead, and the other sciences are surely, if slowly, nearing the same state of exactitude.

It is the first factor that creates the difficulty. For our knowledge of human nature is by no means exact enough to allow us to predict with any strong feeling of certainty what will be the existing social state, or the current beliefs even, a century hence. And predictions which consist—as the majority of them do—upon a projection of our beliefs and prejudices into the future are valueless. But still, even here the future is not quite so dark as might be. One may detect tendencies, even when they cannot foretell events, and one of the most profitable of a generally unprofitable class of prophets, is Mr. H. G. Wells, who in his recently published *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, brings to the task a certain clarity of vision not often met with on such topics. With the bulk of this volume I am not now concerned, but the concluding chapter on "The Faith of the New Republic" comes well within the scope of the *Freethinker* policy.

I do not think that the belief that religion, as

ordinarily understood, is bound to gradually disappear can be legitimately ascribed to Atheistic prejudice. Mr. Wells believes so, and I agree with him. In the absence of some quite unforeseen and almost inconceivable revolution in thought, this much seems certain. And the materials for such a revolution are not now existent. Those who meet such a belief with the retort that so might philosophers have reasoned in the days of the Antonines overlook a very important distinction between the two cases. Intellectually the man of to-day may not be the superior of the man of 1800 years ago, and from that standpoint may be as open to imposition as ever. But from the standpoint of actual knowledge he is far superior; and history proves that knowledge, even more than intellectual ability, is the chief guarantee against religious revivals. In the days of old Rome the spread of a religion was comparatively easy, because, first, the Christian doctrines were fundamentally one with the religious teachings already accepted, appealing to the same type of mind, and adding in their support the same kind of evidence; and, second, because the knowledge of natural processes then known was limited to a few, and little opposition could be offered to religious propaganda from this quarter. Nowadays the position is vitally changed. Scientific knowledge in all its branches has become the common property of all, and the feeling of helpless wonderment in the face of natural phenomena is fast giving place to a lively and healthful curiosity. So deeply is science penetrating our lives that we can no more imagine mankind losing this knowledge than we can imagine people giving up the use of metals and reverting to the implements of the Stone Age. The result has been the growth of a type of mind to which religious beliefs are largely foreign; and, if the doctrines that centre round the name of Darwin mean anything at all, they mean that this type will go on growing and expanding at the expense of the religious kind. There is room for a rearrangement of the religious forces; some of the sects may grow at the expense of others; but a strengthening of the religious mind as a whole seems a huge improbability—almost an impossibility.

We can therefore agree with Mr. Wells that the men of the future will "have no positive definition of God at all," and also that, once they have given up the God of theology, they "will certainly not indulge in 'that something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness' (not defined), or any defective claptrap of that sort." All this philandering with religious terms is but the after-glow of religion—a symptom of mental convalescence, the subterfuges of minds strong enough to throw off theology, but not quite robust enough to carry their rejection to its logical conclusion. It is, as Mr. Wells says, "the last vestige of that barbaric theology which regarded God as a vigorous but uncertain old gentleman with a beard and an inordinate lust for praise and propitiation." One does not expect maturity to be reached at a bound in ideas any more than in stature. Man does not, as a rule, give up the grosser forms of Theism and adopt complete Atheism at once. There are many stages that have to be passed during the journey, and their length is determined partly by mental habits and partly by the pressure of purely social forces. We must expect to find these stages, and expect also to find many who have only completed half the journey congratulating themselves on having covered the whole distance—only it is well to remember that they are stages, after all.

But there are spots on the sun, and Mr. Wells is not quite free from the "defective claptrap," for using which he blames others. He quite properly points out that the modern method of talking of God as "Mind" is "scarcely more reasonable than the one it has displaced." It is as indefensible to speak of God as possessing mind as it is to credit him with red hair or whiskers. One is just as indefensibly anthropomorphic as the other. But at the same time he has much to say concerning the "transcendental God in whom the serious

men of the future will believe.....To believe completely in God is to believe in the final rightness of all being," and the following description of the men of the future seems to contain a fair measure of the "defective claptrap" he condemns in the next paragraph:—

"Quite inevitably these men will be religious men. Being themselves, as by the nature of the forces that have selected them, they will certainly be men of will and purpose, they will be disposed to find, and consequently they will find, an effect of purpose in the totality of things. Either one must believe the Universe to be one and systematic, and held together by some omnipresent quality, or one must believe it to be a casual aggregation, an incoherent accumulation with no unity whatsoever outside the unity of the personality regarding it. All science and most modern religious systems presuppose the former, and to believe the former is, to anyone not too anxious to quibble, to believe in God."

Now I do not think I am "too anxious to quibble," but I must confess that if this represents the mental condition of the men of the future, then they do not seem much of an improvement upon many of the men of the present. First of all, in a work meant to be strictly scientific, there is the objectionable use of that question-begging word, "Religion." To the immense majority of people past and present the word has certain well understood implications. It implies the presence of belief in deity, and in a future life at least, and to speak of a man as being religious means this or nothing. Emotionalists may prefer to call their notions on morals or social or cosmic matters religion, and while this may be allowed to pass muster as a figure of speech, it certainly does not indicate exact thinking. Either we believe in the creation and government of the world by an intelligent power, and we are religious, or we do not so believe, and we cease to be religious. Mr. Wells does not, apparently, believe in this intelligent directive force, and is confident that the future will cease to believe in it. Why, then, retain the name? The belief in the possibility of forces transcending the human mind as much as man transcends the amoeba is not religion, and we have no right to call it so. The possibilities of Nature are infinite; but it is also possible that we are mistaken in this matter, and that human intelligence is the highest expression that force ever will reach. And religion does not require a force superior in kind to human intelligence, it demands a force of the *same* species. Why keep the name once we have thrown over the thing?—especially when the name has such misleading associations to those who hear it. Mr. Wells is not quite so emancipated from "the self-contradictory absurdities of an obstinately anthropomorphic theology" as he imagines himself to be.

And consider what the retention of belief in the supernatural—the raw material of religion—by the men of the future involves. It means that all anthropology has taught us concerning the origin and nature of religious beliefs must be either ignored or disproved. Either it must be shown that the belief in gods and a future life did not originate in primitive man's mistaken interpretation of perfectly natural occurrences, an apparently impossible task, and one that all competent thinkers are gradually giving up attempting, or these teachings must be ignored. We cannot do the first, and we are not likely to keep on doing the second. For a time, the apparently set policy of religious teachers to ignore the anthropological aspect of religion may succeed, and their social influence may keep these subjects from full and fair discussion. But this is a policy which is bound to fail in the long run because it is fighting against time, and in the end time wins. And as a larger number realise that the whole of religion is ultimately based upon this blundering of primitive man, and that what ignorance began, ignorance and cruelty and vested interest has maintained, they are surely likely to drop the thing, and with the thing the name.

Mr. Wells' reason for thinking as he does is that

we must either believe the universe to be held together by an omnipotent quality, or a mere aggregation with no unity outside it save the personality regarding it. Mr. Wells is, I believe, a London Bachelor of Science, but one is bound to say that such a sentence does but poor credit to his scientific knowledge. The use of such a phrase as the universe being "held together" shows that there exists in his mind a dualistic conception of things quite foreign to the spirit of modern science, and which, in all probability, he himself would repudiate when placed plainly before him. The universe is not *held* together, it *is*, and that is all we can say about it. Science does uphold the belief in the unity of all force, but this force is not one thing and the universe another thing, the universe *is* this force, and therefore to talk about it being "held together" is a meaningless association of words.

It is equally objectionable to refer to the universe as "a casual aggregation." Such an expression is good enough for those who believe in some outside force controlling things, and which is pictured as studying the materials in the light of a number of different plans and finally deciding on the present cosmical arrangement. Science knows nothing of a "casual aggregation" of anything, except so far as the phrase expresses our ignorance concerning the nature of the processes that have issued in a certain result. The rolling of a stone down a hill-side may be a "casual" result in this sense, but there is little doubt this was due to causes as definite and as knowable in their nature, as the forces that result in the explosion of a barrel of gunpowder. The universe is what it is, and we can only conceive it being different to what it is by altering our knowledge concerning it, or by being ignorant concerning its mode of action. Mr. Wells should reflect upon Spinoza's teaching that possibility is great in proportion to our ignorance, but that as knowledge grows it is swallowed up in necessity.

And, finally, there is much scientific and philosophic warranty for asserting that it is the personality regarding the universe that gives to it its unity. There is very good reason for believing that the human or animal mind is, among other things, a unifying instrument, and that the harmony and beauty and unity of nature are veritable human products. Mr. Wells points out, rightly enough, that "In the abstract world of reasoning science there is no green, no color at all; but certain lengths of vibration; no hardness, but a certain reaction of molecules; no cold and no pain, but certain molecular consequences in the nerves that reach the misinterpreting mind." Quite so; but why may not this same reasoning hold good of the "unity" of nature?

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

How Will Disestablishment Aid ?

AMONG the ideas called out by the Education Bill we have the old cry for Disestablishment, and there are dark threats that after the Bill has been passed or rejected the agitation for Disestablishment will once more be galvanised into activity. Now, as Freethinkers, the important question for us to be convinced upon is, How will Disestablishment aid Freethought? We grieve that there is such a thing as an Established Church, a huge historic organisation, spread throughout the country, with a bench of bishops permanently attached to the legislative assembly, and with enormous revenues used exclusively for the support of superstition. But we ought to consider what would be the actual consequences of sweeping such an organisation away; and we ought never to forget that the Established Church is not the exclusive representative of religion. If the Church of England were swept away to-morrow, there is no assurance that Freethought would be advanced one jot or one tittle.

Thirty years ago the Church of Ireland was dis

established; but the only result of that measure has been the increase of the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism is no longer a secondary, unrecognised, hole-and-corner, semi-illegal religion in Ireland; it is practically the only faith of the country that is worth considering. Society, politics, and education are dominated by it; and it stands on a firmer footing than it ever did before. So far from the Disestablishment of the Irish Church helping forward freedom of opinion, there is less hope for Freethought there to-day than there was a century ago. In fact, the country has exchanged a theological King Log for King Stork.

Q|In those lands where there is no Established Church we do not find that Freethought opinions are thereby rendered any the more flourishing. The Australian Colonies have no Establishment, and with the exception of New South Wales, there is no endowment. But at the same time there is very little Freethought. All the Nonconformist sects are well represented; and if they are not influential they are noisy. Even in Victoria, where Mr. Symes has worked so strenuously for the last twenty years, there is no coherent Secular body. Hundreds of settlers in the "back blocks" admire Mr. Symes and read his paper; but they are too much scattered to make any valid impression.

In America we meet with the same phenomena. There is no Established Church in any of the States of the Union, or in any of the Canadas. But although there are several able advocates of Freethought in America, and although there has been the robust and effective propaganda of the late Colonel Ingersoll, the Freethought party is very small. On the other hand the religious bodies are wealthy, powerful, and energetic. The commercial magnates find it to their interest to subsidise them; and when President Roosevelt attempted the settlement of the recent coal strike, he considered it politic to associate a Roman Catholic Bishop with the other members of his committee. Instead of adopting the philosophy of Freethought, the Americans are attracted by Spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, and the similar puerile superstitious aberrations of the half-educated. It must therefore be evident that the mere absence of an Established Church gives no advantage to a Freethought movement.

On the other hand, it is to the Establishment that Freethought owes its immunity, and some of its more potent weapons. History proves to us that it is the antagonism of the Christian sects that is the guarantee of toleration. Spurgeon used to say that all the Churches had been persecutors, except the Baptists—and they had never had the opportunity. Fanaticism against "infidelity" is far greater among Nonconformists than among Anglicans; and the active opponents of Secularism are most frequently Nonconformists. Fortunately, however, Nonconformity is curbed by the existence and prestige of the National Church. The great aim of each Nonconformist body is to get itself recognised and subsidised by the State; this, however, is impossible as long as an Established Church exists; for, naturally, the Government cannot, without stultifying itself, encourage any of the rivals to the National cult. Modern Nonconformity, it should be remembered, is the lineal descendant of the sixteenth century Puritanism. Wherever it could, Puritanism got itself recognised by force. In England, Scotland, Geneva, America, Puritanism established itself by force, and then bitterly persecuted all it could reach. The Great Rebellion was entirely precipitated by Puritanism, as has already been pointed out in these columns. The dispute between Charles I. and the landholding classes who considered themselves aggrieved could and would have been settled more or less amicably but for the religious fanaticism which plunged the country into civil war. When the sectaries gained the upper hand, persecution of course ensued, and would have gone much further than it did had not Cromwell happened to have belonged to one of the weaker Puritan sects, which made him an advocate for toleration. We often

hear of the witch-hunting mania, but sufficient attention is not drawn to the fact that this was entirely a Puritan aberration; and the persecution of witches corresponds roughly with the period of the Rebellion. Zachary Grey, in a note to *Hudibras*, points out that between 1640 and the Restoration of Charles II. in 1660, from 3,000 to 4,000 poor creatures were put to death on a charge of witchcraft. Surely no one would desire to abolish the Church of England for the purpose of enabling witch-hunting Nonconformity to rule the land. The Anglican Church has, of course, had its times of persecuting zeal; but these were excited chiefly by Puritan aggression. Persecutions of Roman Catholics were principally political, and flowed from the statute of *Premunire*, promulgated by Richard II. It was not till after the Rebellion that the Church began its course of retaliation for the injuries inflicted during the Puritan domination; and this antagonism to Nonconformity ended in the next generation. During the eighteenth century the Church of England became mellowed. Most of the clergy were Deists. Even Bishop Butler's *Analogy* is merely a surrender to Deism, and Paley was one of the founders of Utilitarianism. But the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield revived fanaticism, or "enthusiasm," as they called it then, and gave fresh life to dormant Nonconformity. Nonconformists entered greedily into the new industrial movement of that period, and their rapacity led to the child labor and oppression of workpeople which had to be put down by the Factory Acts.

Just as, in the eighteenth century, the Anglican Church was rapidly becoming Deistic, so we see a similar process of enlightenment going on to-day; and the reason is the same, namely, its superior culture. Eulogists of the Church of England claim its chief recommendation to be that it has placed an educated English gentleman in every parish; and this is very largely true. We have only to compare the average Church clergyman with the average Nonconformist preacher, to appreciate the vast difference between them. The consequence has been that in the studies and discussions that have established the Higher Criticism in this country, Churchmen have been the leaders, and the Nonconformists have followed at a very considerable distance; reaping where they have not sown, and gathering where they have not scattered. It was Bishop Colenso who struck the first blow at the Pentateuch, and it is Canon Cheyne, Dr. Driver, and a galaxy of other Church scholars, who have placed the Higher Criticism upon its present formidable footing, culminating in that monument of Church scholarship the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Secularists, who have been conducting the siege of Christianity from without, cannot but rejoice at this sap from within; and it is the Established Church that has contributed the sappers. The bulk of the Nonconformists are still sunk in the same fanaticism and obscurantism as their fathers were sixty years ago, and look upon the new criticism with distrust. A distrust perfectly warranted by the fact that the critics, after having demolished the Old Testament, are now applying the same solvents to the New.

Established Churches always tend to become "worldly." The revenues gravitate into the hands of a few leaders; the leaderships become very largely matters of family arrangement; and the leaders prefer to enjoy their lives in quiet, and therefore discourage exhibitions of zeal. At the same time the religion is tacitly disbelieved by them, and recognised as a mere device to gull the public; as in the sentiment ascribed to Pope Leo X., "What a splendid thing this Christian falsehood has been for us." Even in Roman Catholicism we see the operation of all these laws. There have been times when the Papacy threatened to become entirely a family affair—in fact, it only escaped by means of the institution of celibacy; and religious zeal has always come from beneath, never from above. On the other hand, popular Churches have continually to pander to the superstitious spirit, or they die out. When the

enthusiasm of early Wesleyanism abated, its more fervent members found it too dull, and so they split off into the Primitive Methodists. Primitive Methodism tending to become torpid in like manner, it was in its turn drained by the Salvation Army movement; and as Salvationism stagnates, it is bound to be displaced by another ebullition. The moral, therefore, is that the decay of a religion is best effected by an Establishment.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England are sometimes advocated on the ground that such Disendowment would set free an amount of wealth which could be usefully employed in better purposes. But we may rest assured that the greater part of this wealth will be absorbed (as in the case of the Church of Ireland) in compensating the clerical dignitaries whose offices would be suppressed; and so the principal result would be to enrich a few favored families, as has happened in previous disendowments in this and other countries.

A Disestablished Church would no longer be under the control of the Government, and we should in time have a recrudescence of the old claim that religion was above the civil power. The student of history need not be told of the troubles that have arisen in the past through this claim; and at present the chief safeguard against it is that the State religion is entirely subordinated to the civil power, and must submit its controversies to the decision of the secular courts of law.

All things considered, therefore, Freethinkers would be ill-advised at present in supporting any movement for the Disestablishment of the English Church. Such a measure would only strengthen the hands of rival religious bodies, without helping forward freedom of opinion. The Church of England is a large and convenient butt to shoot at; but if it stands in our way, it is a still greater obstacle to our enemies. The Church may say to Nonconformity as Charles II. said to his brother James, Duke of York: "No one will kill me to make you king." CHILPERIC.

Harriet Martineau.

1802-1876.

"Oh freedom, if to me belong
Nor mighty Milton's gift divine,
Nor Marvell's wit and graceful song,
Still with a love as deep and strong
As theirs, I lay, like them,
My best gifts on thy shrine."

—WHITTIER, *Proem*.

THE life of Harriet Martineau is the simple record of a quiet and eminently useful existence. It will be of interest to those who never read the literary works of this great and noble woman.

So far back as 1832 Lucy Aikin wrote to Dr. Channing, "You must know that a great, new light has risen among Englishwomen." Lord Brougham, a still greater authority, remarked to a friend about the same time: "There is at Norwich a deaf girl, who is doing more good than any man in the country."

Harriet Martineau was born at Norwich in 1802. She has given us a picture of life in this cathedral city. She tells us of the clerical exclusiveness and intellectual stagnation, only slightly corrected by the social gatherings of a few cultured families, and by an infusion of French and Flemish blood, the result of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Martineaus were among the families whom that intolerant measure drove to our shores. At Norwich they had flourished for nearly a century, part of the family devoting itself to silk weaving, while others were in the medical profession. Very little is known of Harriet's father, who died early, except that he had eight children, of whom Harriet and her brother James, the distinguished theologian, are alone remembered. Harriet's education was looked after by her uncle, one of the most eminent surgeons in the East of England, who did his utmost to give his nephews and nieces a truly liberal education.

Harriet was barely of age when she published her first book, *Devotional Exercises for Young Persons*. It was a religious publication of the Unitarian school, in which she had been brought up.

It is a work of little merit, but it proved the harbinger of a long series of far more important productions from her pen, which were destined to raise her to the pinnacle of fame and influence. After 1830 there is a marked improvement in her choice of subjects. Works of fiction, theology, travel, folk-lore, biography, and sociology followed in rapid succession. Her fertile and versatile pen even attempted a series of *Illustrations of Political Economy*, in which she tried to popularise, by familiar examples, the principles which Adam Smith, Bentham, and Romilly had laid down in an abstract and philosophical manner. These *Illustrations* were afterwards collected in a single volume and translated into various Continental languages. These she followed by two similar series on cognate subjects, *Illustrations of Taxation* and *Illustrations of Poor Laws and Paupers*.

In the year 1834 Harriet Martineau visited the United States, whither she found that her fame had preceded her. There she met with a most cordial reception from the leaders of thought. On her return to England she published her books, *Society in America* and *A Retrospect of Western Travel*, both of lasting interest. She associated herself with Charles Knight, the eminent publisher, and contributed a number of useful books to the popular series which earned for him a well-deserved and enduring reputation. With the object of lightening her literary labors by variety, she next employed her pen on a series of *Tales for Children*, of which the most popular were *The Crofton Boys*, *The Settlers at Home*, *Feats on the Fiord*, *The Peasant and the Prince*. At the same time she produced two novels of a very marked and distinguished character, called *Deerbrook* and *The Hour and the Man*, the latter dealing with Toussaint l'Ouverture and the Haytian Rebellion. This has passed through many editions, and remains, perhaps, her most famous work.

About this time her health, which was never strong, appears to have suffered so much from literary activity that she was compelled to lay aside the pen. Lord Melbourne generously offered, and even pressed upon her acceptance, a Government pension. But she was too high-minded and conscientious to accept it. In declining this pension she said that she could not share in the proceeds of a system of taxation which she had criticised adversely in her writings. Her illness lasted several years; but she characteristically turned misfortune to account by writing *Life in a Sick-room*, a work which alike proves her courage and serenity under the iron hand of affliction.

In 1844, soon after her restoration to health, she resumed her literary work, and published three volumes of tales and sketches illustrative of the evil effects of our Forest and Game Laws. In 1846 she varied the monotony of her quiet and laborious life by a visit to the Orient, and recorded her impressions in a book, *Eastern Life: Its Past and Present*, a work which is still deservedly popular.

In 1850 appeared a work of a totally different character from its predecessors. The publication of *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* written conjointly with a philosophic friend, Henry George Atkinson, showed the world that Miss Martineau was a Freethinker. Three years later she introduced to the English public a version of Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, a work destined to have an enormous effect on contemporary thought. While thus employed in the study of scientific and Free-thought subjects she yet found time to devote to her *History of England During the Thirty Years Peace*, a standard work which is characterised by its singular clearness and impartiality, perhaps the finest historical work written by a woman. Her *Complete Guide to the Lakes* appeared in 1854. She was eminently qualified for this task, for in her declining years she had made her home at the pretty cottage near Ambleside. From this time it was mainly as a

leader writer to the *Daily News*, and as a contributor to *Once a Week* that Miss Martineau's literary ability manifested itself. The weight of increasing years began to tell heavily upon her, and after a long illness she entirely ceased writing. To the last, in spite of a painful chronic illness, she took the greatest interest in every movement for the bettering of humanity. She lived through a long, happy, useful, irreproachable life, and sank, calmly, full of years into the grave, regretted and esteemed by all.

Because Harriet Martineau taught the vital truths of Liberty and Fraternity, of good deeds to others, of kindly tolerance, she is redeemed of any shortcomings in art, and worthy not merely of equal tolerance, but of warm and genuine approval. Popularity, applause, and friends were rightly hers. Who knows, when the final result is weighed, who will have done the most good to the world, the artist who adds masterpieces to our literature, or the woman who does her best to alleviate

the weariness, the fever and the fret

of life. If Freethinkers, still true to the long line of their illustrious men and women, keep her memory green, making of her no false idol of pride, or brazen image of glory, but holding her as she was, the mirror and measure of true womanhood, then better than in effigy or epitaph will her life be written and her tomb be built in the hearts of her fellow soldiers in the Army of Human Liberation.

MIMNERMUS.

Are the Gospels Historical?

"It is evident," says the *Spectator*, in a recent issue, "that a very critical point has been reached in textual and historical criticism. If Professors Cheyne and Schmiedel are right in their contentions, all that the world has hitherto understood by the religion of Jesus Christ has practically disappeared. The Gospels do not represent what He said; the Epistles were not written by His disciples, or in virtue of His revelation."

Quite so; the truth of the *Spectator's* comment is plain enough. What is not so clear is: How is the historical character of the Gospels to be established? In his paper, read at the Church Congress, Professor Sanday says that, from the point of view of historical attestation, the best evidence lies outside the Gospels—*i.e.*, in Paul's epistles. "There can be no doubt," he tells us, "about St. Paul, or about the time of St. Paul." Probably the *Spectator* would agree with Professor Sanday on this point. But there is room for very considerable doubt about St. Paul and the time of St. Paul.

In this connection it is not necessary to refer to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, nor to "the small school in Holland and in Switzerland," for whom Professor Sanday has such small respect. The writer of the article on "Paul" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* may be quoted. "We have no means of knowing," he tells us, "when Paul was born, or how long he lived, or at what dates the several events of his life took place."

Corinthians ii., xi., 32, is the only passage in the "genuine" epistles that will serve as a time-mark; and this, if not a forgery, would serve also to connect St. Paul with Jeshu ben Pandera. A Catholic friend tells me that he cannot see much in this objection, because it is admitted, even by Rationalists, that the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* is largely fabulous. But the story of a Jesus, the bastard son of a young woman by a Roman soldier surnamed the Panther, was current in pre-Christian times; it was used by Celsus against the Christians early in the second century, before the four Gospels were quoted. And, even if it be fabulous, it is remarkable that Paul should tell us of his escape from Damascus under a king who reigned in the time of Jeshu ben Pandera! Recently certain Catholic writers have been busy re-writing history in the interests of the Church. Cannot

Father Somebody-or-Other, S.J., show that Aretas was king of Damascus towards the end of the first century? That would be a splendid bit of Christian "evidence."

Even then, however, some plausible explanation would be necessary of the silence of contemporary writers concerning Paul and Christ. If, as Christian tradition represents, Paul visited Athens, Rome, and other places, hearing Pagan sages and philosophers in their strongholds, it is certainly curious that no writer should mention either Paul, the preacher, or Christ the preached! Just think of it. It was a brilliant literary age; more than one writer set himself the task of recording the remarkable events of the time, and yet we are asked to believe that the Gospels are historical, although none of these writers seem to have heard of the hero of the Gospels!

Nay, a still further demand is made on our credulity, for Pascal, Newman, and others have argued that the silence of contemporary writers does not tell against Christianity!

Quite recently a reviewer of theological literature in the *Daily News* asked: "Do books on Christian apologetics, after all, do any good?" For himself, he was inclined to think that they do not convert men to Christianity. And really, when one considers what has been said in defence of the Gospels even by writers of the greatest repute among Christians, one wonders why Christian writers should try to make Christianity appear reasonable. If the Gospels were credible, if they had in their support the witness of history there would be no room for faith. Anyone can believe what is reasonable. No one disputes that 2 plus 2 equals 4. But when—as in the doctrine of the Trinity—one is required to believe that 3 times 1 equals 1, then it is not a matter of reason, but of faith.

Belief in the historicity of the Gospels is, in its nature, identical with belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. Reason or historical evidence has nothing to do with it. All the stories told of Christ in the Gospels had previously been associated with the names of numerous mythical heroes and divinities; and the real question is: Why should we regard these stories as history when coupled with the name of Jesus Christ, but merely myth when related of Osiris, Mithras, Æsculapius, *et hoc genus omnes*?

This is, of course, merely a *précis* of the case against the historicity of the Gospels; but it will be time enough to go into details when the *Spectator*, Professor Sanday, or some other champion of orthodoxy seriously attempts to meet any of the objections raised herein.

ANDREW LIDDLE.

Secularism.

(An Acrostic.)

S ecular Philosophy obtains
E v'rywhere with human life and needs;
C ause and fruit of all our highest gains;
U ltimate assayer of the creeds.
L iberty, with justice, is its soul;
A ll the teeming universe, its scope;
R ighteousness, its motive and its goal;
I ntra-mundane happiness, its hope;
S ynthesis and abstract of the past,
M an's essential guide from first to last.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Couldn't Hold In.

Congressman Jones, of the State of Washington, tells this "amen" story. A brilliant theological student had been invited to come and preach as a candidate. Brother Silas Smith was noticed for his tendency to keep the audience awake by shouting "Amen!" about every so often. Some of the members thought that this might disconcert the preacher. So one of the members offered him a new pair of boots if he would refrain from shouting "Amen!" that day. Silas agreed, but toward the end of his discourse the student waxed a little too eloquent for Silas, who shouted:

"Amen! Boots or no boots, amen!"

Acid Drops.

Dr. BOYD-CARPENTER's attempt to draw Dr. Fremantle was not very successful. The Bishop asked the Dean to say something which would reassure "many devout and simple-hearted people," and satisfy them that his own faith in the "simple statements of the creeds" of their Church was "clear, firm, and loyal." The Dean's reply was guarded and astute, under an appearance of cordiality. He said nothing that gave him away, or shed a ray of light upon his real position. He assured his Bishop that he repeated the Creeds "because they express daily Christ as God manifest in the flesh, and that I have no other object in life but to take Him into my inmost being, to preach Him as the Savior of mankind, and to make Him supreme over every part of human life." This is clever. Devilish clever! No one would suspect that the writer had thrown doubts upon the Virgin birth, the miracles, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dean Fremantle presided at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the Albert Hall, Leeds. A clergyman at the back of the meeting wanted to ask him a question about that London address which caused such a rumpus, but the chairman blandly remarked that they had to keep to the program. In the course of his address, however, Dean Fremantle said enough on the subject of "devout criticism" to alarm the weak-kneed brethren. He explained the crossing of the Red Sea. It was no miracle, he said, but a natural occurrence. A storm of east wind kept the tide back and left a path for the Israelites. The storm subsided, the tide returned, and the Egyptians, following after them, were swept away. If people asked where the Lord was in all these occurrences, the Dean would reply "Everywhere." The wind, the storm, and the lightning were all obeying His voice. Which is very pretty, no doubt; but is, after all, but intellectual shuffling. Either the preservation of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians was due to a divine interference with the ordinary course of nature—or it was not. In the former case, it was a miracle; in the latter case it only showed "divine agency," to use Dean Fremantle's expression, in the sense that all Nature shows divine agency. In other words, the crossing of the Red Sea was as much a work of God as the breaking of a man's neck when he falls off a fifty-foot ladder.

There was something very amusing in Dean Fremantle's reference to the first chapter of Genesis. The notion that the world was made in six periods of twenty-four hours was "in conflict with the investigations of modern times," and "people read that chapter quite differently now." Of course they do. They used to read it as meaning what it said. They read it now as meaning anything that may be convenient. The Word of God changes its significance from age to age. Yet those who read it this way, that way, or the other way, are "all honorable men."

"I resign myself to the will of the Lord," says Ex-President Kruger. At the same time he publishes a big book to show what a great mistake the Lord has made in South Africa.

The *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent in Rome writes that in order to increase the effect of his sermon on the torments of hell a priest secreted a number of men behind the altar and in the confessionals, who howled, wailed, gnashed their teeth, and rattled chains. Many of the congregation fainted, and there was a general stampede for the door, a number being injured in the rush. The preacher has now been warned by the police to desist from his realistic methods.

The recent revelations about the treatment of the patients of an insane asylum near Venice, which is kept by monks, have horrified the whole peninsula. The celebrated criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, writing in the Socialist paper, the *Avanti*, about the culpability of the friars, says that Michael Agelo, seeing the friars spoil one of the best chapels in the Vatican, said: "I am not surprised that the friars, who spoiled the whole world, should have spoiled a mere chapel." In his turn, Signor Lombroso is not surprised that the monks, having full power over an insane asylum, have committed such barbarism. He denounces the cruelty practised in the strongest terms, and asserts that the supply of baths for the inmates of the asylum was utterly inadequate, and that they even suffered hunger, as each patient had only 350 grammes of food daily. The great scientist cites other barbarities which cause all good Italians to blush.

Dr. Clifford's friends should look after him. His head seems to be quite turned by the stress of this Education

struggle. His last *Daily News* letter on "Shameless Clerical Greed" was one long scream. All capacity has left him, at least temporarily, of hearing and answering criticism. He does nothing but shriek at the Church of England. In short, he has fallen a victim to mere trade jealousy, though he dignifies it with all sorts of fine names. On the one side, he is quite deaf to the criticisms of High Churchmen and Catholics; on the other side, he is quite deaf to the criticisms of Secularists. Cardinal Vaughan tells him that Catholics don't want to pay for the maintenance in public schools of religious teaching that only suits Nonconformists. And what is Dr. Clifford's answer? Another shriek. Secularists tell him that they don't want to pay for any religious teaching in public schools; whether it suits this denomination or that denomination is, to them, a matter of perfect indifference. And what is Dr. Clifford's answer again? Another shriek. The fact is, we believe, that he brings into this controversy all the methods of the Dissenting pulpit. Preachers are never answered in church, and they never understand criticism outside. Their attitude is always that of "Thus saith the Lord."

Being bereft of sense just at present, Dr. Clifford does not see that his diatribes against "clericalism" might be applied to all Christian denominations. When he says that "Clerical greed was never yet heard to cry, Hold, it is enough," he overlooks the fact that Nonconformist "greed" has never yet been heard to complain of repletion. Is there any Nonconformist Church that is satisfied with its present income and possessions? Is not each one trying every trick to raise the wind?

The Bishop of London has made a discovery! He has found divine authority for the Government Education Bill. Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me." "This meant," he said, "that children must come to Jesus Christ"—whether they like it or not, apparently—and the Church party were resolved to see that these words were carried out by establishing religion in every public school. That settles it.

According to a *Daily Mail* paragraph a Queen Victoria legend has grown up in Burma. It is based, of course, upon the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. It says that Queen Victoria was once a poor Burmese maiden, who was known for her piety and gentleness. When she died Guatama Buddha granted her prayer that she should be born again where she could do the maximum of good to her fellow beings. The consequence was that she became incarnate once more in the baby princess who became Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India. It is said that this story is seriously told by Buddhist priests. Its wide belief is an illustration of the ease with which religious stories are spread in the world.

Sunday last (Nov. 30) was "Advent Sunday," and the Church of England could find nothing better to do with it than to appoint it as a day of intercession for the blessing of God on foreign missions. The two Archbishops took the opportunity of addressing a letter to the newspapers on the subject, and for canting humbug it takes the cake. First of all they talk about the way in which the world has become smaller during the last hundred years, and intercourse between different nations so much easier. But not a word do they say about science which is the cause of this great change. One would think it was the effect of some of their Church magic. Indeed, they regard it simply as "a signal from the Ruler of all human affairs" that the time has come for "resolute forward action" in propagating the Gospel amongst the poor benighted heathen. This is rather an ominous expression in view of what has gone on, and is still going on, in various parts of the world. The poor benighted heathen have very good reason to fear the Christian gentlemen who are so eager to make them fit for the kingdom of heaven. In fact, the Archbishops make a sinister reference to "the superiority which the Christian nations possess in knowledge and power," and which furnishes the missionaries with potent "weapons for fighting the Lord's battle against ignorance and unbelief." Yes, we dare say these "weapons" will be wielded and this "power" exerted to teach the heathen the beauty of the Christian faith. The "weapons" will look a good deal like guns and rifles, and the "power" a good deal like imperial aggression.

"Medical science," the Archbishops say, "can be used, and is now increasingly used, as miracles were once used, to prove to those to whom we are sent that we have in our hands a gift from God." What barefaced hypocrisy is this! Why were the miracles *once* used? Why are they not used *now*? How did the Church lose the power of working them? And is it honest to steal "gifts" from science and work the oracle amongst the heathen with them as though they were

"gifts" from God? Is it right for a missionary to open the poor heathen's constipated bowels with Beecham's pills, and pretend that in so doing he is acting on behalf of his Deity—to make way, as it were, for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?

"God is calling on us," the Archbishops say. Well, it is about time he did call on them to try a little common honesty. No decent God would call on them to spend a lot of money on converting people thousands of miles away while so many evils exist in their own country. When the clergy have "saved" England they may proceed to "save" the rest of the world. The proverb says that charity should begin at home. Reformation should, anyhow.

Lord Charles Beresford is nothing if not breezy. Speaking at a Savage Club dinner the other evening of his experience in the House of Commons, he said: "Whenever religion is brought in I always observe that the opposing parties fight like devils for conciliation, and they do their best to murder each other for the love of God." It is amusing, but the experience is not unusual. People never have fought so bitterly and savagely over anything else as over religion. The worst wars in the world have been religious wars, and the most implacable hatreds spring out of religious differences. The serious part of the business is that this class of people have the direction of the education of the rising generation.

Apropos of the above, and as an example of the civilising influence of religious beliefs, Mr. A. D. White, United States Ambassador to Berlin, and author of *The Warfare between Science and Theology*, has addressed a letter to a well-known German philanthropist, characterising the treatment of the Jews in Roumania as "monstrous," and exceeding in cruelty the laws passed by Louis XIV. against the Huguenots. The state of things there, says Mr. White, "seems an open defiance of the right of justice and ordinary decency." "Judaism is not a religion; it is a misfortune," said Heine. The Roumanian Government seems bent on proving the truth of the latter part of the statement, at least.

I suppose it is possible for an outsider to argue that the Christians are only having their turn at revenge. The Jews took theirs in advance when they gave Christians their God.

When 30,000 people were killed by the Martinique eruption the Bishop of London said that was God's way of teaching us his laws. Evidently the lesson was incomplete, as about 7,000 people have recently been destroyed by the Santa Maria Volcano in South America.

"Providence," as the clergy say, saved King Edward from death through appendicitis. The same consideration was not extended to Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, who fell a victim to that disease. Perhaps the clergy did not pray hard enough in his case.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had 37,787 cases in one year, affecting the welfare of 88,829 children. The number of cases prosecuted was 2,889, which resulted in 2,774 convictions. What a shocking state of things these facts disclose! Yet this is a Christian country, and boasts of being so.

After Liverpool, Croydon. On Sunday last a census was taken of the church and chapel attendances in Croydon. The result was to show that about nine per cent. of Croydon folk attend religious service on the "Sawbuth," of which number about two-thirds belonged to the "softer" sex—although in this case softness might well be predicated of both.

The Bishop of London, the other day at Oxford, said he had arrived at the conclusion that in London only one person in eighty among the working-classes went either to church or chapel. This throws a flood of light upon the Bishop's alleged "popularity" amongst these very people.

Mr. A. M. Thompson, of the *Clarion* staff, has been investigating the results of General Booth's scheme for rescuing the "submerged tenth." He finds that at the Hadleigh Farm Colony, after an expenditure of some £10,000, 200 people were "reclaimed" last year. Not a staggering result, after all the blowing of trumpets we were treated to, and the large promises made if only the money were subscribed. At this rate, as Mr. Thompson points out, it would take about fifteen hundred years to reclaim the three millions of destitute people whom Booth declared existed in England.

"Reclaimed," by the way, is a very elastic word, and one has a suspicion that it does not cover very many of the worst cases. In all probability the majority of this two

hundred would be people who would have "reclaimed" themselves without General Booth's assistance. Any way, the result is a striking proof of the inadequacy of these pietistic schemes of social improvement. One day we shall, perhaps, learn the lesson that semi-philanthropic schemes of this character, which tinker with results without touching the social conditions from which they proceed, are generally useless, and sometimes worse than useless.

Sarah Stevens, palmist, of Kilburn, was fined forty shillings for fortune telling. The salary of the Bishop of London is £10,000 per year.

At Derby Assizes, John Spalding was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for stealing five bottles of wine and a small sum of money from Trinity Church, Matlock. He will now be able to sing, when he is marched to chapel, the hymn commencing, "At Trinity Church I Met my Doom," with increased unction.

What will not some people do for money? To gain a prize of a hundred guineas, Henry Horn, a Dane, and Teresa Berg, a German, got married in a large cage containing several big lions, at the St. Nicholas Skating Rink, New York. Of course there was a large crowd of fools who paid so much a head to see the performance. Dr. Hepburn, an aged Episcopal clergyman, read the marriage service. Who shall say, after this, that Christianity is not a serious and dignified thing?

The Czar of Russia is said to be under the spell of a Spiritist medium. Others say that it is a hypnotist who leads Nicholas by the nose. But what does it matter, after all, *who* dominates such a feeble mind? The Czar's portrait is enough to satisfy any good observer that his only chance of attracting any notice in the world lay in the accident of his being born to a position where people couldn't help seeing him.

A correspondent writing to that pious periodical, the *Sunday Circle*, asks: "Do the great leaders of science disbelieve in God? Were not the great scholars, Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall Atheists?" Someone, who writes under the name of Hartley Aspden, thereupon proceeds to air his ignorance or dishonesty by answering roundly "No." Herschell, he says, believed in God. Perhaps, but Laplace did not. Darwin, he says, declares in his *Origin of Species*, that he believes in God. Darwin does nothing of the kind, and the writer is either untruthful or dishonest in saying otherwise. Darwin does refer to a "creator," and explained that this was only another name for ignorance, and that he regretted ever having used it. Huxley and Tyndall were both disbelievers in deity, as were also Clifford and Spencer and Haeckel and Buchner. Still, we presume the editor knows the type of mind that is fed by such publications as the *Sunday Circle*, and writes accordingly.

Incidentally the same journal unwittingly does Freethought a service. It has often been pointed out in these columns how close has been the alliance between religion and drink, and also that temperance—and, above all, teetotalism—never formed part of Christian preaching until the Temperance party had grown to proportions that rendered its capture profitable. Replying to another questioner, Mr. Aspden says: "When the late Charles Garrett and the present Thomas Champneys were young ministers they were violently attacked, even by brother ministers, for being teetotalers. Teetotalism was regarded as an ally of Socialism and Atheism." We are pleased to see that Mr. Aspden is sometimes tolerably accurate; but we would warn him that this is a terribly rash way of speaking. It would be quite easy to write that the Temperance movement began in Christian circles, and quite as truthful as the statement about the religious opinions of Darwin and Tyndall.

Mr. Abel Abbot Low, of New York, has presented an oil launch, worth £1,000, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. It is to be passed on to the Bishop of New Guinea. Two men steamed it from New York to London in thirty-eight days. Its seaworthiness being thus proved, it is to be "dedicated" before being sent to its destination. Probably it would have been "tempting Providence" to dedicate it before.

Yet once again that bright little boy. He was having a good time at Lake Geneva, where the Swiss watches come from, but he did not forget to say his prayers. "O Lord," he said, as he knelt at his bedside one evening, "make me a good little boy. I asked you the other day to do it, and you didn't.—*Chicago Tribune*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, December 7, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London: "The Fable of Jesus Christ: with Reference to Dean Fremantle."

December 14, Leicester; 21, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

DIOGENES DIDYMUS.—(1) Unfortunately there is no work dealing with the books of the New Testament as Thomas Paine dealt with the books of the Old Testament. (2) Charles Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism* and Mr. Foote's Debate with the Rev. W. T. Lee on *Atheism or Theism* might supply what you require. We believe G. J. Holyoake's *Trial of Theism* is still obtainable. Send your order for these or other things direct to the Free-thought Publishing Company.

F. ARNOLD.—The subject of the cutting is bad enough, but is outside our special province. Thanks all the same. Copies of the N. S. S. Manifesto have been sent you.

AYRSHIRE INFIDEL.—Your verses are so good that we wish they were a little better. Probably you want more practice. There is always the danger, though, of London printers playing the deuce with the orthography of your Doric.

H. A. HILL.—Always glad to receive cuttings on which we can base a paragraph.

R. MORTON.—Thanks for your trouble in the matter. But why should we waste our time in noticing the well-edited effusions of a vindictive old man, who seems incapable of approximating to the truth in his statements? Without his money, what is he? We never doubted he could purchase parasites with it, if he only repaired to the proper market. The only excuse for the ignorance of the editor as to the technical meaning of a common legal term, is that his learning is pretty nearly confined to what he has picked up through proof-reading in a printing-office. The idea of such a pair undertaking to give us literary lessons is really *too* comical.

S. RUSSELL.—We have not seen Tylor's "Gifford Lectures" in print yet, and do not think they have been published.

NEMO.—Your description of the funeral is amusing. It is interesting, as you say, to note how religion accentuates national and party differences. And it is certainly instructive to learn that the path to the grave was kept clear by a band of boys, dressed in military uniforms, and armed with little rifles. It was a practical comment upon Christianity as the religion of love.

L. C. S. (Newton Abbot).—Leaflets have been sent as requested. We thoroughly appreciate your efforts to spread a knowledge of Free-thought, and can well understand the difficulties you have to face in so doing. Londoners would not be so surprised as you think at the difficulty you experience in renting a hall for Free-thought meetings. We have the same trouble in the metropolis. We shall be pleased to help you in any way within our power to start a Branch of the N. S. S. in South Devon.

B. M.—We are not surprised that you received no reply from Mr. Hughes's eulogist. Discretion is clearly the better part of policy in such matters—at least, so far as Christians are concerned. Your other query, being a personal one, must stand over until Mr. Foote's return to town.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Received.

A. HINDLEY.—The astronomical origin of Christianity was treated at great length by Robert Taylor in his celebrated *Devil's Pulpit* (two volumes). Miss Vance could possibly supply you with a copy. There is a fairly extensive literature on the subject, but it has gone out of favor somewhat of late years. The mistake was made in trying to trace Christian beliefs exclusively, or almost exclusively, to this source.

SOME correspondence stands over in consequence of the Editor's temporary absence from London through his engagements in the North of England.

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had two very successful meetings at South Shields on Sunday, friends attending from Newcastle, Sunderland, Ryhope, North Shields, and other places, as well as from the town itself. Mr. Peacock presided in the afternoon, and Mr. Chapman in the evening. The latter said they were all very glad to see Mr. Foote himself again after his severe illness, and hoped he would be able to pay them another visit early in the new year. This hope was enthusiastically endorsed by the audience. On Monday evening Mr. Foote lectured at Newcastle. Unfortunately the weather was very tempestuous, and this had a natural effect upon the audience, which was larger, however, than might have been expected in such unfavorable circumstances. The lecture was followed by a good deal of discussion.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (December 7) at the Athenæum Hall. His subject will be "The Fable of Jesus Christ: with Reference to Dean Fremantle." It would be a particularly good thing if Christians could be induced to hear this lecture. Will the "saints" try to bring some of them along?

The National Secular Society's Manifesto on "The Education Difficulty: and the Only Way Out" should be circulated as widely as possible. We print it in full in this week's *Freethinker* so that our readers may know what they are asked to circulate. Copies for judicious free distribution can be obtained on application to the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

We had also hoped to be able to announce in this issue the details concerning a demonstration on the Education Crisis which the National Secular Society purposes holding this side Christmas. Owing to certain formal proceedings that have to be gone through in the matter of securing halls, this information must be held over until our next number. Meanwhile our friends may note that such a movement is on foot; that the hall, when taken, will be a commodious one, and centrally situated; and that a good list of speakers will be provided. People outside the movement are being invited to attend, and, whether the invitations are accepted or not, their presence or absence will be instructive. At a time when Church and Chapel are both engaged in obscuring the question, and disguising their ultimate objects by much empty talk about education and the rights of citizenship, it is well that the N. S. S. should place the real issue before the public. The present is a peculiarly favorable moment for so doing. Those of our London friends who are interested in this matter, and who would care to bear a part in the labors such meetings involve, will oblige by forwarding their names and addresses to Miss Vance. The meeting will be held some time before December 18.

An able and timely letter is contributed to the *Grays and Tilbury Gazette* by Mr. F. Goodwin, advocating the policy of secular education in State-supported schools as the only just way out of the present difficulty. As Mr. Goodwin is a member of the local School Board, his advocacy ought to be productive of some good. A copy of the N.S.S. manifesto sent round to all people in the district known to be interested in education, would still further emphasise the many admirable points made in Mr. Goodwin's contribution to the discussion.

We should like to hear more of the case of the Rev. W. Harold Davies, who disappeared mysteriously from Pudsey. According to the *Liverpool Post*, the reverend gentleman had been seen by a reporter, and had stated that his flight from Pudsey was not an act of cowardice, but the result of a mental conflict that had been going on for months. He would no longer preach a lie to those whom he had promised to lead into the ways of truth. He had given up a good living and stepped out into the world. His intention was to stay in the locality and enter upon some secular work. We repeat that we should be glad to hear more of this case.

What Is Agnosticism? is the title of a new pamphlet of thirty-two pages by Mr. Foote, which will be on sale in a day or two. It deals with the vexed question of the difference between Atheism and Agnosticism; with the views of Bradlaugh and Huxley, and the recent views of Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who is criticised at considerable length; and also with the views of the late Colonel Ingersoll, who is shown to have been totally opposed to Mr. Holyoake on the main point in controversy. Incidentally, this new pamphlet of Mr. Foote's, which is carefully written in his best vein, is a defence of

Atheism. We strongly commend this pamphlet to the attention of all who wish to be well-informed on this subject.

Many readers of this journal will be interested to learn that a movement is on foot in far-away Calcutta for establishing a crematorium. A well-attended and influential meeting, of both Hindus and Europeans, was held in Calcutta on October 22, and it was unanimously resolved to form a society which should advocate cremation as the best and healthiest method of disposing of the dead. We wish the movement every success. Nothing but unreasoning sentiment and an equally unreasoning conservatism stands in the way of its speedily achieving this.

The *Torch of Reason* (Silverton, Oregon) prints a photograph of the block of buildings in Kansas City, Missouri, which are intended to be acquired by the Liberal University Organisation, at a cost of \$85,000. Contracts have been signed, and the first payment made. The final payment must be made by January 1, 1903. A portion of the purchase money can remain on mortgage. But an effort is being made to raise the whole amount by issuing bonds at 5 per cent. interest to Liberals [Freethinkers] who will advance various sums for the purpose. Part of the premises is used as offices, part by the Athenæum Club, and part will be used by the Church of This World for Sunday gatherings. A surplus income of about \$5,000 is expected, which will be applied towards sustaining the Liberal University school.

The Education Difficulty and the Only Way Out.

THE Education Bill of the present government, whatever be its ultimate fate, will have served a good purpose if it only succeeds in directing public attention to the pressing necessity of a radical reform in our educational policy. Into the merits of the measure we have no desire to enter. It completely satisfies but a few, and seriously offends many. In a certain sense its bad features are its best recommendation. If the measure were much worse than it is, and were in actual operation, the educational trouble would be much nearer its end than it is at present. What is to be feared in this matter is the creation of a fresh compromise, which would render a radical injustice tolerable, and thus continue to prevent our educational system from reaching a proper state of completeness and efficiency.

The history of elementary education in Great Britain for the first half of the nineteenth century may be summed up in a few words. It is a history of the efforts of a small minority of earnest educationalists against the power and intrigues of two great religious organisations, each striving to control the education of the country in its own interests. Here and there one may come across a name in either of these bodies that represented a genuine desire to give to the rising generation a sound and serviceable education; but in the main, anyone who follows closely the History of the British and Foreign and the National School Societies will realise that improvements in accommodation and method were chiefly valued on account of their worth as competitive religious agencies, and that schools were built and maintained by both bodies principally with regard to their acting as feeders for Church and Chapel.

The best comment upon the adequacy of the educational work of the religious bodies is that furnished by the Act of 1870. On all sides it was beginning to be realised that to leave education any longer in the hands of church and chapel or voluntary organisations—hampered as they were by want of funds, but still more by sectarian jealousies and animosities, and far more concerned with turning out sound believers in religious dogma than with creating useful citizens for the State—was to pave the way for national disaster. Other countries had already taken up the problem and dealt with it. Great Britain was last in the field, and even then allowed its legislative efforts to be partly directed by clerical interests.

Had the principal promoters of the Bill of 1870, both in and out of Parliament, had their way, the

measure would have decisively separated the State from all part in religious instruction in public schools, and so have saved us the quarrels of the last thirty years. To do the Nonconformists justice, many of their most prominent representatives were at that day on the side of secular education in public schools as the only policy that was equitable to all. Events showed, however, that their advocacy of this policy, as their repudiation of it at a later date, was based exclusively upon sectarian religious interests. They naturally imagined that if the State, in undertaking the control of elementary education, undertook also to supply religious instruction, the State religion—Episcopalianism—would be taught. Sooner than consent to this they were willing to abolish altogether religious instruction in public schools, and urged strenuously that it was no part of the legitimate function of the State to concern itself with the religious opinions of its members.

Had the Nonconformists remained honest to this position, secular education would have been an accomplished fact. The famous Cowper-Temple clause put a fresh complexion on the affair. It was suggested that in place of the tenets of the Established Church being taught, the religious instruction should consist of those theological doctrines that were held in common by all *Christian* bodies—an arrangement that was all in favor of the Dissenting Churches. The Dissenters saw their chance. At once their principles were trampled under foot. The party that had been loudest in denouncing State interference in matters of religion, was now foremost in urging that the State should undertake the religious instruction of its children. The men who had been shrieking themselves hoarse in denouncing the iniquity of compelling Dissents to pay towards the maintenance of a Church in which they did not believe, were now strenuous in their demand that all sections of the community should be compelled to pay towards teaching a religion accepted by one section only. A more shameless repudiation of avowed principles history fails to record. The Churchman in seeking to get religion into the schools was at least consistent; he believes in an alliance of Church and State. The Nonconformist professes to believe in the complete severance of the two, and yet when occasion serves he is found ready to sell every principle he professes to hold for a purely sectarian gain. It is something to be remembered that, holding the balance of power, it is the Nonconformists who, by their disloyalty to principle, are responsible for the present trouble and for the backward condition of education in England and Wales.

The fourteenth section of the Act of 1870, containing the famous "Compromise," has plainly failed to avoid friction between the religious bodies—to say nothing of outsiders. It was, indeed, foredoomed to failure. An unsectarian or an undenominational religious instruction is a sheer impossibility. In the larger and truer sense of the word Christianity itself is a sect or a denomination; for although Christian doctrines may represent the opinions of the majority of the people of Great Britain, they are still the beliefs of a section of the community. Such an arrangement was, however, supported by the Nonconformists for the obvious reason that it favored them more than their rivals. Moreover, it secured them a certain amount of patronage, and this Nonconformists, despite protestations to the contrary, are always ready and eager to accept. But the arrangement was bound to break down sooner or later. No religious party in the State would long refrain from getting its own definite religious views taught in public schools if the opportunity offered. As a matter of fact, the whole history of School Boards during the past thirty years has been a record of a series of intrigues, with religion as the central motive, while at elections candidates have been selected and elected with a view to their opinions on theological questions, rather than on account of their merits as educationalists.

The compromise, moreover, was an arrangement between Christian bodies only. It was an under-

standing whereby two religious bodies, each anxious to rule the roost, agreed to sink certain differences in order to avoid the just and reasonable policy of secular education. While this completely satisfied none, it was deliberately unjust to many. It compelled non-Christians of all classes to pay, through the rates, for the teaching of a religion in which they did not believe, and it attempted to palliate a gross injustice by the absurd expedient of a conscience clause. It was really a fresh Government endowment of religion, and an endowment all the more objectionable because created by a party of men who on numerous platforms were professing opposition to all State endowment and State patronage of religious opinions.

Let the public, then, in the light of sober historical facts, take serious note of the following items:—

I.—The struggle between Churchman and Dissenter is *not* a fight which has for its main object the securing of the best possible education for every child in the United Kingdom. It is a fight between Church and Chapel as to which shall *control* education, and control it in the interest of a religious denomination. Dr. Clifford, who represents the Nonconformists in this matter, asserts that it is the objects of the Church of England clergy to use the schools as feeders for the Church. Quite so; but are not he and his supporters playing substantially the same game? For what other purpose is religious instruction retained in the public schools? If it is not desired that the schools shall be utilised in the interests of Church or Chapel, or Church and Chapel, why does not Dr. Clifford advocate the exclusion of religion from public schools, and thus confine the State to its proper sphere of secular instruction, leaving each parent to provide, with the aid of the clergy, whatever religious instruction is deemed necessary?

II.—It is through the abandonment of their professed principles by the Nonconformists that the present obstacle to the perfecting of our educational system exists. Had they remained true to the principles of the separation of Church and State, and of the illegitimacy of taxing all to pay for the religion of some, the "Education Crisis," which appears with the regularity of the sea-serpent or the big gooseberry, would never have arisen.

III.—The whole educational difficulty in England and Wales is at bottom a religious difficulty. On the necessity for giving the rising generation the best available education there exists a fairly workable agreement. Such differences as do exist are not important enough to hinder the work going rapidly forward. The one thing underlying the whole dispute—the question upon which parties are fundamentally divided; which puts men on Education Boards who have no defensible right to be there, and which keeps better men out—is theology. And the British public, priding itself upon its practical common sense, allows the quarrel of Dissenting minister and Episcopalian parson to prevent its children being placed upon an education equality with the children of France and Germany.

IV.—Whether the present measure passes into law or not, the difficulty is not ended, the quarrel is not over. If it does become law, Dissenters will still agitate for the return to the present arrangement. If it does not, Churchmen will continue to fight for some measure that will enable them to have their doctrines taught at the public expense. And even though both were agreed, there exists a third and growing party, who, recognising the injustice of the State teaching *any* theology, would not rest until it was confined to the exercise of its legitimate functions.

There is only one program that adequately meets the needs of the situation, and which will keep our schools free from the intrigues of Church and Chapel. This is:—

I. *Universal School Boards.*—The State, having undertaken the business of elementary education, should do its work thoroughly. Let the State pro-

vide educational facilities wherever there are children to be educated. If any parent or parents desire other education than that provided by the State, in the name of all that is just and reasonable let them have it—but at their own expense. As to the cost of establishing these State schools, it surely reflects but little credit upon the people of the richest nation in the world to scruple at finding the wherewithal to give its children a fair start in the battle of life.

II. *Free Education.*—Having made education compulsory, it is an anomaly not to make it free. To a large extent this already obtains; and, as a matter of fact, the State in all cases bears the larger share of the cost. Let school fees then be abolished altogether, not in elementary schools only, but in higher ones as well, whenever possible. Education is far too valuable for us to place obstacles in the way of its acquisition.

III. *Payment of cost exclusively from the National Exchequer.*—Education is more than a local concern; it is a national one. Children are, or should be, educated to play a part in the life of the nation as a whole, and the nation as a whole should bear the cost. By this method we should abolish the cry of an increase in the rates, which the Voluntary Schools, drawing their supplies principally from the national exchequer, use as a means of obstructing the work, or preventing the formation, of School Boards.

IV. *Secular Education.*—This, it is necessary to point out, does not mean an anti-religious education. It means simply that the State is to stand absolutely neutral in religious matters, confining its attention to purely secular subjects, and leaving ministers of religion to carry out their legitimate work in a legitimate manner. This policy inflicts injustice on none. Up to a point we are all—Christian and non-Christian alike—agreed upon the kind of instruction that is to be given, and it is clearly the wiser policy to confine the State to the supervision and promotion of such subjects as are essential to the growth of sound citizenship.

It is, moreover, foreign to the spirit of modern political thought for the State to select and patronise *any* religion. It is true we possess a State Church, but this is a bad legacy from the past, and not a present-day invention. Secular education does but carry out this principle of State neutrality in matters of religion. It is a principle that Nonconformists are pledged to, and, if they are honest, must support. And it is the only policy that can clear the way for real educational effort. As long as we permit the schools to be used as adjuncts to the Churches, as long as we permit teachers to be made the catspaws of the clergy—dismissed, elected, or promoted more for their religious professions rather than for their fitness as teachers; so long we shall find ourselves, as a nation, dropping steadily in the rear. At their best theological doctrines are open to question. Historic and everyday experience shows that they form the grounds of deadly hatreds and violent antagonisms, far more than any other subject that engages human attention. Why, then, introduce this discordant and obstructive element into the State schools? Why not be content with teaching children *how* to think without being quite so eager as to *what* they should think? Why not confine our teaching staff to the task of training children to use brain and muscle in the most skillful manner, and leave all else to those who are willing to act upon their own cost and responsibility?

[The above is the National Secular Society's Manifesto on the Education Bill and the struggle which is going on around it. Copies for gratuitous distribution can be obtained at the Society's office, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.]

A Success.

"What makes you think he would be a great success in the pulpit?"

"He can say more things that sound well and mean nothing than any man I ever knew."

The Doukhobors.

THE Doukhobor fanatics have given Canada some lessons which should be of immense value to the country, but which will most probably be lost, as so many similar if smaller lessons are being constantly lost, in the great maelstrom of theological bigotry and political rivalry in which the Western nations seem to be involved. It is almost universally recognised that the Doukhobors are demented, but it is not so widely recognised that they differ chiefly from such bodies as the Salvation Army, the Primitive Methodists, Plymouth Brethren, and other sects, in being a little more honest, and consequently a little more earnest, in their efforts to "follow Jesus." Like the Crusaders and other fanatics, they determined to sacrifice their property, their houses, and their lives rather than be false to their belief that they were obeying a divine command; and it is probable that many of them would have been frozen to death in the first heavy snow-storm had they not been forced into the trains and taken back to their homes. The stolid indifference of these Doukhobors to physical hardships is common to the devotees of all religions, whether in the East or the West; and the only possible way of knocking common sense into their heads would seem to be to allow them to run the full length of their lunacy and to suffer the consequences, so long as they do not interfere with their neighbors. It is, of course, impossible that a decent Government should permit a horde of starving wretches to continue marching to their death, nor should the inhabitants of the towns and villages through which they passed be compelled, out of a feeling of charity, to strip themselves to keep from death a crowd of monomaniacs who have left ample means behind them, even if they are acting in the name of religion. If anything, the authorities, it seems to us, have been too dilatory in dealing with the trouble. The Doukhobors, putting their religious belief to a practical test, have laid themselves open to charges of vagrancy, wife desertion, etc., and when their object was disclosed, should have been forced back to their villages as quickly as possible. But they have given us one good object-lesson that may be of the greatest value.

This outbreak of religious mania throws some light on the policy pursued in colonising the North-West. It is said that the Doukhobors applied to the Government of British Columbia for permission to take up a section of land in that colony, on which they proposed to establish themselves and live according to their own ideas without interference by the Government officials. Such a proposal was at once rejected. The idea that any good can come to a permanent and stable Government by allowing the establishment within its jurisdiction of separate self-governing communities is one that seems to us to reverse all the lessons of experience. Any policy that tends to isolate the interests and separate the sentiments of the different classes of a people must necessarily prepare the way for antagonisms. As far as possible, the object of the Government should be so to settle new immigrants as to lead to their absorption and assimilation by the rest of the community in the easiest and quickest manner possible. If, in any case, as in that of the negro, this assimilating process is an objectionable one, there is still stronger reason for not permitting the establishment of separate communities. In the case of the Doukhobors, although they have only slightly opposed the necessary restrictions imposed by a civilised Government, the segregation into a district apart from the rest of the population has no doubt tended to foster the religious ideas and feelings which have grown to their present dimensions. Had they been dispersed in smaller bodies among the other sections of the community, the present outbreak would probably never have occurred. If they were unsuited to act as citizens in a civilised community, they should never have been encouraged to enter Canada. The whole system of colonising the North-West has been a disgraceful piece of jobbery, by which the welfare of the people has been sacrificed to the greed of politicians and capitalists. In order to satisfy the latter, the settlers, instead of being allowed to occupy lands in contiguity and to spread from certain centres, have been forced to leave civilisation behind and spread themselves over the wilderness. Necessarily, the settlement of the country under such circumstances has been slow, and in order to swell the numbers of immigrants, the Government have been willing to accept the Doukhobors, and we suppose they would be equally willing to accept Jesuit brotherhoods, Montenegrin bandits, or Greek bandits, to swell the population returns. We are strongly of opinion that the employment of a large staff of emigration agents and the offering of special inducements to immigrants is a vicious policy, especially while large numbers of the people of Canada are out of work and suffering distress. The best advertisement a country could have would be the fact that its people were a happy and contented, united and prosperous community,

and if Canada had that reputation abroad, there would be little need of spending money over immigrants, nor would it be necessary to fill up the country with religious fanatics and lunatics.

No one can read the accounts given by the newspaper correspondents of the marching Doukhobors without a strong feeling of pity for the misguided people. They are undoubtedly sincere, and may be safely reckoned as perhaps the largest section of what we may term *honest* Christians—that is, people who make some effort to put in practice the precepts said to have been uttered by the Gospel Jesus. The object of most intelligent Christians seems to be to interpret those precepts so as to bring them into harmony with the commonest principles of commercial and social expediency and selfishness. The idea that such a method of interpretation involves the assumption of the possession by the interpreter of knowledge or intentions which Jesus either did not possess or failed to express, does not seem to trouble many Christians. Certainly the Doukhobors have not yet attained to the brain-twisting elevations of either the Higher or the Lower Criticism; but, as Jesus is said to have intended his teachings for babes and sucklings, and as the Doukhobors are evidently very much in that category mentally, it would seem to us that their interpretation is more likely to be correct than that of the college-bred apologist. "Where are your boots?" was asked of the wild-eyed leader, who is called "John the Baptist," and who had thrown away his foot-gear. "Jesus had no boots," was the quiet answer. "But your feet will get cold!" "Jesus keeps my feet warm!" was the reply. And then occasionally he stops and cries out: "I see him! I see Jesus! He is coming! He is here!" At such exclamations a flutter of expectancy runs through the daft and melancholy procession, and for a minute or two it stands still, only to resume its dreary march when assured by the clearest evidence that John the Baptist is once more mistaken. Fortunately, the authorities have at length put an end to the childish exhibition; and it is to be hoped that the poor wretches, having been with much persuasion and some little force taken back to their families and homes, will once more begin to appreciate the advantages of civilised life, will remember the lesson they have received of the value of religion, and for the future will learn lessons from their school-children, who will perforce have to become fathers and mothers to their parents if the Doukhobors are to become a rational and happy community.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

On an Often Overlooked Aspect of Browning.

As James Thomson considered, and "Mimnermus" considers, Robert Browning to have been a Christian, I suppose it is little use challenging Browning's right to be so reputed. After all, Defoe has always been claimed as a Christian; so why not Browning? Still, I do not myself think that either Defoe or Browning were intellectually on the side of Christianity. What if they held to Christianity in spite of unanswered objections and doubts by themselves expressed, and not by themselves either met or solved? Take, for instance, Defoe's short cut to Atheism put into the mouth of Crusoe's Man Friday: "If God so much might, so much strong, then why God not kill the Devil, so the Devil can do no more harm?" "I could not," says Defoe, "answer him." In other words, Defoe raised this plea for Atheism, and confessed his inability to overthrow it. How a great man may know and express anti-theologic objections, then confess his powerlessness to answer them, and still remain intellectually a Christian, or even a Theist, is just one of those puzzles which my plodding intelligence entirely fails to solve.

Browning's case seems to be quite similar in this aspect to Defoe's; the former having an even more frequent knack than the latter of putting the anti-Christian case and leaving it unanswered—just running away, like to frightened children fleeing from their own-made bogie—and taking refuge in such futile exclamations as that quoted *ad nauseam*: "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world"—an expression which I never hear or read but a vision of dauntless Vanini burning to death in the market-place at Toulouse rises before me. Both Defoe and Browning remind me of the case of a toper who should propound the most irrefragable reasons for abstaining from alcohol, and should then exclaim: "Now, gentlemen, having shown you how utterly unreasonable it is to touch ardent spirits, let us drink salvation unto ourselves out of this cask of fine old Bourbon whiskey which, by great good chance, I have here with me."

They are most rational, but yet insane,

An outward madness not to be controlled,

A reasoned saneness in the central brain—

are lines which, with a trifling alteration, not inaptly lit off

the mental portrait of such remarkable teachers; the sanity in their cases being outward, the madness inward. A league for the protection of truth and falsehood might have requested Browning to accept the post of president. Doubtless such men are consistent, for "the sum of their inconsistencies makes up their consistency"; but this explanation, whilst applicable to their life, would be utterly idle if applied to their thought as we have it expressed to us in their writings.

Indeed, whilst Browning is putting the anti-supernatural case, he writes as a thinker; when he is pro-Christian he ceases to think, but flies off on the wings of some fine aspiration or crude assertion, such as "What began best can't end worst"; and his aspirations are often beautiful, his assertions daring and attractive, but they are given oracularly as conclusions, and, like the oracles of old, Browning does not risk his reputation by showing you by what steps he reached them.

At the same time there are many poems of Browning's which are outside the region of speculative controversy wherein he speaks magisterially and naturally, leaving the "high gods, if such there be," to fight their own battles; and in such poems, viewing them as wholes, I find Browning at his best. Take such a brilliant poem as the *Fra Lippo Lippi*, or so dramatic a one as *The Worst of It*, as instances where his art is not hobbled by his pseudo-theology. Further, most of Browning's *dramatis personæ* are believers in some sort of a God, and their expressions of sentiments in consonance with their beliefs are not to be taken as Browning's own views, but only as his views of what was appropriate for such *personæ* to express in the positions they were placed in by their author.

Browning was, speaking generally, a fine—perhaps a great—artist, who marred much of his work by inconsequent excursions into theological controversy, a sort of controversy for which he was but half fitted; and the most curious part of him is that he—a professing Theist, if not a professing Christian—had as little constructive intellect on the side of his belief as was possible with so observant a mind, and, on the other hand, had an abnormally vivid intelligence for what is commonly called the destructive in criticism, finding ten arguments against Christianity for one in its favor, whereas he makes fifty assertions in favor of a belief in some sort of a God for every one assertion against such a belief; in short, one may sum up not unfairly by saying that all his arguments are against Christianity, all his assertions in favor of it.

If, therefore, the reader of Browning cares to be at the trouble to disentangle Browning's carefully wrought-out speculations, which lead him direct to the goal of Naturalism, from his assertions and conclusions without premises, which point aimlessly to supernaturalism, he may find this Christian poet a very powerful and picturesque and persuasive Freethinker. His intellect, at any rate, was with us; its lapses, which were many, were with the enemy. SIRIUS.

The Boy and the Fox.

AFTER a long series of stories from mother at bed-time, Johnny at last became inspired on his own account.

"Now, mother," he said, "I'll tell you a story. There was a fox—a red fox—with a bushy tail, and one day the dogs were after him. So he ran and he ran till he came to a tree, and he ran up the tree."

"But, Johnny, foxes don't climb trees."

"No; but this one did. So he climbed and he climbed till he came to the top and couldn't get any further—couldn't get any further—couldn't get any further. So he just gave a great jump and jumped right into heaven."

"But, Johnny, foxes don't go to heaven."

"No; but this one did. So he went on and on till he met some angels, and they went and told God. And God came out to look at the fox, and he looked at him. 'What's that?' said God. And one of the angels said, 'That's a fox;' and God said, 'Dear me, I wonder what we shall be having here next.'"

—*The Outlook.*

A Very Loud Call.

A committee called on Minister Wu to request him to address a society connected with one of the fashionable churches of Washington. Casual mention was made of the fact that the youthful minister of the church had recently resigned to enter upon a new field of labor on the Pacific Coast.

"Why did he resign?" asked the amiable Mr. Wu.

"Because he had received a call to another church," was the reply.

"What salary did you pay him?"

"Four thousand dollars."

"What is his present salary?"

"Eight thousand dollars."

"Ah!" said the disciple of Confucius; "a very loud call."

—*Washington Star.*

The Passing of the Devil.

TOLL, toll the bell! Ring out a knell!
For the devil himself is dying,
Wounded full sore, concerned no more
With the myriad souls a-frying,
His occupation is going, gone!
Mid shattering shafts of the deepest scorn.

A cry has gone up and a piteous wail
Is rending the upper air,
O, never was heard such a sorrowful tale,
Or a bitter note of despair.

Come back! come back! for alack and alack!
We miss you good Sathanas.

"We've got no tin, for we've done it all in"
For a world whose deeds are heinous,
In losing you, Sir, we lose our hold
Of a people's confidence and gold!

Thus speak the priests in accents whining,
With dread of penury's sour-cup,
To whom Old Nick—cease vainly pineing,
The death-doom's sealed, my number's up.

The idol oft of savage man,
I sprang from ignorance, fears and fraud.
The fierce dark side of nature's plan,
The mood demoniac, loved! abhorred!
The life that grew from priestly brain,
I shaped the path to golden grain.

The game is up! The myths give place
To higher critics, Cheyne and Sayce;
The Orient tales they've got firm grip on;
What wondrous change of front we see
Since priestly men of high degree
Hold sentiments most frank and free
Re miracles, like he of Ripon!

But why prolong this conversation?
I've played my part; I pass from earth,
Go seek some honest occupation.

You've worked me well for all I'm worth.
Revenge is sweet! My dying hour
Foredooms the fall of priestly power.

Thus runs the speech of fiend expiring,
While priestcraft vents the vain appeal;
A moribund Devil, deprived of firing,
Disastrous bodes for the clerics' weal.

The light of the truth doth dawn apace;
Reason triumphant mounts her throne,
Unfettered thought her crowning grace
A faith sublime in truth alone.

In truth, not idle fancied needs;
In worship at the nobler shrine
Of generous thoughts and kindly deeds,
Unmarred by touch of aught divine.

WILLIAM TREADWELL.

Arranging It Satisfactorily.

Master Ross Edwards, four years of age, living in Irvington, N.J., was very fond of his grandmother, and spent most of his time at her home. One afternoon he came from play so very tired that he could eat no dinner, and asked his mother to put him to bed. She took him upstairs, and, when he was ready for bed, said:—

"Now, my little boy must say his prayers."

"I can't—I am so tired."

"You want to go to heaven, don't you? Then you must say your prayers."

"Are you doin' to heaven, mamma?"

"I hope to, and want to see my little boy there."

"Is papa doin' to heaven?"

"He hopes to."

"Well, you and papa go to heaven, and I'll go around and see grandma."

Reconciled.

"Why should religion and science quarrel?"

"Why, indeed."

"Why not say that man is descended from the monkey Eve made of Adam and let it go at that?"—*Puck.*

Not Original.

A small boy was taught the Lord's Prayer, and for a few days he kept it going with great assiduity, but then he announced to his mother in disgust:

"I heard another fellow say that prayer to-day, mother, it's going to get all around town."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Fable of Jesus Christ: with Reference to Dean Fremantle."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Conversazione.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, John M. Robertson, M.A., "The Question of the Lower Races."

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

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell): 7, Gustav Spiller, "Spencer's Justice."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tunstall-road, Brixton-road, S.W.): 7, John Clarke, M.A., "The Need for Ethicism."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Mrs. Gilliland Husband, "Sentimentalism and Beauty."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Councillor J. A. Fallows, M.A., "John Ruskin."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, R. P. Edwards, Lantern Lecture on "Japan and the Japanese," with fifty Oxy-hydrogen slides.

GLASGOW (Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class. Open discussion; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull. A lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "The Worlds of Space."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. Wade will open an Impromptu Debate on "Can Britain Feed its own Population?"

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "Problems of Poverty."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 15 George-street, Great Driffield.—December 7 and 8, Failsworth; 9 and 10, Debate at Staleybridge; 14, Glasgow.

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