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A man's honest, earnest opinion is the most precious of all he possesses: let him communicate this if he is to communicate anything.—CARLYLE.

An Agnostic Peer.

EARL RUSSELL is, we believe, the son of Viscount Amberley, who was in turn the son of the old "Reform" Lord Russell. Viscount Amberley wrote a very able Freethought work, entitled *An Analysis of Religious Belief*; he also left his young son to the care of a Freeehinking tutor and guardian. But the Russell family upset that arrangement in the law-courts, and pretty effectually suppressed the heretical book aforesaid. It is presumable, therefore, that the present Earl Russell was brought up as a Christian. He had brains enough, however, to free himself from the dogmas of Christianity; yet he still loves its shibboleths, and the confused result may be seen in the little volume of *Lay Sermons* he has published through Thomas Burleigh, of 876 Strand, London. As far as the sermonising part of this book is concerned, we propose to leave it almost severely alone, for there is nothing to be gained by discussing exhortations. The author himself says, and it is an excellent saying too, that "the only way to be good is to do good," and this sentence contains the pith of all his homilies. We shall rather trouble ourselves, and our readers, with Earl Russell's *ideas* on religious subjects. These can be discussed, which preaching cannot be. Criticism appeals to the intelligence, while preaching appeals to the emotions. Perhaps we should say that criticism appeals to men through their intelligence, while preaching appeals to them through their emotions. The approach in either case is deliberate, but the avenues of access are very different. And that makes a vast difference in their characters—and also, as some of us think, in their prospects of success.

Now the first critical observation we have to make about Earl Russell's book is that it is too slap-dash intellectually, and too little guided by accurate information. Proofs of this will appear as we proceed. For the present, we may ask why he starts by surmising that some of his "more narrow-minded Christian friends" will regard it as "presumption" on the part of "a layman, and above all an agnostic," to "write sermons." Thousands of laymen preach sermons in places of worship outside the Church of England. So great a man as Coleridge the poet published "*Lay Sermons*" nearly a hundred years ago. Cobbett published a volume of "*Sermons*." Huxley published "*Lay Sermons*." There is really no novelty in Earl Russell's enterprise. Nor should he have immediately proceeded to pen a curiously misleading sentence about Huxley and Agnosticism. It is not true, as he says, that the term "agnostic" was "brought into more general currency by Huxley." It was Huxley who invented the term and gave it its first currency. We very much doubt, indeed, whether Earl Russell has any definite conception of Agnosticism in his own mind. What he says of it in the first paragraph of his Preface is, at any rate, very different from what he says of it in the chapter on Speculations. The fact is, there is no word that is used more loosely than "Agnosticism" in the whole

range of recent literature. In the present case, the author's chief concern is that "agnostic" shall not be regarded as synonymous with "atheist." But he admits that he uses the word "God" although another expression might convey his meaning more accurately, because he does not want to lose "the poetic value and the force which association has given to the simpler and more familiar expression." That is to say, he uses the word "God" for convenience in addressing people who are still childish enough to believe in a personal deity. No other meaning can be attached to his words. Why, then, does he shrink from the term "Atheist"? We suspect it is because an Agnostic peer is just tolerable, while an Atheistic peer would be "anathema maranatha." Earl Russell has defied the proprieties, and spent three months of not very agonising imprisonment in Holloway Gaol in consequence; but he is not yet lost to all sense of decency, for he still talks of "Christ" and "God"—although, half under the rose, he is not at all sure about "the Christ of history" and seems to have no more actual belief in God than the worst Atheist in Great Britain.

We wish Earl Russell had more intellectual consistency. Perhaps he will gain it with the progress of time and reflection. He appears to imagine that it is possible to doubt the very existence of "the Christ of history"—that is, the Christ of the New Testament, for there is no *other* Christ—and yet to go on talking about "serving Christ." Now we beg to tell him that this is not possible. It may be possible in his individual case, but it is not possible for men in general, and in the long run. Once believe that the Christ of the New Testament is a mythical creation, and it is only a question of time, and of the adjustment of the emotions to the intellect, for the idea of "serving Christ" to sound as fantastic as serving Prometheus. One might as well have a religion and a church on the basis of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* as a religion and a church on the basis of the Christ of the New Testament—if the latter did not really exist.

Earl Russell has no sort of right to sneer at the Positivists; which, by the way, is one of the cheapest forms of amusement, and one to which many "advanced" people, who sail too much at random on the sea of thought, are only too prone. He tells us that Positivists "might with rough accuracy be described as a religious community which substitutes the word Humanity with a big "H" for God with a big "G," and who already in spite of their youth are oppressed with creeds and formalism." Now we do not deny that this is "rough," but we do dispute its "accuracy." Positivists are certainly not "oppressed with creeds." Their "formalism" may be a different matter; but it must be noted that Earl Russell himself pleads for a certain necessary formalism in connection with his own nebulous Christianity. And, after all, Humanity (with a big "H" or a small one) does stand for an indisputable reality; while Earl Russell's own God (with a big "G" for certain) stands for nothing but—to use his own words, borrowed, but not improved, from Matthew Arnold—the "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." And what is this but a sheer delusion due to a misreading of evolution? Talking about a universal power that makes for righteousness is as sensible as praising the divine economy that has filled the world

principally with *green*, which is so grateful to human eyesight. The truth is that human eyesight has had to be adapted to the prevailing color. And just in the same way, nature does not make for righteousness, but we ourselves attach the idea of righteousness to what makes for the preservation of our own species. In other words, righteousness is only a particular form of man's adaptation to the necessities of his existence. He dignifies it with all sorts of fine names—and they deserve it from his point of view. But nature is quite indifferent in the matter. It is all the same to her (with a small "h" this time) whether a human being, with a good rifle and a good aim, kills a man-eating tiger, or the man-eating tiger takes the human being home to its feline mate and offspring as a providential dinner. And, in either case, there is a feeling of serene satisfaction in the breast of the survivor.

Positivists, it may be observed, adopt prayer into their "formalism," but their prayer is an ideal communion with their ideal Humanity. This is a very different thing from casting one's care upon Christ in times of distress, as Earl Russell recommends; and its spirit is very different from that which prompts him to reply to scientific criticism by saying "It may be very true, but if we do obtain comfort, what of it?" Such a plea might be put in for every pleasant delusion in the world—including those which fill the minds of a considerable number of patients in lunatic asylums.

Constantly in this little book we perceive the bias of Earl Russell's training. We regret to say it, but he talks absolute nonsense about Free Will, and shows that he does not understand the question at issue in its controversy with Determinism. Nor does he understand the nature of the struggle between Religion and Science. It is idle to talk of "loose and poetical statements" being treated as scientific truths. The Hebrews, and the Christians who adopted their Scriptures, regarded the Bible cosmogony as a record of absolute facts. That it was only "poetical" is a very recent discovery. Science has turned it into poetry (of a sort). But it did not start as poetry, and get turned into science afterwards. This little exercise in upside-down evolution is, however, a trifle in comparison with Earl Russell's curious disquisition on the Bible. Admitting what the Higher Criticism teaches as to its history and authorship, he nevertheless praises it in unmeasured terms as literature, crediting it with containing "pathos, dramatic effect, simple narrative, magnificent poetry, and stirring imagery, such as is to be found in no other one book in the world." Just as if the Bible were really *one* book, and not a vast collection of books by many hands, extending over many centuries! Earl Russell does not even shrink from carrying over this exaggerated praise to the English Authorised Version—which is the great fetish of the Protestants of this country. "It is," he says, "an inexhaustible storehouse of beautiful English, a veritable mine of wealth, richer even than Shakespeare in the variety and number of its wonderful phrases and expressions." Well, this is a matter of taste, and taste is proverbially not a matter of profitable discussion. But there is one fact that tells its own story. The English Bible has a vocabulary of some eight thousand words, and there are fifteen thousand words in the vocabulary of Shakespeare.

Earl Russell actually fancies that there is Elizabethan English in the Authorised Version; that it was produced at "what was perhaps the most vigorous period of the English language," and consequently contains "a simplicity of style and a stateliness of diction with which no modern writer can compare." But all this is sheer unmitigated blunder. The real language of the time of the Authorised Version may be seen in the Dedication to King James. It is fine and strong, but the language of the translators (except as it is English) bears not the slightest resemblance to the language of the translation. It is impossible to conceive a greater dissimilarity. The fact is that the Committee

appointed by King James to prepare the Authorised Version were ordered to depart as little as might be from the older versions, and they acted accordingly. Even the older versions on which they worked did not represent the language of any particular period in England. The English of the Bible, indeed, never was spoken or written in England. We defy Earl Russell to point to anything like it in our literature from Chaucer to Shakespeare, and from Wyclif to Hooker. It was, indeed, a pure speciality; a form of composition quite deliberately appropriated to the Scriptures; a religious language built up—as the old cathedrals were built up—by many successive hands. It was rich because it was selective; it was "filed" generation after generation; and thus it was perfected into the monument of English which it undoubtedly is. But it is a monument of a peculiar kind, while Shakespeare is a monument of universality.

This is one of the instances in which a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So many have written rubbish about the English Bible from a limited acquaintance with the subject! We are not inclined, therefore, to be *too* severe on Earl Russell for following a multitude to do evil. We would rather admit, with great cheerfulness, that he steps firmly enough on the right road when he listens to the voice of his own reason instead of the voice of his inherited faith. What he says of miracles is admirable. "There are really only two scientific explanations of alleged miraculous events," he says, "either that they did not take place, or that they are not miraculous." In this connection he quotes some vigorous passages from Paine; whom, however, he should not thrice call "Tom." Speaking of the orthodox doctrine of Vicarious Atonement, he says: "This doctrine has always seemed to me the most blasphemous and paralysing conception that has ever been invented by any religion." He even sees a deficiency in Christ on the sexual and domestic side, and admits that he was wrong on the question of divorce. He also vigorously denounces the "blight thrown by the Church on the relations of the sexes." What he does not see, apparently, but may come to see in time, is that the Church's view of marriage and of all sexual relations is the logical result of the first principle of Christianity—namely, the belief in the irreconcilable opposition between the spirit and the flesh, the former being the principle of all grace and salvation, and the latter the principle of all sin and damnation. Any one fault in Christianity is typical of all the rest. Earl Russell recognises the faults that have figured most in his own experience. That is something; nay, it is much; and we rejoice to hear him speaking out thus far clearly and boldly. But we ask him to go further, to perform an act of sympathetic imagination, to realise the necessary influence of Christianity in all directions. If he does this, we have no doubt that his powers of mind, and honesty of nature, will lead him to cease dallying with the prettier relics of an exploded superstition. G. W. FOOTE.

A Sidelight on Religion and Morals.

THE sensational Peasehall murder trial, with its unsatisfactory conclusion—unsatisfactory because the author of the crime is still undetected—set a writer in one of the morning papers describing the moral condition of our East country villages. His pictures are in all probability painted in rather too lurid colors, but he professes to be writing from positive knowledge, and there are many considerations which leads one to believe there is a solid foundation of truth for what he says. The immorality which the writer depicts is not of the kind that brings people before courts of law—which is at least, so to speak, very often a robust immorality, but one which expresses itself in hypocrisy, meanness, and sensuality.

The writer of the article in question asserts that

in the East Anglian villages truthfulness in speech and decency in conduct are chiefly conspicuous by their absence. They are consummate hypocrites, and will lie out of pure habit, and without any apparent reason for so doing.

"Their attendance at church or chapel is but a hypocritical cloak for the foulest living. The most callous libertine is frequently the shining ornament of the chapel.....In a village well known to me, the greatest bearer of false witness is a frequent preacher in the chapel. They not only pretend to virtue in the sight of their superiors in station, but even among themselves. They are better hypocrites than the Roman augurs, for they never smile at their mummeries. It is curious to see the trouble they take to affect honesty, virtue, and love of religion before their neighbours, who know well enough that these are all assumed. To confront any one of them with his real character would be an unheard of incivility, and would cause a shock to the whole community."

One would like to feel that the above indictment was altogether untrue; but, even though there may be exaggeration, anyone who knows ordinary village life knows its substantial accuracy. In the Peasenhall case the youngster Davies, the writer of the obscene letters found in the possession of the murdered girl, excused himself on the grounds that such subjects were the usual topics among the village youths. Students of village life have over and over again drawn attention to the prevailing low moral tone, and a little while ago a Bishop commented on the low moral tone that "propagated itself from generation to generation." In fact, bad as the towns are, the villages would seem to be, on the whole, worse. Men and women may be healthier animals in villages, but that is about all. In *La Terre* Zola drew a vivid picture of agricultural life in France. If we had an English Zola to do the same work for English villages, I do not imagine that there would be more difference between English and French agricultural life than there is between London and Parisian morality.

There are many lessons for the sociologist in the comparative morality of town and village, and of this a word later. At present we can note its bearing upon religion. And the first comment I have to make is a simple and an obvious one. Religion is far more powerful in the village than it is in the town. Nowhere does Freethought find it harder to maintain a foothold than in agricultural areas. The unbeliever is a marked man; quickly known, and easily punished. Church and Chapel share the village between them; and the result is anything but flattering to religion. In towns, where, as the Bishop of London was complaining the other day, there is a non-churchgoing habit contracted, where people pay less and less attention to religion, the morality, poor as it is, is yet higher. Evidently one would search long to find in such a condition of things proofs of the moralising value of religion.

Of course, it is impossible to bring this matter to the test of figures, save in one instance—that of illegitimate births, where the statistics for agricultural areas are much larger than those for towns. And, of all agricultural counties, Norfolk and Suffolk stand first in this respect, so far as England and Wales are concerned. Offences such as theft, or offences against the person, are of necessity fewer in villages than in towns; but, as regards the general moral tone, there is little doubt as to which takes first place.

And in the villages, be it noted, Christianity has fewer influences against it than elsewhere. In the towns the clergy put in the plea that the distractions and gaieties of life withdraw the mind from religion, and concentrate it upon other subjects. In the village no such excuse is possible. Custom, tradition, and, above all, the overseership of squire and parson, are on the side of religious observances. "Worldly" pleasures, save that of the village ale-house, are hard enough to get at; and thus when we find, as is undoubtedly the case, a lower moral tone in village than in town, there is here furnished a complete reply to such as believe in the beneficent

influence of religion on conduct. There need not be any attempt made to prove the direct responsibility of the current religion for the lax morality of village life. It is enough that religion has not been powerful enough to prevent it.

I grant that this is a superficial way of looking at moral problems, but it is a superficial view I am replying to, and a deeper method would be apt to miss the point altogether. Nothing could be more superficial or more nonsensical than the moral philosophising of a man like Dr. Horton, who attributes the difference in conduct between China, India and England to a difference in religion, and the difference in the morality of Spain and England to the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. There is an old maxim which enjoins the wisdom of answering a fool according to his folly, and this is as true here as elsewhere. Against those who argue, in the face of experience and history, that religion is the creator and sustainer of morals, it is enough to point to one such fact as I have indicated above.

The deeper charge against organised Christianity as a teacher of morals is that it has never really understood the factors that determine its existence and development. The writer of the article from which I have quoted is evidently both religious and conservative, and he apparently inclines to the opinion that much of the village want of morality is due to the disrespect into which both parson and squire have fallen, "the institution of Board schools, and the resulting decay of parental authority." Had he, or had the churches, ever embarked upon a real study of morals, they would surely have noted that geographical, climatic, sociologic, and biologic factors are the real factors of morals, and that all other things are merely their expression. Illegitimate births are greatest in number, for instance, in rural districts. Fundamentally, this is due to the ungovernable sexual instinct. But this does not mean that the sexual instinct is weaker in towns than in villages. What it does mean is, that in the latter case the social conditions do not admit of prostitution, and that the choice really seems to lie between the prostitution of the towns and the illegitimate births of rural areas. I do not say which is preferable, I merely point to a patent sociological fact.

I spoke above of the want of morality in villages. This is really a far more accurate term than immorality. Bad as towns are, demoralising as the conditions frequently are in large centres of population, I am yet of opinion that they make, generally, for a keener and sounder morality than the more primitive conditions of rural life. With immorality in towns there is usually a stronger sense of the nature of the conduct indulged in than exists in villages, and this for a very good reason. Morality is born of human intercourse, and where this is restricted the development of morality is restricted likewise. In town there is necessarily much of the give and take that is absent from rural life. People are constantly rubbing shoulders with their fellows, and the constant friction rubs off the sharp edges and reduces the angularities. Ideas and beliefs lose their rigidity, and the whole nature of the human being becomes more pliable and more sociable. One of the most noticeable differences between a villager and a townsman is the difference of sociability once the ice is broken. Village life, it is true, may be free from some of the special vices of cities, but it is also woefully deficient in the opportunities for a fuller human development. It is for this reason that I believe the term non-morality is most applicable. Rural life, in general, is simply representing one phase in the social evolution of man.

I need not here dwell upon the effect of social conditions in moralising or demoralising man, since these are fairly common, at least so far as the demoralising influences are concerned, to both town and village. The village has its slum as well as the town; and one may question whether the ill-ventilated, badly sanitated, village hovel is not after all quite as effective a demoralising force as the city slum. All that one need say is, that morality

is the result of conditions, and where these are unfavorable there can be but one result. You can no more breed a lofty character in a slum than you can gather grapes from thistles. And you can sooner degrade a character by impure air and impure food and defective sanitation than by any other forces that may be employed. These are truths which the Churches have always neglected, although some are now, almost unconsciously and against their will, beginning to realise them. The movement of recent years concerning the necessity for better homes, open spaces, better sanitation, etc., are, after all, but a confession that the secular and scientific view of conduct is beginning to gain ground.

And what all these facts taken together amount to is the demonstration that morality is no transcendental puzzle, but a very practical human matter. The best morality in the world is but a summary of the ideal relations that should obtain between human beings, and it is the task of the social reformer to work for these ideal relations to become actualities. Religion has so long confused morals, as it has other matters, that this simple aspect of the subject has been largely lost sight of. Centuries of religious preaching and exhortation left the moral condition of the world substantially untouched. The real factors were ignored, the operative causes untouched. What could not be effected by religion is being gradually effected by science. And although religious professors still continue to claim the premier place for their creeds as moralising agencies, the world is fast coming to the recognition that the conditions of human improvement are quite apart from all metaphysical subtleties and religious mysteries.

C. COHEN.

Martyrdom and Morality.

"To those who believed in heaven—not as men now believe, with a slight tincture of, perhaps, unconscious doubt, but as men believe in things which they see and hear and feel and know—death was merely a surgical operation, with the absolute certainty of consequent release from pain, and of entrance into unutterable bliss. The Christians, therefore, encountered it with joy."—WINWOOD READE, *Martyrdom of Man* (p. 62).

"These principles and motives, I say, had such force as sometimes to animate even bad men to endure a martyrdom."—DR. MIDDLETON, "*Free Inquiry*," *Works* (vol. i., p. 346).

"The confessors of the time of Diocletian would have been, after the peace of the Church, wearisome and imperious personages. Men are never very tolerant when they believe that they are altogether right and the rest of the world altogether wrong."—RENAN, *The Apostles* (p. 203).

"O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!

O ghastly glories of Saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods."

—SWINBURNE.

BEFORE entering into a consideration of the character of the early Christian martyrs, let us see what were the governing beliefs, the thoughts controlling the actions, of these first believers.

First and foremost, as we have pointed out in our former article, was the belief in hell-fire—the belief that all unbelievers would endure eternal torment for ever.

Secondly, the belief in eternal bliss for those who believed in the Christian faith, with the correlative belief in the worthlessness of this life, and a longing to escape from it into everlasting felicity.

Thirdly, the belief that those who suffered martyrdom passed directly into heaven—instead of waiting for the Day of Judgment, or suffering in purgatory—and were made assessors and judges with Christ himself at the last day. Many believed that at the second coming of Christ the earth would be transformed into heaven, and that only the martyrs would be admitted to paradise.

Fourthly, the belief that the martyr felt no pain during the operations of the executioner, but, on the contrary, experienced the highest feelings of happiness and delight.

Fifthly, the universal belief in the shortly-expected second coming of Christ, and that those who would

grasp the crown of martyrdom must seize the earliest opportunity.

These motives were so strong that, as Gibbon puts it, with mordant truth:—

"The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate, the fervor of the first Christians, who, according to the lively expression of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom with more eagerness than his own contemporaries solicited a bishopric. The epistles which Ignatius composed as he was carried in chains through the cities of Asia, breathe sentiments the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Romans, that when he should be exposed in the amphitheatre, they would not, by their kind but unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the crown of glory; and he declares his resolution to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which might be employed as the instruments of his death. Some stories are related of the courage of martyrs, who actually performed what Ignatius had intended, who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures."

Not, be it noted, because they wished to testify to the truth of their religion, or for the love of Christ, but for their own personal gain and glory in another life; and far from being sought out by spies and informers, they were so anxious for martyrdom that they were an actual source of embarrassment to the Roman Governors. "One day," says Renan, "the proconsul of Asia, Arrius Antoninus, having ordered certain rigorous proceedings against some Christians, beheld all the believers in the town present themselves in a body at the bar of his tribunal claiming the right of their co-religionists chosen for martyrdom; Arrius Antoninus, furious, made them lead a small number to punishment, sending away the others with the words, 'Be off then, you wretches! If you wish so much to die you have precipices and cords!'"

Of course, the Roman Consul was not aware, that to commit suicide, would deprive the Christian of all the benefits to be derived from martyrdom, added to which, says Middleton:—

"There was another notion diligently inculcated and generally believed at the same time, which was sufficient of itself to efface all the terrors of martyrdom—viz., that under all that dreadful apparatus of racks and fires, and the seeming atrocity of their tortures, the martyrs were miraculously freed from all sense of pain—nay, felt nothing but transports of joy from the cruelty of their tormenters. All which is expressly affirmed by many of the ecclesiastical writers."

Decidedly a pleasant operation. "But," says the learned Doctor, "the principal incentive to martyrdom was the assurance, not only of an immortality of glory and happiness in another world, in common with all other pious Christians, but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and a degree of happiness proportionable to the degree of their sufferings. For, while the souls of ordinary Christians were to await their doom in some intermediate state, or pass to their final bliss through a purgation by fire, it was a general belief that the martyrs were admitted to the immediate fruition of paradise, and that the fire of martyrdom purged all their sins away at once."

* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xvi.

† *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 37.

‡ "*Free Inquiry*," *Works*, vol. i., p. 336.

§ Dr. Middleton cites St. Cyprian, who declared that it is "one thing to be cleansed from your sins by a long course of torments and a purgation of fire, another to have all your sins wiped off at once by martyrdom; in a word, one thing to hang in suspense about your doom in the Day of Judgment, another to be crowned directly by the Lord" (Ep. 51, p. 71). And again: "Who is there who would not strive with all his might to so great a glory, to be a friend of God, enter into present joy with Christ, and, after earthly torments, receive heavenly rewards?.....To accompany God when he comes to take vengeance on his enemies, to be placed at his side when he sits in judgment, to be made co-heirs with Christ, equal with angels, and, together with the apostles, prophets, and patriarchs, to rejoice in the possession of an heavenly kingdom.....What persecution can get the better of such meditations? what torments be superior to them?" (*Exhortat ad Martyr.* c. xii.; *Works*, pp. 335-340).

And the opinion likewise, which commonly prevailed in those days, that this world was near to its end made them the more eager still to snatch that crown, which would entitle them to such high privileges, give them a power with God, so as to procure benefits for others, and make them assessors and judges with Christ himself at the last day.*

These motives, says Middleton, had such a force as to animate bad men to endure a martyrdom, and he is careful to point out that "by bad men who became martyrs I do not mean such only as were called heretics, for that name was often given even to the best, but the proud, the contentious, the drunken, and the lewd among the orthodox martyrs themselves; of all which kinds there were many, as St. Cyprian complains, who, after they had nobly sustained the trial of martyrdom, and escaped with life from the torments of their persecutors, yet, by a petulant, factious, and profligate behavior, gave great scandal and disturbance to the discipline of the Church."†

He cites several passages from Cyprian, of which we give one. It should be noticed that a "confessor" was one who escaped a persecution with his life. "Let no man wonder," says he, "that some of the confessors commit such horrible and grievous sins, for confession does not secure them from the snares and temptations of the Devil; otherwise we should never after see frauds, and whoredoms, and adulteries in confessors, which I now groan and grieve to see in some of them."‡

Christ declared that his mission was entirely directed to sinners; that there was more joy in heaven over one sinner than over ninety and nine righteous men. Apparently his appeal was entirely successful, even to the point of embarrassment. It is also a standing proof that piety and morality are not synonymous; that a pious man may be a scoundrel. Mr. Francis Galton made a scientific study of this matter, the result of which is to show that—

"the chief peculiarity in the moral nature of the pious man is its conscious instability. He is liable to extremes—now swinging forwards into regions of enthusiasm, adoration, and self-sacrifice; now backwards into those of sensuality and selfishness. Very devout people are apt to style themselves the most miserable of sinners, and I think they may be taken at their word. It would appear that their disposition is to sin more frequently and to repent more fervently than those whose constitutions are stoical, and therefore of a more symmetrical and orderly character."§

Just so, and the inducement to the bad man to wipe out all his sins, and to be raised to a higher position in the next world, than the ordinary righteous man who did not suffer martyrdom, was overpowering.

By suffering martyrdom he was certain of having a good time; by attempting to earn future felicity by the—to him—painful process of leading a moral life, was not so certain—the Devil was always on the look out for weak Christians like him; at any moment he might fall into a wile of the Evil One, and be suddenly cut off and cast into hell before he had time to repent. All things considered, a martyrdom was a first-class investment, if only the contract was carried out on the other side, and of this the primitive Christians had not the slightest doubt. However bad a man had been, he was not too bad to become a Christian. It is said that the Emperor Constantine, who made Christianity the religion of the Empire, did not become a Christian until the Pagan priests refused to absolve him from the murder of his wife, his son, and his nephew; but he was received with open arms by the Christians. So much for the morality of the primitive Christians.

W. MANN.

* *Ibid.*, p. 335.

† *Ibid.*, p. 342.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

§ *Hereditary Genius*, p. 282.

The Two Davidsons; or, Randall v. Jesus.

(Randall Davidson has just been made the Head of the English Church of Jesus Davidson.)

WHEN earth was flat, and fixed, and square,
And folk were "flats"—or mostly—
A child arrived, from ev'rywhere,
Whose pedigree was ghostly.

A ghost—the child's *sub rosa* pa—
Of whom the ma was doxy,
Engaged, to right the child and ma,
A wright he wronged, as proxy.

The child grew up and took to drink,
Made wine, was called a bibber,
Began to teach ere taught to think,
And proved a fool, or fibber.

To guide his followers, he left
Absurd but clear instructions;
So clear, that only humbugs deft
Can thence draw wrong deductions.

As Joshua Son of David he
Was known, because "'twas written";
'Tis Jesus Davidson that we
Have christened him in Britain.

A Davidson, called Randall, acts
For Davidson, called Jesus,
And seeks, by preaching fibs as facts,
Financially to squeeze us.

A shiftless vagrant life he led,
And scorned the things that ease us;
So, "had not where to lay his head"—
Not *Randall*, mind, but *Jesus*!

In palaces he struts and sleeps;
His lordly style's a scandal;
What others sow, he coolly reaps—
Not *Jesus*, mind, but *Randall*!

Thrift, Banks, and pills eschewed must be,
Because, the ills that seize us
Can all be cured by pray'r, said he—
Not *Randall*, mind, but *Jesus*!

He cursed the rich and blessed the mean,
And said—by implication—
Believe in Jonal's "submarine,"
Or, simply, dree damnation!

But *Randall*'s rich, and thinkers know,
Despite his pious phrases,
He scouts the fishy tale, and so,
Will burn in brimstone blazes.

The tale by *Jesus* was believed,
So, doubting-folk's assumption
Must be that *Jesus* was deceived
Through lack of brains and gumption.

But these are not the thoughts of those
Who honestly "believe" him;
"Believers" never can suppose
That fables could deceive him.

The ignorance of *Jesus* might
Excuse his foolish notions;
But *Randall* sins against the light,
For lucre and promotions.

If *Jesus Davidson* came back,
He'd doff his dusty sandal,
And swing it with a vengeful whack
Upon the rump of *Randall*!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

No Time to Waste.

A Philadelphia merchant has become fond of an office boy he engaged last June. The boy entered early in the morning, when the merchant was reading the paper. The latter glanced up and went on reading without speaking. After three minutes the boy said: "Excuse me—but I am in a hurry." "What do you want?" he was asked. "A job." "You do? Well," snorted the business man, "why are you in such a hurry?" "Got to hurry," replied the boy. "Left school yesterday to go to work, and haven't struck anything yet. I can't waste time. If you've got nothing for me to do say so, and I'll look elsewhere. The only place I can stop long is where they pay me for it." "When can you come?" asked the surprised merchant. "Don't have to come?" he was told. "I'm here now, and would have been to work before this if you had said so."

Acid Drops.

A great deal of sentimental gush was printed both in this country and elsewhere in connection with the French Government and the clerical orders. In the *Daily News* of Feb. 10 there appeared an article on "Convent Horrors," which more than justifies the steps taken by the Government. Some time ago, it appears, a former inmate of the Nancy Good Shepherd House brought an action against the head of the establishment for £800 damages for loss of health and eyesight. The case was dismissed; but the Court of Appeal ordered an enquiry to be made into her allegations. The enquiry is now proceeding and the results are of the most revolting description. In addition to the legal enquiry, a French bishop forwarded a report to Rome, but was curtly informed that he had no *locus standi* justifying his "interference."

The following are some passages of the Bishop's report to Rome: "It is the work of the girls that enriches the Order" "there is not to be found in the whole country an employer, even an atheist, who sweats his people as abominably as these nuns who pretend to take the girls out of charity" "these crimes are certainly committed in all the 'Good-Shepherd' establishments. What demonstrates it is that notwithstanding all my denunciations, the Provincial and Mother Superior General defend and approve the 'Nancy nuns.'"

The girls were sweated in every conceivable manner. Here are some further points taken from the evidence given before the Nancy Tribunal: Madame Blanchard (21st witness, Nancy) desposes: "I was 15½. We were five in the garden, the youngest 14 and the oldest 25. In summer were digging by five o'clock, and at nightfall we were sent to do sewing." The "Good-Shepherd" nuns boast they give their pupils an education. This is another falsehood. Madame Lazarus (20th witness, Nancy) desposes: "My father put me at the 'Good-Shepherd' at the age of ten to get rid of me. I knew neither how to read or write, nor the names of the week days. When I left eight years later I was in exactly the same state of ignorance. My husband taught me." Madame Lefranc (11th witness, Paris) says: "I was for seventeen years at the 'Good-Shepherd, from 1871 to 1887. I had great trouble in getting out. I did not write home, because the nuns had not taught me to read or write, and they persuaded me I was an orphan. Yet my father and mother were still alive. I was 6½ years old when I came. I was put at once to open-work embroidery. It appears that my grandmother tried several times to see me, but was denied admission. I learnt only on leaving the Convent at the age of 22½ that I had relatives. The nuns said I was one of their best hands, and they would not let me go. At the age of 14 I tried to run away, and by way of punishment was put with the unfortunates. When I left they gave me £4. Until then I had never seen money. I did not know what a halfpenny meant. I had never heard of salt or pepper. The day I left Sister Mount-Carmel told me that my parents had paid for my board up to the age of 17 at the rate of 35 francs a month."

Underfed, unpaid, ill-clothed, uneducated, the girls were sent adrift without money when they were no longer profitable. Many of the licensed prostitutes of Paris are "Good Shepherd" girls, forced into the position by being cast adrift penniless, and without any means of securing a livelihood. Altogether there were about 48,000 girls in the different establishments of the Order, by which the Order profited to the extent of £60,000 annually. Not a bad return for sweating helpless girls in the name of Jesus. It is to be hoped that such revelations will serve to strengthen the French Government in their attempt to civilise these Christian institutions.

Before the Education Act became law, there seemed a burning desire on the part of Nonconformists to go to prison for the non-payment of rates if the measure was passed. Now that the Bill has passed into actuality, a great deal of this seems to be evaporating. Counsels of wisdom are pouring in from all quarters. Among others, Dr. Dawson Burns contributes what is, on the whole, a sensible letter to the *Daily News*, pointing out the unwisdom of such a course. He points out that if the principle of resistance holds good in this case, it must also hold good in others. People who do not believe in State action might refuse to pay any taxes whatever. Quakers might refuse to pay taxes on the ground that part of them went in war. Dr. Burns is on the right track; and this only serves to emphasise what we have always declared—that the outcry is not one of outraged principles, but of disappointed sectarianism hoist with its own petard.

During 1901-2 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children dealt with no less than 32,787 cases. There were 2,939 prosecutions, out of which the Society secured 2,744 convictions—figures which reflect credit on the Society's judgment in conducting its work. These figures are cheerful reading for a civilised community. Had they related to affairs in Turkey or Spain, we should have had shrieks from the religious press concerning the evil influence of Mohammedanism and the Roman Church. But they are here in Protestant England, and so the pious British public grudgingly subscribes to the Society's funds, and pray for the betterment—of other people.

We did not observe anything in the report of the Society's meeting about the number of Atheists who were summoned for ill-treating their children. And yet the Bishop of London was at the meeting!

Thirty lives have been lost on a vessel wrecked by a storm on a rock in the Hebrides. On Lake Michigan forty fishermen have been swept away by a storm which broke up the ice on which they had been living in temporary shanties. Seventeen million of sheep, cattle, and horses have been destroyed in Australia by a terrible drought. Providence evidently manages the weather as badly as though human and other lives were matters of absolute unimportance; as, of course, they are—to Providence.

The late Rev. C. R. Schofield, vicar of Great Ousebourne, a follower of the poor and despised Jesus, has left an estate valued at £92,383, including personality of £87,664. It would have been most interesting to hear this gentleman preach on the subject of his master's saying about the difficulty a rich man had in getting into heaven. His defence would probably have been as ingenious as that of the theologian who, although his knowledge of biology would not permit him to accept the virgin birth, yet believed in what he was pleased to call the psychical virginity of Mary.

The Yankee variety of the "genus" parson is not less cute than the average business man. The Rev. Father Lamb, rector of St. Mary's, Chicago, having suffered in money matters through his natural simplicity of heart, has drawn up a code of rules for Church ceremonies that is being copied by his brethren in other denominations. "I don't believe," he said, addressing his congregation, "in people rushing into matrimony without due preparation. I have been bitten so many times that I have had my eye-teeth cut. Henceforth I must have the money in hand before I begin the marriage ceremony. Wedding in this church from now will be ten dollars payable in advance. Don't forget it. My motto is, 'pay as you go, and if you can't pay don't go.'"

The grand jury found a true bill against the Rev. S. C. Beauchamp, who was charged with committing perjury in order to defeat an affiliation summons. When the trial came on, the judge treated the rector's untrue statements under oath as mere mistakes, and ruled that there was no evidence to go before the jury, who by his direction then returned a verdict of acquittal. The congregation at Little Laver probably hope that their rector will not make any more of these little mistakes in the future.

The Rev. B. I. Parkin, vicar of Brightsides, has been charged before the Sheffield City Police Court with having committed an indecent assault on a little girl, twelve years of age, whilst attending a sale of work and concert at the Page Hall Mission Room. The girl asserted that the rev. defendant, having asked her to go into the vestry and fetch his tobacco-pouch, followed her in and, having shut the door, committed the offence complained of. On the ground that the girl's evidence was uncorroborated, the magistrates dismissed the summons. An indictment is, however, to be preferred against the parson at the next sessions.

In last week's *Freethinker* we reproduced a letter from the *Daily News* purported to have been written by a Mr. C. Effland, and in which it was asserted that on the previous Sunday the preacher at St. George's Cathedral—said to have been the Very Rev. Canon Keatinge—had admitted that during the year fifty-two members of the congregation had seceded to "become Protestants." With reference to the above, it is only fair to say that the following appeared in the *Daily News* of Friday, February 5:—"The Rev. P. H. Mason, priest in charge of St. George's Cathedral, referring to a letter from Mr. C. Effland, which appeared in this column on Saturday last, in which a statement was made respecting lapses from Roman Catholicism, writes: 'In reference to this communication, I beg to state the following facts: 1. Canon Keatinge left England for India on January 14th, and therefore certainly did not preach last Sunday

(January 25th). 2 Canon Keatinge was not advertised on the notice-board outside the church to preach on that day. 3. The Rev. B. Noel Morgan, whose name was on the notice-board, and who preached at the High Mass, made no reference whatever to secessions from, or conversions to, the Church. 4. The number of persons received into the Church at St. George's Cathedral during 1902 was thirty-nine, as the register shows. 5. The Cathedral Clergy have not heard of even one member of the congregation leaving the Church to become a Protestant.' On receipt of the Rev. P. H. Mason's communication, we immediately wrote to Mr. Eftland, who assures us that he is not responsible for the information, and that his name has been fraudulently used by the writer. We express our regret to the authorities of St. George's Cathedral on being thus misled."

So it would appear to have been an attempt on the part of a dishonest Protestant to glorify his own Church at the expense of the Roman Catholics. It reminds one of the "good old days" of Eusebius and Irenius, when "evidence" and "facts" were created by similar methods of fraud and forgery. But, of course, to lie for the glory of God is quite justifiable and commendable.

Hall Caine, author of *The Christian*, is at loggerheads with Wilson Barrett, whose *Sign of the Cross* has been as successful in its way as the trashy novels in which religious sentiment is exploited by such sensational writers as Hall Caine and Marie Corelli. Wilson Barrett dramatised Mr. Caine's novel, *The Manxman*, and produced a highly successful play, with which Mr. Caine, however, was not satisfied. A second version, written entirely under the novelist's own directions, has proved a thorough failure. The vanity of the man now leads him to throw the responsibility for the failure upon Wilson Barrett, who naturally declines to be a silent victim to such injustice.

A little while ago, Mr. Hall Caine—or the "Boomster," to give him the admirable nickname so aptly invented for him by Mr. Henley—having occasion to mention Dickens at some literary gathering, was very careful to lay stress on the fact that the great novelist was on the side of the angels. He was not, like so many of the fictionists of the present day, an unbeliever. He was distinctly religious, in the opinion of the "Boomster," who, we suppose, claimed kinship with him on that score. We don't in the least envy him. Dickens's religion—if he had any, which we are inclined to doubt—would, in all probability, account for his somewhat rough-and-ready psychology, his strain of mawkish sentimentalism, his lack of a broad philosophic outlook. Now Mr. Caine has all these faults, in addition to many that he shares with no one else, except, perhaps, with Miss Marie Corelli; and it is more than certain that he has none of Dickens's great qualities—his humor, his wonderful command of pure English, his charming style. He resembles him only in what is casual, unessential. And it will be remembered that Dickens is not the only great man that Mr. Caine resembles. In his library at Greeba Castle he has a bust of Shakespeare. His friends tell him (and he believes it) that he grows more like the dramatist every day. We mean, of course, in personal appearance. Now we know the Shakespeare portrait, and we have had the pleasure—shall we call it?—of seeing Mr. Caine pretty frequently. We are afraid his friends have shamefully deceived him. If we could persuade ourselves that Shakespeare looked so inane, so fatuous as the man novelist, we would go at once and join a Bacon-Shakespeare Society, and worship no more at the shrine of a national imposture.

Now, with regard to Dickens's religiosity, we think Mr. Caine has over-reached himself. We remember a passage in *Martin Chuzzlewit* on Providence that is certainly as irreligious as anything in Shakespeare. It is interesting, because it throws a new light on Dickens's intellectual character: "It would sadly pinch and cramp me, my dear friend," replied Mr. Pecksniff, "but Providence—perhaps I may be permitted to say a *Special Providence*—has blessed my endeavors." "A question of philosophy," says Dickens, "arises here: whether Mr. Pecksniff had, or had not, good reason to say that he was specially patronised and encouraged in his undertakings. All his life long he had been walking up and down the narrow ways and bye-places, with a book in one hand and a crook in the other, scraping all sorts of odds and ends into his pouch. Now, there being a *Special Providence* in the fall of a sparrow, it follows (so Mr. Pecksniff might have reasoned, perhaps) that there must also be a *Special Providence* in the alighting of a stone or stick or other substance which is aimed at the sparrow."

The commercial basis of foreign missions is not often so boldly avowed as by the Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D.D., who in an article on "What Business has a Business Man with

Foreign Missions?" in the missionary magazine, *All Nations*, says: "Missions not only promote, but create commerce. Ipecac, and quinine, and indiarubber were discovered by missionaries; the first steamships on African lakes were built for missions; ploughs were first sold in Turkey by American missionaries; English goods have followed English school-teachers from China to Peru. Commercial facts like these are so numerous and novel that I commend to you their perusal in books like Warneck's *Modern Missions and Culture*, or the Ely volume on *Missions and Science*." And the obvious moral is, Business men, plank down your subscriptions to missionary societies, since trade follows the—missionary!

At the annual meeting of "Bovril, Limited," the chairman, in the course of his speech, made some remarks on the effects of the drought in Australia. At a time when the demand for cattle was large and urgent throughout the world, one of the great producing countries was practically shut out from the market. The drought had lasted seven years, and everyone expected that the long looked-for rain would come at last, and save the pastoral districts of Australia from something approaching utter ruin; but the eighth year had disappointed them again. From returns lately furnished, he learned that the numbers of cattle in Australia was reduced by about forty per cent. in 1902 alone, without taking into account the losses previous years from the same cause. Many cattle proprietors had had to walk out of their stations empty-handed after years of toil, all owing to the drought. "The future is not for us to predict. The cessation of the drought does not lie in our hands, or 1903 would show very differently." Of course, the complaint of "Bovril, Limited," is purely a business one; but what a reflection on the Almighty is such a state of affairs. By the way, no mention is made of prayer in this connection.

In the *Quiver* Archdeacon Sinclair has a quite tearful appeal to people not to give up Sunday observance. "We implore them," says the tearful cleric, "not to give up the habit of worshipping God, at any rate, once, on the Lord's day, whether in town or country. We implore them not to encourage amusements in their homes, which cause scandal to the serious and impel the irreligious to greater and more general invasion of the rest day. If they have their friends to see them on Sundays, as is very natural, we implore them, for the sake of their servants, to have plain and simple fare, few courses, and as little trouble as possible. We entreat them to give up the practice of using Sunday for starting on their journeys. The hundreds of thousands of cyclists we urge, for the sake of their own souls, to worship God, at any rate, once in the day, if possible in their own church, or at least in some church which they may be passing. If they neglect the day altogether, they will soon lose all sense of religion."

This is really quite too painful to read. We feel ourselves almost weeping. The sight of Archdeacon Sinclair on his knees, crying out "For God's sake come to church," is more than even we can stand.

A literal interpretation of the Bible sometimes leads to what even the godly would consider foolish actions. A contemporary tells us that the fanaticism of a poor man at Warwick was raised to such a pitch, upon hearing a discourse in a meeting-house there, on the text, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee," that on his returning home he actually cut off his hand with a hatchet and threw it in the fire. Such a deluded creature is nowadays called a madman, in the early days of Christianity he would have stood a good chance of canonisation.

Dean Hole, who has been defending the Athanasian Creed in the columns of the *Times*, calls the expurgated version lately sung at Westminster a "sanctified 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

A woman in Pennsylvania was fined for washing clothes and hanging them out on a Sunday. Of course, the woman was poor, or our God-fearing and Sabbath-sleeping cousins would not have dared to fine her.

J. W. Sheppard, a well-educated citizen of the United States, has starved himself to death in the belief that he could so spiritualise his life that he could live upon nothing. According to the account in the *Daily Telegraph*, he used to declare that his fasting had made him spiritually and mentally far superior to all those around him, and that by prolonged abstinence from food he could solve all the mysteries that are now beyond the reach of human intelligence, and in that state, even if he died as a man, his exalted existence would still go on in some other form. His son, the physician, and others who knew him say that

he was not insane. They declare that his mind was perfectly clear and sound upon all other points.

As an instance of the extent to which the grossest superstitions still persist in this country, take the case of a man named Walter Smith, who last week was sentenced at Bottisham, a place near Cambridge, to a month's hard labor for cruelty to three horses under the following circumstances. Smith told a witness that he was bewitched, and that an enemy had placed a spell over the horses so that they should not work. He had been told what to do to bring his enemy to his door. He procured two bottles of wash from the village blacksmith, and some nails and pieces of hoof from the forge. He also bought a pennyworth of pins, and boiled the whole lot together, muttering, the meanwhile, an incantation, which frightened the witness away. He then gave the broth to the horses, which were afterwards kept from food. They were found in a starving condition by the police, who were attracted to the stable by the groans of the animals, and one of them had to be killed. And this is the twentieth century of the elevating and enlightening influence of Christianity!

According to a paragraph in the *Daily Telegraph*, a married couple, well known in Vienna for their spiritualistic researches, have become mentally deranged as a result of their devotion to occult "studies," and have had to be placed under restraint by their friends. They are not the only persons by millions who have lost their mental balance by devotion to occult beliefs and spiritualistic delusions, as the history of Christianity shows only too conclusively.

That rationalising parson, the Bishop of Ripon, has been trying to awaken an interest in the Church at Oxford. He admits that earnest-minded men may be shocked at the divergence of opinion among orthodox members of the Church, but that should not hinder them from joining the "black army." He practically told his audience that there was plenty of latitude allowed, that when an educated man had subscribed to the Thirty Nine Articles, the Church did not inquire very closely into his personal philosophy.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool has been deploring the falling away of the faithful in that benighted city. He referred to a recent local census of church-goers as a sad record of Liverpool's negligence and forgetfulness of God. Sixty-two per cent. of non-Catholics and thirty per cent. of Catholics did not put in an appearance at church. There is some hope for Liverpool yet.

The denominational totals of the census taken a few months ago in Australia have been tabulated by a correspondent of the *Methodist Times*. The population, when the census was taken, numbered 4,544,431. The word "indefinite" was attached to the names of 864 persons; 8,000 were returned as having "No religion." The religion of 57,134 was "unspecified"; 60,419 "objected to state their religion." "Freethinkers, Agnostics, Buddhists, Confucians, Hindoos, and Brahmins" total 22,965; "other non-Christians," 19,893; "Jews," 3,270; "Church of England," 1,811,644; "Roman Catholics," 965,622; "Presbyterians," 602,576; "Methodists," 587,943; "Baptists," 107,037; "Congregationalists," 80,107; "Unitarians," 3,110; "Other Christian Sects, including Church of Christ," 87,576. Assuming the accuracy of the foregoing, there is evidently plenty of room for effort on the part of friend Symes and the other "saints" at the Antipodes.

Under the title of *Biblical Love-Ditties: a Critical Interpretation and Translation of the Song of Solomon* Prof. Haupt, of John Hopkins University, Baltimore, U.S.A., contributes a really valuable study to the criticism of one of the most beautiful love poems in any literature. In his preface the Professor says of it: "The late Professor Franz Delitzsch, of Leipzig, one of the foremost Biblical scholars of the nineteenth century, and one of the most devout Christians I have met in my life, stated in the introduction to his commentary on the Song of Solomon, that this was the most difficult book in the Old Testament; but the meaning becomes perfectly plain, *in fact, too plain*, as soon as we know that it is not an allegorical dramatic poem, but a collection of popular love-ditties, which must be interpreted on the basis of the erotic imagery in the Talmud, and modern Palestinian and other Mohammedan poetry." The price of the pamphlet is threepence, and can be procured from Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trübner & Co.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's method of work is the subject of an interesting article in a new magazine, *The World's Work*. The great philosopher began life as a railway engineer. He was for four years sub-editor of the *Economist* and a contributor to the *Leader*, a journal founded by Thornton Hunt

and G. H. Lewes. In 1860 he commenced the great task which he has but lately brought to a conclusion. His life has been a continual scheming to get the maximum of work out of his brain, and he has always been handicapped by a delicate constitution. A curious point is suggested by a remark in the article above-mentioned. Mr. Spencer, the writer tells us, is a great admirer of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, but finds Fielding too coarse. This is hardly the criticism we should have expected from a man who, although not a wide reader of English literature, is certainly a thoughtful one. If ever there was a coarse writer—coarse in an insidious way—it was the Rev. Laurence Sterne. He even exceeds in salacity his brother cleric, Dean Swift. In comparison with these two worthies Fielding's coarseness, his healthy animalism of the average sensual man, is purity itself.

Dealing with a biography of Robert Buchanan, who died eighteen months ago, a reviewer in the *Daily Telegraph* says he was "'born in the strongest odor of infidelity'; he was always fighting someone. And yet, as his biographer shows, he was a most unselfish soul, loyal and honest above all things." Why should biographer and reviewer alike apply the abusive and utterly mendacious term "infidelity" to disbelief in the current superstition? And why the tone of surprise or feeling of incongruity indicated by the words, "and yet"? Are we to bow to the implied assumption that Agnosticism and honesty are opposite or contrasts? The expressions used show that the vulgar prejudice and abuse fostered by centuries of Christian arrogance still crop up even in the thoughts and utterances of people who evidently desire to do justice to the unorthodox object of their remarks.

A daily contemporary noticing the death of "Edna Lyall," remarked that in *We Two* the novelist drew the only Atheist in modern fiction that was neither a scoundrel nor a death-bed convert to Christianity. The Atheist in question was modelled upon the character of the late Charles Bradlaugh; and two things are responsible for the Atheist being different to those usually drawn. "Edna Lyall," Miss Bayly, came into personal contact with Bradlaugh, from whom, to use her own words, she learned much. And in the second place, Miss Bayly happened to be honest. These two circumstances make a deal of difference to one's writing. It is easy to blackguard Atheists, when one has never known one in the flesh, and even then it may be done if one is anxious to pander to popular bigotry and ignorance with an eye to sales.

The celebrated "Keighley Astrologer," Mr. David Lund, has passed to the other life. His own horoscope was wrong somewhere, for he looked forward to being well again "when the 21st March came round."—*Two Worlds*.

The Christian.

"What a friend we have in Jesus."—HYMN.

OF TIMES in the early morning, as I take my walks abroad,
I commune with moist-eyed yokels on the goodness of the Lord
(*Thick-skulled folk, with souls immortal—how they love to hear of God!*).

As a-down the village High-street to my shop my way I wend,
Looking upward, soft I murmur, "Lord, thy servant blessings send,
And prepare him—O prepare him!—for the Sabbath without end."

And the passers, hearing, seldom fail to gaze with mild surprise,
And observe the upward rolling of my liquid, lamb-like eyes;
And they say: "What do men call him, this sweet saint in humble guise?"

Some reply: "'Tis only Smithers—he who sells the sugared sand
And talks 'gospel' to the public—which the public can't withstand,
For they flock in crowds to Smithers, fight to squeeze his fish-like hand."

Thus my foes; but do I trouble? Nay, each Sabbath on my knees
At the chapel I pray for them; I their Savior's wrath appease—
And on Monday many seek me, and I sell to them my cheese.

Heaven with each slice of bacon, God Almighty with the ham;
With my coffee and my sugar, just a *soupeçon* of the Lamb;
Three-in-One with Gorgonzola..... Ah, it pays to be a sham!

JOHN YOUNG.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- T. ROBERTSON.—We deeply regret to receive the sad news of Mr. Black's death. The Glasgow hall will hardly seem the same place with his earnest and cheerful personality absent from it. Friends throughout the country, who knew him, will join with you in deploring the loss of one of your most esteemed co-workers. We also desire on behalf of ourselves and others to proffer to Mrs. Black and family our most sincere condolence on their irreparable loss. They have lost a good husband and parent, and while that makes the grief of the moment keener, it will yet surround his memory with undying affection.
- J. S. GILBERT.—Please send further orders direct to the Freethought Publishing Company.
- G. COLLINS.—We have not the slightest doubt that the Blackburn Branch does sincerely wish its subscription of ten shillings towards the maintenance of the Freethought lectures at the Athenæum Hall were one of as many pounds. The subscription is, of course, welcome, but the encouraging letter which accompanies it is more valued.
- F. S. draws our attention to an odd misprint in the *Freethinker* a fortnight ago. The *Humane Review* was referred to in "Sugar Plums" as containing an article by Mr. J. H. Levy on "The Bird that Laid the Resurrection Egg." It should have been the "Vaccination Egg." We beg everybody's pardon—including the egg's.
- B. HOLMES wishes us a complete restoration to health and a triumph over all our enemies.
- J. JONES.—The matter is having attention.
- W. J. CHIVERS.—Mr. Foote is well enough to write his weekly article for the *Freethinker*, but not well enough (even if he had the inclination) to carry on a controversy with you upon it through the post.
- J. C. BANKS.—Thanks for your good wishes.
- J. ROSS.—We hope the effort that is being made by yourself and others to sustain and improve the Liverpool Branch will be thoroughly successful. Weak-kneed brethren there will be in all movements. The best thing is to let them go their way when they are frightened by the sky being a little overcast. The greater honor, with the greater burden, devolves on those who stand by the cause in its need.
- G. RILEY.—Yes, it is a rather revolting thing, even at the execution of a criminal, to chant one's burial service while one is still alive, but then religion seldom makes for real refinement or delicacy of feeling.
- C. KELSON.—Received with thanks. Will in all probability appear in an early issue.
- A. GUMSHAW.—It is difficult to say just how much the Church of England receives from the State, and the Church is far too cautious to make the full amount public. Possibly, seven or eight million would be near the mark. We think the Liberation Society might be able to supply you with some printed information on the subject.
- T. FISHER.—Your letter will be forwarded to Mr. Foote for an answer on the purely personal part. We deeply regret to hear of your wife's illness, and hope that by the time this reaches your eye, the "slight hope" has blossomed into a certainty. We return your metaphorical handshake with the most sincere sympathy, and rejoice that Freethought literature and lectures have been the means of ennobling yourself and wife to face life—and death—with none of the fears and terrors that are the products of superstition.
- R. TAYLOR.—Sorry there was a mistake of sixpence in acknowledgment of your contribution to Shilling Month. It has now been rectified.
- C. BRIDGALL, W. MUIR, J. WALKER, M. ROBINSON, and J. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for good wishes, which are warmly reciprocated.
- E. PAINTER, Colchester.—Thanks for contributions to Leicester Society, £1; to Camberwell Hall, £1. The other contributions will be found under their respective headings.
- T. ELSTON and R. T. EDWARDS.—We again remind you that the lecture notices *must* be sent on separate slips of paper or post-card if their insertion is to be assured. Endless trouble is caused by non-observance of this regulation, and it is one that costs little or no trouble to observe.
- H. JONES.—Paper received with thanks, but regret that the report is too scrappy. We hope that matters secularistic will soon begin to look up in Blackburn.
- W. H. DEAKIN (India).—Literature sent as desired. Thanks for good wishes to all, which all return with the utmost heartiness. "Ex-N.S.S." will supply Miss Vance with his name and address, he may receive satisfaction. At present we cannot avoid the impression that its real author has a name commencing with a letter not far from the bottom of the alphabet.
- MONTHLY meeting of the Members of New West London Branch at the Secretary's house, Thursday, February 26, at 8.30 p.m.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and *not* to the Editor.

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

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

A Note of Warning.

I HAVE had reproduced in full in this week's *Freethinker* the report which appeared in the *Oldham Evening Standard* of an argument in the Manchester Chancery Court *re* a bequest of £400 made to the Oldham Secular Society by the late Mr. John Beswick. While the case is *sub judice* I cannot argue it in these columns. I beg to draw attention, however, to the Vice-Chancellor's observation that he would have to "inquire what are the principles of the Secular Society," and that if they are "contrary to the principles of English law the bequest would become invalid." Now I have my own opinion on this point; it is based upon a very special and careful study of the subject; and immediately I saw the printed report I wrote to Mr. J. E. Broadbent offering my assistance to the Oldham Secular Society's legal adviser. For the rest, I desire to remind Freethinkers once more of the danger of all bequests to unregistered Societies. It was partly in order to obviate this danger that I devised and started the Secular Society, Limited; a thing unheard of before in the history of Freethought, and dependent upon a certain principle which its imitators do not appear in the least degree to understand. What that principle is it is not for me to state at present. All I want to say now is that any bequest—small or large, immediate or contingent—to the Secular Society, Limited, is absolutely and entirely safe. Executors have no option but to pay over the bequest in the terms of the testator's will. No objection has been raised over either of the three bequests accruing to the Society since its incorporation in 1898. Nor is it possible to raise an objection. Had the £400 in this Oldham case been left to the Secular Society, Limited, there would have been no litigation over it in any Court whatsoever. Those who wish to leave anything at their decease to the Freethought cause should do so through the medium of this Society. And if there are special circumstances in which they desire advice, I shall always be happy to render it, if they will favor me with a communication.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

It was Mr. Foote's hope that he would be able to lecture at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Feb. 15). But in order to make the necessary announcement he would have had to decide the point a week beforehand. In view of the weather and his own condition, he determined not to lecture before next Sunday (Feb. 22), when he is due at Glasgow. We understand that a large West-end hall has been engaged for him on this occasion. Full particulars of the meetings will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

This evening (Feb. 15) Mr. C. Cohen lectures at the Athenæum, 73 Tottenham-court-road, at 7.30. His subject is "Rome or Atheism? The Great Alternative." It is to be hoped that there will be a good attendance, not merely of Freethinkers, but what is of more consequence, of Christians. Nothing adds so much zest to a lecture as a good sprinkling of opponents among the audience, and Freethinkers might do a deal towards securing their presence.

Mr. Cohen had two of the best audiences—best both in numbers and quality—at Birmingham on Sunday last that he has yet had in that city. The officials of the Branch were delighted with the meetings, and are contemplating a fresh and important venture in propaganda. What that is will appear in due course. Meanwhile, we hope that all local Freethinkers will do their best in supporting one of the hardest working, and one of the most deserving branches in the country.

Mr. Foote's absence from London delays the acknowledgment of some Shilling Month subscriptions sent in letters addressed to him personally. Such letters had, of course, to be sent on to him at the seaside, where he is endeavoring to recover complete health and strength. All subscriptions received up to Monday afternoon are acknowledged in this week's *Freethinker*. Those arriving on Tuesday, as aforesaid, will be acknowledged next week. It will be noticed that Shilling Month runs a day over our time for going to press; and it would in any case have been impossible to close the Fund in this week's issue of our journal.

We see that Mr. John M. Robertson is the accepted parliamentary candidate for the Tyneside Division of Northumberland. We wish him every success in his candidature, and we are sure that all Freethinkers on Tyneside who can assist in securing his return will do so. The prospects of Freethought will be none the less bright for its having a representative in the National Senate.

The Reformer's Year Book for 1903 is a book which should certainly be in the hands of all Trade Unionists, social reformers, Freethinkers, and all others who take an interest in the various advanced movements. It is a distinct improvement on previous issues, although there is still plenty of scope for extension as regards the matter it contains. But even as it stands it contains a mass of valuable information which is not to be found in any similar compilation. Full particulars are given of all reform movements, with the office addresses of the societies, unions, and associations engaged in ameliorative and advanced work of every description; together with a useful directory of political and social reformers; catalogue of recent reform literature; a chronology of social and political progress (such as there was) during the last year; a complete list of labor and social reform periodicals, and other similarly useful and interesting information. A noticeable feature of the book is a series of articles on the labor movement in various countries of the world, and all written by authorities on the subject; whilst a special article by Herbert Burrows on "Fifty Years of the Labor Movement" is well worthy the perusal of all reformers. Many portraits of reformers add considerably to the interest of the book. In this connection, however, we would suggest that it is scarcely necessary to reproduce portraits which have appeared in previous issues of the *Year Book*, as is done in several instances. Surely reformers are not so scarce that a sufficient number of fresh portraits could not be presented each year. The book has been produced under the joint editorship of Messrs. Joseph Edwards and Percy Alden, and is published at the *Echo* office at 1s. net in paper covers, or 2s. net bound in art linen. It is also on sale at the office of the Freethought Publishing Company.

Anyone who has yet to make an acquaintance with Mr. Spencer's work should buy a copy of his book on *Education*, which can now be got for the small price of sixpence. It will be found an illuminating study of education from the intellectual, physical, and moral standpoint. A Freethinker may be surprised to find a number of Theistic expressions, but they are no part of his philosophy. We remember that Lord Bacon, in one of his medical writings, recommends, as good for digestion, "whelps and healthy young boys applied to the stomach." It would be as absurd to make this aberration a characteristic of Bacon's philosophy as to point to a few phrases about God, Providence, and the First Cause as affecting Mr. Spencer's system. One might, however, wish they were absent.

The *Positivist Review* for February contains Mr. Frederic Harrison's annual New Year address on the "Old Order and the New." It is a thoughtful study of modern intellectual and political tendencies.

At the last meeting of the Executive it was resolved to the seaside some time before August. Some of our friends, either in London or the country, may have some suggestions to offer on this matter. Should any know a good seaside resort within easy reach of Soudon, and where arrangements might also be made for a general dinner or tea, they will greatly oblige by communicating with Miss Vance.

Shilling Month.

GENERAL

(For division between the National Secular Society and the maintenance of the Sunday Freethought Platform at the Athenæum Hall).

The figure after subscribers' names represents the number of shillings they have forwarded to the fund.

A Poor Brewer, 5; John Ross, 2½; R. G. Radford, 2; S. Holmes, 2½.

Per Miss Vance: W. Tipper, 2; R. Gibbon, 10; J. P., 1½; G. Kemp, 1; E. L. (Aldershot), 3; J. Latham, 9; J. Phillips, 1; A. Cayford, 2; J. O. Bates, 2; W. M. Roberts, 2; F. Warwick, 3½; R. Robinson, 2; D. R. Bow, 10; Conway Monk, 1; W. Lamb, 5; W. Fawthrop, 1; T. Fisher, 3; R. Taylor, ½; G. W. Holloway, 1; Com, 2; R. Lintorn, 2; W. P. Ball, 5; A. Notley, 1; W. H. S., 2; Crowell Hill, 5; J. Tomkins, 2; W. H. Wood, 1; M. Ridley, 1; F. Terry, 1; A. Clarke, 2; W. H. P., 2; R. G. Fathers, 1; Martin, 5; Driscoll, 5; G. Carrington, 5; G. Dickinson, 1; S. H. L., 2; W. Robinson, 4; C. Birdsall, 2; W. Muir, 5; J. Walker, 5; Two Pitchcombe Saints, 5; Better Late Than Never, 2; A. Button, 1; J. Charlton, 1; E. G. H. and T. R. H., 5; H. Thompson, 5. Northumberland: J. G. S., 1; Miss T., 1; J. J., 1.—Total to date, £45 16s.

SPECIAL

(For Maintaining the Sunday Freethought Lectures at the Athenæum Hall).

Blackburn Branch, 10.

Per Miss Vance: F. S., 3; D. and J., 10; Dr. R. T. Nichols, 10; J. Hughes, 10; W. Young, 10½; J. Thomson, 5; E. Painter, 40.—Total to date, £22 2s. 6d.

SPECIAL

(For N. S. S. General Fund).

J. C. Banks, 3; M. L. B., 1; E. L., 1.

Per Miss Vance: W. M. C., 2; W. Brierly, 1; J. Brierly, 1; Miss Hull, 20; A. Tarlton, 1½; W. Young, 10½; J. Hughes, 10; E. Painter, 20.—Total to date, £12 7s.

Secularists.

AN OLDHAM ACTION.

A BEQUEST AND A CHANCERY ACTION.

SIR SAMUEL HALL, K.C., Vice-Chancellor, heard an argument at the Chancery Court in Manchester to-day (Monday) as to whether there was such a Society at present in existence as the Oldham Secular Society.

John Beswick, nephew of the late John Beswick, who was an assistant overseer, and resided at 425 Middleton-road, Chadderton, was the petitioner, and there were about fifteen respondents—trustees of the alleged Oldham Secular Society and the alleged beneficiaries under the will of the late John Beswick, dated June 30, 1889. The said John Beswick died in 1899, on September 3, without having altered the will. Mr. T. C. Eastwood (instructed by Mr. Wright Bradbury, Oldham) represented some of the beneficiaries, whilst Mr. Grant appeared on behalf of the trustees.

By the will of John Beswick it was directed that to certain trustees, on behalf of the Oldham Secular Society, be given the sum of £400 at the death of his widow, and that the interest on the £400 be paid to his widow during her life; also that the said trustees and their successors should devote the interest of the £400 to the spread of Secular principles as the Oldham Secular Society might from time to time direct. The questions which had arisen on this bequest were (a) whether or not the legacy of £400 was good, and, if so, to what extent, and out of what part of the testator's estate it should be paid, or whether the same had lapsed, and (b) as to who was entitled to the residuary real and personal estate, and in what share and proportions. The contention of the petitioner and certain beneficiaries was that the Oldham Secular Society ceased to exist after December, 1893. It was stated in the petition that on June 9, 1873, a company was formed under the Companies Act, 1862, under the style of the Hall of Science Co., Ltd., with a capital of £2,000, divided into 2,000 shares of £1 each. The company acquired in 1873 a building in Bartlam-place, Oldham, which was called the Hall of Science, and was used for the dissemination of Secularist principles and ideas. In connection with that, under the supervision of this company, a Society called the Oldham Secular Society, was formed about 1875, and the Society held its meetings in the above-mentioned hall. The Society, of which the late John Beswick was a member, was not registered. About December, 1893, the company ceased operations, and the mortgagees of the building, it was stated, foreclosed the company, and took possession thereof, and on the 31st December, 1895, the company was dissolved.

By affidavit Mr. Wright Bradbury stated that he was solicitor for John Beswick, of 601 Middleton-road, Chad-derton, and had made careful inquiry of John Edward Broadbent, of 46 Rock-street, Oldham, as to the existence of a Society called the Oldham Secular Society, and he was able to depose that in or about the years 1875 to 1893 Secularism, through the influence of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., Mrs. Annie Besant, Mr. G. W. Foote, the late Dr. Aveling, and other leaders of the movement, acquired a strong position in Oldham and throughout the country. On the death of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh on the 30th January, 1891, the movement rapidly declined in Oldham, and to the best of his knowledge the Oldham Secular Society became defunct in or about the month of December, 1893, when the Hall of Science Company ceased operations, and for many years past there had been no private or public Secularist meetings in Oldham convened by the Society or held under its auspices.

In an affidavit John Edward Broadbent alleged that there were rules published stating the general objects of the Society. The Oldham Secular Society, as constituted in or about 1875, had never ceased to exist, and was now in genuine existence.

Mr. Eastwood briefly explained the circumstances as given above, and contended that the Society had ceased to exist.

Mr. Grant contended that the Society, being in existence at the time of the death of the testator, though it might not be in evidence at the time of the death of the widow, the defendants were entitled to the bequest. As the Society was clearly in existence at the time of the death the beneficiaries could not get the money.

The Vice-Chancellor: I shall have to inquire what are the principles of the Secular Society, and if it turns out that they are contrary to the principles of English law the bequest would be invalid.

Mr. Radford claimed that the Society was not in existence, did not hold meetings, and had no rules or funds, and that the property had been distributed amongst several former members.

The Vice-Chancellor decided that the case should stand over until the petition had been amended by adding the Attorney-General to the parties, when he would hear the arguments and decide the question as to what "Secularism" meant, without incurring the expense of directing an inquiry in Chambers. The Attorney-General should have an opportunity of claiming the money, as if it was decided to give a charitable gift and the Secular Society was proved to be non-existent, possibly the Attorney-General would be entitled to the bequest.

—*Oldham Evening Standard* (Feb. 2).

Vivisection and Ultra-Moralism.

ANTI-VIVISECTIONISTS urge that vivisection is inconsistent with "moral good," and that it must therefore be suppressed, however useful it may be. But if we regard the cutting and killing and paining of living beings as "moral evil," and if we consequently avoid such "moral evil" at all costs, we shall involve ourselves in troubles and difficulties of the most serious character. We shall have to give up animal food, like the Doukhobors, who have set their horses and cattle free, and who refuse to wear woollen clothing or leather shoes. We shall find ourselves imitating pious and tender-hearted Hindoos who respect life so greatly that they will not even kill vermin. We must not boil water, nor even drink it, because of the millions of live animalcula we thus destroy. Even a vegetarian diet will practically be unattainable, because we must not dig the ground and thereby chop worms in pieces. Wild fruits, berries, and nuts will apparently be our only food. Only a small portion of the human race could survive if they depended on the scanty supply of such unsuitable food, and even then the survivors would often deprive other living beings of their natural sustenance, and so would starve them to death during severe winters. Our only way of avoiding moral evil would apparently be to follow the self-sacrificing example of Buddha, who gave himself as food to hungry beasts of prey.

We are told that justice, mercy, and humanity are far higher than mere utility or material benefits—as if the means were more important than the ends, and the sowing of the corn were more desirable than the eating of the bread. We must not allow ourselves to become slaves to such words as "justice." The loftiest "moral" devotion or enthusiasm may lead to excesses as mischievous as those of religious fanatics. The unqualified application of such terms as justice, moral good, etc., to the relations between man and all other living beings, is an impracticable and therefore unreasonable extension of the social bond. "Morals" are primarily and essentially the manners or rules of conduct among a community. How far we can extend the benefit of such rules or ideals of conduct to beings outside the human

family, has to be decided by practical considerations. Man must kill the wolf, or be torn in pieces himself. He must trap or poison or otherwise destroy the innocent rabbit and the inoffensive mouse, or be eaten out of house and home by increasing multitudes of prolific rivals. If justice be conceded to creatures who do us no harm, it is hard to see by what right man can allow himself to catch and devour the fish which would never interfere with him in any way. In the case of domestic animals, only a very strange kind of justice would permit us to enslave the horse and slaughter the sheep. Justice, as we use the term among men, cannot be extended to all living things. If we allow the moral principle to protect animals as it does men, killing them will be murder, and we shall have to respect the lives and liberties of all living beings whatsoever, just as we do those of our fellow men. To be "just" towards the innumerable organisms which compete with us or prey upon us, is an ideal that cannot be realised. Universal justice would simply mean the suicide of the human race. The fact is that the first law of nature, self-preservation, determines the main features of human conduct. Life is a struggle for existence between competing organisms, and the only escape from the direct or indirect slaughter of other beings is by withdrawing from the struggle for existence. Advocates of universal justice and mercy who care to think the matter out, will find themselves face to face with this doctrine and duty of suicide as the logical climax or ultimate goal of their moral or ultra-moral efforts.*

In our practical dealings with the animal world as a whole, "justice" is almost as irrelevant as politeness would be. Only in slight degree and with halting inconsistencies at every step can we extend the authoritative sentiments and ideals expressed by such terms as justice, duty, right, etc., beyond the human species to the domestic animals, and only in still lesser degree to wild beasts and the whole circle of animated existence. Not the rigid, equalising claims of justice, but the less imperative and more elastic spirit of pity, sympathy, and kindness, should be invoked on behalf of the animals, whose sufferings should certainly be prevented or mitigated so far as is consistent with human interests. If, indeed, "justice to animals" is limited to this, we can all join in the demand, and can all agree that justice to animals is a moral duty. Beyond this, all will be matter of personal taste and opinion, and not of absolutely decisive principle. There will, of course, be cases in which we may be willing, either individually or collectively, to sacrifice human interests in some degree to those of animals. And without committing ourselves to Quixotic extremes of altruism, we may hope that such cases may become more numerous in the future.

Mr. H. S. Salt, in his earnest and carefully-written plea for *Animals' Rights*, has to admit (pp. 79, 22) that the "rights" of animals are subject to the permanent needs or interests or real requirements of the general community—that is, of the human species—a conclusion on which he really (though apparently unwittingly) abandons the claim for absolute justice to all living things, since the subordination of the interests of all other species to that of one particular species is a flagrant contradiction to the very principle of justice. The dispute will be as to what are our real requirements to which the lives and happiness of animals may legitimately be sacrificed. Food for the body is held by the highest races to be a genuine requirement justifying or excusing the painful slaughter of many millions of animals annually. Nations of meat-eaters cannot consistently declare that food for the mind is not a real requirement excusing the sacrifice of a far smaller number of animals. Scientific knowledge and the resultant benefits are among the permanent needs and interests of a civilised community.

But as the cultivation of humanity is also an interest or desire of the community, a compromise between these conflicting interests should be sought. Anæsthetics should be used as far as possible in cases of vivisection, and where this cannot be done the painful experiments should be limited to cases where sufficient reason can be shown for the permission accorded.

I have not written the above with any desire to promote a

* It might of course be argued that, on the Utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the suicide of the universal tyrant and destroyer man is a moral duty transcending all others. But the annihilation of the human race would not necessarily diminish the sum total of pain or destruction. The destruction would merely take place by other means, such as beasts of prey or the starvation of prolific multitudes of animals; and on the whole these means would, I think, cause more pain than those employed by man. The highest hopes and opportunities of the future would vanish with the disappearance of the human race. Human happiness would be lost, and no other dominant animal except man would endeavor to be humane to all others. The suicide, moreover, if it were attempted, would only be carried out by the moral or ultra-moral members of the community, leaving the crueller portion of the race in unchecked control of the animal world in general.

practice with which Secularism has no special concern, but in order to show that we must not discredit and weaken the principles and ideals of Morality, Justice, and Duty by overloading them with responsibilities too heavy to be borne. I wish to make it clear that the limitation of the Moral principle is necessary for the preservation of the Moral principle, since this limitation is necessary for the continued existence of any species that becomes moral. The vivisection question is but a minor offshoot of a far greater question, on which the food supply, the general welfare, and the very existence of the human race will depend.

W. P. BALL.

Book Chat.

SHAKESPEARE'S work has been, and is, a hunting ground for cranks of all descriptions. We have the Baconian maniacs, like Mr. Mallock and his friend Mrs. Gallup, who are shocked at the credulity of an age that can think of such stupendous productions as work of a comparatively uneducated man. They pose as sceptics, and, like many others of their persuasion, strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. We think their contention that Bacon, in addition to his own work, dashed off the plays of Shakespeare in his leisure hours, is too "large an order," even for a generation agape for anything in the shape of the marvellous. Besides these are a number of people who give a lifetime, which would have been better spent in collecting postage stamps, to proving that the poet was a lawyer, an archer, a classical scholar, a Protestant, a Roman Catholic, or a Deist; and many, without any thought, acclaim him as a deeply religious mind.

If anyone were to ask us what portion of Shakespeare's work was least likely to attract this kind of fluent theoriser, we should have said at once—the Sonnets. They are, as everyone knows, passionate poems that scale the heights and sound the depths of love, and are addressed, some to a friend of the poet's own sex, and others to a woman. Yet we lately came across a little book that shows how far people can go astray through perverse ingenuity. It is a selection of fifty sonnets, with what the writer calls their Scriptural harmonies. Each sonnet is fitted with an explanation converting the poet's passion for his friend and his mistress into love for religion and his "Divine Master." A host of passages from the Bible are quoted to show the so-called source from which the inspiration of the poems is derived. Such ineptitude is not even confined to England. A somewhat similar attempt was made by a Frenchman, who sought to prove that Shakespeare had turned the Bible into sonnets, and that all his ideas could be found in Ecclesiastes. This surely is the culmination of the stupidity which will not see that Shakespeare gave little or no thought to religion. But some people are born discoverers—of mare's nests. The Pagan title of *Venus and Adonis* has, perhaps, been the only thing that has kept it from the harmonising hands of these gentlemen. It is not impossible that some day an adventurous person will come along and allegorise or symbolise a poem whose main beauty is its delight in what someone called "young limbs and lechery." Was not the flamingly amorous Song of Solomon by this process converted into mystic mummary?

The immediate effect of the Reformation is often misunderstood. It was essentially an intellectual movement, and acted as a dissolvent of religious beliefs. To be sure there was a slender minority whose eyes were turned towards Rome or Geneva; but the Queen, the Court, and men in general were either openly irreligious or sceptical after the manner of Montaigne, balancing their opinions, and thus avoiding an imputation of hostility to current belief. The dramatists Marlowe, Greene, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher were Freethinkers. Marlowe, for whose genius Shakespeare had unbounded admiration, was more than a Freethinker. He was an avowed militant Atheist, a propagandist; and if he had lived longer would have run the risk of being burnt for his opinions. He called Moses a liar, and made a statement as to the dubious relation of the angel Gabriel to the Holy Ghost, which, although possibly true enough, was not conducive to peace and order. One of the greatest and most fascinating intellects of the time, Sir Walter Raleigh, was currently believed to be an Atheist, and his untimely end was attributed to his questioning of "God's being and providence."

Shakespeare, it will be remembered, was an intimate friend of all of these men. It is, therefore, unlikely that a mind of such a daring type should not have been attracted by this revolt from religion, this return to a healthy intellectual paganism. An inspection of any one of the plays will soon serve to show that the texture is not religious. Let us look for a moment at the *Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare's idea in this play seems to have been to show the

futility of morality based on religion, by ridiculing both that of the Jew and the Christian. It is fundamentally irreligious. Moreover the characters continually choose a religious subject upon which to exercise their wit. Read, for instance, the opening dialogue of the fifth scene of the third act, and say whether you must not confess that, from a believer's point of view, Shakespeare is the "Coryphæus of profanity," as some one said. The most hardened and most delightful offender in this way is that "old white-bearded Satan," Falstaff. Yet he is Shakespeare's chiefest claim to remembrance, the most complete artistic projection in all literature. To the making of him there went a sympathy impossible for religion to understand, a limitless charity that comes of large experience and much deep thought. And these are precisely the great qualities that give ethical values to the plays and differentiate them from a drama based on religious dogma.

If we look for a moment at the drama in a country where religion played an important part, the difference will become obvious at once. Calderon, the Spanish playwright, was born in 1600, sixteen years before Shakespeare died. He was a firm believer and a member of the Holy Inquisition. He had no intellectual curiosity prompting him to attack or scorn the popular faith. How, then, do his plays compare with those of Shakespeare in respect of the great issues of life? Very badly. The whole moral atmosphere is vitiated. Turn to a drama called *Devotion to the Cross*. The hero is an amazing ruffian. His life has been a sequence of hideous crimes, robbery, murder, incest, and there is not a particle of shame in him, he unblushingly owns to all his wickedness. But in the eyes of religion he has one great redeeming virtue—a steadfast faith in God and his mercy. When he has murdered anyone he places a cross upon his victim's grave, and by this act of faith, firmly believes that his own ultimate salvation is assured. After a life of unexampled villainy he dies blessed by religion as a faithful, though erring, son of the Church. There is no question of his not getting a good place in the next world. This is not exceptional. It is an ethical type most frequently met with in the Spanish drama. In a play by another dramatist, Tirso de Molina, we have the tragedy of a hermit whose only crime, in a life of exemplary virtue and charity, is that he doubts the efficacy of religious faith. He is not represented as a scoffer, a profane person; but a serious seeker after truth. His sincerity, however, is insufficient to save him, and he goes down to the tortures of hell at the same time as a believing murderer enters paradise. The difference between this conception of life and conduct and that, say, of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at once leaps to the eyes as the French would say. Can we say even after so cursory an examination that Shakespeare gave any prominence to religion in his philosophy of the world?

A curious point is suggested by a remark of a contributor to the first number of the *Pioneer*. In an essay on the "New Point of View" he tells us that a line from the *Self-tormentor*, a comedy by the Roman poet, Terence, was one that "electrified the ancients." The saying in question is the well-known verse:—

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto

(I am a man, and nothing that is human is without interest for me). This appears to us to be one of those popular delusions that no one ever thinks of inquiring into. The practice of taking such sentences from dictionaries of quotations only serves to make matters worse. If we show how and where the line comes in we shall see that the influence attributed to it is wholly fictitious. Chremes and Menedemes are two country gentlemen who live on estates at some distance from Rome. Chremes has forbidden his son to marry a young lady from Corinth because he does not think she will make him a desirable wife. The son, in a fit of anger, has joined a band of mercenaries, and his father does not now know whether he is dead or alive. This preys upon his mind. He lives a life of seclusion. Instead of merely managing his estates, he works as hard at manual labor as any one of his slaves. The curiosity of Menedemes, a busybody, is awakened, and, in an amusing scene, he attempts to find out the secret of his neighbor's melancholy and self-torture. Chremes roughly tells him his curiosity and interest would be better appreciated if they were confined to his own affairs. Menedemes replies: "I am a man, and all things relating to mankind have an interest for me."

Anyone with an eye for comic effect will see that it is obviously absurd to imagine that an audience applauded the sentiment, as sentiment. What they heard was a busybody explaining his idle curiosity in terms of his general interest in mankind. It was Augustine, we believe, who started this absurd notion. He tells us that even a rough and unlettered audience applauded this sentiment. Of course they would. It would bring down the house now.

F. W.

Correspondence.

SCIENTIFIC TORTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read the letter on Vivisection from your correspondent, C. M. Mallett, and its criticism by W. P. Ball. Allow me to assure Mr. Ball that the terrible indictment brought by anti-vivisectionists against those scientific torturers of animals, the vivisectors, is nothing less than "plainly stated fact," the facts being taken from the vivisector's own records. Out of their own mouths they are condemned, by their own statements they are proved guilty.

It is impossible to exaggerate the unspeakable horrors of vivisection, the awful atrocities perpetrated upon defenceless animals—chiefly our dear friends the dogs—under the pretext and in the name of "scientific research." For what is this "research?" *It is torture*; the torture of creatures whose capacity for pain is equal to our own; intelligent, sensitive creatures, who love and trust us, but who are ruthlessly sacrificed to the mighty, fashionable, false idol, Science, the Juggernaut of to-day.

These poor animals are strapped down on operating tables, fixed, stretched, strained and distorted by elaborate, powerful machinery, muzzled, gagged, kept rigid and motionless by curare (not an anæsthetic) which paralyses movement but greatly intensifies the agony, rendering them, as the late Mr. Cox, M.R.C.V.S., said, "powerless to resist their cowardly torturers." These bound and helpless victims of man's pitiless cruelty are flayed alive, baked, boiled, frozen, suffocated, dissected, hacked and mutilated in every imaginable manner, subjected to every possible excruciating torture that scientific ingenuity can devise, to body, limb, nerve, eye, brain, and internal organ, that the vivisectors may indulge their unbridled curiosity and lust for abstract knowledge at any price, even that of the torture of sentient creatures, committed to our care, and for our treatment of whom we are responsible to Almighty God.

Let none be deceived by the idea—carefully fostered by the vivisectors—that anæsthetics safeguard the vivisectioned animals from suffering. No greater delusion ever misled a nation and sanctioned a national crime. By the discreditable and disastrous Act of 1876, the vivisectors obtain certificates exempting them from the use of anæsthetics and from the obligation to kill the animal before recovering consciousness when an anæsthetic is employed. That Act, while nominally protecting the animals, really protects the vivisectors, and is the greatest curse to the poor animals, for it licenses and legalises cruelty, puts unlimited power to torture into the hands of the experimenters, and places their "subjects" completely at their mercy.

Vivisection means all this and very much more. It means also the demoralisation of doctors and degradation of the medical profession, the undermining of our national humanity and the deterioration of our national character. It is an insult to Christianity and a deep disgrace to England.

The vast scheme of cancer research now on foot will involve an equally vast amount of hideous and shameful torture of dogs and other animals; and with what result? Presumably, none. Animals differ in so many particulars from mankind that experiments upon them are, as the many doctors who strongly condemn vivisection state, not only futile, but misleading and dangerous. This debased form of so-called science has been practised for very many years, yet disease has enormously increased, and the vivisectors agree mainly in mutual contradiction and repudiation of one vivisectional method after another.

Results, however, should not be so much as considered, for this is a moral question. Utility and expediency never condone crime and wrong-doing. Cruelty is a sin, a base and cowardly crime; nothing can justify it. No argument advanced in its favor can possibly justify the crime of vivisection.

C. A. M. BAILEY,

Member of Executive Committee, National
Canine Defence League.

151 Strand, W.C., February 2, 1903.

Among the anecdotes related concerning the late Archbishop of Canterbury and his brusqueness of speech, is one to the effect that on one occasion a lady came up to him exclaiming somewhat hysterically, "Oh, my lord, was not that a dreadful railway accident which occurred this morning on the Great Western? Do you know, my aunt might have been in the train, but she missed it. Now, was it not providential, my lord?" "Well, madam," he replied, "I can't say; I have never seen your aunt."

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's offices, January 29.

Mr. C. Cohen in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. J. Neate, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, F. Wood, E. Parker, T. How, E. Bater, T. Gorniot, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

Two new members were received for the parent society. In the absence of the President through illness, only routine business was transacted.

The Secretary received instructions *re* an annual excursion.

Temporary provision was made for the outdoor work during the approaching season, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

Obituary.

THE Glasgow Secular Society has suffered a serious loss in the death, at a comparatively early age, of one of its principal members, Mr. Donald Black. For many years Mr. Black had been one of the most devoted servants of Freethought in the northern metropolis. During the time that an active propaganda was carried on down the Clyde he was one of the most zealous, journeying to various towns, acting as chairman when required, and carrying on at the same time an effective propaganda of his own. Very few members of the society did more to extend Freethought in Glasgow than Mr. Black, his earnestness often being reminiscent of the Scotch Covenanted spirit. By many outside Glasgow, he will also be remembered as a frequent attendant at the Annual Conferences, and no personality will be more missed, perhaps, at these gatherings than his. He died, as he lived, in harness; his last public appearance being at the recent social meeting of the Branch, when he occupied the chair. A recurrence of a chronic affection of the heart was the immediate cause of his death, after a brief illness of three weeks. Donald Black's end was all that might be expected of him. He faced death as bravely as he faced life, and showed that the philosophy that had sustained him for many years was equally serviceable in the presence of death. In him Freethought has lost one of its most devoted servants, and the local society one of its most valued workers. His memory should long serve as a stimulant and example to the younger members of the movement in Glasgow. In accordance with his wishes his remains were cremated on the 10th inst.—T. ROBERTSON.

Toleration.

THERE should be a perfect toleration in matters of religion. In what relates to the salvation of a man's soul, he is infinitely more concerned than I can be; and to pretend to dictate to him in this particular is an infinite piece of impertinence and presumption. But if a man has no religion at all? That does not hinder me from having any. If he stood at the church door and would not let me enter, I should have a right to push him aside; but if he lets me pass by without interruption, I have no right to turn back and drag him in after me. He might as well force me to have no religion as I force him to have one, or burn me at a stake for believing what he does not. Opinion, "like the wild goose, flies unclaimed of any man": heaven is like "the marble air, accessible to all"; and therefore there is no occasion to trip up one another's heels on the road, or to erect a turnpike gate to collect large sums from the passengers. How have I a right to make another pay for the saving of my soul, or to assist me in damning his? There should be no secular interference in sacred things; no laws to suppress or establish any church or sect in religion, no religious persecutions, tests, or disqualifications, the different sects should be left to inveigh and hate each other as much as they please; but without the love of exclusive domination and spiritual power there would be little temptation to bigotry and intolerance.

—William Hazlitt.

When we are in earnest about the right we need no incitement or support from above; we need no Christian rule of political right; we need only one which is rational, just, human. The right, the true, the good, has always its ground of sacredness in itself, in its quality. Where men are in earnest about ethics, they have in themselves the validity of a divine power.—Feuerbach.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Rome or Atheism? The Great Alternative."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "Why I Pray."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tun-stall-road, Brixton): 7, Thomas G. Tibbey, B.A., "Ourselves and Circumstances."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, C. Schiller, M.A., "Philosophy and Life."

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7.15, Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, M.A. (Boyle Lecturer, 1887-8-9), "Rationalism Unreasonable."

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, J. Dawson, "Faith and Freethought." Music from 6.15.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Monday and Tuesday, February 16 and 17, at 7.30, Debate between H. Percy Ward and Ernest Marklew, "Secularism or Spiritualism: Which is the Better System?"

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Class, Open Discussion; 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "The Stars." With lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "A Reply to the Rev. C. F. Aked."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward, 11, "Secularism: The True Philosophy of Life"; 3, "Morality Without Theology"; 6.30, "How Christians Love Their Enemies." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, February 19, at 8, Miss L. Fawcitt, "Much Ado About Nothing."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans, 3, "The Autobiography of the Earth"; 7, "Healthy Homes." Illustrated by the lantern. Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Victoria Hall, Fowler-street): 7, T. H. Elstob, "Thomas Henry Huxley."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool.—February 15, Manchester; 16 and 17, Debate at Failsworth; 22, Liverpool; 25, Preston; March 8, Liverpool; 22, Liverpool; April 5, Liverpool; 19, Glasgow; May 3, Liverpool; 17, Liverpool.

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