

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good—PAUL.

Dean Farrar.

A FEW years ago I wrote a volume—which is still in print, if anyone cares to read it—entitled *The Book of God*. It was a careful study of the conclusions of the so-called Higher Criticism, and a candid examination of how the Bible stood in view of the admissions of its friends and apologists. It was written principally in reference to Dean Farrar's latest work on *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy*. That work was not one of any intrinsic value. It contained nothing that was new to fairly well-read sceptics. It simply presented the commonplaces of modern Biblical criticism in a manner calculated to spare the susceptibilities of the ordinary ill-informed Christian. Still, it was not without a certain accidental value. While not telling the whole truth about the Bible, it told some of the truth, and told it to persons who would shrink from reading Strauss and Thomas Paine.

Not only did I declare that the value of Dean Farrar's book was accidental, and not intrinsic; I was obliged to express an equally unfavorable opinion of his literary style. After criticising a quotation he made from brave old George Fox, I said: "This is magnificent writing. It has vision, force, and simplicity. In its way it could hardly be beaten. And how poor in comparison is the turgid pulpit rhetoric of Dr. Farrar."

Now that Dean Farrar is dead I do not feel called upon to modify this judgment. He was a painfully good man, with a hopelessly commonplace mind. A slight perception of this fact dawned upon even the *Daily News*. "Dean Farrar," it says, "has written no work that will live. His scholarship was imperfect. His style, in its combination of sentimentalism and vehement rhetoric, produced a wearing effect upon the nerves." This is fairly strong, and the case must have been a very bad one to tempt our pious contemporary to write in such a fashion.

The "sentimentalism" of Dean Farrar's style was characteristic of the man. An unwary reader might have imagined that this eminent Christian strove with all his might to lead a "Christlike" life of poverty and renunciation. Indeed, the preacher once thought it necessary to explain that he was not a rich man; that his salary, after promotion, only amounted to some £1,800 a year—which was supplemented, of course, by the income from his writings. What that income was we do not know, but it must have been considerable, for his writings were "popular," especially the trashy *Life of Christ*. We are well aware that from two to three thousand a year is not the revenue of a millionaire. Nevertheless, it is a large figure for one who spoke as Dean Farrar did. The moral airs he gave himself on that financial elevation were an invitation to sarcasm from some who listened to his exhortations. They might have suggested that his income would probably have saved them from most of the failings he denounced.

This chasm between preaching and practice is noted by the *Daily News* in a different direction. He

started a crusade for the revival of monasticism in the Church of England; upon which our contemporary observes that "the spectacle of an elderly gentleman, with a large family, emphatically proclaiming the advantages of celibacy did not make for edification."

It is said that Dean Farrar showed great courage in the "Eternal Hope" controversy, and that his attitude cost him a bishopric. But what was it he did? He protested, as hundreds had protested before him, without supposing they were doing anything wonderful, against the doctrine of everlasting torment in hell-fire. Not wishing to misrepresent him, or to deprive him of any praise to which he is entitled, I will give his own words:—

"Here I declare, and call God to witness, that if the popular doctrine of Hell were true I should be ready to resign all hope, not only of a *shortened* but of *any* immortality, if thereby I could save, not *millions*, but *one single human soul*, from what fear, and superstition, and ignorance, and inveterate hate, and slavish letter-worship, have dreamed and taught of Hell. I call God to witness that so far from regretting the possible loss of some billions of æons of bliss by attaching to the word *æonios* a sense in which scores of times it is undeniably found, I would here, and now, and kneeling on my knees, ask Him that I might die as the beasts that perish, and for ever cease to be, rather than that my worst enemy should endure the hell described by Tertullian, or Minucius Felix, or Jonathan Edwards, or Dr. Pusey, or Mr. Furniss, or Mr. Moody, or Mr. Spurgeon, for one single year."

Now I confess that I was never able to regard this as anything better than flash rhetoric. The speaker probably felt that he ran no real risk by invoking the Almighty. He knew that there was no real danger in opposing the views of Tertullian and Mr. Spurgeon. And his valor was tempered by discretion in electing to make his protest against "the popular doctrine of Hell." Anyone could throw stones at the "popular doctrine" with impunity. Dr. Farrar's duty was something very different. He had to face the question of what was the Bible doctrine of Hell. What was the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ? On this point he was hopelessly beaten by the superior scholarship, as well as the superior brains and candor, of Dr. Pusey. No one who knew Dr. Pusey would believe that he was more anxious than Dr. Farrar to believe in the everlasting agony of his fellow-creatures. But he was bound to accept what the New Testament taught or else give up his Christianity. Whether he liked it or not was beside the mark. And the conclusion he came to was that "if we know anything at all, we know that the doctrine of Everlasting Punishment was taught by him who died to save us from it."

Dr. Farrar's argument was built upon a very slippery, and even ridiculous, foundation. It was unworthy of the intelligence of a domestic rabbit. John Wesley had noticed and answered it in the previous century. He dismissed it with brevity, and with the scorn it deserves.

There is a text in Matthew (xxv. 46) which concludes Jesus Christ's account of the day of judgment. The sheep are divided from the goats:—

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Now it is the very same Greek word that is employed in both cases. What the life of the saved is,

that the punishment of the lost is. And the very fact that the same word is used to qualify the substantive on both sides of the antithesis carries all the force of a positive demonstration.

Nothing of the kind, said Dr. Farrar; the Greek adjective *sometimes* means everlasting, but not *always*; so you cannot say that it *necessarily* means everlasting in the sentence on the lost.

Was there ever a paltrier juggle? If the Greek word does not necessarily mean everlasting in relation to the lost, it does not necessarily mean everlasting in relation to the saved. So much is clear on general grounds. But when the whole of the circumstances are considered, when we bear in mind the character of the antithesis in which the Greek word occurs, there is no room for the shadow of a doubt.

Dr. Farrar did not want to go too far, but just far enough for his purpose. He did not desire to abolish hell, or to empty it. He merely wanted to get rid of the word "everlasting." A softer word might make the Christian dogma more palatable. He argued, therefore, for the substitution of the word "eternal." He even went to the length of saying that it was "a clear duty" to keep to that rendering, which has been adopted in the Revised Version. But the word "eternal" is substituted for "everlasting" in *both* places, thus leaving the "difficulty" precisely where it was before.

What actual difference there is between "everlasting" and "eternal" Dr. Farrar did not explain. It is really not a question of etymology, but a question of usage. The idea now attached to the word "eternal" is exactly the same as that attached to the word "everlasting." Anyone who disputes this may be referred to the first English dictionary he meets with.

Dr. Farrar is dead now, and if there be a future life I hope he is happy. His friends would probably tell me that he is in heaven. But we can never be certain in these matters, and I will suppose—I say *suppose*, and merely for the sake of argument—that he has gone to the other place. What comfort can he possibly find in reflecting that his residence in the wrong establishment will not be everlasting but only eternal? Is such a distinction worth the single drop of water which Dives implored (in vain) to cool his burning tongue?

Personally, I have little more respect for Dr. Farrar's talk about heaven than I have for his talk about hell. Here is one of his shoddy pictures of paradise:—

"There life's stains shall have been purged away; and the gold shall be mixed with dross no longer; nor the fine gold dim. There is no slander there; no envy, no hatred; no malice, no lies. There is no murder there, nor wounds, nor war. The filth of drunkenness is not in that city of God. No bleared and blighted crowds, degraded out of the semblance of humanity, crawl like singed moths round the flaring houses of multiplied temptations. There are no hearts depraved, corrupted, eaten out by lust; no victims of man's brutal selfishness, no witnesses of his utter shame."

Every feature of this description is negative. We are told, not what heaven is, but what it is not. And most of the description is superfluous. It was not necessary to say that there is no murder or wounds in heaven. Nobody ever expected there was. Dr. Farrar might as well have said that there is no rotten meat or stinking fish in heaven. Some things may always be taken for granted.

How poor, too, is all this "fine" writing in comparison with the noble simplicity of a famous passage in Job—"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." One might say of Dr. Farrar that no one ever praised the Bible more than he did, and that no one ever profited by it less.

Nor is that all. There is another and a graver word to be said. Why does the God of Dr. Farrar's faith postpone the realisation of this pretty dream? Why does he permit envy, hatred, malice, lies, slander, drunkenness, lust, war, and wounds *here*? The Christian deity is always *going* to do something.

You never catch him at it. This world is all wrong, but the next world (or the celestial part of it) will be all right. Thus man is kept miserable and pious generation after generation, while smooth-tongued charlatans trade upon his wretchedness and credulity.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Scientific Apologia.

(Continued from page 179.)

THE dilemma which confronts all modern religious apologists is this—A God who is to evoke any degree of interest or affection must be personal and intelligent—that is, it must be of an anthropomorphic character, and it is precisely an anthropomorphic deity that the modern educated man or woman cannot believe in. Sir Oliver Lodge feels this difficulty, but cannot evade or surmount it. He protests, as we have seen, against the "magnified non-natural man" of ordinary theology, and yet realises that the presence of an impersonal, abstract force is not enough to secure the permanency of religion. To say that this force works through all nature in an impersonal manner is not enough. The religious mind requires the assurance that this force is working for a definite, conscious end, and that this end has some equally definite relation to human development. Without this, religion is a mere name.

Is there any guidance in nature? Religion answers, Yes. Science, as Sir Oliver admits, answers No. Sir Oliver evidently does not agree with the verdict of science; and, although he has no evidence to offer, not a single instance from the whole domain of positive knowledge, in favor of there being any intelligent guidance in nature, he questions the scientific verdict in a series of questions which smack far more of the pulpit than the Professor's Chair. He says:—

"Take the origin of species by the persistence of favorable variations; how is the appearance of these same favorable variations accounted for? Except by artificial selection, not at all.....Does anyone think that the skill of the beaver, the instinct of the bee, the genius of a man, arose by chance, and that its presence is accounted for by handing down and by survival? What struggle for existence will explain the advent of Beethoven? What pitiful necessity for earning a living as a dramatist will educe for us Shakespeare? These things are beyond science of the ordinary type; then let it be silent and deny nothing in the universe till it has at least made an honest effort to grasp the whole."

It is not quite clear at whom, or what, the concluding exordium is aimed, but suppose one were to admit, as Sir Oliver suggests is the case, the absolute bankruptcy of science in face of these problems, what then? Will he hold that this would constitute even the faintest presumption in favor of guidance in nature? Surely not. That the origin of variations cannot be, at present, explained by science, cannot prove there is divine guidance—only that we are in a state of ignorance. In his first article, Sir Oliver warned religionists, who were inclined to shelter themselves behind the present ignorance of scientific men, that, while "the present powerlessness of science to explain or originate life is a convenient weapon wherewith to fell a pseudo-scientific antagonist.....it is not perfectly secure as a permanent support." The advice was excellent, and it loses none of its quality, because its author so completely disregards it. And one may really reply to Sir Oliver in the words of his further advice to theologians, that "their central tenets should not depend, even partially, upon nescience or upon negations of any kind, lest the placid progress of positive knowledge should once more undermine their position." Rules for mental guidance *should* be the same for scientist and theologian alike.

But there is more than the mere neglect of a good rule in the passage cited. It contains, perhaps, as gross a distortion of the Darwinian theory as could

be had outside a pulpit. Surely no evolutionist ever dreamed that some "pitiful necessity for earning a living as a dramatist" created Shakespeare. Such an expression might be in keeping with the intellectual tone of men like the Bishop of London or Dr. Horton, but it is sadly out of place in the mouth of a leading scientific teacher. For the query leaves out of sight what is the very essence of the doctrine—long generations of insensible and unconscious growth. What apparent connection is there between the prehistoric savage chanting a hardly human doggerel round a camp-fire and Shakespeare? What relation between the idea of a soul, hatched in the brain of some far-away savages, or the hieroglyphics found scratched upon some extinct animals' bones, and our great dramatist? And yet all these crude beginnings were the starting point of Shakespeare, and all the generations of social and mental life between he and they were helping in his development. Genius is not something that arises suddenly, and in full stature, as Sir Oliver evidently concludes if the sentence quoted has any meaning at all; it is a product, as all else is, and brought to perfection as gradually as all else. Its *sudden* appearance is merely a register of our ignorance of the steps of the development, not a statement of nature's working.

Once in the unscientific vein, and Professor Lodge gains strength as he proceeds. What are we to make, for instance, of the following expressions? "What becomes of an intelligence which has left this earth?" How do we know that *an* intelligence has left? If intelligence is an entity there is reason in the question. If not, it is like asking what has become of the music that was played yesterday. "The Universe is governed by Law." Nothing of the sort; the "universe" is not one thing and "law" another; law is but a name for the dynamic aspect of the universe. "Effect is connected with Cause." Inaccurate again; there are not two things—only one. The difference is that between analysis and synthesis. "If a thing moves it is because something moves it." "What is all the effort—scientifically regarded—but the action of the totality of things trying to improve itself, striving still to evolve something higher, holier, and happier out of an inchoate mass?.....This planet has labored long and patiently for the advent of a human race." Sentences of this description almost defy scientific criticism because of their hopelessly unscientific nature. To find a twentieth-century scientist, gravely speaking of things trying to evolve something higher and holier, as though the period of cosmic gestation had not been as lengthy for a microbe as for a man, and as though nature cared more for the life of a genius than for that of a tapeworm, is enough to make one wonder whether the last century of scientific progress has not been a dream, and that we are still living in the "Bridgewater Treatise" days! And the evil of it is that this will be hawked about as scientific teaching because a scientist has written it.

The Universe—that is, God—Sir Oliver believes is trying to evolve something better than now exists. Well, in the name of all that is sensible, what prevents him, or it, succeeding? Not natural forces, because these are in a "dim and ungraspable manner in some sort God himself." Not man either, because he is part and parcel of the natural forces constituting the universe. What, then, is in the way, and which causes this "trying" and patient "labor"? The moment we reduce Sir Oliver's rhetoric to proper proportions, its absurdity becomes apparent.

"Suppose for a moment that there a God.....A scientific God. How would he work?" asks Sir Oliver. And he concludes that he would work through us; we are his agents. We have all met this talk of man carrying out God's purpose many times before. What is its worth? If all men were working towards a common conscious end, if even all natural forces could be seen to be doing this, there might be a *prima facie* case for the position. But is there any such evidence? Let us see. Sir Oliver is an agent

of God in trying to perpetuate religion, and I am also another agent in trying to destroy it. The sweater and the philanthropist, the Jew, the Christian, the Mohammedan, the Atheist, are all agents of God; he is working through them all, and is busy destroying on the one side what he is building up on the other.

And it is the same in nature at large. Construction and destruction go on side by side. Planets are formed, destroyed, and reformed. Even humanity itself, for the production of which the earth has "labored long and patiently," will one day disappear, and our planet be as silent and lifeless as the moon. If science has reached any conclusion at all, it is that there is no striving to produce anything "higher" or "holier" in nature, but that all there exists is a ceaseless series of changes and modifications.

Sir Oliver's assumption sets one thinking. Suppose there were a scientific god—a god that is who possessed the well-ordered brain of a first-class scientific man, how would he work? Is it conceivable that such a being, knowing the end from the beginning, creating and controlling natural forces, is it conceivable that the bungling, wasteful, and cruel methods of nature would obtain? Would such a being adjust his forces so as to produce a first-rate intellect, capable of bestowing priceless benefits upon the race, and then blast it with some deadly disease or obscure affliction? And if man were the end of his action, would he make him less tenacious of life than a tapeworm? Would he proceed to develop species of animals by the long, roundabout, and cruel method of natural selection? Would he remain as deaf and as blind to human suffering as he is? Does not every breeder of animals in the world give Sir Oliver's "scientific god" a lesson in the art of how to do it? Does not every breeder show greater forethought, greater economy of time and material than this deity? And does not man in his ceaseless efforts to remove suffering, redress injustice, and improve society, show himself to be possessed of a keener sense of right than this deity who is held up for admiration. Let Sir Oliver Lodge face his assumption fairly, and he will see that, given a scientific god, the world is, in a majority of instances, exactly the reverse of what we might reasonably expect it to be.

Sir Oliver Lodge's reconciliation of religion and science ends, where all such attempts are bound to end, in failure. For what is the quarrel between religion and science? Essentially one of interpretations. Both science and religion are concerned with the same universe, and the same set of phenomena. The distinction between the two is that religion clings, in essence, to an interpretation that was born during the infancy of the race, when men were necessarily ignorant of the real conditions of natural phenomena, while science is born of man's better knowledge, verified by experience and facts. The dispute is, as Sir Oliver himself has said, that between vitalism and automatism. These two views cannot be reconciled; one must, in the long run, give way. And all experience points to the one that will succumb. Every advance in knowledge has been to the discredit of the vitalistic theory. So far as we know, the universe is absolutely independent of any force external to itself; and, so far as we can forecast the future, all advance will be along the lines knowledge has hitherto pursued.

Moreover, a God who merely operates through natural forces will not keep religion alive. Religious belief has little of the idealistic about it, and, fundamentally, men began to believe in the gods because they were afraid of what they would do, or hoped for something from their favor. And they have gone on believing for substantially the same reason. But a God who is *behind* natural law, acting through forces which operate upon believer and unbeliever alike, cannot maintain a hold upon the people. It will be seen that the essential thing is, after all, knowledge and adequate control of natural forces; and, in the long run, it is the essentials that live. The non-essentials are doomed to disappear.

A Neglected Humorist.

THERE is more in a laugh than meets the ear. Everybody has laughed at least once in a lifetime, not excepting the professional body-guard of the Man of Sorrows, whose perennial rigidity of features has always been the wonder of outsiders. But even priests laugh in private. Laughing is, happily, a more common indulgence than weeping, although the ever-growing sternness of the battle of life is tending to the elimination of real, hearty laughter. There is, moreover, an increasing body of laughless folk who regard the indulgence as ill-bred if not criminal. They join cause with my Lord Chesterfield, who congratulated himself on the fact that since he had full use of his reason nobody had heard him laugh.

The function of the laugh-maker is under-estimated. The man who grins at you through a horse-collar, and sets you laughing back at him, does you a great service. The physiological value of laughter has never been correctly appraised. Although doctors bestow a certain patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that the humorists are the benefactors of society. And yet, with the exception of Molière, Rabelais, and Dickens, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate artists. The world will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide mirth for thankless folk. Mark Twain, the most conspicuous man of letters in America, is a great humorist. He has kept us laughing for a quarter of a century. Meanwhile we have neglected other jesters worthy of more than passing attention.

Take Phil Robinson, for example. Why his books are not as popular as those by Mark Twain, Max Adeler, or Artemus Ward is a mystery. That he is as funny as either, is evident. If his humor is not appreciated by the public to the extent of those others, it may be because he has chosen to expend it mainly upon birds, beasts, and fishes. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the wide mouth of the general public to broaden to a grin, must also concern a human animal. Yet people love Richard Jefferies, are sentimental over vivisection, are generous to starving cats and lost dogs, and absolutely maudlin over the departure of an elephant from the Zoological Gardens.

When a delightful pocket series of Phil Robinson's works was initiated, we laughed at the humorous preface that said,

"My publishers assured me that each successive work they brought out for me plunged them deeper and deeper into poverty,"

and concluded by suggesting that twelve volumes should appear, one each month, and, if successful, that the series should be continued for ever. Yet three of the mirth-provoking booklets are all we have ever seen. For uproarious farce, that is impossible to read calmly, the stories of "The Tiger in the Ticket Office," "Ought Boys to Sit on Whales' Blow-holes?" and "My Wife's Birds"—to mention but a few—are funny beyond comparison.

For staid humor, in the caustic American manner, the volume, *Noah's Ark*, an essay on un-natural history, is devoted to a dis-respectful perversion of sentiment, popularly ascribed to certain wild animals. The lion, tiger, elephant, and others, fare as badly as the Christian superstition at the hands of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Yet, with all the jesting, we are conscious of a keen naturalist's regard for the animals themselves.

In *My Indian Garden*, with its studies of "niggers," cattle, and plants, is a book no one should overlook. As White's *Selborne* is to England, so ought this to be to India. The frank record of Phil Robinson's long ride in the fast train to Chicago, is splendid. The query, "Does the fast train to Chicago ever stop?" with the reply, "Oh yes, it stops—at Chicago!" is the keynote. His dismay at the endless miles of

split rails, and his remark that, whereas he had been surprised before by the biographies of distinguished Americans who had "split rails" for a living, he now wondered whether every American had not done it at one time or another, or, indeed, gone on doing it all his life, is excellent. Another amusing passage concerns the first sight of Chicago:—

"Not a pig in sight: I had thought Chicago was all pigs."

The gems of humor scattered in Phil Robinson's writings would make the fortune of a comic writer. The "impossible giraffe," with its potential "seven feet of sore throat," has been often quoted. In a quaintly-worded letter to the Secretary of the Zoological Gardens, he suggested that the old elephant had become shabby by long use, and required re-stuffing and re-covering, and that his tail might be renewed with advantage. Also that the smaller elephant might be neatly covered in appropriate cretonne, and ebonised and gilded.

On the text supplied by an alarmist that flies carry contagion, he pointed out the difficulty of staying the cholera by catching the flies: "That it would be as useless to attempt to stop the cholera by killing bluebottles as trying to coax an earthquake with a penny bun." One might go on quoting for hours, and fail to exhaust the jokes.

In his book, *Saints and Sinners*, a revelation concerning the Mormons, there is one passage that is perfectly delicious. When speaking of bugbears, he says:—

"Is a bugbear most bug or bear? I never met one yet fairly face to face, for the bugbear is an evasive insect. Nor, if I met one, can I say whether I should prefer to find it mainly bug or mainly bear. The latter is of various sorts. Thus, one—the little black bear of the Indian hills—is about as formidable as a port-manteau of the same size. Another—the grizzly of the Rockies—is a very unamiable person. His temper is as short as his tail, and he has very little more sense of right or wrong than a Laud Leaguer. But he is not quite so mean as the bug. He does not go and cuddle himself up flat in a crease of the pillow-case, and then slip out edgeways as soon as it is dark, and bite you in the nape of the neck. It is not on record that a bear ever got inside a nightcap, and waited till the gas was turned out, to come forth and feed like grief on the damask cheek of beauty. I cannot make out whether bugs or bears are the worst thing to have about a house. You see, you could shoot at a bear out of the window; but it would be absurd to fire off the rifle at bugs between the blankets. Altogether, there is a good deal to be said on the side of the bear."

But to pick out passages at haphazard is not doing justice to a charming jester. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in an atmosphere of its own—a soil of its own; and there are few plants so tender in the transplanting. While the creator of Mr. Dooley is welcomed, and the author of *Three Men in a Boat* is passing popular, one cannot help regretting the inadequate appreciation Phil Robinson has won. Of course, all reading people must needs know his writings, but that the larger public should not have an opportunity of testing what he has written is unsatisfactory.

MIMNERMUS.

The Holy Bible.

BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.

FOR centuries the Church insisted that the Bible was absolutely true; that it contained no mistakes; that the story of creation was true; that its astronomy and geology were in accord with the facts; that the scientists who differed with the Old Testament were infidels and Atheists.

Now this has changed. The educated Christians admit that the writers of the Bible were not inspired as to any science. They now say that God, or Jehovah, did not inspire the writers of his book for the purpose of instructing the world about astronomy, geology, or any science. They now admit that the inspired men who wrote the Old Testament knew

nothing about any science, and that they wrote about the earth and stars, the sun and moon, in accordance with the general ignorance of the time.

It required many centuries to force the theologians to this admission. Reluctantly, full of malice and hatred, the priests retired from the field, leaving the victory with science.

They took another position:

They declared that the authors, or rather the writers, of the Bible were inspired in spiritual and moral things; that Jehovah wanted to make known to his children his will and his infinite love for his children; that Jehovah, seeing his people wicked, ignorant, and depraved, wished to make them merciful and just, wise and spiritual, and that the Bible is inspired in its laws, in the religion it teaches, and in its ideas of government.

This is the issue now. Is the Bible any nearer right in its ideas of justice, of mercy, of morality, or of religion than in its conception of the sciences?

Is it moral?

It upholds slavery—it sanctions polygamy.

Could a devil have done worse?

Is it merciful?

In war it raised the black flag; it commanded the destruction, the massacre, of all—of the old, infirm, and helpless—of wives and babes.

Were its laws inspired?

Hundreds of offences were punished with death. To pick up sticks on Sunday, to murder your father on Monday, were equal crimes. There is in the literature of the world no bloodier code. The law of revenge—of retaliation—was the law of Jehovah. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a limb for a limb.

This is savagery—not philosophy.

Is it just and reasonable?

The Bible is opposed to religious toleration—to religious liberty. Whoever differed with the majority was stoned to death. Investigation was a crime. Husbands were ordered to denounce and to assist in killing their unbelieving wives.

It is the enemy of Art. "Thou shalt make no graven image." This was the death of Art.

Palestine never produced a painter or a sculptor.

Is the Bible civilised?

It upholds lying, larceny, robbery, murder, the selling of diseased meat to strangers, and even the sacrifice of human beings to Jehovah.

Is it philosophical?

It teaches that the sins of a people can be transferred to an animal—to a goat. It makes maternity an offence, for which a sin offering had to be made. It was wicked to give birth to a boy, and twice as wicked to give birth to a girl. To make hair-oil like that used by the priests was an offence punishable with death. The blood of a bird killed over running water was regarded as medicine.

Would a civilised God daub his altars with the blood of oxen, lambs, and doves? Would he make all his priests butchers? Would he delight in the smell of burning flesh?

Some Christian lawyers—some eminent and stupid judges—have said, and still say, that the Ten Commandments are the foundation of all law.

Nothing could be more absurd. Long before these Commandments were given there were codes of laws in India and Egypt—laws against murder, perjury, larceny, adultery, and fraud. Such laws are as old as human society; as old as the love of life; as old as industry; as the idea of prosperity; as old as human love.

All of the Ten Commandments that are good were old; all that were new are foolish. If Jehovah had been civilised, he would have left out the commandment about keeping the Sabbath, and in its place would have said: "Thou shalt not enslave thy fellow-men." He would have omitted the one about swearing, and said: "The man shall have but one wife, and the woman but one husband." He would have left out the one about graven images, and in its stead would have said: "Thou shalt not wage wars of extermination, and thou shalt not unsheathe the sword except in self-defence."

If Jehovah had been civilised, how much grander the Ten Commandments would have been.

All that we call progress—the enfranchisement of man, of labor, the substitution of imprisonment for death, of fine for imprisonment, the destruction of polygamy, the establishing of free speech, of the rights of conscience; in short, all that has tended to the development and civilisation of man; all the results of investigation, observation, experience, and free thought; all that man has accomplished for the benefit of man since the close of the Dark Ages—has been done in spite of the Old Testament.

Is Freedom Won?

I LEARN from the *Freethinker* that some people in England (not including Mr. Foote) appear to think the battle of free speech has been fought and won! This is astounding. Here the battle has hardly begun. To-day we find the Parliaments absolutely closed against every honest, outspoken, and manly Freethinker; every such person is as fully excluded from all the newspapers as he is from the altar of the Romish sect and the pulpit of the Protestant; every such person is, of course, ostracised from society; every such person finds himself boycotted in every direction, nobody will sell his works, few will sell his journal. Nor is he more boycotted by the "uppers" than the "lowers," by the rich than the workers. In Melbourne no one dares to speak the truth about Jesus or Mary in the open air; to do so will certainly lead to his being treated as a felon, and one of the worst of them too. No Freethinker can get justice in any court in this city, nor in Australia, as far as I am aware. Right of free speech won! Why, murderers are treated with far more consideration here than the most faultless and humane of men, if he happens to be a Freethinker and has been so ill-advised as to let that be known. No, no! The battle of free speech is not half fought, not half won as yet, nor will it be this generation. The people are stagnant; their intellect is asleep under the opiate of Socialism, sports, and gambling; and they care no more than oysters for liberty. The sky-pilots and purgatory guides are in power here—especially the latter. They have money, got in many nefarious and wicked ways; and the newspapers, of course, are ever ready to flatter them. The worst rogues and cheats to be found are in office, and ruling with a rod of iron. Only those who can hit back and don't care a fig for blind and brutal sentiment can live here. In sober truth, most of our work has yet to be done—much of it the second time; for the people have gained just liberty enough to content them; they feel no aspirations for more; they think the priest and parson, since they are no longer able to whip, to imprison, to torture or burn them, must have become civilised merely because they are shackled somewhat; and while the fools are dreaming of security the old foes of liberty are busily weaving around them the very same bonds they had once escaped from. Liberty does not consist in laws, forms, institutions, checks upon governmental action, but in human sentiments and personal vigilance and proper self-assertion. Our contemporaries do not realise this. They have heard so much of reformers, reform, advancement, the uprising of the masses, the enfranchisement of the people, the cry of British liberties, and similar cries, that they have come to think themselves fully possessed of all a man can rationally claim or demand; and, what is worse, they think that all that has been won for them by the work and sufferings of others is quite secure, whether they safeguard it or not. Here is the fatal mistake ninety-nine out of every hundred people have made, and herein lies the most tremendous danger before us. Our rulers and newspapers are in league with the clergy, and they are all plotting together against our liberties, and will, I fear, plunge us all into a slavery as galling as that of feudalism, as that of Popery, as that of Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, or Puritanism.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

JOSEPH SYMES.

Acid Drops.

THE Wesleyan Methodists have been holding a big missionary meeting at the Queen's Hall (London). It was addressed by Dr. J. P. Banks, the President of the Wesleyan Conference. The reverend gentleman advocated a great forward movement in foreign lands. He called upon Wesleyans to save Africa, India, and China. He implored them to think of the hundred and fifty millions of young people in India, the two hundred millions in China, and the countless millions in other parts of the world. It was all very pathetic, and we suppose the heathen may rejoice at the prospect of a speedy salvation. But what about the "young people" at home? Wouldn't it be wiser, and even more honest, to do something for them first? Many of them are ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-sheltered, and ill-treated. Why not look after them a bit, and let the children in other parts of the world wait their turn?

What is it that the heathen children will lose by waiting? Their temporal condition is not as sad as that of our own neglected children. Oh, it is their spiritual condition that needs looking after! Well, what does that mean? Are we to believe, at this time of day, that children all over the world are going to hell because they know nothing of Christ? Will the President of the Wesleyan Conference lay his hand upon his heart and assert this infamous doctrine? Even if he does so, the fact still remains that people are going to hell here. Every religious census proves that the majority of the inhabitants of England never darken the church doors. Dr. Banks should try to save *them*.

Mr. David Bates, in his recently published book, *The Law of Likeness*, of which we hope to give a fuller account shortly, devotes a chapter to life in West Africa. He admired the devotion of the Christian missionaries, though they made no converts; but he could not help seeing that, from an ethical point of view, the "savages" were not open to the general condemnation with which they are too often visited. "In reality," he says, "there was no savagery among them worse than ours, even in high places; and there was no vulgarity whatever to compare with the hideous vulgarity of the slums of our great cities; and no heathenism so shameful and debased."

A *Daily News* interviewer has been "taking down things" from the lips of certain "dusky preachers" who have been helping to carry on the Salvation Army's work in Zululand. The natives, it appears, are willing and eager "up to a certain point" to accept "the teachings of civilisation." They readily embrace opportunities to learn reading and writing, but they do not catch on as they should to the missionaries' religion. "Christianity," it is said, "strikes at the root of their national life, for if they accept it they must renounce polygamy and resist the innate influences of witchcraft and superstition."

Is this not extremely rich? Fancy a Christian missionary, with a Bible in his hand, going about begging people to give up witchcraft and superstition! Why, the Bible *teaches* witchcraft. We do not mean that it teaches how to *practise* witchcraft, but it teaches the *reality* of witchcraft. And that is enough for the average Zulu, who is not a practitioner, but a victim, of this horrible delusion. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," is one of the darkest and bloodiest sentences in human literature. And then as to superstition! Why, the Bible is nearly as full of superstition as an egg is full of meat. We do not recollect a single superstition, from witchcraft and blood atonement down to casting lots and dream-telling, which it does not illustrate and support. No wonder the Zulus do not catch on to the missionaries' religion when they learn the contents of the missionaries' book. They are not fools. Some of them are very intelligent. When the great Bishop Colenso tried to convert them they succeeded in converting *him*. They asked him whether he really believed the Pentateuch, which he was translating into their language, was the Word of God; and he was obliged to confess, on further reflection, that it was not.

How on earth, too, does Christianity strike at polygamy? We are well aware that the Christian *tradition* is in favor of monogamy, but that tradition was simply inherited by the early Christians from the civilisation of Greece and Rome. It is certainly not derived from the Bible. There is no censure of polygamy in the New Testament, and it was practised—sometimes very extensively—by Jehovah's favorites in the Old Testament. As far as the Bible is concerned, the Zulus might accept Christianity and marry as many wives as they please.

"Turkish atrocities" have been so widely reported of late years that most people have contracted a very one-sided idea of the relative moral characters of the Turks and the Christians in the south-east of Europe. The general idea is that the Turks have every vice, and the Christians every virtue. How far this is from the truth is known to all who have taken the slightest trouble to learn the facts of the case.

One fact should be noted at the outset. It has been pointed out that the Turks "do not advertise." The Christian nations rail at them, and they never answer back. But that is their pride or indifference to Giaour opinion. It does not follow that all that is said of them is true.

Even in the Balkan States, although the Turkish officials are corrupt enough, owing to the wretched system under which they hold their posts, the common Turk is not the ignoble animal he is painted by Christian artists for a Christian public. Sir Vincent Caillard's series of letters in the *Realm* were mainly in the Turk's favor. Mr. G. F. Abbot, who made a tour through Macedonia for folklore purposes, under the auspices of Cambridge University, is obliged to admit that the Mohammedans have their good qualities. Speaking of Salonica, he says that the Mohammedans there are much superior to the Jews and Greeks; being "extremely honest in their private transactions" and "scrupulously careful in the handling of truth." They believe in "physical purity," and this is not unnaturally associated with "moral uprightness."

Mr. Abbott gives a curious illustration of the peculiar morality of the subject races in the villages. Their houses are built of flimsy material and conflagrations are wonderfully frequent. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, though, the house is insured if it belongs to a Jew or a Christian. The Mohammedans do not approve of insurances, as implying a want of faith in Allah; and their houses seldom fall a prey to the flames. "These accidents," Mr. Abbott observes, "may be said to throw a lurid light upon Hebrew and local Christian morality; and so seem to think the London insurance companies, which since the great fire of 1891 have abolished their Salonica agencies."

No doubt the Turkish Government is rotten enough, and its abolition in south-east Europe would be a benefit to civilisation. But it must not be supposed that the common Mohammedan is in any sense inferior to the common Christian. In some respects he is distinctly superior. Nor must it be supposed that the Turks will be driven out of Europe easily by Russia, or by Russia and Austria combined. A million of them are ready to fight for their own flag whenever it is unfurled. Not a million of "the city's pale abortions," but a million strong men, who live clean lives, and have no fear of death. When the soldiers of Christian armies are wounded they take a lot of healing; but it was noticed by the war correspondents, during the late fighting in Greece, that the wounded Turkish soldier recovered with amazing celerity. His flesh was pure. And there you have one of the secrets of his character.

Mr. W. M. Thompson, the editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, speaks out as follows on the subject of the Salvation Army:—"Why do we criticise the Salvation Army?" asks a correspondent. Because we believe that religion and commerce are a bad mixture; because we think that in many ways the methods of General Booth tend to encourage and make pauperism permanent; because he has assumed functions which he ought to denounce the State for not discharging; because, so far as we can see, no effort is made to educate its officers, who profess to teach others about a subject of which they have only the most elementary knowledge themselves; because it is a crime not to stir up people to resent injustice on earth, but to cruelly lead them off to look for reparation in some state which may, or may not, exist; because in doing so the S.A. are acting as the policemen of the unjust, the monopolists, the sweaters; because it is an un-Christian attitude, as the Son of Man was always denouncing the rich and the oppressors, the Pharisees, and the hypocrites. At the same time we have always admitted that this circus-managed organisation has done good, in so far as it has reclaimed drunkards and helped fallen women."

We cordially welcome this outspoken criticism, but we venture to ask Mr. Thompson a question on his last sentence. Is he really sure that the Salvation Army has reclaimed any considerable number of drunkards? We mean *permanently*. Propping them up for a week or two in special circumstances counts for nothing. It seems to us that the boasts of the Boothites in this respect are quite inconsistent with "profane" statistics. The Salvation Army insists on absolute teetotalism, but what difference does it make to England's annual drink-bill? What difference does

its reprobation of smoking make to the tobacco trade? Looking at general results, it is evident that Booth's "circus-managed organisation," as Mr. Thompson calls it, might just as well have no existence.

Gipsy Smith, the revivalist, has noted "a change for the worse" in the matter of church attendance. He partly accounts for it by "the growing passion for outdoor amusement." Any reason is preferable to the admission that people are ceasing to believe.

There is a body with a very ambitious name—the League of the Kingdom; but the kingdom meant is apparently that of heaven, so the name might more appropriately be the Kingdom-Come League. It includes Churchmen and Nonconformists, and it held a conference the other night in the Vestry Hall of St. Ethelburga's Church, Bishopsgate-street. The question for discussion was "Why men do not go to church?" One speaker advocated disestablishment and disendowment—as if the Church of England had less worshippers than Nonconformist Churches! Another speaker wanted to see the clergy's incomes reduced, so that they would be obliged to work harder. Another speaker said that the clergy watered down the supernatural in religion. Another speaker argued strongly for the ethical movement. Nobody seems to have offered the simple explanation that men don't go to church because they don't believe the doctrines preached there.

Blackpool's religious census is distinctly discouraging. We mean to the orthodox. The population is 53,200. Of these 7,019 attended church or chapel in the morning, and 8,994 in the evening. Blackpool is not even as devout as some districts of London. But then—as the *Daily News* observes—it is a popular seaside resort, where "churchgoing has to contend with numerous counter-attractions." In other words, the Devil does the best business when he is allowed fair play.

The religious census in the St. Marylebone division of London gives an aggregate attendance of one in three of the population. This is obtained, of course, by reckoning the morning and evening congregations as two entirely different sets of worshippers. The real fact is that one man in eight, and one woman in five, went to a place of worship in the morning; and one man in eight, and one woman in five, went to a place of worship in the evening.

The Church of England comes out an easy first again in the St. Marylebone census. It has a total of 20,916 attendances out of a grand total of 40,988; that is, more than half. The Nonconformists have 11,551; the Roman Catholics 5,474; and "Other Services" 3,047.

The Rev. Mr. R. J. Campbell objects very strenuously to his sermons being sold in the City Temple. "Never shall there," he said, "with my consent, be any commercialism on these premises. Make not My Father's house a home of merchandise. We come here to wait on God, and there is no business to be transacted." This sounds very fine, but is it true? When Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple (we take the story for granted for the moment) he was not receiving any salary, and he might at least have pleaded that he was not in business himself. Is Mr. Campbell quite on the same platform? Does not his relation to the City Temple rest upon a commercial basis, and is the Temple not as much his place of business as if he were a city merchant in his office? We do not blame Mr. Campbell for taking a salary; we merely remark that it is so. And there is really no ethical difference between taking fifteen or twenty pounds per week for preaching sermons in the City Temple, and selling them for a penny or twopence each in the same building.

According to the Rev. W. J. Dawson, young men who are employed by City firms whose heads are most conspicuously identified with Christian philanthropies are the firms "where young men are treated most unsympathetically, often with injustice, often with meanness, and often with the harshest spirit of commercial avarice." Quite so. It is an open secret that people in search of employment have almost as strong a dislike to these pious firms as white men in Africa and India have to converted Kaffirs and Hindoos. There is, perhaps, no greater fraud in the City than the pious philanthropy of many of these Christian firms. Care for the souls of their employees is used as a pretext for lightening their pockets. Their charities are only too often made up from the salaries of workpeople and the pockets of purchasers; while Exeter Hall meetings give them a gigantic advertisement at about one-tenth the ordinary newspaper rates.

The *Church Times* refers to the "astonishing circumstances" of the Bible Society's Centenary Meeting being presided over by a non-Christian, "who rejects the Divine authority of the New Testament, and who does not believe that the Son of Mary spake truly when He said: 'Moses wrote of me.'" The reference is, of course, to Sir Saul Samuels, a Jew. We do not see anything astonishing in the matter. The great thing about current religion is to secure a big audience and rake in the shekels; and, so long as that is done, most religious organisations would not care if Beelzebub himself took the chair.

But the Bible is, after all, a Jew book, and Jesus, if he ever lived, was a Jew also; so that there was at least some colorable reason for having a Jew present. But what about Mr. Balfour? We seriously question whether Mr. Balfour believes in either the New or Old Testament in any *Christian* sense. He may express a vague kind of admiration for the Bible, and for Christianity in general; but does he believe them in the sense that the *Church Times* does? We think not. And the reason for inviting the presence of the Prime Minister is practically the reason for inviting a Jewish Lord Mayor—Kudos.

An American paper says that President Roosevelt "sleeps like a soldier and a philosopher—with his fists clenched and his mouth open." Wonderful! We are not quite certain which is which in the simile; the clenched fist has a distinct reference to military life, but is it characteristic of philosophers to have an open mouth?

A very curious accident occurred at Bishop's Court, the residence of the Bishop of Manchester. His housekeeper, Mrs. Rowell, a middle-aged lady, was walking across the kitchen, when the floor gave way and she disappeared. She was found at the bottom of a disused well twenty-one feet deep, and was hauled up by the Bishop's chaplain and the footman. Unfortunately both her legs were broken, and one had to be amputated at the hospital. Bishop Moorehouse is naturally concerned about this sad accident. Like everybody else, he was ignorant of the existence of the pit under the kitchen floor. He has had it filled up, as it ought to have been in the first instance. For it makes no difference to "Providence" whether the house is a parson's or a publican's. If there is a big hole under the kitchen floor, and the planks get rotten, all the religion in the world will not prevent somebody or other falling in.

A Turk and a Jew were one day in a boat. Suddenly the weather changed, and a fierce squall arose. The Jew proposed that they should turn back. The Turk was for going on. "Fear not, my friend, Allah is great," he said. "Allah is great," retorted the Jew, "but our boat is small."

It was noted in these columns last week that on the receipt of the result of the Woolwich election the delegates at the Brighton Free Churches' Annual Conference sang the doxology. The incident was symptomatic of the growth of Nonconformist religion in politics. Hitherto the clergy have enjoyed a practical monopoly of the political field, as far as religion is concerned. The Nonconformists, under the misleading guise of "citizenship," are now making a bid for first position, and a new Janger—or rather the old in a new form—fronts the democracy. Nonconformists have protested for long against the evil influence of "the priest in politics," but it seems to us that "the minister in politics" is an even greater danger still. Religion, whether it be of one brand or another, organised for political action is one of the greatest evils that can front a people. The interests of a sect will be balanced against the interests of a nation, and Milton's remark that "new presbyter is but old priest writ large," is likely to receive a fresh significance, if people allow themselves to be deceived by the loose rhetoric of men like Dr. Clifford, Mr. Campbell, and Dr. Horton.

Miss Weston, the "Sailor's Friend," in a little book she has just issued dealing with her work among the sailors at Portsmouth, says that "The Navy of England is under God the best asset the nation has." This is the first time we have heard of God as having any direct command in the English Navy. What will the Kaiser say to this? Anyhow we are all right under Admiral Jehovah.

A letter is printed by Miss Weston from the wife of a sailor who went down in the *Condor*. The heart-broken woman says: "You say that God does all for the best, but at present I cannot realise that." She had been married only four weeks.

Arthur Ernest Bursill, a young commercial traveller, who committed suicide recently at Thorne-road, South Lambeth, left a letter in which he said, "I am an Agnostic, and per-

sonally don't believe in any hereafter. Still, I hope there is." *Why* he hoped so is not very clear. He ended the life he had because he was sick of it, owing to long illness and the prospect of becoming a nuisance to all about him. What was the use of another life, to go through perhaps the same unpleasant experience? There is something pathetic in the idea so many people have that the next life (if such there be) must be better than this one. For all they know it may be worse.

A diminutive boy of ten, named William Cook, appeared lately before the West Ham "beak." A week before he had been charged with stealing tobacco and cigarettes, and had been discharged with a caution. His second offence was stealing 14s. from the pocket of a butcher. A constable said he was a "bad lot," and his mother that he was utterly beyond control. A remand was ordered, and it was stated that he would undoubtedly be sent to a reformatory school.

Those who believe in "Providence" and the Design Argument should explain how the omniscient Creator came to turn out such a job as little William Cook. An incorrigible criminal at the early age of ten! It is enough to take one's breath away. And more than enough to upset all the theology (and theologians) in England!

Dr. Dallinger is one of the few scientific men who are right inside the Christian Church. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Daily News* (which is now religious or nothing) interviewed him on the subject of Professor Delitzsch, the German Emperor, and the Higher Criticism. What he has to say on this particular subject is of no special value; we prefer to take what he has to say on the subject of Christianity and Science; for Dr. Dallinger is a biologist as well as a Wesleyan.

This is what the *Daily News* gives as Dr. Dallinger's deliverance on Christianity and Science:—

"On the subject of the influence of scientific knowledge on Christianity, Dr. Dallinger said that undoubtedly science had freed the religious mind, as a whole, from certain crystallisations of judgment which had been formed in the Church a couple of centuries or so ago, and this had not been followed by the dangerous consequences that were at one time feared. For instance, the Darwinian hypothesis was at first regarded as leading to Atheism, but it was now universally accepted as a law of creation. Influenced by Milton's poetical conceptions, men used to believe that creation had been the result of what were called 'fiats,' but now it was almost universally accepted that the Creator had produced the universe by the operation of certain laws which were still greatly in operation."

Note the pretty like trick—borrowed from Huxley—of making "Milton's poetical conceptions" bear the brunt of scientific condemnation. Moses and the Bible are quietly overlooked; whereas it was from these that Milton derived the story of creation which he elaborated in *Paradise Lost*. It is really worthy of Bret Harte's "heathen Chinee" to saddle Milton with the responsibility of those creative "fiats." The "fiats" are all in Genesis. It was not Milton, but Jehovah, who kept on saying "Let there be" until the universe was completed.

Note again the juggling with the word "creation." Dr. Dallinger might reply, if taxed on the subject, that by "creation" he simply meant "nature." Otherwise he is flatly telling an untruth in saying that the Darwinian hypothesis "is now universally accepted as a law of creation." Darwin himself did not believe in creation. Haeckel does not believe in creation. And if you take away these two you make a monstrous havoc of that "universally accepted."

After juggling with the word "creation" Dr. Dallinger introduces the word "Creator"—capital C and all. Thus we have full-blown theology in the name of Darwinism. Now we beg to tell Dr. Dallinger that he knows no more of *creation* or a *Creator* than the greatest ignoramus in England. It is one of the silliest ideas imaginable that a man is likely to find God by using a microscope. Neither with the microscope, nor with the telescope, any more than with the naked eye, has any man ever seen *creation*. And everyone who has tried to work the idea out in his mind, knows that creation is utterly unthinkable.

It was a sound instinct—the first one—that Darwinism led to Atheism. It certainly led Darwin himself to Atheism. He called it Agnosticism. But what's in a name? Atheism, by any other name, is just as godless. The Christians who first caught sight of Darwinism shrieked out in honest terror. They had not learnt to trim and pretend like their successors. They hadn't time, for one thing. They were caught on the hop, and they let the truth out unconsciously.

We have received a curious tract from the "Albion" Press, Lahore. It is headed, "An Important Discovery Regarding Jesus Christ." According to its contents, it is a Christian fable that Jesus Christ died upon the cross; he was, in fact, taken down alive though senseless, and he travelled eastward, where he lived to a good old age. He body was buried in a tomb which is situated in the Khan Yar Street at Srivagar (Cashmere). Of this tomb, which is quite a considerable building, a picture is given on the second page of the tract. And opposite it, on the third page, is the portrait of a middle-aged, bearded, mild Hindu, called Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Chief of Quadian, Panjab, who is announced as "the Promised Messiah." This gentleman seems to be a sort of rival of our own Messiah Piggot. He claims to have been "sent from heaven" for the world's reformation "exactly at the time fixed by calculations based on Biblical prophecies as the time of the advent of the Messiah." He does not say that he *is* Jesus Christ, as Piggot does; but that he is "a substitute of Jesus Christ." What the Christian world has to do, therefore, is to welcome and acknowledge Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the real up-to-date Messiah; and, presumably, to make it worth his while to keep occupying that position.

Messiah Piggot has been lying low for some time. Owing to the disgraceful chivvy that went on six months ago, the Ark of the Covenant at Clapton was closed, and has remained so ever since. Where the faithful meet is a mystery, though it is considered certain that they meet somewhere. The same mystery envelopes the whereabouts of their leader. Some say he has been all the while at Cedar Lodge, where the ample grounds afford him an opportunity of daily exercise without being seen. Others say he has been dwelling amidst the Agapemonites in the West of England. In any case, it is whispered that sensational developments may be looked for at an early date; and Clapton is all agog for new revelations. Some of the old ladies, no doubt, are anticipating the pleasure of having another smack at the Messiah with their umbrellas. Perhaps the fun will begin with the fine weather.

Superstition is sometimes logical. In that case you get a Calvin or a Swedenborg. Sometimes it is illogical. In that case you get transparent cranks and graduates for lunatic asylums. One of these is Claude Jacquet, a gardener in the employ of a gentleman living in the Rue de la Bruyère, Paris. His ardent devotion to Spiritualism has driven him mad; but fortunately he was stopped before his madness, as is often the case, ran into murder. He had got hold of his employer's youngest son, and was trying to hang him on a tree, when the lad's shrieks brought assistance. "All right," said the baffled lunatic, "it does not matter. The end of the world will come in five minutes. I thought I had better hang the boy to save him future misery. The spirits warned me last night of what was coming." What a comical idea! though also so tragic. Hanging the boy to save him future misery when the end of the world was coming in five minutes!

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, etc. A little boy was told lately at Grayhurst-road School, Hackney, when he was going home to dinner, that God had given him the meal. "No, he didn't said the lad; "mother bought it in the Broadway."

An Epitaph.

HERE lies a poor woman
Who always was tired;
Who lived in a house
Where help was not hired.
Her last words on earth were:
"Dear friends, I am going
Where washing ain't done,
Nor sweeping, nor sewing;
But everything there is
Exact to my wishes,
For when they don't eat
There's no washing the dishes.
I'll be where loud anthems
Will always be ringing;
But, having no voice,
I'll get clear of the singing.
Don't mourn for me now,
Don't mourn for me never;
I'm going to do nothing
For ever and ever.

Priest (to mendicant): "Why don't you stop begging and go to work?" Mendicant: "Why don't you?"

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

April 19, South Shields; 26, Manchester. May 10, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- W. P. JACOBS.—There is an excellent little book, *The Non-Christian Cross*, by John Denham Parsons, published by Simpkin and Marshall, that would supply you with most of the information you desire. We think it is published at 4s. 6d.
- H. E. DODSON.—Thanks. See Obituary.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your welcome cuttings.
- W. JACOB.—We are not concerned to defend the writer you annotate, and we fear you will never find any writer absolutely consistent. Why not put your own views in a temperate letter for publication?
- W. MANN.—Received with thanks. Will appear in our next.
- GERALD GREY.—Pleased to hear from you again. Thanks also for the reference. Your wish shall be attended to.
- T. TALBOT LODGE.—Sorry we cannot find room for further correspondence on Spelling Reform at present.
- G. LAND.—It is just one of the ordinary silly conversion tracts, and does not seem to call for any special notice in our columns. As no names or addresses are given, there are no means of following up the story. "Produce your converted infidel" is the only answer to such pious nonsense.
- SHILLING MONTH.—We have received the following late subscription from India:—Isaac Jackson, £1.
- R. BROOKS.—See "Acid Drops."
- W. BINDON.—We cannot do things in that way. One would think your Theistic friend were a sort of veiled prophet of controversy. Our columns are open to him if he will send a letter to prove "the absurdity of Atheism." There is no need of an intermediary—even a friendly one like yourself; and it is evident that discussions cannot be carried on under the heading of "Answers to Correspondents." We strained a point at first, for your sake; but the process must not continue.
- E. CHAPMAN.—The date is booked, though we should have preferred another meeting-place.
- E. PARKER.—See paragraph. You will understand that Mr. Foote could not reserve a Sunday for a contingent engagement. He is always ready to oblige as far as possible.
- J. HOWARTH.—We do not know of any one pamphlet or book that meets your want. There is room for a brief accurate history of the struggle in England for a free press, doing justice to the more militant spirits who did the hardest work and paid the worst penalties.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Free-thought 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.
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Sugar Plums.

THERE was a fine gathering at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "A Godless World: and What Would Happen." A more attentive, appreciative, and even enthusiastic audience could not be desired. The lecture was followed by some discussion, not of a very profitable character. It is so seldom, nowadays, that a competent Christian has the courage to debate his faith.

That was the last of the Sunday evening Freethought meetings at the Athenæum Hall, which Mr. Foote (of course

with the aid of co-workers) has kept open for nearly seven years. Very soon the demolishers will be at work upon the building, clearing a site for a station on the new tubular railway from Hampstead to Charing Cross. No doubt it will be reported for many years to come that the Christians acquired the premises for the service of God. But that is only a move in a common old game.

We hoped to be able to make a definite announcement this week as to future Sunday evening meetings elsewhere, but unfortunately another hall has not yet been secured. London happens to be about the most difficult place in England for such enterprises. It may be relied on, however, that there will be no unnecessary delay. If a regular meeting-place cannot be obtained soon, Mr. Foote may deliver some lectures for a while in various parts of London. Friends who know of suitable halls to be let for such purposes are requested to communicate at once with Mr. Foote, or with Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

The April number of the *Pioneer* will be published soon after the present number of the *Freethinker*. We believe it will be found a lively, interesting, and instructive issue. A full list of contents will appear in our next week's advertisements.

Friends are requested to note that the *Pioneer* is still being supplied for gratuitous distribution at the following rates:—Six copies for threepence, twelve copies for fivepence, twenty-four copies for ninepence—in each case post free. We are happy to state that there seems every likelihood of the new venture turning out a reasonable success.

Amongst the "spring announcements" of John Murray is Dr. E. B. Tylor's *Animism: a Treatise on the Natural History of Religion*, based on the Gifford Lectures delivered at Aberdeen in 1889-90 and 1890-91. Some of the Gifford Lectures have been trumpery enough, and have been published with sufficient promptitude; but Dr. Tylor's, which are probably the most important of the Series, have, for some reason or other, been kept waiting all these years. Their publication should be quite an event in the book-world; especially if the author of the magnificent *Primitive Culture* speaks out with any degree of freedom on the ultimate questions of theology.

Mr. Foote wrote a very careful and thorough reply to the late Mr. Gladstone in 1888. It was published in pamphlet form at the price of twopence. For some years it has been out of print. Many persons have asked for it during that interval, and it is now republished at the more popular price of one penny. The new edition is excellently printed on good paper, and the contents fill sixteen pages. It may be added that this pamphlet contains facts and figures that should be very valuable to Freethinkers in discussion with Christians.

Freethinkers are asked to circulate the *Letters of a Chinaman* which have been reprinted in pamphlet form from our columns at the low price of one penny. Mr. Foote has provided a brief Introduction. This pamphlet ought to be circulated by the thousand.

"These letters," Mr. Foote says in his Introduction, "reached me through the medium of a gentleman of some distinction who does not wish to be known to the public. The writer of them is a friend of his, a Chinaman at present residing in London, who has strong reasons, both social and political, for concealing his identity. It will be observed that his command of English, while good, is not perfect. There is also a certain very un-English simplicity about his criticisms and observations; and something very pathetic in his appeal for consideration and fair-play to his native country. The reader may rest assured that he has in these letters the views of an educated and thoughtful Chinaman, which are the views of *all* educated and thoughtful Chinamen, on the question of Missions and Missionaries. And the understanding of this question is the key to nearly all the trouble between China and the Christian Powers."

The West Ham Branch starts the new year's open-air propaganda at the Grove, Stratford, on Sunday next (April 5), at 7 p.m., when Mr. Ramsey will occupy the platform. On the following Sunday evening the Stratford Town Hall has been secured. The lecturer on that occasion will be Mr. C. Cohen, and the subject, "Christianity: is It Worth Preserving?" It is to be hoped the local Freethinkers will give the West Ham Branch both moral and financial support. The secretary is Mr. E. Parker, 50 London-road, Plaistow, E.

The Peasant of Nazareth.

By HUGH O. PENTECOST.

WHEN the mass of people try to estimate the character of Jesus of Nazareth they are unable to do so, for the reason that the ages have handed down to us an idea of him that clouds our vision. We cannot separate him from the ideas of divinity and the special characteristics that have surrounded him and become part and parcel of his very name. I intend to try to put him in such a place that you can look at him the same as you look at anybody else, and give him the same kind of judgment that you would give any other man, and to make it as clear as I can that the average conception of him is a misconception. I want to try to show you in the first place that he is not a god, and in the second place that he is not even a perfect man, or a very extraordinary one as compared with some other persons this world has produced.

I do not intend to waste much time in trying to convince you that he was not God, or not even a god, although the common Christian doctrine is not that he was a god, but that he was God. The old theologies describe it that he was very God of very God, as if it were not sufficient to say that he was God. Now, that conception is one that belongs to a savage state, or at least to a barbarous state, of the development of the human mind. When the mind of man is on its way toward rational conceptions of things, its heroes of whatever kind, warlike or philosophic or medicinal, the men who distinguish themselves over and above other men, seem to the untutored to be divine men and different in kind from the rest of the race. So the history of the thinking of partially developed man is the history of gods, who were just remarkable men. It seems to me that in this age of possible enlightenment there ought not to be one single human being in the United States who could hold seriously the notion that a man, say six feet high, weighing a hundred and eighty pounds, with a certain colored hair, certain colored eyes, with five fingers and with the ordinary limbs that belong to the human body—I say it seems almost incredible to me that there could be one person in the United States in this age who could seriously believe that a limited being, such as man is, could be God. For while we do not pretend to know what God is, we have certainly reached the point where we can say some things that God is not, and we are quite sure that God is not simply six feet high, and that he cannot be weighed on scales, and he cannot be differentiated, as individuals are differentiated, from other beings. And when we are told that this being is very God, actual God, not a part but a whole God, and that at the same time he is very man, perfect man, in the same person, and that we ought to accept this as one of the mysteries that nobody can understand, it seems to me that the time has come when we ought to nerve ourselves and say flatly, "What you say is not a mystery, but an impossibility, and being an impossibility, it is not true;" and not being true, we should have no hesitation in saying, "I do not believe anything like that because I am not in a position to place myself on the plane of a naked savage who might be excused for having such views."

I am not going to argue with you that God does not eat three meals a day and perform the functions of the human body. I do not mean to imply that your intelligence is of such a grade as to need an argument. If there are any among you who really think that Jesus is God, why, go on thinking so; but do not let us talk about it, because I should feel badly to have to argue it with you at all. If that be your faith, take it and be happy. Personally, I take it for granted that he was not a god, and also that he was not a perfect man.

I lay stress on that point because many persons who say he was not God, say he was a perfect man, and if not a god he was a divine man because he is a perfect character. The timid Christian, who is

afraid his faith will be taken away from him, holds to this, because he believes that Jesus is the only representative of perfect manhood. I want to show you that this notion, also, is a mistaken one.

It would be extraordinary in the extreme if, being born at the time he was, with the world in the condition that it was, and with the environment that he had—it would have been miraculous if he could have been the one perfect specimen of the human race; that is to say, to suppose that two thousand years of enlightenment, of progress, of evolution, have gone on and the world has not been able to improve upon that character. The man is the creation of his environment to a very large extent. The environment of Jesus was not so favorable to the production of the most finished kind of character as is the environment in which you and I live; therefore it would be unnatural if we should have to go back to two thousand years ago to find a perfect man.

Judging Jesus by the knowledge of our age, he was a very ignorant man. As far as scientific truth is concerned, he knew almost nothing, and should not be expected to know much, because in his immediate neighbourhood nobody knew much except what was observed superficially. In his surroundings the belief was general that when the sun appeared to rise over the horizon it actually did rise. Everybody around him believed the sky to be a solid substance that could be rolled away as a scroll, to use a scripture expression. There was no knowledge as to how things occur, and no such knowledge as the children in our schools to-day have of physics and chemistry and astronomy.

Not only was Jesus ignorant of all that we call scientific knowledge, but he did not seem to be abreast of the thinking of his own times. He seemed to turn his attention away from the subjects that were discussed by the great thinkers of the earth. Jesus was a peasant who grew up in the family of a mechanic and received the mental and manual education that every Jewish boy was supposed to have. As we would say now, he was an unlettered man.

Three or four hundred years previously Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato lived, and before and after them every conceivable subject known to the human mind was discussed from every point of view, and Jesus seemed to know nothing of that mental activity. At the time of his birth, and for two or three hundred years before that, there existed in Alexandria the greatest school for the enlightenment of the human mind that the world had ever seen. Chemistry, astronomy, physics, and mathematics were taught. Euclid studied in that school, where really great teachers and scholars were working. This school had been in existence for two or three hundred years, and there is not the slightest indication that Jesus was touched by its learning. In Alexandria it was well known that the world was round, and there is no indication that that knowledge had reached Jesus.

He was superstitious. He was a man who had not taken the trouble to free his mind from the commonest delusions of his day. I do not need to elaborate, but only to remind you that he went around among people who were sick and told them they were troubled with devils. He went about thinking he was casting out devils. That is the kind of teaching that belongs to the most simple-minded people, like the North American Indians at the time this country was discovered. He taught those superstitions, and if we accepted them, instead of having treatment in hospitals we would have fasting and prayers to get devils out of people who are stricken with sickness.

He was also narrow-minded, and taught that he belonged to a chosen race. When the Syrophenician woman wanted him to cast the devil out of her daughter he said that he was sent only to the house of Israel. Jesus never seemed to have gotten that idea out of his head that the Jews were a chosen people, and that God sent him especially to them.

And again, it seems that he did not take advantage of the best thinking in his own province, for there was a sect called Sadducees who had made some progress. They did not believe in the resurrection of the body, and they did not believe in angels, and the presumption is that they did not believe in devils. There were people teaching right there a rational doctrine that when the body is put into the ground it decays, but Jesus went right on teaching the resurrection of the body. So we can probably say that he did not have an active mind, a thinking mind, because he was not ready to take the reasonable suggestions of teachers around about him.

And Jesus was extremely egotistic. He had an exaggerated opinion of his own character. He turned his thoughts upon himself and went off into a desert to meditate, and finally came to believe that he was the Son of God in a somewhat different sense from what he thought others were the sons of God. He allowed his conscience to develop in one direction to that extent that when the Jews said that he made himself God, it is true that he thought he did. He thought about himself so much that his own conscience became exaggerated. He got a false view of himself and misrepresented himself to the world. And then when he went about preaching he tried to make disciples. "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me." Drop your nets, stop fishing, come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If you love me you will keep my commandments," and so he went on teaching the importance of himself. And then he built up around him the seventy disciples who were to be sent to others around about, because they were attached to him personally. He told them "the evidence that you are the true believers in God is because you believe in me, whom God hath sent." There is a certain kind of wisdom in that; I do not know that "cheap" is just the word that should be used, but I want to get the idea into your minds that anyone who tries to attach others to himself personally is not a great man. The great man does not want disciples. The great man fears that people will, instead of searching after truth, attach themselves to him personally and allow him to dominate them. The truly great man will say, "Do not believe what I teach you because I teach it, but take it, weigh it, and if it does not appeal to you as truth, discard it." Jesus instructed his followers, "I cannot be mistaken; God speaks to me, for I speak the truth, and if you want to be perfectly safe believe in me, and if you do not understand the truth, just believe in me, anyhow."

For example, compare Jesus with one great man of the past, who lived four hundred years before him—take Socrates. He did not try to attach anybody to himself. He did not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," but he tried to have men train their minds so they could decide what was truth and what was not. Down at our own times read Emerson's works from beginning to end, and you will see there is not the slightest suggestion that he wishes anybody to be his disciple. Take Walt Whitman, who is in many respects to be accepted as one of the world's greatest teachers; he not only does not want disciples, but warns people against making a sect around him. That attitude by Whitman is characteristic of a large mind that wants everything left free, because every person knows that however great a man is in the day in which he lives, somebody is going to be greater, and that a new day and a new generation will evolve a man of different development which the world will need more than it needs him at that time.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be continued.)

Another child story comes to hand. A school-teacher was giving a Scripture lesson to infants. "Who was it," she asked, "that tried to imitate our Lord in walking on the water?" "Simple Simon," was the childish reply.

Honesty.

AMONG the many false, or (to choose the most charitable form of expression) mistaken declarations continually reiterated by orthodox writers and speakers, is the assumption that all possible means are employed for investigating the claims of evangelical religion to historical accuracy and revealed truth. On the contrary, the Christian Church has always discouraged independent research; formerly, out of reverence for the accepted oracles, and later, through a well-grounded fear that modern discoveries, if generally known, will destroy the whole fabric of theology.

The attitude of the Church towards the "Higher Criticism" is a striking proof of the prevailing disinclination to accept the results of scientific study, and there are many less notorious, though equally significant, instances of persistent neglect of available knowledge and obstinate denial of established facts. On the other hand, every incident which seems to strengthen orthodox pretensions is proclaimed throughout the world with a great flourish of gospel trumpets and hailed as positive evidence, without question as to its authenticity or its intrinsic worth. For instance, a short time ago the religious press was teeming with elaborate accounts of the recent discovery of an ancient scrap of writing (apparently from the note-book of an unknown individual) containing a few sentences resembling certain verses of the New Testament Gospels, together with other sentences not to be found in the canonical records. Now, the most that could fairly be deduced from that relic was that this unknown scribe, as also the compilers of the Synoptic Gospels, had quoted from some already existing source; and, even if the new discovery prove (as alleged) that the Gospels can claim an earlier date than modern criticism is willing to allow, there is still sufficient time left between the beginning of the Christian era and the beginning of authentic history upon the subject to permit the creation of a fable, and to justify the reluctance of many honest minds when required to accept legend as fact. On the other hand, whatever, in the nature of testimony, casts a doubt upon established theories is either systematically ignored, or else dismissed with an *ex cathedra* negation. Many years ago, a standard church history acknowledged that the scenes of the Savior's Passion—Gethsemane and Calvary—did not really exist in the topography of Jerusalem. Now, such an admission ought to have awakened at once a suspicion of the falsity of the whole story, and led to a thorough investigation of the momentous narrative. But to this day the great majority of Christians are ignorant of the fact that such a statement was ever made, and those who do know it are careful to preserve silence. Again, it has long been known by scholars that the passage in the book of Job, which is cherished by the Christian Church as a convincing proof of the resurrection and of human immortality, rests entirely upon a false translation. The word "God" does not occur in the authentic original versions, and the whole passage is nothing more than a passionate declaration by Job of his individual innocence, and of his firm conviction that sometime, perhaps not until after his own return to dust, a defender would rise up to vindicate his character. Every educated Jew, every Hebrew scholar among Christians, knows what Job really said and really meant; but does that alter the general belief and practice? Not at all! To this day, every time that the body of a departed member of the Church of England, or of the Episcopal Church in America, is committed to the grave, the officiating clergyman begins the Burial Service with the solemn assurance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc., and all the people say "Amen" in their hearts, while other Christian sects draw upon the same falsified source for their belief in the resurrection of the body. If those clergymen are not aware of the correct reading of that passage, they might have known long

ago, and priests and people can easily find out the truth if they wish to discover it.

It is now "a burning question" whether such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed, even as a man, to say nothing of a divinity. One would suppose that the slightest hint in this direction would commit every sincere soul to a search for the truth from every possible source—a search which should never be relaxed until the truth should be revealed through the unimpeachable testimony of facts.

But that question is still, as it has hitherto been, ignored by the churches; or, if alluded to at all, is condemned as dictated by pitiable ignorance or by heaven-defying blasphemy; meantime, idolatry flourishes as before. Every year at the recurrence of the winter solstice, Christian children are called upon to rejoice over the birth of a virgin-born savior, and their elders, brought up in the same absurd belief, stultify their minds into a forced acquiescence with the fable.

Enough evidence has already been accumulated to give substantial ground for the opinion that the principal characters of the New Testament story, Jesus, Peter, and Paul are fictitious, excepting in so far as this narrative may be founded upon persons and incidents belonging to a period nearly a century earlier than the time alleged and having no claim to supernatural interposition in their behalf. Peter, indeed, seems to be also a resuscitation of a Phœnician legend which passed through a Roman metamorphosis before being adopted by Christianity; while the Christ-myth is only another form of an idea common to many primitive religions. Certainly, these matters demand examination. Intellectual progress must keep pace with materialistic advance; the "X rays" of Higher Criticism must be turned upon the ailing body of Christianity and the disease be diagnosed, even though it be incurable and deadly. Let us know how we have been deceived, not that the deception was intentional or malicious. Most people formerly believed these myths; the few who doubted or disbelieved were guided only by their reason and common sense; but now knowledge has applied its test and the illusion has faded for ever. Those persons who still adhere to and teach the old exploded mysteries are either ignorant or insincere. There is no longer any room for a choice of opinion concerning these questions.

Let us be honest with ourselves and others. Let us renounce our errors and start fair upon a course of life wherein there are only the penalties of Nature to avoid, only the rewards of Nature to deserve and, deserving, to receive.

ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—Reprinted.

The Religion of the Occult.

FROM the dim dawn of history, when men, impelled by fear or through the persuasions of a rising priestly caste, were awed by the pretensions of supernaturalism, down to this modern age of scientific research and positive knowledge, mankind has been, and now is, under the dominion of the religion of the occult.

Man, naturally superstitious and credulous, has been operated on by fears and frightened by phantoms. Religion too often has been but a fraud founded on falsehood. Maintained by, and maintaining, a hierarchy, a priesthood, or ministry, it has sedulously advanced its claims in order to keep itself established in power, authority, and wealth. This is true of the majority of all forms of religion.

And one chief agent in effecting a supreme control and universal sway has been through the potent agency of mystery—profound, secret, hidden or occult. To believe without inquiry, and not to demand reasons or proofs; to accept implicitly the assertion made, the doctrine taught, in unquestioning faith—this is ever the sign of the "true believer," the "docile disciple," in all religions.

Wonder has added its peculiar force to fear, and every possibility has been sought to establish a communication with the unseen world, the divine, and the invisible. Man seeks and desires this still, till science demonstrates its complete

futility. This communication, intimacy, and commerce with the invisible and the occult has been the bait, the charm, of all mystical, supernatural religion, whose hierophants have been dubbed "stewards of Thy mysteries," but often supremely mystified themselves, and entirely unable to maintain or conduct any intercourse of the heavenly with the human, the spiritual with the actual, or any transcendental communion of the seen with the unseen. Fetishes, incantations, ceremonies, solemn functions, gestures, crossings, genuflections, are alike inoperative in the performances of either savage or civilised humanity. Here the barbarian, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Spiritualist, are all on the one level. Mysteries, ceremonies, and sacraments effect nothing, and are utterly of no avail.

Not that we deny there are mysteries and things and forces unknown, as yet, in the physical universe. We believe that such a vast domain as this exists, and is inviting exploration. Myriad utilities and forces await the touch of scientific investigation, and it will reveal wonderful powers, marvellous results. But our contention is that it will be the man of science who will accomplish this, not the theologian nor the religious person *per se*. For science deals with facts, but religion with variable theories. Science deals with practical demonstrations, and these of material benefit; religion deals with the immaterial, the unreal, the invisible, and intangible. It is veiled in mystery and obscurity, and its chief power is in faith. No cloud lifts from the landscape beyond, however beautiful it may be. The God or Deity is clothed in unfathomable mystery, and we know nothing whatever about him, or his methods. They tell us to look for him in his works; why not refer us to his disasters and calamities? If there be such a deity, he is either malevolent or must be powerless and inefficient, and so, really, no god at all—only an invention of mistaken faith and credulity duped into believing. And so of any Christ, Krishna, or Buddha—he is simply a human character idealised, nothing more, but invested with supernatural attributes, miraculous gifts, fabulous wonder-working actions, which probably never occurred. As Professor Agassiz once remarked to a spiritualistic enthusiast, who recounted a marvel contrary to all known laws of physics, "I should say, sir, that *it never happened!*" And so the exaggerated ideal of any teacher or reformer imputes to him qualities he never possessed and powers he never exercised, because he never had them. The claims of all these teachers and reformers, whether of Judæa, India, Persia, or China, are greatly exaggerated. They were simple originals which have been astonishingly embellished by their several cults. The originals may have done good deeds, or set lofty examples, or uttered words of wise counsel. For all that they honestly were, we venerate them, and would seek to profit by anything they can teach us as fellow-men. Beyond this no reasonable, reflective mind can go.

And as to spiritual, occult communications of any sort in any form of religious belief, anywhere, let us free ourselves from all illusion, delusion, and collusion. The entire "heavenly hierarchy," from great Jove himself down through all the ranks, is, we believe, a groundless fiction. Archangels, and "all the community of heaven," and all mahatmas, "masters," "brothers," spirits, ghosts, demons, and devils—these, we think, exist only in imagination, fed by fancy and encouraged by superstition. They are the creations of the brain, subservient to the human wish or yearning. Winged or wingless spiritual beings do not exist. That is our firm belief, our deduction from reason and experience. Existence beyond the grave has never been proved. There is no actual evidence of any life beyond this. We all go to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."

Therefore let us lay aside all belief in magical or supernatural forms of faith. Let us discard as untrue all statements of incarnations, atonements, resurrections, and ascensions. Let us cease from prayers and sacraments and "pious observances," which are purely formal. Let us not be burdened by the "bitter Cross" and heavy burden of voluntary humility, or moved to any self-denial which is not directly for the good or help of others. Let us not be frightened when the shepherds of Zion cry "Wolf!"—that is to say, Sin. Sin consists in working harm and mischief, not in promoting joy or pleasure. A worthy dame once asked the writer, "Is it any sin to dance?" To which the reply was made, "Yes, madam, if you don't dance well!" And this might apply to a wide range of enjoyments.

Emancipated from all servility in our beliefs, and denying the power of any occult or mystical forces to harm us, let us refuse their inducements and blandishments, and cease to employ their agencies or ministrations advanced on the specious plea of "doing good" to our souls. Let us, rather, do good to our bodies, while we have them. Keep the brain clean and clear, and the "soul" will take care of itself. Let those who serve the supernatural and the occult weave their spells and theological intricacies in their own dim temples.

Our place is outside, in the pure air and sunshine. Remember that he who is free from the thralldom of the occult, the mysterious, the supernatural, the mystical in *any* religion, he is the free man. In his spirit has dawned "the morning all divine."
GERALD GREY.

America's Religious Crisis.

IN discussing "America's Religious Crisis," Rev. Dr. George C. Lorimer, pastor of the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York, said: "Religion, especially evangelical religion, is to-day of very low vitality. The attendance at church service is shamefully small. We are attacked by secular writers. They tell us that the ministry is deteriorating, that the churches have lost their influence to the schools, and that education alone can encompass all the activities of life. They say that the churches spend more for superfluities of life than for Gospel, and point with scorn at the ice cream suppers and other cheapening methods of obtaining money to support the Gospel. They condemn us for sending missionaries abroad when our people are spiritually starving at home, but however true these accusations may be in part, they are overdrawn. They must be taken with an allowance. Yet a thoughtful man will not ignore them. He must admit that there is a crisis in American religious life. As has been said, we live for money by day and pleasure by night. I have no fear in saying that, at the present rate at which we are living, in fifty years we will have no Sabbath."

Sovereigns, it is true, call themselves the representatives of God, his vicegerents upon earth. But does the fear of a master more powerful than they are incline them seriously to study the welfare of the nations whom Providence has intrusted to their care? Does the pretended terror which ought to be inspired in them by the idea of an invisible judge, to whom alone they acknowledge themselves accountable for their actions, render them more equitable, more compassionate, more sparing of the blood and treasure of their subjects, more temperate in their pleasures, more attentive to their duties? In fine, does this God, by whose authority kings reign, deter them from inflicting a thousand evils upon the people to whom they ought to act as guides, protectors, and fathers? Alas! If we survey the whole earth, we shall see men almost everywhere governed by tyrants, who use religion merely as an instrument to render more stupid the slaves whom they overwhelm under the weight of their vices, or whom they sacrifice without mercy to their extravagances.—*D'Holbach*.

So far as science or a rational conception of things is concerned, the fathers of the Church and the framers of our popular theology were mere children. Considerations were all-powerful with them, which to-day would not have a feather's weight with a man of ordinary intelligence. Children readily, even eagerly, believe almost any impossible thing you may tell them about nature. As yet, they have no insight into the course of nature or the law of cause and effect, no fund of experience to serve as a touchstone to the false or impossible. The same was true of the fathers and of the races that witnessed the advent of Christianity..... mere children so far as the development of their scientific faculties were concerned.—*John Burroughs*.

We do a great injustice to Iscariot in thinking him wicked above all common wickedness. He was only a common money lover, and, like all money lovers, didn't understand Christ—couldn't make out the worth of him or the meaning of him. He didn't want him to be killed. He was horror-struck when he found that Christ would be killed; threw his money away instantly, and hanged himself. How many of our present money-seekers, think you, would have the grace to hang themselves, whoever was killed?—*John Ruskin*.

Failure seems to be the trade-mark of Nature. Why? Nature has no design, no intelligence. Nature produces without purpose, sustains without intention, and destroys without thought. Man has a little intelligence, and he should use it. Intelligence is the only lever capable of raising mankind.—*Ingersoll*.

The Minister's Wife: "I'm afraid Mr. Skinflint does not realise that the Lord loves a cheerful giver." The Minister: "Oh, I don't know. The less he gives, the more cheerfully he gives it."—*Statesman* (Calcutta).

How a Boy Explained a Parable.

There is no saying how the average small boy sometimes regards religious truth. A London paper records that the son of a well-known bishop, being asked to explain the meaning of the parable of the grain of mustard seed, replied: "It means that a little religion goes a long way, and those who have least of it here will be highest in the kingdom of heaven."—*Leslie's Weekly*.

What He Was Doctor Of.

Tommy Figgjam: "What makes people call the Rev. Longwynde 'doctor'? What did he ever cure anybody of?"

Paw Figgjam: "He's cured many a person of a supposedly hopeless case of insomnia."

—*Baltimore American*.

Here is the way Dr. E. C. Hirsch, a noted Jewish preacher of Chicago, speaks of Sunday-school books: "Have you ever tried to read an ordinary Sunday-school story? If you have, you know that my condemnation is not at all exaggerated. For there is not a single line in this trash that rings true to the life or character of the child. In these books all sorts of impossibilities are calmly assumed, and God is dragged into them in the rôle of a brutal and bungling policeman. There are no words in the Anglo-Saxon tongue that would adequately characterise their stupidity. Beware of this literature. Label it "poison," put the sign of the skull and crossbones on it, and lock it up, for it is worse than carbolic acid. The Sunday-school books are worse than any dime novel. Their theology is damnable, and their morality is below the freezing point. Even if they were not liable to these objections they should be condemned for their literary style, for they contain so much bad grammar and baby-talk that they are a cruel infliction on the child. The best I can say for this literature is that it is not quite so bad as the ten-cent detective story sold to the children at the candy shops. Indeed, no literature on earth is worse than the dime novel except the Sunday-school story."

Obituary.

THE Freethought party in Edinburgh has this week sustained a serious loss by the sudden death of Mr. Richard Stuart Brown. On Sunday week (March 15) Mr. Brown was, as usual, at the meeting of the Edinburgh Secular Society, and he was testifying to the truth of those principles he so firmly cherished. At a late hour on the following Tuesday night he burst a blood-vessel, and he passed away in the early hours of Wednesday morning (March 18). In all social and political questions Mr. Brown took a great interest, but he devoted himself specially to the furtherance of the Freethought movement, with which he had been connected for many years, and which had few more able and no more zealous supporters. Mr. Brown had attained the age of sixty-two. For many years he carried on business as a photographer. His wife predeceased him, but he is survived by three sons and three daughters, all grown-up. He was buried on Friday in North Merchiston Cemetery. The funeral was attended by a large number of Freethinkers, and the Secular Funeral Service was read at the grave. On Sunday last, at the meeting of the Edinburgh Secular Society in the Hall, 84 Leith-street, fitting reference was made to Mr. Brown's death, and a vote of condolence with his family was passed.

DORA SMITH, aged five years, the child of Jane and John Smith, both members of the N. S. S., South Shields, died on Saturday last. On Monday the interment took place at the Old Westoe Cemetery in the presence of a large number of relatives and Secularist friends, including Messrs. Chapman, Fothergill, and White. Mr. S. M. Peacock, President of the local Branch, read impressively an appropriate service compiled from various sources. Much sympathy is felt for the young couple in their untimely loss.—*E. C.*

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. John Maddy, secretary of the North Camberwell Liberal and Radical Club. He was one of the best known South of London politicians, and his death will be regretted by a wide circle of friends. Mr. Maddy used to occupy the Camberwell Secular Hall platform a good deal at first, and only last summer he lectured several times for the N. S. S. Branch in Brockwell Park.

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.)

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, T. H. Griffin (S.D.F.), "Trade Unionism and the Condition of the Workers."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, W. Sanders, "Shelley as a Social Reformer."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, J. Fagan.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "The Sub-Conscious Mind."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tun-stall-road, Brixton): 7, Social Meeting of Members and Friends.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "How I Found God."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, Dr. Watson, "Vivisection." Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Frank H. Edwards, "A Thrilling Passage from French History."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 3, H. Percy, "The Secular Movement: Past, Present, and Future"; 6.30, "Does Science Kill Religion?" A Review of Nunquam's View. Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, April 2, 8, A. Howson, "Joseph Mazzini."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, W. J. P. Burton, F.G.S., "Prehistoric Remains of Harlyn Bay, Cornwall"; 7, "Recent Cave Discoveries in Derbyshire." Lantern Illustrations, and Bones of Extinct Animals. Tea at 5.

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool.—April 5, Liverpool; 19, Glasgow; May 3, Liverpool; 17, Liverpool.

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