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Vice lives either before Love is born, or after Love is dead—INGERSOLL.

Resurrectionism.

THE death of Jesus Christ, if he ever lived, occurred on a particular day. His resurrection from the dead, if it was a fact, also occurred on a particular day. Yet both events are celebrated at a different time in every succeeding year. The anniversary of his death must fall on a Friday, and the anniversary of his resurrection must fall on a Sunday; and the Friday and the Sunday fall now here and now there, according to an astronomical calculation. Nor is that all. First, the position of the sun is taken into account: the vernal equinox must have arrived. Secondly, the lunar phases are taken into account: a full moon must have followed the vernal equinox. Then come Good Friday and Easter Sunday. And the result is that Christians have to consult the almanack in order to learn when they are to expect these occasions. But this strange fact does not excite their curiosity; if it did, they would learn that Easter is a conciliation of sun-worship and moon-worship, that it is an old Pagan festival, and that it has no relation whatever to any event that ever happened in Palestine or elsewhere. The Jews, also, if they took the trouble to inquire, would find that their own Passover is of the same mythical character as Easter. It falls at the same time and has at bottom the same significance. The story of the ancient Jews passing through the Red Sea from the land of Egypt, after the slaughter there of all the native firstborn, is purely legendary. The truth is that they never were in Egypt, and consequently never left it. This is demonstrated, negatively, by the Egyptian stone records. And the fact that the Jews have believed to the contrary for nearly three thousand years, only proves the tenacity of life there is in anything that is religiously handed down from father to son.

Easter being thus a mythological anniversary, it is pretty certain that all the alleged historical events connected with it are imaginary. This is as true of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ as it is of the emigration started by Moses from Egypt. And it follows, therefore, that Christian preachers at this time of the year lay down the rankest fictions as the basis of man's hope of salvation; and promise him fine things in the future world on the strength of events that never happened in this world. Which, we take it, is about as high as the art of imposture could be carried.

Is it any wonder that the preachers of such an imposture should flounder about in their sermons, and talk the greatest nonsense with an air of supernatural gravity? One of these preachers is the Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D., Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. This gentleman entertained a large congregation at Lyndhurst-road Church, Hampstead, on Easter Sunday morning, with a discourse on the resurrection of "the Savior." We wish we had a full report of it; but in the absence of one, we take the summary report in the *Daily News*, which looks carefully done, if not actually "inspired."

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Mr. Horton began by admitting that "the resurrection of the body was a stumbling block to many who regarded the resurrection of its minute particles after death as a childish idea." He might have said it was not only a childish, but an impossible idea. Nothing is more certain than that the matter of human bodies has been used over and over again; and who but a lunatic can believe that one atom of carbon or oxygen, for instance, could be allotted at the general resurrection of the dead to several different souls?

Childish as the idea of the resurrection of the body is, however, it has according to Mr. Horton "a deeply holy meaning." Let us quote from the report:—

"Burial was a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of a very deep meaning. They put the seed of the body into the ground, not expecting the seed to emerge, but something far more beautiful and higher than the seed that had perished. The symbol they placed in the ground must be reshaped, and this was accomplished by the vital principle called the soul."

What a jumble is this! The body is first a seed; then it is a symbol; and this symbol is lastly dealt with in some unimaginable way by a mysterious "vital principle" which is also an entity called "the soul." Such is Christian philosophy in the twentieth century!

Mr. Horton knows very well that the body is put into the ground simply to get rid of it. Certainly those who put it there do not expect it to "emerge." Nor do they regard it as seed. They do not plant it like a potato, with a view to a crop. This "seed" metaphor is borrowed from Paul; and if Mr. Horton reads Sir Samuel Baker he will see how the great Apostle's "inspired" nonsense was laughed at by an intelligent African chief.

The body is buried in a grave; it decomposes and disappears. In the course of time neither the eye nor the nose of Oniscience will be able to detect a trace of it. Science, moreover, assures us that the matter of the body can never be collected again, except at the expense of other bodies into which portions of it will enter. It is idle, then, to talk of the resurrection of the body nowadays. We therefore hear of "something far more beautiful" which is to take its place. But what has this to do with the *body*? Nothing at all; it is something totally distinct; and is only brought in to cheat the imagination. We all know what the body is; but this beautiful something else is like the peace of God—it passes all understanding.

What tricks these professors of superstition are up to! When the resurrection of Jesus is objected to as inconsistent with his alleged ghostlike appearances, such as coming into a room while the door was closed, they tell us that he had "a glorified body" after the resurrection. But if he did not have the same body that was laid in the tomb, there was no resurrection in the case. And what, pray, is a *glorified* body? One understands a fat body and a thin one, a heavy body and a light one, a tall body and a short one, a handsome body and an ugly one. But this glorified body is as imaginary as the soul which is supposed to inhabit it.

Mr. Horton actually went on to talk about "the resurrection of the soul." Does he mean that the soul is buried with the body? Does he mean that it has to wait there, after the body has rotted away,

until the "glorified body" comes along and takes it on board? Or is he merely using a catch-phrase to bridge over the gulf between the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul?

Let us hear Mr. Horton on the latter doctrine—the immortality of the soul—which owes absolutely nothing to Christianity.

"It was present in the legends of the childhood of man, such as those of Hercules and Alcestis, and Orpheus and Eurydice. It found its place in systems of theology, like the Egyptian 'Book of the Dead'; and in philosophy, as exemplified in Pythagorus and Plato. The native witness to immortality did not lie in the reasoning faculties, but in the fact of personality in the fact that they were able to use the word 'I.' It was one of the primal instincts of man, and no argument could disprove it. When Christ rose from the dead he placed the keystone in the bridge which man was always endeavoring to throw across the River of Death, and the bridge was now secure."

Now if the belief in the immortality of the soul existed before Christianity, and has existed since independently of it, why all this boast of what Christ has done for the doctrine? Mr. Horton's "bridge" is a ridiculous image. How was a keystone placed in a bridge that was not yet constructed? But a greater difficulty remains. What bearing has the resurrection of Christ upon the immortality of the soul? None at all, if it was his *body* that rose; and none specially, if it was his *ghost*, for the belief in apparitions was common enough already. The truth is, indeed, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ involves a *denial* of the immortality of the soul. If that doctrine were true, why should it require evidence from cemeteries? That doctrine, indeed, was declared by Mr. Gladstone to be "wholly unknown to the Christian Scriptures"—and we have the honor to agree with him.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Problem of Evil Again.

THE first number of the *Hibbert Journal* contained three articles by Dr. Howison, the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, and Dr. R. F. Horton, on "Catastrophes and Moral Order." The object of the articles was to reconcile such catastrophes as the Martinique disaster with the ordinary theistic belief. As the Theist, the Unitarian, and the Christian had each had their say, it was only fitting that an Atheist should have a share in the discussion, and I contributed a brief criticism of the efforts of Messrs. Armstrong and Horton to the next issue of the *Journal*. In the number just issued Mr. Armstrong, with more courage, even if with less wisdom, writes a short rejoinder, and asserts that my criticism was irrelevant, because the subject set for discussion by the editor was not how to reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in a good and wise deity, but simply whether the Martinique disaster added anything new to the problem; or, in other words, if the believers could reconcile the general mass of evil with their faith, ought they to cavil at an earthquake more or less.

I was not aware of the text given by the editor to his contributors, and can only say that if Mr. Armstrong is stating it correctly, he is exposing the editor to the charge of unfitness for the control of a *philosophic journal*, although his fitness for a religious one may still stand good. It certainly never dawned upon my mind that the editor of a publication like the *Hibbert Journal* would write to three other gentlemen asking them to discuss the question of a special catastrophe quite apart from its bearing upon the general question of what is known as the "Problem of evil." The value of any special case such as the Martinique catastrophe lies precisely in its bearing upon the general question. I, therefore, in my criticism took the simple line that the apologies put forward by the two gentlemen I have named were quite worthless in the face of any sane criticism that might be brought against them. The writers were

able to prove easily enough that this special disaster was in essence no worse than other evils, but these other evils still remained, and their existence are enough to shatter the whole theistic case.

Mr. Armstrong advises those who would find his own solution of the difficulty to consult his book, *God and the Soul*, in which he has stated it with "simplicity and directness." As *God and the Soul* happens to be among the books on my shelves, it may be as well to see what this solution is, and how much it is worth.

The chapter in the volume dealing with this subject bears the title of "On the Problem of Evil." The problem Mr. Armstrong sets out to answer is this: "There is great evil in the world. If God cannot prevent it, he is not all-powerful; if he can, yet does not, he is not all-good." The answer has the common characteristics of a Theistic defence—viz., great apparent exactitude, with a complete ignoring of the vital point in dispute. For example, there is a page or so spent upon the right meaning of the word "Omnipotent." Omnipotence, we are informed, means not the ability to accomplish a contradiction, but only the ability to do all that is possible—an answer that is both question-begging and obscure. Obscure, because it raises the question of "What is possible?" and question-begging because, if God can do what to us is a contradiction, then it is not impossible, but possible. "All that we have a right to mean by Omnipotence is power to do everything that is in itself possible," says Mr. Armstrong. Quite so; only *anyone* ought to be able to realise that this is the whole question at issue—whether certain things are possible with God, and how does our belief in his power, or in his want of power, affect our belief in his character?

Mr. Armstrong's reason for insisting upon this point is as follows. The presence of sin and pain is undeniable. The Atheist asserts that their presence is a negation either of the goodness, or wisdom, or love of God. Not so, says our apologist; this is a world where provision is made for moral development; and, if we ask God to annihilate evil and pain, we are asking him to destroy the conditions of moral improvement as a means to bringing it about. That is, we are asking Omnipotence to perform a contradiction—a thing which we have no right to do.

Now, the plain answer to such a position is, first, that moral development is not a good in itself; and, if we could get a good man, minus the process of development, no one would be any the worse; all, indeed, would be much the better. And, as a matter of fact, the process of moral development is actually shortened with the progress of the race. It has taken thousands of generations to develop the character with which the average civilised youth faces the world; and, if it is good for us to start life with this moral stock-in-trade, independent of our own personal experience, why should it not have been well for this to have been the endowment given originally to man by God?

To this Mr. Armstrong replies, "If God had made me so that I *could* not tell a lie, I could not choose to tell the truth, (and) human character is made up of right choosings.....To get moral good out of me; to make character, I must have a free choice between a better and a worse—it must be open to me to tell the lie, or there will be no morality in telling the truth."

Mr. Armstrong is here following his master, Dr. Martineau, pretty closely, and it is worth while seeing what there is in the argument. "Character is made up of right choosings," Agreed, with qualifications—although the "right" might well be dropped, as whether our "choosings" are right or wrong the building of a character, good or bad, is the result. The qualifications are two. First, there are other things beside "choosings" that go to mould character. Food, climate, heredity, all play their parts in moulding character, and it is significant of Mr. Armstrong's philosophical equipment to ignore these things. Second, even the part played by "choosings" in building character is very largely performed by

people other than oneself. It is the choosings of our ancestors that play an extremely important part in the formation of each individual's character. I take it as beyond dispute that could Mr. Armstrong and I change our heredity, our opinions upon the subject in dispute would not be quite what they are.

And to these necessary qualifications one may add that Mr. Armstrong has actually done what he declares Omnipotence itself cannot do—he has reconciled a contradiction. If his thesis that, without the power to choose the wrong, morality and character disappear, it follows that the more moral a man becomes the less moral he is, and the more fixed his character is the less character he possesses. For example. There is a sense in which it would be perfectly true to say, if I walked into Mr. Armstrong's chapel, and placed my watch on his desk, he *could* steal it. I do not say he would; but Mr. Armstrong will agree that he could. Or if I walked down one of the side streets off Scotland-road, and left my watch on a window-ledge while I went for a newspaper, it is true again that someone *could* steal it there. The same statement is true of both places; and yet what a difference there is between the two! The odds against Mr. Armstrong exerting his ability to steal in the one case is more than reversed with the Scotland-road lounge in the other. Mr. Armstrong would, I believe, never be even conscious of the desire to pocket the watch. He would announce that someone had forgotten their watch as *instinctively* as the other's hand would close over it. Yet, if Mr. Armstrong's thesis be correct, the man who is conscious of the desire to steal, and who overcomes it for the time, is really more moral than the man who never dreams of stealing.

It does not end here. Right choice and right action makes character. But the physiological effect and the mental effect of any course of action is to induce a habit primarily, and an instinct ultimately. The more frequently I lie, the less regard I have for the truth; the more frequently I tell the truth, the greater the repugnance to a lie. A thoroughly truthful man does not *choose* to tell the truth; he tells it. It is only the habitual liar who stops to make a choice. The longer, then, that anyone persists in a course of right conduct, the more fixed and determined his or her character is, and the more difficult any contrary course of action becomes. Yet, if Mr. Armstrong is correct, they will cease to possess character in exact proportion to the fixedness of their character.

There is only one thing that Mr. Armstrong believes we are justified in asking of God, and that is, "So to order the conditions of human life that good should be sure *in the end* to overcome evil." Obviously this is a request framed to suit the circumstances. Why we are warranted in asking that God should do this is because Mr. Armstrong believes he has done it. He says that God has so ordered the condition of life that "goodness must prevail in the end." Let us grant that this is true, *in the end* how does it effect the question? Here, for instance, in our city, are men, women, and children are suffering unspeakable degradation owing to the greed and callousness of sweater and slum landlord. We ought not to complain against God's ordering of the world, because *in the end* sin destroys itself and goodness remains. In the end! thousands of years, that is, perhaps hundreds of thousands, after these people have lived out their joyless lives and sunk into their pauper graves. In the name of all that is reasonable what kind of a benefit or a consolation is this to the people who are living now? Have not they as legitimate a claim for comfort and happiness as the people who will be born thousands of years after they are born? Does Mr. Armstrong believe that these people *ought* to be punished for the crime of being born before their remote descendants? If he does not, how is he going to justify the ways of a God who deliberately planned this as the best method of developing character? And can he not see that in the process of developing the character of remote generations

the characters of thousands are being sacrificed now?

Then there is the fact that one's wrong-doing does not end with oneself. Its influence reaches and punishes the innocent. Mr. Armstrong's justification of this is, that mankind is knit together, and we are best taught by the sufferings of other people. "If every wrong-doer brought trouble on himself alone, the forces making for the destruction of sin would be infinitely less powerful and effective than they are." I wonder how many really believe this? How many really believe that, if every time a person stole, or lied, or acted dishonestly to another, he or she suffered an immediate and inevitable punishment, there would therefore be less inducement to good behavior? I do not think anyone really believes such a teaching, the plain truth being that the worse a man is the less he is affected by the sufferings of others, and *vice versa*. It is the most moral man who is apt to be guided by the mental realisation of the pains endured by others as a consequence of his actions. Such pleas set one wondering whether there is *any* argument that a confirmed Theist will not use in defence of his creed.

Here then, is Mr. Armstrong's defence, stated with "simplicity and directness," against the anti-theistic attack. We may not ask why God did not create good people right off, because, unless he had created them with the power, and evidently the choice, to do evil, good would have no meaning. But, as Mr. Armstrong believes the world is getting better, and people are getting more moral, which means that they will have less desire to do evil, we shall really get in the long run to the condition in which it would have been wrong for God to place us at first. Nor may we complain of the innocent suffering for the faults of the guilty because the wrong-doer learns better by the pain he inflicts upon other people, a view of the matter which will no doubt afford unspeakable satisfaction to all who are suffering through the misdeeds of other people. And, finally, if we complain of earthquakes and the like, we should bear in mind that these outbreaks are inevitable, and if God had waited until the earth had cooled sufficiently to do away with the possibility of these outbreaks, this would have "diminished the total number of happy human lives from first to last by thousands of millions"—a conclusion which points to the existence in Mr. Armstrong's mind of some sort of similarity between not being born and being killed. How anybody could be the loser by never having been born is a problem that Mr. Armstrong alone can solve.

The fact that all these pleas are destroyed by the simple consideration that on the theistic hypothesis it is God himself who creates the conditions, and could have created other ones, never seems to cross the Apologist's mind. In common with others of this class, he seems to believe that when he has shown that, under present conditions, things are as well as they can be, he has established his case beyond question. I do not think anyone with any degree of intelligence ever disputed this. It is the arbitrary creation of the conditions themselves that is the subject of complaint. Mr. Armstrong suggests that my criticism of his article was "eager." Maybe; but I fancy an eagerness to disprove error is on the whole more commendable than a statement of unscientific arguments in defence of an illogical creed.

C. COHEN.

Disintegration.

IN what is known as the "Higher Criticism," as well as in the changed manner of the pulpit and the religious press on the subject of Biblical themes, there are the sure evidences of positive religious disintegration, a gradual but real crumbling of old doctrines. We have all seen its progress from the abandonment of Calvinistic hell-fire and Satanic theology to that milder form of the "Gospel of Love" now so generally and generously preached even by

Evangelicals and Nonconformists. Now and then some inconsiderate, foolish zealot comes out with his wrathful manifesto of brimstone, to startle yokels and groundlings; but even for these the strong medicine of denunciation yields to homœopathic doses of remonstrance or condemnation. In place of the old, heroic, vigorous, "creepy" methods, the pulpit is now dulcet and persuasive, drawing adherents by "bands of love," as preachers now declare.

Of course we rejoice to note the change, but it is one of the signs that the old Christianity is disintegrating, evaporating, gradually failing as it changes from the old bases, and strives to build on newer, better foundations. If Christ were in existence now—if, indeed, he ever existed—he would not dare to drive a company of stockjobbers out of the Royal Exchange, or even off the threshold of St. Paul's Cathedral. Nor could his theological "whip of small cords" have any terrors for thinkers and free men anywhere. He would find opposition, ridicule, hatred, even in his own ranks. If he sought to reform abuses, he would be thrust out of his own synagogues, his churches, and chapels. And herein are the signs of disintegration. "When the Son of Man cometh"—as he never will, we may rest assured—he will *not* "find faith on the earth." Long ere any supposed "Second Advent"—so falsely promised—the religious structure he and his followers sought to found on the "Impregnable Rock" will be in ruins. Like the Abbey, it is wearing away, and is in need of continual reparation.

Take, for instance, the alleged divinity of Jesus. That doctrine is being gradually eliminated, excluded, and his relegation to manhood only, is more and more widely accepted, not only by Unitarians, but multitudes of others in the Christian fold. So, too, the Gospel fables of Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, however desperately clung to by the militant orthodox, are being swept away, and will in time cease to be claimed for him any more than for Shakespeare, George Washington, or Colonel Ingersoll—the latter a truer apostle of the right than many a haloed saint or Messiah.

Jesus no longer the demi-god he was, even as Mary, his mother, is no more the "Queen of Angels," taking her son's place as he was supposed to take the Father's place, his cultus is seen to be all an idealisation of attributes, the product of priestly teaching and popular religious fancy.

So the Scriptures under the Higher Criticism are suffering a piecemeal, destructive disintegration. This book is not authentic; those passages are spurious; the authorship and origin of others is extremely doubtful; certain accounts, like that of Jonah, are simply parables (Let us be thankful, for poor Jonah's sake!). And the story of the Creation, the sun's paralysis by Joshua, and a host of other narrations, are now neatly rationalised and made plain, so that even a Sunday-school scholar need not believe them—as few of them do.

This process of disintegration in religious belief is quite like what befel a certain saint, a very "holy man," who set out on his travels. His fame preceded him, and in every hamlet, village, city whither he went, the inhabitants were so eager to get amulets and relics from his blessed person that everybody snipped and nipped at his garments till, when the godly man reached his destination, he was reduced to a state of nudity, *à la* Adam, so extreme was the veneration felt for him, or his raiment. All that was left to him was to be "clad with zeal as a cloak," or to wear "a thin veil of fiction." Like this will be the fate of theology in its disintegration—that theology once characterised by Thomas Aquinas as "the Queen of Sciences."

GERALD GREY.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and
live out thy life as the light. —Swinburne.

Extremes Meet.

How unspeakably ludicrous is the spectacle of absolutely irreconcilable extremes meeting and fraternising as if there could be any harmony between them. In the same denomination, and not seldom on the same public platform, we see the man whose credulity knows no limits, who swallows huge chunks of superstition with the utmost ease, and the man who openly denies and scornfully rejects all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The one says, "I unreservedly accept everything between the two covers of the Grand Old Book," while the other vehemently asserts, "The Bible is not the Word of God, but merely *contains* it among hosts of other words not in the least divine." The one affirms that the writers of the Bible were simply the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost, and that every word they wrote must be true; but the other declares that the sacred volume is crowded with historical and topographical blunders, and perpetuates teachings that are morally unsound and dangerous. The late Dr. Parker was perfectly correct when, standing on the brink of the grave, he maintained that now the heresies of Tom Paine are unblushingly taught from the theological chairs of the country. Less than thirty years ago the late Professor Robertson Smith was deprived of his Chair at the Aberdeen Free Church College because he ventured to cast a doubt on the Mosaic Authorship of the First Five Books, and to suggest that there might have been two Isaiahs. To-day Professor George Adam Smith, of the United Free Church of Scotland Glasgow College, who is a much more advanced Biblical critic than Dr. Robertson Smith was, is allowed to proclaim, both in College lectures and published volumes, that the Bible teems with discrepancies, contradictions, and errors. This is one of the most significant signs of the times. The literalists, the slaves of superstition, the blind believers in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, are still in the Church, only now they are bound to admit themselves that they are in a rapidly dwindling minority.

Now, every sensible person will readily grant that the only logically defensible position is that occupied by the old-fashioned orthodox school. The moment the admission is made that the Bible is a fallible book, the spell of its Divine authority over the hearts and consciences of men is broken. The Higher Critics are diligently digging the grave in which the Bible and Christianity are doomed to be effectually and forever buried. This was recently pointed out, in a series of sensational articles in the *British Weekly*, by Dr. Robertson Nicoll. According to this gentleman, up to a certain point the Higher Criticism of the Bible does good; but the moment it passes that point it becomes an instrument of incalculable harm, in that it is bound to undermine the foundations of the Christian religion. Did it not occur to Dr. Nicoll that in putting forth that contention he virtually surrendered the whole case for Christianity? If the foundations of the Christian religion are *underminable*, do they not *deserve* to be undermined? To be afraid of honest criticism is a sign of cowardice, and a confession of radical weakness.

The other Sunday evening I heard the Rev. John Hunter's strange discourse on Justification by Faith. There was a large congregation at the King's Weigh House Church, and it took Dr. Hunter forty-one minutes to read his deliverance on the great subject. Everybody knows that Christ did not mention such a doctrine, and that the Apostle James wrote his epistle to denounce it; but everybody knows also that, according to the Apostle Paul, justification by faith is a Divine act by which an unjust man is, on the ground of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, pronounced just in sight of heaven. It may be variously stated, but, in essence, such is the Pauline doctrine of Justification by Faith. No sane man would ever dream of doubting that, according to the New Testament, the death of Christ is the external ground on which alone God can justify and forgive guilty sinners. It is undoubtedly an absurd, irrational, and intrinsically unbelievable doctrine, but nothing can be more undeniable than that it is vigorously taught in Paul's Epistles. But Dr. Hunter wasted forty-one minutes in a vain attempt to prove that Paul never taught anything of the kind, that for fifteen hundred years the Apostle's meaning was completely misunderstood by the whole Church, and that it is only now beginning to dawn upon a few clear-headed, gifted fellows, like himself, what the New Testament teaching on this point really is. Well, what is this great doctrine of a standing or a falling Church—the doctrine for which Martin Luther so nobly fought, and which is now known as the supreme doctrine of the Protestant Reformation? It is this, and nothing more: *He who means and tries to do well is justified by faith in the sight of God.* Had Paul been present and heard Dr. Hunter's sermon, he would have exclaimed, with righteous indignation, "O Lord, deliver me from my friends, who twist and torture my poor words in this unmerciful fashion!" There was a good deal of common sense

in the sermon, but it was pitiful to father it all on the Apostle Paul. Justification by faith, as taught by Paul, is a radically different thing from justification by faith as taught by Dr. Hunter. This gentleman should have ignored the Bible altogether, and taken these lines of Robert Browning for his text:—

What stops my despair?

This: 'tis not what man Does which exalts him,
But what man Would do.

That is perfectly true, but it is not Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.

But I am not really finding fault with the Rev. Dr. Hunter. While apparently defending and interpreting Scripture, he is really discrediting it, and destroying its authority in the eyes of all fair-minded and unprejudiced people. In his scheme of salvation there is neither room nor need for Christ and his work. Man must save himself or be lost. If man is what he ought to be on this earth he need not concern himself about any other world.

The superstitious preacher is alienating the people from the Church, while the preacher who criticises the Bible and twists its language to suit his own purposes, is alienating the Church from God and his Revelation. From both the Church and the Bible the people eventually turn to Rationalism and Secularism.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

Tolstoy on the Bible.

ADDRESSED TO THE CLERGY.

At the present time the chief means of transmitting to men the truth revealed to you by God consists in propounding this truth to ignorant adults and to unreasoning children who will accept everything.

This teaching generally begins with the so-called Scripture history, consisting of selected passages from the Bible—those Hebrew books of the Old Testament which, according to your teaching, were dictated by the Holy Ghost, and are therefore not only undoubtedly true, but also sacred.

This Scripture history begins with an account of how God, who had been living eternally, 6,000 years ago created from nothing heaven and earth; how he next created animals, fishes, plants, and finally man, Adam, and his wife, made out of a rib of Adam. Then it is related that, being afraid of this man and his wife eating an apple which had the magic property of giving power, he forbade them to eat this apple; how, in spite of this prohibition, the first human beings ate this apple and were consequently ejected from Paradise; and how for this disobedience all their progeny were cursed and the earth itself was cursed so that since then it produces weeds. Then is described the life of Adam's descendants, who became so depraved that God drowned not only all of them, but also all the animals, and left alive only Noah and his family and the animals taken into the Ark. It is then described how, amongst all men, God chose out Abraham and made an agreement with him according to which Abraham was to recognise God as God, and in token of this to perform circumcision, while God undertook in return to furnish Abraham with a great progeny and to patronise him and his descendants. Then it is narrated how God, patronising Abraham and his descendants, performed in their interests most unnatural deeds called miracles and did the most dreadful cruelties. With the exception of silly stories sometimes innocent, such as the visiting of Abraham by God and two angels, Isaac's marriage, etc., but sometimes immoral, as the swindling practised by God's favorite, Jacob, the cruelties of Samson, the cunning contrivances of Joseph—the whole of this history, beginning with the plagues sent by Moses on the Egyptians, and the murder by an angel of all their first-born, down to the fire which consumed 250 rebels, and Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and the destruction in a few minutes of 14,700 people, and down to the foes who were sawn asunder with saws, the priests executed by Elijah for not agreeing with him, and the boys who were cursed by Elisha for laughing at him, and torn and eaten by bears—the whole of this history is a series of miraculous events and awful atrocities committed by the Jewish people, by their leaders, and by God himself.

But this does not exhaust your teaching of the history which you call sacred. Besides the history of the Old Testament you instruct children and unenlightened people in the history of the New Testament in such a way that the chief significance of the New Testament is made to lie not in its moral teaching, not in the Sermon on the Mount, but in the harmony of the Gospel with the history of the Old Testament, in the fulfilment of the prophecies, and in miracles: the moving star, the angels' song, the conversation with the Devil, the turning of water into wine, the walking on the

water, healings, raisings of men from the dead, and, lastly, the resurrection of Christ himself and his flight into the sky.

If all this history of the Old and New Testaments was propounded as merely a story—still scarcely any teacher would have courage to relate it to children or to adults whom he wished to enlighten. But the narrative is propounded to people incapable of criticising, as the most trustworthy description of the world and its laws, as the most authentic teaching about the life of men men of bygone days, about what should be regarded as good and bad, about the essence and qualities of God and about the duties of man.

We speak of harmful books! but does there exist in the Christian world a book which has done more harm to men than that this dreadful book called *The Scripture History of the Ancient and New Testaments*? Yet all people of the Christian world pass in their childhood through this study of Scriptural History, and this same history is propounded to all unenlightened adults as the first essential foundation of knowledge, as the sole eternal truth of God.—From "*An Appeal to the Clergy*," by Leo Tolstoy. The Free Age Press.

The Bible in Kansas.

A FEW weeks ago we announced a judicial decision in Kansas, which excluded the reading of the Bible from the exercises in the public schools of the State, as being unconstitutional. This decision, however, has just been reversed by the Supreme Court, to which it was carried, and which decides that the Bible may be read in the schools at the option of the local authorities. This see-saw sort of business will go on, we suppose, until the public become sufficiently interested to ask why the time of the judges should be wasted over such a question, and why the children's innocent minds should be debauched by the stories of vice, crime, wholesale slaughter, and priestcraft which form such a large portion of the Bible history. Public opinion, we should hope, will some day arrive at a rational conclusion that, whether in its theology or in its morality, the Bible is by no means a book fit to be put in the hands of either children or ignorant adults, and that the proper way of dealing with it is by a Constitutional Amendment. The only means of arriving at such a result, it seems to us, is by persistently calling attention to the real character of the Biblical history, its theology, and its immorality, and encouraging its critical study. While this is left in the hands of the college professors and the preachers, it is safe, we think, to say that the immoral portions of the "sacred" book will be kept out of sight, and the less poisonous parts be put forward as "grand literature," "noble ethics," and so on, and numbers of thoughtless persons will be induced to sanction the use of the Bible in the schools, as if it were a veritable mine of rational ethics, the fact being that, even in its grandest passages, the ethics of the Old Testament are those of priestcraft or savagery, and the ethics of the New Testament those of the mystery-monger and the dealer in faith. Of true liberty, of manliness and honor, of independence of thought, of toleration, of moderation, and of earnest searching for truth and righteousness, there is but the faintest glimmer throughout the whole book; but of incest, murder, robbery, unprovoked wars, wholesale assassination, sorcery and witchcraft, lying, anger, and vengeance, on the part of both gods and men, there is enough to cause the book to be banished from any library that is within the reach of innocent childhood. The totally false notions constantly uttered, often endorsed by Freethinkers, in regard to the literature and ethics of the Bible, prove to what a slight extent the Bible is really studied.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS.

Some one had dared to say, "Happy the poor in spirit!" and from that mortal error had sprung the misery of two thousand years. The legend of the benefits of ignorance now appeared like a prolonged social crime. Poverty, dirt, superstition, falsehood, tyranny, woman exploited and held in contempt, man stupefied and mastered, every physical and every moral ill, were the fruits of that ignorance which had been fostered intentionally, which had served as a system of state politics and religious police. Knowledge alone would slay mendacious dogmas, disperse those who traded and lived on them, and become the source of wealth, whether in respect to the harvest of the soil, or the general florescence of the human mind. No! happiness had never had its abode in ignorance; it lay in knowledge, which will change the frightful field of material and moral wretchedness into a vast and fruitful expanse, whose wealth from year to year culture will increase tenfold.

—*Zola*, "*Truth*."

Acid Drops.

We have often remarked in this journal, during the past twenty years, on the strangeness of the designation of "Good Friday" for the anniversary of the day on which the Christian God died an ignominious death upon the cross. Now at last we find our criticism echoed in the *Daily News*. "In the quaint Kalendar of Christendom," it says, "there is no more curious feature than the practice of applying to this particular Friday the adjective Good." This is all right so far. But when our contemporary calls the crucifixion of Jesus Christ "the most poignant act of suffering yet recorded in the annals of human history," we are bound to say it is talking partisan nonsense.

The writer of this "Good Friday" article in the *Daily News* seems to be a non-Christian—unless a belief in the deity of Jesus Christ is no essential part of Christianity. The crucified one is referred to as one "whose whole being was consumed by reverence for the Creator." This is not a language of Christianity. It is the language of Deism.

On the supposition that Jesus Christ was a man there is something very pathetic, and even tragic, in his cry from the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a cry from the very depths of despair. But on the supposition that Jesus Christ was God this cry is simply farcical. Let us work it out for a moment, and see what it comes to. "My God (that's me), my God (that's me, too), why hast thou (that's me, again) forsaken me (that's you)?" Was there ever anything more ridiculous?

George Chapman, or Severino Klosowski, was duly hung on Tuesday morning, April 7. The procession to the scaffold was headed by a Catholic priest carrying a crucifix; and, as a special Mass had previously been said, we suppose the poisoner has gone to glory.

Klosowski kept up his miserable pretences to the very last. Not only did he protest his innocence—in a silly way, without answering the evidence against him; he maintained that he was not Klosowski, the Pole, but Chapman, the American-Englishman, or English-American. He appears to have spoken very good English. But he could not write it, and his letters gave him away. He spelt even the simplest English words in a most astonishingly foreign way; not at all the rough phonetic way in which illiterate Englishmen turn out their orthography.

To the pathologist Klosowski is interesting as a case of sexual perversion. Lust and cruelty were his principal indulgences. For the rest, he does not seem to have had any idea of right or wrong, or of truth and falsehood. He said and did just what served his turn without the slightest uncasiness. According to the evidence, he positively snivelled over the dead bodies of the women he had painfully murdered. He shed some crocodile tears in the dock, and some more in the condemned cell. He had them on tap when necessary. His was one of those cases of sexual perversion in which the moral sense is totally absent. No doubt he derived a certain comfort from the ministrations of the priest who attended him during the last three weeks of his wretched career. But that had no relation to morality. He did not like having to die. That was all. As far as his victims were concerned, it does not appear that he felt the least regret for their sufferings.

We see in Klosowski's case what religion really is in itself; a mere superstition, without any relation to morality. Orthodox Christianity, indeed, denies that there is such a thing as morality; for it declares that virtue is as bad as vice unless it flows from love of God or obedience to the divine will. This is the reason why religion and crime go so often together, especially in the most superstitious countries. Shelley noticed this in Italy, and referred to it in the Preface to *The Cenci*. "Religion in Italy," he said, "is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to

established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check." That was why the monstrous Count Cenci combined "an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt." Count Cenci was even worse than Klosowski. He was also more pious.

A dog in North London woke up a man who would otherwise have been burnt to death. The man rushed out of the place and saved his life. He left the dog behind him—as well as another man; and both perished. Yet there are people who say the man has a soul and the dog none; in fact, they twit Materialists with "dying like a dog"—which is sometimes a compliment.

Dr. Clifford is a first-rate study in Christian duplicity. We can quite understand that he believes he is sincere and straightforward, but this is often the case with double-dealers. No man is a thoroughly successful liar, for instance, until he believes his own lie. After telling it long enough he believes it himself, and is then a very capable missionary. Very much in the same way, Dr. Clifford has denounced "sectarian" education so long that he has come to believe he is "unsectarian." He started, of course, on trade lines. As a Dissenting minister, it was his business to oppose the designs of the Church clergymen. But it would not do to put his opposition in that light; so he began to talk big about civil and religious liberty, and took to posing as the model citizen. And the joke is that he got himself regarded as such by nearly the whole of the Liberal party.

One of Dr. Clifford's most fetching cries is "No priest in politics." By "priest" he means "Church clergyman." Dissenting ministers, of course, are not priests. That is to say, they are not priests in name. But are they not priests in fact? Does not the Dissenting minister *live* by religion precisely like the Church clergyman? Is he not really in the very same profession? And is he not under the same temptation to look at everything from a professional point of view?

Dr. Clifford agrees with the Church clergy in wanting religion taught in the public schools at the public expense. He desires the children to be manufactured into Christians up to a certain point. The process should stop, he thinks, at the point where the interests of Churchmen and Dissenters cease to agree. Beyond that point he demands that religious instruction should be discontinued. And for what reason? Simply because he fears that the Church would gain, and Dissent would lose, by its continuation.

Nature has endowed every species of animal with the instinct of self-preservation. They feel with a wonderful certainty what makes for their advantage and what for the contrary. This law of nature is universal. There is no exception in the case of the men of God.

Being interviewed by the *Daily News*, Dr. Clifford instinctively goes to the weak point—or, as the Government no doubt think, the strong point—of the London Education Bill. "The pivot of the Bill," he said, "which is that of putting the management of education practically in the hands of the Borough Councils, is the worst feature of the whole scheme. In giving the appointment and dismissal of teachers to the Borough Councils, it gives the actual control of education to them, and, as so many of these Councils are Tory and clerically-minded, there is no doubt the change will give an enormous influence to sectarian education." Precisely so. The Government have played the game for the parsons. Only a fool would expect them to play it for the Dissenting ministers.

The London Education Bill, then, according to Dr. Clifford, will give an enormous influence to sectarian education. But what is sectarian education? Dr. Clifford means by it simply Church of England education. That is *sectarian*. Nonconformist education is *unsectarian*. How delightfully simple! But what is the truth? All education is sectarian which gives positive instruction on controverted points. Now the inspiration of the Bible and the diety of Jesus Christ are controverted points; nevertheless Dr. Clifford wants them taught in public schools, by public officials, at the public expense. He is as much sectarian, therefore, as the Church parson who would introduce the Catechism, or the Catholic priest who would introduce Transubstantiation and the Infallibility of the Pope.

So great is Dr. Clifford's hatred of "sectarian" education (we can hardly hold the pen for laughing!) that he reaffirms, still more sternly, his attitude of passive resistance. "I would suffer anything," he says, "rather than pay rates to schools to impart sectarian teaching." Poor man! He pays rates readily enough for sectarian teaching while it suits him. His quarrel with it begins when it ceases to be of his own color. If he refuses to pay rates (which we doubt), and has his furniture distrained or is sent to prison, he will be a martyr—as martyrdom is understood nowadays. But for what principle? Why, for the glorious principle that Nonconformists should decide the quantity and quality of religion to be taught in the State schools! If they decide it the country is free; if Churchmen decide it, the country groans under a most odious tyranny.

It never seems to have occurred to Dr. Clifford that Jews, Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Freethinkers, Rationalists, and all other non-Christian people in England, might refuse to pay rates, and court a cheap martyrdom, because the Christian religion is taught in the State schools. Had they entertained such an idea, Dr. Clifford would probably have been one of the first to scold or deride them. What a fine homily he would have read them on the citizen's duty to obey the laws while agitating for their alteration! We picture Dr. Clifford at this task—and leave him there.

The Yorkshire Congregational Union has been meeting at Harrogate. Among the questions discussed was Why men do not go to church? One minister, the Rev. F. Wrigley, admitted that his profession were not popular with the working men. If they wanted to overcome the "growing scepticism of thoughtful workmen" they would have to "interpret the Bible in the light of the theological discovery." Give the old Wax Nose another twist!

This seemed a feeble remedy, however, to the Rev. T. C. Booth, who said that "the Church must compete with the formidable rivalry of the public-house, and give facility for every form of amusement under its roof." Beautiful! There is a future for the Congregational Caterers' Union. Billiards will take the place of bad sermons, smoking concerts will supersede lugubrious hymn-singing, and Sabbath "hops" will knock out Sunday-schools. A splendid idea!

"Verax," of the *Daily News*, is strong on "enthusiasm" and hot against "materialism." There is a perfunctory air about his articles, however, as if he were paid for them by the yard. He does not even take the trouble to give his pious quotations accurately. The other day he surmised that his readers would "doubtless be familiar with George Herbert's quaint lines:—

Who sweeps a room in the name of God,
Makes that and the action fine.

"In the name of God" what is this? George Herbert did not write it. What he did write was:—

Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

"Verax" really ought not to leave it to the editor of the *Freethinker* to set him right on a quotation from a Christian poet. We might add in charity, to save him perhaps a lot of trouble, that the "quaint lines" occur in the penultimate verse of *The Elixir*.

The leader writers on the *Daily News* live and learn. One of them has now awakened to the discovery that the existence of "radium" does not threaten the doctrine of the conservation of energy. The writer also is of opinion that the fact of it being necessary to explain this shows that there are "members of the human species who are dwindling in intelligence." Which is precisely the substance of our criticism of the *Daily News* article on the subject a week or so ago.

The writer adds that "the energy in the whole universe is, and must be, a fixed quantity, which can only be added to or diminished by an omnipotent fiat." The first portion of the sentence is sound science; the concluding part is equally sound religion—otherwise nonsense. We should dearly like to know how a fixed quantity can be added to or diminished, and should be as interested in learning if the "energy in the whole universe" is a fixed quantity, where on earth the extra energy is to come from. "Omnipotent fiat" in this connection is just a senseless piece of theological jargon. It means nothing; and, if anyone seriously tries to think of an "omnipotent fiat" adding to or taking from a fixed quantity, he will at once realise how completely imbecile such a sentence is. Such expressions, to use the writer's own words, certainly show that, "while science is making wonderful discoveries, there are members of the human species who are dwindling in intelligence."

The same writer shows how fitted he is to play the part of a scientific teacher by remarking that "the great underlying mystery must always remain beyond the reach of science, simply because that mystery is not physical, and does not manifest itself in physical phenomena, with which science has exclusively to do.....Should, therefore, scientific research lay bare every secret in the universe of physical nature, it would still remain true that 'no man hath seen God at any time.'"

This is a *very* old trick, but it is one that can only impose upon the unwary or the unthinking. It is quite easy to prove that science is incapable of dealing with the "mystery" of the universe by restricting it to a certain area of investigation. To label one set of facts mental or spiritual, and another physical, and to restrict science to the latter class, is a refreshingly easy way of proving the inadequacy of science. The only weakness in such a decision is its unsoundness. All phenomena, mental or physical, are the legitimate data of science, and are to be studied by scientific methods and subjected to scientific tests. The exact correlation of mental and physical phenomena is a matter of developing knowledge, but that such a correlation actually does exist no competent investigator doubts. It is simply a question of whether we are in possession of enough knowledge, at the present time, to explain the precise nature and extent of the dependence of mental facts upon physical processes. And one thing is certain; if science is unable to explain the "mystery" of the universe, religion is hardly likely to show a greater capability. But the *Daily News* writer loves to harp upon a mystery, because he feels, as all religious people feel, that in the absence of mystery religion perishes. All modern religion is mystery-mongering, and all preachers of religion know it. It, and they, thrive best in an atmosphere of ignorance and unreasoning wonder.

The concluding observation that, let science grow as it may, it will always be true that "no man hath seen God at any time" strikes us as quite satirical. We quite agree with it, and the saying will become more axiomatic with the progress of science.

A little while ago *What would Jesus Do?* was all the rage in religious circles. Mr. Sheldon, apparently, and his book certainly, are now as dead as door-nails. We see that a new book is announced, under the title of *What Jesus is Doing*. This is progress in religion, anyhow. And we should much like to know *what* he is doing. We have often thought that, if the Gospel story be true, he must put in a fair amount of time thinking what questionable judgment it was to trouble about saving the "souls" of a lot of those who call themselves his followers. His excuse would probably be that he "saved" them before seeing them. We would like to suggest a book on "*Who his followers are doing*" as likely to arouse interest.

In addition to having returned Mr. Crookes to Parliament with his amazing majority, Woolwich may feel proud of its Mayor. Speaking at a church bazaar, he told the people that he was then wearing the identical glove he had on when the King shook hands with him on the occasion of his visit to the Herbert Hospital. He therefore offered to shake hands with anyone present at the modest charge of sixpence a shake. Eighty-one people availed themselves of the opportunity, paid their sixpences, and went home happy at having touched the same glove as the King. Numerous others had a threepenny shake. What a pity it is that King Edward had not occasion to kick the Mayor of Woolwich! We have no doubt that the people would have cheerfully paid twice as much to have repeated the operation on the spot hallowed by the touch of the royal toe.

At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem a file of Turkish soldiers stand between the Greek and Latin Christians to keep them from flying at each other. Something of the same sort occurred on Good Friday at Thornton Heath. High Church clergy marched through the principal streets, wearing cassocks, and bearing aloft a large crucifix and Catholic pictures. Kensit crusaders followed with Protestant banners, shouting "Go to Rome." A strong body of police were necessary to keep the rival Christians from making "martyrs" of each other. As it was, they could only indulge in compliments. These were high-flavored.

April the ninth was Maundy Thursday. Kings and other exalted people used to celebrate it by washing the feet of poor folk, as Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples before the Crucifixion. This they called humbling themselves. English kings used to go through this performance up to the reign of James II. William III. left it to his almoner, and in subsequent reigns it was discontinued.

The Emperor of Austria, however, who is a good Catholic, still washes the feet of twelve poor men annually. That is to say, he pretends to; for the twenty-four feet are well cleansed before he touches them.

A Reading gentleman, named A. F. L. Smith, protests against Wandsworth Prison being used as a place of execution. His objection is rather singular. He points out that the Prison is adjacent to the Wandsworth and Battersea Cemetery, where many a dear one is reposing beneath the very shadow of the hideous building. We never thought of that. Perhaps it would be as well to take a poll of the Cemetery's inhabitants.

There is a native in the American postal service at Kolkea, Hawaiian Island, whose first name is David, and his second name twenty-four letters long. He acts as postmaster there. His chief recommendation for the job was that he is a lineal descendant of King (another twenty-four letters), "who was very fond of missionaries." It is not stated whether he preferred them fresh or potted.

Mr. George Wise, the Liverpool infidel-slayer and Protestant champion, has at last achieved the honor of going to gaol. He ought to have gone before, but he said his committee would not let him. They appear to have relented since then, and he is now doing two months in Walton Prison on account of "religious disturbances." This is the alternative to finding sureties to be of good behavior for twelve months. We daresay Mr. Wise thought twelve months a long time to keep like that. So he takes his imprisonment "in the first division." Not a very terrible martyrdom, after all!

Blackpool Corporation, after a sharp discussion, has decided that the sands shall be free to all religious denominations and preachers of the Gospel. But it also decided by a large majority to prohibit Sunday collections. This is *too* severe. What does the Blackpool Corporation think men preach for?

The *Daily News* religious census for Greenwich was taken on March 29. The aggregate attendance was about one in four of the population. In the morning one person in seven, and in the evening one person in eight, attended church. One woman in eight attended in the morning, and one woman in six in the evening. One man in ten attended on both occasions.

In Greenwich, as elsewhere, the Church of England comes out an easy first. The aggregate attendance, morning and evening, was 25,181. Of this number the Church of England claims rather more than half—12,630. Nonconformist Churches altogether numbered only 9,960. The Roman Catholics were 1,904; and Other Services 987.

"With reference to the 'Twicers,'" the *Daily News* says, "we are making investigations in a scientific manner in order to obtain accurate *data* to place before the public." We shall see, of course, what we do see. While being open to conviction (by facts), we confess we do not see how the *Daily News* investigations on this head can be very "scientific." It is impossible to tell from people's faces whether they have been to church twice the same Sunday, and it seems equally impossible to interrogate them at the church doors. A show of hands inside would be "unseemly."

Professor W. E. Collins, in the last volume of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, writes on "Methods and Results in Modern Theology." He confesses that, while people have now a much greater realisation of the universality of Law, they have "largely lost the thought of a personal Will behind its manifestations."

The dear good Holy Czar of Mr. Stead's dreams is evidently an impostor. He talks about concord, calls Peace Congresses, and urges Arbitration—upon others. In this way he tries to amuse and deceive the world while he is helping to work out the designs of the great Bureaucracy of which he is the titular head. Immediately after his late illusory manifesto to his own subjects, in which all sorts of fine things are hinted and none really promised, he signs another manifesto giving General Bobrikoff dictatorial powers in Finland. Everybody knows what this means.

M. Combes, the French Premier, speaking in the Chamber of Deputies, used the words "hazard, or justice of things." "Don't you say Providence," shouted a Nationalist. "Providence, perhaps," said M. Combes. "If I do not believe in

the Providence taught to me in my youth, I believe in an immaterial invisible force, namely, the law of progress, or what was called by Gambetta immanent justice." This immanent justice, which is after all but an aspect of the reality of things as opposed to artificialities and falsehoods, is steadily making its way in France. Mr. Jaurès, Atheist and Socialist, has brought the Dreyfus affair before the Chamber and obtained a Government promise, given through General André, of another inquiry based on certain fresh facts. The truth is there are high-placed pious scoundrels in France who deserve to be shot, and there will be no real peace there until some of them receive their deserts.

The Bishop of London was *so* sorry to leave his dear East-end people, but he is pretty well accustomed now to his change of condition. Prior to the Easter holidays he went off to Biarritz. These other-worldite soul-savers know how to make the best of *this* life—at other people's expense.

Down at Brighton the Free Churches Conference got up a midnight mission-meeting, which was "run" by Gipsy Smith. It was a great success, and the idea has "caught on." We see that Gipsy Smith, supported by more than thirty regular men of God, has been holding a midnight mission-meeting in the Victoria Hall, Sunderland. No doubt he will do the same elsewhere. The wonder is that nobody thought of it before. A midnight meeting is a capital excuse for being out late, and the soul-saver may rely on a crowded attendance whenever he goes on this ticket.

Brigham Young, number two, is dead. The original Brigham Young died in 1877. He was, as everyone knows, the head of the Mormons. The Brigham Young of our days was the President of the Mormon Twelve Apostles. A grandson of the first Brigham Young is under sentence of imprisonment for life, for murdering a woman in peculiar circumstances, probably under the influence of religious mania.

The curate of Christ Church, Sefton Park, Liverpool, advertises for another job, the "Curacy Fund" being "in debt." He has "excellent testimonials." What he wants is an excellent berth. We hope he will get a suitable "call" from the Lord; that is to say, from a more flourishing church.

Archdeacon Watson is preparing for Disestablishment. He calculates that the Church revenues from all sources, capitalised at twenty-two and a half years' purchase, would amount to £130,000,000. He proposes that the Church should walk off, free and independent, with £100,000,000; leaving the odd £30,000,000 to the State. To enlist the sympathies of the working men, he suggests that the State's share should become a fund for Old-Age Pensions. Having allotted the State's share, which is very kind of him, this enterprising man of God does not say how much the Church should contribute to the same fund. On the whole, it is clear that the clergy will have to be watched. When it comes to dealing with money they are as sharp as needles. The Irish Church was disestablished by Mr. Gladstone, and, out of the seventeen millions or so realised, about three accrued to the State, and the Church walked off (laughing) with the other fourteen. Better wait another fifty years than see the Anglican Church disestablished in that manner.

FREEDOM OF THE CITY.

This story is credited to District Attorney John F. Clarke, of Kings County, N.Y.

"A neighbor of mine," says Mr. Clarke, "is far from being orthodox in religion; in fact, believes in none. Someone remonstrated with the man, who related in extenuation a dream he had had. He had died, and in the course of events gone to heaven. Peter let him in, to his surprise without a murmur. He looked around with some curiosity, and noticed that the grass was marked off in plots. Becoming worried over the matter, he finally asked the doorkeeper what it meant.

"He was told that the Methodists had to stay on the plot of grass marked for them, likewise the Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and so on down to the line.

"But how about me?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Well, what denomination are you?" was the rejoinder.

"Oh, I'm—I'm none; don't belong to nothing."

"Why, if that's the case," said the doorkeeper, with a pleasant smile, "just go anywhere you like."

"Well," said his wife's mother, "there was one home without a mother-in-law, and disaster came to it. It was the Garden of Eden."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, April 19, Victoria Hall, Fowler-street, South Shields: At 3, "Was Jesus Christ a Man or a Myth?"; at 7, "Man's Origin and Destiny."

April 26, Manchester. May 10, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

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

FELIX HERMANN.—We are much obliged to you for the information. It is very interesting to learn that the Lessing Society had a matinée performance of Giordano Bruno's *Il Candelajo* at the Berliner Theatre on March 29. We are afraid, however, that this old comedy would be of no service to the Chatham Branch's dramatic class. It is not translated into English, to begin with; and, in the next place, it is, like most old comedies, too plain-spoken for the present age.

D. McLEOD.—Glad to hear from you as a three-year-old reader of the *Freethinker*—the paper having been introduced to you by a freethinking friend. What you say about the men of God is true enough; with most of them religion is a business, and with many of them a better business than they would find elsewhere. Some of them, however, as Ingersoll said, are stupid or ignorant enough to be honest. Thanks for your own efforts to promote our circulation. We have handed your order over to the right hands. See "Acid Drops" as to the cutting.

J. BUCHAN.—The Rev. George Hack's sermon seems to concern Mr. Keir Hardie and the *Clarion* more than it concerns us. Both of them are well able to take care of themselves in controversy; and the reverend gentleman is apparently not a very formidable opponent. We are not aware, by the way, that Mr. Keir Hardie has ever professed himself an Atheist. He rather affects a sentimental sort of Christianity. Most of the labor leaders, unfortunately, lack the courage of their Continental peers in regard to religion. That is why the present outspokenness of the *Clarion* is so refreshing.

W. P. JACOBS.—We did not know the book was out of print. You must try to get a second-hand copy. The information it contains is not, to our knowledge, supplied by any other single volume in English. Perhaps you might succeed by dropping a postcard to the Freethought Publishing Company.

F. G.—Too late for notice this week. We may deal with it in our next. Meanwhile, thanks for your trouble in the matter.

H. E. DODSON.—See paragraph. We wish the Camberwell Branch all success in its summer campaign.

H. HARRISON.—Glad to hear it went off so well. See paragraph.

M. A.—You say you want to purchase a pound's worth of our literature, on condition that, with all correspondence pertaining thereto, it is sent to you privately. If you mean that you want the parcel forwarded so that its contents are not in any way suggested on the outside, you can, of course, be obliged. If you mean anything more than this, you must know that no other sort of "private" business is done at our office.

W. P. BALL.—Owing to the holidays, your letter did not reach us till Tuesday morning, but we have strained a point to let it appear this week. Thanks for the batch of cuttings.

H. HUHN.—We are obliged. The suggestion shall be considered. It must be borne in mind, of course, that there is more prejudice against the *Freethinker* than against the *Clarion*. Thanks for the names, etc., of Woolwich halls.

E. PARKER.—See "Sugar Plums." Pleased to hear there was a good sale of literature. You should have had a larger supply of the *Pioneer*. A penny paper goes off easier at meetings—which, by the way, is part of the calculation.

T. J. THURLOW.—Your letter would have been inserted, but this week's *Freethinker* had to be made up exceptionally early. We are glad to hear that the Stratford Town Hall meeting was so successful. See "Sugar Plums."

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

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 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.

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures twice to-day (April 19) at South Shields. These meetings (afternoon and evening) close the local Branch's successful winter's propaganda, which was initiated by Mr. Foote some six months ago. No doubt there will be a strong rally of the district "saints" on the present occasion. The afternoon subject, "Was Jesus Christ a Man or a Myth?" should prove attractive at the end of Eastertide. During the evening lecture on "Man's Origin and Destiny" reference will be made to Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace's recent article in the *Fortnightly Review*, and also to Professor Turner's reply in the same magazine. The South Shields friends should advertise this fact as widely as possible.

Owing to the Easter holidays, the publication of Mr. Foote's new pamphlet—*God Save the King: and Other Coronation Articles*: By an English Republican—has been delayed a little. It will be on sale, however, soon after this number of the *Freethinker* is in the readers' hands.

Referring to the new Loyalism, in his Introduction, Mr. Foote writes: "When I call this superstition 'contemptible' I am not speaking in temper or haste, but calmly and deliberately. There is something to be said for the worship of Mumbo Jumbo: he is supposed to be able to make it very hot for those who offend him. There is something to be said for the worship of the Sun; it is an undoubted benefactor. But what is to be said for the worship of the 'hereditary nothing' who happens at any time to sit upon the constitutional throne of Great Britain and Ireland? A passion for genius, for moral excellence, or personal beauty, is intelligible; but how is one to explain a passion for the incarnation of mediocrity to which this nation has long been accustomed in its sovereigns? It is not merely a case of inherited folly, for the royal fever was less acute in the early days of Queen Victoria. It seems, in truth, that loyalism is a form of religion; and it has all the common characteristics of religion—blind faith, headlong zeal, and a hatred of heresy."

The meeting at the Town Hall, Stratford, on Sunday evening last, was a complete success. The seats were filled, with many standing; which on Easter Sunday, with so many people out of town, was no small thing. Mr. Cohen received a splendid reception from the crowded audience, and his lecture, of nearly an hour and a-half's duration, was followed with the closest attention and frequent applause. A little opposition prolonged the meeting until just on ten o'clock. This was the first Freethought meeting ever held there on a Sunday. The experiment is well worth repeating, and in all probability it will be.

The Camberwell Branch starts the new season's open-air propaganda to-day (April 19), in the morning at Station-road, and in the afternoon at Brockwell Park. South London Freethinkers should rally round both platforms and give the work a good send-off.

The "Gentlemen's Tea Party," held at the Failsworth Secular Sunday School in aid of the Whit-Friday Fund, was a signal success. The number of persons who sat down to tea was 154. Tea was followed by a capital entertainment of music, readings, and dramatic selections. The sum of £17 5s. 8d. was realised.

We venture to call attention once more to the Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is published at the wonderfully low price of sixpence. Besides a complete reprint, on good paper, of Paine's theological masterpiece, this edition contains valuable and interesting up-to-date Notes on the text, and a succinct Biography of Paine, which Mr. G. J. Holyoake has described as "masterly." Both the Notes and the Biography are from the pen of Mr. Foote. No pains have been spared to render this book of the highest value for propagandist purposes, and Freethinkers should recognise the duty of securing it a wide circulation.

The first impression of the sixpenny *Age of Reason* was 10,000 copies, which were all sold in a little over twelve

months. Another impression of 10,000 copies is now placed on the market, and is selling rapidly. We should like to see the whole second impression circulated during the present year.

"Edna Lyall" (Miss Ada Ellen Bayly) desired in her will that her body should be cremated. Was this done? Anyhow, the desire shows common sense and courage on her part.

Branches and members of the National Secular Society will note that the Annual Conference takes place, as usual, on Whit-Sunday. It is to be hoped that every effort will be made to render this Conference widely representative.

Science, Religion, and Proselytism.

[The "dear Mr. ——" to whom the following letter is addressed is a gentleman who spends his life in writing tracts and trying to convert other people to his way of thinking. Coming into contact with a well-known scientific man who, like himself, had been helping the poor, he thought that such a man must have a soul, and that it ought to be saved. So he wrote the scientific man a long letter and sent him a lot of tracts. The scientific man replied and gave his reason for not wanting his correspondent's particular kind of religion. We believe our readers will be glad of the opportunity to read this communication.—EDITOR.]

MY DEAR MR. —,

Your letter of the 22nd February (Washington's birthday) is received; also your tracts and religious advice.

I have not the least doubt but that you are an honest man, and that, in sending me the religious tracts and writing to me on religious subjects, you thought and honestly believed you were doing me a favor; or perhaps I might go still further, and say that you thought you were doing your duty.

This universe is a great deal larger than some people have supposed. If we go back to the time when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness of ignorance and superstition, we shall find that their Jehovah, or God, was only supposed to have jurisdiction over their own tribe; in other words, Jehovah was simply the tribal deity of the Jews, and was very jealous of other gods. Men who write can only write of things they know, and this is true of the men who wrote certain books in the Bible. They were extremely ignorant, and their writings bear the impress of ignorance and superstition. At that time the world was supposed to be flat, like a pancake, and the sun only believed to be about four miles from the earth, and about the size of a cart-wheel. You will remember that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him. Of course, it was only a little sun in those days, and could be stopped quite as easily as a cart-wheel. The sky was a crystalline dome and the stars holes for letting the rain through. The Jehovah of the Jews and those who wrote of him did not know that there was another side to the world. They never had heard of America, or even of China. Since that time we have learnt a good many new truths. We have found that the earth, instead of being a little flat pancake, is a sphere, and that there are continents on all sides of it inhabited by great numbers of people. We have found that the sun, instead of being a little orb the size of a cart-wheel, which could be stopped at will, is of enormous dimensions. We have learnt that the cause of day and night is because the earth turns on its axis. The telescope has enabled us to extend our knowledge beyond this world, and we have found that there are other suns and other worlds than ours. We find that our sun, which is the centre of our solar system, is nothing but a little speck of cosmic dust when compared to the boundless universe. There are countless millions of suns. If the Jehovah of the Jews made all the various worlds in the universe, and occupied six days on each one, it would have taken him countless ages to make the lot. Suppose, then, that he should have made as many mistakes with other worlds as he did with this particular world that we happen to live on; suppose that he had found it necessary on each of these worlds to drown the people that he had made, and also later on to be

born of a virgin in human form, and to cause himself to be killed in order to pacify himself. This would have complicated matters still more, and required a great deal more time, and would have given plenty of employment to the Holy Ghost. I think we may therefore infer that if the tribal Deity of the Jews made the whole universe, and had the same luck as he had with this world of ours, it must have taken an infinite period of time.

I have not the least doubt that when you were born into this world you found yourself surrounded by people who believed implicitly in the particular kind of faith that prevailed in England at the particular time you were born, and that you took this faith on without asking any questions, just exactly as you would have done if you had been born in Spain, France, or Turkey. I will, however, admit that most of mankind accept the faith which happens to prevail in their own country at the times they are born, and in all probability if you had been born in Turkey, or Persia, you would have been a very devout Mohammedan; if you had been born in China and not educated you would have been a Buddhist; if you had been born in China and received a classical education you would without doubt have become a follower of Confucius.

With me it was quite different. It would not have made the least difference in what country I was born, I should have gone on with my investigations and should have believed just exactly as I do now. I must have been about eight years of age when I first asked my father about religious subjects. He told me that I was not old enough to understand the subject. Still, he said he would tell me something of religion. He said:—

"The people who live right around here are for the most part Methodists. The Methodists are a small sect, and perhaps their religion is a hundred years old. There are many other sects in the world which are much more numerous than the Methodists. There are the Roman Catholics, the Greek Catholics, and a great number of different sects that call themselves Protestants, of which the Methodist is only one. Then, again, there are vast numbers of Mohammedans in the world who are not Christians at all, and who have only one God. But the Mohammedans are by no means the least numerous. There is another sect called the Buddhists, who have a religion closely resembling Christianity, which is very old, and has the largest following of any religion in the world. Besides this, there are Brahminism and Confucianism, both of which are very important religions, but you cannot understand these things until you get older. When you get older it would be a good plan for you to see what they all have to say, and then draw your own conclusions. Most of mankind are like young crows. If you go to a crow's nest and make a noise, the young crows will open their mouths and swallow any mortal thing you may drop into it without asking any questions. Now the majority of mankind accept the religion that happens to be prevalent in their own country at the time of their birth, without asking any questions, and when they discover that there are other religions than their own, each one thinks he is right and believes all the others to be wrong. The thoughtful man, however, accepts nothing for granted, but investigates for himself. Consequently, when you grow up, it is your duty to yourself to examine the different religions, and if you want any religion at all, choose the one that suits you best, or do as others have done before you, 'make one.'"

And this is exactly what I have done. I have followed my father's advice. It appeared to me that there were many errors in the local brand of religion that prevailed in my own country. The religion of the Parsees seemed to be much more reasonable, but it had its faults, and it was not until I had made a study of Confucianism that I found a religion, or system of philosophy, which was quite free from the errors which were so common to other kinds of religion. So at the present moment I am inclined to be a Confucian. Now if you should give up your present religion and take over Confucianism, I feel quite certain you would find it a very great advantage. Confucianism has many advantages over other faiths. It has no devils or miracles to defend. There is nothing supernatural, and, consequently, no super-

stition about it. If you are a Confucian, no one can ask you awkward questions. I have no doubt that a great many people who teach Christianity, especially to the young, are annoyed by the questions that are liable to be asked. How often it happens that the child, before his mind is warped by theological teaching, will ask the question, "Why does not God kill the Devil?" This is and always has been a very awkward question, and no theologian has ever been able to answer it in a satisfactory manner. Now if you were a Confucian, no one would ask you such a question, because in that religion there is no devil.

Then, again, modern science is making great strides, new truths are being discovered every day; the world is progressing with very great rapidity. If you were a Confucian it would not be necessary for you to combat any of the new truths that are being discovered. Christianity, as you well know, has opposed tooth and nail every new truth that has been discovered during the last five hundred years, even to the extent of burning people at the stake. But you may say this is past; people do not do it now. However, I think you find that there are plenty of Church-going people at the present moment who ridicule the discoveries of Darwin. Darwin's theory is just as much of a truth, and just as important a truth, to mankind, as the discovery that the earth was a sphere and turned on its axis, and it is just as much folly to oppose the one truth as the other. The advantages of Confucianism will, therefore, be self-evident to you. There is nothing in Confucianism which is contradictory to modern discoveries. The geologists tell us that the earth, instead of being only six thousand years old is many millions of years of age. We know definitely at the present moment that man has existed on the earth for some hundreds of thousands of years. We know that he was contemporary with the mammoth. This is a truth that would not in any way conflict with Confucianism.

Then, again, there are no awkward snake, pig, or fish stories in Confucianism, which I think is a very great advantage. During the last hundred years England and the United States have been sending missionaries to China. It has cost more to send out these missionaries than to support all the London hospitals, and I am informed by the very best authority that not one single honest convert has ever been made, notwithstanding that something like fifteen millions of Chinamen have lost their lives in attempting to keep Christianity out of their country. Let us look at the other side. China has sent no missionaries to England or to the United States. She has never spent a penny in missionary effort. Still, without sending a single missionary to us, she can reckon many hundreds of thousands of honest converts to Confucianism in Europe and America. Herbert Spencer, the greatest philosopher of the day, is said by the learned Chinaman to be an incarnation of Confucius. Confucius taught that there was a natural cause for everything; that there was no such thing as a miracle or a devil in the world; that it was useless to speculate on the unknowable; that one might speculate to all eternity as to what became of a man after he was dead, and he would know just as much at the end of these speculations as he knew before.

When the International Exhibition was held at Chicago, they had a Congress of religions. They invited the leaders of all religions in the world to come to Chicago and take part in the proceedings. I have no hesitation in saying that the Americans themselves thought they would have a walk over. They did not for one moment believe that any of the so-called Pagans or heathens from foreign countries would have the least bit of a chance against them; but in this, it appears, they were very much mistaken. The Hindoos sent a very learned man, Vivekananda. The speeches that were made by the local delegates were very commonplace, and were not noticed by the press at all; but when Vivekananda addressed the Congress every word he said was eagerly taken down by the reporters, and telegraphed

all over the United States. It was printed in all the newspapers, and millions of copies were circulated. It was the address of the Congress. Every other address sank into insignificance as compared with it. But Vivekananda was not a Christian, but a high-class Hindoo, and a Brahmin in religion. He gave the Americans some very excellent advice; he told them plainly that what they required was a religion of amity instead of one of enmity, that they should do unto others as they would have others do to them, and that they should persecute no one on account of religion. He advised them to be more liberal, and to have more charity. He said, if they wished to have uniformity of religion throughout the whole world, that the Christians themselves would have to make as many concessions as anyone else.

After the Congress it was found that there was not a hall in the United States of America that would hold the people who would pay their money to hear the lectures of Vivekananda. He became the most popular religious teacher in the States, and it has been said by the missionary societies in America that their takings fell off more than a million dollars a year on account of the lectures delivered by Vivekananda in the United States of America. I know Vivekananda very well indeed. He is the wisest man in philosophy, history, and religion that I have ever had the good fortune to meet. He told me in Paris that it appeared to him that Europeans and Americans were quite unable to understand religion or moral philosophy; that there was absolutely no resemblance at all between the theory of their teachings and their actions—otherwise there would have been no war in China.

I have no doubt at all but what you firmly believe the doctrines that you teach; and I have not the least doubt, if these doctrines were actually practised by European and American nations, that it would save a great deal of bloodshed. Confucius taught that we should not do unto others what we would not like to have others do unto us. He expressed it in a negative sense. We have transposed it into a positive sense, and it is our Golden Rule. I have always thought that the very pith and core of both Confucianism and Christianity was the Golden Rule which was first enunciated by the great Confucius himself. If Christian nations would make this rule their guiding star, if they would not depart from it, the world would be a great deal better than it is to-day. Suppose, for instance, that the Emperor of Germany, the Czar of Russia, and also the French Republic, could be made to live up to their professed doctrines, and treat the Chinamen as they would the Chinamen should treat them; suppose that England, sixty years ago, had employed the Golden Rule in their dealings with China—then they would not have forced opium upon the Chinese, but they would have done to the Chinamen as they would have liked the Chinamen to do unto them. This would have saved an immense amount of pain and sorrow in the world. A short time ago an English gentleman, having some business to transact with a Chinese merchant, was told by the merchant that he was up all night, that he did not have any sleep, and was feeling very badly. When asked what the trouble was, he said that his wife was mourning and weeping the entire night because her son had been seen talking to a missionary. The Chinese mother feels exactly the same about her religion as the English mother does about hers. When 15,000 Mohammedans were attacked by 80,000 Christians, and the Mohammedans defeated them, killing no less than 50,000, the Mohammedans were honest and conscientious, and many of them claimed to have seen the sword of God in the air. They were as firmly convinced that God had helped them in the destruction of the enemies of God, as they called the Christians, as Mr. Kruger was when he thought that God was about to help him. Nine thousand millions of mankind have lived and died Mohammedans. Mohammedans extirpated Christianity from the Holy Land and three-quarters of the Christian world in a few years.

If there is such a thing as a great over-ruling

Spirit which controls the actions and affairs of mankind, may we not reasonably suppose that during the time when the Christians were so corrupt and the Saracens were extending their conquests and establishing the Mohammedan faith in the place of Christianity, that the Mohammedans were quite right, and that God himself took a hand in the struggle? The great error we make in this world is, that we are too cock-sure. No matter how small and insignificant a man's sect may be, he is apt to believe it to be the only one, or, at least, the favored one, of God. We should have more charity, and we should extend to others every privilege that we ask for ourselves. We should not force upon any nation any measure which we would not like them to force upon us. If anyone should come from a foreign country with a religion totally different from our own, and should attack our faith and tell us that all our ancestors had gone to hell because they did not believe a religion they had never heard of, we should be exceedingly indignant; if they entered our Catholic churches and removed the images and burned them, the people would be still more exasperated, and, in all probability, it would result in a riot, bloodshed, and a great loss of life. If we send our religion abroad, if we attack the religion of others, if we burn their idols and tell them all their ancestors have gone to hell, they will feel the same towards us as we should feel towards them under similar conditions, and although they may have better manners than we have, and refrain from bloodshed, still their feelings would be very much against us. When Christianity was taken to China, and a man ignorant of the Chinese language translated the Bible into a species of Billingsgate Chinese, and the Chinese read this remarkable production, their learned men pronounced it to be an obscene book. They found it abounded so much in devils, and that a devil occupied so high a place in the new faith, that they dubbed the whole thing the devil religion, and it is officially known to-day as the devil religion. But there are many kinds of Christianity in China, and the Catholics never have, and never will, lose an opportunity of blackguarding the Protestants and burning their Bibles, while the Protestants are not slow to recapitulate the past iniquities of the Roman Catholic Church, and to assure the Chinese that there is no surer road to hell than by becoming a member of this particular creed.

Now if you cannot make up your mind to become a good Confucian, or if you think this is too great a change, then may I advise you strongly to at least teach the doctrines of Confucius; teach mankind to treat others as they would like to have others treat them; try to show your people what a dreadful iniquity it is to send missionaries to China to attack the ancient faith of that people; try and make them understand the infinite amount of bloodshed that has resulted from this vain attempt to thrust a new kind of religion upon an unwilling people. The Chinese have been taught by their philosophers for thousands of years to have nothing whatsoever to do with anyone who pretends to have dealings with the supernatural; they have been taught that if they allow supernaturalism to be introduced into their country, it can only result in the most awful catastrophe. The Chinese have a very ancient faith. They are very anxious to preserve it in its original truth and purity. They feel exactly as we should feel under similar circumstance. It is, and always will be, useless to attempt to thrust any kind of supernatural religion upon the Chinese. China is a great nation, and no government, no matter how strong, can protect missionaries in every out-of-the-way corner of so vast an empire. If you in London should send Protestant missionaries into the wilds of Ireland and attack the religion of the people, and burn their wooden idols, England would not be strong enough to protect you. The Irish would very soon see to it that your missionaries were duly qualified to wear the crown of a martyr. Why then should you send them so far from home in order to obtain it.

Yours in the true faith.

Consolation.

'Is face it was long an' mournful, 'is beard it was skimp an grey;
'E sidled up to me softly, an' sed, in a smirkin' way:
"Come, wash in the Fountain, my brother; it's waitin' for sinners like you;
It's free as the air we're breathin' (an' it's very much purer too)."
But I sed as I wanted no washin' (too much isn't good, I think),
An' I 'inted my pocket was empty an' I very bad wanted a drink.
'E gazed at me, O so sadly, an' turned with a weighty sigh,
Sayin': "Well, the Fountain is open, and *there* you may drink.....Good-bye."

For work one day I 'ad 'unted, but 'adn't 'ad no success;
I'd run past the bakers' winders (the reason you'll mebbe guess!);
An', faint an' weary, at sundown I lounged up agen a wall,
As one o' two parsons passin' sez: "Some critters won't work at all;
There's pay for them as 'll earn it my brother, as well you know."
Sez I: "It's work, sir, I'm wantin'—I've searched for it 'igh an' low.
I fear it'll come to the work'ouse; all day I've not 'ad a bite."
Sez 'e: "Try the bread that's *livin'*, an' 'unger no more..... Good-night."

When Mary, my dear old missis, was laid in her clayey bed,
I cried, "Life's not worth livin'. I wish as I, too, was dead!"
Sitch thoughts were foolish, I reckon, an' p'r'aps they was blunt expressed,
For the Reverent Robbin sed "'Ush, man! We know as it's for the best.
The Lord 'e 'as seen your failin's, an' sees as you should be 'tried,'
To bring you back to 'is footstool—so the one as you loved best, died.
She didn't attend church reg'lar, but to you she was staunch an' true,
So let's 'ope, my friend, God 'as saved 'er from the torments of hell.....Adieu!"

JOHN YOUNG.

Consolation.

A FEW years ago I was one day packing a large box of books for removal to another apartment, and thinking only of my work, when suddenly the idea came into my mind: "There is no future life!"

It seemed as though I had heard the words spoken, so powerful was the effect of that hopeless sentence, and I stood still, gazing down into the box, as though into the black abyss of despair. I had not been reflecting upon such subjects, and there was no book among those I was arranging which could have suggested the theme. Of course, I had long known that immortality is a debated question; but my mind had never before entertained so decisive an answer. Being entirely free from superstitious beliefs, I did not consider that dictum authoritative or final; still, the thought was a terrible shock: the agony of that moment I can never forget! Then I sought for consolation, and it came in the form of a homely, every-day phrase. It was as though the same voice which had uttered that fatal sentence now mocked me with the familiar taunt:—

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Sure enough," I said to myself, "what is there to do? I came into this world without my knowledge or consent, and the only way of leaving it is by the gate of death. Whether that gate opens upon a beyond, or into nothingness, I do not know, and it would not help the matter to die prematurely out of sheer horror at the appalling uncertainty of future fate." The recognition of my utter helplessness in the situation restored my habitual calm, and presently another wise saying of universal import came to comfort me. "We are all in the same boat!" was the chering reminder, and I felt that to share the destiny of my fellow-mortals was enough for me. If we are all to meet hereafter, we shall doubtless be happy in that conscious existence; if eternal silence is the portion of the rest of the human race, why should I desire to be awake and alone for ever? Perhaps, if we could understand the complete working of every law of the universe, we should acquiesce in the proposition—often ignorantly and arrogantly asserted—that "whatever is is right;" at any rate, it is absolutely certain that whatever is, is, and with that knowledge we must learn to be resigned and con-

tent. What comes, or does not come, after death, is none of our business now and here; what concerns us is so to order our lives and develop our capacities as to make ourselves and others as good and useful and, consequently, happy, as circumstances permit. The past is beyond recall; the present is all we have; the future will take care of itself.

ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence.

ULTRA-MORALISM AND VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—When I began discussing the demand for the absolute prohibition of experiments on living animals, I put forward a "*reductio ad absurdum*," as I expressly termed it. No one has ventured to reply to it. Neither does my latest opponent, "H. W." In mathematics, which furnishes the type of strict and accurate reasoning, what would be thought of a disputant who ignored a *reductio ad absurdum*, and assumed that he carried his point by passionate epithets? If the savage accusations of hellishness, fiendishness, Yahoo callousness, etc. (together, of course, with many minor charges of dishonesty, trickery, puerility, etc.), are persisted in, anti-vivisectionists must not be surprised if they in their turn are subjected to similar insults. I have already shown Mr. Gibson that violent epithets may return like boomerangs upon those who fling them.

In the case of a single disease (diphtheria) it is claimed on behalf of the vivisectionist (See *Contemporary Review*, Nov., 1902) that his discoveries save the lives of 1,000 children annually in London alone. When the treatment is adopted by the continually increasing population of the whole world, this might mean a saving of 300,000 lives every year, or of thirty millions of human lives in every century. If the vivisectionist who believes (whether rightly or wrongly I shall not pretend to decide) in such possibilities of benefitting humanity, is to be hounded down as a hellish fiend and callous Yahoo, he may be tempted in his turn to hound down anti-vivisectionists as rabid fanatics, who would torture and destroy untold millions of children rather than allow experiments upon a few animals.

For my own part, I condemn such methods on either side. I think we should recognise each other's good intentions, and should decide our controversies by friendly reasoning rather than by rousing feelings of hatred and contempt against each other.

"H. W." supposes that he answers an argument of mine against ultra-moralism by calling it "the most puerile subterfuge and sophistry," while Mr. Gibson similarly disposes of it by terming it "ridiculous nonsense." Euclid's demonstrations could easily be demolished by the same convenient method. That we mutilate earthworms by the million is a perfectly valid argument against the adoption of the standard of absolute right or universal justice which had been put forward by some of my opponents. If, as they say, it is a dastardly crime to torture harmless creatures, they, too, are guilty of that crime, and they do not escape from the force of their own unmeasured denunciations by deciding that the application of their own words to themselves is ridiculous nonsense and puerile subterfuge. Mutilated earthworms, if only by their vast numbers, are capable of as vast a totality of torture as frogs or dogs. Dr. Smith, in his *Scientific Research* (to which I am referred), maintains, indeed, that natural selection makes the lower animals more sensitive than ourselves, as a means of escaping the great dangers to which their inferior capacities expose them. "H. W." pretends, in spite of the contradiction I gave to such hasty misconception, that I argue that because worms are mutilated in ploughing therefore vivisection must not be attacked. I say, again, this is *not* my argument. To show that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones, is not an argument in favor of the glass houses of either party. It merely suggests that judicious reasoning would be better than the flinging of brickbats. My opponents always seem to forget that I, too, object to vivisection so far that I would prohibit it except in special cases. They forget that the question at issue between us is not whether vivisection is an evil—which I affirm as well as they—but whether there are not exceptions to the rule. They also forget that they seek to inflict pain by law on human beings, whereby they may appear in the "unhappy rôle" of persecutors of scientific investigators.

I cannot admire the impartiality of a law which would send a doctor to prison for skinning a live eel for scientific purposes while his cook or his fishmonger may skin a thousand live eels with impunity. I am not willing to inflict punishment on scientific investigators for the purely sentimental crime of experimenting on animals rendered insen-

sible to pain by the use of anæsthetics. I will not send a man to gaol for the pretended crime of endeavoring to find more humane methods of killing animals for food. I am not prepared to make martyrs of men who seek to find remedies for the diseases that torture and destroy mankind and the lower animals.

Such instances are sufficient to show that a sincere humanitarian need not attempt to suppress *all* experiments on living animals, and that he incurs a grave moral responsibility if he persecutes and imprisons actual or potential benefactors of their species or of the lower animals.

W. P. BALL.

Lent.

The days of penance are at hand;
Maidens and men are nobly bent
On self-denial, duly planned
According to the rules of Lent.
Away with idle merriment—
Dinners and dances, cards and plays!
We play the pious penitent—
But only for the Forty Days.

Flirtation by Jeannette is banned;
My mood is likewise reverent;
To church I go, at her command,
And hear the sermon, eloquent
Of deeds undone and time misspent;
We vow reform; and who shall raise
The question if it's permanent
Or only for the Forty days?

While self-denial rules the land
The world of fashion must invent
Amusements of a harmless brand—
Pastimes to suit the innocent;
The sins we love must now be blent
With piety—for Fashion pays
Profound regard to precedent—
But only for the Forty Days.

Satan, you grumbler, be content!
Though we renounce you and your ways,
And think it proper to repent.
It's only for the Forty Days!

—*Frank Roe Batchelder.*

PROVIDENCE.

There is no room in the mind of man for Providence or chance. The facts and forces governing thought are as absolute as those governing the motions of the planets. A poem is produced by the forces of nature, and is as necessarily and naturally produced as mountains and seas. You will seek in vain for a thought in man's brain without its efficient cause. Every mental operation is the necessary result of certain facts and conditions. Mental phenomena are considered more complicated than those of matter, and consequently more mysterious. Being more mysterious, they are considered better evidence of the existence of a god. No one infers a god from the simple, from the known, from what is understood, but from the complex, from the unknown and incomprehensible. Our ignorance is God; what we know is science.—*Ingersoll.*

ROBERT BURNS.

Robert Burns lived in this world until he died. Most poets reside elsewhere. Some in the shadowy past, some in the far-off future, some in the realms of fancy and romance, and some in the unmapped regions of ethereal dreams and speculations. They are not residents of this world. They are merely callers. They drop in occasionally for luncheon, or a night's lodging, or to have their laundry work done. Burns lived right here for thirty-seven years; lived a human life; felt the storm and sunshine; knew the sorrow and the joy; wore the laurel of triumph and felt the dagger of remorse as men have and must so long as man is man.

—*Dr. J. E. Roberts.*

ONE GRATEFUL SON.—"This," said the guide, "is the grave of Adam." With reverential awe the wealthy merchant tailor, on his first trip to the Orient, drew near and cast a lotus blossom on the tomb. "Erring ancestor," he murmured, "I should be the last man on earth to revile your memory. To your sin I owe my prosperity."

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, Mr. C. Cohen, "Will Christianity Live?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Charles Watts, "The Ethics of Unbelief."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Miss Vallance, "Women and the Church."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Davies, "Wicked Voltaire."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.—Station-road: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. Brockwell Park: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. Mile End Waste.—11.30, F. A. Davies, "Secularism."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, J. Robertson, "The Future State." Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward: 11.30, "Morality without Theology"; 2.30, "Ghosts: an Exposure of Spiritualism"; 6.30, "How Christians have Loved their Enemies."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. M. Robertson: 3, "The Church and Education"; 7, "Christianity and the Sword."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Tom Swan, "A Common-Sense View of Science and Religion."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Victoria Hall, Fowler-street): G. W. Foote: 3, "Was Jesus Christ a Man or a Myth?"; 7, "Man's Origin and Destiny."

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