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Be like the promontory, against which the waves continually break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the waters around it.—MARCUS AURELIUS.

Bible Difficulties.

MESSRS. MOODY AND SANKEY, the preaching and singing revivalists, are succeeded by Messrs. Torrey and Alexander. Dr. Torrey does the talking and Mr. Alexander looks after the music. This is a very useful combination, and its success is not astonishing. Moreover, the new firm of evangelists, like the old one, belong to the land of the Stars and Stripes. Of course they are none the worse for that; on the contrary, they are better. They have the American eye for business, and they are giving the Christians in this country some excellent lessons in the art of "hustling."

We have not heard Dr. Torrey preach or Mr. Alexander sing. These luxuries are in store for us. But we have seen accounts of their performances, and we infer that Mr. Alexander sings well, while Dr. Torrey is good at converting "infidels." He seems to have converted one in every district he has visited. It has been suggested that there is only one convert after all, and that he travels round with the show. This is shockingly profane, and almost blasphemous. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Dr. Torrey has given a handle to the scoffers by carefully concealing the identity of the "infidels" he has brought to God.

Dr. Torrey's achievements in this line gave a special interest to a pamphlet of his that fell into our hands, entitled *Hard Problems of Scripture*. Such a subject seemed the very one for a successful converter of "infidels" to deal with. We expected, therefore, to find something fresh and satisfying. But on reading the pamphlet through we found nothing of the kind. What we did find was replies to "infidel objections" that did duty fifty years ago. There are thousands of Christian ministers in England who would be ashamed to put their names to such replies. They know that educated and intelligent people have long ceased to be so easily imposed upon. Many of them also know that the Higher Criticism—which is the name given to more or less honest and scientific criticism of the Bible inside the Churches—has done away with the necessity for low-class juggling of this kind. Instead of "torturing one poor word ten thousand ways" to make it harmonise with the teachings of science and history, and the conclusions of reason, the Higher Critics give up Genesis as a scientific text-book, admit the presence of many historical blunders in the Bible, and treat a host of wonderful stories as legendary. They plead for the general, and not the verbal, inspiration of Scripture; and in so doing they are probably cleverer, after all, than the Yankee revivalist who undertakes to champion every orthodox absurdity.

Not only is Dr. Torrey the Rip Van Winkle of Biblical criticism; he is as hard and unsympathetic, and even insolent, as the commonest Christian Evidence-monger. It does not occur to him as possible that any man can honestly doubt the truth of any

passage in the Bible. He is evidently quite unable to conceive that a non-Christian can be a person of decent character. He actually goes to the length of denying the Christianity of all who do not read the Bible precisely as he does. He tells them they have no chance of salvation. He regards them as certain candidates for hell.

We do not know to what denomination Dr. Torrey belongs, but we should imagine him to be a Presbyterian. In this pamphlet, at any rate, he is austere, matter-of-fact, and unbeautiful. There is not a single word of spirituality; whether we take it in a natural or in a strictly religious sense. Not a breath of poetry, not a touch of humanity, brightens one of these forty-four pages. The Bible is treated as a sort of Euclid of theology, and Dr. Torrey is the frowning pedagogue who looks upon sturdy questioners as refractory pupils.

We do not think Dr. Torrey would be worth answering if it were not for the importance which is given to him by the Christian Churches who are supporting his revival enterprises in this country. For this reason, and for this reason only, we shall go through his pamphlet section by section, and see what is the value of his solution of these Scripture problems.

I.—THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS.

Dr. Torrey accuses the "infidel," twice on the first page, of "simply displaying his ignorance." We dare say he finds this sort of expression "catch on" with the audiences he addresses. But it seems to us that the "ignorance" is on Dr. Torrey's part—unless he is guilty of something worse. He denies that the Bible represents the world as being made in six days of twenty-four hours each. He says that "the use of the word day is not limited to periods of twenty-four hours." This is quite true, but it is nothing to the purpose. A man might say of a certain event, "It is not likely to happen in my day." We also speak of "former days." This means an uncertain period of time. There is no such uncertainty, however, if we say it takes six days to cross the Atlantic. The fact is that the word *day*, like many other words, is used both literally and metaphorically. Whether it is used in the one way or the other depends upon the context; and the context in this case is exactly what Dr. Torrey avoids. After the first day's creation the Bible says "And the evening and the morning were the first day." The same form of words, only changing the numeral, is used after each day's creation; the last verse of the chapter concluding with the words, "And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." This constant refrain seems decisive; Dr. Torrey was bound in honor to notice it; and his not doing so may be left to the judgment of honest men.

The "infidel" again "displays his ignorance"—Dr. Torrey is so fond of this expression!—by objecting that the Bible speaks of there being light before the sun existed; whereas "there was cosmic light ages before the sun became a separate body." But the Bible does not merely say that light existed before the sun. It says that evening and morning, and therefore day and night, existed before the sun; it also says that the earth existed before the sun; and every properly educated person knows the latter to be untrue, and the former to be impossible. The

Bible likewise says that vegetation, including fruit trees, grew on the earth before the sun existed; which is, of course, an absurdity.

Altogether it is clear enough that Dr. Torrey's strong point is not candor. Neither is it logic. Let us hear him again:—

"Professor Dana said in my presence that one reason why he believed the Bible was God's Word was because of the marvellous accord of the order of creation given in Genesis with that worked out by the best scientific investigation."

This was none the truer because it was said in Dr. Torrey's presence—though he seems to consider the fact important. Nor was Professor Dana everybody. His statement as to the harmony of the two orders of creation was contested by Professor Huxley. It is disputed even by Dr. Dallinger, who is a Wesleyan as well as a biologist. It is practically given up by Dr. Torrey himself in the following passage:—

"There is grave reason to doubt if anything in Genesis i. after verse 1 relates to the original creation of the universe. It seems rather to refer to the refitting of a world that had been created and afterwards plunged into chaos by the sin of some pre-Adamic race."

Here is geology and biology for you! But we will not dwell upon it. Our point is that the "order of creation" in Genesis, according to Dr. Torrey's view of its significance, has nothing whatever to do with the "order of creation" which Professor Dana had in mind. Invoking the authority of the American "prince of geologists" was therefore only a bit of Yankee bluff.

II.—CAIN'S WIFE.

Dr. Torrey says that one of the favorite questions with "infidels of a certain class" is "Where did Cain get his wife?" This ancient conundrum has a curious effect upon his temper. He appears to think it a sign of terrible depravity. He regards those who raise it as simply seeking a "pretext to continue in sin." He tells the story of a nameless sceptic who was dreadfully troubled over the problem of Cain's wife, but when he was tackled by Dr. Torrey it turned out that "the real difficulty was not about Cain's wife, but about another man's wife." This sort of anecdotage may be very acceptable to Christians "of a certain class," but we are unable to see what it has to do with the point in question. If it could be proved that a sceptic had eloped with twenty other men's wives, it would not throw a single gleam of light on the identity of Cain's wife.

It may be, of course, that Dr. Torrey designed this irrelevant talk as dust in the eyes of his readers; for he has to admit that "Cain married his own sister."

"That was a necessity if the whole Adamic race was to descend from a single pair. But as the race increased, it remained no longer necessary, and the practice, if continued, would result in great mischief to the race. Indeed, even the intermarriage of cousins is fraught with frightful consequences. But in the dawn of human history it was not so. As late as the time of Abraham, that patriarch married his half-sister."

Dr. Torrey is here—to quote from himself—displaying his own ignorance. Savages, such as the very ancient Jews were, are apt to trace their pedigree through the mother. They only acknowledge a uterine relationship. They see nothing wrong in intercourse with a woman born of a different mother from their own, but intercourse with a woman born of the same mother is quite another matter. They regard it with repugnance, as we do, even if they do not call it by the special and odious name of incest. The story of Abraham marrying his half-sister is, therefore, simply a proof that the people among whom it originated were in a low stage of culture.

Science has not demonstrated that "the intermarriage of cousins is fraught with frightful consequences." Dr. Torrey is only repeating a social superstition. It is admitted, however, that more distant marriages secure the advantage of organic variety. But, on the other hand, the variety may be too great; such as in the mixture of different races, the result of which is generally a mongrel offspring, with the vices of both races and the virtues of neither.

Dr. Torrey does not see, or he affects not to, that the Bible story of creation stains the cradle of the human race with incest. What necessity was there that the race should descend from a single pair? God could as easily have made two pairs. Cain would not then have been obliged to marry his sister.

"Infidels" are represented by Dr. Torrey as saying that Cain, according to the Bible, went into the land of Nod and got his wife. This is about as near, he says, as they ever get in quoting from the book they have so much objection to. What the Bible states is that "Cain dwelt in the land of Nod. And Cain knew his wife."

Dr. Torrey explains the word "knew," but we need not trouble about his superfluous biology. It is superfluous, at least, in England; we believe it is so in Scotland; and we can hardly imagine it is necessary in America. Neither is it to the point at issue—namely, where did Cain get his wife? Dr. Torrey's position is that he took her with him when he was driven out, with a mark upon him, from the presence of the Lord. But this is only a conjecture. The Bible does not say so. No mention is made of his wife before his emigration. Moreover, the very fact that the mark was set upon him "lest any finding him should kill him" suggests that the land he fled to was already inhabited.

We daresay Dr. Torrey is a clever man—in his way. But he is not clever enough, after all, for the "infidels" he despises. He does not see what they mean by asking questions about Cain's wife. Their object, of course, when it is not mere curiosity, is to gain the admission that Cain married his sister—which is a reflection on the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. Dr. Torrey has simply walked into a trap.

III.—HUMAN SACRIFICES.

Dr. Torrey's observations on this subject are not convincing. He denies that God ordered Abraham to slay Isaac. What the patriarch was told to do was "to offer him for a burnt offering." He laid Isaac upon the altar, but whether God "would require him to go further and slay his son, he did not know." As a matter of fact, he did not slay Isaac, and God told him not to do so. This is true enough, but it misses the point. Abraham did not *know* he would be required to slay Isaac, but he *expected* to be, and he was ready to *obey*. On this point the text does not admit of a doubt; otherwise it would not have been a trial of Abraham's faith, but a ridiculous pantomime.

We quite agree with Dr. Torrey that this story does not encourage human sacrifice. It seems designed to the very contrary. The substitution of a ram for Isaac suggests that animals should be sacrificed instead of human beings. But the suggestion would have been unnecessary if the Jews had not to be weaned from the darker practice.

With regard to the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, Dr. Torrey argues like a criminal lawyer in a very bad case. Nobody saw the prisoner commit the murder, and therefore he is innocent. But there is such a thing as circumstantial evidence, which is sometimes overwhelming. It is true that "we are nowhere told that Jephthah did burn his daughter." But we are told that he "did with her according to his vow," and his vow was to "offer up for a burnt offering" whoever come forth from his house to meet him if he returned victorious from the war with Ammonites.

It is no use trying to explain away this text, which as Luther said "stands there clear." Dr. Torrey ought to know that the great weight of scholarship is against his argument that the girl's bewailing her virginity on the mountains points to her having been devoted to a life of perpetual celibacy. "Solutions like these," said Bishop Warburton, who *was* a scholar, "expose sacred scripture to the scorn and derision of unbelievers." Dean Milman pointed out that "vows of celibacy were totally unknown among the Hebrews." The *Speaker's Commentary* observes that the reference to Jephthah's daughter dying

childless only means that "her virginity was an aggravation of her cruel fate." The whole question is dealt with by the present writer in the tenth chapter of *Bible Heroes*, where a formidable list of authorities is given for the view that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter. It includes Josephus, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, St. Thomas Aquinas, Calmet, Michaelis, Warburton, and Milman—to which may now be added the name of the late Mr. Gladstone. What is the use of Dr. Torrey's "She seems" against such a weight of critical judgment? And why does he conceal the fact that his own opinion, however *convenient* it may be, has only the slender and half-hearted support of a few timid commentators? Why, in short, does he talk to ignorant and bigoted orthodox audiences in a way that it would be very dangerous to talk before a well-informed and impartial assembly? Can it be that he is only "displaying his ignorance" again; and that he is one of those who rush in where angels fear to tread?

But we have not done with Dr. Torrey in relation to this story. After contending that Jephthah did *not* sacrifice his daughter, he actually says that "the whole story is intended to be a lesson upon the folly of hasty vows." He also says that, even if Jephthah *did* sacrifice his daughter, the Bibliolators are under "no necessity of defending" it, since Jephthah had no "command or other warrant from God." But the "Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" just before he made his vow; the vow itself was "a vow unto the Lord"; and Jephthah is mentioned in the eleventh of Hebrews amongst the workers of righteousness through faith. We defy Dr. Torrey to find a word in censure of Jephthah's conduct in any part of the Bible; and what a man does when the "Spirit of the Lord" comes upon him may be taken as all right unless it is expressly condemned.

IV.—THE SLAUGHTER OF THE CANAANITES.

Dr. Torrey is not without courage—of a kind. He stands up in the twentieth century and defends the wholesale massacre of men, women, and children. Dean Farrar was unable to do so. He lacked the nerve of the Yankee revivalist. In his work on *The Bible: its Meaning and Supremacy* he referred to the "worse than Armenian atrocities" of the Jews in Palestine, and denounced the "miserable pleas which have sometimes been urged in favor of the righteousness of the wars of extermination." But the bold Dr. Torrey laughs at all that. He remembers that his God is a consuming fire. He declares that the indiscriminate slaughter of the Canaanites was "absolutely necessary in the interests of humanity." The command to exterminate them was "a command big with mercy and love." They were hopelessly sunk in unfathomable depths of moral pollution. Killing the men was not enough, for "depraved women are more dangerous than depraved men," and children will take after their parents.

Who are the authorities for the hopeless depravity of the Canaanites? Their executioners. We are to take their character from those who killed them and seized their property. It is like an inquest by a butcher on a dead sheep. We need not wait for the verdict.

"The philosopher," says Dr. Torrey, "never appears a greater fool than when criticising God." We might reply that the man of God never appears a greater blackguard than when defending wholesale butchery in the name of Infinite Benevolence.

Nothing is more absurd than the supposition that any nation, or considerable body of people, could be hopelessly sunk in unfathomable depths of moral pollution. Such a nation would not need exterminating; it would exterminate itself. There must be a balance of good over evil if a nation is to continue. Most men must work, and work is incompatible with absolute moral corruption. Most women must be mothers, and have enough maternal affection to rear their offspring. This is an elementary point of sociology.

Dr. Torrey is not a philosopher. He is an exhorter.

"I could wish," he says, "that all the babes born in the slums might be slain in infancy, were it not for the hope that the Church of Christ would awake them to the saving Gospel of the Son of God." He preaches this to crowds of middle-class Christians. Let him preach it to the slum-dwellers—with an ambulance ready.

The Church of Christ does not "awake" the people in the slums; it does not reach them; and the proof is to be found in Mr. Charles Booth's great work on the poor of London.

Dr. Torrey comes from America. There is a slum-born man over there who ran about the streets with naked feet in his childhood selling newspapers. His name is Edison. The Church of Christ did nothing for him. Fortunately he was not "slain in infancy" by the apologists of the Bible. He escaped the tender mercies of Dr. Torrey's friends, and lived to become famous throughout the civilised world.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Mr. R. J. Campbell on Prayer.

A CORRESPONDENT wrote in a recent issue of the *Christian World* complaining of the constant "booming" of certain ministers by certain papers. The complaint was well grounded. A casual reader of the *Daily News* would often imagine that the future of England depended upon Dr. Clifford and one or two other Nonconformist ministers. Other papers select other men, but with the difference of the name, the effusions are identical. The *Christian Commonwealth*, for instance, seems to have placed its money on Mr. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple. It publishes a sermon of his every week, with the precaution of having it copyrighted, and fills up a fair number of its columns with his doings generally. His audiences are always "immense," his speech is "marvellous," he "alone among human beings" disdains notes when speaking; he, marvellous to relate, addresses three or four thousand "as confidently as gatherings of a few dozen," and "one of the many remarkable things about him" is that he is "equally competent on both the philosophical and practical sides of religion." Truly a wonderful man!

Naturally this sort of thing, kept up week by week, persuades sections of Christians that they have got hold of a great man, a profound thinker, and a born leader, and as most people take away from a sermon all that they have previously put into it, the majority of those who attend Mr. Campbell's sermons doubtless find the newspaper descriptions justified.

The sermon in the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 23 is on "Praying in Christ Jesus." I cannot say on the *reading* of this sermon that Mr. Campbell is *not* an eloquent preacher—there is so much difference between reading a speech and listening to it—but if he is so, this quality is very carefully concealed in the printed report. Thought, however, is a quality that should show up better even in print than in speech, but one looks in vain for any justification in this direction for the journalistic rhapsodies I have quoted. The best parts of the sermon are commonplace, and the rest neither good nor bad, but just words, words, words. And what the reporter regards as profundity, is simply, as we shall see from one or two illustrations, fallacies and false analogies of the most transparent description.

Mr. Campbell prefaces his sermon with a prayer extending over about half a column of the *Commonwealth*, and which is, as usual, very liberally studded with "Thee," and "Thou," and "Thy." And why on earth people, if they feel impelled to remind Jesus of what he *ought* to do for them, what he is expected to do for them, and to jog his memory by reminding him of his far away life in Judea, why they cannot do this in ordinary everyday English is a puzzle. Mr. Campbell does not "thee" and "thou" his congregation; why should he, and others, do it in their prayers? The reason is, I imagine, partly that an

archaic custom requires a more or less archaic form of speech, and partly that it is all part of the general game of self-delusion and hypocrisy. If Mr. Campbell were to put his prayers into the vernacular, it would not have nearly the same effect upon the congregation; it is the old-fashioned language that imposes upon them, and the preacher probably knows that as well as I do. But if Mr. Campbell wants the real language of prayer, the "thee" and "thou" of the Elizabethan age is terribly modern. He ought to go much further back, somewhere about the period of the semi-articulate utterance of pre-historic man. It was in this period that prayer had its origin, and without which it would not exist now. One of the characters in *Our Boys* declared that he did so well out of a deal in bacon that he lifted his hat whenever he met a pig in the street. For a similar reason every clergyman ought to raise his hat in a spirit of thankfulness every time he thinks of the mental qualities of our savage ancestors.

Mr. Campbell's object in the sermon I have before me is to make out a case for the reasonableness of praying to Christ. He commences by taking two types from, I think, Professor W. James's book on *Religious Experience*. The questions put by James to each of the two were "What does religion mean to you?" and "What is your notion of sin?" The first replied that religion "means nothing, and it seems, so far as I can observe, useless to others.....If I were to die now—being in a healthy condition for my age, both mentally and physically, I would just as lief—yes, rather—die with a hearty enjoyment of music, sport, or some other rational pastime. As the timepiece stops, we die, and that is all about it." The answer to the second question was: "It seems to me that sin is a condition, a disease, incidental to man's development not being yet advanced enough. Morbidity over it increases the disease, and at any rate it is no use praying about it." The answer of the other person was: "God is more real to me than any thought or thing or person. I feel his presence positively"; with much more to the same effect.

It may, of course, be due to personal predisposition, but for the life of me I cannot help regarding the first answer as being essentially healthier than the second. The man who feels a genuine pleasure in a healthy pastime, who has no morbid fear of death weighing upon him, and who recognises that all forms of "sin" are so many indications of disease, to be removed as the race grows in knowledge and power, seems to me a more valuable social asset than one who regards a metaphysical abstraction as the most real and most valuable thing he knows of. It is the conviction that "God" is more real than aught else that is at bottom responsible for the little care for human interests shown by religionists is working out what they believed to be their Deity's desires.

But let us note the use made by Mr. Campbell of the two cases. I said above that at best his addresses were commonplace. His method of answering the first type proves this. He believes he has disposed of the first answer by placing the second against it. There may be people in the audience, he says, who answer to the first type, and to their case he places "in respectful contrast the experience suggested..... as coming from the religious mind." Well, and what then? Surely Mr. Campbell must see that at most the case would only prove that religion is necessary to some. One person gets on very well without it. He is a good citizen, a good friend, a good husband, a good parent. Another feels that it is necessary for him to pray, and asserts that he is also a good man because of his prayer. The obvious comment is that the man whose nature prompts him to carry out in a loyal manner all the obligations of life is certainly a better social asset than the man who requires a constant stimulus to come up to this level. To say that the man who doesn't pray is losing a high view of life that is attained by the man who does would be downright impertinence; and, as Mr. Campbell does not say this, we need not saddle him with this retort. But the plain fact is that certain

people—it does not matter how many; one is enough for the argument—are able to do without prayer all that the Christian asserts he is only able to do with it. So far as can be seen, they are as admirable as the best type of religionists; and, this being the case, it is clear either that prayer is only necessary to an inferior social type or the religious man is mistaken in attributing whatever good there is in him to its influence.

As a matter of fact, as an Atheist, I do not find any difficulty in admitting that both views of the case may be correct, and that without admitting either that there is a God to pray to, or that any external influence is exerted by prayer. Mr. Campbell harps upon the idea that, if you trust in Christ and pray, your prayer will be beneficial to you. This is quite probable; and if you had an equally strong faith in swearing, and swore earnestly, fervently, religiously, you would be benefited by that. The great thing is to believe in the value of prayer before you pray, otherwise it does you no good whatever. And if Mr. Campbell were less of a preacher and more of a scientific student of human nature, he would see that the whole question of the subjective influence of prayer is a question of physiological psychology, pure and simple. A fixed belief in the efficacy of a certain practice induces a certain result. No one denies this; the Atheist would, indeed, be the first to assert it. The essential question at issue is not whether there are certain emotions and feelings experienced as the result of prayer, but whether there is a deity who, as the result of prayer, produces results that would not have transpired in the normal course of things. But this is a question Mr. Campbell never comes within a thousand miles of discussing.

The religious man says he feels the influence of God, and Mr. Campbell wishes us to take this as decisive. Could anything in the shape of an argument be more childish?

Again, no one doubts the genuineness of the conviction; what is questioned is the accuracy of the diagnosis. A man says that God is influencing his life. All he means is that the belief that he is in communion with someone who is strong enough and willing enough to help him has cheered him up. Agreed; one gets the same feeling from talking over one's troubles with a friend. It is an expression of man's gregarious nature. But how does the religious man know that there is a God to listen to him? How can he be sure that he is not fooling himself all the time? A savage praying to a piece of wood or stone experiences the same feeling of comfort. The Christian says he is deluding himself. Can he be sure that he is not acting in a similar manner? The plain truth is that all that is happening is the clothing of one's feelings and emotions in a religious dress. In Roman Catholic countries the peasant is helped by praying to some local saint. In London Mr. Campbell is helped by praying to Jesus. Mr. Campbell says that the peasant's saint is as powerless to aid his devotee as the hat upon his head. The Atheist retorts upon Mr. Campbell in a similar manner with reference to his own fetish. The self-delusion in both cases is identical.

Mr. Campbell evidently has no belief in the objective value of prayer. He says: "If you come to me with curious questions whether you can pray about the removal of the street pump.....my answer is, Abide in Christ, and you won't be thinking about the removal of the street pump." This is no doubt considered smart; but it is a pity that Mr. Campbell does not realise that the answer to the question, of which this one is a type, will, in the long run, determine whether men continue to believe in prayer or not. Once upon a time, people believed in God's ability to not only guide them in the matter of the village pump, but to remove it for them if they prayed hard enough. And why does Mr. Campbell believe that the street pump is not a fit and proper object to be prayed about? Well, I presume because a pump is an actual, concrete fact. Prayer about a pump could be made a test question. You might

pray for it to be removed bodily, as Jesus said of mountains, and whether it was removed or not would settle whether your prayers were answered or not. Or you might pray for advice concerning its removal, and your final opinion would also form some sort of a test. Mr. Campbell will run no such risks. He prefers to justify the belief in prayer by parading the testimonies of certain people who were helped by Christ. The proof that they were helped is that they say they were. Mr. Campbell would not, in all probability, trust to their diagnosis of the cause of a stomachache, but in this matter their diagnosis is unimpeachable.

And this is all that our brilliant preacher has to put forward in support of the belief in the efficacy of praying to Jesus. Over four columns taken up with a dreary reiteration of the very old argument from experience. And what an experience? Not an experience that can be offered to others and induce belief, but a mere tale of a *feeling* which is of no value to anyone unless he is afflicted in a similar manner. Of what kind of a man Mr. Campbell may be personally, I have no idea. He may be engaging in manner, kindly in nature, and eloquent in speech. But if the City Temple is crowded by "immense" audiences to listen to sermons of the character of the one I have just waded through, I can only find in the phenomenon a fresh argument for pessimism, and suggest that much more benefit might be derived from a good book at a quiet fireside.

C. COHEN.

Shut Out.

THE Leicester School Board will die in a few weeks. I cannot say I regret the extinction of this and other School Boards. It appears to me that, in spite of much excellent work done, these bodies have been too often degraded by illiberal piety. The Town and County Councils which will soon become the educational authorities all over the country are less likely to fall into this sin; for they are not so much dominated by clerical influences, and they are more in touch with the needs and methods of the practical, secular life.

One of the last incidents in the history of the Leicester School Board is worth relating as an example of Christian narrowness.

We have, in connection with the Board in Leicester, an Industrial School for boys. At a recent meeting of the Board the Chairman of the Industrial School Committee announced that a tablet was to be dedicated in memory of five old Desford boys who had lost their lives in the course of the South African war; and the members of the Board would be invited to join in the ceremony of unveiling. He went on to say (and at this point I became all attention) that the proceedings would open with a procession and would include a religious ceremony, with prayers.

I immediately rose to point out that the introduction of this religious ceremony would necessarily shut me out. I added that I did not wish to discuss the issue involved, but simply to make my colleagues aware of the effect of the program suggested.

There was a pause. As I had raised no theological issue in a debateable form, it was impossible for any member to accuse me of starting a controversy. I had not even complained, but had merely stated the logical consequence of the proposed devotional service. I think it must have been uncomfortably evident to my Christian friends that they were excommunicating me in a very clumsy method. They had not even intended it!

The Chairman of the Industrial School Committee is a person of the most unblemished orthodoxy and holds first-class Tory principles; and more than once he has protested that my habit of standing in a minority of one showed a want of respect for the dignity of the Board. On this occasion, however, he felt obliged to take up an apologetic attitude. He was sorry, he said, that I should be excluded. He had, indeed, rather anticipated that I might not care

to attend, because of my well-known objections to anything approaching militarism.

Well, as to that, I have very decided opinions; but the Board should have waited for me to state my views in my own way. Besides, I had made no reference to militarism; I had confined myself to explaining the effect of the religious character of the proceedings. However, proceeded the person of unblemished orthodoxy, he hoped that, for once, Mr. Gould would see his way to accompanying the other members of the Board.

This fairly staggered my heretical soul! My only comment was to repeat that the prayers absolutely shut me out.

But just see what this friendly invitation amounted to. Everybody on the Board knows that I hold office in the local Secular Society, that I am an avowed Agnostic, and that I was elected to the Board as an advocate of purely secular education. Had I attended the ceremony, and knelt to pray along with two clergymen of the Church of England and several conspicuous Nonconformists, the act would have been a farce and hypocrisy. Yet I was invited to do this sordid bit of compliance out of courtesy to the spirit of orthodoxy.

A simple incident of this kind aptly illustrates the sectarian nature of popular Christianity. We are familiar with (and many of us are sick of hearing) the boasts of educationists of Dr. Clifford's type that the Christianity they want taught in the schools is of a wholly unsectarian species. Why, what does "sectarian" mean? It means having an exclusive quality or effect. A sect is a divider, a barrier, a partition. For no assignable cause, except a theological one, I was shut out from an assembly of ladies and gentlemen engaged in a public function. That is an essentially sectarian action.

It may not be out of place to refer to a question frequently brought up when such difficulties are under discussion. People say: "It is all very well for you Secularists to denounce the sects, but you are yourselves a sect. You know that, as Christians, we could not attend a Freethought function. Therefore you are as exclusive as we ourselves are."

A little reflection will show how baseless this pleading is. It is quite true that we could not reasonably expect Christian men and women to take part in any demonstration at which anti-theological sentiments were expressed. But, as Atheists, Agnostics, Positivists, etc., we never propose to import our anti-theological doctrines into the civic sphere. We demand that, when assembled as citizens, we and the adherents of all other schools of belief and thought should meet on terms which mutually exclude any manifestation of religious differences. That condition hurts none and compromises none. If we are to have a State at all, we must have a social bond—a principle of civic unity. That bond cannot be religious (in the theological sense), because the community is sharply divided on dogmatic and speculative issues. The bond must therefore be entirely Secular, and not even the most earnest follower of Rome, or Canterbury, or of the Inner Illumination, such as the mystics defer to, need feel ashamed to combine with his fellow-citizens on this honorable Secular basis.

This is one of the elementary lessons of politics, but the average Christian mind is a little slow at taking it in.

F. J. GOULD.

The Confessions of an Ex-Atheist in America.

THE *Medical Brief* is a monthly journal published at St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A., and claims to have the largest circulation of any medical journal in the world. Evidently it is conducted on strictly business lines, for there is scarcely a page which does not contain an advertisement, either in the form of an obvious "ad." or "puff" of some wonderful drug written by some M.D. or other. This by the way of showing the kind of journal the *Brief* is.

In the April number is an article "written for the

Medical Brief” entitled, “Confessions of an Ex-Atheist.” The confessions are from the pen of a gentleman named C. E. Boynton, M.D., of Los Banos, Cal. Being not a little curious as to what shocking deeds the Ex-Atheist had to confess, we read the article through. The writer commences by asserting that “There is more in a beautiful painting than canvas and chemicals, though he who believes not in a God might hardly think it.” Well, we have had some acquaintance with Atheists, and have never found them, as a rule, particularly lacking in artistic appreciation. Of course there are some men who, as the great St. Matthew once said, “can never look upon the sea without thinking of the price of fish.” We have noticed, however, that such men were invariably religious and would go into ecstasies over a sixpenny-halfpenny reproduction of a painting of the “Madonna” or some sickly-looking saint tied to an impossible rock, with angry waves breaking round her. But to get back to the confessions. It seems that there has been some correspondence in previous numbers of the *Brief* on the question of the conflict between religion and science, and a Dr. Hausemann has been crying impossible as the suggestion of a religio-scientific harmony. The Ex-Atheist requests Dr. H. to prove the impossibility of such a harmony, and does his best to show that in time the desired harmony will result. Here is a gem: “Self-acknowledged ape-fatherhood with no God-oversight is revolting to all that is Human. Such self-abasement being torturous must be destructive, hence degenerative.” The writer states that at fourteen years of age he “denied a God, considered mentation a machine process of the cell and molecule and to fit himself for an image-breaker went hunting for diplomas”; all of which was a good start for a boy of fourteen. Then followed a dozen years, during which he lectured, argued, and “wrote, and wore off his teeth in vindictive spite at everything conventional, religious, archaic, etc., rarely letting an opportunity pass to vent blood-curdling blasphemies in the presence of sanctimonious persons.” Quoting again: “The ordinary Atheist takes his doctrine in moderation, but this one lived one hundred years of iconoclastic, antitheistic spite in twenty, when life began to feel empty.....The sciences were plunged into deeper and deeper, to find something in them to live for. Surely in the calculus he would find it; this was mastered.” Then in his awful despair the poor devil began “exploring here and there in chemistry, physics, quaternions, etc. But all to no purpose, the heart was still empty. He looked at the appetite-slave, he a suicide seemed contemptible, and he hated the weak, vile worm. He looked at the sex-glutton with equal loathing. Still his enmity for religion did not tempt him into these.” Thus we have a picture of an Atheist, who, although delightfully miserable yet was not a libertine. Think of that, good Christians; an Atheist, yet no libertine! What is even more wonderful still is the fact of which we are solemnly acquainted that he was actually truthful and paid his debts. We hardly like to suggest such a thing, but his truthfulness does not seem to have been retained now that he has been converted. The reason for his having so many virtues, however, was that he could not think of anything sufficiently devilish to satisfy him. “He would not have burned one church or one saloon; this would have been too meagre a slaughter. But gladly would he have wiped every Christian, every whisky-drinking human form from the face of the earth had it been in his power. Life’s chief sweet to him was an intellectual triumph and contemplation of a general fool-killing; to find that human beings generally were more interested in billiards, whisky, church, and women, than in the calculus, chemical symbolism, and kereokinesis, convinced him that such beings were only fit for killing.” Of course all this shows what a magnificent intellect C. E. Boynton, M.D., Los Banos, Cal., possesses. The rest of the article really is not worth quoting; the same sort of stuff may be heard from any Christian Evi-

dence lecturer in the parks; but the following quotation will give some idea of the writer’s capacity: “The man who thinks deeply enough to be an anti-Theist, does not, like the unfortunate jailbird, commit short-sighted sins. The anti-Theist sees the brand of mental inferiority upon the brain of every worshipper. He hates humanity; he curls his lip at love, in its purer, spiritual sense; he is boastful of his truthfulness, vain in his sobriety and honesty, and goes on hating, hating. What scruples has an Atheist against criminal abortion?” Choice, is it not?
D. L.

Acid Drops.

Prophet Baxter has fixed the end of the world a good many times. He has been foolish enough to do this within a period which he might live through. Consequently he has been found out every time. But the fool-crop is perennial, as Heine said, and Prophet Baxter has at last learnt a little prudence. He now fixes the end of the world for 1924. Christ is to come then and catch the faithful up with him into the air. “You will not want any grave,” the prophet says. This is something to look forward to. Baxter says a hope like this is better than Pierpont Morgan’s millions. Yes, but Pierpont Morgan has them *in hand*; which is a great consideration when the other birds are *in the bush*, and the bush itself will not be visible for another twenty-one years. Meanwhile we observe that Prophet Baxter is trying to acquire all he can of Pierpont Morgan’s complaint.

Messrs. Torrey and Alexander, the Yankee evangelists, have been doing good business at Aberdeen. They are now off to Belfast. We read that they “have received many interesting evidences of the lasting effect of their work in Edinburgh and Glasgow.” The next yearly statistics of drink and illegitimacy in Scotland ought to show a decided improvement. But will they? We shall see.

The Low Church is up in arms against the High Church on account of a proposed service of prayer in St. Paul’s Cathedral for members of certain religious guilds and all soldiers who died in the war in South Africa. It seems to us, however, a great fuss about nothing. Prayer is just as likely to benefit the dead as the living. Anyhow it can’t hurt them, and it is an act of kindness to give them the off chance of good. We hope the proposed prayer-meeting will proceed.

Winter this year occurred in April. This is really *too bad*. What is the Clerk of the Weather, or Providence, thinking about? The intense cold has had a disastrous effect on the crops. Fruit trees, especially plums and apples, have been greatly damaged. Vast stretches of early potatoes and peas have been ruined. And the worst of it is there is no chance of getting damages against whoever is responsible for this havoc.

Mrs. Eddy, the Mother of Christian Science in America, carries on a remarkably flourishing business. The Christian Science Trust has five hundred churches and a million adherents, and Mrs. Eddy bosses and owns the lot. Mark Twain is getting his book ready against her. He is going to show that “she is by a large percentage the most erratic and contradictory and untrustworthy witness that has occupied the stand since the days of the lamented Ananias.”

According to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, M. Loubet “does not go with the Cabinet in its policy of persecution.” This refers to the expulsion of the illicit religious orders. But how far is this *persecution*? It is certainly not meant to be anything of the kind. This correspondent admits, for instance, that “a whole crowd of municipal councils, workmen’s syndicates, associations of freethinkers, school teachers’ societies, and Socialist groups, in the Department of the Isère, have sent addresses to the Chamber, calling for the expulsion of the Carthusians, who, they say, have used their immense financial power against the Republic by subsidising clerical schools and clubs.” This is the whole case in a nutshell. The religious orders have conspired against the Republic, and the Republic is throwing them out of France. The Catholic Church remains as far as it is recognised by the laws, with its considerable income guaranteed by the State. Where, then, is the *persecution*? The Republic is merely acting in self-defence.

King Edward laid the memorial-stone of the new break-water at the entrance to the Grand Harbor, Malta. Theu

he cried out in a loud clear voice, "I declare this stone to be well and truly laid, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." We wonder if the Trinity heard him.

We have several times observed that the Church of England comes out an easy first in in the *Daily News* religious census of London. There are other facts pointing in the same direction. Of the total marriages in London 72.0 per cent. take place at the Established Church, 16.8 per cent. at Registry Offices, and 4.6 per cent. at Nonconformist places of worship. Men and women don't seem to trouble the Dissenting Bethels much at the most critical moment of their lives.

Cobbett said that if you gave a lie twenty-four hours' start it will be half round the world before you can overtake it. The statement that we corrected a few weeks ago concerning Mr. G. J. Holyoake seems to be of this robust and active character. It has apparently gone round England already, and we fear there is little chance of its being as widely contradicted. The *Portsmouth Evening News*, for instance, says that Mr. Holyoake "was the last person imprisoned in England on a charge of Atheism." But atheism is not an offence known to the law of England. No one was ever imprisoned for it, and no one was ever prosecuted for it. Mr. Holyoake was prosecuted and imprisoned in 1842 under the common law of blasphemy. He was not the last by any means. Several persons were prosecuted under the same law subsequently. The last prosecution was in 1883, when the editor of the *Freethinker* and two of his associates were imprisoned in Holloway Gaol.

A story is being told of a young man who went to Charles Haddon Spurgeon and said, "The Lord has revealed to me that I am to enter your college." "Unfortunately he has not revealed it to me," was the reply, and the youth retired discomfited. The story is not bad, but it does not belong to Spurgeon. It is only another edition of Paine's famous phrase that what is revelation to one man is only hearsay to another. Paine's epigram was one that knocked the bottom out of all general revelation. Any revelation must be individual or it is nothing. Paine said this, as usual, so clearly, that even a Christian preacher could not help seeing the force of it, although he did not always admit that he saw it. A Christian paper can appreciate the point when it doesn't reflect on its religion; when it does it is blasphemy.

Sir Francis Powell, M.P., is of opinion that Church troubles are due to the "want of higher and better education and riper culture among the clergy." Probably, but what does this religious M.P. want? Men of better and higher education and riper culture, in the truer sense of these much-abused words, would not become clergymen. It is only a certain type of intellect that nowadays takes to the pulpit, and if you eliminate this type the pulpits would be vacant. As Sir Francis Powell wants clergymen he must be content with what he can get; if he commences to broaden their minds he will lose them altogether. One can't have a cake and eat it, as the old adage has it.

Another M.P., Mr. T. H. Sloan, declared at a meeting of the Protestant Alliance that "if people took the Bible for their guide there would come the reign of unity, love, and the millennium." Mr. Sloan makes one feel quite proud of the kind of legislator selected by a "free and enlightened democracy." The idea of unity or love being developed by sticking to the Bible is born either of ignorance or hypocrisy. What else is it that divides Christian sects but the fact that they are all taking the Bible as their guide, and are interpreting it in their own way? Eliminate the Bible, and there is nothing for Christians, as such, to quarrel about. And as for unity, this is the last thing we should expect to see brought about by the Bible. The only kind of unity ever produced by organised Christianity is that effected by the Roman Catholic Church, which is produced by the suppression of individual freedom. Geneva under Calvinism, and England and Scotland under Presbyterianism, could also for a time boast of a comparative unity, brought about by the same methods. Jesus Christ, who may, from the theological point of view, be assumed to understand the matter better than Mr. Sloan, is reported as saying that his Gospel would create divisions. Our erudite M.P. is of a different opinion. We should recommend his applying for the Chiltern Hundreds, and directing a few years to the careful study of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if he wishes to see how much love and unity is produced by a study of the Bible.

A father and son were found poisoned in bed in Holloway on April 20. The father had been complaining of pains in the head, and, obviously, during a fit of insanity had killed

himself and son. A letter written by him, and addressed to his wife, ran as follows: "God must have known what I was about to do. Having failed in health, I cannot live. Do not think hard of me. I have loved you as no other would have done. You have been a thoroughly good wife to me, and I have lived with comfort at home. My poor head is in such a whirl. My brain seems in a whirl.....Give my love to all your people. Hope you will soon get over the shock. Good-bye, and God bless you. I hope I will be happy in another world."

The *Daily News* heads this "Strange Delusions." We wonder what the "strange delusions" are. Is the belief that God must have known what he was about to do a delusion? Or is it the belief that he would be happy in another world? There seems nothing else about which a delusion could exist. The pains were not delusions. The love for his wife was not a delusion. If there is a God, he *must* have known what he was about to do, and, in parenthesis, he *ought* at least to have protected the poor little child. And is it not part of the religion of the *Daily News* that we shall all be happier in another world? Yet our pious daily calls these "strange delusions"! Really, it is most difficult to avoid being accurate sometimes.

A number of public men have been appealed to for their opinions on Lord Penrhyn and his action towards the Bethesda quarrymen. Among these was the novelist, Mr. Jerome K. Jerome. Part of his reply runs as follows: "God made a stone quarry at Bethesda; said to the British nation, 'Here is material for you: take it. Shape it into habitations, into roadways, add your labor to it, fashion it to your uses.' One item out of the forty million places himself before it, spreads out its tiny arms, cries, 'No. In the beginning God made these stones for me, Lord Penrhyn. It is written in the Book of the Law—made by myself and a few particular friends. The stones are mine. You shall stand idle, looking at them, needing them. You shall not touch them but with my consent, but upon my terms—mine, Lord Penrhyn, for whom, alone, God intended them.' Think of it, oh members of the Property Defence League; think of it, oh dull-witted, patient British people: God and all His angels, laboring six days and resting on the seventh, to make a world for—Lord Penrhyns!"

We are not quite certain whether all this is meant as sarcasm or not, but if Mr. Jerome believes that God and all his angels created the Bethesda quarries for the benefit of the nation, he places his deity in the ridiculous position of having been outwitted by Lord Penrhyn. God created the quarries millenniums ago, foreseeing the needs of a twentieth-century people, but he did not foresee that one of the atoms he had also created would upset all his arrangements as Satan did in the dawn of creation. Mr. Jerome's far-seeing deity is strangely blind. Besides all this trouble would have been avoided if the deity had fashioned the stone into slabs ready for use. And, to Omnipotence, one thing is as easy as the other.

There are some very fine heroics on view just now over the Government Education Bill. Nonconformist ministers are going to resist the operations of the measure, not by going to prison, as was at first said, but by permitting their goods to be distrained in default of payment of the rate. Doubtless some will submit to this, and with equal certainty many will not. But, after all, courage in a crowd is not a very heroic characteristic. One may have one's opinions of how many of these brave Nonconformists would face persecutions *alone*. To invite persecution, with a consciousness that there is a large public opinion to appeal to for support, and thousands of other ministers to keep one to the sticking point, is really not much to make a fuss over. And yet the Rev. R. J. Campbell and others announce that they will allow the rate-collector to seize their goods, as though the crown of martyrdom already rested on their brow.

We should respect these heroics more than we do if there were really any *principle* involved. But there is not. The only point at issue is whether Nonconformist or Conformist shall rule the roost. The evil that Mr. Campbell complains is inflicted upon him as a Dissenter by this Act are the very evils he has helped to inflict upon all non-Christians. Only the other day he was talking about his belief in unsectarian education, and protesting against being forced to pay for the Church of England religion. A correspondent wrote to a morning paper, asking would Mr. Campbell also support Jews, Atheists, etc., in refusing to pay a school rate part of which went in teaching Christianity. It was a straightforward question, and, had Mr. Campbell meant anything by his heroics, he would have given a straightforward reply. As it was, he left the question unanswered. This, at least,

gives one an idea of the value of the Nonconformist talk of "principle." They care no more for the convictions of non-Christians than other Christians care about theirs.

Speaking at a sparsely-attended conference of clergy and laity at Sion College, the Rev. Dr. O'Brien complained that many members of the Free Library Committees cared extremely little about religion, and but little more about morality. It looks as though the reverend gentleman had tried to select the books himself—and failed.

Miss Alice Jane Beatty has sued the *Month*, a religious magazine, for libel. Comments reflecting on her moral character were made in an article on her story of having been carried off to Chiswick Convent and detained there against her will, until she escaped in her nightdress and cloak. We believe there are many such cases that never come into the light of publicity.

The Christian Police Association, started twenty years ago, is now a big affair with Branches all over the country and some in other lands. Recently it held a great meeting in Exeter Hall, at which Sir Charles Warren presided. The hero of Spion Kop may be regarded as a sort of Christian policeman. He was sent out to catch the Boers, but he couldn't do it. We understand he is much better at praying.

A correspondent, who gives his name and address—William Owen, 2 Jones-square, Troedyrhiw, Merthyr, S. Wales—sends the following experience to the *Daily News*:—"I was employed by a large firm as invoice clerk. I was one day instructed to send a credit note to a customer for goods unsaleable. When invoicing the next consignment I was instructed to include on the invoice an amount to cover the credit note sent a few days previously. I refused, and lost my situation. The chief clerk (who is also a professing Christian) carried out the 'Christian' manager's instruction. Yet when I asked for a reference the manager stated that I carried out my duties to their entire satisfaction, 'was a 'good worker,' 'straightforward,' and were 'sorry to lose' me." Comment would only spoil it.

Rev. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, has been pouring out his pious pessimism to the Hampshire Congregational Union. He referred to the *Daily News* figures of church attendance in London as "appalling." It was no use trying to explain them away. The majority of people were outside the Churches altogether. If there was not a change, the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire would be nothing to the Decline and Fall of the British Empire. But some remedies offered were simply absurd. It was sometimes said that if sermons dealt with labor problems people would go to church. What a pitiful mistake! People did not want so many shillings a week, they wanted a Savior. Yes, but we dare say the Rev. J. D. Jones wants a Savior and so many shillings a week, too.

"Campbell of Brighton," now the "City Temple Campbell," has of course been interviewed by Mr. Raymond Blathwayt, and the result is published in *Household Words*. In the course of the interview, this preacher of transcendent modesty gave utterance to a quiet but quite colossal piece of egotism. "Somehow or another," he said, "under the spiritual stimulus of preaching, people can be made to think up to the mental level of the man who is speaking." Very likely. It doesn't involve much strain to think up to Dr. Campbell's level.

Dr. Campbell noted "how greatly materialism has died down within the last few years." We have heard this sort of thing for at least thirty years. It has been as true all the time as it is now.

"The Death of Atheism" as a sub-heading led us to expect something of the same novel character. Atheism has been dying ever since we knew it. No doubt it will be still dying a hundred years hence. The statement is one of the chestnut wheezes of the pulpit.

"The Atheist," said Dr. Campbell, "who thundered denunciation to a great Hyde Park crowd of working-men only ten years ago, speaks nowadays to a handful of poor ignorant creatures who cannot appreciate his silly blasphemies, and who do not in the least grasp at what he is driving." Name, please! Or is it only a fancy portrait, like the Atheist Shoemaker? Anyhow, poor ignorant creatures ought to be able to appreciate silly blasphemies. That they don't only shows how Dr. Campbell can talk without thinking.

The Bishop of Worcester (late Canon Gore) was at Stratford-on-Avon, preaching the regulation sermon in the parish church on Shakespeare. If the spirit of the Master hovers about the place where his bones rest, he must have smiled at that ascetic-looking individual in the pulpit. Shakespeare never delighted in Puritans.

Shakespeare's Day is St. George's Day in the Calendar. Who the saint was is not quite clear. Probably he was nobody at all, or else the rascally bacon-seller satirised by Emerson. "Somehow," as the *Daily Telegraph* says, "the Bard seems to be better remembered than the Saint."

Cardinal Vaughan permits his flock to call themselves Catholics or Roman Catholics as best suits their convenience; only they must be careful not to use "Roman" too much in England, where the Protestants have made it an epithet of reproach. For legal purposes, as when making a bequest to the Church, they should always write "Roman Catholic," for then no one else would dare to claim it. Which shows that the Cardinal has a good eye for business.

E. Kay Robinson, who writes on "British Wild Life" in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, may be a man or a woman; or, for all we know, may belong to the third sex, of clergymen. This writer, whether he, she, or otherwise, after quoting some pious and fanciful verses entitled "A Legend of the Birds," in which God inflicts suffering upon them to make them sing better, goes on to claim that these verses "figuratively reveal the whole doctrine of evolution." Advancement, we are told, is only won by stress and suffering. Science states the fact, and can go no further; whereas Religion says it was ordained by the inscrutable wisdom of God. Science has "no data" for such a statement; but Religion has—although the writer omits to say how it obtained them and why they were not equally available to Science. For our part, we seriously doubt whether E. Kay Robinson quite understands "the whole doctrine of evolution." As stated by a Darwin or a Haeckel, it leaves no room for a wise and good God behind the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Even with regard to the birds, it is pretty enough to say in the manner of a Sunday-school poet laureate that their wings carry them up towards God; but where do their wings carry them in frightful storms, or when the cold freezes the warm life in their breasts, or when they migrate and perish by myriads on the way? This writer would do better to tell "the whole truth" than pretend to grasp (wrongly) "the whole doctrine of evolution."

The Origin of Man.

AMONG the appendices to Lord Cromer's reports on Egypt and the Soudan for 1902 is an interesting note on the religious beliefs of the tribes dwelling along the banks of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. The Dinka, it says, though the most difficult of all to approach on such subjects, appears to have a most elaborate list of gods and demi-gods. At the head of the divine community are Deng-Dit (Rain-Giver) and Abok, his wife. They have two sons, Kur Kongs, the elder, and Gurung-Dit, the younger, and a daughter called Ai-Yak. Their devil is called L'wal Burrajok, and is the father of Abok, the wife of Deng-Dit. There are other relatives also. Their story of the origin of mankind (or, it may be, of the Dinka tribe) is curious and poetical. Deng-Dit gave to his wife Abok a bowl of fat, and she and her children, softening the fat over the fire, proceeded to mould from it men and women in the image of the gods. Deng-Dit warned her against L'wal (the devil), who was suspected of having evil intentions towards Deng-Dit. But Abok forgot, and with her children went to gather wood in the forest. There L'wal found the bowl, drank the greater part of the fat, and from the remainder proceeded to mould caricatures of men and women with distorted limbs, mouths, and eyes. Then, fearing the vengeance of Deng-Dit, he descended to earth by the path which then connected it with heaven. On discovering the result of her neglect, Abok hastened to her husband, who, greatly incensed, started in pursuit of L'wal. The latter, however, had persuaded the bird Atoi-toish to bite asunder with its bill the path from heaven to earth, and he thus escaped from the divine wrath.—*Daily Telegraph*.

AN EXAMPLE FROM NATURE.—"What would you say," began the voluble prophet of woe, "if I were to tell you that in a very short space of time all the rivers of this country would dry up?" "I would say," replied the patient man, "Go thou and do likewise."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended for the present.)

To Correspondents.

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

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

R. CARRURY.—Pleased to hear that you and your friends so appreciated the "Acid Drop." The subject of it, however, is not worth recurring to; otherwise your lines should be inserted. We note your wish to read more from the pen of the scientific gentleman who so cleverly replied to his would-be soul-saver.

E. PURCHES.—Thanks for the cuttings.

J. E. LING.—Thanks for the reference to the Shelley picture. We will try to see it. Sorry you have lost what you are good enough to call your "intellectual treat" at the Athenæum Hall, but hope you will be able to enjoy it again (elsewhere) before long.

F. S.—Thanks. We have dealt with the matter in "Acid Drops"—we hope to your satisfaction.

S. J. B.—In our next. Pleased to hear from you again.

STAFF-SERGEANT.—We shall print your letter on Indian Converts next week. It is curious how successfully the humbug of Foreign Missions is maintained in this country.

J. DUNSMORE.—We fear it is outside our scope, at least for the present, to find room for a correspondence on whether man is a superior animal to the "brutes." The question is not a very practical one, anyhow, is it?

E. CHAPMAN, Secretary of the South Shields Branch, writes:—"It has been decided to hold the forthcoming Conference of Whit-Sunday, May 31, at South Shields. The town is well situated on the North-East coast, half an hour's ride from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Though practically the centre of the Durham coal trade, it is yet almost as popular as a pleasure resort as the neighboring borough of Tynemouth, on the North bank of the river. The unrivalled pier, promenades, splendid sands, beautiful marine parks, and interesting rockbound scenery of Marsden Bay, render it specially attractive to those delegates who wish to combine business and pleasure. Granted that the weather gods smile—which is not guaranteed—no better place can be found for a seaside holiday. The local friends have received the news of the Executive's decision with enthusiasm, and are prepared to put forward every effort to make the Conference as great a success as it was in 1888. Mr. S. M. Peacock, 35 Baring-street, has consented to act as hon. sec. of the Special Conference Fund which is being raised, and the assistance of local Branches, individual members, and all other friends is cordially invited. Communications should be addressed to the Sec., Mr. E. Chapman, 32 James Mather-terrace, South Shields."

RANA SARDAISINGHI, B.A., and M. GODREJ, B.A. (Bombay).—We have received the pamphlet you take the trouble to send us, and will read it through carefully, with a view to mentioning its contents in the *Freethinker*.

J. W. GOTT.—Thanks for the cutting. We are glad to hear that religion is exciting so much interest in Bradford. This is sure to be of advantage in the long run to Freethought. The greatest enemy to our cause is indifference. Christian bodies take advantage of that to hold their own and ignore criticism.

GERALD GREY.—Probably the greatest utterance of all on the subject is Spinoza's "The man who regrets is twice miserable." Glad to hear you are able to send copies of the *Freethinker* about. This is good work. It is scattering seed. Some will spring up somewhere.

D. B. ANTON.—We have handed your letter, with enclosure, to Miss Vance. You have acted honorably in the matter,

S. BURGON.—Mr. Foote is writing you personally.

A LOVER OF "BOOK CHAT."—The best pocket edition of Shakespeare is the "Temple," edited by Israel Gallancz and published by Dent & Co. The only drawback, though that can hardly be helped considering the get-up, is the price. The leather set comes to about £3. But it is the edition for the pocket, and you can buy the volumes separately.

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.

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Personal.

I AM sorry to say that I had to send Mr. Cohen to lecture for me at Manchester on Sunday; he having kindly consented to stand in the gap caused by my indisposition. There were very good audiences, particularly in the evening, when the Secular Hall was crowded. No announcement of a change in the program was possible beforehand, as I did not know I could not keep the engagement before Saturday morning; but I am sure that those who assembled to hear me, however much they regretted my absence, must have had a good time in Mr. Cohen's company.

While not seriously ill, I could not have gone to Manchester without incurring a considerable risk; indeed, I do not believe I could have got through the lectures in any case. I was in bed, as a matter of fact, and in the doctor's hands.

This unfortunate circumstance would not call for any special observation in itself. But it has an important relation to other matters.

When I broke down in January my doctor advised me to bring my season's lecturing to a close as soon as possible, and give my lungs and vocal apparatus generally an ample opportunity of recovering their tone. A short rest, he said, was of very little use; for I had suffered a severe strain less than a year previously, from which I had not completely recovered. I was, so to speak, like a man with a sore place, which would never heal satisfactorily while he kept knocking it.

In my anxiety to return to the Freethought platform, which is not too crowded at present with speakers who can command good audiences, I did not pay sufficient attention to my doctor's advice. Those who heard me speak must have seen at times that I was struggling with difficulties.

I have now decided to do what I might have done earlier. I shall give myself a complete rest from lecturing. I have written to Liverpool to say I regret I cannot come on May 10. Of course I shall strain a point to attend the Annual Conference, which is a special occasion. But that is all I can promise to undertake.

There is plenty of other work to go on with. I shall not be idle. What I feel is that I must be careful.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

The voting has gone in favor of holding the National Secular Society's Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday at South Shields. Many years have elapsed since the Conference was held on the Tyneside, and we hope it will give a fillip to the cause in the district. A fine and centrally-situated hall, capable of holding fifteen hundred people, has been secured for the evening public meeting, which will be addressed by Messrs. Foote and Cohen and other N. S. S. speakers, whose names will be announced in due course.

The Scottish "saints" should really make an effort to be actively represented at this Conference. There ought, in

especial, to be a good delegation from Glasgow. Whitsuntide is not a regular holiday in Scotland, where the Puritans knocked off all such frivolities in the interest of hard work. Nevertheless the Conference this year is so near the border that the attendance of Glasgow and Edinburgh friends, at least, should reasonably be expected.

Individual members of the N. S. S., who have joined through the headquarters in London, have a right to attend the annual Conference, and to speak and vote. They may rely upon it that they will be thoroughly welcome. They will find that there are special facilities for cheap travelling on all the railways at that season.

English Branches of the N. S. S. should be represented in strong force at this year's Conference. There are special reasons why it should be a great success from every point of view. A splendid gathering will show all the enemies of the N. S. S. that organised Freethought is far from being dead, as they repeatedly declared. It must be remembered, too, that the enemies of the N. S. S. do not all belong to the Christian camp.

The May number of the *Pioneer* is now ready. We believe its contents will be found both useful and interesting. Our friends are earnestly requested to push its circulation amongst their acquaintances, and in other possible directions. It ought to command a large sale at the outdoor lecture-stations. One idea in starting it was to have a penny paper, which is far more readily introduced to the public than one at twopence—as well as to have a Freethought paper with a less aggressive title than the *Freethinker*.

We are glad to see that a flourishing report was presented at the recent annual meeting of the National Sunday League. In London alone, it appears, the Sunday evening meetings attract half a million persons during the winter seasons. We are far from pretending to believe that this is a perfectly ideal state of things. There ought to be good thinking on Sunday as well as good music and other recreations. Still, the good music is infinitely better than a bad sermon, and the Sunday League is doing a good work in providing it.

The twenty-third of April is beginning to be known as Shakespeare's Day. No doubt in the course of time it will be universally accepted as such. We mean in England. This year there were celebrations in London as well as at Stratford-on-Avon; the new London Shakespeare League holding a commemoration dinner at the Criterion, with Dr. F. J. Furnivall in the chair, and Dr. Garnett and Mr. Isreal Gollancz (editor of the "Temple" Shakespeare) amongst the company.

To-day (May 3) Mr. Cohen lectures at Aberdare, South Wales, at 11, 3, and 6.30. The lectures will be delivered in the Town Hall, and we hope that there will be a good muster of friends from the surrounding districts.

SKY PILOTS.

There is a great difference between the sea pilot and the sky pilot. The honest salt boards the ship, and takes her out to sea, or brings her into port. When the work is over he presents his bill. He does not ask for payment in advance. He neither takes nor gives credit. But the sky pilot takes credit and gives none. He is always paid beforehand. Every year he expects a good retaining fee in the shape of a stipend or a benefice, or a good percentage of the pew rents and collections. But when his services are really wanted he leaves you in the lurch. You do not need a pilot to Heaven until you come to die. Then your voyage begins in real earnest. But the sky pilot does not go with you. Oh dear no! That is no part of *his* business. "Ah, my friend," he says, "I must leave you now. You must do the rest for yourself. I have coached you for years in celestial navigation; if you remember my lessons you will have a prosperous voyage. Good day, dear friend. I'm going to see another customer. But we shall meet again."—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Freethought*."

AMBIGUOUS.—It was a New York pastor who received the following from one of his parishioners: "My Dear Pastor,—I have been sick for two months and have not been able to hear your excellent sermons, which has been a great comfort to me."

A Scientific Poet.

"Verse is the form most apt to preserve whatever the writer confides to it, and we can, I believe, confide to it, besides all sentiments, almost all ideas."—SULLY PRUDHOMME.

A STRIKING example of the isolation of the Anglo-Saxon mind is seen in the fact that Sully Prudhomme, who has received the Nobel prize for the greatest work in pure literature, is so little known to English readers. But then, the average Englishman would have difficulty in naming any living French poet except Rostand. Poetry is essentially untranslatable, and those whose literary education is limited know the classics of their ancestors, but not the masterpieces of their contemporaries. People commonly believe that this is a scientific age, and that good poetry is impossible in such an atmosphere. The poets themselves help this delusion by seeking their subjects from the past. Instead of drawing inspiration from the world around them they find themes in the Greek drama, the fables of King Arthur, or the legends of the Vikings. To those who admire the sham antique school of poetry, it must be a shock that the prize for the ideal in literature goes to the man who more than any other living poet has embodied in his verse the new material gathered by science, and has best expressed the questioning spirit which characterises this age.

Sully Prudhomme is a scientist as well as a poet. The trend of his imagination and his modes of thought are scientific. He is not the

"Bobby Burns to sing the song of steam"

whom Kipling calls for. He is not a poet of the people, like Beranger, or a writer of music-hall songs. But he differs from most literary men in that he has caught a glimpse of the new poetry which science has revealed and which is so much grander than that which it has destroyed. He does not hold to the theory that the vocabulary of three centuries ago is better fitted to express modern thought and feeling than the living language of to-day. A poet who sings of balloons and barometers, of submarine cables and photography, of evolution and specific gravity determinations, is a novelty to the critics. According to the popular standard the sword is more poetical than the revolver. Cavalry may be mentioned, but to introduce torpedo boats into poetry is to attempt too much. That Sully Prudhomme should utilise astronomy is taken for granted. But that he should talk of chemistry and biology is unpardonable. In English the difference between the literary and the vulgar vocabularies is greater than in French. There is all the more need of poets bold enough to bridge the gulf which separates literature from life. The success of Sully Prudhomme should stimulate our poets to develop the deeper meaning and hidden beauty of life.

This is not by any means an entirely new note in literature. Twenty centuries ago Lucretius made his readers thrill with his magnificent presentation of the atomic theory and other scientific ideas. But this presentation of the hidden truths of nature hardly found any further poetic expression until the advent of the nineteenth century.

Among the qualities which science will tend to develop in poetry are clarity and sincerity, and both these are prominent in the poems of Sully Prudhomme. Indeed, Brunetiére, as leader of the reactionaries, complains that he is "too conscientious," and says that he is "too much afraid of the Sorbonne and the Ecole Polytechnique, and does not care enough for the ordinary reader." Brunetiére evidently misses the freedom of phrases when poets sought rather to be musical than truthful, and did not care what they said so long as they said it beautifully. Granting that over-nicety is a blemish, is it not possible that poetry can acquire the exactitude demanded by science without losing its charm? Sully Prudhomme has proved that it can. Tennyson, too, in our own tongue, has shown the same thing. Passages from *In Memoriam* and *The Two Voices*, as well

as from *Le Bonheur* and *La Justice* express scientific theories or metaphysical arguments as accurately as could any technical treatise, and prove that it is not necessary to be false in order to be poetical.

It was once thought that the advance of science would make poetry impossible. We now realise that science discloses more mysteries than it solves. There is more poetry to be seen through the microscope and the telescope than with the naked eye. Sully Prudhomme has a truer insight into the significance of the effect of science on poetry than Keats, consummate artist that he was.

Like Whitman, Prudhomme does not find it necessary in his interpretation of nature to use the old machines in the literary property-room. What beauty and force the metaphors of science may give to literature has been abundantly shown by Ruskin and Tennyson in English prose and poetry. Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee* is an example of what may be achieved by those who can handle the new symbolism. It requires a master-hand to use the crude material excavated by science, because it is lacking in poetical associations. There is always the danger of embodying unassimilable matter. The average poet masks his incapacity by using words and thoughts which he knows are poetical because poets of the past have used them.

It is not of so much importance that Sully Prudhomme has sometimes failed as it is that he has so often succeeded in bringing under the domain of poetry so much alien territory. It is a great triumph for the greatest of the arts, the finest flower of the mind.

Sully Prudhomme has extended the domain of poetry as far as possible. Maybe he occasionally passes over the boundary of poetry into prose, and even into the prosaic, in his use of unconventional expressions and in putting into verse ideas essentially unpoetical. The boundary line depends largely on the reader. Oliver Wendell Holmes succeeded in *The Chambered Nautilus*, and failed in *The Living Temple*, although it would be hard to say why the anatomy of a mollusc should be more susceptible of poetical employ than that of man. No living poet has extended the domain of poetry further than Prudhomme, whose excursions have been both in the realms of fancy and speculative thought.

What seems most foreign in the poetry of Sully Prudhomme is his frequent tone of sadness, sinking at times, as in the *Vœu*, into the depths of pessimism. Not but what he is cheerful compared with most French writers, who, though often joyful in life, are seldom cheerful in literature. Sully Prudhomme's melancholy does not take the personal and theatrical form of Byron or Lamartine, but is dry, clear, and cold, an intellectual despondency. Sully Prudhomme takes refuge as did Auguste Comte, in the Religion of Humanity.

In *Le Bonheur* Faustus seeks for the meaning of life, first in enjoyment, then in the answers given to the riddle of the universe by philosophers, scientists, and theologians. But he is not satisfied and resolves to devote himself to the rearing of a new race. He thus reaches the same utilitarian conclusion as the elder Faust, though by a different route.

The theology of Sully Prudhomme seems to consist chiefly of a poetic personification. A vague pantheism and a clouded optimism appear at times. Death is to him, as to Whitman, the Liberator as well as the Supreme Consoler. His philosophy of life is stoicism, that magnificent philosophy which appealed alike to Epictetus and to Marcus Aurelius, the lowly slave and the mighty emperor.

MIMNERMUS.

A TRIBUTE.—A rough miner died out West, and was laid away by his fellow laborers, with a common slab of stone to mark his resting-place. On the stone was this inscription: "Bill Jenkins; died June 13, 1901. He done his damdest. Angels could do more."—*Boston Herald*.

Moses and the Pentateuch.—I.

IT may seem, at first sight, to be a matter of no consequence whether the first five books of the Old Testament were written by one man, an alleged law-giver named Moses, some time before the Israelites entered Canaan, or were composed many centuries later by four or five different writers. When, however, we come to look into the subject a little closer, we find it to be one of considerable importance; for the question affects not only the inspiration imputed to the Old and New Testament writers, but is a means of testing the knowledge and veracity of Jesus Christ himself—that is, of course, of the Jesus delineated in the Gospels.

In the first place, the Mosaic authorship of the five books is plainly implied, if not distinctly asserted, in the Pentateuch itself. Thus we read:—

Exod. xvii. 14.—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book," etc.

Exod. xxiv. 4.—"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord," etc.

Deut. xxxi. 9.—"And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests," etc.

Deut. xxxi. 24.—"When Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book until they were finished," etc. (See also Deut. xxviii. 58; xxxi. 26; etc.).

In the next place, one of the books of the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy) is expressly ascribed to Moses in the following passage:—

"On that day they read in the book of Moses.....and therein was found written that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God for ever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, to curse them," etc. (Neh. xiii. 1-2).

The portion of the Pentateuch to which reference is made is Deut. xxiii. 3-4. From the foregoing passage there can be no doubt that the authorship of the so-called "books of Moses" is plainly attributed to the mythical personage so named.

Next, both the Jews in the time of Christ and all the Christian "Fathers" believed the Pentateuch or "Law" to have been written by Moses. Josephus and Justin Martyr may be cited as examples.

Lastly, all the New Testament writers firmly believed these five books to have been given by the hand of Moses. The author of the Fourth Gospel, for instance, says: "For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (i. 17). The author of the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles refers several times to the books of the Pentateuch as written by Moses (Luke xvi. 31; xxiv. 44; Acts iii. 22; vii. 37; xv. 21; xxvi. 22). The apostle Paul had the same belief as to the authorship of those books (Rom. x. 5, 19; 2 Cor. iii. 15). So, also, had the unknown writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. ix. 19; x. 28).

But, besides the steadfast belief of the sacred writers mentioned, we have what all Christians deem the very highest authority for regarding Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. This, it is scarcely necessary to say, is the recognition and endorsement of the claim by no less a personage than Jesus Christ himself. In the Second and Third Gospels that great Teacher is represented as saying:—

"But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err" (Mark xx. 26; Luke xx. 37).

Here, it may be remarked, it was not the Jews, but Jesus himself, who did "greatly err." His argument, drawn from Exod. iii. 6, is childish, and contains no proof "that the dead are raised." The Gospel Jesus, like the modern Christian Evidence man, has very shaky ideas as to what constitutes evidence.

Again, in the First and Second Gospels we read:—

"And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto him, *What did*

Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorce, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart *he wrote you this commandment*" (Mark x. 2-5; Matt. xix. 8).

The legislation here referred to as written and given to the Jews by Moses is found in Deut. xxiv. 1-4. As a third example, the author of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as saying:—

"Did not Moses give you *the law*, and yet none of you doeth the law?.....Think not that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, *even Moses*, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for *he wrote of me*. But if ye believe not *his writings*, how shall ye believe my words" (John vii. 23; v. 45-47).

In the foregoing remarkable passage we have, besides the ascription of the Pentateuch to Moses, several undoubtedly false statements. In the first place, it is not true that the Jews in the time of Christ did not act in accordance with the Law which they attributed to Moses. They were, if anything, too scrupulous in their observance of that law. In the next place, it is equally untrue that the Jews were condemned by the "law of Moses" for their rejection of Christ. In the third place, the Jews *did* believe the writings ascribed to Moses, and this belief did *not* cause them to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. Lastly, the statement that Moses wrote concerning Christ is untrue. If Jesus uttered the words attributed to him in the Fourth Gospel, then—no matter who was the author of the Pentateuch—he told the Jews an unmitigated falsehood. There is not one word in any of the five "books of Moses" that has the smallest reference to Jesus Christ. The last quoted passage from the Fourth Gospel is thus nothing less than a tissue of false statements.

Setting aside, for the present, this luminous sample of Biblical truth, there is one fact that stands out clearly in all the passages quoted. This is, that both Christ and the New Testament writers assert as a matter of which there could be no question that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. This circumstance furnishes us with another example of the fact that Jesus knew only what the Gospel writers knew; that is to say, the ideas expressed by the Savior, whether right or wrong, are never at variance with those held by his biographers and the early Christians.

The same so-called divine personage has, according to the Gospels, vouched for the truth of the following Old Testament narratives: Noah's ark and the Deluge; the destruction of Sodom by fire from heaven; Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt; the Brazen Serpent in the wilderness; the multiplication of the widow's oil and meal by the prophet Elijah; the miraculous healing of Naaman the leper by Elisha; Jonah living three days and three nights in the stomach of a "great fish"; and the repentance in sackcloth and ashes of the whole population of Nineveh at the preaching of the same Hebrew prophet. Christ further believed that the Psalms were composed by David, and that the book of Daniel was written by the prophet of that name who is mentioned in the book.

All these matters, which Jesus, in common with every other Jew of his time, imagined to be historical or authentic, can be shown to be a mass of fables. And it is the credulous personage who believed all these Old Testament fictions whom we are asked to believe was a divine Being—the "Son of God." It has also to be borne in mind that these references to the Old Testament are stated to have been made by Jesus *after* the Holy Ghost (the alleged source of inspiration) had descended upon him at his baptism. His ignorance is therefore conclusive proof that he possessed no divine knowledge whatever. And this being the case, it is really amazing to read some of the statements ascribed to him in the Gospels. Thus, in John iii. 12, he is represented as saying to Nicodemus: "If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" How, indeed? But, seriously, the fact of Christ being ignorant of "earthly things" is no

reason why he should be credited with a knowledge of "heavenly things." And, as a matter of fact, no such knowledge is to be found in any of the four Gospels.

To examine all the statements respecting the narratives and the writers of the Old Testament which are ascribed to Christ in the Gospels would be long and tedious. It will suffice, I think, to consider that in which Moses is said to be the author of the Pentateuch; that is to say, whether the so-called "books of Moses" were written in the age when Moses is supposed to have lived. This question, as already stated, is a test both of the knowledge imputed to Jesus Christ and the inspiration attributed to the New Testament writers. These stand or fall together. To determine this crucial question it is only necessary to turn to the Old Testament. Here we find the best evidence it is possible to have—the internal evidence of the books themselves.

It may, perhaps, be urged that such an examination is now unnecessary, since many critical scholars—some occupying responsible positions in the Christian Church—have admitted the non-Mosaic authorship of the books in question. This is, to a certain extent, true; but it is unsafe to trust to anyone in matters of religion. As a matter of fact, the great mass of the clergy, as well as the editors of religious periodicals, flatly deny the soundness of the conclusions at which the few advanced scholars have arrived; which conclusions are characterised as theories and inferences unsupported by evidence. Furthermore, not one in a thousand, probably, of all the church and chapel-goers has ever heard of such critics as Drs. Driver, Ryle, Cheyne, etc., or is even aware that the authenticity of the Pentateuch has ever been questioned. I will, therefore, with the Editor's permission, briefly examine some of the evidence. Every intelligent reader will then be able to decide the matter for himself.

ABRACADABRA.

The Darkness of Ignorance.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS

(Minister of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Mo.)

IT has long been held that ignorance is the sister of faith, an accessory to the plan of salvation, an accomplice of the work of grace, a kind of sentinel keeping guard before the citadel of faith. Knowledge has been under suspicion, enlightenment has been feared and dreaded, investigation has been discouraged lest something long believed should be found unable to qualify. The conclusions of the past have been defended, the conclusions of the present have been attacked. The sceptre has been held by hands of dust, the living have been forced to abdicate in favor of the dead.

Men have sought for inspiration in cemeteries, for truth in tombs; for the purple of authority they have substituted the vestments of death. The priest and the printing-press have not reached an understanding; the Pope is still in doubt about the school-house. The Church at large has never exchanged courtesies with science, while thousands of really good men still use the term "Higher Criticism" as a term of reproach. In order to have commanding influence in the religious world, a man must have been dead a few thousand years—the longer dead the more influence; the deader he was the better they liked him. The Church has been suspicious of a live man; they could not be sure of him. With the dead it was different; a corpse could be controlled. Religion has loved the sepulchre; every church displays the Cross—the instrument of death. Monks fight for the blessed privilege of sweeping the steps of a church built above a Judean tomb. While science was exploring with the telescope the heavens, the Church was digging in graveyards for prophets' bones. The past is fear and faith; the present,

investigation and doubt; the future, knowledge and liberty.

THE PULPIT'S POWER IS FEAR.

Men and women are not as bad as most people say, nor as bad as they sometimes appear. The old world is more good than bad, and growing better as the years pass. The human world has suffered much from the tongue of slander. Men have been paid to paint it bad. It has been damned for revenue. Upon every pulpit hang the red lights proclaiming danger. The pulpit has derived its power from fear—fear of the future, fear of hell, fear of God. Under the influence of fear men will sacrifice their rights, their reason, their conscience. Sufficiently-frightened men will do anything senseless, insane, absurd. Fear makes men abject, subservient, servile. They can be controlled. This the pulpit has understood, and has threatened and thundered. There is an intimate connection between hell and the contribution-box.

It cannot be denied that it is knowledge that changes the world. Men are beginning to ask, If there is no hell and no personal devil, what are we paying the preachers for? How can they earn their salary? What is there left for them to do? It is knowledge, not faith, that changes the world. The thinkers, the inventors, discoverers, and explorers make new maps, new customs, new creeds. Every geography became instantly obsolete when Magellan furled his sails. Columbus took a compass and added continents to the world of man. Religion does not do these things. While religion is counting beads, muttering prayers, and protesting that faith will remove mountains, industry and invention go through with a tunnel and let the mountain stand. If they wish to have it removed, they do not pray; they dig. They do not get a prayer-book, but a shovel. These things are gradually dawning upon the intelligence of man. Religion is potent in proportion as it violates its own theories and contradicts its own profession of faith. Prayer is appealed to as a compulsive force with less and still less confidence as the relations between cause and effect become understood.

THE RHETORICAL AND THE ACTUAL.

It may be safely assumed that all sincere men have one common end in view—namely, the welfare of the human world. However much men may differ in the plan and theory and ceremony and creed, nevertheless, that is the one end that actuates and inspires them all—the happiness of mankind. Some defer it to another world; some deny it even there for a part of the human race; some are more particular about the way it is attained than about the thing itself. Nevertheless, there is the one end, the human welfare. The rhetorical phrases, such as the "Glory of God" and the "Kingdom of Christ," are void of meaning, save only as they embrace the happiness of mankind. The Church exists rhetorically for the glory of God and the spread of Christ's kingdom; it exists actually for the betterment of the human world.

It is one of the strangest infatuations of religion that God needed it. So men have brought sacrifices to placate him, uttered prayers to persuade him, sung prayers to please him, and with a thousand rites and ceremonies fondly fancied that they have been serving God. But God cannot be glorified when his children are enslaved, or oppressed, or miserable, or wretched; and when his children are happy and free God is glorified already. If he is infinite, then he is unchangeable and conditionless; he can neither be pleased nor provoked, complimented nor offended, gladdened nor angered, praised, blamed, appeased, placated, or bribed. It surely cannot be of great concern to him who made the unvalled temple of the sky inlaid with suns what the mutterings and genuflexions of men are in the temples made with hands. Religion has imagined that there were certain ceremonies—baptism, for instance—of vast moment to the infinite. Some have contended that

unless a man were baptised he could not be saved; until that act was performed, God was helpless; he couldn't do a thing for him; the most he could do was to put him on the waiting-list. Unbaptised infants were believed to slip at the magical touch of death out of their mother's arms and God's into eternal night. Some have contended that the very form of the ceremony was of great importance to the maker of worlds. Others have said that the form was not so particular; still others have contended that the infinite maker of constellations and stars would not even consider anything except immersion. They probably thought that since he had made the world three-fourths water he intended they should use plenty of it.

THE BASIS OF SYMPATHY.

After all, there is a unity of purpose in all religions. Let us not lose sight for an instant of that fact. There are many plans, many theories, many creeds; but, underlying them all, one purpose. In this we have a broad and sufficient basis for sympathy. Let us repeat it again and again, however much men of various faith and creed may differ in the things superficial, transient, and inconsequent; they, after all, are moved by one great and noble purpose. We may shake our fists at the way each other travels, but we will shake hands when we have all arrived. I may abhor Catholicism, I can yet like the Catholic; I may detest poke bonnets and religious uniforms, and yet approve of the work which the Salvation Army is trying to do. And here and now I extend the tokens of friendship and fraternity to every sincere and honest man of every faith or creed, or of no faith or creed; to the robed priest, in spite of his senseless solemnities; to the Presbyterian, in spite of his kindergarten in hell; to the Unitarian, who keeps the historic form and denies the historic significance; to the Christian Scientist, who denies the substantiality of matter and yet buys good, substantial ground and builds temples of stone; to the Baptist, who abjures the overland route; to the Methodist, who thinks God is deaf, and to the Congregationalist, who does not know what he does think.

(To be continued.)

The Work of the Humanitarian League.

THE Humanitarian League held its annual meeting at Essex Hall, Strand, on Friday evening, April 24, when there was a full attendance of members and friends. The Annual Report for 1902 shows that the activities and influence of the League have been well maintained, especially in the department of the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Committee. Mr. Herbert Burrows, speaking with a special knowledge of the work of this department, paid a tribute to the useful though unpretentious labours of its hon. secretary, Mr. Joseph Collinson, whose zeal and energy deserved the highest praise. The meeting afterwards resolved itself into a conversation, varied by recitations. The Rev. A. L. Lilley gave readings from the works of Robert Buchanan and other authors, and Miss Florence Farr chanted poems of Blake, Whitman, and Shelley, with the accompaniment to the Psaltery made by Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch. Among those present were Mr. J. Frederick Green, Mr. Howard Williams, M.A., Miss Isabella O. Ford, Miss Honor Morten, Captain Carpenter, D.S.O., Captain Quintanilha, Hon. Fitzroy Stewart, Colonel Benson, Mrs. Brace, Mrs. C. Mallett, Mr. Ernest Bell, M.A., Professor Long, Mrs. Nelson, Mrs. E. Bell, Colonel Coulson, J.P., and many other well-known workers in the humanitarian cause.

PERSONIFICATIONS.

If the devils were only personifications of evil, what were the angels? Was the angel who told Joseph who the father of Christ was, a personification? Was the Holy Ghost only the personification of a father? Was the angel who told Joseph that Herod was dead a personification of news? Were the angels who rolled away the stone and sat clothed in shining garments in the empty sepulchre of Christ a couple of personifications? Were all the angels described in the Old Testament imaginary shadows—bodily personifications? If the angels of the Bible are real angels, the devils are real devils.—*Ingersoll.*

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, Conversazione.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. McCabe, "The Golden Age."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, J. T. Grein, "The Stage as an Ethical Force."

OUTDOOR.

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

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

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. Mile End Waste.—11.30, A Lecture.

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

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, F. A. Davies, "The Meaning of Atheism,"

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE (Town Hall).—11, 3, and 6.30, C. Cohen.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. H. Memmuir, "Lives of Some Noble Men." Discussion invited. Music at 6.15.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Geo. Muirhead, "The Evolution of Society"; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Shall we Live After we are Dead?" 7, "Is There a God: An Atheist's Answer." Saturday, May 2, at 8, Mr. Ward lectures in the Islington Square (weather permitting).

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, Percy Redfern, "The Old Religion and the New."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7. Business meeting. Conference arrangements.

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