

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Public Opinion especially acts upon the imagination; it does not convince, but it impresses; it has the force of authority, rather than of reason; and concurrence in it is, not an intelligent decision, but a submission or belief.*—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

## Science and Faith.

EARL BEACONSFIELD, when plain Benjamin Disraeli, is said to have sneered at a certain Liberal statesman—it was Lord Selborne, we believe—as a man without a single redeeming vice, who taught in a Sunday-school. It appears, however, that Sunday-schools are not considered such low-class puritanic establishments nowadays. There is even a Midland Adult Sunday School Association which held a great meeting lately in the Birmingham Town Hall. The Lord Mayor presided, and was accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, and the gathering was addressed by no less distinguished a person than Sir Oliver Lodge. This fact, indeed, gave it all its real importance; for Sir Oliver Lodge's name carries great weight as that of an eminent scientist, and he was there to give the sanction of his authority to the orthodox faith. The meeting opened with prayer and a reading from the Bible, and was therefore of the utmost imaginable orthodoxy; and it must be admitted that Sir Oliver Lodge's address was quite in harmony with the rest of the proceedings.

When we say that Sir Oliver Lodge was giving the sanction of his authority to the orthodox faith, it must not be supposed that his name exerts any influence over our own judgment. There is no authority in the court of reason—and generally very little reason in the court of authority. In the court of reason every man's name—the highest as well as the lowest, and the lowest as well as the highest—carries precisely the weight of his arguments. Sensible men always judge for themselves; and, if their experience is wide enough, they recognise that experts in one department may be extremely incapable in another. A first-rate bootmaker may make a frightful mess of darning a stocking; a splendid painter may be a miserable duffer on the piano; some very great writers (Scott, for instance) have absolutely no ear for music, and, except for the words, cannot tell Auld Lang Syne from God Save the King; a great geologist may be a tyro at mathematics; a great soldier may be a fool as a statesman; and, even in common life, the capital man of business sometimes astonishes us by the imbecility of his observations on subjects that are beyond the province of his special capacity. In the same way, a great man of science in one direction, like Lord Kelvin, may talk great nonsense in another direction—for instance, in biology; just as a great biologist, like Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, may talk great nonsense in another direction—for instance, in astronomy; and there are even cases, like that of Faraday, in which a great man of science refuses to let his mind operate on the contents of his religious faith, and is nevertheless cited as a conspicuous witness to its truth. Bearing these things in mind, no intelligent man will bow down to any authority whatsoever. And as we claim to be intelligent, at least to this extent, we are not going to be imposed upon by any

“great name”—not even by that of Sir Oliver Lodge. We hope he wishes men to think for themselves. Why else does he take the trouble to address them?

There is also this to be said. Science touches faith at some points, and not at all at others. If the book of Genesis gives a wrong order of creation, it is competent for a biologist like Huxley to say it is false; but if it be said that God originally created the matter of the universe, Science does not say “Yes” or “No” to the proposition. Science, again, can neither affirm nor deny a future life. A Cherokee Indian knows as much about it as Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge. This implies, of course, that the belief of all three rests on precisely the same foundation; either upon evidence met with in the ordinary course of experience, or upon a principle of faith, which really means a trust in the authority of our religious teachers. Science follows a man from birth to death, but declines to have anything to do with him afterwards, and takes no interest in the statement that he still lives in some unearthly conditions.

It seems clear, then, that even when Sir Oliver Lodge speaks on “The Tendency of Modern Science,” his words are not necessarily valuable if the “tendency” relates to matters of pure faith, that is of mere speculation. And perhaps we shall find that his words, in this instance, are only the expression of his personal opinions.

Sir Oliver Lodge says that the word which marks the tendency of modern science is “unification.” We first learnt the unity of force, then the unity of life, then the unity of matter, and then the unity of process. This he calls “a system under one government, one kingdom of law.” But he is passing, in this language, from fact to metaphor; or, if you will, from science to poetry. The word “law” properly belongs to jurisprudence. Such a “law” can be broken, and the violation carries a penalty. But a so-called “law” of nature cannot be broken—as Sir Oliver Lodge admits. There is really no analogy between a legal promulgation and a natural fact; between the “law” that murderers will be hung and the “law” that oxygen and hydrogen combine chemically as water. Some other word—say “method” or “process”—ought to be used in the latter instance. It may be said, indeed, that the taking over of the word “law” from jurisprudence to physical science has been a godsend to the religionists. They have worked this fallacy of confusion for all it was worth. “Law” itself was impressive enough—in a country with judges, juries, constables, gaolers, prisons, and criminals; and the passage from “law” to “lawgiver” was as easy as sucking eggs to the average mind. Never did such a tremendous edifice of belief rest upon such a basis of transparent fallacy. Yet it is this very fallacy to which Sir Oliver Lodge offers a scientific testimonial.

Wishing to give a friendly lead to the doctrine of prayer, Sir Oliver Lodge started an argument in its favor by observing that man himself “could interfere with the course of nature in a sense.” In a sense! In what sense except nonsense? It is absurd to explain “in a sense” as meaning that man “regards himself as outside” the course of nature. What he regards himself, and what he is, are often very different. We find it difficult to take Sir Oliver Lodge seriously when he talks of diverting watercourses, building bridges, and making canals, as interfering with the course of nature. He might as well say



that a beavers' dam or an anthill is an interference with the course of nature. Statements of this kind are on a level with the fancy of the late Canon Liddon that he contravened the law of gravitation every time he lifted his hand to his head! And it seems to us that Sir Oliver Lodge must be "larking" when he meets a certain objection to prayer by saying that if he cannot bring down rain he can take a watering-pot and put water where he wants it. Does he mean that God wields a watering-pot, supplementary to natural rain? And will he explain how drought occurs if this is the case?

Sir Oliver Lodge is rather less absurd than Lord Kelvin. He recognises that you must get morality into the scheme of things before you can have a God worth talking about. He points out that human beings help each other, that pity and love exist among them; and he argues that if these qualities "are found in any part of the whole united scheme, then necessarily and without any further proof these are attributes of God." But cruelty and hatred are found in the same united scheme; consequently they also are attributes of God. This is unanswerable. Sir Oliver Lodge's objection is nothing to the purpose. It is idle to urge that "vice and wickedness are but a temporary phase in the cosmic scheme." So are virtue and righteousness. For what is human history to the history of this planet, and what is the history of this planet to the history of the universe?

That "the problem of evil is a great problem" is true only in the theology of men like Sir Oliver Lodge. The problem simply means an obvious contradiction between the theory and the facts. There is no "problem of evil" to the Naturalist. If a shark dines off a man, or a man off a rabbit, it is all one to nature. "Law" goes on smoothly in both cases. The good or evil depends on the point of view. What is evil to the man is good to the shark, and what is evil to the rabbit is good to the man. The truth of the matter is in Shakespeare—"There's nothing good or ill but thinking makes it so."

G. W. FOOTE.

### Notes on Free Will.

THE articles of Mr. Robert Blatchford in the *Clarion* on "Religion and Science" will have been welcomed as a refreshingly new departure in the labor world. Labor leaders whose opinions were of an anti-Christian type have usually taken so much pains to suppress their heresy, while at the same time leaving the religious leader to air *his* opinions, that the labor movement in this country was running a considerable risk of being dragged along at the tails of churches and chapels. Mr. Blatchford has at least shown where he is in the matter, and his example cannot but have a tonic effect upon all others who are not engaged in some political wire-pulling.

I have no desire in this controversy to defend Mr. Blatchford against any of his opponents; they are in safe hands, and my defence would be certainly gratuitous, perhaps impertinent. Still, a few words upon a subject that is now being taken up afresh by the religious world as one of its principal weapons of defence will not be out of place.

Mr. Blatchford's articles have brought into the arena Mr. G. J. Chesterton, who crosses swords on the subject of "Free Will." Mr. Chesterton is of opinion that if Mr. Blatchford had settled himself seriously to ask the nature of the controversy, he would not have written as he has. We can let that pass; but meanwhile I am of opinion that if Mr. Chesterton had paid more attention to meanings and less to words, *his* writing might have borne a different complexion. For Mr. Chesterton's position seems to hang upon two points—the conception of "will" as a *thing*, and a certain conception of responsibility flowing from it. I say Mr. Chesterton's conception, although it is, of course, the general attitude of all who accept the position of a "will" as something

existing *in vacuo*, but operating under concrete conditions.

What, in the first place, can be meant by "will"? As it is generally used it implies the existence of something quite apart from motives or desires, a faculty which *selects* a certain course of action, but which, at the same time, is quite able to have selected an entirely opposite course. One writer speaks of "two motives offering different attractions to the will," and this language will be found to be tolerably common, not only among ordinary writers, but also among many who make psychology and ethics their special studies. If all of these had asked themselves the simple question of what precisely was covered by the term, a great deal of the discussion would have been over long ago.

Language may help us to a determination. We say one man has the will to commit murder, or another has the will to sacrifice himself for the benefit of his fellows. Or yet again we speak of a man's strong will, or of a man's weak will. The cases may be multiplied indefinitely, but as regards the first class there is not a single instance that one can think of where the word "desire" would not take the place of "will" without any injury to the meaning of the sentence. To say that a man has a desire to murder and to say that he has the will to murder, is substantially two ways of saying the same thing. Used in the first way it opens up no ambiguities; used in the second it does allow any amount of illegitimate metaphysics, which with some people does duty for philosophy.

Let us take a concrete illustration. Mr. Chesterton would say that my will led me to write these notes. I should say that my desire was to write them; but on ordinary occasions I should not quarrel with his way of putting it. Mr. Chesterton might further add that there were other desires one was conscious of at the same time, which is quite true. As a matter of fact I am conscious all the time of a desire to spend the time with a couple of books that have just come to hand. But, anyway, I am writing, and it would be argued that it is this fact of *decision* that opens up the question of a "will." In my judgment it does nothing of the sort. What it proves is two things. First, that no single desire quite monopolises consciousness, and, secondly, that desires are of unequal strength. Everyone is conscious of these two things, and with them his knowledge stops. The further inference that there is a separate faculty governing the decision is as unwarrantable as that of "aquosity" or "aurocity."

Take another case. A man is offered a position abroad. On the one side there is the pain of breaking old associations and forming new ones, the discomfort of the voyage, and the possibility of his being a round peg in a square hole when he arrives. On the other hand, the voyage may be extremely pleasant, the post very comfortable, and the new friends make up for the old ones. Again, we say his will decides one course or the other; but, again, there is nothing in the situation that cannot be adequately covered by the phrase "a conflict of desires," expressed this time in the form of hopes and fears, but governed by the general desire for betterment. And so in every case that can be imagined, motives or desires will determine action.

Ought we, then, to decline to use the word "will" altogether? Not at all; there is a legitimate use for the word, once we understand it properly. I affirm that the only legitimate use of the word "will" is in the sense of desires or motives that are strong enough to express themselves in action. A man is conscious of a number of desires in quite a number of cases. Some we are barely conscious of; others we feel are *almost* strong enough to decide conduct. Finally we act; and we say that we *willed* to so act. That is, the word covers that motive or cluster of motives that are strong enough to decide conduct. Or, to put it in another way, motive is will in its static aspect—the feeling of deliberation that accompanies choice being nothing more than a consciousness of conflicting motives.



Determinism, we are often enough told, destroys character; but, as a matter of fact, determinism is the philosophy that gives a foundation for character. For what is meant by a man of strong moral character? Simply that, under given circumstances, we feel tolerably certain that he will act in a given manner, and in no other. And let it also be noted that, with a really strong desire, the sense of choice, of freedom, of selection, is almost non-existent. Strong will in this connection only means that a man's training and organisation are such that he is certain to respond to a given stimulus in a given manner. Leave him near an open cash-box, and the thought of stealing will not enter into his head, or, if it does, it will be only in the nature of a speculation concerning a remote possibility. But there is here nothing that cannot be adequately explained on deterministic principles. Action is but one aspect of the liberation of nervous energy; and when this has, year after year, taken a specific direction, the result is honest habits or dishonest habits, and one is as hard to break as the other. Strong will is, then, another way of speaking of settled habits, and the phrase "It needs a strong will to do this or that" is a tacit expression of the truth of old habits being hard to break.

Moreover, it may be pointed out that all our practical life proceeds on deterministic lines, and quite ignores even the possibility of there being any such independent faculty as "will." In estimating a man's conduct in the future we reason from what it has been in the past. In historical matters we argue the many marriages of Henry VIII., or the wars of Napoleon the First, from the presence of particular motives, and without allowing for any factor such as a "will." Education, again, is wholly based upon determinism—upon the influence of certain forces in inducing and securing a desired course of conduct. The whole of human society and intercourse is based upon the assumption that identical actions are the result of identical motives, and that these motives are caused in turn by heredity and environment; and that we can, by taking thought, modify conduct as we can modify physique.

Finally, there is the question of responsibility. Mr. Chesterton says the question is not, as Mr. Blatchford puts it, whether God would be justified in asking of the human will more than it can perform, but whether man is responsible for the use of it up to certain limits. Now, Mr. Blatchford's position was perfectly plain, and Mr. Chesterton has not by any means met it. The argument was that as, on the Christian hypothesis, God makes man, and therefore endows him with all the qualities he possesses, the responsibility for the exercise of those qualities rests with God, and man cannot, therefore, be accused of sinning against him. Mr. Chesterton says that "the definition of a will is a certain limited responsibility," which is quite the most wonderful definition I have yet seen. Further, we are told that man is responsible for the use of his will up to a certain point; he is bound to do all that he *can* will to do. But cannot Mr. Chesterton see that, scientifically, everyone does already do all he can do. A man lies in bed instead of getting up to his work. Oh, says someone, he can get up if he only will. Quite so: but *while* he was sleeping instead of getting up, it is absurd to say he could get up then. In the very fact of telling him he can get up, and ought to get up, there is an alteration in the conditions, and the alteration has the effect of bringing about the desired change. What reasoners like Mr. Chesterton altogether fail to see are the simple facts, first, that man's actions are as much the outcome—logical and mathematical—of all preceding conditions, as is the position of the sun or moon in the heavens; second, that these conditions are constantly undergoing modification; and, third, that our praise, or blame, or exhortation are themselves forces helping to bring about new results. Instead of this, we get quite irrelevant assertions to the effect that man could have "willed" to act differently yesterday, because after he had been spoken to he willed differently to-day.

But there is, on deterministic lines, a meaning for responsibility, although I quite agree with Mr. Blatchford that it is absurd to talk of responsibility to God. There is only one definition that covers the field, legal and moral, and that is, an ability to appreciate consequences. The law does not hold a maniac responsible for homicide. No one would blame a man who, struggling in a fit, kicked another and caused death. Children are also absolved from responsibility for many of their actions, and, in their extreme infancy, for all. And the one quality general to all these cases is the inability to appreciate the consequences of actions. Putting on one side, therefore, the purely physical meaning of the word, morally, everyone is responsible (to his fellows) for his actions, just so far as he can appreciate their consequences. This appreciation may be of a general or a special type, but this does not affect the statement.

And this also gives a place for punishment and education. Often it is said that if a man's conduct is the necessary outcome of his conditions, punishment is an absurdity. So it is, if our punishment is retrospective only. To punish a man for what is already done, and with no other object, is the very acme of absurdity. The past is past, and no power on earth can change it. But if our punishment, instead of being retrospective is prospective; if instead of punishing for what is past, we punish in order to create a new influence to deter from certain actions; our punishment on these lines ceases to be vindictive and becomes wholly educative. And this education by creating a consciousness of consequences, individual and social, does create at the same time a legitimate feeling of responsibility.

A further statement often met with is that, unless an action is purely voluntary, it ceases to be moral. By "voluntary" is meant the conscious choice between a good and a bad action, with the power to do either one or the other. Putting on one side the fact that the power to perform opposite actions at the same time is a sheer impossibility, a very obvious comment upon this position is a statement of the fact that the more moral men and women become the less choice there is as to their conduct. A man who, by a hard struggle, has resolved not to get drunk again, finds himself beset at every public-house with the temptation to drink, and is conscious of making the choice not to drink. A man who has been sober all his life is subject to no such temptation, and decides not to drink almost unconsciously. Yet, if Dr. Martineau is right, the first man is the more moral of the two. Further, as I have already said, the repetition of actions create habits, and the very nature of a habit is that one performs it instinctively, without consciousness of any choice whatever; it is in the nature of a reflex action. So that, on lines that morality cannot exist without a choice of alternatives, and the possibility of rejecting either, we reach the paradoxical position that they whose right conduct is the expression of their whole nature are actually less moral than they who only do right after a hard struggle, and that the progress of moral development will end in our losing morality altogether—which should be paradoxical enough for even Mr. Chesterton.

In reality this struggle of the religious world on behalf of "Free Will" is the last protest against the scientific principle of causation. It is felt rather than seen that this principle sooner or later destroys religious beliefs. Attempts are made to harmonise this principle with religious beliefs, but it kills them sooner or later. Religion fought against this principle in physics and in biology. It was defeated in both. Psychology is its last stronghold, because here our knowledge is less complete, and the factors are more complex. But an uncaused volition, originating with an independent faculty, is independent of organisation, and is on all fours with the "souls" and "essences" that science has already destroyed, and which will, sooner or later, share the same fate.



## From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform.

BY RICHARD TREVOR.

### V.—THE FIRST YEAR OF PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

THE day of my ordination to the ministry of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God was the greatest, grandest, and gladdest in my whole history. At last, the harvest of my ambition was fully ripe, and about to be gathered into the barn of enjoyment. My wildest dreams and brightest hopes were on the eve of veritable fulfilment. Unanimously invited to the pastorate of a large city church, possessing the entire confidence of a congregation that had had experience of me as a preacher for several months prior to the tendering of the invitation, and having just listened to extravagant encomiums pronounced upon me by famous ministers who took part in the ordination service, I was elated with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I scarcely knew whether I was in heaven or on earth. I felt as if I were automatically floating on an ocean of holy peace. As I looked back upon the past, I was confident that exceptionally high and fruitful privileges had been lavishly showered upon me in childhood and youth. While comparing notes with my chums at the Divinity Hall I discovered that, even at sixteen years of age, not one of them knew the meaning of the word "theology," while I was a distinguished champion of the faith at ten. I had drunk theology with my mother's milk, and had been, during all my teens, systematically drilled in the art of controversy. Had I no excuse for cherishing a little pride and self-complacency? And as I looked forward to the future, bright stars of hope shone upon and illumined the far-stretching pathway.

There never had been such a preacher as I was fully determined to become. The Celtic fire, sanctified by the grace of God, blazed away in all my veins. I was deeply sensible of the reason why the majority of churches were empty, and entertained no doubt but that mine would soon be full. My sermons would aim at converting two predominant classes of people, namely, the open, reckless sinners who were rushing on to hell at express speed, and those characterised by St. Paul as *natural* or *psychical* men, who neither cared for nor believed in the higher and nobler realities. In the faces of shameless sinners I would vigorously shake hell, painted in the most lurid colors, and I would drive the natural man out of every stronghold in his possession, and force him to surrender, openly confessing that his case was utterly hopeless. Certainly, my part of the city would be completely transformed within a few months. I would frighten sinners and argue naturalists right into the kingdom of God. Such was my program. I little dreamed that the Fates were all the time laughing in their sleeves at my ineffable stupidity.

For a time I did, undoubtedly, occasion not a little sensation in my own immediate neighborhood. My outspoken denunciation of everything I believed to be sin soon attracted attention. Crowds flocked to hear me preach. I had invincible energy and boundless enthusiasm; and I spared nobody. A text from which I frequently discoursed was this: "*Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?*" The sufferings of the damned were never more vividly and realistically portrayed than in those crude addresses of my early ministry. I could not have depicted them better had I actually seen and experienced them for a thousand years. I remember once taking a Sunday afternoon service at a neighboring church, and speaking on this my then favorite theme. At the close the minister intervened, and said: "I thank God for this afternoon's message. It is so refreshing and reassuring to hear God's own truths so boldly and uncompromisingly proclaimed. Alas, not all ministers in this city (with an obvious reference to a popular preacher who did not believe in endless punishment) preach the Gospel on this awful subject. But woe be to us if we withhold this revealed truth from our people."

In the extra-orthodox churches I was immensely popular. People admired my courage in putting so much fire and brimstone into my sermons. Not one of my discourses was a sugar-coated pill. But I was not nearly so successful with St. Paul's *natural* man. I soon perceived that he had a mind of his own, and was astonishingly difficult to move. I brought out my heavy artillery, and vigorously bombarded the castle of his naturalism, but failed to make the least impression upon it. I had fondly hoped that he would have quickly surrendered, readily acknowledging the superior cogency of my arguments; but instead of that coveted result, I found my own armor sadly riddled with his shot, while he remained untouched in his strongly fortified position. My signal failure with him gave me a painful sense of disappointment, but I comforted myself with the soothing reflection that, had it not been for his intellectual stupidity and spiritual obstinacy, I would have gained a magnificent victory over him.

On the whole, however, my first year of professional life was fairly satisfactory. My faith in the Divine Verities continued unflinching and undimmed for many months. My acceptance of the Bible was complete, without even a shadow of reservation; and I was joyously loyal to all the doctrinal standards. I was a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer; and, when the late Professor Tyndall issued his famous Prayer-Test, I was horrified at the blasphemous audacity of his proposal. I pitied the poor scientist as an unregenerate natural man. By-and-bye, however, dark, ominous clouds began to gather in my hitherto clear ecclesiastical sky. In the middle of each week a well-attended Prayer-meeting was held in a large hall adjoining the church. It was my custom to deliver a short address on some religious topic, and then to call upon several people to engage in prayer. Among those who usually responded were two of the office-bearers. They were both exceedingly fluent, and people always liked to hear them. They were well-read, intelligent, and devout men; but, unfortunately, it was softly whispered that their unctuous rectitude was only a thin coat of veneer, covering and hiding a character that was radically putrid. The one was said to be living continually in grossest immorality, and the other to be the biggest scoundrel out of prison. By degrees, the half-smothered whisper grew into a loud rumor, behind which it was evident there was too much truth. It was an insoluble mystery to me how these men could offer up such fervent, heart-stirring prayers, while pursuing such iniquitous and God-defying practices. Thus two of my right-hand men were consummate hypocrites. Was it possible that they really believed in a holy, truthful, and loving God, or were they simply playing at religion? I was staggered and bewildered, and knew not what to think. In course of time, I came to the mournful conviction that, in the world, Christians were generally looked upon with suspicion, that in business circles they were not always trusted, and that many of them were openly denounced as cunning and heartless swindlers. I found out that because of their commercial crookedness and social insincerity the members of a particular sect were universally loathed; and the more I mingled with men the more deeply convinced I became that such aspersions were only too well founded. People who professed to be better were really worse than their neighbors, and shielded themselves under the cloak of religion. Today I am bound sorrowfully to admit that the tendency of adhesion to the popular type of religion is to make people hypocritical and immoral. Their professed peace with God, the fact of their regeneration, their dream of eternal blessedness in heaven, and their comforting conviction that they shall never see hell except at a safe distance, are dependent, not in any sense or degree on their character, but on their faith in Christ, for whose sake and in whose merits alone they are accepted in the Divine sight. Their faith is reckoned or imputed to them for righteousness, and their religious exercises—their praying, hymn-singing, church-going, Bible-reading,



alms-giving—are substituted for upright living. Christ fulfilled the moral law in their stead, and the moment they believed in him they were released from all moral obligation. I remember a dear, deluded old saint saying, with grateful tears in her eyes: "I deserve to go to hell, and therein to burn for ever; but, blessed be his name, my beloved Redeemer deserves that I should go to heaven and sing his praises without end, and I am sure God cannot say Nay to his only begotten Son." If there were a God of truth and love, such a belief would be rank blasphemy; and in any case, he who lives up to such a faith is guilty of high treason against his own nature. I have no hesitation whatever, therefore, in laying to the charge of all so-called Evangelical Churches the stupendous crime of being direct and fruitful sources and encouragers of commercial dishonesty, social hypocrisy, and moral stupor. In illustration of the truth of this charge, John Ruskin tells us, with burning indignation, of a wicked merchant in the City of London who was a prominent and active member in a suburban church. In the City he was a man that required special watching, and one day he was guilty of a specially tricky and fraudulent transaction. On the following Sunday, one who knew of this dishonest bargain, happened to attend that suburban church, and therein saw the self-same merchant engaged in a most solemn act of worship. At the close of the service, he went up to him, and, with a significant look in his eye and withering scorn in his voice, said: "YOU HERE?" The great man felt most uncomfortable, but after a moment's pause, answered: "Here, you know, we all assume the attitude of the poor publican, in the parable, who smote upon his breast and tremblingly prayed, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

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### The Virgin Birth.

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RECENTLY an extraordinary effusion of orthodoxy has been displayed regarding this supernatural, unnatural, and wholly incredible article of faith, asserting that Christ, divinely begotten, was born of the substance of the Virgin Mary, his mother, his father being the Holy Ghost. It is needless to say how often this fable of supernatural birth has been related of others, such as Osiris, the Greek deities, and even of mortals like Alexander the Great, whose body was said to have given forth "a delicious perfume"—especially, no doubt, after a luxurious and fragrant herbal bath.

But a miraculous birth from a pure virgin cannot be accepted by the rational mind. It is an impossibility. There must be a human father or there never can be a human son. Joseph, or the soldier whom Celsus names, was probably that individual responsible for the existence of Jesus—if we are to believe that he ever existed at all.

Canon Randolph has just sent out a book on this subject, affirming the Virgin Birth most vigorously, "for those," says the *Church Times*, "who seek for some guidance in a matter in which their sense of reverence has been grievously shocked, where the very sacredness of the subject and the vital nature of the belief have forbidden hitherto the profanity of speculation or the insult of a possible doubt." But the critic will have to reckon with greater minds than his own, who are not afraid of "the profanity of speculation" in this matter, and have honestly doubted all theological pronouncements on the subject.

It is realised, and it is true, that the dogmas of the Virgin Birth and the incarnation of Jesus Christ, are the bases of true, orthodox Christian belief. Grant them, and you can grant Christ's divinity, his miracles, his atonement, resurrection, ascension, and session at God's right hand. Grant the incarnation, and you can grant the real presence in the Eucharist logically. Acknowledge the virgin birth, and you can acknowledge every claim the Church makes

respecting "Mary and his mother." If the claim is a true one, then she may well be called "Queen of Heaven," "Queen of Angels," "Rose of Paradise," and Mother of God."

But those of us who doubt Christ's divinity and reject his Virgin Birth and incarnation, regarding him as only a human being, if we can regard him at all, and to whom he may only be a myth or a composite character of devout and fervent superstition, wrought up in a fabulous story, to us there is no such thing possible as a virgin supernaturally producing a son, no such thing as an incarnation. They may call us Unitarians, Jews, Agnostics, or Atheists; uplift their hands in holy deprecation and shake their pious heads at our unbelief; but we ask if Buddha was content to make no such supernatural claims or assertions, why Christ as another teacher of truth should need bolstering up with pagan myths? Buddha in his day and way was the equal, and in some respects, the superior of Jesus. Lord Buddha is quite as legitimate a title for him as Lord Christ is for the other. And so of other saints and sages of all time, ancient and modern; they are lords in intellect and ethics, and none of them pretend to divinity or a virgin birth. Imagine Emerson or Carlyle, or Buckle or Herbert Spencer, or Ruskin making such an assertion! How they and we would laugh over it and scorn it!

Yet a certain bishop demands that those whom he is to ordain shall subscribe to the Virgin Birth as an article of faith—a *sine qua non*. "This question is one of those which have been recklessly cast down before the public," says the *Church Times*, "in the vain hope, of those who believe, that they may conciliate those who have never held, or have lost touch with, the Catholic Creeds, and by a permission to doubt some of the fundamentals of the Faith, to induce them to occupy a perilous and useless position inside the sacred precincts of dogmatic Christianity.

Very true; so they do. The fair thing for all such as these is to renounce such dogmas honestly, and to learn and labor truly to get their own living independently, and, free in heart and sound in head, to own to nothing an emancipated mind cannot accept.

GERALD GREY.

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### Pentecost on Immortality.

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IN connection with my subject "Is Man Immortal?" there are at least four classes of persons to be named. There is one class who believe, or think they believe, or pretend to believe, that the soul is immortal. There is a second class who believe, or think they believe, or pretend to believe, that the soul is not immortal. There is a third class who have no beliefs on the subject, who are indifferent to the whole subject, and do not care whether the soul is immortal or not. The fourth class are those who have no belief, but are interested, curious; who would like to know that the soul *is* immortal. In passing, I may say that perhaps with the rest of you I belong at times to one of these classes and sometimes to another. At times I have no beliefs on the subject; sometimes I am not interested in it, and sometimes I am, it depending largely upon the mood that I happen to be in.

Now, what is the common belief among us about the immortality of the soul or the immortality of man? I think it can be described about as follows: That man about six thousand years ago, the chronology being taken from the Old Testament, was created as to his body out of earth-stuff—that his body was manufactured out of dust. But first Jehovah had gotten the world up to a certain point, the animals and other things being created so that it was a proper place for man to come; then he took



some earth and out of that earth manufactured a body, formed it, shaped it, and when the body was formed, he, in the same manner, out of something or out of nothing, created a soul and put that soul in the body, or, the exact language of the Bible, I believe, is, He breathed the breath of life into his form and man became a living soul; the body being one thing and the soul being another thing, both of them newly created, neither of them ever having existed before, and that this body and that soul are for ever separate things unlike each other; one material and the other spiritual, and that the relationship between them is like the relation of steam to an engine. The steam is not part of the engine, but the force injected into the engine to make it run. Or, to take a very common example, that the soul inhabits the body as a person inhabits a house, and at death the body disintegrates and the soul moves out, just as you do when your house is going to be torn down. And when you move out, according to the belief, you move into one of three places, hell, or heaven, or purgatory, purgatory being a kind of finishing school where it is decided where you shall go finally. I believe the common belief is that in purgatory you are prepared to go on to the place of the blest, and that by and by at the end of the world an angel from heaven will blow a terrific blast on a trumpet and at this blast the bodies that the human beings inhabited before will rise out of their graves and that the souls will return to inhabit them again, but that some sort of change will take place in the body so that it will be a fit place for the soul. The belief continues that after the body is resurrected, then will come the day of judgment, when an appearance must be made before a great white throne of God, and the ones with proper requirements will be taken into heaven and those not qualified will be sent back to hell. That is the Protestant belief, but just what the Roman Catholic belief on that particular point is, I do not know—what is to become of the resurrected bodies of the wicked. I believe that is a fair statement of the common Christian belief. I mean by that that probably more persons of the Christian world believe about like that than have any other belief.

I wish to say that that belief is entirely untenable among thinking people, and I wish to say that with very great positiveness, not as a dogmatist, but because there are reasons for saying it. Think a little. If there is anything known in this world scientifically, it is now known that man was not created about six thousand years ago. There is no possible way for a rational person to escape from that, for as a matter of fact remnants of human bodies have been found among the fossil remains of the earth in places where they must have been deposited not six thousand years ago, but more probably six million years ago and possibly longer still than that. Now, when there are found portions of the human body buried under deposits that at the present rate of deposit must have taken millions of years to accumulate over these remains, then of course that person who says that the body was created only six thousand years ago, is not worth discussing with any more. Such persons are joined to their idols and they are not worth considering at all. If a person does not know that, and still holds to the belief of six thousand years ago, he is to be reasoned with, but it is a waste of time to talk with a person who knows the facts and still holds to that theory of six thousand years.

The present status of knowledge is that the human body was never created at all, but that it has been evolved through such a length of time that it is impossible for us to know what that length of time is; that this body which we have has grown from the simplest cell formations up through the various animal forms, and that the whole process has been so gradual that the slowness is hardly conceivable to us. It is said by some persons yet that this theory of evolution is only a hypothesis. That is true; it is a hypothesis, but it has been proven as well as anything can be proven, and the person who does not

believe in the evolution of the human body from lower forms is outside of the pale of reason.

Now, as it is impossible for us to believe that the human body was created six thousand years ago, so it is impossible for us to believe that the human soul was created at that time or any other time. For all the evidence that points to the evolution of the body points with the same irrefutability to a similar origin of the human soul. That which characterises us, and is mind in all of its branches, has grown with the same slowness and through the same stages as the body, from the simple cell formation up through the fishes, birds, and reptiles to man. They have evolved together, and they have never been distinguishable as separate organisms. They are always joined. There is not the slightest reason to believe that the human soul has ever been separated from the human body, or that they can be separated. Their connection, their relation, is so vital that they are one thing. The idea that the human soul is a tenant of the body is purely a poetical idea with nothing whatever to substantiate it. The theory of those who believe that the soul is separate from the body is that it is to the body what steam is to an engine. But the facts seem to be that what we call the soul and the body act upon each other interchangeably; the body acts upon the soul and the soul acts upon the body. When embarrassed, we blush; and that is something that acts upon the soul, and an interaction takes place in the particles of the body.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(*To be continued.*)

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### Bon Voyage!

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"Bon voyage, Ma'm'selle! Hold to your Classics! First place for rare old Molière. And if you hear any smug religionist abusing Voltaire, tell him to take his hat off, and use more reverence."—*Letter.*

A PLEASANT voyage, Ma'moiselle,  
Over the sea to your own Land!  
Or here or there, alike all well!

Tell me (for I don't understand)  
Why politicians scheme and scheme  
Still to approve some old fool's dream  
That England, France, are foe and foe;  
The stupid knaves! why do they so?  
English or French, do we not feel  
With the same heart in woe and weal?  
If harvests here are not so bad  
Once in a way, is France not glad?  
And when in pleasant France the grain  
Sways golden o'er the fertile plain  
(A plague on ministers and kings!)  
We all take pleasure in good things.

Ah! is it that a different speech  
Puts neighbor nations out of reach?  
Beshrew that old-time Tower of Babel  
And the confusion that befel!  
Else, were Earth's Babel tongue a fable,  
'Twould ask a subtle eye to tell,  
For gracious port, or word, or smile,  
Thou wert not one of our own Isle.

So, if you're questioned, Paris way,  
What folks are like in England, say  
They're like yourself: and that as for  
Anything like to words of war,  
It's only boys and politicians,  
Who talk to air their high positions.

An Englishman's best bow to you:  
And, Fille de France, adieu! adieu!

H. BARBER.

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GREAT PRIVILEGES.—Now they say Bishop Potter tells it. A dear old lady asked him how it was that Solomon was allowed to have so many wives—not to mention the other ladies. He explained that the manners and customs of Solomon's days were different from those of the present era, whereupon she replied earnestly, "Oh, don't you think those early Christians enjoyed great privileges?"



## Acid Drops.

The Pope is dead, long live the Pope! The change in the person of God's vicegerent on earth will make very little difference. The Great Lying Church will go on working the Christian superstition for all it is worth. There will still be a "servant of the servants of God" rolling in wealth at the Vatican, and Peter's Pence will flow in from well-plucked dupes in all parts of the world.

Newspapers say that Pope Leo XIII. made a brave fight for life. What life was there at ninety-four worth fighting for? And why should a man of that advanced age—especially a priest—cling to the last narrow ledge of earthly existence? Is there no such place as heaven? Is the future life only a dream?

Every superstitious effort was made to keep old Pope Leo alive. Prayers were offered by the thousand, and the most celebrated relics were brought to his bedside. One of them, possessing a great reputation, the moribund Pope kissed devoutly and pressed upon his head. But it could not cure him of the universal complaint of mortality. He had to die.

How will Pope Leo get on at the resurrection? His liver and lights—we beg pardon, his internal organs—were removed, enclosed in a crystal urn, and conveyed to the Church of SS. Vincent and Anastasius, the parish church of the Quirinal. The body itself has its final resting-place in the Church of St. John Lateran. When the angel Gabriel purses his lips on the resurrection trumpet, what a job Pope Leo's viscera may have to join Pope Leo's carcase!

According to the Emperor of Austria-Hungary the dead Pope's "memory will be for ever holy, and for him a foremost place in the annals of Church history will always be secure." Francis Joseph forgets the dangers of prophecy. It is not given to him, above all men, to see into the future. Many a man who was going to figure largely in history has dwindled into insignificance. Distant generations are so hard to reach. When an inferior French poet read his "Ode to Posterity" to Voltaire, that famous wit doubted if it would ever reach the persons it was addressed to.

Emperor William telegraphed how "painfully affected" he was by the sad news of the Pope's death. This is part of the humbug of "diplomacy." What is there "painful" about the news of the death of a man of ninety-four? When the greatest of the Hohenzollerns—Frederick the Great—saw some of his soldiers fleeing from the field of battle, he rode up to them and shouted, "Wretches! Would you live for ever?" Emperor William might be asked whether he expected the Pope to live for ever. If not, why these tears?

The Irish Party in the House of Commons does not appear to be exclusively political. It held a special meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. John Redmond, and passed a resolution of condolence on the death of the Pope, in which it observed that he had "done much to strengthen the influence of religion throughout the world." We did not know that the Irish Party was professionally interested in that subject. But, as the proverb says, we live and learn. Moreover, we go back in mind to the time when it voted against "Bradlaugh the Atheist."

More than twenty years ago Mr. William Redmond—who then represented a small Irish constituency, the voters in which might have been conveyed to St. Stephen's in a couple of omnibuses—got up in the House of Commons and asked the Home Secretary (Sir William Harcourt) whether he was going to take steps to put down the *Freethinker*—a paper that had thousands of readers. This same Mr. William Redmond, quite recently, asked the Prime Minister to let the flag on the Victoria Tower fly half-mast out of respect to the memory of the Pope. What an idea this gentleman must have of religious liberty! Or rather has he any such idea at all?

Mr. John McNeill, the famous Evangelist, who is, we understand, a "kept preacher," in the sense that his salary is provided by Lord Overton, was recently at Hastings, where, at the request of the local Free Churches, he started preaching on the beach. A constable stepped up and warned him to desist. But the reverend gentleman protested that he had preached in the open air all over the world, and the police had never tried to stop him before. The crowd cried

"shame!" the policeman moved away, and Mr. McNeill continued his sermon. But what if he had been a Free-thought speaker? Would not the bye-laws have been strictly enforced in that case? Why should they be relaxed in favor of a Christian evangelist? And is there any worse tyranny on earth than a discriminative enforcement of the law?

The *Daily News* is carrying its religious census into Greater London. The first place dealt with is Acton, with a population of 37,744—including 17,022 males, and 20,722 females. In the morning one person in seven, in the evening one person in nine, was present at a place of worship. Men were in the proportion of one in twelve in the morning and one in thirteen in the evening. This is regarded as gratifying! The total figures were: Church of England 4,718, Nonconformist Churches 3,620, Roman Catholic Church 427, Other Services 174. Here again the Church of England beats all the Nonconformist Churches off its own bat.

Nonconformists are telling the truth at last. We have always said that when they talked about "unsectarian education" in the recent and present struggle they meant "Christian unsectarian education." This is now confessed by the Wesleyan Methodists. The resolutions moved by Mr. Perks, M.P., at the Camborne Conference, demand "the placing of a Christian unsectarian school under adequate and representative public management within reach of every child," and recommend Wesleyan Day Schools to be given up to the authorities "wherever a guarantee can be given that such schools shall in future be conducted as elementary schools on a Christian unsectarian basis." They have been a long time letting the cat out of the bag, but it is out at last.

Alderman Fleming Williams, L.C.C., speaking at Wimbledon, where the Passive Resisters are rampant, called the Education Act an "unhallowed law." Quite so. All laws are unhallowed, unless Nonconformists do the hallowing. They ruled the roost on the London School Board, for instance, and there was nothing unhallowed in the resulting arrangements. The trouble begins when the Nonconformists cannot have their own way.

Mr. Boardman, the malignant and unscrupulous bigot, who led the crusade against the *Freethinker* at West Ham, has lately been posturing there as an oppressed friend of religious liberty. Being one of the Passive Resisters, he has been taxing the patience of the magistrate at the police-court by airing his conscientious objections to paying his legal rates. This person cries out lustily when Nonconformists are cornered by Churchmen, but he sees nothing wrong in Nonconformists and Churchmen joining together to persecute *Freethinkers*. On the whole, we are rather glad to hear him squealing. When a fellow, belonging to a gang who have insulted and beaten you for years, becomes himself a victim to the same kind of treatment, it is only human to feel a little gratification. We plead guilty to that amount of vindictiveness. There is music to us in Boardman's bawlings.

This Mr. Boardman is one of the most strenuous opponents to this journal being admitted into the West Ham Public Libraries. He, again, finds nothing in his conscience against *Freethinkers* paying a Library rate, and then finding their literature excluded, he even helps actively that this shall be done. We wonder if the *Freethinkers* of West Ham refused to pay a Library Rate until the *Freethinker* was placed upon the same level as Christian papers, whether this very conscientious Nonconformist would assist them in their "Passive Resistance." We have strong doubts upon the matter. Bigotry, and not a sense of fairplay, would dictate his conduct in this case as it dictates in the other.

What folly is written in the name of religion! The *Echo de Paris*, a Church and Army organ, declares itself hostile to the principle of arbitration unless the Pope is chosen as arbitrator. Let the world burn up unless it uses our patent extinguisher!

Miss Holland, the lady Dougal murdered, had relatives who appeared at the trial. We presume it is they who have buried her remains at Saffron Walden and are placing a marble memorial cross over the grave. The halo (we read) is to be centred with the figure of an angel receiving a woman into its arms. It would have been better, however, to leave the angel out. Miss Holland was an unfortunate woman foully murdered, but her relations with Dougal were not too creditable, and her name upon a tombstone would have been sufficient. But there is no limit to the sentimental absurdity of these religionists.



The Rev. William Henry Cooper, of St. Martin's, Stamford, who died on April 21, left real and personal property to the value of £106,607. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."

The only thing that can be said for Parson Cooper is that he left a considerable number of charitable bequests. But this may have been only making a virtue of necessity. Perhaps we might call it "hedging."

"The mischievous and meaningless practice" of throwing rice and confetti at weddings is denounced by the Rev. G. S. Leigh-Bennett, vicar of Long Sutton. But is it quite as "mischievous and meaningless" as a good deal that goes on *inside* the churches?

The *Christian World* tells of a minister who denounced that paper while boasting that he had not looked at a copy for the past twenty-five years. This is very amusing, but, after all, it is only how ninety-five per cent. of the clergy act in regard to Freethought literature. Few of them read, all of them denounce, and not only denounce, but try to perpetuate their unreasoning prejudice by warning their hearers to be careful not to listen to Freethought lectures, and not to read Freethought literature. We must confess to just a little pleasure at seeing Christians physiced with a dose of their own medicine.

The Bishop of Manchester is resigning his post on account of age. This is not an item of news that will violently agitate our readers, nor do we suppose Mr. Balfour will have much difficulty in getting a successor. But, before being in Manchester, Dr. Moorhouse was for ten years in Australia; and during these ten years, we are informed, he was "very successful in combating the influence of Secularists and Atheists"—*in Australia*. It is strange how all these successful infidel-slayers perform their exploits a long way from the place in which they are speaking or writing. Dr. Moorhouse has been *sixteen* years in Manchester, but he does not seem to have done much infidel-slaying in that city. At least, we have not heard of any number of conversions owing to his influence.

According to the *Christian Commonwealth*, an American paper describes Mr. R. J. Campbell, in big headlines as a "Fearless Young Preacher," "Defies his Government," "Predicts Psychology will be a Link between Religion and Science," etc. The fearlessness and the defiance has reference to Mr. Campbell's refusal to pay school rates, which strikes us as a proceeding not demanding an enormous amount of courage. As a matter of fact, it would require more courage for a Nonconformist minister to pay than to refuse; and, from the anger shown by a lot of them in cases where the magistrates have refused to listen to long addresses on "Conscience," we suspect that the desire for advertisement has some share in influencing their conduct. As to the latter part of the headlines, Mr. Campbell evidently finds it easier and more profitable to predict what psychology *will* do than to say what it has done. Up to the present scientific psychology has been one of the deadliest enemies that religion has had to fight.

We all know that animals do not think. That practice is reserved for Christians—many of whom do very little at it, however. But the landlord of the Warren House Inn, Wokingham, will doubtless carry a different opinion as long as he lives. He was roused from sleep by the family cat scratching his face; the room was full of smoke, and he was only just in time to save himself and rouse the other inmates of the house.

Some time ago a London man (it came out at the inquest) was roused from sleep in the same way by his dog. That man saved himself and left his dog to die. When asked why he did not try to save the poor dog, he replied that he "did not think of it." Which was the nobler animal of the two?

Last week's *Reynolds'*, under the "Spiritual Guides" heading, reported several cases of good men of God gone wrong. One involved gross drunkenness, and another gross profligacy. The last was a case of suicide, in which the man of God has our sympathy—if we may use the Hibernicism. The Rev. F. R. Pearson, of Warrington, shot himself dead with a revolver because he could not live without his wife whom he had just lost. Such romantic sentiment is not to be treated with derision. Mr. Pearson showed that bereavement had broken his heart; and also that Christian consolations are much feebler than is pretended.

Some of the testimonials which Dowie receives in proof of his power as a healer are remarkable. One fellow down

in Mississippi had nervous indigestion, kidney troubles, insomnia, and Methodism. He withdrew from the Methodist Church, joined Dowie's Church, attended a divine healing meeting, got Dowie to pray for him once, and it was all over. He was well "in spirit, soul, and body." A woman up in Westchester, N.Y., had stomach trouble, floating kidney, catarrh of the bowels, and female troubles of twelve years' standing. She repented, confessed, and was made right. God also healed a bone felon and a very painful corn for her in response to a prayer by a Dowie elder. God also cured her husband of a desire for tobacco, also of a chilblain and a bad cold in the head. She cannot now "begin to tell of all of God's goodness to her." What puerile fools religion makes of people! These poor idiots actually think that the architect of the universe, the maker of worlds and suns, is a corn doctor, a specialist in female and kidney troubles, and a curer of indigestion! The blasphemers are the Christians, not the infidels.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The *Daily Telegraph*, in a leading article, constantly speaks of Dr. Clifford as Mr. Clifford. Is this a reflection on the reverend gentleman's "Dr."? We should like to have a little information on this point.

"Some of our tunes are positively brutal," said Dr. Percy Rideout, at the recent annual dinner of the Guild of Organists. That some of the hymns are brutal has long been perceived; and the clergy are beginning to recognise the fact—after their congregations.

The Prince of Wales, during his Western tour, assisted at the benediction of the nave of the Cathedral Church of Truro. It was a grand affair, the processions being particularly fine, with three hundred parochial clergy and lay readers, and the combined choirs of Truro and Exeter. The Prince and Princess were met at the west door and preceded by the Bishop, arrayed in a magnificent cope of cream and gold damask, with richly embroidered red hood. When the ecclesiastical tomfoolery of "blessing" the nave was over, all knelt and sang "Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire." We do not read that the Holy Ghost accepted the invitation.

According to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, in her new novel *Avery*, the most troublesome classes that dentists have to deal with are children and clergymen.

A case just decided in the City of London Court shows that people are entitled to leave noisy lodgings in which they are unable to sleep. In this case the church bells, chiming every quarter of an hour, were the cause of offence. How often have sick people, trying to obtain a brief refreshing slumber, cried out with Othello, "Silence that dreadful bell!" Church bells never ought to be allowed at all in cities, except (perhaps) on very special occasions. Often their monotonous and unmusical clang is a terrible nuisance. Nothing but religion would ever be invoked to justify such an infiction.

NOT TO BE TAKEN IN EARNEST.—This story is credited to Mayor Mulvihill, of Bridgeport, Conn.: "There lived in our town," says his honor, "a man who made a kind of mania of his religion. He used to go every afternoon to a lonely field, and, kneeling there behind a bank of earth, he would pray at the top of his lungs for thirty or forty minutes at a time. Some of us boys would follow him now and then, hide on the other side of the mound, and listen to him with wonderment. One afternoon he prayed about his sins. He vowed that he was the wickedest man that had ever been created. He declared that he deserved death. He begged the Lord to put an end to him by toppling over the embankment on him then and there. The ringleader of our crowd was up near the top of the mound, and at this point he shoved down on the man a quantity of loose soil. Instantly the fellow sprang to his feet, and ran away home. 'It's an awful world, this,' he said to a friend later. 'You can't say a thing in fun, but what it's taken in earnest.'"

TIME TO SWEAR OFF.—"If an angel should appear to you and offer you three wishes," said the imaginative young woman, "what would you do?" "I'd sign the pledge," answered the matter-of-fact man.

WARLIKE.—Patience: "Did you say she came from fighting stock?" Patrice: "Yes; her mother and father were both members of church choirs in their early days."—*Yonkers Statesman*.



## Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended until September.)

### To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- J. E. STAPLETON.—Pleased to hear you have such a high opinion of Mr. Cohen's character and abilities.
- VENOCIA.—We do not see how it is possible to obtain a census of Freethinkers.
- AMATEUR FREETHINKER.—The "Cynicus" cartoons are always striking and effective; but, although the Bible and whisky are both popular in Scotland, they are not the secret of Scotland's fame. The real greatness of Scotland is in spite of both.
- J. B. W.—The Jesus story is an old one; so old, indeed, that it may be new to the present generation of readers.
- A. CAPON.—We wrote you by post, as the matter seemed urgent. No doubt you received our letter.
- F. COMERFORD.—Thanks for cuttings. Such things are always welcome. See "Acid Drops."
- THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—A. S. Vickers 1s., J. E. Stapleton 2s. 6d.—This fund is practically in abeyance for the present. It is no use making financial appeals during the holiday season. We shall revive this fund in September.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for your valuable batches of cuttings.
- H. BARBER.—Thanks. Appears, as you will see.
- W. R. MORGAN.—The Athenæum Hall has not fallen into the hands of the Christians; it is demolished to make room for a new railway station. We have an interesting article in type *à propos* of this matter, and hope to find room for it in our next issue.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions

## Sugar Plums.

The August number of the *Pioneer* is now on sale. The special articles that should command attention are one by the Editor on "Letting the Cat Out," dealing with the Passive Resistance movement and the recent Wesleyan Conference resolutions; one by "Julian" on "The Religious Mind," showing that the religious type of mind is to be found in political and social life; and one on "Marital Love" by "Radicus," dealing with a delicate subject in an outspoken but inoffensive manner. There are also the usual crisp paragraphs headed "Matters and Musings," and the usual "Questions Concerning Women" by "La Pensee," which the gentler sex should find interesting.

The convert to Freethought whose experiences are now appearing in our pages, week by week, is writing under the assumed name of Richard Trevor. His real name will be published in due course. Freethinkers will have an opportunity of hearing him in the autumn, when Mr. Foote organises a new series of Sunday lectures in London. Provincial friends will also have an opportunity of hearing him afterwards.

To-day (Aug. 2) Mr. C. Cohen lectures twice, afternoon and evening, in Victoria Park. We trust the weather will be fine. In that case one need have no fear concerning the audience.

Mr. J. W. de Caux contributes an able letter to the *Yarmouth Mercury* on "The Christian Fables" in reply to the Rev. C. Lloyd Engstrom, honorary secretary of the Christian

Evidence Society. We hope Mr. Engstrom will come up to the scratch again. It will give Mr. de Caux another opportunity of striking a vigorous and effective blow for Freethought.

The annual Picnic of the South Shields Branch and local friends takes place on Sunday next, August 9. Brakes leave North Shields at 1 o'clock. Newcastle friends travel by the train calling at North Shields at 1.25. Unattached Freethinkers and others desirous of joining or requiring any further information should apply to the secretary, 32 James Mather-terrace.

Thirty years ago James Thomson ("B. V.") said that the *Daily News* was like one of Hosea Biglow's heroes, and could exclaim with him:—

I do believe in Freedom's cause  
Ez fur away ez Paris is.

The *Daily News* can exclaim it still. Its Paris correspondent writes sometimes with a strange freedom in the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience. Speaking of M. Hanotaux's article on Pope Leo XIII., this writer observed that "the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs judges things from a sceptical standpoint, which is that of every French statesman, almost without exception." This is a very significant admission.

*Apropos* of Julian's article on the S.P.C.C. in the July *Pioneer*, Mr. Mortimer Mepes' description of child life among the Burmese is striking. "Burma," he says, "is a happy hunting-ground for children. All the grown-up people seem to wish for nothing better than to contribute to a child's amusement; they are ready to join in a game at any moment, to fashion a toy or tell a fairy story; they even allow a child free access to every house and garden in the village; and, what English children would appreciate more than anything else, no one in Burma ever says 'Don't.' As in Japan, the children are the young blossoms of the country; and, as in Japan, they are very tenderly treated. On every possible occasion in Burma a festival is given; any excuse is welcome that will give the dearly-loved little ones pleasure, and afford an opportunity of adding to their honor. Whenever a baby is born there is always a festival; when his head is washed for the first time there is another festival; and the cutting of the first tooth, the forming of that downy fluff called by courtesy hair, the first laugh, the first few words, the first step—each and every important event is celebrated in sumptuous fashion by a festival. The Burmese baby girl leads much the same kind of life as her brother, and wears very much the same kind of garments; and, except on festive occasions, when her face is powdered, her hair elaborately coiled, and her arms bedecked with jewels, she is allowed to run wild and do just as she pleases. Burmese baby girls have not the dignity and fine deportment of the children of most Eastern countries; but even the poorest Burmese girl-child has a grace and charm of manner and voice such as one seldom meets with; she is a gentle, lovable little soul, tactful, self-controlled, and desirable, and destined to make the most perfect little wife and mother in all the glorious Orient."

By way of contrast, one is tempted to print the following from one of our daily papers of last Tuesday's date:—"A revolting story of child neglect was told to the Smethwick magistrates yesterday. A widow named Meighan was found lying on the hearth drunk; a baby on a ragged mattress upstairs was in an emaciated and apparently dying condition, and a child aged four, which should have weighed 36lb., weighed only 15lb. The woman had recently received £31 insurance in connection with the death of her husband. She was sent to gaol for six months with hard labor." Further comment is needless.

## SHAKESPEARE—BACON.

A curious philological fact bearing on the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy is pointed out by Dr. Murray, the editor of the great "Oxford English Dictionary," now in course of publication. It concerns the use of the *out*-verbs—like *outly* and *outstrip*. "It is noteworthy," Dr. Murray says, "that, while Shakespeare uses fifty-four of these verbs—for thirty-eight of which he is our first, and for nine of them our only, authority—we cite Bacon only for two, one of which, indeed, *outshoot*, had, in those days of archery, been in common use for more than seventy years. The contrast between the language of Bacon and that of Shakespeare in this respect is the more striking seeing that other contemporary authors—e.g., Ben Jonson—used these *out*-verbs almost as freely as Shakespeare himself without, however, yielding anything like the same number of first instances."



## Is There a God?—II.

(Continued from page 476.)

Is there a God? Before we answer such a question we are entitled to ask what is his nature and character? What kind of a god is he? Our teachers tell us he is all-wise, all-good, all love, almighty, all-present, infinite, and so forth. Before we accept these assertions, we are entitled to examine them to see if they are in agreement with known facts. If the universe is the handiwork of God, he is the creator of evil as well as good, for evil exists everywhere. Good and evil seem to be about equally balanced. What is good to one is an evil to another. What is good in one age is an evil in another age, and what is evil in one part of the earth is good in another part. The same thing is both a good and an evil according to time, circumstances, and situation.

There is no escape possible from the conclusion that God is the author of all things, or that there is another god or gods equally great and powerful. To assume the existence of a rebellious creature, however great and powerful, will not explain or remove the difficulty. Whatever a creature could do, would be done through him by the creator. To suppose a creature could originate anything independent of or against the will of a creator, would be to make the creature a creator—a god.

Creation, in the ordinary meaning given to the word, seems to me unthinkable. As soon as we begin to think on the question, we are forced to assume that something is external, without a beginning. When the assertion is made that God made the universe, many an intelligent child has asked, "Who made God?" The question is pertinent. It is quite as easy and rational to believe the universe is eternal, as to believe God is eternal. The creature must be smaller than the creator, and if the smaller require a maker, the greater needs a maker, too. It is said that God is eternal, without a beginning and without an ending. The same can be said of matter—it cannot be destroyed, and therefore had no beginning. Matter, in part, can be seen, handled, tested, and experimented upon, which is more than can be said of God. Even matter that the eye cannot see, as electricity, can be tested and made manifest in light and power, and its existence demonstrated. But, as far as we know, no such demonstration of the existence of God is possible.

It is said that God is infinite. If God is a person, is it possible to conceive of a person of unlimited size? To me the idea is unthinkable. If God is not a person, what is he? We can think of unlimited space and duration, but we cannot imagine either to be a person. On the supposition that the universe was created, one might say that only an infinite being was equal to the work. For that matter, as much power and wisdom would be required to create an atom as to create an universe. A being that could create an atom could create anything. But infinity includes all, and that leads to Pantheism, which teaches that the universe is God. There cannot be anything outside the infinite.

If we suppose, for the sake of argument, that God, as a being, is not infinite, but that his attributes, his power, his wisdom, his knowledge, his love and justice, are infinite—that is, unlimited—the difficulties are not removed. It is possible to imagine a being located in the sun or some other world in infinite space, with eyes that can see all, with ears that can hear all, and with power that can influence and control all. But a being of that sort would be a local deity, however great. And we have no evidence of the existence of such a being, and cannot have, until such a being, if existing, choose to reveal himself.

The universe is an evidence of itself only, and of nothing else. The Design Argument is exploded. Even if we entertain it for the sake of arguing, it is utterly useless to prove the existence of one good designer. If nature has ways and means which work

for good, she has also ways and means which work for evil; and that proves, if they are the result of design, there are two or more designers working against each other; or, that the one designer is good and evil in one; or, that the ways and means which work for good and evil are all natural, and nothing more.

Those who believe in design and a designer ought to explain what they mean. Was everything designed? Are all creatures made after a plan drawn before? Were the millions of parasites that prey on man's body each designed, as well as man himself? Was a mouse designed, and a cat planned to kill and eat it? We cannot escape the conclusion; if one thing was designed, all things were designed. If nature could make one living thing without a designer, there is no sound reason for doubting her ability to make all living forms existing.

Strictly speaking, it is impossible to think of anything outside nature, for nature is everything. But, in arguing, we are forced to use language implying something outside everything. Without this, argument would be impossible. Therefore, using this form of speech is not an admission that something outside nature does exist. If something outside nature, say a designer or god, was needed to make the first man, was the same not needed to make a second, a third, and every one that followed? To make a second was as great a miracle as to make a first. And what about the imperfect work—the blind, deaf and dumb, the deformed, decrepit, insane and vicious, and the monstrosities? Is it any credit to a god to fill a world with ugly, miserable failures? If it be said that the failures are not the work of God, but the work of nature, nature is made equal to God. If nature by natural means could make a second, even an imperfect second, it is reasonable to conclude that she could make a first without an intervention from any outside power.

The same line of argument is applicable to plants and everything that exists. If a designer was needed to make a living form, he was needed also to make a plant or an atom. As an indication of power an atom is as important as a world. If nature can make a plant without an outside maker it is reasonable to suppose she can also make a living form, for there is no greater difficulty in the one than the other. If the universe was made, an atom required as great a maker as a universe did.

We are taught that God is all-wise, all-good, and all-mighty; that he knows everything, sees everything, and hears everything; that all wealth is at his command; that he is all-powerful, and therefore can do whatever he wills, when he wills, and how he wills. But are these attributes consistent with the facts of life and nature as we know them? To human understanding the world, in many respects, seems very imperfect. We think that we see how many things could be improved, had we sufficient power to make things anew. Would it not have been better to have made health infectious instead of disease? Would it not have been better still to have made disease impossible? Would not everlasting life be better than decay and death? Would not a world without volcanoes, storms, droughts, and floods, causing miseries and death, be better than a world with them?

There are millions of men who would feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and comfort the sorrowful if they could; yes, millions of men who would save the shipwrecked, rescue the miner, stop the ravages of epidemics, save the cities from the lava and the floods, and make all such disasters impossible if they could. Is it possible that man is better than God? If a man saw a disaster coming which he could prevent, and did not, he would be denounced as a brute and a monster. A man that would witness another man rushing to death without an attempt to save him, would be censured by a jury and despised as a coward by the public. If we condemn man for doing these things, how can we justify God for doing the same things? Are we to judge man by a higher standard than God? Is a deed done by God a crime when done by man? If God be



omniscient, he knows all, and sees all the calamities coming; and if he be omnipotent, he could control and prevent their happening. Most men would do so if they could. As God does not do so, we are forced to the conclusion that he is not all good, or not omniscient, or not omnipotent. If it be argued that life and death, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, storms and shipwrecks, famines, disease, and miseries are inevitable, then all, including God, are in the grip of eternal fate, and fate is made the only Almighty God.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be continued.)

### Dr. Samuel Kinns.

AN obituary notice in the *Daily News* recently gave a falsely eulogistic account of Dr. Samuel Kinns. One would imagine that the scientific world had, by his death, lost a shining light. Dr. Kinns was a man, doubtless, of good intentions; a *gentle* man outside his theology; but a man of poor qualifications scientifically, and with indifferent reasoning powers. He persistently tackled his pet subject, which was the reconciliation of Bible cosmogony with modern astronomy and geology. I knew Dr. Kinns many years ago; lived next to the College, Highbury New Park, and received part of my education there. Now that death has closed his life, I should not come forward to criticise him but for this *Daily News* account, which is so extravagant in its laudation, that it is difficult to keep silence. Speaking of his three books, and *Moses and Theology* in particular, it actually declares: "Dr. Kinns' works possess extraordinary claims to a permanent place in English literature!"

Now, *Moses and Geology* is a large volume, well bound, and profusely illustrated. This is all that can be said in its favor. In turning over the leaves at haphazard, one would imagine it to be an illustrated encyclopædia, so many subjects, having nothing to do with the title, being dealt with. In this sense alone is it a "remarkable work." It doubtless contains all Dr. Kinns knew about geology, which was microscopical; also all he knew about a hundred extraneous subjects, and homely and domestic matters. It was published in 1882; and in 1888, having then some time left his college, and having had my mental vision cleared by Freethought, I entered into a dialectic battle with the author. I am afraid it turned out to be a case of the grandson checkmating the grandfather. In his flounderings, the Doctor was often grotesque, often irritating, always shallow. Readers of the *Freethinker* know that since Dr. Kinns became a Reverend he has been criticised more than once in these columns, and with no excess of flattery. When personally attacked on his "work," he was powerless to answer argument—even the argument of one who had been but lately his pupil, and in age might have been his grandson. He was a firm believer in "design in nature," and in the "creation" of all that lives. Yet he could not say whether the designer, being design, was designed; or whether the Creator, being creation, was created. But the *pièce de résistance* in the book is his tabulation of "fifteen creative events." Fifteen creative events as given by Moses, and their harmony with fifteen creative events given by science. No one outside a lunatic asylum could understand why Dr. Kinns took only *fifteen* "creative events" from science. If the term can be used at all in connection with science, the "creative events" of science must be innumerable. Here are some of them, as examples, with the "harmony" attached:—

"SCIENCE.—The condensation of æther formed luminous nebulae, which afterwards still further condensed into suns and worlds.

"MOSES.—And God said—Let there be light."

Now Moses, if he knew anything about the condensation of æther and luminous nebulae, certainly veiled his knowledge in very primitive words! Again:—

"SCIENCE.—On the cooling of the earth, some of the gases which surrounded it, combined mechanically and chemically to form air and water.

"MOSES.—And God said—Let there be a firmament."

And, I suppose, Let there be the "stars also," as a makeweight! One more of the fifteen "creative events" will be enough:—

"SCIENCE.—In the new red sandstone footprints of birds are found for the first time.

"MOSES.—And fowl that may fly above the earth."

With reference to this, I quoted to him at the time Mr. Foote's *Creation Story*, which says: ".....it is quite certain that the order of creation given in Genesis differs widely from the revelations of geology. For instance, fish and fowl are said to have been created on the same day. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that day means period. The conclusion still is that fish and fowl were created together. Starting from this conclusion, what should we expect to find in our geological researches? Why, the fossil remains of fish and of fowl in the same epochs. But we find nothing of the kind. Marine animals antedate the carboniferous period, during which all our coal deposits were laid, but no remains of fowl are found until a later period. Now the carboniferous period alone, according to Sir William Thompson, covers many millions of years; so that, instead of fish and fowl being contemporaneous, we find them geologically separated by inconceivable spaces of time. Here again the Bible and science fatally disagree." This he never answered.

Dr. Kinns' treatment of the creative "day" of Scripture is extraordinary. He affirms that this becomes quite clear by rendering the word as an indefinite period of time, perhaps embracing millions of years, during which various geological formations took place. And this in the face of the Genesis account, which says "the evening and the morning were the first day," and so on. To render this into "the evening and the morning were the first million years" is preposterous. The difficulty is increased when we find the Lord finishing his creation in six days, and resting on the seventh. This involves God resting for a million years; and as the creation was finished six thousand years ago—a mere drop in the ocean of time—he must, of course, be resting still. This rest, or apathy, may afford some reason for the futility of prayer, but nothing else. Jesus must have fasted forty millions of years; after which there is, of course, no room for wonder that he was "an hungered." Joshua stopped the sun for a million years; yet geology knows nothing of this, and there is no explanation of what became of organic life. The thing is ridiculous, for Joshua did not even *live* a million years, much less did he require that time in which to "slay his enemies." Where, then, in the treatment of the word "day" comes the "reconciliation"?

The *Daily News* declares that Dr. Kinns was a singularly charming man. Let us pass this, although the charming aspects of the schoolmaster are not always apparent to the pupil. The account goes on to say he had one "absorbing passion." This, I suppose, was the life-long attempt to put into shape what his Heavenly Father had imperfectly done. We are told: "He often expressed a hope that, should he reach Heaven through the merits of Christ the Savior, other delightful work would be given him to do." After this we can only trust he is there, and in the congenial company of bishops and reverend fathers; more than all, safely out of the reach of wicked sceptics. But, even from such a distance, he may be able to read these words, and to know that one strong sheep still bleats out a protest against his wasted life-work on Moses.

In a letter written to me in March, 1883, Dr. Kinns, referring to my allegiance to Freethought, says: "May God change your heart before it be too late, and before your infidelity bring down your kind and loving mother with sorrow to her grave." This, I still believe, was earnest and well meant. Then he wrote again, soon after our old chief had, at the Hall of Science, mercilessly hammered his "life-work" all



to pieces, complaining: "Mr. Bradlaugh misrepresented and insulted me in my absence.....I understand he went so far as to call me a 'charlatan.'" This was true; but it was also true that Dr. Kinns sent representatives to the lecture, and not a man among them got up to defend him. At the close of the lecture they were called upon to appear, but in the hour of need they had forsaken their Master, and fled.

The last letter I ever received, says: "Some day, dear Arthur, I will answer every one of your difficulties." But the days have sped on, and passed out of memory, and the answer has not come." Now the grave is closed. Peace be with the dead! He did his best to reconcile an ignorant theology with wide-eyed science, and failed. Failed, as all must fail, who try to reconcile the irreconcilable; as all must fail who try to make a three-sided square.

A. FAGG.

### Poetry.

By ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

WHAT is a poet? What is poetry? Everyone has some idea of the poetic, and this idea is born of his experience—of his education—of his surroundings.

There have been more nations than poets. Many people suppose that poetry is a kind of art, depending upon certain rules, and that it is only necessary to find these rules to be a poet. But these rules have never been found. The great poet follows them unconsciously. The great poet seems as unconscious as Nature, and the product of the highest art seems to have been felt instead of thought. The finest definition, perhaps, that has been given, is this: "As Nature unconsciously produces that which appears to be the result of consciousness, so the greatest artist consciously produces that which appears the unconscious result."

Poetry must rest on the experience of men—the history of heart and brain. It must sit by the fireside of the heart. It must have to do with this world, with the place in which we live, with the men and women we know, with their loves, their hopes, their fears, and their joys.

After all, we care nothing about gods and goddesses, or folks with wings. The cloud-compelling Jupiters, the ox-eyed Junos, the feather-heeled Mercurys, or the Minervas that leaped full armed from the thick skull of some imaginary god, are nothing to us. We know nothing of their fears or loves, and for that reason the poetry that deals with them, no matter how ingenious it may be, can never touch the human heart.

I was taught that Milton was a wonderful poet, and above all others sublime. I have read Milton once. Few have read him twice.

With splendid words, with magnificent mythological imagery, he musters the heavenly militia—puts epaulets on the shoulders of God, and describes the Devil as an artillery officer of the highest rank. Then he describes the battles in which immortals undertake the impossible task of killing each other.

Take this line:—

Flying with indefatigable wings over the vast abrupt.

This is called sublime, but what does it mean?

We have been taught that Dante was a wonderful poet. He described with infinite minuteness the pangs and agonies endured by the damned in the torture-dungeons of God. The vicious twins of superstition—malignity and solemnity—struggle for the mastery in his revengeful lines. But there was one good thing about Dante; he had the courage, and what might be called the religious democracy, to see a pope in hell. That is something to be thankful for.

So, the sonnets of Petarch are as unmeaning as the promises of candidates. They are filled not with genuine passion, but with the feelings that lovers are supposed to have.

Poetry cannot be written by rule; it is not a trade, or a profession. Let the critics lay down the laws, and the true poet will violate them all. By rule you can make skeletons, but you cannot clothe them with flesh, put blood in their veins, thoughts in their eyes, and passions in their hearts. This can be done only by following the impulses of the heart, the winged fancies of the brain—by wandering from the paths and roads, keeping step with the rhythmic ebb and flow of the throbbing blood.

In the olden time in Scotland, most of the so-called poetry was written by pedagogues and parsons—gentlemen who found out what little they knew of the living world by reading the dead languages—by studying epitaphs in the cemeteries of literature. They knew nothing of any life that they thought poetic. They kept as far from the common

people as they could. They wrote countless verses, but no poems. They tried to put metaphysics—that is to say, Calvinism—in poetry. As a matter of fact, a Calvinist cannot be a poet. Calvinism takes all the poetry out of the world. If the existence of the Calvinistic, the Christian hell could be demonstrated, another poem never could be written.

In those days they made poetry about geography, and the beauties of the Scotch Kirk, and even about law. The critics have always been looking for mistakes, not beauties—not for the perfections of expression and feeling. They would object to the lark and nightingale because they do not sing by note—to the clouds because they are not square.

At one time it was thought that scenery, the grand in nature, made the poet. We now know that the poet makes the scenery. Holland has produced far more genius than the Alps. Where Nature is prodigal—where the crags tower above the clouds—man is overcome or overawed. In England and Scotland the hills are low, and there is nothing in the scenery calculated to rouse poetic blood, and yet these countries have produced the greatest literature of all time.

The truth is that poets and heroes make the scenery. The place where man has died for man is grander than all the snow-crowned summits of the world.

A poem is something like a mountain stream that flashes in light, then lost in shadow—leaps with a kind of wild joy into the abyss, emerges victorious, and, winding, runs amid meadows—lingers in quiet places, holding within its breast the hills and vales and clouds—then running by the cottage door, babbling of joy, and murmuring delight, then sweeping on to join its old mother, the sea.

### Apostle Spoons.

£4,900 FOR A COMPLETE SET.

WHEN Messrs. Crichton gave £690 in the memorable Dunn-Gardner sale last year for a silver spoon dated 1488 it was generally felt that no one could tell whither the silver craze would lead collectors. In this state of doubt the inscription on the trophy, "Saint Nicholas, pray for us," seemed especially apposite. Recently at Christie's the fever of possession broke forth anew, the bait to lure the cult being a complete set of Henry VIII. silver Apostle spoons. Frequently single spoons of this class appear at auction, but rarely indeed is a complete set of thirteen by the same maker and of the same date offered. By the time that the lot was reached the room was filled with an expectant company, of whom may be mentioned the Earl of Coventry, Baron Schroeder, Georgiana Countess of Dudley, Lady Muir-Mackenzie, and Miss Alice de Rothschild. Immediately the set was put up Mr. Mallett, of Bath, opened the bidding at £500. Messrs. Crichton at once joined issue, and at £3,000 their opponent retired. Then unexpected rivalry came from Mr. L. Hart, and the bids were carried rapidly to £4,000. At £4,900 Messrs. Crichton, who have so frequently shown a disposition to secure the prizes in the silver market at any cost, had at length to give way, leaving their doughty rival the distinction of paying £377 each for thirteen spoons, or at the rate of £148 per ounce, seeing that the set weighed 32oz. 19dwt.

It is claimed for the set that it is the earliest complete series of thirteen Apostle spoons known to collectors. The London hall-mark is for the year 1536, and the maker's mark is a sheaf of arrows. Each spoon measures 7½ in. in length, the figures are gilt and finely modelled and chased. The inside of the bowls bears the sacred monogram in black letter contemporary engraving on hatched ground in a circle. The set comprises The Master, St. Peter with a sword and book fastened by a clasp, St. Andrew with a cross, St. James the Greater, St. John with the Cup of Sorrow, St. Philip with a long staff with a cross in the "T," St. Bartholomew, St. Thomas, St. Matthew with an axe, St. James the Less with fuller's bat, St. Jude with a carpenter's square, St. Simon Zelotes with a long saw, and Judas Iscariot with a bag of money.

With regard to the previous appearance at auction of complete sets, it should be stated that on March 27, 1901, a full thirteen, dated 1617, realised £1,060. The famous Bernal set, lacking The Master spoon, is further supposed to have one spoon not of the same date as that borne by the other ten, which are uniformly 1519. At the Bernal sale, in 1855, they were sold to the Rev. Thomas Stainforth for 62 gns.—a price which must, after yesterday's event, be many times multiplied to meet their present value. Now and again a set of Apostle spoons of varying dates is made up, as in the Boore sale of June, 1902, when thirteen, dated between 1617 and 1639, brought £480. Recently, in the Bateman sale, a single St. John spoon, dated 1515, realised £90, and a St. Andrew, 1532, £50; but, as will have been seen, it is the complete set which is most valued.

—Daily Telegraph.



## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

## THE LESSON OF DOUGAL.

SIR,—Any slight misgiving one might have had as to the culpability of that vile by-product of Evolution, Samuel Dougal, was dissipated on reading that he had confessed his guilt: yet now—only a few days after the execution—it seems the seven reporters are not unanimous in stating the culprit really made the self-condemnatory admission; and one, at least, distinctly denies that such was the case.

Here, then, we have a very instructive instance of the value of eye-witnesses' testimony.

Most Christians are visibly fluttered and confused when asked to state the reason for "the faith that is in them," and those who do not retort with the quite too rapid and impossible clap-trap that they "feel" the truth of it, generally profess reliance upon the statements of the reputed eye-witnesses as set forth in the weird rigmarole which has come up to us from the dark, dank abyss of bygone, dreaming ignorance.

To this class of believers the following quasi-Rule-of-Three statement should be interesting, to wit:—

If, in connection with an event happening but a few days ago, and witnessed by competent men making reporting their profession, and being aided by the products of modern invention—if, I say, so much discrepancy can exist between their several accounts of the affair as to make it uncertain whether the central actor did or did not make a most important statement; how much error requires to be sifted out of the testimony of men who are themselves but names to us, and who lived, if at all, in a semi-barbarous land upwards of eighteen hundred years ago; when they would have us believe they walked and talked with a Man who was really the incarnation of the great mysterious forces which preserve the stability of the cosmos amid what seems to be a mad swirl of worlds; when they say this man raised the dead to life, walked on the billows, etc., and that at last the man himself died, anon to rise from the tomb and soar—in defiance of gravitation—right out beyond the earth's attraction, far beyond her life-supporting oxygen?

Yet, most probably, Christians will not see anything unbelievable in all that bizarre babble of the unknown "fishermen." Faith sustains them; and what a prodigy that faith must be! How would one express it in terms of a mustard-seed?

J. B. W.

## The Three World-Seasons.

THE winter season of the world has gone,  
Those arctic ages when the frozen brain  
Let no gray atom melt and flow to thought;  
When every hidden root lay cold and dark,  
Unconscious of its life, beneath the snow;  
When every seed, with summer instincts, slept  
And shuddered in its sleep, and dreamed of leaves;  
When every throb of life was sternly checked,  
By chill Repression, procuress to Death.

The springtime season of the world is here.  
Heroic days of strife and turbulence,  
When blows the March wind in rebellious glee.  
They who love peace must seek a younger star;  
Here all things clash, and break, and change, and grow;  
The snowdrifts melt into one common stream,  
Until the swift flood hurls the ice ashore.  
The glacier slips and floats to warmer seas;  
The white grass struggles underneath the stone.

The summer season of the world shall come,  
The final age of verdure, bloom, and fruit,  
Of which the river lisped and robins sang;  
When every acorn bursts into the oak  
Of its ideal, and clasps the genial soil;  
When every seed beneath the kindly sun  
Unfolds the fulness of its inner self;  
When winter's frost and springtime's broil are past,  
And all the purpose of the year made plain.

—Herbert N. Casson, in "The Vanguard."

DAVID'S LETHAL WEAPON.—David was receiving the congratulations of his friends on the Goliath episode. "But, tell us," they urged, "where did you get the stone?" "Sh!" he whispered, "it was a piece of mother's home-made bread!" Marvelling no longer at the efficacy of the weapon, they silently withdrew.

## THE GOOD OF GOOD.

To do good, not so much to the whole world or the world of humanity, as to certain definite people; to relieve actual misery, to lighten someone's burden—such things cannot deceive. We know what we are doing; we know that the aim will be worth our efforts—not in the sense that the result obtained will be of considerable importance in the mighty stream of things, but in the sense that there certainly will be a result, and a good result; that our action will not be lost in the infinite, like a small cloud in the monotonous blue of the sky. To do away with some suffering, that is in itself a sufficient aim for a human being. By so doing we change an infinitesimal part of the total sum of pain in the universe. Pity remains—inherent in the heart of man, vibrating in his deepest instincts—even when purely rational justice and universalised charity sometimes seem to lose their foundations. Even while doubting, one may love; even in the intellectual night, which prevents our pursuing any far-reaching aim, we may stretch out a helping hand to those around us who suffer.—*Guyau.*

## ATHEISM AND THE RABBLE.

Narrow-mindedness sometimes expresses its apprehension that the people, when they no longer believe in a theological world and in immortality, will brutishly squander this life, and give the reins to the coarsest passions. I say nothing of the coarseness of referring mankind in general for their morality, not to reason, but to fear; but I ask you to consider how foolish is the supposition that the people, when they no longer believe in those things, will be still the same people who are now feared. The total discarding of such a belief does not take place in a day. But where it does occur there is necessarily connected with it a transformation of the whole manner of thought and a cultivation which excludes all fear of unbridled bestiality. Of this be assured, the rabble will never be made licentious through unbelief, because it will no longer be a rabble when it really abandons its belief. Only religion and the rabble belong together; Atheism and the rabble are a contradiction.—*Karl Heinzen.*

## HUXLEY'S "INFIDELITY."

I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian world call, and, so far as I can see, are justified in calling, Atheist and Infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts. On the contrary, the whole teaching of experience seems to me to show that, while the governance—if I may use the term—of the universe is rigorously just and substantially kind and beneficent, there is no more relation of affection between governor and governed than between me and the twelve judges.—*Professor Huxley, in a letter to Charles Kingsley.*

## THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

For a thousand years the triumph of the Cross was the annihilation of everything that makes life pleasant and dignified. The Star of Bethlehem shone in a sky of utter blackness. All the constellations of science, art, philosophy, and literature were in disastrous eclipse. Cruelty and hypocrisy abounded on earth, toil and misery were the lot of the people, and bloodshed was as common as rain. Religions, said Schopenhauer, are like glow-worms; they require darkness to shine in. This was quite true of Christianity. It was splendid when it had no competitor. To be visible—above all, to be worshipped—it needed the sky to itself.—*G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."*

## JESUS PAYS.

One set of preachers make salvation to consist in believing. They tell their congregations that if they believe in Christ their sins shall be forgiven. This, in the first place, is an encouragement to sin, in a similar manner as, when a prodigal young fellow is told his father will pay all his debts, he runs into debt the faster and becomes the more extravagant. Daddy, says he, pays all, and on he goes. Just so, in the other case, *Christ pays all*, and on goes the sinner.—*Thomas Paine.*

AND FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.—"Bob" Breckinridge, of Kentucky, dropped into a church one evening while services were in progress. In the course of his remarks the clergyman in the pulpit said that "slavery is a divine institution." The congregation was considerably disturbed to hear "Bob" Breckinridge burst out from the rear; "And so is hell,"



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

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CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey; 6.30, E. B. Rose.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

FINSBURY BRANCH N. S. S. (Clerkenwell-green): 11.30, a Lecture.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, A. F. Davies.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. Schaller; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, a Lecture.

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HALIFAX (Public Square): Tuesday, 4, at 7, Ernest Pack, "Jesus the Jew."

HUDDERSFIELD (Market Cross): Wednesday, 5, at 7, Ernest Pack, "The Bible God."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): 3, Ernest Pack, "St. John's Nightmare"; 6.30, "What must we do to be Saved?"

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