

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Opinion governs all mankind,
Like the blind's leading of the blind.*

BUTLER.

Lord Salisbury's Christianity.

WHEN a prisoner in the dock has been tried and found guilty, the judge sometimes hears witnesses as to character before passing sentence, and if the culprit has a number of good friends the fact may be received in mitigation of punishment.

Christian apologists seem to remember this procedure, but they act upon it with their usual confusion. Instead of waiting for the verdict of the jury, they insist on calling in their friends during the trial, as if their testimony were a part of the evidence. They ask you whether they can possibly be guilty of maintaining a falsehood when they boast the acquaintance of so many distinguished people. Christianity must be true, they say, because that great statesman, Mr. Gladstone, or that great scientist, Lord Kelvin, believes it to be so. They often rattle off a long list of what they are pleased to call "authorities"—although fact and logic are the only authorities in the high court of investigation. At bottom, of course, they are simply betraying the rat-in-the-corner instinct of the beaten partisan; for if you rattle off, in reply, a long list of equally eminent "authorities" who disbelieve Christianity, you make as much impression upon them as a shower of rain makes upon a leaden roof.

Truth is the wise man's authority, but authority is not the wise man's truth. Authority is the truth of fools. And while fools are plentiful there will always be an appeal to the roll of famous men who adhere to this or that form of opinion. Unfortunately this appeal is made all round. We hear it every day in politics as well as in religion.

We are not surprised, therefore, at seeing the late Lord Salisbury so extensively cited as a friend of Christianity. Perhaps the cream of the joke is that some people mention him as an "authority" in support of their religion who treat his political views as false and detestable.

A gentleman who modestly conceals his identity has produced Lord Salisbury as a "witness" in favor of Christianity in the columns of the *Yarmouth Mercury*. In the course of his communication he quotes the following letter, purporting to have been written by his lordship in reply to a clerical correspondent some nine years ago:—

"Chalet Cecil,
"Puys, Dieppe,
"August 30th, 1894.

"REV. SIR,—I wish I could assist you, but it is difficult to touch so large a theme in so short a space without doing harm.

"Everyone has their own point of view from which they look at these things. To me the central point is the Resurrection of Christ, which I believe.

"Firstly, because it was testified by men who had every opportunity of seeing and knowing, and whose veracity was tested by the most tremendous trials, both of energy and endurance, during long lives.

"Secondly, because of the marvellous effect it had upon the world. As a moral phenomenon, the spread and mastery of Christianity is without a parallel. I can no

more believe that colossal moral effects lasting for 2,000 years can be without a cause, than I can believe that the various motions of the magnets are without a cause, though I cannot wholly explain them.

"To anyone who believes the Resurrection of Christ, the rest presents little difficulty. No one who has that belief will doubt that those who were commissioned by Him to speak—Paul, Peter, Mark, John—carried a Divine message. St. Matthew falls into the same category. St. Luke has the warrant of the generation of Christians who saw and heard the others.

"That is the barest and roughest form the line which the evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament has always taken in my mind. But intellectual arguments, as you well know, are not to be relied upon in such matters above.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

"SALISBURY.

"The Rev. W. T. McCormick"

We know nothing about the Rev. W. T. McCormick, but we know something about Lord Salisbury. We know he was a good writer and a good speaker. His utterances were always couched in elegant English. Consequently we are surprised at a letter like this being attributed to him. If he was indeed responsible for this production, we should say he must have written it when he was ill, or drunk, or three parts asleep. Now it does not appear that Lord Salisbury was ever drunk, nor do we believe he was ever much asleep except in bed; so we fall back on the other alternative, and conclude that he wrote this letter during a fit of illness.

Stay, there is another alternative conceivable. His lordship may not have written this letter at all. He may have said to his secretary, or to some member of his family, "Here, answer this troublesome fellow for me. Tell him so and so, and I'll just sign it." Perhaps that is how it happened.

Frankly, we cannot conceive Lord Salisbury writing with his own hand that "Everyone has their point of view." Such grammar is unworthy of a school-boy. And what an expression is that "such matters above"! Did the vivid and pungent Lord Salisbury terminate a letter with such a vile piece of slovenly composition? We cannot believe it. Did he pen that appalling phrase of "intellectual arguments"? Again we say we cannot believe it.

Now let us look into the substance of this letter. We will assume, for the sake of argument, that Lord Salisbury wrote it, and we will then ask sensible men, or even Christians, what it is worth.

Lord Salisbury starts off with the Resurrection. He says he believes it, and he gives his reasons—which would be scanned with a tolerant eye by his correspondent, who believed it too.

His first reason is Paley's argument in rough attire. The Resurrection was "testified" by men who saw and knew, and whose veracity was "tested" by heavy "trials"—which is a bad bit of tautology.

Who are these men? Five are mentioned—Matthew, Peter, Mark, John, and Paul. But the last may be dismissed at once. Paul did not see and know Jesus. He was converted to Christianity several years afterwards. Mark may be dismissed too. It is admitted that he never saw and heard Jesus. According to Christian tradition, he was a disciple of Peter. Peter may be dismissed also. If he wrote an account of the Resurrection it is not extant. Matthew and John remain, and Lord Salisbury assumes that they wrote the first and

fourth Gospels. Well, the answer to this is that there is not a scholar in the whole Church who believes it.

The "trials" of those who "testified" the Resurrection are entirely imaginary. If there be any truth in the Acts of the Apostles, the preachers of the Gospel found the Roman law a protection against their persecutors. Setting ridiculous legends aside, there is no trace of any interference with the Christians before the time of Nero, and that is extremely doubtful. All who have any respect for history, therefore, must agree with Gibbon that the first apostles of Christianity did *not* seal their testimony with their blood. Even if they had done so, it would not have proved the truth of their story, but only their earnestness—which is quite compatible with the grossest error.

Lord Salisbury's second reason is founded on a misstatement. It is not true that the spread and mastery of Christianity is without a parallel. It has parallels in the cases of Buddhism and Mohammedanism. What the "colossal moral effects" are is not indicated. But if they were ever so great—and they are only so to Christian eyes—they could not possibly prove the truth of an historic allegation. Jesus rose from the dead, or he did not; in any case, the evidence must be contemporary; it is the height of absurdity to appeal to something that happened (if it *did* happen) hundreds of years afterwards.

There is something delightfully simple about the observation that "To anyone who believes the Resurrection of Christ, the rest presents little difficulty." When you have swallowed the Resurrection, with the smallest possible supply of evidential butter, there is no reason why you should stickle at anything else. Here, as elsewhere, it is only the first step that costs. Lord Salisbury took the first step—with his hand in his mother's. All the rest was "as easy as lying."

G. W. FOOTE.

Dr. Horton and "Nunquam's" Questions.

DURING the past fortnight I have been favored with three copies of a pamphlet by the Rev. Mr. Horton, of Hampstead; two of the copies have come from Freethinkers; the third from a Christian. The latter accompanies the pamphlet with a request that I will read it, and, presumably, he thinks that my doing so will tend to diminish my opposition to Christianity. The request was, to a certain extent, unnecessary; although I expect that it was prompted by the belief that Freethinkers are as chary of reading a Christian's apologetic as the latter is of reading Freethought literature. It is not, however, usual for Freethinkers to warn people *not* to read Christian productions. On the contrary, they advise them to do so; and, so long as the reading is done in the light of a sense of fairness, and with the help of adequate knowledge, there is nothing that so confirms a man in his Freethought as reading Christian defences.

Dr. Horton's pamphlet is professedly a reply to a number of questions that "Nunquam" put to Christians through the columns of the *Clarion*. From a religious paper I see also that various clergymen are doing all they can to distribute the *brochure*, so that it is evidently looked upon by many as an effective antidote to the heresy that is being disseminated by Mr. Blatchford. From a Christian standpoint this may be so, for the average Christian seems to regard an affirmation of his belief as tantamount to a reply, and reiteration as equal to a rebuttal. From any other point of view Mr. Horton's pamphlet is about as poor a performance as I have seen for some time. The only indication of an answer to "Nunquam's" questions that I can find is on the title page, where Mr. Horton says they are answered. Apart from this, the chief feature of the pamphlet is a repeating of the question, with a "Yes, I do," at the end of each. Mr. Horton evidently thinks an experience meeting is synonymous with evidence.

And it is clearly the latter that "Nunquam" required. When he asked Christians, "Do you believe" so-and-so? the query implied, "Have you any reason for believing it?" Everyone knows that Christians profess to believe certain things. The real point is whether there is any justification for the belief. Mr. Horton for the most part simply repeats the question, and then says, "Yes, I do." This may sound very convincing at a prayer-meeting, no doubt; outside it is apt to be looked upon as only one more proof of the intellectual poverty of contemporary Christian leaders.

Take the following as indications of the nature of Mr. Horton's reply. "Nunquam" asks, Do you believe that Christ was a god or only a man? Now the difficulties in the way of believing that Jesus—assuming his existence—was God, are stupendous. Mr. Horton's reply is that he believes what is stated at the opening of the Fourth Gospel. Anything more inane could hardly be imagined. Of course Mr. Horton, or any other clergyman, will *say* they believe this. The real point is whether this belief is reasonable or not. Again, "Nunquam" put a question about the Immaculate Conception. Mr. Horton replies that he is confusing the Immaculate Conception of Mary with the Virgin Birth of Jesus; but, if he means the latter, the reply is, Yes. He further says the testimony of the first and third gospels are enough to establish it, and the manner in which Luke tells the story shows that "he derived it from the Virgin Mother herself." Mr. Horton, having written this tract for Christian consumption, is obviously trading upon the ignorance of some and the credulity of all. Otherwise, how on earth can even he imagine that the bare statements of Matthew and Luke are enough to prove the truth of so wildly improbable a story? And one would much like to know the grounds for believing that Luke got the story from Mary. Mr. Horton says because of the "exquisite manner" in which the story is told. Did ever folly go farther? What, in the name of all that is reasonable, has an "exquisite" way of telling a story to do with its truth or falsity? The truth is that, far from telling Luke, the strange thing is that Mary herself seems quite unaware of the divinity of Jesus. She is "amazed" at his understanding, which she would hardly have been had she known his divine origin and nature. She is afraid he is lost. Fancy being afraid that God Almighty had got lost in a small place like Jerusalem! And when Jesus, in anything but a dutiful manner, tells her that he is about his "father's business," she "understood not the saying." And this in the very chapter to which Mr. Horton refers as proof that Luke had the story from Mary! Mr. Horton, doubtless, has a firm faith in Jesus, but he clearly has a much stronger belief in the lack of critical ability among his readers.

Mr. Blatchford asks his Christian, "Do you believe in direct answer to prayer?" To this Mr. Horton gives the quite gratuitous, because useless, answer, "Yes, I do. The instances are innumerable, and the proofs are absolutely convincing." No doubt Mr. Horton thinks his confession of faith so weighty that when next the Christian finds his belief questioned, he will only have to reply that Mr. Horton—the Mr. Horton—believes it, and there will be an end of the matter. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Mr. Horton has elsewhere given samples of these "absolutely convincing" proofs. Here they are.

Case Number One is of a little child. A mother wrote: "Pray for my child; the doctor has been, and gives no hope." Mr. Horton and his Church prayed, with the result that when the doctor came again he found the child better, and she ultimately recovered. The second case is also concerned with a doctor who said he could "do nothing more." It was a case of peritonitis. This was a serious case, and Mr. Horton took it in hand himself. "I asked *definitely* that she should be restored." There could be no mistake. The Lord was not given a chance to back out. It was not a mere "Thy will be done" kind of prayer, but "I, R. F. Horton, of Lyndhurst-road Chapel, *definitely* request you to cure this case of peritonitis."

There was no evading the petition, and the child got better. One is really amazed at such proofs. If patients who had been given up ever recovered without prayer, or if doctors were ever out in their diagnosis, or if people ever got worse in spite of prayer, the sceptic might take heart again. As none of these things ever happen, we must admit, with Mr. Horton, that these proofs are "absolutely convincing."

A further instance given is that of a lady who lost her shoe while on an excursion in Norway. Several people searched for it in vain. Then came upon the scene Mr. Horton. This profound philosopher thought, "If the hairs of our head are numbered, why not the shoes of our feet?" Once more he wrestled with the Lord, and then set out like some knight of old to discover the "fayre ladye's" shoe. And then, guided by the Lord, he went to a particular spot, he "knew not how or why," and there lay the shoe, "obvious as though it had fallen from heaven." I do not know how a shoe looks after it has fallen from heaven, and can only say that, in face of such stupendous proofs, criticism is dumb, and to express my firm belief that, if only Mr. Horton took the matter in hand, he could discover the missing lady doctor as easily as he found the missing shoe. That Mr. Hickman should write to Scotland Yard about his daughter instead of to Dr. Horton is only another proof of the unbelief into which the age has fallen.

Another of "Nunquam's" questions is, "Do you believe that Christ performed miracles?" Mr. Horton says "Yes," because Hume said it is all a question of evidence. "If the evidence for a miracle is strong enough, you are bound to believe it." Quite so; but it would have been rather more honest if Mr. Horton had also told his audience that Hume had pointed out that, in the very nature of the case, there *never could* be enough evidence to prove a miracle. The evidence sufficient to compel belief would, Hume said, destroy its character as miracle. But it would not suit Mr. Horton to deal thus fairly with Hume, and so he prefers to present him to his readers as one who was undecided and waiting for evidence.

And Mr. Horton finds this necessary evidence (1) is the fact that the gospel narratives are more and more proved to be genuine documents; (2) that the miracles are of the kind that have never been attributed to men by superstition and legend; (3) Christ's person and history could not be explained without it.

I said above that Mr. Horton was trading upon the credulity and ignorance of his readers; and I believe that no one who honestly examines this reply can doubt it. Mr. Horton writes as though the critical work of the last half century had never existed. Let any reader of his pamphlet spend a few hours at a public library with the now completed volumes of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* and he will discover that instead of the Gospel narratives being "more and more proved to be genuine documents," in the opinion of many of the writers the evidence is overwhelming that these documents have not the slightest claim to be considered authentic narrations of historic events. Mr. Horton may reply, as he has a right to, that he does not agree with these critics. But surely the fact that a number of eminent *Christian* writers are driven to this conclusion ought to be enough to prevent a conscientious man writing that these gospels are "more and more proved to be genuine," as though that were the unanimous verdict of modern scholarship.

The statement that "Christ's history and person cannot be explained without the miracle" is so fatuous that it may pass without much comment. Naturally as the history of the gospel Jesus is the history of a miracle worker, beginning with the miracle of a Virgin Birth, and ending with a resurrection, you cannot explain this person without the miracle. But one can explain the creation of this character without believing in miracles, and this fact never seems to have crossed Mr. Horton's mind.

But it is the statement that the Christ miracles

are unlike those attributed to men by legends, that makes one pause and ask whether Mr. Horton has so little information on the question as to believe this, or is he writing with his tongue in his cheek? Surely Mr. Horton does not mean to say that the miracle of the Virgin Birth is original with Jesus? Does he not know even his Old Testament sufficient to be aware that cases of healing the sick and raising the dead are found therein, just as they are afterwards found in the New Testament? Was not the struggle with the devil one of the common features of Egyptian mythology? As a matter of fact the whole list of miracles can be paralleled before the date given for the birth of Christ, just as they can be paralleled later. I do not believe Mr. Horton is ignorant of these things, and not believing this, only one other conclusion is possible.

Mr. Horton has answers to each of "Nunquam's" questions, but they are all on the same level as those already dealt with. Their chief—indeed, their only—importance lies in the fact that they are written by one who is an acknowledged representative of dissenting Christianity. And one is constrained to ask whether a creed that depends upon this species of intellect can reasonably hope to persist. Organisation on the one side, and apathy on the other, may combine to lengthen its existence; but such defences can hardly hope to withstand the insistent pressure of progressive knowledge and feeling. Slow though the decay of Christianity may be, it is, nevertheless, sure, and one of its clearest symptoms is the decreasing ability of its defenders.

C. COHEN.

From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform.

BY RICHARD TREVOR.

XI.—THE INDESTRUCTIBLE REMAINDER.

NOW that we have eliminated the Bible as a specially inspired and authoritative book, and Christianity as a miraculously revealed religion, both from our minds and from our lives, is there anything that remains and cannot be swept away? Yes, ALL THAT HAS EVER HAD ANY REAL AND VERIFIABLE EXISTENCE. We have merely rid ourselves of unnatural and morbid developments, of troublesome and hurtful incumbrances, or, in other words, we have only lopped off a few injurious excrescences. We ourselves, and Nature, of which we are an important part, still endure. I can find no more in external objects than is already, either active or dormant, in myself. Man is an epitome of the Universe. Nothing transcends the soul, because it is the sum-total of all things in miniature. Hence, neither poet nor philosopher ever uttered a thought that did not awaken echoes in all minds. That which is in itself true appeals more or less forcibly to all alike, because it is germinally present and regnant in all natural souls. I know how customary it is, in certain quarters, to accuse Atheists of contradicting, in the most wilful manner, the testimony of their own nature, and to call them liars and hypocrites. "At heart," we are confidently assured, "no man is or can be an Atheist." The obvious retort is that, at heart, no man either is or can be anything else. Even according to the teaching of orthodox theology, ever since the Fall in Eden Atheism has been the natural fruit of unregenerate hearts. Now that science has disproved the Story of the Fall it is undeniable that, by nature, all men are Atheists. Everybody knows now how the belief in Supernatural Beings first arose, and how it was gradually evolved into its present forms. As I have already said, we are not naturally religious. Even to-day children have to be diligently and painfully trained and coaxed, often very much against their wills, into religious beliefs and exercises, and many of them, as soon as they arrive at years of discretion and independence, shake them off again. We do not take to religion as naturally as we do to our food. Furthermore, unbelievers are frequently taunted with their

inability to supply the world with a worthy substitute for the Christian Religion. "What have you to offer us in place of Christianity?" they are excitedly asked. "You must not rob us of our religion until you can provide us with another and better one." We cheerfully accept the challenge; and our answer to it is, that the world would be immensely better off without its Supernatural Religions, because they are all more or less artificial and of a bedwarring tendency.

As illustrations of the truth of this contention let us consider a few of the great, central words of the Bible, such as *God*, *Christ*, *Sin*, and *Immortality*. Is not the merest tyro in theology fully aware that no two divines are in entire agreement as to the meaning of a single one of these terms? It may be alleged that all theologians speak of God as an infinite, eternal, invisible, and absolute Being; and yet hosts of them admit, on metaphysical grounds, that an infinite and absolute Being is unthinkable. "But," some simple-minded person will say, "I must believe in God because he is revealed in the Bible." But several different and conflicting gods are revealed in the Bible—in which of them do you believe; the god who commanded human sacrifice, or the one who forbade it: the god of war or the god of peace: the god of vengeance or the god of love? These are all in the Book, and you must make your choice between them. "My God," another exclaims, "is the embodiment of all high and noble qualities, and whenever I worship him it is really to such attributes that I am paying homage." Then your God cannot be an infinite and self-conscious person, but merely an idealisation, a poetic fancy, a product of your own imagination. The only sound advice to such a believer is this: By all means, retain and adore the qualities, in so far as they are high and noble, but, for all sakes, drop the fanciful person. The term *Christ*, also, is open to the same objection. As to who or what Christ is there is an endless diversity of opinion. To one disciple, he is the Son of the living God, the only begotten; to another, the completest revelation of the Highest; to another, the all-sufficient expiatory sacrifice for sin; to another, a teacher of remarkable originality and power; and to another still, man at his highest and best, the supreme miracle of history. These typical disciples represent different and contradictory schools of Christology, which have always stood at daggers drawn in relation to one another. In the Middle Ages the Church sanctioned the Christology of the Augustinian school, and tried to stamp out the other schools by imprisoning, torturing, and burning their representatives. But at no time was the Church competent to exercise absolute authority in matters of doctrine, because it has been repeatedly proved that she put men to death for holding and teaching opinions which riper knowledge has established as incontestably true. Her character as an infallible teacher has been completely and irretrievably shattered. Convicted, in open court, as a false witness on many important points, the validity of her evidence on all other subjects has been hopelessly destroyed. If therefore we listen to our own reason, unterrorised by any superstition, we shall have to let the theological Christ go, with all the theories concerning him, or put him in the same category as Buddha, and Confucius, and Zoroaster.

The same remarks apply to the words *Sin* and *Immortality*. What is sin? No two people agree. According to some there are sins specially against God, transgressions against positive commands, similar to the Edenic one about the forbidden apple, and so far as one can make out these are exclusively sins of omission. We sin against God when we neglect to pray, to read the Bible, to attend church, or to contribute towards the due maintenance of the priesthood. Then there are sins against ourselves and sins against our neighbor, which are variously defined according to the theological standpoint. Again, according to the ripest and most reliable Biblical scholars, immortality is not taught in the Old Testament at all, so that in reality the Jewish

Church concerned itself solely with the affairs of the life that now is. Dr. George Adam Smith informs us, further, that there are excellent Christians in present-day Churches to whom the doctrine of a future life does not appeal, and who have accepted Christianity merely on the ground of the unique exaltation and purity of its ethical teaching. But is it not indisputable that if we eliminate the Supernatural, with its heaven and hell, from the Christian Religion, nothing of distinctive value, nothing that is not common to all the great Religions, remains? All that is peculiar to it is purely mythical, while all that is of real value in it is common property.

Now, face-to-face with such significant facts, my argument is that we do not need a substitute for Christianity, but would be much better off, in every respect, with no Supernatural Religion whatever. But what remains to us after we have discarded God, Christ, and Immortality, with all the absurd dogmas concerning them? Nature, in all the plenitude of her glory and power. She is our kind, loving, all-sustaining mother, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. She answers all our anxious questions and solves all our vexing problems. We never appeal to her in vain. How speedily she responds to our varying moods, comforting us in sorrow, cheering us in despondency, inspiring us in weakness, weeping with us when we are sad, and laughing with us when we are merry. Our one business in life is to observe her laws, and to be in perfect tune with her sweet harmonies; and the only sin possible to us is to be in a state of rebellion against her wise orderings. There is only one thing we should dread, not the wrath and punishment of a Supernatural Being, supposed to be seated on a glittering throne no one knows where, but the ominous frown of our mother when we have wilfully disregarded her beneficent injunctions. No, my friends, we do not need another Supernatural Religion, but we do need to return to the worship of reason, the adoration of Nature, and the practical fulfilment of the laws of truth, and honor, and honesty, and pity, and service. This is the divinest religion on earth, and yet the one most culpably neglected. Christians are too busy preparing for heaven to pay the slightest attention to the social duties of earth. "But," someone cries, "I cannot give up my hope of heaven, and you have no right to try to rob me of it." Well, cherish it to your heart's content, so far as I am concerned; but will you be good enough to consider, with due seriousness, the following practical questions?—

"Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?"

Is it well that—

"There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street?"

Is it well that—

"There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor?"

Is it well, is it right, is it just that these and a thousand other anomalies, sufferings, and cruelties should be permitted to continue in countries which call themselves Christian? Is it well, is it consistent that you, a professed follower of Christ, should be rapidly amassing a colossal fortune, and faring sumptuously every day, at the expense of the poverty and misery of your work-people? If that is what your hope of heaven enables or allows or leads you to do, the sooner you part with it the better it will be for all concerned. In your sane moments, do you not agree? It is most lamentable to think how Christian churches seek to win and retain the rich by wheedling flatteries and infamous cajoleries, and then dole out a little charity to the poor, accompanied by the assurance that though poor on earth they shall be rich in heaven. In their hearts the poor scorn charity, and cry bitterly for justice, fair-play, and the recognition of their humanity. If the

churches were true to Christ, whom they call their Head, they would tell the rich that they cannot possibly enter the Kingdom of Heaven until they learn, not to bequeath their riches to good causes when they die, or devote them to ecclesiastical purposes while they live, and be made famous, but so to conduct their business affairs from day to day as to preclude the possibility of ever becoming rich. Instead of that, they are doing their utmost to perpetuate and accentuate the terrible injustices, inequalities, and artificial distinctions that now obtain in Society. Our reason tells us how iniquitous the present condition of things is, and our reason, guided by our heart, dictates the only true remedy; and if we only had the courage to apply the remedy all would soon be well. Christianity has been in the world for nineteen hundred years, but has ignominiously failed to set it right. Indeed, it has often succeeded in setting it quite wrong. The reason is that it is pre-eminently the religion of the world to come, and, consequently, concerns itself but little with the affairs of this. When we have detached ourselves from it we shall have time to fulfil the common duties of the common day, and, as a result, to restore our relations to ourselves and to one another to their normal and healthy condition.

My story is told, and I am at rest, and can face the future without dread. I know whence I came and whither I am going, and I greet the unseen, and whatever it may be, with a cheer. I take my stand with Ernst Haeckel in the tabernacle of wonder and admiration, and I join the great Goethe in the sanctuary of sorrow and sympathy, reconsecrating myself to the service of the huge army of the wronged and sinned against, the suffering and the sad. Great and honorable is the work that lies before us, and I call upon the reader and myself to awake from sloth and begin with glowing hearts to do it. Let us unite in a grandly altruistic mission to rid the world of debasing superstitions, to dethrone all existing evils, to establish right relations between man and man, to promote good will and genuine brotherhood all round, and to fill the days and hours of this earthly life, the only life of which we are sure, with merry laughter and songful joy. Such is the beneficent ministry of the only true gospel.

Correspondence.

MR. ENGSTRÖM AT FINSBURY PARK.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have just received from the office of the Christian Evidence Society the current (September 6) number of the *Freethinker*, specially sent to me as it contained an article with the above heading, signed "J. K. Maagaard. Without delay I reply thereto.

I don't want to say much on the personal question, though I feel bound to thank your contributor for the very kind way in which he speaks of the tone of my lecture. I can assure him that, if I then spoke favorably of yourself or any other Freethinker, my language on our platform is precisely the same as my utterances in the office of the C. E. S., or in the most secret discourse with the narrowest Christian. I may be excessively weak in brain, but I try, like John Ruskin, "to speak the truth." As to my worthy Chairman, on the occasion referred to, I should like to say that I believe him to be one of the best men I have ever known. If he muddled his h's (I have no recollection of receiving brevet rank in that line), he is certainly a gentleman in the very best sense of that ill-used word. As to the lecturers of the C. E. S., I cannot accept Mr. Maagaard's view. To explain why I cannot would involve a long correspondence.

Perhaps you will allow me to state quite simply the argument used, which was partly that of the Rev. Norman E. Marsh and partly my own. If Jesus Christ does not save men and women from their sins *now*, the Christian Creed is not worth defending. But, if sin is (as the noblest men of all ages, climes, and religions have, at their best moments, felt and said)—the worst of all evil things, beside which neither poverty nor pain nor death count—then, if there be any means of salvation from it, to make known that means of deliverance is to preach a gospel indeed.

Putting aside any and every influence for generally improving character which Christianity may (and in the opinion of ninety-nine persons out of a hundred does)

possess, a small percentage of its nominal adherents—most of whom, in more or less degree, believe it to be true—are *real* Christians. Supposing these, at the very lowest computation, number 10,000,000 (who, again, are regarded by ninety-nine out of a hundred as the very salt of the earth), almost all are deeply conscious of their natural sinfulness, and of their real deliverance from it by the power of Jesus Christ. Whether of the Roman, Eastern, Anglican, Presbyterian, Nonconformist, Lutheran, or Calvinist Churches, they intensely believe in their own redemption from the *power* (for my argument did not necessarily dwell upon pardon from the *guilt*) of sin through faith in, and union with, Jesus Christ. These ten millions are found in successive generations; they are of all types of character, ability, social grade, and it is the veriest folly to speak of them as knaves or fools or madmen; for the change referred to, whatever name is given to it—"regeneration" or "conversion" or the "new birth"—is testified to by those who know them most intimately, and who regard them with feelings of veneration.

When I spoke of science, I used the word in its noblest and fullest sense. I meant the careful search for facts, the explanation by some theory which seems to account for them, the most painstaking verification, by applying the theory to other cases. Judged by this method, there is no so-called science which can surpass, perhaps equal, that which deals with the facts and causes of Christian saintliness. In what respect is a rock, a fossil, an embryological condition a more certain fact than a saint? And the latter is certainly, in every point of view for human purposes, the most interesting and the most helpful of any object on our planet. And what verification in ordinary science can surpass in completeness, both in closeness and permanence of observation, the verification of the Christian theory of redemption from the power of sin, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Further, if there be any fundamental law of scientific logic, it is that, given the same conditions, the same factors invariably issue in the same result; and that a different result compels us to hold that there has been a variation in the preceding factors.

Now, it seems impossible to hold that, if Jesus Christ had been Himself born in sin, and had actually sinned, He could have been, and continue to be, the Savior from sin the science of saintliness proclaims Him to have been, and still to be; consequently we are compelled by scientific logic to demand an origin in some of its factors differing from those which issue in ordinary human beings. And, though from the nature of the case a vast spiritual power is the first necessity this logic demands, the action of mind upon body and body upon mind is now by science known to be so close that a physical variant might seem not unlikely to have accompanied the spiritual force.

At this point we turn to the New Testament, and find that it everywhere speaks of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and that His Humanity was filled with the Spirit of God. That is the essential meaning of the Incarnation—"His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The physical variant in His human origin is stated in the word "Virgin"; and to that variant two of the four Gospels bear plain witness.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM.

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A MIRACLE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the *Hibbert Journal* for last July is to be found a spark of true wit in the summary of contents of a chapter in Albert Houtin's *Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX. Siècle*. (Paris, 1903.) Here it is: "Variations sur un grand miracle biblique, 'le vrai miracle,' le deluge universel.—Le deluge un peu restreint: Deluc, Cuvier, Wallon, Darras, le père Brucker.—Le deluge plus restreint: d'Omalius, Motais, Charles Robert.—Le deluge très restreint: MM. Suess et de Girard.—Un peu plus de deluge: M. de Kirwan.—Pas de deluge du tout: MM. de Lapparent et Loisy."

Which may be Englished, omitting the authorities cited, as follows: "Variations on the great biblical miracle, 'the real miracle,' the universal deluge. The deluge slightly restricted. The deluge more restricted. The deluge very restricted. Very little deluge at all. No deluge whatever."

I think it not unlikely that Monsieur Houtin has heard the story of the "teetotal" sergeant—Irish, of course—who, at a Dublin bar, called out in a loud voice: "A lemonade, please Miss"; then, *sotto voce*, as she is departing to execute his order, "er—you may put 'a cinder' [whiskey] in it"; and, again calling her back, in a whisper: "Miss!—er—never mind the lemonade!"

The *Freethinker* will have to "gee-up" a bit if theological magazines break out in this fashion. The French are indeed a great people—we owe them many smiles since the Pantagruelian Epic.

JEAN D'ARQUE.

Acid Drops.

We regret that members of the Trade Union Congress at Leicester stooped to listen to what is called the "official sermon" by the Rev. F. L. Donaldson. This gentleman simply presented the claims of the Church under cover of moral truisms that are as old as the records of human thought, and were hoary or baldheaded before Christianity was thought of. His object was to persuade "the great Labor forces of the world" that they ought to "claim the alliance of religion"—whereas it is really religion that is claiming the alliance of the Labor forces. The reverend gentleman spoke of Labor's "natural ally, the Church of God." *Natural* ally, forsooth! An ally that comes in at the twelfth hour when the battle is nearly over and the victory almost won! An ally that did nothing but give open or underhand help to the enemy during all the previous eleven hours! Freethinkers like Charles Bradlaugh, John Morley, Frederic Harrison, and Professor Beesly stood up for Trade Unionism when it badly wanted friends.

The Torrey-Alexander Mission has been "going strong" in Birkenhead. By the co-operation of half the leading Christians in the town a "mighty success" has been achieved. In other words, the orthodox have swarmed together nightly, and the Yankee evangelists have had big meetings in consequence. The saved in Birkenhead are saved still; the damned are damned still. Probably the only people better off are Torrey and Alexander.

"X. Y. Z." in the *Daily News* wants to know where the late Rev. Dr. Parker's degree came from. He asks the same question with regard to the living Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan. He even requests the opinion of the present oracle of the City Temple on the subject. Verily the dear old Nonconformist dovecote is fluttering.

The new oracle of the City Temple, being back from America, has been interviewed by the daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience; and we are told that, from the look of "resolute determination" on his face, it is obvious that he is prepared to "take his full share in the big fight that is coming"—the fight of the Passive Resisters, to wit. Well, we shall see what we shall see, and we are prepared to wait. Mr. Campbell may be a hero, but he doesn't look it.

Mr. Campbell was good enough to talk to the interviewer "with regard to the future." One passage of his prophetic discourse is decidedly Campbelleque:—

"It seems that the English people as a whole—even those of no religious persuasion—do not wish the Bible banished from the schools. Undenominational religious instruction has proved satisfactory under the Board School system. Why should not that instruction continue in this class of [Provided] school?"

This is very pretty. What right has Mr. Campbell to speak for the people of no religious persuasion. We have a right to speak for a good many of them, and we say that they do wish the Bible banished from the schools. It is simply impudence on his part to speak for his religious opponents, and then to make up a system of education for them as well as for his own party. Mr. Campbell has been told again and again, and we repeat it now, that undenominational religious instruction is Nonconformist religious instruction. It suits Nonconformists, and Nonconformists only. It does not suit Churchmen, it does not suit Catholics, and it does not suit Non-Christians. To support it at the public expense is simply to quarter Nonconformity upon the rates and taxes. And in spite of all their hypocritical protests, that is what Nonconformists are really after.

It is nonsense to say that undenominational religious instruction proved satisfactory under the Board School system. Mr. Campbell is deliberately romancing, or he does not know what he is talking about. It was so unsatisfactory to Catholics that they would have nothing whatever to do with it. They built their own schools, which the Dissenters have never had the grit to do. It was so unsatisfactory to Churchmen that they tried to upset it from the very beginning. Their revolt grew in force as the years rolled by, and when their opportunity came they made such use of it that the Nonconformist arrangement was absolutely annihilated. Hence all these tears.

Nonconformity in this matter is merely another name for humbug. Its champions refuse to see the most obvious facts. They play the ostrich, they equivocate and lie, and they argue like idiots; in short, they act like those whom the gods have given over to destruction.

Mr. Campbell has been speaking at a Passive Resistance meeting in Devonshire. One of his remarks there was decidedly interesting. He said that the moral sense of the community was behind the Passive Resistance movement. Well, we venture to say it isn't. Mr. Campbell is taking—not unnaturally, perhaps—a Chapel view of the matter. He forgets that there is a Church view. Also that there is a view which is neither Chapel nor Church. The last view is the one likely to prevail in the long run.

Mr. Campbell told the Barnstaple Nonconformists that the Passive Resisters were "trying to keep the priests from assuming dominance." By "priests" he means Church of England clergymen, and by "dominance" their having a larger share than Dissenting Churches in controlling religious instruction in the public schools. Apparently it would be all right if the Church would share with Nonconformity. And perhaps there ought to be honor amongst—ministers. But, on the other hand, when certain people fall out, there is some chance of certain other people coming by their own.

Passive Resisters are still on the rampage—looking out for the cheek of the man that smote them. Some of them cut a very comical figure, although they believe themselves to be serious and even dignified. The Rev. J. T. Frost (Baptist), for instance, turned up in the Southwell Police-court, and made a diffuse declaration of the good old principle that "Base is the slave that pays." He protested that to make him pay for the teaching of another man's creed, even to that man's children, and more so to his own, was unjust and anti-Christian. This is evidently a brand-new discovery of the reverend gentleman's. He does not seem to have caught a glimpse of it during all the thirty years that he and his like were taking money out of the pockets of Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Freethinkers, and Jews to pay for teaching other people's children, and sometimes their own, all the arcana of the Christian superstition. "Injustice is only injustice when it touches us." This is the Nonconformist motto.

"Passive Resistance.—Exciting Scenes at Brentford.—Crowd Hoots the Police." These headlines from the *Daily News* speak for themselves. Give these *Passive Resisters* rope enough, and there would soon be bloodshed all over the land.

Mr. Montague Sharp, the chairman of the magistrates at Brentford, made some pertinent observations to one of the resisters. "I suppose," he said, "your refusal is based on the same ground as the others. You object to other people's children being educated in a different shade of Christianity from that which you profess. There are about fifty shades of Christianity. You know there is an old saying: How these Christians love one another!" Yes, they do; they love each other with a noble brotherly love—the love of Cain and Abel.

Passive Resistance meetings seem able to stand anything in the shape of a fling at the Church of England. Mr. H. S. Yoxall, a former member of the Aston School Board, told the following anecdote at a recent Passive Resistance meeting in Birmingham: "A Baptist minister in a certain village was astonished at being called in to minister to a dying Churchman. Having afforded what consolation he could to the sick man, he asked the Churchman's wife, 'Why didn't you send for your own clergyman?' 'Oh, no, sir,' she replied; 'the doctor said the case was infectious.'"

All sorts of moral Leagues are necessary in this Christian country. There are many Anti-Swearing Leagues, for instance, whose object is to put down bad language in the public streets. One of these Leagues exists at Ealing, and we have just seen a brief report of its first annual meeting. The Chairman was happy to state that the two Inspectors appointed to warn offenders had produced a great impression, and he believed that in the course of time street swearing would be a thing of the past. Perhaps it will all be done indoors; which will certainly be an improvement in one way, for a gentleman who walks the streets, or rides on cars and buses, will not have to hear other people swearing when he is in a good temper himself. But it is idle to suppose that Leagues will put down swearing altogether while the Christian religion and the Bible exist in this country. The speciality of the Christian religion is "hell and damnation," and the Bible is quite a swearer's text-book.

A clergyman, the Rev. Robert Owen Thomas, was fined ten shillings at Bath a few days ago for being drunk and incapable. This is nothing of much importance. What we should like to know is the history of this tipsy parson's name. How did he come to be called "Robert Owen"? Was

it a mere accident, or was it a compliment to the great Reformer? If the latter, it was not a handsome compliment, as things have turned out.

Mr. Holbein failed in his third attempt to swim from England to France, and may never try again. The only party we know of likely to win in a Channel competition is Jesus Christ. With him it would simply be a walk over.

The *Eastern Daily Press*, a Norwich paper, printed the following paragraph on September 1:—

"SWAFFHAM.—On Sunday evening the Baptist Church was crowded, over 500 being present. For the past month the Rev. J. Menzies Love, of London, has occupied the pulpit in the absence of the pastor. This being his last service, he consented to give a history of his life, which proved to be one of intense interest. Before entering the Baptist ministry Mr. Love was an infidel lecturer, and the story of his career was listened to with rapt attention."

Now the converted infidel game is an old one, and we are afraid this gentleman has been playing it. *Where* was he an infidel lecturer, and *when*? We do not recollect his name, and we have more than thirty years' intimate knowledge of the "infidel" movement in Great Britain. We should like to know if the oldest members of our party have any recollection of an "infidel lecturer" called Menzies Love.

We are glad to see a letter from "A Natural Religionist" in the *Eastern Daily Press* asking "When was the Rev. J. Menzies Love an 'infidel lecturer' and for how long, and where did he discourse?" "I am led to make this challenge," this correspondent says, "because inquiries addressed to the recognised leaders of 'infidelity' fail to elicit any knowledge of such a person ever having been an 'infidel lecturer'."

A newspaper paragraph is going round to the effect that "two Secularist leaders" have "lately been converted in London." Now the number of Secularist "leaders" is small; we know every one of them; and we are able to give this statement an unqualified denial. One of these converted "leaders" is said to have been "the secretary of the N.W. Branch of the Secular Society," and to have given "his first address for Christ recently from the open-air platform of the Christian Evidence Society in Regent's Park." We invite the Christian Evidence Society to tell the truth for once in a way. What is the name of this convert? And what "Secular Society" is it that he was secretary to a Branch of? There is no N.W. Branch of the National Secular Society. As to the second converted Secularist "leader," we see he is described as "having the advantages of education and culture, but a pronounced agnostic, and a regular attendant of Secularist meetings on Peckham Rye." How a regular attendance at meetings makes a man a "leader" passes all comprehension. Still, we should like to have the name of this convert too.

The real "converted Secularist leaders" are the leaders who have been converted from Christianity (or, in the case of Mr. Cohen, from Judaism) to Secularism. All the Secularist leaders, including the editor of the *Freethinker*, were brought up as Christians. One of the latest accessions to the ranks of Secularism is a Presbyterian minister, who has been writing the history of his conversion to Secularism in our columns. The Christian Evidence people say nothing about all this. But what a cackle they make when some real or imaginary small fry, who never did more than hang about the precincts of the Temple of Freethought, happen to find Jesus—perhaps after failing to find something else.

The paragraph in the *Christian Herald* about these converted "Secularist leaders" is headed "Two Freethinkers Reclaimed." "Reclaimed" is good! It is the word generally used in the case of drunkards, thieves, and prostitutes. The converted "Secularist leaders" ought to feel highly honored.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is a go-ahead paper. It has awakened to the fact that belief has to fight for its existence, and is desirous that Christians should be properly equipped for the fray. It complains also that "A believer is apt to be modest in his statements, for he is content—too content—to let truth take care of itself." We must confess that we have never yet come across this very modest believer, and we should much like to make his acquaintance. As for the Christian leaving truth to take care of itself, what in the name of all that is wonderful does our contemporary call the various agencies for the propagation of Christianity, the destruction of unbelief, and the innumerable tracts, pamphlets, and books issued in defence of Christianity?

In the same article the *Commonwealth*, for the purpose of its argument, passes in review the following names: Temple, Mansell, Tyndall, Harrison, Buckle, Spencer, Comte, Martineau, Harrison, Mallock, Mill, Darwin, Drummond, Dallinger, Haeckel, Virchow, Flint, Fiske, Hartmann, Schopenhauer, Kant, Goethe, Momerie, Ambrose, and Newman. The list is instructive. Of the twenty-five names mentioned, six only are unmistakably Christian, three have enough heresy about them to make other Christians very suspicious about them, one is a Unitarian who did not believe in the divinity of Jesus, and the remaining fifteen are Freethinkers. Moreover, the eminence of men like Temple, Mansell, and Newman was principally in religion. Their absence might leave a gap in the religious history of the nineteenth century, but that would be about all. But leave out Tyndall, Buckle, Comte, Spencer, Darwin, Schopenhauer, Mill, and Haeckel, and what a gap there would be in the intellectual life of the last hundred years. The names of Comte, Buckle, Darwin, and Spencer are the names of the lawgivers of the past century. Others have been great because they followed in their steps. Again we say, the list is instructive.

Apropos of the above, we note the Rev. F. J. Kirby tries to score something for Nonconformist Christianity by pointing out in the *Baptist Magazine* that Priestley, Dalton, Young, and Faraday were Nonconformists. One might point out that Priestley was denounced as an infidel by Nonconformists as well as by Churchmen. But it would be interesting to find out what on earth Christian beliefs had to do with their scientific work. Faraday, at least, was very candid on the subject, and he said plainly that if he carried the same common sense into religion that he did into science he should not believe it. And the others might have said the same with equal truth.

Sir George Bruce, the veteran engineer, must be a sly humorist. Speaking at Newcastle on the days of his youth, he said that in the Presbyterian churches he attended the prayers were never less than twenty minutes long, and the sermons never less than an hour, while one passage of Scripture was sometimes made to last as a text for four or five Sundays. Since then the services have been popularised, he said, and "the results are evident in the enormous increase of congregations." This "enormous increase" is to ordinary eyes an enormous decrease. We therefore conclude that Sir George Bruce was poking fun at his fellow Presbyterians.

Christianity is declared to be a religion of pure spirituality. Well, the other day a vanload of pictures, confessional boxes, holy water stoups, and crucifixes, were carried away from the Church of the Annunciation at Brighton, by order of the Chancellor of the Diocese. This church is situated in a working-class district, and is said to be quite popular with the inhabitants.

Cardinal Newman once observed that by a judicious selection of facts you can prove anything. This is how the novelists with a purpose go to work. They exhort through the mouths of their good characters, and warn through the mouths of their bad ones; and their personages are moralising puppets instead of artistic realities. This truth is noticed, we are glad to see, by Mr. W. L. Courtney in the *Daily Telegraph*. Reviewing *Place and Power*, a new novel by Miss Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, he points out that she is spoiling the powers she displayed in her first book, because she "deliberately sacrifices her clear, fresh outlook into character and life in order to suit her edifying purpose—to prove that the atheist is always wrong and the believer always right." This is not art; it is preaching. Such is Mr. Courtney's judgment, and we are glad to see a similar view expressed in the *Daily Chronicle*. "Of story there is little," it says, "of character there is none, but there are great waste spaces of pulpit commonplace. There may be readers who like to be preached at in this style; who regard fiction as the handmaid of religious sentiment, authorised to enter the sanctuary now and then with a duster. They will be delighted to find *Place and Power* starting off with two thorough-paced atheists, father and son, of a type never seen except in old-fashioned tracts." Of course they both come to a bad end.

We have often said that "Providence" does not even look after its own buildings. Only the other day a serious gas explosion took place at St. John's Church, Red Lion-square, London, several windows being blown out and much damage done to the interior. At Lower Crumpsall, a Llandudno workman, named Elias Evans, engaged in redecorating St. Thomas's Church, fell from the scaffolding to the pavement and was killed. The angels we read of in the New Testament as "bearing up" a certain gentleman were evidently not present on this occasion.

Canon Bullock, the Vicar of Spalding, claims burial fees for all interments on the consecrated side of the cemetery, even when they are conducted by Nonconformist ministers. The Urban District Council has appealed to the Local Government Board for light and leading on the question. However it may be decided, it gives us a good idea of the professional side of parsondom. Every time you come to the bed-rock of a parson's business you find *cash*.

Jesus Christ said, "If one smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." The Vicar of Lowestoft, in the Parish Magazine, announces that he is starting a boxing-room for boys, and asks assistance from "any of the members of our congregations who are proficient in the noble art of self-defence." The Vicar of Lowestoft calls himself a Christian.

Archdeacon Perowne, of Norwich, has addressed a letter to the *Eastern Daily Press* on the Sunday question. We have read it carefully, and the sum and substance of it, as far as we can see, is simply this, that other people should keep Sundays holy because he is a Christian.

"I am a believer," Archdeacon Perowne says, "in the divine authority and moral obligation of the Fourth Commandment." Well, he has a right to believe this. What we deny is that he has any right to make other people act as though *they* believed it.

According to the Archdeacon of Norwich, God "bids us after his own example, give to him six days in active work and one in rest and worship." How astonishing, at this time of day, to find an educated man, presumably of some reputation for intelligence, endorsing the old Hebrew story of God Almighty having made the universe in six days and rested on the seventh! And what does Dr. Perowne mean by giving our six working days to God? Is it really a fact that the man who sells fish from a barrow is working for God? Would he not be surprised if you told him so? Is he not in most cases working for his wife and children?

Working for God is generally a better job than selling fish from a barrow. Archdeacon Perowne works for God—and finds it pay. But other folk have to work for something else; or there wouldn't be any stipend for Archdeacon Perowne.

But let us get on with the Sunday question. Our distinguished Norwich man of God tells us that "the Commandment which makes Sunday a day of rest makes it also a holy day." Moreover, it is "not merely any one day in seven, but the particular day." Yet a few lines afterwards he says, "I am well aware that it is easy to state a principle like this, but exceedingly difficult to apply it to the varied circumstances of our complex civilisation." Is not this a flat contradiction? If it is the one day, the particular day, that has to be observed by God's command, there can be no further question in the matter. We have simply all got to cease work on Sundays—Archdeacons included.

We quite agree with Archdeacon Perowne that "Sunday pleasure means Sunday toil." If Sunday is to be of any use to the majority, a minority must work on that day; but a weekly rest on some other day should be secured to those who are obliged to work on Sunday. This is common sense and common justice. The particular day is nothing; the certainty of one day is everything.

We entirely differ from Archdeacon Perowne when he says that "If we sacrifice the day of worship we shall soon lose the day of rest." This statement is based on one of two suppositions; either that when a man ceases to be a believer in the Bible he develops a passion for working seven days a week, or that a periodical day of rest is directly due to the Hebrew and Christian religions. The first supposition is an absurdity, and the second is a falsehood. The Jews did not invent the Sabbath; they borrowed it from Babylon. The Christians did not invent Sunday; they borrowed it from the Pagans. This is perfectly well known to all who have given the subject any serious attention. We can hardly conceive its being unknown to the Archdeacon of Norwich. He does indeed speak of Sunday as "the weekly festival of the Resurrection, the Lord's Day," but this is only the romance of his profession. The Pagan Sunday, the *dies solis*, the sun's day, existed in the Roman Empire as a day of release from ordinary toil before Jesus Christ was born or thought of. The Christians simply met together on that day because it was the only day open to them. It was only when Christianity triumphed over Paganism, and suppressed its remains by brute force, that the Church pretended to have invented Sunday. It was one of the bare-faced lies of that unscrupulous organisation.

Mr. A. E. Lean, the orthodox curiosity we referred to a fortnight ago, returns to the *Daily News* in the character of a Jonah Man. After referring to the story of the old lady (it was originally a curate) who declared that she would have believed the Bible if it had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, this funny gentleman says: "Would that the world were full of such faithful souls, who, regardless of ridicule, believe in the unalterable truth of God's written word as stated fact. No man, however eminent, has any right whatever to tamper with the Bible in any way." That is one for the Rev. Dr. Horton, who is shaky on the Jonah story. Mr. Lean also hits out at the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who goes in for the "softening" process, and explains away such things as the Devil. No Jonah's whale, and no Devil! Just fancy! says Mr. Lean. It is really too awful. Christianity is going to the dogs.

The recent sad boat accident at Yarmouth resulted in the drowning of six persons. Had the *Skylark* been full the number might have been sixty. One of the seven persons rescued was a local musician, who was in the habit of adding to the gaiety of the boat's passengers by singing comic ditties, for which we suppose he was paid according to the appreciation and generosity of his audience. This gentleman overwhelmed an interviewer with pious ejaculations. He saw the hand of Providence in his own preservation. "God is good," he exclaimed. It did not occur to him that God's goodness might as well have been extended to the unfortunate persons who were drowned. Like most religious people, he was too concerned with the safety of his own skin.

St. Peter's Church, Yarmouth, is not a very handsome building outside. We know nothing about the interior. The red bill on the railings is enough for our curiosity. It announces Sunday afternoon services for "MEN"—of course for men *only*. These are described, on the bill, as short, spirited, and sympathetic. We expect the first adjective hits off their principal merit. But they might be still shorter with advantage. There is something positively indecent in that word "MEN." What have the vicar and his curates to say to *men* which they might not as well say to *women*? Are their discourses on religion or sexual physiology? Or do they preach on the blue parts of the Bible?

How rational Christians can be when they are criticising somebody else's religious belief! Here is the pious *Daily News*, for instance, laughing at an Indian who gave Sir Thomas Lipton a small image, with the assurance that it would bring good fortune to anyone who rubbed it in a spirit of faith. All very absurd of course; but we should much like the *Daily News* to explain the difference between the Indian who believed that you might win a yacht race by faith in his little deity, and the Christian who believes that he can secure a good harvest, or cure a disease, avert a war or win one, by a sufficient faith in his God? Whatever difference there is, is in favor of the Indian. He was uneducated and his ignorance relieves his belief of much of its absurdity. The Christian is educated, and *his* knowledge makes the absurdity all the greater. The Indian would say that Lipton did not have enough faith. The Christian, when his prayers are not answered, makes the same excuse to the Freethinker. After all, the Indian can say just as much in defence of his faith as the Christian can in defence of his. And both are equally absurd to an unprejudiced mind.

Mr. W. T. Stead wants to know if "the heart of the Empire has lost its soul." That is, has London ceased to be religious? From the *Daily News* census it would appear that this question must be answered in the affirmative. "One notable result of the census," Mr. Stead says, "is the discovery that prayer-meetings, which were once regarded as the vital breath of the Church, have almost ceased to exist. In the populous borough of Chelsea only thirty persons were found to be in attendance at prayer-meetings. Thirty persons out of seventy thousand! Week-night services have also fallen into disuse."

The American evangelist, Torrey, does not think much of the condition of the Churches. He says: "Neglect of the Word of God goes hand in hand with neglect of prayer to God.....Along with neglect of prayer and neglect of the Word of God goes a lack of generosity." The point of the complaint is evidently at the end. Most religious complaints end in this way, and we have no doubt that Mr. Torrey would be tempted to overlook the two former features if they did not culminate in the latter.

"The Nonconformist Conscience considered as a Social Evil and a Mischief Monger. By one who has had it." This is the title of a book announced as in course of publication by Mr. Eveleigh Nash. We shall look out for that book.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, September 13, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 8 p.m., "The Fate of Faith." With Reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* Articles.
 September 20, Queen's Hall, London.
 September 27, Manchester.
 October 11, Glasgow.
 November 1, Birmingham.
 December 6, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. September 13, m., Ridley-road, Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. 20, m., Kingland; 27, m., Kingsland; e., Queen's Hall, Langham-place. Oct. 4, Glasgow; 25, Leicester.

J. B. WALLIS.—Thanks, but the cuttings would be more useful if more up-to-date.

D. BARTER.—The verses you send us were widely published some years ago. We believe the writer was an American journalist. The Kaiser's "Me und Gott" caused a good deal of amusement at the time. We see no reason for reproducing the verses at the present moment.

A. FOWLER.—Volney's *Ruins of Empires* is a powerful book; although, of course, the author would write somewhat differently if he were living now in the era of Evolution. Volney was a man of great learning and ability, and was a distinguished personage in his time. You will find the silly fiction of his having "funked like an infidel" in a storm at sea dealt with in Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death Beds*.

W. STARKEY.—You probably mean Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2—"The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir." Jehovah seems to have done a lot of travelling.

W. B. CARTER.—The reference in the *Pioneer* to Mr. Bernard Shaw's new book entitled *Man and Superman* is not an exaggeration. It is brilliant and witty. You will see that Mr. Foote is making it the subject of his Queen's Hall lecture on Sunday evening next (Sept. 20). Of course it naturally follows that he has points of difference from Mr. Shaw as well as points of agreement with him.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—See "Acid Drops." We also would like to know the convert's names.

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY.—A notice of your meeting on September 6 reached us on Friday, September 4. Please note that the *Freethinker*, though dated Sunday, goes to press on Tuesday night, and that all lecture notices must reach us by Tuesday morning.

W. P. BALL.—Your useful cuttings are always very welcome.

R. CHILD.—Pleased to have your encouraging letter. We note your opinion that "the Trevor articles are well worth pamphlet reproduction." The idea may be carried out. With regard to the Secular Society, Limited, there is, of course, no difficulty with respect to reversionary legacies. A bequest can be made to the Society and fall due only after the death of persons who have to be provided for out of the estate as long as they live. The late Mr. E. Lawson, of Aberdeen, one of the Society's member's left a bequest subject to such conditions. It may not be realised for years, but the estate meanwhile is in the care of trustees under Mr. Lawson's will. The Society itself is even competent to act as trustee, should circumstances render it desirable.

C. T.—Thanks for your very interesting letter. The Canadian figures you refer to would probably be more encouraging if they were quite accurate. No doubt a good many persons would hesitate at returning themselves as Freethinkers. We are very glad to hear that you have sent one of the N. S. S. Manifestoes on the Education Difficulty to nearly every Passive Resister whose name and address has appeared in the Hornsey and Highgate local papers. We trust your sanguine expectations with regard to the Queen's Hall meetings will be realised.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for the cutting. It is well, of course, to indicate what progress has taken place; we are encouraged to persevere by recollecting such facts. But it is not well to drop into an optimistic fool's paradise. The fact is that in the England of to-day a terribly large part of the population live amidst conditions that are a scandal to civilisation.

MAJOR JOHN C. HARRIS, R.E., sends us an earlier and, as he considers, a better, version of the epigram "To an Atheist" which appeared in our last issue. It runs as follows:

WE.
 We are the pure—the elect few;
 All others will be damned—
 And very right and proper too—
 We can't have Heaven crammed.

H. SILVERSTONE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen's lecture at Mile End Waste on "Christianity and the Jews" gave such satisfaction, and that you all wish you could hear him more frequently.

JAMES ANDERSON.—Thanks for the Hoxton music-hall bill. It is rather odd, as you say, for a Christian Evidence lecturer to write Variety Theatre sketches; and with a scene in "The Witch's Cave" too. But it does not look so odd, after all, when you reflect that a lot of the Bible is only imaginary, and that witchcraft is plainly taught in it.

G. J.—You ask, as an "important question which demands a definite answer," "Why do Atheists request Theists to disseminate atheistical literature?" We reply that Atheists do not request Theists to disseminate atheistical literature. A news-agent in his shop is simply a newsagent; and neither an Atheist nor a Theist—nor a member of any other persuasion. If he opens his shop as an apostle, he should put up a notice to that effect. His customers would then know what to expect. There is another point you overlook. Newsagents do not disseminate literature, in the ordinary sense of the word; they sell it as a market commodity, like tea and sugar, with a view to profit. Have you not allowed yourself to be imposed upon by the words you employ in framing your question?

E. H.—You must see, on reflection, that you cannot expect us, or Mr. Cohen either, to take part in the discussion in your local press. Discussions go on in all sorts of newspapers up and down the country, and to take part in all of them is an impossibility. Why then take part in any? Besides, the discussion in your local press ought to be an expression of local opinion. What you have written, in the printed letter you send us, is sound and forcible; and we are sure you are quite able to defend it in debate.

TOM MARKS.—The "reclaimed infidels" yarn is dealt with in "Acid Drops." With regard to the other matter, we cannot prevent anti-infidel humbugs from practising on the credulity of the readers of Prophet Baxter's journal. We do not intend to advertise the one in question. Besides, one liar more or less doesn't make much difference in the ranks of religious impostors.

T. ROBERTSON.—We have posted your letter to Mr. John Lloyd ("Richard Trevor"), and are glad to know you want to hear him at Glasgow.

E. PACK.—We had received the Bingley bill from Mr. Gott, as we said last week. What we wanted to know was the result of the meeting, and that is not stated in the paper you kindly send us.

MANCHESTER.—Thanks for copy of the *Umpire*. What does it matter that some obscure writer signing himself "W. W." (Weary Willy perhaps) "would not be inclined to back to any great extent the heroism of a regiment of Freethinkers"? Very likely he would back them to a great extent—by getting behind them. Probably he means, at bottom, that Freethinkers would want something worth fighting about before they took the field.

RECEIVED.—Progressive Thinker—Postal Record—Crescent—Man and Superman. By Bernard Shaw (Constable & Co.)—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Blue Grass Blade—El Libre Pensamiento—Freidenker—Watford Observer—Newtownards Chronicle—Manchester Guardian—Zoophilist—Boston Investigator—Lucifer—Public Opinion—Leeds Daily News—Free Society—Sun (Kalgoorlie)—Le Réveil de Bruges—Umpire.

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.

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

THE *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.

London Freethinkers will do their best, of course, to render the new course of Queen's Hall lectures a great success. The handsome meeting-place should be crowded on each occasion. The expenses are heavy, as may be imagined, and the Secular Society, Limited, is footing the bill; but this Society does not wish to meet a loss, and the meetings really ought to be self-supporting. It may be observed that the most expensive tickets are as high as two shillings, but nobody is bound to buy them, although some can very well afford to do so. The shilling tickets are no higher than the front seats used to be at the Athenæum Hall—or, for that matter, at the old Hall of Science. There are no sixpenny tickets, because, as we explained last week, no ticket printed in connection with the Queen's Hall is allowed to be priced at less than one shilling. Two admittances to what will virtually be sixpenny seats can be secured by means of a special shilling ticket; and these two admittances may be for one person on two different Sunday evenings, or

for two persons on the same Sunday evening. We cannot help this complexity of the ticket arrangement, but it is not very formidable after all, and it is forced upon us by the conditions under which the Hall is engaged.

A large audience may reasonably be expected at Queen's Hall this evening (Sept. 13), when Mr. Foote delivers the first lecture of the course. He has been several months absent from the platform, and his friends will doubtless be glad of the opportunity to hear him again. This is no reason, however, for not giving the widest general publicity to the meeting. London "saints" are invited to apply at our publishing office as promptly as possible for handbills which they can distribute judiciously amongst their friends and acquaintances. Large or small quantities will also be obtainable from Miss Vance at the Hall, after the lecture. Small posters can also be supplied to those who are able to display them.

The Birmingham Branch has secured the use of the great Town Hall for the first Sunday in November, and has invited Mr. Foote to deliver two lectures there on that date. Mr. Foote has accepted the invitation.

We have just written to our friend and colleague Mr. Joseph Symes at Melbourne. His *Liberator* has not reached us for a long while. We hope it has not gone under, after all those years of gallant struggle. Perhaps it is only a hitch somewhere that has kept the paper from arriving at our office. We earnestly trust it is nothing worse.

The September *Humanitarian* (organ of the Humanitarian League) is an excellent one. We have often commended this modest, but ably conducted, paper to our readers' attention; not without some good result, we hope, to its circulation. It is published by W. Reeves, 83 Charing Cross-road, London, W.C., and only costs a penny twelve times a year. Those who prefer can get it direct from the Humanitarian League office, 53 Chancery-lane, W.C.

One of the reviews in the *Humanitarian* is of *The Shambles of Science*, written by two ladies from the inside of a vivisection-room. The following passage in this review will interest the majority of our own readers: "The only blemish which we noted in the book has, we are glad to see, been removed in the second edition—namely, a reference to vivisection as connected with the 'atheism' of the present day. Vivisection has no more to do with atheism than it has with theism, as may be seen by the splendid protest made against scientific cruelty by such distinguished leaders of free-thought as Colonel Ingersoll in America and Mr. G. W. Foote in England—not to mention the fact that free-thinkers as a body have ever been in the van of humanitarian progress. The amusing thing is that this taunt of 'atheism' has been flung at humanitarians from the time of Descartes downward."

The Paris journal *La Fronde*, started by women, and conducted by women, has ceased to exist in its old form. Henceforth it is to appear as a monthly. The reason given is that it has done most of its work, but probably there were financial reasons behind. During its several years' career it has exercised a good influence. Nearly if not quite all the women connected with it were Freethinkers. We understand that the greater number of them have gone over to *L'Action*, the new Anti-Clerical organ started by the ex-priest, Victor Charbonnel.

M. Bernard Lazare, who has just died at the too early age of thirty-eight, was a Jew by blood and a Freethinker by conviction. He was the first French writer who took up the Dreyfus case, his action in which did him infinite honor. His pamphlet *The Truth on the Dreyfus Case* was published in 1896. It was republished in an enlarged form two years later, under the title of *Comment on Condamner un Innocent*. This book opened the eyes of many of the leaders of the Dreyfus crusade, such as M. Pressensé and M. Jaurés. Bernard Lazare was a brave friend of truth, justice and humanity.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* continues to print contributions to the discussion initiated by Mr. J. W. de Caux. Last week's issue contained a long letter, to a considerable extent on the Freethought side, from "Natural Religionist;" two anonymous letters from orthodox pens about nothing in particular; a very silly and impertinent letter from Mr. John Rudge, who seems chiefly bent on advertising his presence in Yarmouth; and a longish sophistical letter from the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, of the Christian Evidence Society, who does not see that a wily argument is the very worst you can

use when you meet an able and a sincere opponent. We guess Mr. Engström will look rather blue when Mr. De Caux's reply appears.

"Natural Religionist," by the way, refers to Mr. Herbert Spencer as believing that "there is within the human body a divine effluence." We should like to know where in Mr. Spencer's writings this opinion is to be found.

Freethinkers should carefully note that under the new by-law of the Education Board they are entitled, not only to withdraw their children from religious instruction in any elementary school, but also to withdraw them from attendance during the time the religious instruction is imparted. Nonconformists are taking advantage of this by-law in connection with Church schools, and Freethinkers should do the same in connection with *all* schools. The following is a form of withdrawal already in use:—

"To the Head Master or Mistress of — School. Dear Sir, or Madam,—We desire that our child (children) —, should not be instructed in the special creeds and doctrines taught in your school during the time allotted to religious instruction. And we hereby give notice that it is our intention, under the Conscience Clause, to withhold the above-named from the school during the time stated.—We are, yours truly,

"—, Parents.
"—, Address."

Leeds City Council considered a proposal to allow Secularist meetings on Woodhouse Moor to sell literature, and take up collections—just like other meetings. The proposal was defeated by means of reckless lying on the part of the bigots; but the majority was only a narrow one—24 to 23. Some defeats are very much like victories. This is one of them. We predict that the voting will be different next time.

The *Manchester Guardian* prints an excellent letter by Harold Elliot on "Undenominational Education," pointing out that the only real undenominational education is secular education. We wish Freethinkers all over the country would contribute letters to the local press wherever they can. A great deal of good is done in this way. We are pleased to note a capital letter on the Education Act by "Education First" in the *Watford Observer*. The writer points out what Board School religious teaching actually came to from an ethical point of view.

Mr. Joseph Skipsey, the pitman poet, who died a few days ago at Low Fell, in his seventy-fourth year, was a Freethinker; at least he was so some years ago when we met him at Newcastle, and we believe the fact will not be contested by the readers of his writings.

Saturday (Sept. 5) was the anniversary of the death of Auguste Comte. Mr. Frederic Harrison delivered an address at Paris, and the occasion was celebrated in London by the Clifford's Inn Positivists who paid a visit to Westminster Abbey, where they gathered (the newspaper paragraph says) around "the tombs of Newton, Graham, Wallis, Watt, and others mentioned in Comte's works." Surely this is an odd way of putting it. Comte was a very great man, but Newton's claim to immortality does not rest upon the fact that he is "mentioned in Comte's works." Probably the Clifford's Inn Positivists do not mean that it does; only discipleship is so apt to run into fanaticism.

It is pleasant to find a little common sense now and then amongst religionists. The Rev. George Whelpton, a Wesleyan missionary in France, writing to his committee in London, says that the English people are mistaken in their sympathy for the expelled Religious Orders, and that the case is misrepresented here by Roman Catholic journalists on the staff of English newspapers. He states his opinion frankly that the fight is really a struggle for existence on the part of the French Republic, and is waged, not so much with the Roman Church generally as with that militant portion of it which is outside the control of bishops, municipalities, and governments alike; that is, with the two hundred thousand monks and nuns, who threaten to make France another Spain.

A letter appears in this week's *Freethinker* from the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, honorary secretary of the Christian Evidence Society. It will be dealt with in our next issue.

AND THAT SETTLES IT.—Husband (irritably): "It isn't a year since you said you believed our marriage was made in heaven, and yet you order me around as if I wasn't anybody. Wife (calmly): "Order is heaven's first law."—*New York Weekly*.

Was Heine an Atheist?

(Continued from page 571.)

Heine's last moments are described by Sharp:—

"By the night of the 16th, he himself knew that the end was at hand. 'Am I about to die?' he asked of his physician, whom he saw steadfastly regarding him. 'It is well.'

"Ere midnight an anxious friend called to inquire as to his state, and to bid farewell. With officious zeal, he asked if the dying man had made his peace with God. 'Do not trouble yourself,' replied the poet, with a wan smile, '*Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son métier.*'"

"These were the last words uttered by Heinrich Heine. His untamable irony illumined even the shadow of death."

This is decisive. A man who believed that he was upon the point of entering the presence of his Maker would scarcely go out of his way to mock him in this manner with his last breath. It is evident that Heine died an Atheist by conviction; but, like some other great men, he thought that Atheism should be confined to the cultured and educated. It was a good thing for people like himself, but it should not be taught to the people. For, if the poor people suddenly discovered that there was no "Almighty One," who of his own sweet-will ordained that some of his creatures—like Heine, for example—should lead a life of idleness and luxury, while others earned a bare existence by the sweat of their brow, the poor people might wish to examine the title-deeds of these fortunate ones; and, if refused, they might in their struggles upset a state of affairs which people like Heine regarded as eminently satisfactory and natural. There is nothing like a good banking-account for suggesting arguments against Atheism; in fact, most of them have had their roots in the Funds.

We prefer the teaching of Professor Clifford, who declares, with piercing sincerity:—

"It is constantly whispered that it would be dangerous to divulge certain truths to the masses. 'I know the whole thing is untrue: but then it is so useful for the people; you don't know what harm you might do by shaking their faith in it.' Crooked ways are none the less crooked because they are meant to deceive great masses of people instead of individuals. If a thing is true, let us all believe it—rich and poor, men, women, and children. If a thing is untrue, let us all disbelieve it—rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the housetops, not to be whispered over rose-water after dinner when the ladies are gone away."

The fact is, Heine was not built of the stuff Reformers are made from. Reformers, like poets, are born, not made. To judge Heine by the same criterion as we should a Bradlaugh or a Bright is to act like the American, who, when taken to admire the grandeur of the Niagara Falls, immediately began to calculate the horse power the waters would develop.

"It was," says Mr. Sharp, "as though a million spirits of satire possessed him; and, whenever he opened his mouth, one leapt forth and became verbally tangible." And he adds: "it is no wonder that when Heine gave greeting with his right hand, and pinched agonisingly with his left, acquaintances fought shy of him."

"Even in matters of opinion many of his friends, particularly of the Börne type, could make nothing of him. They never knew where he stood. He repudiated Judaism, he repudiated Christianity, he repudiated St. Simonism, he repudiated Deism, he repudiated Atheism; a republican, he repudiated monarchism, and thereupon repudiated most republicans, apparently on the ground that they were indifferent as to change of linen, and smelt of garlic; a soldier in the liberation of humanity, he preferred to do his marching by deputy, and allowed himself frequent and unrestricted furloughs. In a word, he was, as they say across the border, 'no canny.'"

In his famous quarrel with the Republican Börne, he says plainly: "You desire simple clothing, ascetic

morals, and unseasoned enjoyments; we, on the contrary, desire nectar and ambrosia, purple mantles, costly perfumes, pleasure and splendor, dances of laughing nymphs, music, and plays. Do not be angry, you virtuous Republicans; we answer all your reproaches in the words of one of Shakespeare's fools: 'Dost thou think that because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?'" The austere and puritanic Börne retorted by comparing Heine to a boy who, chasing butterflies "on the bloody day of battle," gets between his legs; and accuses him of spending the day of their greatest need in winking at and flirting with the pretty girls. "Heine," says Börne, "with his sybaritic nature, is so effeminate that the fall of a roseleaf disturbs his sleep; how, then, should he rest comfortably on the knotty bed of freedom?" And we must conclude, with Mr. Havelock Ellis, when he declares that—

"Börne was right; Heine was not the man to plan a successful revolution, or defend a barricade, or edit a popular Democratic newspaper, or represent adequately a Radical constituency—all this was true. Let us be thankful that it was true; Böernes are ever with us, and we are grateful: there is but one Heine."

Heine's genius was of the order that blows where it listeth, and, in all his brilliant but desultory assaults in the cause of emancipation, refused to be confined within the bounds of any system of religion or philosophy.

Heine's criterion of life was pleasure. Yet he was condemned to suffer those last terrible years of Life in Death which he laments in such perfect prose poetry, and with which we cannot do better than conclude this article. It was written upon hearing that his poems had been translated into Japanese:—

"But at this moment I am as indifferent to my Japanese fame as to my renown in Finland. Alas! fame, once sweet as sugared pineapple and flattery, has for a long time been nauseous to me; it tastes as bitter to me now as wormwood. With Romeo, I can say, 'I am the fool of fortune.' The bowl stands filled before me, but I lack a spoon. What does it avail me that at banquets my health is pledged in choicest wines, and drunk from golden goblets, when I myself, severed from all that makes life pleasant, may only wet my lips with an insipid potion? What does it avail me that enthusiastic youths and maidens crown my marble bust with laurel wreaths, if meanwhile the shrivelled fingers of an aged nurse press a blister of Spanish flies behind the ears of my actual body? Of what avail is it that all the roses of Shiraz so tenderly glow and bloom for me? Alas! Shiraz is two thousand miles away from the Rue d'Amsterdam, where, in the dreary solitude of my sick-room, I have nothing to smell, unless it be the perfume of warmed napkins. Alas! the irony of God weighs heavily upon me! The Great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, wished to show the petty, earthly, so-called German Aristophanes that his mightiest sarcasms are but feeble banter compared with His, and how immeasurably He excels me in humor and in colossal wit.

"Humbly do I acknowledge His superiority.....but here I venture to offer most submissively the suggestion that the sport which the Master has inflicted on the poor pupil is rather too long drawn out; it has already lasted over six years, and after a time becomes monotonous. Moreover, if I may take the liberty to say it, in my humble opinion the jest is not new."

What a marvellous writer! "Strange dreams," writes his dearest friend, "where raillery cloaks tenderness; roseate clouds, where fair angel-heads appear between demon-faces; transparent fogs, illumed by an imaginary sun; shifting landscapes full of contrasts; sometimes a cloister-garden, and close beside it the blue waters of a Greek river; sometimes Gothic ruins, and close by the Indian cactus, displaying its blood-red purple blossoms."*

W. MANN.

Let us place the sovereign good in our minds. It loseth its grace and dignity, if, from the better part which is in us, it is translated to the worse, and transferred to the senses, which are more active in brute beasts. Those are true goods which reason giveth; they are solid and everlasting.—*Seneca.*

* God will pardon me; it is his business.

† Sharp, *Life of Heine*, p. 197. ‡ *Lectures and Essays*, p. 337.

§ Sharp, *Life of Heine*, p. 140.

* Sharp, *Life of Heine*, p. 200-210.

A Study in Confusion of Thought.*

THE student of modern Christian apologies must often have been struck by the fact that half the controversy would be superfluous had the apologists chosen to attach a definite and constant meaning to their terms. What interminable wrangling about "God" we might have been spared had that word been only carefully defined. How much wonderful philosophy about the personality of the Absolute could be disposed of by an analysis of the terms used. When once a writer has a clear idea of what he wishes to express he generally finds words appropriate for the precise expression of his thought; and it is hardly unfair to suspect that the general indefiniteness of theological terminology is an expression of a prevailing laziness in theological thought.

These reflections have occurred to me on reading a pamphlet which has lately been ushered into the world by a new champion of theology. It bears the pretentious title of *Modern Scepticism and Christianity*, and is evidently considered by its author to be an important contribution to modern thought. Mental confusion is evident in every page; indeed, it would be difficult to find, between one cover and the other, an original sentence conveying a definite meaning. Though in itself calling for no criticism it may be regarded in many respects as typical of a certain style of apology, and on this account it may be worth while to subject it to a short examination.

Before proceeding to consider the "arguments" against scepticism, some literary peculiarities of this pamphlet may be noticed. Christ is represented in one chapter as "towering in solitary grandeur above the rest of the world's religious masters," while in the next he is said to "stand visibly higher than they." Pessimism is spoken of as "a doctrine, or rather a mood, which men should shun and banish from their thoughts as a nightmare." To *shun* is to avoid; to *banish* means to drive away; thus two words having in many respects contradictory meanings are used as if they were synonymous. The piling up of terms conveying nearly the same meaning is also a characteristic of a certain class of writers. Such phrases as "some find rest and repose for the intellect"; "obvious manifestations of law, order, and arrangement," are fair samples of what this writer supposes to be good English.

Turning from the mode of expression to what is expressed, the same confusion is evident. The following extract may be taken as an illustration:—

"With regard to modern explanations of the origin of religion through the belief in ghosts, spirits, or natural forces, it must be said that such explanations do not at all meet the complete demands of faith's position in the matter. It (*sic*) does not account for the *feeling* which impelled primitive man to worship and revere. The savage would worship an object in nature, not because the *object* commanded him to do so, but from the fact that *within* him was a feeling which responded in some rational way to the external object—to the object outside himself. If this responsive feeling had had no place in the inner consciousness of the savage antecedent to the object observed, then primitive man would certainly not have worshipped, from the obvious fact that he was minus the faculty within him to respond to the external object."

This is an argument frequently advanced by those who demur to naturalistic explanations of the origin and prevalence of religious beliefs. The existence of this faculty is also adduced as a conclusive proof of the existence of some Supreme Being by whom it must have been implanted. Indeed, in one form or another, this idea does so much to countenance certain theological dogmas that it becomes imperative to meet, and, if possible, dispose of it.

The writer under consideration, as well as the others who make use of this "religious faculty" argument, must regard the human mind as divided into a number of distinct departments. Such phrases as "geometrical faculty," "linguistic faculty,"

"mathematical faculty," and the like, are evidently supposed by them to describe certain well-defined divisions of the human intellect. Were any other meaning attached to them the argument drawn would be reduced to an absurdity. If, for instance, the religious faculty be merely a combination of such ordinary feelings as fear, admiration, and love, any argument based on its supposed separateness from all other mental functions becomes utterly meaningless. And this, it may be shown, is the true state of the case.

All ideas of God, a soul, and a future state have their origin, according to Spencer, in the primitive belief in a ghost or shadowy double. Great chiefs or warriors developed, a few generations after their death, into presiding spirits of their tribe, and were supposed to possess, in an indefinitely greater degree than when alive, the power of working good or evil for their descendants. The food and drink which satisfied the wants of the primitive worshiper were considered fitting gifts to gain the favor or avert the wrath of gods who differed but little from themselves. The offering of these gifts became, after a time, the function of a certain class of men, and was accompanied by appropriate ceremonies. And, as all religious beliefs are developments of this primeval germ, so all religious ceremonies, elaborate as we now find them, have arisen by continual evolution from the primitive ceremony of propitiating the dead.

Nobody who rightly understands this theory need ask whether it takes account of the "religious faculty," for it is obvious that the relation between the worshiper and the departed chief or warrior is of the same kind as that between the worshiper and his surviving rulers. Food, drink, weapons, slaves are offered to the deity for the same reasons that they are offered to a living despot; and for the same reason, too, he is addressed in terms of the most lavish praise. There is no special faculty called into operation. The chief sentiment entertained is fear, qualified only in a very small degree by admiration or love.

An "unusual facility in avoiding the truth" is still further illustrated in the theological manner of dealing with the question of the origin of life. The line taken by apologists on this question is, to say the least, extraordinary. The experiments of Tyn-dall and others concerning "Spontaneous Generation" are held to prove that life did not originate on this planet in a natural manner, and that its advent was therefore due to the direct intervention of the "Almighty." Now, anyone who has devoted sufficient attention to the question knows that the experiments referred to prove nothing. They establish an extreme probability that even the minutest living organisms do not, at present, spontaneously arise from inorganic matter. The question of the origin of life is left very much where it was; and to a rational mind not biased by theological pre-conceptions the statement that life probably originated in a natural manner must seem almost a truism. There is no definite line of demarcation between animal and vegetable life, and the border-land between vegetal life and inorganic matter is equally vague and shadowy. The "great gulf which separates the living from the non-living" is a product of the theological imagination, and, like so many other emanations from the same source, has no objective existence. The theological position in this matter is indeed extraordinary in more ways than one. The progress of science has ever been a reduction of apparent anomalies to an underlying law. Every step in its advance has shown more clearly than before that an unvarying sequence pervades everywhere within its ever-widening sphere. A most significant fact for the theologian is that during the long period of scientific advance, a supernatural cause has never been discovered. Another fact which he would do well to ponder over is that theology has been forced to retreat from one position after another by the spread of knowledge. These facts, however, seem to convey no lesson to the advocates of supernatural

* *Modern Scepticism and Christianity*. By H. T. Nicholson.

theories. Though theological interpretations have been over and over again discredited; though "extinguished theologians lie round the cradle of every science like snakes round the cradle of Hercules;" the modern apologist elings with the same stupid tenacity as of old to every new and fantastic position theology is forced to occupy, until some new discovery, or the general spread of enlightenment shows that this position also is untenable.

One or two more absurdities may be noticed before concluding. For instance, "power" and "force" are used as interchangeable terms; "matter" and "force" are spoken of as if they were absolutely separate existences; and that old scientific bogey—a vital principle—is again resuscitated. In conclusion, the author may be advised to obtain a clear conception of his subject before he again ventures on its elucidation. More attention to elementary grammatical rules, and a better attempt towards precision of expression than are here manifested, would enhance the value of any future contributions to apologetic literature. If these points are attended to in a future production, it may deserve a reply on its own merits instead of serving as an illustration of theological fallacy.

JOHN J. MURPHY.

Correspondence.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN; THE NONCONFORMIST RED HERRING; AND THE POLICY OF FREETHINKERS IN THE COMING ELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I notice in your issue of August 30 a reference to remarks in an advanced Liberal contemporary concerning Mr. Chamberlain.

With your kind permission, Sir, I propose that we look at Mr. Chamberlain's position and attitude in regard to Free-thought, and contrast it with what was the attitude of Mr. Gladstone, the great idol of respectable Liberal Nonconformity; for disagreeing with whom in regard to his Home Rule scheme, Mr. Chamberlain first earned that title of "Judas."

What was Mr. Gladstone's attitude? Mr. Gladstone was Chief of the Government at the time that you, Sir, with others, was prosecuted and imprisoned for "blasphemous libel." When, on receipt of a petition for your release, signed by, among others, the leading thinkers in England—I need mention only Professor Huxley, Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Matthew Arnold—the Home Secretary (we have reason to state) put the question of your release to Mr. Gladstone, it was "thumbs down." And you had to stay in Holloway Gaol the full term allotted you by a Roman Catholic judge. Why? You had put into pictorial illustration what your intelligent Nonconformist holds in sacred belief

("For the Bible tells him so"):

the old Jew-god in that act of graceful and familiar condescension towards Moses, described in the thirty-third chapter of Exodus.

We all know that Mr. Gladstone was wont to parade his ecclesiasticism by reading "prayers" in Hawarden Church; and, when he wanted the votes of Nonconformity, he knew how to fetch 'em. We remember, when he was badgered in the House of Commons by the nimble wits and the young bloods of the Conservative Party on points of Ministerial policy, his trick of dropping into the attitude of pew-prayer. And it went the round of the political Nonconformist pulpits, and was volubly repeated, with sheepish eyes of reverence, by the illiterate Bible boobies, that Mr. Gladstone was then "in communion with his Gord." There was the idol of respectable Liberal Nonconformity!

Mr. Chamberlain dared to differ as to the policy of Home Rule; and the word went round to sacrifice him on the altar of adulation of the Party idol. But Mr. Chamberlain was too clever and too powerful for them. However much we regret that the Irish grievance has been obscured by personal issues, we cannot but admire the way that Mr. Chamberlain demolished the old idol. He may have played (in Mr. Gladstone's phrase) "the part of the Devil's Advocate";

"But let the Devil

Be sometime honour'd for his burning throne."

Later, Mr. Gladstone made an attempt to bolster the crumbling fabric of Semitic-derived theology; and, there-with, win the worship (and the votes) of the "faithful." He wrote and published his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*. Unfortunately for the old gentleman, Professor

Huxley took him in hand; and, in his *Examination*, of that poor "impregnable rock" and Mr. Gladstone's reputation in the field of polemics,

"left not a wrack behind."

It is with an unfeignedly sad heart we go on. But there came the announcement that Mr. Gladstone intended giving the world a work on the Early Christian Fathers. "Poor old soul!" we said; "more lumber for the shelves of the orthodox!" But he was spared this last.

What have been Mr. Chamberlain's position and attitude in regard to Freethought? As far as he has connected himself with any body of opinion, it has been with Unitarianism; and Unitarianism is only one step from absolute repudiation of the theological and black-coat domination.

Again: who among Freethinkers has forgotten, when Mr. Bradlaugh was struggling for entrance into Parliamentary service, in the teeth of enormous odds of theological prejudice and cowardly misrepresentation, Mr. Chamberlain's donation of £50 towards his election expenses. This public countenance, at the moment so timely, by the member for West Birmingham, was as generous as it was bold.

True, Mr. Chamberlain supported the recent Church Schools Relief Bill. The Government owed the Church party something; and Mr. Chamberlain, as a member of the Government, could not do other than support the Bill. With one effect of that Bill Freethinkers may see matter for special satisfaction. It lies in a counter feeling to that which they themselves have had to bear, evidenced by the wry faces of the Nonconformists, who are being dosed with their own physic. I well remember, when canvassing for signatures to the petition for your release from Holloway Gaol, Sir (I was a boy at the time), that several liberal-minded Churchmen gave me their signatures, but not a solitary Nonconformist. One and all shook their solemn heads, and concurred in the sentence of Mr. Justice North. Your Nonconformists (poor souls!) are firm "believers"; and the Heaven stakes are too big for them to allow the laugh of a sceptic. "Blasphemy," they said, "must be put down." But we are still here, as Burns says; and we remember. And if the church and chapel census of London conducted by the *Daily News* points to anything, we are on top.

The General Election is near, and Freethinkers have to decide their own action. Are we to play the Nonconformists' game for them? Are we to let the *Daily News* draw the red herring of their anti-zollverein agitation across our path of action? If so, we shall soon be safe in the arms of Nonconformity, and no doubt join them in singing, at their "political" meetings, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." Mr. Cadbury might as well know at once that we think his cocoa better than his newspaper; and that we will act independently.

There has been some heart-burning over the war. But the war is over; and let Mr. Robertson put all that by. We have a closer (though not a dearer) object before us than equal rights for the Boers. (And Mr. Robertson must admit that Mr. Chamberlain, in his direction of the settlement in South Africa, has come out well.) I say we have before us a closer object, and one as dear: the intellectual emancipation of our own people. If Freethought is to have equal countenance in the Political State, is it to dozy dukes and the grumpy place-seekers of the Front Opposition that we are to look; or to a statesman who has the power and, we think, the will to give our rights effect?

H. BARBER.

Obituary.

ON Thursday, September 3, quite a considerable gathering of Freethinkers assembled at Abney Park cemetery around the grave of little Eva Pinnell, the four-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pinnell, two earnest and hardworking members of the Kingsland Branch of the N. S. S.

Mr. E. B. Rose read in an impressive manner from the "Funeral Orations and Addresses" of Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, the eloquent and appropriate lines, "At a Child's Grave."

A special meed of sympathy will, we are sure, be accorded Mr. and Mrs. Pinnell in their present affliction, in view of the fact that only six or seven months ago they lost their other child—a babe some fourteen months old.

ON September 2 Mr. and Mrs. W. P. St. John Sutcliffe, of London, lost their only son, William Cyril, aged fifteen months. The interment took place last Sunday at Kirkdale Cemetery, Liverpool, when Colonel Ingersoll's "Address at a Child's Grave" was read by Mr. H. Percy Ward.—H. P. W.

If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.—Bacon.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards. Brockwell Park, 3.15, R. P. Edwards; 5.30, R. P. Edwards. Station-road, 11 prompt, F. S. Fisher. Christian Evidence Society, will attack Robert Blatchford's recent article on the "Resurrection." J. Hampden Davis will defend Robert Blatchford's position.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 3.30, Members' Meeting, Stanley's Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney.

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

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 1.30; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, Lectures.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Town Hall-square): Sunday, Sept. 13, at 11, Ernest Pack, "Why I am a Secularist."

BINGLEY (Myrtle-place): Tuesday, Sept. 15, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Devil."

BRADFORD (Covered Market): Saturday, Sept. 19, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Virgin Mary."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class, Open Discussion. 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "'Nunquam' and his Critics."

HUDDESFIELD (Market Cross): Wednesday, Sept. 16, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Flood."

LEEDS (Vicar's Croft): Monday, Sept. 14, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "Prayer"; Thursday, Sept. 17, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Parson"; Friday, Sept. 18, at 6.30, Ernest Pack, "The Sermon on the Mount."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): Sunday, Sept. 13, at 3, Ernest Pack, "Bible Filth"; 6.30, "Blasphemy."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "An Outline of the Evolution Theory: II. The Origin of Species." 7, "Dr. Torrey's Christianity." Monday, at 7.45, Edge Hill Church, Mr. Ward will lecture.

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "The Bible Creation Story." (Postponed from 23rd ult.)

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