

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXIV.—No. 10

SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 1904

PRICE TWOPENCE

If I had to choose a religion, I think I should be a worshipper of the sun. The sun gives to all things life and fertility. It is the true God of the earth.—
NAPOLEON.

The Kinship of Life.

A SECULARIST VIEW OF ANIMALS' RIGHTS.*

LET me explain my position this evening. It is true that I have the honor to be President of the National Secular Society; it is also true that I cannot speak in public without a sense of that responsibility. It must be distinctly understood, however, that I am not addressing you officially. The great majority of Secularists would probably endorse the views I have to present; nevertheless they are not committed to everything I may say. I can only ask you to believe that, while speaking entirely for myself, I am confident that I am really, though not by express mandate, voicing the general opinions and sentiments of our members in all parts of the kingdom. On that point I have not the slightest doubt.

The subject before us is the Rights of Men and of Animals. But I imagine that I am not expected to discuss the Rights of Man, as declared by the French Revolutionists, as set forth in the American Declaration of Independence, or as advanced by the various political and social theorists of the nineteenth century. To do this might be beyond the scope of my powers; it is certainly beyond the compass of my time. I take it that the subject I am to deal with is really something more restricted; not so much the Rights of Men and of Animals as the Rights of Animals in relation to Men. What rights animals may have in relation to each other is a problem which we cannot ask them to determine, and in which we ourselves can only take a very limited and academical interest. It is a problem, indeed, which, as the French say, lacks actuality.

In this discussion, as in others, it is necessary to guard against merely verbal disputes. Logomachies are the bane of controversy. Disputants often use one word with two (or more) meanings, or they use two (or more) different words conveying the same meaning, and thus fight over a distinction without a difference. Sometimes they waste time in another way, by not recognising that they have no common ground to start from, that they are divided by opposite first principles, and that they are aiming impossible blows at each other across an impassable chasm. To understand where we are, and what we mean, is the first preliminary to any useful discussion; and this involves, amongst other things, a precise definition of terms.

Now there is scarcely any word more abused in controversy than the word "Rights." Auguste Comte, indeed, stigmatised the whole discussion as fantastic and sterile. There are no rights, he said, except those which grow out of duties; and it must, I think, be admitted that unless the two are taken together we shall become victims of authority or sentimentalism. A right is really a duty that some

one owes to me, and a duty is a right which I owe to another. They are like the two halves of a pair of scissors; inoperative and unintelligible except in relation to each other, and also in relation to the purposes they both subserve.

Rights are of three sorts—Legal, Moral, and Natural. The wit of man may be challenged to discover (or invent) a fourth species.

The legal meaning of "Rights" is undoubtedly the primary one. It has been said that Conscience is a residuum of Law, and there is more truth in the statement than Intuitionists would care to allow. In any case it is historically a fact that the legal meaning of "Rights" comes first. This is the only meaning which obtains in primitive communities. A member of a tribe, or of a barbarous society, dreams of no right but that which is sanctioned by written law, or by custom, which is unwritten law. And this is the only *definite* sense in which the word can be used. Such a right can be claimed and enforced; and this is the only right that is known to jurists.

But in the course of time, and the advance of civilisation and intelligence, words take secondary and tertiary meanings. The conservative instinct clings to old terms, while the progressive instinct gives them fresh significance. The moral sense of a community expands, and its dictates are called "Moral Rights." What-should-be presses upon what-is; newcomers clamor for admission into the old comity. Morality itself eventually broadens into Humanity, and then we hear of "Natural Rights." It is all a question of development. Moral Rights are widespread new sentiments, demanding incorporation into Legal Rights; and Natural Rights are still newer sentiments, aspiring to recognition as Moral Rights, with a view to ultimate incorporation as Legal Rights. Legal Rights represent the wisdom and power of the past, Moral Rights represent the wisdom and power of the present, and Natural Rights represent the wisdom and power of the future. They are respectively, a solid fact, a general demand, and a growing aspiration. As the aspiration ripens it becomes a demand, and as the demand gathers power it passes into a fact.

Evidently, therefore, the word "Rights" requires a qualifying adjective before it can be admitted as a term in our discussion. And I fancy the point of wisdom lies in the golden mean. We need not discuss the Legal Rights of animals, since these can be decided by an appeal to the Statute Book; nor need we discuss the Natural Rights of animals, as this involves too many grave differences of opinion and sentiment; but I think we may profitably discuss the Moral Rights of animals, for this simply means—Are they, or are they not, participators in the beneficence of our ethical progress? Or, in other words, Is our treatment of animals consistent with the moral ideas we should blush to repudiate? For, after all, animals can never have enforceable rights against us; they must take their fate from our hands; at the best they can only be sharers in the fruits of our wisdom and humanity.

It is now necessary that I should indicate the moral standard which I recognise as a Secularist. Our standard is utility; not the narrow utility of the passing hour, which is merely policy, but the wide utility of generations, which is principle. What

* A Lecture given before the Humanitarian League.

conduces to human welfare is right; what militates against it is wrong. This criterion is deep, and high, and solid enough to satisfy the profoundest philosopher; it is also simple enough to be intelligible to a little child; and it is applicable at all times, and to all the varied affairs of this world. There may be differences in its application, but the test is a practical one, and differences subside, and eventually disappear, in the course of experience and investigation.

Now the principle of utility rests upon the ultimate fact that we are capable of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. We instinctively desire pleasure or happiness, and we instinctively avoid pain or misery. This is the normal tendency of human beings in all ages and in all parts of the world. Haughty, transcendental ethics may call it grovelling; but, for my part, I agree with Schiller that "there is no higher and no more serious problem than how to make men happy." I agree also with the great Spinoza, that joy is the passage from a lower to a higher state of perfection. At the same time I concede to my "spiritual" friends, who dwell so much on the idea of "peace," that joy is only durable when it is accompanied by serenity.

So much for the principle of utility. It is founded, I say, on our power of feeling, on our susceptibility to pleasure and pain. But who will deny that susceptibility to what are called the lower animals? And if they feel *as* we do, though not *as greatly* as we do, owing to our higher powers of memory and imagination, does it not follow that the moral law extends to them in their due degrees? And will not the man of sensibility and reflection gravitate naturally to the principle of Wordsworth's lines?—

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Notes on Ethics.

GIVEN the average Christian speaker or writer, and there is one point on which he is apt to lay extra and unceasing emphasis. This is the influence of Christianity on morals. He will paint the pre-Christian and the contemporary non-Christian world in the blackest of colors, in order that the very grey-colored Christian world shall appear white by comparison. He will dwell with much unction upon the morals of the Christian life, and conveniently ignore the awkward fact that those countries that have been longest Christian are not so plainly conspicuous for their lofty and disinterested virtue; and that even where a fair level of decency is attained there are many other influences besides Christianity at work. And he will further draw the most doleful pictures of the consequences likely to result should faith in Christianity disappear.

And in so behaving the Christian strikes a note that is both offensive, and, in the worst sense of the word, pessimistic. It may be taken as a fairly sound general rule that the man whose mouth is continually full of moral exordiums, and whose most attractive occupation is the stirring up of moral cesspools, is never a delightful, and is usually an unhealthy, character. It is not the morally healthy person who sees suggestions of indecency on all sides, or who shuns the company of one of the opposite sex for fear of impure thoughts. A man with an ever-watchful eye upon other people's conduct is usually one whose attentions abroad distract from due care at home. Puritanism is, in fact, as unhealthy a symptom as vice; indeed, in some of its manifestations it is difficult to distinguish between them. Virtue is never in so great danger as when it fears to come in contact with its opposite.

And if it is justifiable to call any form of pessimism immoral, it is certain that the Christian in his fears for a human nature divested of religion, preaches it. For when one looks

closely at such a statement, it is seen to imply nothing more nor less than the belief that human nature, as such, is absolutely incapable of ordinary morality. Men and women are such that without the artificial stimuli of the belief in God and a future life they are incapable of proper behavior. It is the ethics of the police force applied to human nature at large. And then one has to remember that this is put forward in the name of a lofty idealism, while those who take the purely naturalistic view of morality are characterised as coarse, worldly, materialistic, etc. The Freethinker may, of course, be wrong in his view of morality; that is always possible; but it is certain that the man who believes that morality is the expression of instincts and needs generated in human nature by the exigencies of social life, is taking a loftier view of life than one who believes man must be under constant police supervision.

It is to be noted, too, that all along Christian moral teaching has taken the direction of branding as "low" or "sinful" a purely natural view of life and its duties. For centuries physical beauty, physical cleanliness, or a healthy appetite for the mere joy of living were denounced as so many snares of the devil. A sane mind in a healthy body was never a Christian ambition, but rather a morbid mind in a neglected body. The use of such phrases as "Pleasures of this world" as a synonym for all that is degrading is alone enough to show this. And it is significant of the general unhealthiness of the Christian conception of morality that in just those periods when Christianity has been most powerful, the excesses have been greatest. Either that or it has induced a reaction far from pleasant. It does not require a very profound student to realise that it was the Puritan supremacy in the seventeenth century that most certainly paved the way for the return of Charles II., as its memory served as his best safeguard once he was enthroned.

With all the Christian cant about morality, hardly any other religion has shown so little appreciation of its real nature, so little perception of the conditions of its development, or done so little to facilitate its understanding. The last thing to be realised by Christian teachers was that morality had a purely physical basis; and that in our great cities, as elsewhere, good food, pure air, well-built houses, and a healthy social environment were potent factors in the creation of character. It is quite possible to resist the contact with low characters, or with open and direct temptation, but it hardly ever happens that the insidious effects of impure food, air, or housing, which operate by lowering the whole tone of the nervous system, can be successfully encountered. Of late, it is true, some Christians have taken a saner view of the subject. They have seen the absurdity of preaching purity of thought and deed to families living in one room, or of preaching "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods" to a man with his wife and family starving around him. But this is only a proof that even Christians cannot remain uninfluenced by the spirit of the age, and modern secularising influences are too strong for them to successfully fight against.

Nothing shows the wrong-headedness of Christian morality better than its treatment of what is called "sin." Man has been split up into a number of mutually destructive "faculties," a few of which have been treated as essentially good, and the remainder as incurably bad. A proper conception of the nature of human development would have shown the practical impossibility of an instinct or a feeling that was absolutely evil—bad, that is, at all times and under all conditions—ever coming into existence. All our feelings and instincts are of gradual growth; they are all elaborated as the result of ceaseless action and reaction between organism and environment. And it follows that for any instinct to exist it must at some stage of human development have represented a species of adaptation to environment. Consequently the struggle for existence guarantees

the practical impossibility of any instinct persisting that is wholly evil, for the reason that any animal or group of animals showing such an instinct would be wiped out of existence.

There are, in fact, only two ways in which a relatively evil instinct can come into existence. The first is a simple case of an instinct outliving its period of usefulness. Instincts useful at one stage of human culture become, owing to change of conditions, useless at other stages. Of this class personal loyalty to a king or a chief is a good sample. It is easy to see that at one stage of human culture this feeling must have counted for much as a factor determining survival. But at a later stage, where tribal conditions no longer exist, and where there exists greater opportunities for the display of individuality, this feeling is more or less an evidence of lack of development, and may become an element of evil. In an early stage leaders are followed, because they are the appointed leaders; at a later stage they are, or ought to be, followed because they are the conscious representatives of certain principles worth following.

In the second case the feeling or instinct is, properly speaking, not evil, but its harmful character is due to the immoderate use of an instinct which, rightly used, is perfectly legitimate and beneficial. Under normal conditions and speaking generally, all our instincts are perfectly moral and legitimate if exercised within due limits. Acquisitiveness, which is perhaps responsible for as much evil as any other feeling, is perfectly legitimate provided one does not gratify it at the expense of other people. Ambition may be either a good or bad passion as one gratifies it by legitimate work or by ruthlessly crushing others. Strong sexual passion is, again, responsible for untold wrong and misery; yet it is pretty certain that much of our morality and all the feelings that cluster round the family have their origin in this feeling. And so with nearly all the faculties and feelings we possess. It is not that they are essentially evil or incurably bad; essentially they are good; their badness consists in gratifying them without due regard to the claims and welfare of others.

And it is this that gives the foundation for the Freethinker's view of the nature of moral development. So far as this can be affected by teaching or preaching, he believes that what is needed is a quickening of the imagination, a development of the intellect, or what is generally summed up as culture. There is a sound basis in common sense for morality if only people could be brought to see it. That honesty is the best policy is a precept that has more than mere sentiment to support it. The whole of morality, in fact, has a natural basis, so evident when it is studied that there is good warranty for classing ignorance and immorality as two sides of the same thing. Unfortunately, this natural and sensible basis for morality has been lost sight of by religious preachers, who have been fond of depicting us as by nature immoral, presenting sin as full of concealed attractions, and its opposite as only to be gained by sorrow and privation. It is in this direction that religion has operated as a *de-moralising* force, and by picturing human nature as destitute of the essentials of morality helped as far as was possible to realise its teachings.

C. COHEN.

The Book of Genesis.

FREETHINKERS have been persistently affirming, for many ages, that the Bible is purely the work of man, and that in producing it man had no assistance whatever from any supernatural source. This affirmation the Church has always treated with haughty contempt, and in characterising its supporters she has employed the most opprobrious epithets at her command. But most astonishing are the performances of time's whirligig. To-day the Church herself is beginning to advocate Free-

thought principles. Everybody knows that the Higher Criticism is a thoroughly naturalistic movement, and that its only tendency has been to discredit and dethrone the Bible as "the inspired and infallible Word of God." Two of the most distinguished Hebrew scholars now living are Canons J. H. Cheyne and S. R. Driver, and they are both Professors of Exegesis at Oxford. Some years ago Canon Driver published a great work entitled *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*—a book that has caused quite a revolution in the religious world. The Professor has followed up that work with others no less iconoclastic. The most important of these until recently was a *Commentary on Deuteronomy*, which was an opening of the eyes to many. He has now presented us with a similar work on the Book of Genesis; and this is undoubtedly the most valuable contribution to its cause Freethought has had for many years.

In the *British Weekly* for February 25 there appeared a most appreciative review of this new Commentary from the pen of Professor Marcus Dod, of the United Free Church College, Edinburgh. This is how this Scottish divine characterises the work: "The English public has had long to wait for a first-rate Commentary on Genesis, a Commentary which might be read with pleasure, and which should afford a thorough treatment of the many difficulties connected with the origin and character of the book, a Commentary also suited to the English mind which distrusts and shrinks from hasty conclusions and the vagaries of ill-considered criticism, yet at the same times desires to be well informed and abreast of the time." Such a Commentary the one under consideration undeniably is. It is but fair to Canon Driver to say that he is generally looked upon as one of the most moderate, cautious, and impartial of the Higher Critics, while Canon Cheyne is often accused of rashness and lack of that mental balance which is essential to the formation of sound judgments. It is clear, therefore, that the conclusions arrived at in this Commentary on points of importance, will be acceptable to a vast majority of Old Testament scholars.

In the Introduction Dr. Driver discusses, with great fairness, the composite structure, the chronology, and the historical value of the Book of Genesis. It is his conviction that the first compiler made "use of pre-existing materials in the composition of his work," and that "as soon as the book is studied with sufficient attention, phenomena disclose themselves, which show that it is composed of distinct documents or sources, which have been welded together by a later compiler into a continuous whole." This effectually disposes of the old doctrine of revelation and inspiration. The contents of Genesis were not revealed to Moses in the wilderness and written down by him and his scribes. Genesis is a collection of interesting traditions and fables laboriously made by a number of different men in different ages. While it has unity of plan it has no unity of composition. The first compiler had two sources at his disposal, called J and E; but the second compiler possessed a third source known as P, which he made the framework of his composition, working in the J E combination as best he could.

Passing from the structure of Genesis to its chronology, Dr. Driver has no hesitation in pronouncing the latter utterly inconsistent both with itself and with "such external data as we possess for fixing the chronology of the period embraced by the book." From this it necessarily follows that the historical value of Genesis must be very insignificant. The historicity of the first eleven chapters is emphatically denied, and the time they ostensibly cover is christened the Pre-historic Period. The date fixed here "for the creation of man is equivalent to B.C. 4157, or (according to the higher figures of the LXX) B.C. 5328. It is, however, certain that man existed upon the earth long before even the earlier of these dates, and that the vicissitudes through which the human race passed have been far more

diversified, and must have occupied a far longer period to accomplish, than is allowed for by the Biblical narrative." There are many indisputable proofs of the antiquity of the human race. "If we call up before us the land of Babylonia," writes Professor R. W. Rogers, a distinguished American Assyriologist, "and transport ourselves backward until we reach the period of more than 4,000 years before Christ, we shall be able to discern here and there signs of life, society, and government in certain cities. Civilisation has already reached a high point, the arts of life are well advanced, and men are able to write down their thoughts and deeds in intelligible language and in permanent form. All these presuppose a long period of development running back through millenniums of unrecorded time." Egyptologists more than confirm the evidence from Babylonia, while according to geological records man must have existed 20,000 or 30,000 years before our era. In the face of these and other incontrovertible facts, Dr. Driver cannot but admit the utter untrustworthiness of the early chapters of Genesis; but one is highly amused at the naïve language in which he does so:—

"We are forced therefore to the conclusion that though, as may be safely assumed, the writers to whom we owe the first eleven chapters of Genesis, report faithfully what was currently believed among the Hebrews respecting the early history of mankind, at the same time, as is shown in the notes, making their narratives the vehicle of many moral and spiritual lessons, yet there was much they did not know, and could not take cognizance of: these chapters, consequently, we are obliged to conclude, contain no account of the real beginnings either of the earth itself, or of man and human civilisation upon it."

That is a great and almost incredible admission for a minister of the Gospel to make; but his love of truth compelled him to make it. It is beyond doubt, indeed, that a man must be either deliberately and selfishly dishonest or grossly and culpably ignorant if he is not driven to the same conclusion. The Bible League cuts a sorry figure when it tries to defend the first eleven chapters of Genesis as a portion of "the inspired and infallible Word of God." What about the Rev. John Tuckwell, M.R.A.S., and his ridiculous challenge, after this? He swaggered as a great hero at Oxford in 1902, and defied the world to find a single mistake in the first chapter of Genesis, in the study of which he had spent nearly five years; but here is a great scholar who, having spent at least twenty years in the study of them, declares that as a record of *real* beginnings, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are entirely worthless, and proves that the Babylonian monuments, already discovered and deciphered, contain not a scrap of corroborative evidence such as Mr. Tuckwell so confidently alleges they do.

We now come to the Patriarchal Period, which occupies the remainder of the Book of Genesis. In his treatment of this section Dr. Driver allows his theological prejudices to betray themselves, but, fortunately, not sufficiently to warp his critical judgment. Nothing is more evident than his pious desire to believe in the historicity of the dear, delightful old Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but we rejoice to find that he has the courage to admit that "the evidence for their historicity is not such as will satisfy the ordinary canons of historical criticism." Religiously or emotionally, he believes that the Patriarchs were historical persons; but this belief he qualifies by the statement that the accounts which we have of them are only *in outline* historically true, and "that their characters are idealised, and their biographies not unfrequently colored by the feelings and associations of a later age." But he resolutely maintains that their historicity is not corroborated by any of the discoveries of Archaeology, and in this contention he has the full support of Canon Cheyne and Professor George Adam Smith.

Such, in merest outline, is this latest Commentary on the first book in the Bible. It is worthy of note that by the advanced section of the religious Press it has been welcomed with boundless enthusiasm. The

Guardian pours unstinted praise upon it, and the *British Weekly* has pronounced its blessing upon it. And yet it is perfectly obvious that this Commentary strikes a strong and fatal blow at two, at least, of the fundamental doctrines of orthodoxy. If the conclusions arrived at by Dr. Driver are correct, how infinitely absurd it is for the members of the Bible League to assert that the Scriptures are, from beginning to end, "the inspired and infallible Word of God." Strangely enough, Dr. Driver himself is convinced that, from a religious point of view, the Book of Genesis is a revelation from God. Thus the theologian and the critic in him are hopelessly at variance. To be consistent he must completely abandon either theology or criticism, for these two are in their very nature absolutely irreconcilable. His criticism laughs disdainfully at his theology, and his theology shrinks with horror from his criticism.

Again, Dr. Driver's critical conclusions are subversive of the whole scheme of salvation through Christ as elaborated by St. Paul and succeeding theologians. That scheme has its roots in the doctrine of the Fall of Man in Eden as described in Genesis. If Adam had not sinned there would have been no need of the incarnation of God in Christ, nor of the atoning death on Calvary. We owe the sacrificial and redeeming God-man to the eaten apple in Paradise. I dare say that on this point also Dr. Driver's theology endeavours to shake hands with his criticism, and that as Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, he finds it difficult to be on tolerably good terms with himself as Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University. It must be admitted that the situation is full of risks and perils.

With all its drawbacks, due chiefly to the author's theological bias, this Commentary can be heartily recommended to the perusal and careful study of Freethinkers. Perhaps it is all the more valuable to us *because* of these theological prejudices by which some of its conclusions are colored. It is most significant that the great majority of the Higher Critics are also zealous theologians; and yet they are treating almost every book in the whole Bible in precisely the same manner as Dr. Driver treats Genesis. Indeed, Dr. Abbot and Professor Schmiedel are much less merciful to the historicity of the Four Gospels than this Commentary is to that of the first portion of the Pentateuch. After all, it is the Church rather than open Infidelity that is going to overthrow the Bible as a special message from God to man.

JOHN LLOYD.

FAITH.

FAITH is a word that has many different meanings and shades of meaning. It means trust, confidence, belief, and the thing believed in. The faith once delivered to the saints was the Gospel doctrines. Faith in God is a belief in him. The word is often used for religion. The household of faith means the household of religion, or religious persons. In fact, the word "faith" is used to signify feeling, desire, assurance, and all the religious emotions. The author of the letter to the Hebrews describes faith as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Marginal reference makes the word "substance" mean ground or confidence. That is to say, faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the foundation of hope for them. This definition of faith is, I think, a good one, and exactly correct. The things not seen are God, Jesus, Holy Ghost, the soul, heaven, the white robes and golden harps; and the only foundation and evidence of their existence is faith.

The Bible definition of faith makes belief the foundation and evidence of theology. Faith, in most cases, means belief, and to believe. It is a religious word, and abounds in every religion. In commerce and science we seldom meet with the word "faith." Science concerns itself with evidence, and commerce with cash and profit. In the affairs of this world

men are saved, not by faith, but by the want of it, as Franklin observed in *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Religion would be all the better with less faith and more evidence. The Bible, especially the New Testament, is speckled with the word "faith," and in most places means to believe, or the thing believed in.

Faith is often spoken of as if it was an entity, or something apart, existing by itself, ready-made like a garment, for man to receive or reject, as he wills. There are various sizes of faith, it seems, for Jesus told his disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." If a faith no bigger than a mustard seed could do all that, a faith as big as an egg could surely remove a continent into the sea, or the sea into the continent. Christians having a faith like this, and would use it, would be a fortune to the world, as they could abolish all the ills that afflict humanity by a mere act of the will. Does anybody believe such teaching? Do Christians believe it? They do not, and never did.

Faith is treated as if it was one thing always, and everywhere the same. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." But unity of faith does not exist. It is as various as the persons who profess to have it. Whether faith is considered as a doctrine, or as a belief or religion, it differs in every country, every sect, and every individual in them. No one can tell what it is, or what it means; and we read in Timothy that deacons in the Church were to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Whatever meaning we give to the word "mystery"—whether something concealed, unknown, or unknowable—it is clear that officers in the Church were to have a different faith from the ordinary members. And Jesus told his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." The disciples had one faith and outsiders another—a faith not to save them, but to prevent them being saved. That is the only inference that can be drawn from the passage.

There is a verse in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews which says: "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Here the identity of faith and belief is apparent. Another verse in the Romans says: "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." But if this was carried out, what would become of the churches and chapels? And what would become of the priests? for their occupation would be gone. But if the doctrine of faith is true, what will become of all men, including Christians? For we read: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If that is true we are all doomed, and there is no hope even for Christians.

What faith can do, that is, according to the Bible account of it, is wonderful. We have already seen that faith no larger than a grain of mustard seed can remove mountains. A faith like that would be very acceptable to railway contractors. A few men having a faith like that would remove all difficulties from the world, for Jesus told his disciples that with a faith no bigger than a mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible unto them. Faith can wither a live tree with a word, as Jesus did the fig tree, because it had no fruit out of season. Faith can make a man almighty and greater than God, for Jesus said: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." Faith can make a man invincible, for Jesus said: "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Faith can give a man a new language without the trouble

of learning it, for Jesus said: "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." To do all that you have only to believe. There is nothing faith cannot do. Respecting the power of faith over sickness, James gives the recipe how to do it: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." There it is as plain as daylight. No need for doctor or medicine. Faith, oil, and an elder is all that is wanted. And Christian England prosecutes the Peculiar People for carrying out the instructions of God.

But the greatest marvel in the recipe for curing the sick is in the tail. If the sick man has committed sins, and therefore is a sinner, the faith of an elder will secure forgiveness for him. Such a transformation, surely, is a miracle of legerdemain. The same doctrine is taught in many parts of the Bible. In fact the whole Christian religion is vicarious, for it is based on the sacrifice of the innocent that the guilty may escape. It makes the sinner a saint by faith in the merit of another. This is explicitly taught by the author of Romans: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." A greater caricature of reason and justice it would be impossible to conceive. Counting the guilty innocent and rewarding him for virtues he does not possess, by punishing the innocent in his place is the acme of absurdity and injustice.

According to most parts of the Bible, to believe is the most important thing. Faith overtops everything else altogether. It covers all faults and blots out all sins and transgressions. However great a sinner he may be, faith will make a man a saint in an instant. His faith will be counted righteousness unto him, and that is equivalent to saying that faith will change his sins into virtues. It is not goodness and usefulness that justify and save a man, but faith: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Goodness and usefulness will not justify and save without faith; but faith will justify and save without goodness or usefulness. This is the only inference that can be drawn from the doctrine of faith as taught by Jesus. And the same doctrine is taught by Paul in his letter to the Romans: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Many other passages to the same effect might be quoted, but enough is already done to prove the point. That there is another side, I know, and I will refer to it presently.

Seriously, is not this doctrine of mere faith an absurd and injurious doctrine? Does any intelligent man believe in its efficacy? Does anyone attempt to practice it throughout? Would anyone venture to test the truth of it by taking poison? Would any civilised community apply the teaching to business, to education, to law, to medicine, to politics, to war, or to anything else, even as an experiment? If not, why should anyone think there is any merit in it as a means of salvation for the soul? To see the absurdity of the doctrine of faith, all we have to do is to substitute some other name for that of Jesus, say Jupiter, Thor, or Robinson Crusoe, and its silliness becomes apparent at once. We fail to see the absurdity in connection with the name of Jesus because the colored spectacles of education have been placed over our mental eyes in the days of our youth. Nevertheless, vicarious righteousness is irrational. Besides, it is not possible to transfer the righteousness of one to another, and even if it were possible, it would be unjust. To punish the innocent instead of the guilty would be an unjust and an immoral act, under any canon of

law. A sin committed can never be undone, never be called back, never be changed, never be blotted out. If forgiveness of sin means cancelling sin, forgiveness is impossible. The only thing possible for a sinner is reformation.

The doctrine of vicarious justification and salvation by faith seems to me to be an encouragement to sin and a bribe for wickedness. If there is more joy in heaven when one great sinner enters, who at the last moment believed in Jesus, after a long life of crime and wickedness, than over hundreds of virtuous and worthy men, what is there in such a teaching to deter the wicked from sinning, or to encourage the good to lead a virtuous, useful life?

Besides, the doctrine implies that man has power to believe what he likes, when he likes, and how he likes. And that again implies that man has power to disbelieve what he likes, when he likes, and how he likes. But an adult intelligent and educated man has no such power. He can neither believe nor disbelieve by an act of his will. Children or weak-minded men may give a sort of assent to a doctrine which they do not understand, nor see the need of evidence to support, and which may by courtesy be called a belief. Hence the desperate efforts made by priests of all sects to retain a right to teach religion in schools, well knowing, if their dogmas are not impressed on the brains of the young, they would not believe them when grown up. If anyone thinks he can believe or disbelieve as he wills, let him try to do it, and he will soon find out that belief and unbelief force themselves upon him independent of his will.

And even if we could believe or disbelieve by an act of the will, there would be no merit in the belief nor a sin in the disbelief. If anyone said it was night when it was day, would it be sinful to disbelieve it? Or is there any more merit in believing an evident truth than there is in breathing with the lungs or seeing with the eyes? And this view of the case is actually upheld by certain passages in the Bible, notwithstanding the all-importance attached to faith in other passages. Thus the author of the first letter to the Corinthians: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." And James on this side of the question is delightfully strong: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead."

I need not quote any more. What has been quoted is decisive. There is something greater, better, nobler, more important, and far more precious than faith. Love manifested in work, service, and usefulness is far more important than faith in the unseen and unknown. There is no virtue whatever in believing. It is doing that is meritorious. Conduct and service should be the tests of worthiness, and not creeds, professions, and ceremonies. If you feel the need of some objects to believe in and venerate, there are abundance of them all around us in this world, and that now. Believe in man as a neighbour and a brother, believe in virtue, truth, and justice, believe in honesty, duty, and faithfulness, believe in the right of man individually and socially, believe in the constancy of law and the efficacy of material means to secure for man better and happier conditions, morally and physically, than exist at the present time. If men would make a religion of doing instead of faith, and would all combine to use material means to uplift the masses, a new world of justice, comfort, and happiness would soon be made. The possibility of greatness and happiness in this world is immense. The earth can be made into a paradise. A millennium is possible, not by faith, but by work. It must be made, and made by united work.

R. J. DERFEL.

Acid Drops.

We have already remarked that the men of God spoil whatever they touch. They are now taking up the Chinese Labor question in South Africa, and of course they talk the greatest nonsense about it. They cannot rest satisfied with denouncing the system of veiled industrial slavery which the Government contemplates introducing. They attack the Chinese as though, being "heathen," they are naturally vile and filthy. From one day's "Points from Pulpits" in the halfpenny organ of the Nonconformist Conscience we select the following. A Congregationalist exhorter, of Ilfracombe, says: "A hotbed of immorality is about to be created in South Africa." A Baptist exhorter, of Newport, refers to the "moral deterioration" that is sure to result. A Primitive Methodist exhorter, of Bradford, says: "One result will be the spread of moral contagion among the black people." Evidently these whipper-snappers of the Christian pulpit fancy the average Englishman is a saint compared with the average Chinaman. But, alas, it is not true. It is rather the reverse of the truth.

Sir Robert Hart knows a great deal more about the Chinese than do these English men of God. And what does he say about them? "They are," he says, "well-behaved, law-abiding, intelligent, economical, and industrious.....They are punctiliously polite, they worship talent, and they believe in right so firmly that they scorn to think it requires to be supported or enforced by might.....They possess and practise an admirable system of ethics, and they are generous, charitable, and fond of good works; they never forget a favor, they make rich return for any kindness.....They are of a good faith that everyone acknowledges and admires in their commercial dealings." Could as much be said honestly of Sir Robert Hart's own countrymen? Could as much be said honestly by English men of God of their own congregations?

It is recorded that before the war between Russia and Japan broke out the Bible Society distributed 100,000 Japanese Gospels and Testaments among the soldiers of the Mikado. We do not know what effect these are supposed to have—whether it is believed they will make the Japanese fight better or worse; but this story reminds one of another. Some years ago there was a great demand for Bibles in the Far East, and subscribers to the various missionary bodies were led to expect a large number of converts. But the converts didn't arrive; and then it was discovered the wily yellow man had been applying for Bibles wholesale, using them up in the manufacture of paper-mache trays, and then selling back to the English, in this guise, the Bibles that had been given gratuitously. We wonder how many of this 100,000 will find their way back to England in a similar disguise?

In connection with this distribution of Bibles it is worth noting that the Japanese are not a Christian people. Now, suppose the Japanese had asked permission to distribute 100,000 copies of Confucian or Buddhist writings among the soldiers in South Africa, we wonder what kind of a reply would have been given. Evidently the Japanese are, at present, a more tolerant people than ourselves. But perhaps this will all be altered if they become properly Christianised.

A Temperance revivalist called Smith, with the distinguished front-name of Tennyson, is advocating a new way of serving the cause of sobriety. His idea is to have a day or week of special prayer on its behalf. A number of lunatics are quite fascinated by this proposal. The Lord's ears are busy enough already, but if this sort of thing continues he will never have a minute's repose. What good it will do the Temperance cause is a problem that every sensible man may be left to decide for himself.

During "Gipsy Smith's" mission in Southend the Town Council resolved to allow one of the street lamps in a main thoroughfare to remain unlighted, in order that lantern slides advertising the mission might be exhibited. Had the mission been a Church affair, Nonconformists would have been raging at this as a fresh sample of clerical tyranny. As it is not, a Nonconformist journal jubilantly records it as a proof of the good done by "Gipsy Smith."

Gipsy Smith claims to have converted two publicans at Southend. He says that they are retiring from the drink business. Perhaps they were on the eve of doing so before he arrived. In any case, we hope Gipsy Smith is not soft enough to fancy that these "conversions"—even if they are real—will make any difference to the total drink business in

Southend. There will be the same number of public-houses as before, the same number of publicans, and the same consumption of liquid refreshment. And these very facts show how superficial and vitally unimportant are the efforts of Christian revivalists.

Another Christian revivalist, the Rev. John McNeill, has been carrying on a great soul-saving mission at Plymouth and Stonehouse. His principal meetings have been held in the Guildhall, which, of course, would not be available for Freethought gatherings. A special feature of this mission was the open-air service held daily in the dinner hour at the gates of the great Government establishments at Devonport. We presume, however, that canny John McNeill did not inform the workmen of the particulars of his own income. It is one that would make their mouths water; and we believe it is paid to him, wholly or in large part, by a Scottish capitalist who is not celebrated for generosity amongst his own workpeople.

There is a "Children's Corner" in the *Daily News*, and it recently contained something about seals. The following passage could hardly have been intended to "justify the ways of God to men":—"Hunters seldom find the seal's home, but the great white Polar bear does. His nose guides him to the spot, and then he crushes in the top of the house by leaping in the air and throwing his whole weight on the seal. He puts in one big, cruel paw and lifts out the baby seal, and then, very cunningly, he lets it down through the breathing hole in the ice, thus tempting out the mother. She he secures with his other forefoot." Delightful for the bear. But rough on the seal. Yet both are God's creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Canon Driver's new book, *Genesis*, treats all the early part of the first book in the Bible as "symbolic." "In the first eleven chapters," he says, "there is little or nothing that can be called historical in our sense of the words." A hundred years ago, perhaps fifty years ago, Dr. Driver would have been turned out of the Church for saying this. Two hundred years ago he would have been imprisoned or hurried out of this world.

There is an (unconsciously) amusing letter in the current issue of the *Church Times* from the Rev. Mr. N. Trollope. The *C. T.* had been calling attention to the great danger run by Missionaries in Corea, their heroism, etc. Mr. Trollope writes that the same kind of paragraphs appeared in English newspapers between 1890 and 1900, and "were a standing joke to us residents in the country." As Mr. Trollope was there at the time, he ought to know what he is talking about. He says there was no danger whatever. Still the alarmist paragraphs may excite subscriptions, and this, we suppose is their real object.

The subject of pain is one of those things on which the religious world delights to air its absurdities. A writer in the *Examiner* dealing with this topic, brings up the old argument that pain is ultimately beneficial to man, which is an easy philosophy—when some one else bears the pain. Of course the Theist is bound to "explain" pain somehow, and so he argues that it is through pain and privation that character is purified. This sounds plausible until one begins to examine into its meaning. Then it is seen to be one of the crudest of fallacies. In the first place, even though some benefit were derived from pain, it would not meet the criticism, which is that in a world governed by an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving God, some other method of making people better might exist, save that of suffering. Secondly, suffering brutalises far more frequently than it elevates. There is nothing so hardens character as the constant contemplation of suffering, and long continued pain has a strong tendency to bring out the selfish and exacting aspect of human nature. Thirdly, that no one believes this plea is shown by the fact that we all seek to avoid pain, the Christian is trying to get to a heaven where no pain exists, and the greatest benefactor is he who diminishes its volume. And, lastly, if suffering does elevate character, what public benefactors slum landlords, sweaters, and the like, really are! And grievously they have been misunderstood! While they have been denounced as public dangers, they have really been God Almighty's chief agents in reforming the world.

The same writer observes that "it is quite evident to anyone that the world was never meant to satisfy the wants of worldliness." Well, what on earth was it meant for? If by worldliness is meant what is usually intended by the religionist—a taste for the low and degrading, one would like to know why God made man with such an appetite if the

world was not meant to satisfy it. Or if it is meant a genuine healthy delight in the life of this world, then the reply is that the world does or can satisfy all one's legitimate "wants" when these are not made morbid by theology. What religion does is to create a morbid appetite for a number of unrealisable things, and then cry out that as this world does not supply them some other world must.

The rain falleth upon the just and unjust alike, and among other sufferers from the bad weather are the churches. One minister in Sussex has just sent round a circular letter to his congregation pointing out that the constant wet weather has sensibly diminished the collections, and requests them therefore to see that when they do come to church what they put in the plate or bag shall cover all the Sundays they have been absent. It is a case of you can't come in without paying, but you can pay without coming in.

The football edition of an evening paper declared the other day that no man needed to be such a slave to his conscience as an umpire at a football match. He must know neither fear nor favour; his sole judge must be his conscience, and to this he must sacrifice all else. Now we wonder what Dr. Clifford and Co. will have to say to this. Hitherto Nonconformists have claimed that they only possess a conscience, and now their claim is challenged by a *football referee* above all others! The situation is quite pathetic.

An "Answers to Correspondents" column is run by Mr. R. J. Campbell in the *British Weekly*. In the current issue a correspondent asks his opinion on "Free-will." Mr. Campbell replies that we possess "much less [freedom] than we think we do, but the little that we do possess is sufficient for the development of our moral nature"—an answer which gives a fair measure of this gentleman's mental calibre. And then follows this brilliant passage: "The word 'wrong' settles the matter. If I see a thing to be wrong I need not do it, no matter how enormous the temptation may be..... The moment the word 'wrong' is written across any possible course of action, that moment I know myself to be a free man." Anyone with the most elementary knowledge of the subject could have told Mr. Campbell that it is just this "feeling" of freedom that is called into question. No one disputes the feeling; what is disputed is its worth. And the talk about temptation is more stupid still. What Mr. Campbell really says in this nonsensical jumble is: "No matter though a temptation to do something may be too strong for me to resist, I can still refrain from doing it." Which, when put in plain English, is absurd enough to suit the taste of even a City Temple audience.

"Two well-attended meetings in support of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews were held yesterday at Exeter Hall." So said a morning newspaper on Saturday, Feb. 27. It was not stated how many Jews were present. There was plenty of talk about Jews by Christians, but the Jews themselves seem to have been occupied elsewhere.

"Gi'me a chance. I often says me prayers for yer." These were the words of William O'Farkell at the Marylebone Police Court to Magistrate Plowden. He was a Black Lister and he had been drunk and disorderly. His sentence was a month's imprisonment. If there is any good in prayer, he had better spend the time in praying for himself.

The Rev. Dr. Stewart, of John-street Congregational Church, Aberdeen, was recently advertised to speak on "Why Ingersoll Became a Christian." We really should like to know why; and two still more interesting queries would be Where? and How?

According to the Bishop of Stepney, there are "thousands of parents who do not recognise their responsibility in regard to their children's baptism, and there are multitudes of adults who, already in that state, do not recognise its gravity. If they did, they would be enabled to withstand the temptations; to throw off their old habits and dissipations." This is very sad! Still, we fancy it would be worse if the same number of people failed to recognise the benefits of a *general* wash instead of a mere sprinkle. And it is so like a bishop to pretend that a sprinkling of water over a child enables it to "withstand the temptations of the world," and throw off "dissipation." We wonder if any of them really believe it? And if they do, who will say that the days of necromancy are quite dead?

Miracles.

WHAT is a miracle? Some people would reply, an act of God. But this definition is far too wide. In the Theistic sense, it would include everything that happens; and in the sense of our archaic bills of lading, it would include fire and shipwreck.

Others would reply, a miracle is a wonder. But this definition would include every new or at least every surprising new fact. A black swan would have been a wonder before Australia was discovered, but it would have been no miracle. Railways, telegraphs, telephones, electric light, and even gas light, would be wonders to savages, yet neither are they miracles. One of the Mahdi's followers was astonished by an English officer, who pulled out his false eye, tossed it in the air, caught it, and replaced it; after which he asked the flabbergasted Arab whether his miraculous Mahdi could do that. It was a greater wonder than the Mahdi could perform; still, it was not a miracle. Ice was so great a wonder to the King of Siam that he refused to credit its existence. Yet it was not miraculous, but a natural product, existing in practically unlimited quantities in the polar regions. We might multiply these illustrations *ad infinitum*, but what we have given will suffice. If not, let the reader spend an evening at Maskelyne and Cooke's, where he will see plenty of startling wonders and not a miracle amongst them.

Hume's definition of a miracle as a violation of a law of nature is the best ever given, and it really is as perfect as such a definition can be. It has been carped at by Christian scribblers, and criticised by superior theologians like Mozley. But, to use Mr. Gladstone's phrase, it keeps the field. Even the criticisms of Mill and Huxley leave its merit unimpaired. The ground taken by these is, that to say a miracle is a violation of a law of nature is to prejudge the question, and to rule out all future facts in the interest of a prepossession. Mill, however, allows that a miracle is a violation of a valid induction, and as a law of nature means nothing more it is difficult to understand why he takes any exception to Hume's statement of the case. It is perfectly obvious that Hume's argument is not metaphysical, but practical. He does not discuss the *possibility* but the *probability* of miracles. He reduces the dispute to a single point, namely, whether the person who relates a miracle (for to the world at large the question is necessarily one of testimony) is deceived or deceiving, or whether the otherwise universal experience of mankind is to be disbelieved; in other words, whether he or the rest of the world is mistaken. One man may, of course, be right, and all the human race opposed to him wrong, but time will settle the difference between them. That *time*, however, simply means general experience through long ages; and that is precisely the tribunal which Hume's argument appeals to.

Quarrelling with Hume's definition is really giving up miracles altogether, for, except as supernatural evidence, they are no more important than shooting stars. The very nature of a miracle, in whatever formula it may be expressed, is superhuman, and, having a purpose, it is also supernatural; in other words, it is a special manifestation of divine power for a particular object. Whether, being so, it is a violation, a contravention, or a suspension of the laws of nature, is a mere question about words.

We may say that a miracle has three elements. It is first a fact, unaccountable by science; secondly, it requires a conscious agent; and thirdly, it results from the exercise of a power which that agent does not naturally possess.

Let us descend to illustration. Huxley takes the following case. Suppose the greatest physiologist in Europe alleged that he had seen a centaur, a fabulous animal, half man and half horse. The presumption would be that he was laboring under hallucination; but if he persisted in the statement he would have to submit to the most rigorous criticism by his scientific colleagues before it could be believed; and everybody would feel sure beforehand that he would never pass through the ordeal successfully. The common experience, and therefore the common sense, of society would be dead against him, and probably he would be refused the honor of examination even by the most fervid believers in ancient miracles.

But after all the centaur, even if it existed, would not be a miracle, but a monstrosity. It does not contain the three elements we have indicated. Real miracles would be of a different character. Plenty may be found in the Bible, and we may make a selection to illustrate our argument. Jesus Christ was once at a marriage feast, when the wine ran short, which was perhaps no uncommon occurrence. Being of a benevolent turn of mind, and anxious that the guests should remember the occasion, he turned a large quantity of cold water into fermented juice of the grape. Now water contains oxygen and hydrogen in definite proportions, and nothing else, while wine contains in addition to these, carbon and other elements, being in fact a very complex liquid.

Jesus Christ must, therefore, in turning water into wine, have created something, and that transcends human power. Here, then, we have a complete miracle, according to Hume's definition and our own theory.

We do not say the miracle never occurred, although we no more believe in it than we believe the moon is made of green cheese. We are willing to regard it as susceptible of proof. But does the proof exist? To answer this we must inquire what kind of proof is necessary. An extraordinary story should be supported by extraordinary evidence. It requires the concurrent and overwhelming testimony of eye-witnesses. We must be persuaded that there is no collusion between them, that none of them has anything to gain by deception, that they had no previous tendency to expect such a thing, and that it was practically impossible that they could be deluded. Now let any man or any Christian seriously ask himself whether the evidence for Jesus Christ's miracle is of this character. Four evangelists write his life, and only one mentions the occurrence. Even he was certainly not an eye-witness, nor does he pretend to be, and the weight of evidence is against his gospel having been written till long after the first disciples of Jesus were dead. But even if the writer distinctly declared himself an eye-witness, and if it were undeniable that he lived on the spot at the time, his single unsupported testimony would be absurdly inadequate to establish the truth of the miracle. Every reader will at once see that the established rules of evidence are not conformed to, and whoever accepts the miracle must eke out reason with faith.

So much for the evidence of miracles. Their intellectual or moral value is simply nil. The greatest miracle could not really convince a man of what his reason condemned; and if a prophet could turn water into wine, it would not necessarily follow that all he said was true. In fact, truth does not require the support of miracles; it flourishes better without their assistance. Universal history shows that miracles have always been employed to support falsehood and fraud, to promote superstition, and to enhance the profit and power of priests.

—Flowers of Freethought.

The New Church that was not Built.

I HAVE a friend who was never a church member, but was, and is, a millionaire—a generous, benevolent millionaire—who once went about doing good by stealth, but with a natural preference for doing it at his office. One day he took it into his thoughtful noddle that he would like to assist in the erection of a new church edifice, to replace the inadequate and shabby structure in which a certain small congregation in his town then worshipped. So he drew up a subscription paper, modestly headed the list with "Christian, 2,000 dollars," and started one of the Deacons about with it. In a few days the Deacon came back to him, like the dove to the ark, saying he had succeeded in procuring a few names, but the press of his private business was such that he had felt compelled to entrust the paper to Deacon Smith.

Next day the document was presented to my friend as nearly blank as when it left his hands. Brother Smith explained that he (Smith) had started this thing, and a brother calling himself "Christian," whose name he was not at liberty to disclose, had put down 2,000 dollars. Would our friend aid them with an equal amount? Our friend took the paper and wrote "Philanthropist, 1,000 dollars," and Brother Smith went away.

In about a week Brother Jones put in an appearance with the subscription paper. By extraordinary exertions Brother Jones—thinking a handsome new church would be an ornament to the town and increase the value of real estate—had got two brethren, who desired to remain *incog.*, to subscribe: "Christian," 2,000 dollars, and "Philanthropist," 1,000 dollars. Would my friend kindly help along a struggling congregation? My friend would. He wrote "Citizen, 500 dollars," pledging Brother Jones, as he had pledged the others, not to reveal his name until it was time to pay.

Some weeks afterward, a clergyman stepped into my friend's counting-room, and after smilingly introducing himself, produced that identical subscription list.

"Mr. K.," said he, "I hope you will pardon the liberty, but I have set on foot a little scheme to erect a new church for our congregation, and three of the brethren have subscribed handsomely. Would you mind doing something to help along the good work?"

My friend glanced over his spectacles at the proffered paper. He rose in his wrath! He towered! Seizing a loaded pen, he dashed at that fair sheet and scribbled thereon in raging characters, "Impenitent Sinner—Not one cent, by G—!"

After a brief explanatory conference, the minister thoughtfully went his way. That struggling congregation still worships devoutly in its original, unpretending temple.

—Dod Grile.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

March 13, Liverpool; 20, Camberwell; 27, Birmingham

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—March 6, Queen's Hall, London.
- J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 6, Glasgow; 13, South Shields; April 3, Sheffield; 17, Merthyr Tydvil; 24, Failsforth.
- MR. L. STENTFORD.—Regret we cannot oblige you. We should have a rare task on hand if we wrote letters for our readers to send to their local newspapers. We are sure you mean well, but you very much overrate our powers of endurance.
- O. ALLEN.—We can only repeat what we said that Fair Trade is incapable of a definition. We never said a word about Free Trade or Protection *per se*, and don't mean to.
- W. R. G.—Received and will be dealt with as soon as possible.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- C. HOLMES.—It is pleasant to hear from readers so far away as South Africa. Thanks for your good wishes in the new year.
- P. FORD.—Shall appear.
- ARNOLD RÖHDE.—Glad to receive a letter from one who caught sight of the *Freethinker* by accident two years ago and has never missed a copy of it since. We do not regard Germany as over-religious, and are quite prepared to hear your report as to Free thought in Hamburg. Our references have rather been to the Emperor and the laws.
- H. C. SHACKLETON.—You will see the reason why we have to delay dealing with your enclosures.
- MR. W. A. PERTON, whose address is Box 125, East London, South Africa, has a large number of *Freethinkers* which he would like to give to any *Freethinker* in Port Elizabeth, or elsewhere.
- N. S. S. CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Mr. and Mrs. Chapman Cohen, 10s.; Mrs. Crummey, 2s.; Mrs. Henderson (result of second collection), 11s. 5d.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and *not* to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Personal.

I HAVE to ask the indulgence of my readers this week. They will perhaps find that the *Freethinker* is not up to its usual level. I mean from an editorial point of view. The explanation is that I am bowled over for a day or two. I was not too well when I started for Coventry on Saturday, and the local "saints" know that I was not at all well on Sunday. But I forced the pace by an effort of will, and I believe I managed to put plenty of vigor into the lectures. One has sometimes to pay the penalty of such a performance afterwards, and I have paid it this time. When I reached home on Monday evening, after cold travelling in bitter weather, I was fairly done up. My doctor found that I had a touch of influenza, with a rise of temperature, and ordered me to bed. This morning (Tuesday) I am up again, but have to keep to my bedroom. My temperature is dropping to normal, and I hope to be much better

to-morrow; but to-day I am fagged, limp, and inert, and work is entirely out of the question.

Readers who take an interest in my health—and some of them are good enough to think it an asset of Freethought—need not be alarmed. They may rely upon it, I think, that I am only bowled over very temporarily. And my doctor considers that I have plenty of reserve strength.

My own impression is that I am just suffering one of the after-effects of that infernal imprisonment twenty years ago. I had a magnificent constitution, but I never expected that such an experience would do it any good. I knew that I was paying a big price; for I had heard a great judge and legal reformer say that no man ever suffered twelve months' imprisonment without injury, or two years' without serious injury, or three years' without being practically broken. One may say, in language slightly altered from the Bible, be sure your imprisonment will find you out.

And now I know my readers will give me all the indulgence I need.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had capital meetings at Coventry on Sunday, and any amount of enthusiasm. The local "saints" are delighted, and the local Branch profits by a considerable accession of new members. A fine contingent of old and new stalwarts came over from Birmingham, and some of them assisted the mild and modest, but tremendously effective, Mr. Partridge to push the sale of literature. Councillor Jackson occupied the chair at both meetings, and it was a brave thing to do. He has been insulted and threatened for letting his name appear with the names of "notorious infidels," but he does not look like a man who is easily frightened, and the bigots may just as well save their breath.

Mr. Cohen takes the last of the present course of Queen's Hall's lectures to-day (March 6), and we hope the London *Freethinkers* will see that he has an audience worthy of his lectures.

How the press did boycott the Queen's Hall Demonstration in favor of Secular Education. They must be dreadfully frightened, so perhaps the boycott is a compliment. In spite of it there was a large crowd present, including a satisfactory contingent of the Freethought party. One thing was particularly noticeable—the enthusiastic reception accorded to the President of the National Secular Society, and the applause which greeted his demonstration that the master-evil, the source of most other evils, in our educational system is the presence of priestcraft, through religious instruction, in the public schools. Take that away, he argued, and all other reforms would be comparatively easy. Mr. J. M. Robertson made a fine speech, which was highly appreciated. Mr. H. M. Hyndman got the applause he always gets from a popular "advanced" audience. Mrs. Bridges Adams ably and boldly represented woman's interest in better education. Mr. F. Green, a well-known Peace man, presided admirably. And the other speakers were Mr. Will Thorne and Mr. H. Quelch.

The Birmingham Branch has a rare sort of a program for to-day. It has the Rev. E. Price, B.A., lecturing for it in the afternoon on "The Word of God and the Bible." This is the second time Mr. Price has lectured for the Branch. He is a courteous local minister, and does not mind a lot of discussion, so the "saints" should swarm in and have a good time. In the evening Councillor J. A. Fallows, M.A., lectures for the Branch, and for local reasons his subject will be "Thomas Paine." Mr. Fallows ought to have a crowded audience.

Mr. George Standring has given notice of a motion on the Finsbury Borough Council to the effect that it is desirable that the custom of "official attendance" at Church services by the Mayor and other members of the Council should be discontinued," as (*inter alia*) tending to raise an invidious distinction between the Church of England and other religious bodies." No doubt, in introducing the motion Mr.

Standing will not confine himself to the reason mentioned in the notice. There is much virtue in an "*inter alia*."

A correspondent at Kimberley writes Mr. Victor Roger, one of our vice-presidents, that as he has come across many Freethinkers at that place, he thinks it probable that a successful organisation might be formed there in the near future. We do not know how many of our readers have friends at Kimberley, or near there, but any who have and care to send their addresses to 14, Kennington-road, S.E., Mr. Roger will be pleased to put them into touch with one another.

We are pleased to note that *La Raison*, our French contemporary, is to make its appearance as a Freethought daily paper on Monday next, instead of a weekly, as hitherto. This is a gratifying sign of Freethought on the other side of the Channel, and we heartily wish *La Raison* every success.

The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

NINTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

S. K. 2s. 6d., C. H. 2s. 6d., Arnold Rohde 2s. 6d.

The Education Question.

ON Friday evening last, at the large Queen's Hall, a singularly earnest and successful meeting was held—no less important because conspicuously ignored by the general Press—to express the views shared in common with the organised representatives of Labor in the Trade Union world—by Socialists and Secularists—on the present position of the Education controversy. The level of speaking was high throughout, and the same tone of tolerance to all differing modes of thought, the same insistence on the claims of the children to the best the country could provide for them, marked all the speakers without exception.

In his opening speech, the Chairman, Mr. J. F. Green, a Socialist and Freethinker of long standing, referred to the fact that all the speakers and sympathisers that night had their own point of view, secularist, socialist, religious, but all were alike in favor of the policy set forth in the Trades Union Congress Manifesto and embodied in the resolution to be submitted to the meeting.

Mr. Will Thorne, General Secretary of the Gas Workers' Union, speaking first, told the tale of the steady and continuous ripening of Trades Union opinion, and its now practical unanimity on the program before the meeting.

Mr. John M. Robertson, in an admirable speech, traced the development of education during the last century, and marked its relative insufficiency in our land when compared with the U.S.A. and the rest of Western Europe.

Mr. G. W. Foote paid a fitting tribute to the importance of women's work on the School Board, and strongly deprecated their exclusion as elected representatives from the scheme of the new Act. He dealt in a statesmanlike manner with the Nonconformist attitude; and while doing full justice to their services to the cause of religious freedom in the past, aptly remarked that they "had sold their birthright for a mess of pottage thirty years ago, and it was now choking them."

Mr. H. M. Hyndman, in his well-known trenchant style, traced his view of the position, and complained of having to beat again the old dogs whipped so long ago. Like other speakers he showed that the free platform alone can do justice to the Christian position, and the absence of religious teaching from the State schools is the only way to ensure that definite religious teaching should be imparted by those alone by whom it is conscientiously believed.

Not last nor least came the telling speech of Mrs. Bridges Adams, sole Labor Member for years past of the London School Board. She had given her whole life to this question she said, and she detailed the manner in which her resolutions in favor of "Secular education" had been met in the recent committees of the expiring Board, even such arch progressives as Dr. Macnamara and Mr. Yoxall both speaking and voting against it. Her protest against the tyranny of the *status quo ante* and her plea for better things was brilliant and effective.

Mr. H. Quelch, editor of *Justice*, made an ardent and practical speech. Mr. H. J. Hawkins, a special delegate from the London Trades Council, also addressed the meeting, and the carrying of the resolution with practical unanimity closed an earnest and significant meeting.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary N.S.S.

On Death and Immortality.

DID it ever strike you, dear reader, that it must be a particularly pleasant thing to be dead? To say nothing hackneyed about the blessed freedom from the cares and vexations of life—which we cling to with such tenacity while we can, and which, when we have no longer the power to hold, we let go all at once, with probably a feeling of exquisite relief—and to take no account of this latter probable but totally undemonstrable felicity, it must be what boys call awfully jolly to be dead.

Here you are, lying comfortably upon your back—what is left of it—in the cool dark, and with the smell of the fresh earth all about you. Your soul goes knocking about amongst an infinity of shadowy things, Lord knows where, making all sorts of silent discoveries in the gloom of what was yesterday an unknown and mysterious future, and which, after centuries of exploration, must still be strangely unfamiliar. The nomadic thing doubtless comes back occasionally to the old grave—if the body is so fortunate as to possess one—and looks down upon it with big round eyes and a lingering tenderness.

It is hard to conceive a soul entirely cut loose from the old bones, and roving rudderless about eternity. It was probably this inability to mentally divorce soul from substance that gave us that absurdly satisfactory belief in the resurrection of the flesh. There is said to be a race of people somewhere in Africa who believe in the immortality of the body, but deny the resurrection of the soul. The dead will rise refreshed after their long sleep, and in their anxiety to test their rejuvenated powers will skip bodily away and forget their souls. Upon returning to look for them they will find nothing but little blue flames, which can never be extinguished, but may be carried about and used for cooking purposes. This belief probably originates in some dim perception of the law of compensation. In this life the body is the drudge of the spirit; in the next the situation is reversed.

The heaven of the Mussulman is not incompatible with this kind of immortality. Its delights, being merely carnal ones, could be as well or better enjoyed without a soul; and the latter might be booked for the Christian heaven, with only just enough of the body to attach a pair of wings to. Mr. Solyman Muley Abdul Ben Gazel could thus enjoy a dual immortality and secure a double portion of eternal felicity at no expense to anybody.

In fact, there can be no doubt whatever that this theory of a double heaven is the true one, and needs but to be fairly stated to be universally received, inasmuch as it supposes the maximum of felicity for terrestrial good behavior. It is therefore a sensible theory, resting upon quite as solid a foundation of fact as any other theory, and must commend itself at once to the proverbial good sense of Christians everywhere. The trouble is that some architectural scoundrel of a priest is likely to build a religion upon it; and what the world needs is theory—good, solid, nourishing theory.

—Dod Grile.

The Good Young Man.

WHY is he? Why defaces he the fair page of creation, and why is he to be continued? This has never been explained; it is one of those dispensations of Providence the design whereof is wrapped in profoundest obscurity. The good young man is perhaps not without excuse for his existence, but society is without excuse for permitting it. At his time of life to be "good" is to insult humanity. Goodness is proper to the aged; it is their sole glory; why should this milky stripling bring it into disrepute? Why should he be permitted to defile with the fat of his sleek locks a crown intended to adorn the grizzled pow of his elders?

A young man may be manly, gentle, honorable, noble, tender, and true, and nobody will ever think of calling him a good young man. Your good young man is commonly a sneak, and is very nearly allied to that other social pest, the "nice young lady." As applied to the immature male of our kind, the adjective "good" seems to have been perverted from its original and ordinary signification, and to have acquired a dyslogistic one. It is a term of reproach, and means, as nearly as may be, "characterless." That anyone should submit to have it applied to him is a proof of the essential cowardice of virtue.

We believe the direst ill afflicting civilisation is the good young man. The next direst is his natural and appointed mate, the nice young lady. If the two might be tied neck and heels together and flung into the sea, the land would be the fatter for it.

—Dod Grile.

Lotus Lakes and Lacquered Gods.

A LETTER FROM JAPAN.

BY HELEN H. GARDENER.

(From the "Liberal Review," Kansas City.)

I THOUGHT you might like to hear a word from me while I am in this land of lotus lakes and lacquered gods. I have just returned to Tokio from a trip up to Nikko, a beautiful summer resort, noted for its number, variety, and quality of temples and shrines, where hundreds of yearly pilgrims go on foot to pray, pay, and be "healed"—and incidentally to spread all kinds of diseases *en route*. The red and gold and black lacquered deities who cure eye troubles are rubbed quite bare to the bone (or wood) all over and about the eyes. The patient rubs his own eyes, prays, and then rubs the corresponding part of the god to whom he has come for relief. It is a kind of object lesson for the god, I suppose. The practice brings much coin to the shrine. It is strange that such idol worship should flourish in a country which has surprised the world with her wonderful material and intellectual development.

For the strides made by this mentally alert and ravenously hungry little nation in the past thirty odd years (the revolution was in 1868) are encouraging to observe. They date everything from that Revolution which they call Miji 36. That is, this year is the 36th of "enlightened government." Their emperor, who has ruled with extraordinary wisdom and judgment all those years is still a young man—he is 54 years old.

Up to 1853, when our Admiral Perry came here and opened this country to the world—for which act he is held in deep reverence here—Japan was like a plant growing underground. It had vigor, and had become hungry for light and air; so that, with contact with the rest of the world, these alert little people, with their long stored-up energy, ability, and intense curiosity, have simply sprung forward at a most amazing rate. If they do not get intellectual dyspepsia it will be fortunate indeed. In our country we do not think of any Oriental women as doing some of the things these girls now do in their schools. I have seen 1,000 of them in the girls' university going through the athletic exercise, gymnastics, basket ball, foot racing, etc., etc., of our most liberal schools, and that out of doors before an audience of thousands of men and women who were delighted to applaud. They tell me I shall see the same even in the exclusive Peeress school a bit later—when their public day comes. How is that for women's progress in the Orient?

One of the humors of the situation over here is the fact that the people at large take the Salvation Army and the missionaries quite seriously, and accept what they teach about their gods and religion with entire good faith. Nevertheless, this in no way interferes with their own native beliefs. They already have such a variety of gods that one or two or three more or less makes no perceptible difference. They don't expect any *one* god to attend to all kinds of business. Each has his specialty or his district, and Jehovah or Jesus would in no way interfere with Amida, Buddha, or Diabutsu. So when the missionaries think they have converted these people, they have simply helped the natives add to their already overstocked market a fresh set of legends and superstitions. The big stone and bronze Diabutsu just outside my window has so many bumps on his head that he is wonderful to behold. His head looks as if it had gone through a patent perforated potato masher. He is a sort of a Henry Ward Beecher and Daniel Webster rolled into one.

I have asked a number of educated natives whether these Buddhas and Diabutsus with the bumpy heads are really made that way to represent outwardly their brain developments. Some have said yes, others—and the greater number—said no.

These latter say they THINK it was done by the "old masters" to represent curls; but as the god came from India, and the hair of that race is not kinky, I am not wholly satisfied that this explanation explains.

The really educated men here are, in the main, Agnostics. They make a kind of political patriotism their real religion—that and a type of ancestor worship, or devotion to the heroic dead, and emulation of their virtues. This feature of their national life goes very far to instil in their youth much of the best that their national character offers. Speaking of educated men being in the main Agnostics, I was talking with a prominent and well-known man the other day, who spent many years in an American college. He explained quite simply, and with a smile, that he was baptised three times while in our country, and that he was a little afraid that he hurt the feelings of his Baptist friends by declining to be baptised by them. "But," said he, "I did not like to go under the water. Besides, it was cold weather, and I feared a cold dip in the climate of Boston. I had to be a little careful about that, and I explained it to my Baptist friends; but I think they did not like me so well after that, and did not think me so good as before." "What in the world were you baptised three times for?" I asked. "Well," said he, "it seemed foolish to me, too; but I had friends who believed those different ways, and they urged me to accept their kind of religion and accept the symbol of it in their kind of baptism, and I did not wish to be unaccommodating. Besides, I could not see that it could do me any harm, and it pleased them, so I was quite willing."

We have heard always in our civilisation that "God intended" or "Nature demands," etc., etc., a Sunday or Sabbath—one day in seven as a day of rest or worship. Well, you do not know how odd that idea seems here. None of these Oriental nations have as yet discovered that "on the seventh day the Lord rested." Nevertheless, these people have their holidays and their holy days. But the stores and general business of life go right along just the same. Since the Christian influence has been adopted "officially," the public offices and banks do close on Sunday, but this is about all. As you go about you could not tell the day of the week by outward and visible signs.

It seems to me that Japan has suffered about as much from her admirers as from her enemies. From the missionaries we have learned of them as a sadly deficient, undeveloped, rude, dirty, and immoral race, with most of the vices and few of the virtues of humanity; and, incidentally, sadly in need of more religion—of course of the Christian brand. On the other hand, there has been a set of enthusiastic writers and travellers who have raved about Japan as the ideal spot on earth—the "paradise of nations." To my mind each is about as far from the truth as the other. Let me illustrate, using a thing which I admire—in the abstract—to show my meaning: that is the costume. I will take that of the woman as an example and begin at her head. Her heavy suit of very black hair is made at once a means of uncleanness, and discomfort and ill health by the national method of doing it up. It is heavy with a greasy substance that holds dirt and microbes; it prevents her from sleeping in comfort—for she must keep it in trim at all cost. It early produces a bald spot on the top of her head, and later almost complete baldness. One rarely sees a fair suit of hair on an old woman, or one past fifty even. It carries its chemicals and microbes into the eyes of the helpless and ever-present baby strapped tight to her shoulders—if she be of the lower or middle classes. It has nothing whatever to recommend it, except its supposed beauty, which is to the foreign eye the beauty of a highly polished piece of sheet iron or patent leather. All idea of softness and delicate texture is utterly lost in the glittering, hard polished surface of it.

And now about the kimona, that pretty garment

which we are all inclined to copy (with modifications). It is comfortable, *per se*; but worn properly (that is, as they wear it) it is anything else. For it involves a very tight and uncomfortable binding down of the hips and abdomen that is said to be most painful, and one cause of the very smallness of the race itself. Then to speak of that awful thing the obi. I am told that obis of the present size and stiffness are only 300 years old. I've had them on, and I can say without the slightest exaggeration that a rich heavy obi is a more painful and uncomfortable thing than was the old time French corset. It is equally stiff and unyielding, with the added fault of weight, preventing the free use of either the lungs, the breast, or the back. A soldier's knapsack is the only thing I can think of as equally unpleasant on the back. The obi is a horror both to wear and to look at. The more handsome and expensive it is, the worse it is. I saw them weaving splendid ones in the famous Kyoto factories the other day, in which solid gold threads were frequent enough to make the single obi (between three and four feet long) cost from 100 to 3,000 yen—that is, from 50 to 1,500 dollars of our money. The throat is always exposed—and I am not sure of the effects, good or bad, of this—but the bare legs, bare (often shaven) heads, and general lack of warmth in cold days appear to have produced almost universal head and nasal catarrh.

One rarely sees a child who is not a repellent sight in cold weather, and not far less so even in summer. The daily sight of hundreds of babies from three days old to three years, strapped on backs of older babies or grown people, with their little bald (shaven) heads bobbing helplessly about like a ball on a rubber cord, with blinded eyes exposed to the fierce light and often to the direct heat of the sun, appears to me to be enough to account, not only for the head catarrh, but for that national curse of the Japanese, ophthalmic diseases. But doubtless all these defects will be duly corrected, and let us hope that the really pretty, attractive, and graceful features of the national costume will be kept. Let us hope also that the intellectual development of the Japanese will continue.

Life—Death.

FOR thousands of years the minds of men have puzzled over the problems of life and death.

Faith pictures a God all-powerful, loving and kind. Yet this God of human faith allows the cancer microbe to slowly eat into the vitals of the faithful; sees the innocent slowly starve to death, and does not raise a helping hand. This God that faith has created, sees children taught to lie, steal, drink and go the downward road to eternal (?) destruction, yet, in his great power, he could banish all evil—could make all perfect, and happy. He could do this or he is not all-powerful.

If he could do this by the power of his will, and does not do it, can he be loving and kind? Is it logical to say that God created us, and then blames us for our weaknesses, which are almost all entirely hereditary, or caused by environments? If God is the author of all things, how can there be anything wrong? Can a pure fountain produce an impure stream? Can a pure stream become anything but pure, without impurity somewhere? Is it harder for human life to exist without an intelligent creator than it is for the greater life and intelligence to exist with something back of it?

How easy it is to say: "God created all things." Do you believe that God rules? If he does, all things must be right, and all intelligence denies this—or God's rule is a partial failure. Did God create life? If he is life, or has life, he did not, as he did not create himself.

Let us be honest, and say we do not know what life is, we know not from whence it came, neither do we know the end.

Our faith in a book, causes us to believe in a God

of certain—rather uncertain—attributes. The Mohammedan faith in another book causes another people to believe in a God of different attributes. Can any one say, except through faith, that there is a God?

Whose faith is right?

We are not antagonistic to the good, the true and the beautiful. We long to follow where truth leads. Can a good, true, earnest, honest life be of so little worth, that faith will turn the scale and send the good man "howling hellward" because he cannot believe in the supernatural? Or, on the other hand, will faith in the miraculous, carry the man who has lived wickedly, straight to happiness, because he puts his sins on Christ, the innocent? Let us follow what we believe to be true, and risk being on the "safe side." If we do our best to live true, honest lives, and lose by it, who will be to blame? Let us walk in the beautiful sunlight of truth and love today; the "golden street" we may never see. Let us be happy and try to help others enjoy this life, and if there is a life beyond, of joy and peace, we will be ready, ah! glad, to partake of it, even to the uttermost. Let us believe that a good, true life is of more worth than everything else combined.

The idea of a big hell, and a little heaven, may be very comforting to some, yet I have seen old "soldiers of the cross" sorrowing for fear, that by some mistake they might miss the "crown." I have seen parents weeping for fear that their children might be eternally lost. Friends are distressed over the conditions of friends. Doubts and fears are all along the way, except, perhaps, in times of magnetic, hypnotic, revival faith.

Brothers of a thousand Christian faiths, how is it with you? Are you comforted—happy, to believe that a few souls are saved, and many lost? How selfish is the man who feasts rejoicing, while his neighbors are starving.

"God created evil," is that the best he could do? Christians tell us that we cannot reason along these lines, that faith is above reason. They say that I have reached my present lost condition by trying to reason things out. All absurd beliefs in the world were born of faith without reason. I believe that faith in immortality was born of faith alone. If you have a knowledge of immortality, my brother, you have the advantage of me. I wish that I had evidence of a happy future spirit-life for all, not myself alone, nor that I might be one of a few. "Few there be that walk therein."

There is not one in this big, round world, that I would not rejoice to shake hands with in a happier state of existence.

Some say that we are very egotistical, that we think we know more than God himself. Yet we claim that we don't know, and are trying to find substantial ground for a belief. Often the very same people will say that we put ourselves on a level with the brute creation. Wrong again, we believe that mankind is above any *known* thing, created, or uncreated (self-existent) in intelligence and many other qualities.

"What is death?" is a question yet unanswered, except by Spiritualists. They claim to have a personal knowledge. If we must not reason along these lines, why not accept their views by faith?

I have witnessed the death of as good, consistent Christians—I believe—as ever lived. I have heard them mourn for fear that they had committed some sin that they had forgotten, or that through some mistake, they might miss the life with the Savior they loved so well.

Let death be what it may, when I reach the end of life, when the ministers are using my death to scare others (not to live better than I have) but to accept their faith, and thereby enable them to gather in a few more "widow's mites," while you dress in rags, please hand them a few dollars to replace their fine silks and broadcloth.

When I come to die, please do not pray over me. While I have my reason, or what I believe to be reason, I hold prayer as a useless mockery.

If there is a God, and he will not do what is right without you pray and tell him what you want done, the case is surely bad, indeed. If any one cares to talk—or read something like this—over my body, let them tell what they know of my life. They cannot know my future lot. What good does it do to speculate, to guess?

Some say that at death they have known many to talk like they saw a glimpse of the glories of spirit life. Suppose there are many cases of this kind, what do they indicate?

Dr. H. J. Whittier, a firm believer in the Christian faith, says of death:—

“At the approach of death the energies of the brain seem to be lulled to sleep. Generally a tranquil sleep, filled with dreams, which impel the dying lips to murmur the names of friends, and the occupations and recollections of their past life. The herdsman faintly ejaculates something about ‘green fields,’ the gambler something about ‘tricks’ at the card table, the virtuous and the good often talk about and see (perhaps they do see with spiritual eyes) beautiful regions of immortality beyond death.”

He does not suggest that the gambler sees perhaps with spiritual eyes, the tricks of the card table.

If I should talk as I am going to sleep, that sleep that knows no waking, what will it prove? Do you prefer the babbling of a mind worn out by disease, to what I now may say?

What is there in it, except that as mind action fails, the things of childhood are remembered much better than things of yesterday.

This is very noticeable in nearly all old people. They can tell you all about things that happened in their childhood, but cannot call to mind the things of yesterday.

We cannot help the dead; let them rest. We can help the living by kind words of sympathy and praise. Don't wait until it is too late and then try to ease your conscience by tears and show, in costly funeral equipments. The Bible has at least one true saying, “Charity is the greatest gift of all.” Let us have charity (Love) for our fellow men now.

—Searchlight.

S. F. DAVIS.

A Secular Funeral

AT THE MANCHESTER CREMATORIUM.

MR. FOOTE travelled down to Manchester after seeing last week's *Freethinker* to press, in order to officiate on Wednesday morning at a Secular funeral at the Manchester Crematorium—a handsome building some four miles out from the city. The deceased lady was the wife of a Freethinker, who has been a generous friend to the Freethought movement, but has reasons for not desiring publicity on that account. The Crematorium chapel was well filled with mourners and sympathisers; a fact in itself remarkable, considering that there had been no sort of advertisement. Between musical selections rendered on the chapel organ Mr. Foote occupied the chapel pulpit and delivered a Secular address. The introduction, which was of a personal character, ran as follows:—

“We meet this morning to pay a tribute of respect to one who was an affectionate and faithful wife, and a loving and devoted mother; one who bore much suffering in a spirit of noble fortitude, without reaching out a hand for the treacherous anodynes of superstition, and met the last adventure of death without expectation or dread of a hereafter. Satisfied with having brightened, rather than darkened, the plot of existence on which she had moved, she faced the end with that serenity which falls, as the light of life fades, upon all honest and loyal souls.

“Those to whom she was bound by ties of love and domestic relation must feel the pang of bereavement. They know that death is natural, but, being human, they must feel their loss. Those now present who stand outside that privacy of affection, may nevertheless extend to them the most sincere sympathy. In such a place, and at such a moment, we share the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin; and the busiest brains pause to listen, as they might with advantage do more frequently, to the sweet and tender eloquence of the heart.”

This was followed by selections from a Secular Burial Service which Mr. Foote drew up nearly thirty years ago, but which, curiously enough, he had never used before.

A Freethinking Philanthropist.

MR. EDMOND DRESDEN, of 36 Curzon-street, Mayfair, died at Wiesbaden on December 17, leaving an estate of the value of £339,503 12s. 1d., of which £321,682 17s. 1d. is net personally. His will is dated May 10, 1900, and thereby he gave to the Children's Hospital, Great Ormonde-street, £25,000, for beds to be called the “Dresden Cots,” and if possible all to be in one ward, to be called the “Dresden Ward,” and no part of such sum is to be used on building, and he also gave to them his pictures and paintings to be hung on the walls; to the National Lifeboat Institution £5,000 and an additional £1,000 should his executors think fit for a lifeboat to be called the *Edmond Z. Dresden*, in memory of his father “to whom I am indebted for every happiness in life”; to the London Hospital, the Middlesex Hospital, and the Cancer Hospital his reversionary share in his sister's settlement; to the South Kensington Museum his collection of lace and carved ivory, and the cases containing antique silver ornaments; to the Brompton Consumption Hospital, Queen Charlotte Lying-in Hospital, the Middlesex Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn-road, £5,000 each; to his executors, Charles Lindo, of 30 Hyde Park-square, and Edward Godefroi, of 11 Cophall-court, £250 each and a work of art; to his cousins, Marie and Rose Josephine Godefroi, £2,000 each; to Mrs. Lottie Hunter, £1,000; to Mrs. Nellie Spencer Moore, £2,000; to his servant, Charles Butler, £2,000; to the Hunt Servants' Benefit Society, the proceeds of the sale of horses, carriages, and saddlery. The residue of his personal property he left among the Brompton Consumption Hospital, Queen Charlotte Lying-in Hospital, the Middlesex Hospital, the Royal Free Hospital, and St. Mary's Hospital, on the express condition that each share, together with the legacy of £5,000, is to be invested and the income used for the assistance of needy and deserving in-patients on taking their discharge, no patient to receive more than £10, and he wished that the managing body of such hospitals would put up notices in conspicuous places drawing attention to such fund. Should any one of such institutions refuse these terms, then the share of the hospital so refusing is to be divided among the others, and in the event of them all refusing then the whole of the residue is to go to the London Hospital and Cancer Hospital in equal shares. The testator directed that the following inscription is to be placed on his tombstone: “Here lie the remains of Edmond Dresden, who believed in no religion but that of being charitable to his fellow man and woman, both in word and deed.”

—*Jewish Chronicle*.

Judas Iscariot.

(A HYMN FOR JUNIOR SUNDAY SCHOLARS.)

Come let us praise the Lord above
And bless his goodness still;
God is to us a God of love,
And never works us ill.

For when we all were doomed to die
For crimes that we had done,
God sent us from his throne on high
His well-beloved son.

'Twas Judas led that son to death,
To death upon the tree;
And now as holy Scripture saith,
We all may saved be.

Had Jesus died of fever's heat,
Had small-pox laid him low,
Down to the hottest hell 'twere meet
That all mankind should go.

The name of Judas then we'll laud,
Who gave him to his foes;
And with a kiss (O blessed fraud!),
Relieved us from our woes.

Sweet Mary we will ever love
Who gave the Savior birth,
And her dear husband who was styled
His father on the earth.

But most we honor Judas' name,
Who brought salvation nigh;
Undying is his worthy fame,
Wide-spreading as the sky.

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.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, C. Cohen, "Outgrowing the Gods."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30. *Conversazione*, for Members and Friends.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brnuley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "Woman and the Ethical Movement."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Cobden."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. J. Oakesmith, "Reynard's Politics."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Haringgay): 7.15, J. H. Crump, "Socialism."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, Rev. E. Price, B.A., "The Word of God and the Bible"; 7, Councillor J. A. Fallows, M.A., "Thomas Paine."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): John Lloyd, 12 noon, "The Trial of Christianity"; 6.30, "The Collapse of the Bible."

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, George Weir, "Sermon on the Mount"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, George Weir, "Old Age Pensions"; Town Hall Square: 7, W. Woolham, "Bible Contradictions."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, W. C. Schweitzer, "Why I am a Freethinker"; 7, L. Bergman, B.Sc., "The Origin of Life." Monday, 8 p.m., W. Cain, "Dickens."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. L. Hare, "In Defence of Religion." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward, 3, "The Wonders of Radium"; 7, "Jesus Christ: God, Man, or Myth?" Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting: Final Arrangements for Mr. Lloyd's Lectures.

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