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Nothing useful can be poured into a vessel that is already full of what is useless. We must first empty out what is useless.—TOLSTOY.

The Future of the Bible.

MANY years ago—I hardly care to remember *how* many—a young clergyman offered some criticism after one of my Thursday evening lectures at the Hall of Science. Subsequently he answered my lecture in a special discourse, which was printed as one of the Oxford House pamphlets. He looked a gentleman, and spoke like one; and he confessed that he had been treated like one. He said that the way in which he had been received took away from controversy all its most unpleasant features.

That young clergyman was called Hensley Henson. He is now known as Canon Hensley Henson. It will thus be seen that he has made his mark in the Church of England; and, as far as I am concerned, I should not begrudge him the Archbishopric of Canterbury. Of course I wish that the State Church and all other Churches were as extinct as the mastodon; but, while they linger in the world, it is just as well to see the best positions in them filled by gentlemen rather than by human caricatures. And this may be said without losing sight of the *per contra* principle, which led Gibbon to observe that a philosophic eye the virtues of the clergy were more dangerous than their vices.

Canon Hensley Henson is the author of an article in the current number of the *Contemporary Review* on "The Future of the Bible," which has caused a considerable flutter in orthodox circles, and has been boomed in the *Daily Express*. A representative of that paper called at the office of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to ask what was thought there about Canon Henson's article, and received the bland reply: "We only circulate the Bible here; we do not explain it." One of the secretaries in charge, however, the Rev. J. H. Ritson, volunteered on his own account the information that the very things the critics wanted to sweep out of the Bible were the most useful in introducing it to the heathen. The story of the Flood caught on splendidly; and even the deadly-dull genealogies in Genesis and Matthew made a great impression on Chinese ancestor-worshippers.

Some of my readers will remember that I wrote an article on the Bible Society's centenary, in which I said that the Society was really circulating a lie, because it presented the Bible to the heathen as the Word of God in a sense that has died out of the minds of all decently educated Christians. Canon Henson cannot talk in such a fashion, for he is *inside* Christianity. Nevertheless he makes the Bible Society's centenary his own starting-point; and, after paying some perfunctory compliments, he soon comes to business. Now that the commemoration is over, he says, we should think of the "misgivings" which "will be stirred in many minds" and the "questions suggested." What will be the place of the Bible in the future? This question should be faced, for it is unquestionable that "many causes have conduced to work something like a revolution

in educated Christian thought with respect to the sacred writings of Christianity." It is no good trying to silence the dissatisfied with words like "inspiration." Not even that word can override "the objections which the Christian conscience takes against much that is recorded in the older Scriptures." Teachers of the young, even, are "continually clamoring for some escape from the difficulties in which they find themselves placed when they handle the Old Testament." Nor is that all. The Old Testament was naturally the first to be surrendered to the critics, but the turn of the New Testament is coming. There is less in it that is objectionable, but whatever in it offends reason or hurts conscience "will have to go the way of the Old Testament prodigies."

This is very plain speaking. It is also very clever. Canon Henson says nothing about the long attacks of "infidelity." He makes no reference to the bitter struggle it has had with Christianity. He does not allude to the Freethinkers who have been persecuted and imprisoned for saying no more, substantially, than he himself says now. He calmly attributes to the "Christian conscience" the "revolt" against the crudities and brutalities of the Bible; whereas every well-informed person knows that the inside revolt is only an echo of the outside revolt. For the Christian Church is no exception to the historic truth that Churches do not advance independently, but in consequence of external pressure. Which is simply a part of the wider truth that man has a hard task to civilise himself, and a still harder task to civilise his gods.

What is the Church going to do in the face of this "revolt?" Canon Henson declares that "the present indiscriminate reading of the Bible in public" is "an extremely perilous proceeding." He calls for a "drastic revision" of the Church lectionary. The old principal of selecting "lessons" no longer answers. Moreover, the selection ought not to be confined to the Bible. There is other "devotional and edifying" literature to be drawn from. And the change should be prompt, for the danger is imminent.

"Educated men have at their disposal means by which to escape from the perplexities stirred in their minds by the incredible, puerile, or demoralising narratives which the Old Testament contains. But these resources are not accessible, and will never be accessible, to the masses of the people. They have no other course open to them when the difficulty is brought home either by their own intelligence or by the action of others, than the violent and unhappy course of repudiating the Bible altogether. The transition is prompt and obvious in untutored minds from a sacred volume, too sacred for discussion, to a pack of lies, too gross for toleration.

"Incredible, puerile, or demoralising narratives"! This is strong language. It would be considered impolite or ill-conditioned in the *Freethinker*. Still, it is a fair and accurate description of too much of the contents of the Bible. One is therefore prompted to ask Canon Henson whether his proposals are sufficient. A more careful selection of passages might be made for reading in church. But how about the Bible itself? Is it to be purged or left as it is? And if you once meddle with it, where are you going to stop? Is there to be a specially cleansed edition of the Bible for children? Is a

freer edition to be published for adolescents? And is the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, to be offered to grown-up men and women?

It seems to me that Canon Henson is only putting the trouble a step further back. When all is said and done, according to his suggestions, the Bible remains as it is and what it is; and nothing can save it, in the long run, from being regarded as a human production. And whoever thinks it will retain a hundredth part of its present value and importance when it is no longer looked upon as divine, is simply an invincible optimist.

Canon Henson believes that the Bible will remain paramount in "the life of the Christian Society." This is very likely. But what does it mean? Merely this, that the Bible and Christianity stand or fall together.

Considering his profession, I am not surprised to hear Canon Henson declaring that "the Bible remains, after all the educational discussions of our times, the best manual of fundamental morality of which experience has knowledge." But why, in the name of common sense, should he call upon those who do not regard it in this light to "name some substitute which could take the place of the Bible as a manual of elementary and fundamental morals"? Freethinkers do not look upon any book of religion as eligible for such a purpose. Nor is it likely that a manual of elementary morality, of a purely secular character, will be written until there is a demand for it. Whenever the nation, or a considerable section of it, is prepared to use such a manual, say in the public schools, it will be easy enough to find a competent volunteer committee to undertake its production. Canon Henson need not trouble himself about that.

The really important thing in Canon Henson's article is not what he has to say about the future, which is a matter of prophesy, but what he has to say about the present, which is a matter of information. When he states that "the credit of the Scriptures is seriously shaken in the public mind," and that "the tendencies in popular life at present prevailing are, in the main, hostile to the Christian tradition," he is quite safe from controversy. No candid observer will think of disputing his assertion. Protestantism made its great appeal against Catholicism, and set up an infallible Book against an infallible Church. It invited private judgment, and the result is the destruction of the infallible Book. Nothing can save it now. Its fate is sealed.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Scientist at Sea.

To the present writer it was always a matter of some little astonishment that a man like the late Professor Huxley could discuss with gravity such questions as the Biblical miracles. Presumably it is a matter of temperament, and the difficulty is always that of putting oneself in the other man's place. In the case of Professor Huxley there was, however, the saving fact that he did not believe in the Christian mythology, and the solemn manner in which he discussed many intrinsically ridiculous beliefs may have been a concession to social prejudice, or an exhibition of supreme control over his sense of humor. In the case of another man of science, Sir Oliver Lodge, the conditions are different. He not only propounds ridiculous theorems in defence of religion, but apparently believes them. Sir Isaac Newton was a great physicist—and wrote on religion; but he lived over two centuries ago, and some little excuse is to be found in his environment. Sir Oliver Lodge lives in the twentieth century, in the days of advanced science, of comparative mythology; and writes as though the only fault to be found with religion is the way in which it is expressed. One feels that it would be pleasant to be alive a couple of centuries hence, if only to see how the men of

the twenty-second century will regard these curious mental aberrations of a prominent scientist.

Sir Oliver Lodge seems to have set himself the task of reconciling religion and science—a work that is always going on and never accomplished; but a work in which there is, as time passes, an increasing quantity of science and a decreasing quantity of religion to bring into harmony. His latest effort takes the form of certain "Suggestions Towards the Re-Interpretation of Christian Doctrines." And this also is a process continually operating. For the whole history of Christianity is that of a series of modifications and concessions and withdrawals, in the face of pressure from developing culture. "Re-Interpretations" doubtless *sounds* better than defeat, but it means that all the same. It is much the same as when a burglar, hearing a policeman's footstep, re-interprets his desire to break into a house as a craving for a smart walk out of that vicinity.

It is symptomatic of English thought that a leading scientific man should offer a "suggestion" that the doctrines of the fall of man, of vicarious atonement, original sin, and the belief in a God who is angry with man for his not being better than he made him, are not *quite* agreeable to the average educated human being. Freethinkers have been saying as much for generations, and it is perhaps a little gratifying that Sir Oliver Lodge is just discovering the truth of statements that others are almost tired of repeating. And one feels also that it would not be quite out of place if some of these *daring* thinkers, who are so pleased with the more civilised notions now held, were to drop just a word of acknowledgment of the services of those who for more than a century past have been trying to bring home to the general mind the inadequacy of orthodox Christianity. Sir Oliver Lodge might, perhaps, be surprised to learn that, so far as his criticisms on orthodoxy are concerned, these can all be found in old files of Freethought papers, and one can say safely that they are supported by a much wider knowledge of the subject than Sir Oliver himself possesses.

But it is not with Sir Oliver's attacks on Christianity that I am now concerned, but with his attempted re-interpretation. This takes the form of the suggestion that there are certain "Truths underlying the great mysteries connected with the appearance and work of Christ"—which is not by any means a *new* idea, and that a re-interpretation would bring these truths into harmony with modern thought. When a man once gets on to this line he is capable of almost any folly, and one feels that it is only Sir Oliver's scientific training that prevents him blossoming out as a second Dr. Cumming.

For instance, Sir Oliver Lodge objects to the theory of eternal damnation on the grounds that we did not make the world, we and it are what we are independent of our choice or action, and it would be stupid of a God to saddle us with a load of original sin to commence with, or damn us at the end because we had not been able to get rid of our heritage. Still there is a great "Truth" in the Athanasian doctrine of damnation. And this is that unless a man understands the cosmic scheme and gets into harmony with truth and reality he cannot be perfect or "saved." So that what Athanasius was really preaching was the Spencerian doctrine that perfect living is perfect harmony with one's environment, and if we interpret the doctrine of damnation in that sense Christianity is in complete harmony with modern thought.

If! And if we deal with Old Mother Hubbard, or Jack the Giant Killer in the same way, we can find in them also the same profound lesson. Only one would like to know if anyone seriously believes that this religious doctrine of no salvation outside a specific belief in Christian doctrines really embodies the statement that there is no salvation for man apart from a knowledge of the true relation between man and nature? With a man who can solemnly argue in this fashion reasoning is almost useless. If the sight of such an argument in cold type

cannot convince him of its absurdity, then the case is almost hopeless.

In the same way "The worship of Jehovah was based on a recognition of the majesty and sacredness of Law," as though primitive peoples began to worship their gods from any such abstruse reason. A very little study of the origins of religion would have shown Sir Oliver that people begin to worship gods because they fear them; and a little reflection would also have shown the recognition of cosmic law is a very late development in the history of man. Further on we are assured that the "persistent element" in the idea of "sacrificial suffering" is that the evolution from animal to higher man could not be carried through without suffering. It was the perception that development involves suffering that caused Christianity and other religions to promulgate the teaching of sacrifice. And we presume it was the perception of the same truth that led the Christian Churches to so liberally torture all those who disagreed with them. One instance is quite as good as the other; and if one is put to it pretty much the same kind of excuse may be found for every superstition and folly that has ever existed.

The truth is that Sir Oliver Lodge seems quite wanting in the necessary equipment for a helpful study of religion, and is, therefore, a sad and striking example of a man great in one department becoming ridiculous in another. The desire to find such conceptions as those of universal law animating primitive religious beliefs is alone enough to render worthless what he has to say. But a still more serious flaw is his obvious want of acquaintance with the conditions of the origin and development of religious beliefs. One or two instances will be enough to show this clearly.

Commenting on the identity of some of the rites connected with the worship of Dionysus and those of the worship of Christ, he says: "It is clarifying to realise how these strange doctrines (*i.e.*, vicarious sacrifice, etc.).....represent a survival of religious beliefs held *five or six centuries* before the Christian era." The italics are mine, but the "five or six centuries" is suggestive; the truth being that such doctrines are a survival of a very much earlier period than 600 B.C. If Professor Lodge wishes to find the origin of such beliefs, he will have to search much deeper than the period of Greek civilisation when such stories were already more or less survivals, and were receiving at the hands of Greek writers the same "re-interpretation" that he is now applying to Christianity. If Sir Oliver Lodge will set himself to study such works as Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, or Frazer's *Golden Bough*, in the same spirit that he pursues his scientific studies, he will realise that Christian ceremonies have their roots in customs and beliefs that grew up amid savages, and that these were the natural outcome of ignorance grappling with a universe in which almost everything was unknown. And having realised this, he will also realise the absurdity of taking religious doctrines as enshrining deep moral or physical truths.

Again, dealing with the argument of universality, he says: "In certain beliefs, such as that of immortality, I should myself allow the argument to have weight, and should not be unwilling to appeal to the antiquity of human tradition as tending in favour of some sort of truth underlying this perennial and protean faith." Again we have a striking obliviousness to anything approaching a scientific method of inquiry. No one disputes nowadays that certain religious beliefs are universal, and of these the belief in a life beyond the grave is one. But its universality is absolutely worthless as evidence for its truth. It quite harmonises with the Atheistic explanation of its origin, although Sir Oliver appears unaware of this fact. For if the belief in a future life arose in the manner described by such writers as Tylor and Spencer, then as human nature is everywhere fundamentally identical, and the conditions of existence fundamentally the same, universality of belief means only that under identical conditions the human mind has everywhere formed the same conclusions. As a

matter of fact the antiquity of such a belief as that of a future life, or of the existence of God, is an argument against rather than for its truth. Theologians are fond of reminding us of the abstruse nature of these beliefs; and yet we are asked to believe that savages, who were admittedly wrong on so much where they *might* have been right, were right on just those subjects where no evidence existed, and where the united wisdom of the ages has failed to produce a single fact in their support.

How far Sir Oliver Lodge forgets his scientific method is seen in the curious expression that while science has nothing to say of a positive nature in favour of a future life, "I claim that at least it is not negative. No science asserts that our personality will cease a quarter of a century hence, nor does any science assert that it began half a century ago." To which one need only reply that science does declare its absolute ignorance of any individual existence preceding birth or following death, and that it is mere idle talk to say that science, therefore, "is not negative," as though it held an affirmative in solution. Every *fact* in science does negative the persistence of personal consciousness after death, and while it is logically impossible to prove that there is not a future life, the absence of all evidence establishes a strong presumption in this direction.

Finally, Sir Oliver Lodge is quite wide of the mark in thinking that what people want is a reinterpretation of Christian doctrines. They want nothing of the kind. It is not the *form* in which religious ideas are expressed that constitutes the great difficulty, but the ideas themselves. It is useless changing the form of the God idea for people who are outgrowing the belief in deity; and it is equally useless to change the form of Christian doctrines when a growing proportion of the people are realising that the beliefs they enshrine were born in ignorance and shapen by fear. It is almost distressing to find so able a scientific worker as Sir Oliver Lodge so blind to the real nature of what is going on around him, and rushing forth to join in discussions for which he is so poorly equipped. To the religious world his name as that of a leading scientist is a valuable asset, and one may be sure he will be widely quoted as "evidence" for Christianity. It is for this reason that what he does say ought not to be allowed to pass without some warning or criticism.

C. COHEN.

Can the Gospel History be Trusted?

EVERYBODY recognises the vital importance of the above question. If the Gospels are historically trustworthy, then Christianity, with all its supernatural equipments, must be accepted as the only true religion, and all controversy is at an end. The Rev. Dr. Adeney, Principal of Lancashire College, discusses this subject, in one of the Manchester Mission Lectures, in a most ingenious and plausible manner, and comes to the happy conclusion that the trustworthiness of the Gospels is capable of being fully verified. But the question is by no means so simple and easy of settlement as he seems to imagine. There are numerous obstacles in the way which he conveniently ignores. Nor is he quite disingenuous in his treatment of debatable points. He presents the whole matter as if it were entirely free from doubt and difficulty.

He begins by stating that Christianity is "a religion which springs from history, which is rooted in events, which is based on facts, so that if the history were myth, and what we take to be facts were dreams, then the religion would only be a house without foundation, a castle in the air." That statement makes the issue perfectly clear and simple. The Venerable Archdeacon Wilson and the Rev. R. J. Campbell complicate and mystify the issue by the assertion that Christianity does not stand or fall with the historical and scientific truth of the Bible, which is utterly absurd. Dr. Adeney's contention is

in the highest degree reasonable. But how does he proceed to establish the historicity of the Four Gospels? By endeavoring to prove that the writers were well-informed and honest. He says: "If they were not well-informed, their honesty goes for nothing, because they may have been themselves deluded. If they were well-informed, but not honest, their information only makes their falsehood the more guilty; it is no help to us."

Treating of the information possessed by the Evangelists, Dr. Adeney refers to several MSS. of the Scriptures to be found at the British Museum and at Rome and St. Petersburg, which belong, as Paleography assures us, to the fifth and the fourth centuries, and he claims that thus "at one stride we have crossed fifteen hundred years, and are back in the reign of Constantine the Great," and that now "we have simply to know how the Gospel story came down to that period." Pursuing the same delightfully pleasant path, the Principal finds himself in the third century, and at Alexandria in Egypt, where he discovers "a brilliant, scholarly thinker and author among the early Christians whose name is Origen, and who wrote commentaries on our Gospels." Then "a little earlier, quite early indeed in the third century, farther west on the shore of the Mediterranean, at Carthage," our lecturer meets Tertullian, who writes in Latin, and uses a Latin version of the Gospels, which he tests by the Greek. Continuing his excursion backward, the learned Principal meets Irenæus in the city of Lyons, who conducts him to Smyrna, in Asia Minor, and introduces him to a very old bishop whose name is Polycarp, and Polycarp introduces him to the apostle John, who, of course, knows all the facts about Jesus. The problem is now finally solved: "Irenæus Polycarp, John! Here is a close linking of personal connection. Irenæus ought to know, therefore, what he is talking about, if he has anything to say concerning the Gospels." But, as a matter of fact, Irenæus has very little to say concerning the Gospels, and what he does say is tinged with inaccuracies. Dr. Adeney says that "he frequently quotes from our Four Gospels"; but then Irenæus wrote at the very close of the second century when the Gospels, almost in their present form, may have been in existence. Irenæus, although he knew Polycarp, who used to converse with John, gives us nothing but a few quotations from, and one or two opinions as to the composition of, the Gospels.

At this point Principal Adeney's argument becomes exceptionally weak and inconclusive.

"We will now go back twenty years earlier," he says, "and travel as far as the Euphrates. There we meet an Assyrian, whose name is Tatian. This man takes the Four Gospels, and combines them into a Harmony for the use of the Church at Edessa. So indeed several ancient writers tell us."

This passage, which Dr. Adeney intends to be, in conjunction with what immediately follows, the most important in the whole lecture, is wholly misleading. Tatian is alleged to have written his *Diatessaron* about the year 170, or ten years earlier according to the lecturer. But is it not strange that for a hundred and fifty years after the supposed composition of the work there is not a single trace of its existence? Neither Tertullian nor Origen mentions it, although they both condemn Tatian's heretical tenets. The first reference to it is made by Eusebius, who describes it in such vague terms as would lead us to the conclusion that he had never read it. The second writer who refers to it is Epiphanius, who informs us that some called it the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Half a century later still, Theodoret mentions it, describing it as "the Gospel which is called *Diatessaron*, composed by Tatian, which cuts off the genealogies and such other passages as show the Lord to have been born of the seed of David." In the middle of the sixth century Victor of Capua fell upon an anonymous work entitled *Diatessaron*. Having read it, Victor was anxious to ascertain who its author was, and in his search he consulted Eusebius, who spoke of a similar work and ascribed it to Tatian. So Victor took it for granted that this

was Tatian's book. We learn nothing more of the work till the ninth century, when Barali, who evidently derives his information from Theodoret, refers to "the *Diatessaron* made by Tatian," and informs us, as Theodoret does, that it contained "neither the natural nor the traditional genealogy of our Lord Christ," and that for this omission Tatian had been anathematized. Now, is it not evident, from the infrequency of reference to this work, that no definite information concerning it is obtainable? It is only a conjecture that the book found by Victor of Capua was identical with the one so vaguely described by Eusebius. But Dr. Adeney coolly ignores all uncertainties, difficulties, and unexplained gaps, and speaks of guesses, and conjectures, and inferences as if they were veritable facts. Having made a passing reference to the controversy between the late Bishop Lightfoot and the author of *Supernatural Religion*, he says:—

"But the misfortune was that Tatian's Harmony was lost, and therefore the question was left open to speculation. Since then, unfortunately for the author of *Supernatural Religion*, Tatian's Harmony has been recovered. It has been found in an Armenian text, and also in an Arabic text; it has been translated into English, and I have the book here. If I had time I could read it to you, and show you how it begins with the first words of St. John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word,' and goes on weaving in bits of narrative from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, combining them together as those old church writers had said, proving to us that Tatian did use our Four Gospels away there by the Euphrates about the year 160."

That paragraph is a tissue of misrepresentations. Those who do not know the facts would naturally infer from it that the much-discussed *Diatessaron* had just been recovered in Tatian's very handwriting, and so that it has been proved beyond dispute that the Four Gospels, in their present form, were in use about the year 160. But no inference could be farther from the truth. Dr. Adeney did not tell his audience that neither of the two texts just recovered takes us further back than the tenth century, and that the *Diatessaron* itself in both is anonymous: it is only in notes at the beginning and at the end that the work is said to be Tatian's. Dr. Adeney is silent on all points of difficulty. Even granting that Mar Ephrem, in the fourth century, wrote a commentary on a Harmony somewhat similar to the one ascribed to Tatian, it must be borne in mind that he neither calls the work a *Diatessaron* nor attributes it to Tatian. And yet, in spite of all this, Dr. Adeney asserts, in the most positive terms, that the *Diatessaron* of Tatian is now in our possession, which proves "to us that Tatian did use our Four Gospels away there by the Euphrates about the year 160." Those who know the facts are aware that the assertion is totally groundless.

Now, Dr. Adeney's object in his unhappy allusion to Tatian and his traditional *Diatessaron*, was to prove that the Four Gospels were in use at an earlier period still, say in the years 130-147, although to Justin Martyr, Tatian's master, they were known as *Memoirs of the Apostles*. "Is it likely," he asks, "that Justin Martyr the master used some other gospels, though we know Tatian his disciple used these four?" As it happens, we do not know that Tatian used the Four Gospels, and it is a fact that Justin Martyr never mentions them, though he is constantly quoting from *Memoirs of the Apostles*.

Thus the attempt to prove that the writers of the Gospels were well informed has turned out a complete failure. The unbroken chain composed of these strong links, Irenæus, Polycarp, John, is, after all, utterly valueless. We cannot slide down it and find ourselves face-to-face with the Jesus of the Gospels. We are enveloped in a deep, impenetrable mist, and we cannot find our way about. Of the existence of the Four Gospels at the close of the first century, or during the first half of the second, there is absolutely no proof. Gospels may have been written by the time of Papias of Hierapolis, but there is nothing to show that they were identical with the present four. Irenæus calls Papias "an

ancient man," "the hearer of John and the companion of Polycarp"; but Eusebius tells us that Papias made no such claim for himself. Justin Martyr quotes only from *Memoirs of the Apostles*, and never even names the Evangelists. Even if Tatian composed a Harmony of the Gospels, the probability is that it was irretrievably lost at an early age, and that the *Diatessaron* recently recovered in two texts should be assigned to a period much later than Tatian's day. There is, therefore, not a scrap of proof that our Gospels were in existence at the close of the first century, nor even at the end of the first half of the second.

The only legitimate inference from the facts known to us is that the Evangelists were not Apostles, not even hearers and companions of Apostles, and that, consequently, they were not "well informed." What they give us is not trustworthy history, but traditions, fables, myths.

Now, Dr. Adeney himself admits that if the Evangelists were not "well informed," their honesty cannot be discussed. Assuming that he has proved that they were "men in touch with the events," he says:—

"Now, we have the picture of Jesus in these Gospels. If no such person as Jesus ever lived, how was that picture painted? If the model was not before the artists, how did the artists conceive the picture? They must have invented it; but they would not have wilfully invented it. The days of the old crude criticism that said the Gospels were forged by priests are gone. I do not think many sensible people say that now. Really it is impossible that the Gospels could have been created by priests."

How exactly the Gospels were composed will possibly never be fully known; but it is incontrovertible that the character of the compositions indicate clearly that they were the work of time, and of several different hands. If they were forged, the work was probably done in essentially the same way as in the case of the Five Books of Moses, which, according to the Higher Critics, and even according to the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. viii., 8) were forged by the priests during the latter portion of the Prophetic Age. I do not like the term *forgery*; but it is undeniable that the Gospel story was subjected to numerous modifications before it assumed its present form, of which modifications there are many indications in its very structure. The day of this criticism is not gone, but is only in its dawn. All the ripest scholarship is strongly set in this direction. There are Christian scholars not a few who are obliged to admit that there is much in the Four Gospels which is not strictly historical; and although Principal Adeney may call them "eccentric," the day of their triumph is already begun, and in the consciousness of this some far-seeing theologians take refuge behind the false phrase, "The Christian Religion does not stand or fall with the Bible."

JOHN T. LLOYD.

THE OUTRAGEOUS CREED.

Is it not the worst of sacrilege, a foul profanation of our human nature, which for us, at least, should be holy and awful, when the heroic and saintly martyrdom of a true Man is thus falsified into the self-schemed sham sacrifice, ineffectual, of a God? The people who profess belief in this are shocked at the outrage offered to our humanity by the Development Theory, while they themselves commit this outrage more flagitiously. Little matters whence we sprang; we are what we are. But much matters to what we may attain. If the Development Theory plants our feet in the slime, the Christian Theory bows our head to the dust. It asserts that human nature could not possibly be so good as Jesus, that human genius could not possibly write the books which tell of him; it denies us our noblest prerogatives, and declares us bastards when we claim a crown. It climbs to God by trampling on Man, it builds Heaven in contempt of Earth, its soul is a phosphorescence from the slain and rotting Body; its fervent faith vilifies us worse than the coldest sneer of Mephistopheles. Yet the orthodox shudder and moan, outraged in their pious susceptibilities, when one dares to speak with manly plainness of their doctrines, which commence by polluting our common nature, continue by insulting our reason, and conclude by damning the large majority of us.—James Thomson ("B.V.").

Acid Drops.

God wills it! God's plans are inscrutable. "His will be done!" So said the Czar when he had done crying over the awful news from Port Arthur. But this is the language of weakness. It is the miserable and helpless who seek such consolation. If the Czar were a thinker he would see that if God regulates this affair it is folly to go on fighting. What will be, will be, when Omnipotence is running the job. The help or hindrance of pigmy men counts as nothing.

You don't hear the Japs talk about the will of God. They are heathen. They look after themselves, and do their own business. And they blow the ships of God's worshippers out of the water.

He who trusts in God is saved. That is religion. He who trusts in God is damned. That is common sense.

There is some truth in the Genesiac story of Creation when regarded as mythology. The worst part of the curse after the Fall is laid upon the woman. Yes, as the proverb has it, the woman pays. This is true in wars, for instance, though it is so generally overlooked. Admiral Makaroff's daughter lost both her father and her intended husband in the naval tragedy at Port Arthur. Poor young lady! The blow that kills men lacerates women's hearts and leaves them bleeding.

The blowing up of the *Petropavlovsk*, with Admiral Makaroff on board and nearly a thousand men, was a very dramatic disaster, and it seems to have produced the staggers at the *Daily News* office. The organ of the Nonconformist Conscience forgot its gibes at Russia, and suddenly remembered that, after all, it was a Christian country. "The Japanese," it said, "are intelligent and progressive, but they are not Christian either in religion or morals." Which, of course, is perfectly true. The Japanese are not Christian, and not likely to be. They do not hate people who think differently from themselves, they are polite, they are sober, they revere and cherish their parents, they are good and kind to their children, and they don't go all over the world lying, thieving, and murdering. Yes, it is evident, as the *Daily News* says, that the Japanese are *not* Christians, either in religion or morals.

The organ of the Nonconformist Conscience wound up by asking whether England was "wise in siding entirely with Japan." Was there not something behind the war between Russia and Japan? Was it not the beginning of "a great combat between the white and yellow races for the civilising influence over Southern Asia"? Shade of the immortal Pecksniff! hear this friend of Christianity and admire your pupil! Surely "civilising influence" is a most admirable phrase from the Pecksniffian repertory. Russia exercised this "civilising influence" some time ago on the Chinese bank of the Amur, spitting babies on bayonets, and choking the river with corpses; and England has just been exercising it in Tibet, at the expense of five hundred silly natives who would get in the way of English guns. Russia and England, as the pious *Daily News* points out, are the two "great European conquerors of Asia," and there ought to be a fellow-feeling between butchers when the sheep are turbulent.

There was a nice sample of Christian "morals," by the way, in that very same number of the *Daily News*. It occurred in the report of a criminal case at the Clerkenwell Sessions, in which a receiver of stolen goods was concerned. "I know," counsel said, "that a good deal of stolen property goes abroad. English receivers don't pay enough nowadays. It is very hard on English receivers, this foreign competition." Splendid! Comment would only spoil it.

Here is another nice sample of Christian "morals" from the same columns—same day. It appears that General Mistcheuko, commanding the Cossacks on the Korean frontier, was asked why nothing was ever heard of Japanese prisoners being made there, and his grim reply was, "We have arms, not ropes," so that there "seems to be no doubt that no prisoners' will be the order of the day as far as the Cossacks are concerned." Well, one is glad to know that the Japs are not in love with Christian "morals" any more than they are with Christian "religion."

Lord Cromer's population figures for the Soudan are astonishing. He states that the approximate population prior to Dervish rule was 8,525,000. The approximate loss during Dervish rule by disease was 3,451,000, and the

number killed in external or internal war 3,203,500. The present population is 1,870,500. What a powerful illustration of the truth that war and religious fanaticism have been the world's greatest desolators!

Rev. A. N. Cooper, vicar of Filey, near Scarborough, is a great man at last. He has not preached himself into fame, but walked himself into it. By his feats of pedestrianism he has earned the title of "The Walking Parson." He can do his thirty miles a day, and keep it up for weeks, and his feet are acquainted with various parts of the world's surface. When at last he walks into heaven St. Peter will probably take him straight off to J. C. to have his pedal extremities washed. Should he walk into the other place he will probably be welcomed by the Boss as a brother tramper, used to going "to and fro in the world and up and down it."

Mr. Balfour is a shocking man. He plays golf on Sunday. No wonder he is the pet aversion of the Evangelicals. One of them has written to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject. But his Grace recognises that it is no part of his duty to reprehend high-class Sabbath-breakers. So he shirks the problem by saying that every man must regard the matter as one "for his own conscience," and that each is "responsible to God for so using the Lord's Day as to fit him best for the working days that follow." It is a pawky answer. We believe Dr. Davidson is Scotch.

Naturally the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience went interviewing some Dissenting heroes on this topic. The Rev. F. B. Meyer was one of them. He agreed with the Archbishop that "a man must be left to his own convictions as to the way in which he observes the rest day." At the same time, he said, probably with a severe look and a grave shake of the head, that those "who hold pre-eminent and responsible positions should be very careful on which side they throw the weight of their example." There you are, Mr. Balfour; that hits you in the midriff, doesn't it? We guess you'll have little power left in your arm the next time you strike a ball on the blessed Sabbath.

Mr. Meyer whined professionally over the growing desecration of the Lord's Day—which, of course, means the Preacher's Day. "There can be no doubt," he said, "that there is a strong tendency to relax the observance of Sunday in the direction of bicycling, golf, lawn tennis, and pleasure-taking generally." He had some experience of what this sort of thing led to in Germany, where it was "lamentable to see the excesses to which the majority of the people go in pursuit of pleasure on Sundays," even the theatres being "open and crowded." No doubt the reverend gentleman hopes the Lord will save his ministers from that. For it is quite certain that the more places of recreation are open on Sunday the less chance there is of doing good business in the gospel-shops.

"We do not open the theatres yet," Mr. Meyer said, with great relief; but he saw "some danger in the sort of entertainments given at Queen's Hall and in the operations of the Sunday League." That is to say, in Sunday concerts and Sunday excursions. But are not the Churches themselves going in more and more for Sunday concerts? Do not some of them boldly announce short sermons, longer services, and good music? Has not even the Rev. R. J. Campbell put his choir into uniform? And as for Sunday excursions, was it not the Rev. F. B. Meyer who lately advised his brother preachers to go right away from home one day in every week, seeking wholesome change and recruiting their physical health? Well, if it was Mr. Meyer, as we feel pretty sure it was, we wish to ask him why one day of that sort in every week is not also a good thing for laymen, and what other day than Sunday is available to the great majority of them? We should like to hear the reverend gentleman's reply.

Algernon Denham, perhaps a man of God, dating from Zion House, South Ockendon, Romford, suggests "the desirability of Christians uniting on the first of May in prayer to God that the obnoxious and unjust Education Act may be repealed." Not a bad idea, perhaps; but is it not a month too late? If the suggestion had been made in time, the national prayer-meeting might have taken place on the first of April. Mr. Denham should keep his proposal till next year, and come out with it in time to secure the best date in the calendar.

We gather from Mr. Denham's letter to the *Daily News* that the only Christians in this country are the Nonconformists—since his proposal could hardly include Catholics

and Churchmen. We have often wondered who are the true Christians. We know now.

How the Passive Resisters give themselves away when they open their mouths! Several of them at Bournemouth, described as "Nonconformists to the backbone" by the *Daily News*, publicly "declared that they would never pay until there was a national system of education with Churchmen and Nonconformists on the same footing." This is letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. And it proves that we have been right all the time in saying that Nonconformists were not fighting for general freedom but for placing themselves on an equality with Churchmen. They want to see the opportunity of dosing the nation's children with religion fairly divided between the Anglican and the Free Churches. All other bodies, including Catholics, may go to the Devil.

Mr. William Wardle, secretary of the Manchester Teachers' Association, points out through the *Guardian* that in the municipal schools of that city 70 minutes per day are given to religious exercises and the teaching of Scripture. This 70 minutes out of a school day of 330 minutes represents over one day out of the five school days in the week. Mr. Wardle asks, rather satirically we fancy, how much time is given to these subjects in the Manchester Grammar School, the Hulme Grammar School, or the Girls' High School. Really it would be interesting to know.

Dr. Clifford is rather a heavy joker. Writing to the Passive Resisters at Retford, he dragged in the Bishops as usual, and said: "They and the Romanists have triumphed over the citizens of England." On the face of it, this means that the citizens of England are the Nonconformists—Churchmen and Catholics, apparently, being foreigners. But this is not what Dr. Clifford really means. He is in a comic mood now and then, though, like the Scotchman, he "jokes with difficulty."

"God will go with us," General Booth says to his "Army" on his seventy-fifth birthday. Will he? We wonder. What does God say? One thing is quite certain. William Booth will be at the top of that "Army," and near the cash-box—wherever God is.

Mr. Jamieson, head of the "Protestant Union" at Glasgow, has been warming up his Catholic fellow-Christians at Edinburgh by telling them what the newspapers cannot print about the "relations between priests and nuns," also that Mariolatry is as "false as hell," and that their faith is not Christianity at all, but "represents the fiends in the lower regions." "Hear them howling," he exclaimed in conclusion. Yes, they love one another, these Christians, just the same as ever.

The youth named Moore, or Stephens, the hero of that £10,000 a-year fortune story, who at length invited the attention of the police, seems to have done a little of his peculiar business at Bristol; and while he was staying there "he was regular in his attendance at church, and as recently as Sunday week he partook of Holy Communion."

According to a correspondent of the *Catholic Times* Germans have carried the Higher Criticism in another direction. It appears they have long since known and made public the facts that the celebrated "Twelfth" Mass was not composed by Mozart, that it did not appear until long after his death, and that it should be assigned to an obscure composer named Muller; yet the whole world knows how Mozart's great reputation has been exploited by the Roman Church to advertise it as an attraction to her services.

Romanism really revels in frauds. Sham relics and miracles are taken by the world as a matter of course, but it has no idea of the extent to which it is imposed on. Now it is a forged name to a musical masterpiece. Not long since we were told that the magnificent jewels which were constantly being presented to the late Pope, were so many of them false that he put aside a special room for them. What will the public learn next?

Several popular statues of saints were formerly Pagan gods, many of the most celebrated miraculous "Virgins" of Spain are simply wicker-work dress stands with wax heads similar to those used in drapers' shops. The thick, heavy-looking embroideries of Italian vestments which appear to be stiff with bullion, are merely worked with gilt paper on parchment twisted around threads which are sewn over pasteboard cut to the design. In Germany the close gold work of Gothic

vestments is merely thin brass stamped to represent fine stitches around jewels which are merely the poorest glass, inferior to the rubbish used here for sixpenny jewellery. In France, not many years ago, it was discovered that thousands of masses were paid for which had been celebrated with "wine" which did not contain an atom of the juice of the grape—a concoction made and sold expressly as an "altar-wine." Many priests in England, according to a Randsomer park lecturer, are married; and, in fact, the swindlers are carried so far that the fire which is supposed to be struck from a flint on Holy Thursday, is sham, and is really produced by an ordinary lucifer match. Even the Host at times is not eatable, but allowed to remain unchanged in the monstrances until it is green with mildew!

Mr. Lloyd George, the Nonconformist champion in Parliament, recently was introduced to the King. Now he is in consultation with the Roman Catholic Archbishop on the amendment of the Education Bill. Mr. Campbell, of the City Temple, also has met the King by special invitation of the Bishop of London. Not long since it was the Jesuit Fr. Bernard Vaughan who had an audience of the King. Some thirty years ago there was a Republican mayor of Birmingham whose existence as mayor was regarded on the Continent as an indication that the English monarchy was doomed. The present Queen went down, and that mayor had to entertain her; and now that former Republican is—what we see.

Mr. George is a youngish man, Archbishop Bourne is older, and the King is older still. Mr. Campbell is also a youngish man, and the Bishop of London is older, and again the King is older also. The path Mr. George will wend will most probably be the same trodden by former oratorical wits who are politicians; and seeing that Mr. Campbell has become convinced of the unseemliness of lay attire, and has got himself up in a cassock and put his choir in surplices, he will not improbably continue to progress along his path and discover that he will not hear *the Church* is no better than a heathen. One thing is certain: the Archbishop of Canterbury is a peer, and in our constitution is the second great officer of the realm. But however great Mr. Campbell may be, his sermons at the City Temple will never give him a seat in the House of Lords, nor make him a great dignitary of the State either.

The Liverpool police have been trying to stop a pious Good Friday game. For some years past a section of the residents in the south side of the city have rigged up effigies of Judas, and perambulated the streets with them, shouting "Remember Judas." Finally they collected all the effigies together and made a bonfire of them in the street, dancing round the blaze like Red Indians before going on the war path. This year the police took the names of thirty-two offenders, some of whom have been prosecuted and fined. They also collected 152 effigies, with paraphernalia, enough to fill three Corporation carts. But the principal feature of this Good Friday celebration related to the Jews. As the effigies of Judas were carried about they were thrust into the windows of houses tenanted by Hebrew families. This was to remind them, we suppose, that Judas was a Jew. Yes, but the Hebrews might have reminded the Liverpool Christians that Jesus Christ was also a Jew. So *that's* all right.

Doing something for the "fallen," morally or socially, is the great object of that much-belauded thing called Christian charity. All the Churches are at it, more or less; and General Booth is at it altogether. This pottering with the effects of evil they call "salvation." But a thing or a person must be lost or perishing before it can be saved; so that Christianity is a religion for the world's failures, and only for others as far as they are failures. Its business is seeking the lost sheep. The other ninety-nine don't matter—until they get lost too. Thus we have hundreds of societies, spending millions of money, and working away on the most rotten material. That they can do any real good every sane man knows to be an utter impossibility. Doctors may take the chronic sick in hand, and may give them palliatives, but can seldom if ever cure them. The only true method is *prevention*, which is not only *better* than cure, but is an immeasurable distance ahead of it; for, to begin with, prevention is *possible*, while, practically, cure is *not*.

Such is the teaching of science, history, and common sense. Yet if you go to a Christian "mission," which is the supreme Christian effort in these days, you will find two, three, or even eight thousand people listening with their eyes and mouths wide open while a spiritual charlatan on the platform tells them that a man who has been twenty years at the game has just left off beating his wife for a

bit, that a well-known drunkard has taken for a while to ginger-beer, or that a frequently convicted thief has decided to try whether honest labor agrees with him. All the time this performance is going on the causes that make miserable homes, and drunkards, and thieves are steadily overlooked. What we clearly want in England, to begin with, is a better system of education. But we cannot get it. Why? Because the Churches block the way. On one side they are trying to reform various sorts of failures; on the other side, by means of their religious squabbles with each other, they prevent a reformation of the conditions in which these failures are inevitable.

One of the latest failure-cure efforts is the new reformatory for Lancashire inebriates at Langho, which has just been opened with much *clat* by Sir John Hibbert. This institution cost £70,000 to start with, and there will be the annual cost of maintenance subsequently. Meanwhile the conditions that produce drunkenness go on unchecked in the Lancashire manufacturing towns. Would it not be better, we ask, to spend the money on improving the conditions instead of dealing with their worst effects? Science and Secularism answer this question in the affirmative. Christianity has always answered it practically in the negative.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who is now eighty-seven, was the subject of three "Personal" paragraphs in the *Daily News* on the occasion of his birthday. Mention was made of the fact that he was imprisoned in 1842 at Gloucester "for an answer given to a question following a lecture." What a gingerly, Nonconformist Conscience way of stating that he was imprisoned under the Blasphemy Laws for saying that the Deity should be put on half pay!

The Westminster Gazette's paragraph on Mr. Holyoake's birthday is worth reproducing in full. Here it is:—

"To-day Mr. George Jacob Holyoake celebrates the eighty-seventh anniversary of his birth in wonderful physical health and unimpaired mental activity. The veteran reformer, who was a public lecturer as far back as the late thirties of last century, in concluding on Thursday last a 'powerful and pungent speech' at a meeting of Passive Resisters at Brighton, remarked that 'people might laugh at the Nonconformist Conscience, but those who laughed had no conscience themselves.'"

This "canonisation" of Mr. Holyoake, if we may call it so, goes on apace. His orthodox friends have apparently made up their minds that he must die in the odor of sanctity. No one who read this birthday paragraph, and was not aware of the fact beforehand, could have the faintest idea that Mr. Holyoake was "tainted with atheistical positions" (as Lamb said of Kit Marlowe), and got into trouble (as, by the way, Jesus Christ did) through "blasphemy." The suggestion of this paragraph, though not its statement, is that Mr. Holyoake is a veteran Nonconformist.

Mr. Swinburne, the poet, is referred to in the *Daily News* as "that strenuous protagonist of all established religions." This is the very opposite of the writer's meaning. The *protagonist* of anything is its *first champion*. Of course our contemporary regards Mr. Swinburne in this case as the *first opponent*.

And why is Mr. Swinburne's hostility to "established religions" emphasised? Does the *Daily News* want its readers to believe he is a Nonconformist? Mr. Swinburne's bitter phrase "the poison of the crucifix" applies to Dissenting tabernacles as well as Church temples.

Mr. C. F. G. Masterman, one of the Nonconformist Conscience politicians, who is seeking a seat in the House of Commons, winds up his review of Mr. Haldane's new volume of Gifford Lectures with these words: "The acceptance of a universe with pain an ingredient as rational is in the last resort an act not of reason but of faith." This is poor composition, but its meaning is clear enough. It is an admission that there is no such thing as a rational religion—which is perfectly true. Christians who talk about reason are only flirting.

According to Bishop Knox, of Manchester, the Church of England is the only Church which has kept it in the Bible way, without adding to it or taking from it. Roman Catholics have added to it by pouring ointment on candidates for confirmation. Fancy! A quarrel in the name of God over pomatum! Such is the elevating influence of religion.

Three hundred English Catholic pilgrims have lately been welcomed at Rome. The Pope thanked them most cordially,

and gave them his benediction, which he extended to their families. That cost him little. He received in return, a considerable sum as Peter's Pence. Lucky old man!

Cowper, the poet, was one of the tenderest of men, yet he believed that he had incurred the implacable resentment of God Almighty. His melancholia allied itself to his Calvinistic religion, and the result was a feeling of being utterly lost. Cowper wrote in the most collected way about his perdition. Two terrible passages are cited in the *Academy* review of Mr. Thomas Wright's new edition of the *Correspondence*. In one letter he says that he spends his nights "not seldom under a constant sense of God's contempt and abhorrence." In another, not long before his death, he says: "All my themes of misery may be summed up in one word, He who made me, regrets that over He did. Many years have passed since I learnt this terrible truth from himself, and the interval has been spent accordingly." One thinks of Cowper's beautiful lines on his mother's picture, and then of the awful suffering he endured; and then one wonders what words are strong enough to brand the damnable creed which was the nightmare of his tragedy.

The *Daily News* has been puffing Dr. Torrey for months. Its attention has been called to his disgusting libels on great Freethinkers like Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll, and his constant references to "infidels" as filthy and immoral. But the *Daily News* said never a word. It was not going to interfere with Dr. Torrey for slandering "infidels." So it went on puffing the Yankee Revivalist as zealously as ever. But a cloud has now appeared in the sky. Dr. Torrey has annoyed the *Daily News*. He has extended his Christian charity to Unitarians, and declared that "Unitarianism, as a rule, is not because of intellectual difficulties, but because of moral difficulties." They wanted to lead "a loose life." Such is this bigoted blackguard's diagnosis of all who do not see eye to eye with him. But when he applies it to Unitarians the *Daily News* waxes angry. It stands up for the Unitarians, and tells Dr. Torrey that his language is "singularly unfortunate and uncharitable." Probably this will take effect; Dr. Torrey will confine his blackguardism to "infidels." And the *Daily News* will smile—and puff him with fresh vigor.

Mr. James Toope's case, which appeared in the newspapers under the heading of "Hyde Park Oratory," is one that ought to be further ventilated in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Toope is not a member of the National Secular Society; he has been lecturing in Hyde Park as a free-lance; but when he called on the President of that Society, and stated that he was being prosecuted by the police on what was evidently a ridiculous charge, he was told that he should be defended. Mr. Foote authorised Miss Vance, the secretary, to employ a competent solicitor with a knowledge of Police-court business, to take charge of Mr. Toope's case; and she employed Mr. Basil Watson, who appears to have made an excellent fight for his client.

Mr. Toope's case came on at Marlborough-street on Saturday, April 16, before Mr. Kennedy, who unfortunately displayed a most excessive prejudice; which, however, is not unusual when the rights and interests of Freethinkers are concerned. Mr. Kennedy pooh-poohed the idea that any man could deliver addresses in Hyde Park except to gratify his vanity. He regarded principle as altogether out of the question. Perhaps he did not know, or did not remember, that Christians deliver addresses there too. When it was urged that Mr. Toope was entitled to protection against wilful rowdiness, Mr. Kennedy remarked that he could obtain protection by stopping at home. Well, it is equally true that Mr. Kennedy can obtain protection against criticism by stopping in the same place. But as he chooses to sit upon a magistrate's bench, we beg to tell him that he did not adorn it on this occasion.

Mr. Kennedy backed up the policeman in saying that Mr. Toope was arrested for his own protection. But the facts in evidence were that Mr. Toope appealed to the policeman, under the Park rules, to assist in keeping the peace at his meeting; that the policeman declined to do so; and that he eventually arrested Mr. Toope, and charged him at the station with conducting a disorderly meeting. Had he arrested Mr. Toope for his own protection, he would have got him safely away, and then set him free, and not have charged him with a criminal offence. This was bad enough, but the policeman's plea, supported by the magistrate, was still worse. There were a hundred disorderly persons in Mr. Toope's meeting, and as the officer could not arrest them all he adopted the easier course of arresting Mr. Toope! On the same ground, of course, a policeman might decline the

difficult task of dealing with three or four burglars who had broken into a house, and settle the matter by arresting the householder, who, by occupying the house, had obviously incited them to break into it.

When common sense can be so defied in a court of justice it is not astonishing that Mr. Toope was bound over for twelve months to keep the peace which other people had broken. What sort of speaker he is, whether refined and discreet or otherwise, is not at all to the point. An attempt was made to raise it in court, but we decline to consider it for a moment. His real offence is lecturing against Christianity, and we say he has a perfect right to do that under the law as laid down by the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. Consequently we are glad that Miss Vance tendered herself as the surety of £5 which Mr. Kennedy's judgment (or want of it) made necessary. And if that £5 has ever to be paid up it will certainly not be allowed to come out of Miss Vance's own pocket.

Some "tall" speeches were delivered at the recent meetings under the auspices of the Surrey Free Church Federation at Surbiton. The Rev. C. O. Eldridge said that if England was to be saved it must be through the Free Churches. "Good God," as the parson said when the captain told him in a storm that their only hope was in Providence, "has it come to that?" We note that the last speaker of all was called Gammon.

We see that the Rev. Walter Walsh has been "giving beans" to the Ritualistic clergy of Guildford. These gentlemen go in for Confession, which we believe to be as rotten an institution as Mr. Walsh declares it to be. But when he says that the whole question is "How are we to obtain forgiveness of sins?" we cannot help feeling that his doctrine is as rotten as what he attacks. Forgiveness of sins is the most mischievous part of Christianity. It enables people to run up a big score of wickedness on the slate and wipe it out with the sponge of repentance. But you cannot wipe anything out of nature in that way. Nature's debit and credit account is accurate and unalterable.

More religious riots, and Belfast and Liverpool policemen severely injured. How these Christians love one another!

Father Creagh has been stirring up prejudice against the Jews at Limerick. Result: a boycott against the Jews, and the pelting of the local Rabbi with stones. One stone-thrower has got a month's hard labor—thanks to the Stipendiary. Father Creagh keeps within the law.

Mr. George Wise, the Liverpool Orangeman, deals in the *Protestant Searchlight* with the novel question "Who was Cain's Wife?" We congratulate him on his up-to-dateness. It shows that even Christian Evidence is progressive. Mr. Wise concludes that Cain married his own sister—which is likewise extremely novel, and is a reason for strengthening our eulogy.

Mr. Wise argues that the whole human race must have descended from one family because, scientifically, it is of one blood. We do not deny the fact. We admit it. But we understood that men are of one blood with all the other mammals. Perhaps the up-to-date Mr. Wise will tell us what physiological or chemical test enables him to tell the blood of a human being from that of any other species of the mammalian order. We hope he will condescend to enlighten us.

It is to be hoped that Dr. Clifford will not visit Cheshire and talk vague heroics, for a Passive Resister there (Mr. Jones, of Sandbach) says he has so much confidence in the reverend gentleman that "If Dr. Clifford told him to jump from a window he would do it."

DICKENS ON MISSIONARIES.

So Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it.—*Letter to M. de Cerjat*, Nov. 13, 1865.

I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker—as he had need to be.—*Dod Grile*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, April 24, Printers' Hall, Bartlett's-passage, Holborn, E.C., at 7.30: "Shakespeare as a Freethinker: an Anniversary Address—with Illustrative Selections."

May 1, 8, 15, Printers' Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—April 24, South Shields; May 1, Victoria Park; 8, Coventry.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 24, Failsworth.

T. E. HARGRAVE.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks. Always glad to receive cuttings.

F. S.—Cuttings welcome and useful.

A. G. LYE, 23 Rudge-road, Coventry, would be much obliged if our readers could send him information as to Public Libraries that admit the *Freethinker*. Details as to whether the paper is purchased or presented would also be valued.

G. WILK.—Sorry to hear that the Leeds police are so unteachable. It is disgracefully absurd and absurdly disgraceful to prosecute you for "obstructing" Victoria-square by Secular meetings, when the Christian meetings on the same spot are not interfered with, and when the Mayor takes part in a Good Friday Teetotal meeting completely blocking the square. Perhaps the approaching N. S. S. Conference and Demonstration at Leeds may have some influence with the bigots.

L. B. GALLAGHER.—Thanks for the further cuttings, which are useful. One pair of eyes (our own) cannot possibly see everything in the multitude of journals now published, and our readers do us a real service by sending us pertinent cuttings. They also help to make the *Freethinker* more interesting and up-to-date.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful cuttings.

W. H. THRESH.—Pleased to hear that the Camberwell Branch asks you for dates for open-air lectures. We hope your outdoor work this summer will be the prelude to a good spell of indoor work next winter.

H. PENGELLY.—We don't quite understand your question. In our article on Good Friday we stated the relation which the date bears to the moon's phases—that is, really, to ancient moon-worship, which was widely spread like sun-worship.

T. KEHOE.—We can quite understand the bitter disappointment of the Liverpool Branch at the breakdown of their arrangements for the N. S. S. Annual Conference, and we share your hope for better luck next year. Could not some local pressure be brought to bear upon the bigots who were responsible for the refusal of Picton Hall?

E. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph. Glad to note the activity of the South Shields Branch. Of course it will be represented at the Leeds Conference.

J. E. BALLIN.—We have dealt with the Josephus "Christ" passage in the Chapter on "Pious Forgeries" in *Crimes of Christianity*. Bishop Warburton's judgment that it was a forgery, and a very stupid forgery too, is shared by the overwhelming majority of critics. Apart from the external evidence, which is quite conclusive, the internal evidence alone stamps the passage as a forgery. The forger did not know, for instance, that the Jews did not expect the Messiah to be himself a divine personage, but only the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets and deliverers.

H. R. C.—Much obliged. The matter is having attention, though we have been too busy to deal with it satisfactorily yet.

W. ROWLAND.—Thanks for cuttings. Send more when you can.

F. J. GOULD.—Article to hand. Proof in due course. We believe our readers are as glad as we are to see your articles in the *Freethinker*. Unfortunately they are rare, but we know you are very busy.

C. K. ANDREWS.—The Christadelphian nincompoop at Coventry is really not worth answering. One who says that the Babylonian inscriptions are all forgeries may be harmless, but he is far gone. We cannot give you the answer you require in this column, but you can look out for our review of a valuable book on the subject, which will shortly appear in the *Freethinker*.

JAMES NEATE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen's meeting on Sunday evening was so successful, and that he himself was in such "good form." We are not surprised that the President of the Victoria-park Christian Evidence Society did not take part in the discussion.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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Sugar Plums.

A good start was made at Printers' Hall on Sunday evening, and most of the audience were rather tickled at the idea of occupying pews in a building that had been consecrated. Mr. F. A. Davies came up from South London to be in at the start, and was pressed into the chair, which, of course, he filled admirably. Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Future of the Bible" was well enjoyed by the meeting. He did not give the full measure to which his audiences are accustomed, as he had special reasons for catching the last train that would take him home. This was explained, and was thoroughly understood. On future occasions Mr. Foote will be in no hurry, having arranged to stay the night in London. He will therefore do his best to compensate the audience this evening (April 24), and will stay a little after the meeting breaks up to shake hands and chat a while with the "saints" who may stay likewise.

There seemed an indisposition on the part of attendants to go up into the balcony. Those who did go up, however, found it very comfortable. It is really one of the best parts of the house. Perhaps the friends will take this hint, and give the balcony a trial. It is certainly preferable to the sides of the body of the hall.

Another thing must be said. The neighborhood of Printers' Hall is so deserted and silent on Sundays that people can be heard talking as they approach, and even walking if they tread heavily. Those who come after 7.30 should therefore drop in as quietly as possible—and not talk as they go upstairs.

Owing to the construction of the place, Printers' Hall really holds more people than might be fancied from its dimensions between the walls. The ground-floor and the balcony together will seat nearly as many as the Minor Queen's Hall. Consequently the "saints" should not be afraid to come, or to bring their friends. Let the place be filled first, anyhow; as we hope it will be to-night (April 24), when Mr. Foote will take a very interesting subject for his lecture; namely, "Shakespeare as a Freethinker: with Illustrative Selections."

Mr. Cohen had another full house at the Stratford Town Hall on Sunday evening, and many questions were asked and answered at the close of the lecture. This ends the course there for the present. It has been a highly successful experiment, and we hope it will be repeated in the autumn. It bears out our old view that effective Freethought propaganda is now mainly a question of money. Let us have first-rate halls in the big thoroughfares of great centres of population, and we will fill them as easily as the Christian revivalists do—and at far less expense. Oh for the advent of that Freethought millionaire! Ten thousand pounds would suffice to half ruin Christianity amongst the masses in the cities of Great Britain.

Mr. Cohen delivers three lectures at South Shields to-day (April 24) in the Tivoli Hall, near High Shields Station. The local members hope to see a strong gathering of Tyneside friends. Mr. Cohen's afternoon and evening subjects are considered especially attractive.

Mr. John Lloyd is the speaker at two "special services" to-day (April 24) at the Failsworth Secular Sunday School—afternoon and evening. Hymns will be sung by the choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band. We hope to hear of crowded meetings.

The Liverpool Branch holds its annual meeting after the lecture this evening (April 24), when it is hoped that all members will attend. We desire to call special attention to the afternoon lecture in the Alexandra Hall. The lecturer is Mr. J. A. Sharpley, one of the big guns at Dr. Aked's Church, late editor of the *Liverpool Review*, and the writer of some excellent letters to the local *Post* on Secular Education. Mr. Sharpley is evidently a man of very liberal intelligence. His subject will be a highly interesting one—"The Place of a Child in the Making of a Nation."

Our valued exchange, the New York *Truthseeker*, shows a commendable spirit in giving some attention to Freethought affairs in Great Britain; but it is misled in stating that "George Jacob Holyoake has revolted against the imposition of a tax for the teaching of religion in the schools of England." That tax is nothing new; it has been levied for thirty-three years. Mr. Holyoake only revolts against Church religion in England's school—not against Nonconformist religion; and the *Truthseeker* should understand that Nonconformist religious teaching over here means reading and explaining the Bible as the Word of God.

Mr. J. M. Robertson lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, at the Camberwell Secular Hall this evening (April 24), and the South London "saints" should see that he has a good audience.

Mr. H. L. Brækstad, the well-known Anglo-Norwegian journalist, has received from King Oscar the Order of Knight of St. Olaf in recognition of his services to Norway during the thirty years he has been settled in England. At such a moment we may add our own congratulations. Twenty years ago, when the Christians put us in prison, Mr. Brækstad was very helpful to us and the cause we represented. Perhaps he does not care to remember these things now, but we do.

Vassili Verestchagin, the famous war painter, who went down with the *Petropavlovsk* at Port Arthur, produced a number of pictures dealing with religious subjects. His unorthodox treatment of the Holy Family led to warm scenes at Vienna, when the picture was exhibited there. Catholics resented the Virgin Mother being depicted with a large family. Verestchagin replied that he found Mary's children—that is, the brothers and sisters of Jesus—in the Bible; moreover, there was no doubt about *their* legitimacy. That witticism, however, only made matters worse, and the exhibition was closed by the authorities; but not before the peccant picture had been defaced by some fanatic with a bottle of vitriol.

A good letter by "X" appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* criticising the Bishop of Manchester's statement that the first fruit of the union of Church and State was Constantine's law for the observance of Sunday. "X" points out that the law was enacted before Constantine adopted the Christian religion, and there was not one word of Christianity in connection with it. It speaks not of the Lord's Day, but of the Day of the Sun. Moreover, the "coins of the Emperor Constantine bear the name of Christ on one side and the figure of Apollo on the other. Such is the leader whom the Bishop of Manchester asks us to follow."

Another letter in the *Guardian* by J. Adshead draws attention to the coolness with which it is assumed, in this Education controversy, that there are only three sections of citizens—Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Nonconformists. "There was," he says, "never a greater mistake. How about the fellow who is none of these—I mean the Agnostic? Surely he has a right to be considered.....I have to recognise that the people who are saying the least now (the Secularists) are the worst off." Mr. Adshead, who says he is supposed to be an adherent of the Church of England, states that when the Town Council passes the by-law allowing every parent to keep his children at home during religious instruction he shall take advantage of it on principle.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference is always held on Whit-Sunday. Owing to a difficulty with bigots at Liverpool—where, apparently, the mutual-hating Catholics and Protestants have joined to spite the Secularists, the use of the Picton Hall was refused—there has been a great delay in making decisive arrangements for this year's Conference. We are happy to state, however, that it will be held at Leeds, where the use of the splendid Theatre Royal has been engaged for the evening public meeting. The sessions of the Conference itself will be held in a more private part of the same building.

We earnestly invite Branches of the N. S. S., and also individual members in various parts of the country, to do their utmost to make this Conference a great success. Leeds is central for the whole of Great Britain, and we trust to see the Scottish "saints" fairly represented on this occasion. Of course there is no time to be lost now. Branches and individual members should therefore be making their Conference arrangements without a moment's unnecessary delay.

Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Lloyd will be on the list of speakers at the evening public meeting in the Theatre Royal. Probably there will be other speakers, but we are unable to announce them this week.

Whence the Trinity?

WE do not ask this question in the same spirit as the little girl who, on being told that God made her, inquired "Who made God?" But we ask it as a matter of extreme importance to all Christians, for is it not laid down in the Creed of S. Athanasius:—

"Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith.....And the Catholick Faith is this:.....The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. And yet they are not three incomprehensibles: but one incomprehensible*.....which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

The New Testament speaks of these three personages, but gives no explanation concerning them. They are introduced without a word of warning; and the reader is presumed to be familiar with them. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all," saith S. Paul in 2 Cor. xiii. 14, apparently quoting a set liturgical formula. But this only tells us that the early Church venerated the Trinity; it gives us no information as to where they got the idea. S. John relates that Jesus promised the disciples the "Paraclete" (xiv. 16), but he evidently assumes that this Paraclete—i.e., "intercessor"—was a well-known personage requiring no further explanation than that he was the Holy Spirit. From other passages, however, he was an igneous individual. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," says John Baptist, "but he that cometh after me.....shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And when the apostles were assembled at Pentecost there came cloven tongues of fire which sat upon each of them, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

This triad, or trinity, is peculiar to the New Testament; it cannot be discovered in the Old. Evidently Judaism had imbibed some fresh doctrines by the time the Gospels were coming into being; and the question is, where did these doctrines come from?

Some time before the Christian era the Jews had been in close contact with Babylon the Mighty. The Hebrew books represent the Babylonians as a sinful and sorrowful nation, and countless divines have held up Babylon as a typical example of irreligion and unbelief; but we know better now. To quote from a work published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge:—

"To judge from the inscriptions of the Babylonians and Assyrians, one would say that there were not upon the earth more pious nations than they. They went constantly in fear of their gods, and rendered to them the glory for everything that they succeeded in bringing to a successful conclusion. Prayer, supplication, and self-debasement before their gods seem to have been their delight.....Many a penitential psalm and hymn of praise exists to testify to the piety of the ancient nations of Assyria and Babylonia."

These pious Babylonians had one rigid theory in regard to sickness or misfortune. They believed that such evils were punishments for sin. Therefore the first thing necessary was to conciliate the deity. The favorite intercessor was the God Merodach, and there are dozens of tablets which profess to describe the treatment necessary for the various diseases, etc., that flesh is heir to. These tablets are drawn up in the form of recorded cases. That is to say, instead of invoking the deity for every fresh patient, the priest referred to his series of records, and drew out the one he considered most appropriate. The usual formula is as follows. The sufferer is led by the priest before the God, and states his case. Merodach pities his worshiper, and seeks out his father Ea-Ea was one of the most important members of the Babylonian pantheon. He was the depository of all the knowledge in the universe, and dwelt apart in

* So Dean Stanley; the Prayer Book hath it differently.

† *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia*, by Theophilus G. Pinches; London, 1903; p. 49.

awful grandeur, unapproachable by any being except his only son Merodach, the Creator and Savior of Mankind. Some Assyriologists have been so impressed by this august personage that they have endeavored to read his name as *Ia* or *Ya* or *Yahu*, and connect him with the Jewish *Yahveh*. But as a matter of fact he is far more comparable with the Christian conception of God the Father than with any development of Jewish theology, and Merodach corresponds very closely with the idea of the Son. However, Merodach sought out his father Ea, and described the sufferings of the devotee, concluding:—

"I know not, Father, how this man may be restored."
Then Ea answered his son Merodach.
"My Son! what dost thou not know?
What can I tell thee more?
What I know thou knowest also."
Get thee gone, my son Merodach [and such and such a thing shalt thou do that that man may be restored]."

Merodach then receives specific instructions as to the means to be used for the recovery of the patient, usually including lustrations with holy water, and other religious ceremonies.

In tablet after tablet we find Merodach acting as intercessor in this manner, and invoking the omniscience of Ea for the benefit of mankind. Very frequently, however, we meet with another intermediary, who acts between the patient and Merodach himself. This intermediary is *Gibil*, the God of *Fire*! So that the Babylonian Paraclete, like his Christian representative, was associated with *fire*.

There is a well-known exorcism of the "Seven Evil Spirits" which may be selected as a typical example of the co-operation of Ea, Merodach, and *Gibil*; the Babylonian Father, Son, and Paraclete. These Seven Spirits were much dreaded by the Babylonians; and it is highly probable that they were identical with the "seven devils" who were driven out of Mary Magdalen. The Fire God is first addressed:—

"O *Gibil* where were the Seven Spirits born;
Where did they grow up?"
"The Seven were born in the Mountain of the West;
The Seven grew up in the Mountain of the East.
In the cavity of Earth they abide:
From the waste places of the earth they come.".....†
Gibil went to Merodach, the merciful counsellor,
The great judge of the heavens.
And communed with him thus.....
Merodach passed within, unto his father Ea.....
And to his son, Merodach, answered Ea, wise of mind:
"Get thee gone my son Merodach,
Kindle the holy purifying exorcism of Eridu
Under the vessel which drives away demons!
Put fire above and below
That the Seven may not come near the sick man.
Let it glow at his head by day and by night."
"O *Gibil*! Stand thou by him at midnight
When he sleepeth, to guard him.
Drive away the Seven; and scare them far away."

The mere names of this Babylonian Trinity were considered sufficient to terrify wizards and sorcerers.

"Your sorceries with which ye have bewitched me,
May Ea, the exorcist dissolve!
Your witchcrafts, may they be torn asunder
By Merodach, the decider, the Son of Ea!
I bind ye! I fetter ye! I deliver ye
To the Fire-God, the burning, the singeing, the binding
To him that overthrows sorcerers!"

As Dr. Zimmern puts it, therefore:—

"In the Babylonian religion we meet with a triad of Gods, of whom the two first—Ea and Merodach—stand to one another in the relation of Father and Son; while the third—the Fire-God—carries out the commands of both, and acts especially as the Intercessor between God and Man."

It is needless to remark, that the great fount of inspiration for later Jewish theology was *Babylonia*. The cuneiform tablets we have cited are sufficient to prove that at least six centuries before the Christian Era, a Trinity exactly parallel to the Christian one was venerated upon the Euphrates; so that when we find in the New Testament the

full-blown conception of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is assumed to be familiar to the reader, we can only conclude that it was a direct derivative of the earlier Babylonian triad, delivered almost unaltered into the apostolic faith "which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

CHILPERIC.

The Church.

THE word "church" has many meanings. It is used for the buildings, such as cathedrals, churches, chapels, and temples. The Temple of Diana at Ephesus is called a church in the Acts. Then the congregations meeting in the buildings are called churches. Again, the different religions and sects are churches—the Greek Church, Roman Church, Mormon Church, Church of England, Free Churches, and so on. By implication the different doctrines of the various sects are also churches. Under some name or other churches abound in almost all lands, for the altars and temples of what we call Pagan religions are as much churches as St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. We claim that the Christian Church is a Church of God, but our claim for it does not make it so. Every altar, shrine, and temple claim to be churches of some god or other, and they have similar and about as much evidence for their claim as the Christians have. As a matter of fact, they are all man-made. The churches and all the gods of the churches are as much man-made as the buildings erected for them, and bear in themselves as much evidence of their human origin as the buildings do. All churches have a common origin. As the most civilised of men have developed gradually through countless ages from a savage, so the most advanced and refined of churches have evolved by slow degrees from the lowest of worship known.

No church and no religion were ever made; they have grown, evolved. New churches established in recent times, such as the Mormon and Positivist Churches, are formed of old ideas, colored and mixed with new names, fancies, and meanings. The Labor Church is a new design of an old idea. The Protestant Church is the Catholic old house with some of the old furniture changed; and the Catholic Church is the old Pagan temple with some Christian novelties mixed with the old equipment. Not only are the churches as organisations a growth, but their creeds, or their life, so to speak, are a growth also. No creed was born fully developed. Like everything else, creeds have their birth, life, growth, and death. Sometimes things appear as if dead creeds could be revived and resurrected, but the revival is not real, and the semblance is short-lived. Sun-worship can never be revived in any country where the people know that the sun is a world and not a god.

Change seems to be the only permanent thing. Everything is moving and changing continually. The desperate efforts of churches to secure unity and permanency to their forms and creeds has not succeeded. Ostracism, threats, promises, prisons, fire, torture, and death utterly failed to prevent change. The power of the Churches and States kept the world in a state of seeming stagnation for very long periods, but the inevitable change came at last. And really, during the profoundest mental trance produced by religions, intelligence fermented and gathered strength for the bursting forth. At the present time Churches and States are making great efforts to prevent feared social and religious changes, but their efforts will not succeed. In spite of reactionary political measures and religious artifice, social and religious revolution are inevitable. Vast changes are growing visibly to anyone with an eye to see. Darwin effected a revolution in thought during a single generation, and that gives us ground to believe that vast changes will be brought about in the future in much shorter time than in the past. By means of railways, steamships, telegraphs and

* Compare John x. 15. "All things that the Father hath are mine."

† Compare Matt. xii., 43, 45.

‡ Vater Sohn und Fürsprecher (Leipzig, 1896), p. 11.

telephones, the world is shrinking rapidly. The remotest parts of the earth are being brought as near to us as our next-door neighbor, and countries beyond the seas are within speaking distances. The press also circulates new ideas and new discoveries of science with wonderful celerity amongst all civilised nations, and these with better education and better conditions of life will improve the intelligence of mankind, and make them less liable to be duped by the organised agencies of priestly superstitions.

In the past the great hindrance to progress has been the Church, especially the Church allied to the State. Had there been no Church, it seems probable that the world would have made a greater and quicker progress intellectually, civilly, and ethically than it did. The high intellectual state reached in Greece and Rome before the birth of Christianity, warrant us in supposing that many of the wonderful discoveries of the last century would have been made long, long before had it not been crushed by the conquering churches. Science was tabooed. New thoughts and discoveries were the work of the Devil. Free inquiry and discussion became crimes to be punished with prison and death. The Bible as interpreted by the priests was the only knowledge tolerated. Anyone who ventured to contradict or doubt anything in the Bible was cruelly persecuted. The Church, it is true, had been persecuted also; but the persecution by the Church was far greater and far more cruel than the persecution of the Church.

And in the history of the Church there seems to be no compensation to make up for its defects. It is no use to refer to the Sermon on the Mount and certain Socialistic utterances attributed to Jesus. Doctrines, unless embodied in institutions and acted, are only dead letters. It is not possible to separate Christianity from the Church, and the Church, after the first at Jerusalem, never attempted to put the doctrines in practice. Immorality of the grossest kind was tolerated when opinions were suppressed. Cathedrals for an imaginary God were built, and churches and palaces for the priests were erected, and the masses were left in huts and hovels, seething in poverty, degradation, and misery, oppressed by the rulers, exploited by the classes, including the priests. The Church always sided with the oppressors, always supported war, and never attempted to secure justice and temporal comforts for the toilers who produced all the wealth they possessed. Education, except for the classes, was entirely neglected, and all means of knowledge and culture were carefully kept from the reach of the common people. In fact, the past history of the Church is a dismal record of sins of omission and commission, with scarcely one redeeming feature to lighten the gloom.

During long centuries, when the Church was all-powerful and kings and rulers had to obey its commands, it did nothing to justify its existence, but almost everything it did indicated that, as an institution, it was a curse and not a blessing to the world. Had the thing been possible, it is conceivable that the world would have been better without the Church than with it. Had there been no Church, the Crusades and many other disastrous wars would not have occurred. Had there been no Church, opposition to science in all probability would never have existed. Racial and international religious hatred would have been unknown had there been no Church to foster it. Burning of witches and degrading superstitious errors would not have flourished so long had there been no Bible and a Church with vested interests in their continuance. Had there been no Church to hypnotise the people by distracting their attention from their own affairs in this world to gaze and dream on and about an imaginary world in the sky, it is not likely they would have remained so long in the miserable condition they are in to-day. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that during the past the Church has been a huge nightmare on the vitals of man and a deterring barrier in the way of his progress. Concede, for the sake of argument,

that with all its faults and deficiencies the Church did some good, truth demands the conclusion that the evils she did greatly preponderate over any and all her supposed good, and therefore, as an institution, she has been an immense failure.

But it is useless to grieve over the past. The past cannot be altered or recalled. The Church was inevitable. Circumstances and conditions led to its establishment. It evolved and grew from germs previously existing. That in a way accounts for and excuses its existence, but does not prove it to be good. There are many things in the world inevitable and thoroughly bad, from a human point of view; and I fear the Church is one of the worst. But blaming and censuring will not change the fact. The Church has been, the Church is now, and apparently the Church will be for a long time in the future. Therefore it may not be unprofitable to inquire what is the value of the Church now, if it has any; and, if it is to continue, whether it is possible to make it a more profitable institution than it has been, or is now.

R. J. DERFEL,

(To be continued.)

Book Chat.

SHAKESPEARE'S DAY.

APRIL 23 is the greatest day in England's calendar. It is the death-day of William Shakespeare, and probably also his birthday. Strictly speaking, of course, he died ten days later, for the calendar has been altered ten days since then; a fact, by the way, that should be remembered in reading the old poets' praises of May, which was ten days nearer the summer then than it is now. But the ten days were dropped out in order to set the year right astronomically, and were thus, as it were, annihilated; so that the London mob actually clamored to have the ten days back when the change was made, as though they had been robbed of the time, and had so much less to live. The old dates therefore stand as they did in the old documents, and it is impossible to alter them now. So we go on calling April 23 "Shakespeare's Day," and shall continue to do so in spite of the precisians.

Shakespeare's Day! How the words animate us and brighten our horizon! The very earth becomes sacred, the air enchanted, and the sky supernal. Such is the magic of genius—the greatest genius the world has ever known. Possibly the greatest genius the world will ever know.

Some may take exception to such expressions, but may be guilty of worse themselves. Mr. Gladstone rebuked Colonel Ingersoll for calling Shakespeare the greatest of the sons of men, and asked how he knew that. Mr. Gladstone himself, however, in the very same article, called Aristotle the greatest thinker of antiquity; and Colonel Ingersoll asked him how he knew that.

There are people who fancy that Shakespeare was unappreciated in his own time, and for long afterwards, and that he was almost discovered in the nineteenth century. But this is a foolish theory. The facts are dead against it. Naturally the fame of Shakespeare was bound to grow with the ages, but it has grown gradually from the very beginning. Ben Jonson's panegyric was followed by Milton's eulogy, and the stream of praise has flowed on steadily ever since, widening in every generation, until it has become the magnificent river we now behold.

Only one book has a wider circulation in the English-speaking world (not to go farther at present) than Shakespeare. That book is the Bible. But the circulation of the Bible is very artificial. It is a book of religion, to begin with, and is therefore purchased and kept as a sort of fetish. In the next place, societies exist for the purpose of scattering it broadcast at uncommercial prices, and even gratuitously. The Bible has even been declared to be the Word of God by the law of the land. It is also placed in nine hundred and ninety-nine, at least, of every thousand schools in the country as a volume of transcendent worth; nay, as a more than human production. The Bible does not stand on its own merits. Nobody knows what its natural circulation would be. But it would certainly be far short of its present extent. Indeed, there are persons—and we count ourselves among them—who look upon the Bible as an

immensely overrated book from every point of view. The glamor of its supposed supernatural origin still lies over it as literature.

Shakespeare, however, without the aid of religion or philanthropy, and simply in the natural course of things, enjoys an ever-increasing circulation. Great editions like Dyce's and the Cambridge, and the still greater Variorum which comes from America, are surrounded by a multitude of smaller editions, until we come to the Temple pocket edition, and at last to the waistcoat-pocket edition. All these editions find purchasers, and presumably readers. And every year sees new editions placed upon the market.

Nor is that all. A whole library of books has been written about Shakespeare. And they go on multiplying. Even the clergy have begun to join in the chorus of criticism. Father Bowden argues that Shakespeare was a Catholic; the Rev. T. Carter argues that he was a Puritan; somebody will argue by-and-by that he anticipated Mormonism and foreshadowed the Salvation Army. But all this proves at least one thing; namely, the vast importance of Shakespeare in the intellectual world.

It should be remembered that the clergy did not patronise Shakespeare until they thought it profitable to do so. They always used to regard him as profane and irreligious. And this was the general view of commentators, down to the time of Charles Knight. Gifford, indeed, the learned and zealous editor of Ben Jonson, sneered at Shakespeare as "the Coryphæus of profanity."

But let us hear what Mr. Swinburne says—Mr. Swinburne who is still amongst us, who knows his Shakespeare better perhaps than any other living man, and who, both as poet and as critic, is eminently entitled to speak. Mr. Swinburne, referring to a Hamlet soliloquy, says that it supplies "full and sufficient evidence for the conviction of every candid and rational man" that "Shakespeare was in the genuine sense—that is, in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term—a free thinker." Mr. Bernard Shaw, who does not share Mr. Swinburne's passionate adoration of Shakespeare, and rather cultivates the Byron trick of affecting to despise him, is nevertheless of the same opinion on this point. He allows that Shakespeare saw through the popular religion, and had no belief in a future life.

Goethe called Shakespeare "a truly pious nature," who "cultivated his pure, inward nature without regard to any definite religion." "His point of view," Karl Elze says, "was above all Church doctrines, and as far removed from the Protestant as the Catholic dogmas—in other words, his point of view was humanity." This is pretty much the opinion of Mr. Sidney Lee, and it was rather sadly admitted by the clerical Mr. Richard Green in his *Short History of the English People*.

Shakespeare had the supreme genius that dares to be perfectly natural. He took human nature as his province—with nature as the eternal background of the mighty drama. He saw that human life and human ethics were complete in themselves; that man could be interpreted without reference to the supernatural. This was his distinctive virtue, and the inmost secret of his greatness. For this reason he is truly "not for an age, but for all time." And as the world moves forward in its secular progress to a nobler culture, it finds more and more in Shakespeare its own self-revelation. If we could for a moment lay sacrilegious hands on a line of Shelley's, and substitute "Humanity" for "the Universe," we might imagine the genius of Shakespeare saying:—

I am the eye with which Humanity
Beholds itself and knows itself divine.

Charles Arnould.

The Mayor of Rheims, our friend Charles Arnould, member of the Committee of the International Freethought Federation, has fallen a victim to congestion of the brain. The Congress of Rome was up to his last moments his principal preoccupation. For many months past he had been studying to perfect his knowledge of the Italian language, and last December, when presiding over the meeting of the General Committee of the International Federation, he manifested the greatest enthusiasm on learning that our Italian friends were preparing to give the greatest *éclat* to this solemn

manifestation of Freethought in front of the Vatican. His inexhaustible generosity scarcely needs mentioning. All our societies and all our institutions have felt its beneficent effects. When we founded *La Raison* he headed the list of subscriptions, and, if the preparatory work for the Roman Congress has been enabled to be pushed forward with some amount of energy, it has been largely due to him. Even at Rheims he had given invincible force to Freethought. He had endowed Rheimish Freethought with a magnificent habitation, a real Freethought home, where, under his direction, was organised an intense propaganda which was destined to conquer the old clerical city where, in days of old, were crowned the Kings of France. No sooner installed in the mayoral chair than he set about realising the program upon which he and his friends had been elected. The hospitals and charitable institutions were at once secularised.

It will be remembered—it will never be forgotten—the firmness with which he opposed Cardinal Langenieux, and the truly republican dignity he displayed on the reception of the Tzar in France.

The admirable *fêtes* for the young which he organised, and which gathered together each year hundreds of children and thousands of spectators in the great Circus of Rheims, were among the first manifestation of our Rationalist movement in that town.

International Freethought inclines with respect and gratitude before his bier. His name will remain as that of a citizen truly devoted to the public good, and whose enlightened patriotism knew how to conciliate the humanitarian aspirations which animate to-day those who are noble of soul and enlightened of mind.

LEON FURNEMONT.

The Freethinker and valiant Republican, our friend Charles Arnould, has had the great funeral which he deserved. An immense concourse of people escorted his remains. The whole town of Rheims seemed actuated with a desire to do honor to his memory, and gave the sad ceremony the character of an imposing manifestation of sorrow. M. Valli, Minister of Justice, headed the procession, accompanied by a large number of leading Republicans, and at the station delivered a valedictory address, concluding with: "Charles Arnould leaves behind a grand memory, because his life was a grand example."

—From "*La Raison*" (translated by V. Roger).

BREAK UP THE CHURCH!

Undoubtedly the abandonment of the clerical profession by the best men will have the effect that the ecclesiastical business passing into coarse, immoral hands, will more and more disintegrate, and expose its own falseness and harmfulness. But the result will not be worse, for the disintegration of ecclesiastical establishments is now going on, and is one of the means by which people are being liberated from the fraud in which they have been held. And, therefore, the quicker this emancipation is accomplished by enlightened and good men abandoning the clerical profession, the better it will be. And so, the greater the number of enlightened and good men who leave the clerical profession, the better.—*Tolstoy*.

MAN AND NATURE.

Here is the source of man's unhappiness:—

That he regards himself as nature's crown,
To pleasure whom Fate should relax its stress,
And humbly to his needs or whims bow down.
How small his part upon the Eternal Stage,

What petty passions rage within his breast,
His microscopic vision cannot gauge,

But magnifies his actions worst and best
To huge proportions. Will he learn at last
He's but a bubble on the ocean wave,
A grain of sand upon the seashore vast?

Learn this, all's learned; for then he will not crave
What cannot be awarded; but will bend
His reason to achieve its proper end.

—Bertram Dobell, "*Rosemary and Pansies*."

But why does this God, more perfect than men, ask of us what a perfect man would not ask? Why does he make a too willing, an almost blindly accepted faith the first, the most necessary and, indeed, the only virtue? If he is incensed because he is not understood, because he is disobeyed, would it not be just that he should manifest himself in such a manner that human reason, which he himself created with its admirable demands, should not have to surrender the most precious, the most essential of its privileges in order to approach his throne?—*Maeterlinck*.

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.

PRINTER'S HALL (Bartlett's-passage, Holborn, London) at 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare as a Freethinker: an Anniversary Address—with Illustrative Selections."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (61 New Church-road, Camberwell): 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Meaning of Materialism."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Mr. G. E. O'Dell, "The Democratic Ideal."

NORTH KENSINGTON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Cornwall Hall): 7, J. McCabe, "The Ethical Principles of Robert Owen."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "The Code of Hammurabi."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Coit.

WIMBLEDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (6 The Broadway): 7, J. Oakesmith, M.A., "The Politics of Reynard the Fox."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 7.15, H. B. Holding, "Some Songs of Freedom."

OUTDOOR.

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

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, G. J. Parsons, "Secularism and Morality."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Grove, Stratford): 11.30, G. Parsons, "Secularism the Emancipator of Mankind."

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): John Lloyd, 2.30, "At the Bar of Reason"; 6.30, "Why I Renounced the Christian Religion." Hymns, etc., by the Choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6, Discussion, Business Meeting; 6.30, Ignatius McNulty, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, J. A. Sharply, "The Place of the Child in the Making of a Nation"; 7, H. P. Ward, "Burnt for Atheism."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Simpson, "Truths Ignored and Errors Proclaimed by 'Nunquam.'"

SOUTH SHIELDS (Tivoli, High Shields): C. Cohen, 11, "The Present Position of Religion and Science"; 3, "Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work"; 7, "Christianity's Last Stand: With Special Reference to Education and Passive Resistance."

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