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True poets and true women have the native sense of the divineness of what the world deems gross material substance.—GEORGE MEREDITH.

George Meredith and Women.

THE great poets have always been friends to women; partly because there is always chivalry in deep feeling—and in true passion, as distinguished from lust, which is indeed its very opposite; and partly because the genius of great poets is bisexual, having the feminine as well as the masculine element in its composition. For this reason it is that Shakespeare, the greatest of all great poets, is so supremely generous to women. He understood them as being, through their motherhood, nearer than men to the very heart of things. And what a gallery of women he painted! Women with beauty and feeling and wit; yes, and with wisdom that did not falter when the best of the men around them went astray. Shakespeare painted no flawless men; he painted many perfect women. Here and there he sketched a woman irredeemably bad; but in that also he was true to nature, and by no means unflattering to her sex; for is it not a proverb that the corruption of the best is the worst? Some day or other the women of England will turn away from the coarse insults of the Bible and welcome the noble compliments of Shakespeare; and if they *must* bow the head and bend the knee, they will reverence and adore the mighty and gracious poet who drew the loftiest and loveliest ideals of their sex.

Shakespeare stands unapproached and unapproachable. But if we except the Master, is there any writer who excels—is there one who equals—George Meredith in the delineation of female characters? Being not only a great novelist, but also a great poet, he has the Shakesperean faculty of creating vital women, breathing, pulsating, and adorable; women, not of some impossible world of romance, but of this world of reality; women that love and rejoice and suffer, and laugh and weep, and bear hearts of gold, and carry brains in their heads; fit mates for the best men the world may produce, and fit mothers for the better men of whom we are free to dream. George Meredith's women are not possessed of the sickly negative virtues; if they are good, they are positive. And this is the highest test of genius. It is so easy to draw bad characters and make them interesting, if not attractive; for wickedness lends itself to movement and sensation. But the triumph is to draw good characters, who, from the nature of the case, cannot be active figures in any sensationalism, and who yet fascinate and satisfy by the force and subtlety and beauty of their personalities. This is what George Meredith has done through a long line of creations, from the Lucy Feverel of his first novel to the Aminta Farrell of his last; and in the midst of it the heroine of *Emilia and Vittoria*, whom James Thomson did not hesitate to call "the sovereign character of our modern fiction."

During his whole life George Meredith has helped the cause of women in the best of all possible ways; not by soft preaching, nor by hard organisation, but by steadily pressing the sanest and sweetest sexual

ideals upon the attention of his thoughtful readers; and he has had, and yet has, more thoughtful readers than any other writer in England. Never for a moment has he ceased to protest against the savagery that still lurks in our sexual arrangements. It was George Eliot who said that marriage must be a relation of either conquest or sympathy. George Meredith has pleaded—not as preachers plead, nor as advocates plead, but as lovers plead—for the nobler relationship. He has declared that this is impossible while a single fetter remains on woman's mind or life. She must be free. Man must not prescribe for her. He must leave her to nature, who will then bring her to him again, henceforth not as a toy or a slave, but as a dear companion and spouse. And even if she will not be so brought, but will stand alone and live her own individual life, she is to be barricaded against no form of social service, but is to be free and welcome to try her powers in every honest direction.

It was on these lines that George Meredith expressed himself once more in his late interview with a representative of the *Daily Chronicle*. Incidentally he said that women ought to be parsons. Not that he was in love with parsons himself, for he said that he dropped going to church forty years ago because he could no longer stand the nonsense he heard there. What he meant was that while England has pulpits women should be as eligible to occupy them as men. It was really a plea for the fuller voice of women in human affairs.

Imagine our astonishment at reading the following remarks on George Meredith by a woman in last week's *Clarion*:—

"But, really, I think one of the most unkind things has been said by Mr. George Meredith. He says women ought to be parsons. There! Some woman must have been lecturing him; or was he thinking of Mrs. Caudle? Whatever his reason is, that remark is past forgiveness, and I am glad to take this opportunity of saying I always held out, in face of all argument, that I do not like Mr. Meredith's novels, and that he does not in the least understand women, as his heroines prove.

"Now, Mr. J. M. Robertson is much more gallant than Mr. Meredith. He weighs the evidence for and against women, and shows, in his new book, that they have attained great heights in literature, acting, painting, and poetry. All these things have been done, therefore they can be done again."

These remarks are signed "Winifrid Blatchford." We do not know the lady. Presumably she is a member of Mr. Robert Blatchford's family. But that is a matter between himself and her, and is of no importance to the general public. The lady, whoever she be, is allowed to write "Our Woman's Letter" in the *Clarion*, and the editor cannot avoid the responsibility for the appearance in his paper of such impertinent nonsense about a veteran of English literature, who has never written for pay or applause, but has held aloft for fifty years the flag of an invincible sincerity. We say nothing, in this connection, of George Meredith's genius, or of the passionate admiration in which many of his greatest contemporaries have held him. It is enough to refer to his age, his long service to literature, and his acknowledged position in the world of letters.

Really the notion that "Mr. J. M. Robertson is much more gallant than Mr. Meredith" is ineffably comical. Mr. Robertson is a writer of great ability,

and a brave soldier on the unpopular side; but, as a mere matter of chronology, George Meredith was "gallant" before Mr. Robertson was born. The poet and novelist has certainly not "weighed the evidence for and against women"—which is rather an odd kind of gallantry; but he knows all about the "great heights" that women have reached. A good many years ago, when he accepted an invitation (in common with other writers) to indicate what he considered the finest passages in verse and prose, he chose a glorious passage (in prose, of course) from Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. What higher compliment could be paid to woman in the field of literature? And such a compliment is necessarily sincere; which is more than can be said of some of the compliments that buzz around female ears.

George Meredith would not go on eternally chattering about "George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë." One gets so tired of hearing the changes rung eternally upon these two names. There are others. Why do we hear so little of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti, who, with Emily Brontë, make up the trio of indubitable English poetesses? Some rank Mrs. Webster high in poetry; others rank "Ouida" high as a novelist. Colonel Ingersoll thought *Ariadne* the greatest novel in the English language. We do not share his opinion, but we mention these facts (without going back to Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Miss Mitford, etc.) to show that woman's achievement in literature is very far from being a new discovery.

The statement that George Meredith "does not in the least understand women" is a criticism on the writer as well as on George Meredith. What sort of woman is it that makes this statement? Let us take an illuminating sentence from her article. "After all," she says, "it really does not matter what the men think or say about us." Many women would say that very little else *does* matter. In any case, the lady's sentence is one of those insolencies which pouting young lips may indulge in with impunity, but which no woman should ever attempt when she is old enough to be judged gravely. What men think of women, and what women think of men, happens to be the main pivot of human activity.

All that anyone can say about "the woman movement" was set forth in profound and graceful verse by George Meredith in "The Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt." The pros and cons are stated with splendid insight and wit, in a constant atmosphere of poetry. The scales are held quite evenly, yet you know in your own mind which way the poet inclines. And the "Ballad" was first printed some thirty years ago!

We will now turn, almost at hazard, to what George Meredith has said about women of brains in his prose. Any one of his novels would do, but our hand falls upon *Diana of the Crossways*, and we take the following passage:

"The something sovereignly characteristic that aspired in Diana enchained him. With her, or rather with his thought of her soul, he understood the right union of women and men, from the roots to the flowering heights of that rare graft. She gave him comprehension of the meaning of love: a word in many mouths, not often explained. With her, wound in his idea of her, he perceived it to signify a new start in our existence, a finer shoot of the tree stoutly planted in good gross earth; the senses running their live sap, and the minds companioned, and the spirits made one by the whole-natured conjunction. In sooth, a happy prospect for the sons and daughters of Earth, divinely indicating more than happiness: the speeding of us, compact of what we are, between the ascetic rocks and the sensual whirlpools, to the creation of certain nobler races, now very dimly imagined."

The man who wrote that superb passage, and the noble motto we select this week, and hundreds of other things worthy to stand beside them—the veteran Freethinker and Liberal, in the best sense of the words—is picked out for petty insult in an "advanced" journal. Surely the editor will print an apology.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Clergy.

MISS MARIE CORELLI has recently been denouncing the shortcomings of the clergy. I should be the last to deny that there is much ground for denunciation, although my reasons would not be those advanced by our lady novelist. Those who are familiar with Miss Corelli's works, and who are consequently aware how hazy are her notions of the distinction between history and hysteria, fact and fiction, will not, of course, be surprised at the nature of her recent attack on the clergy. She complains, principally, that the clergy do not take enough interest in the "poor"—that providential opportunity for sentimental notoriety-hunters and intellectual incompetents; they figure at swell garden parties instead of living among the lowly and oppressed, and think more of theological disputes and of their own advancement in life than they do of promoting their "Master's" principles as interpreted in the pages of *The Master Christian*.

All of this may be true enough. It may be quite correct that the clergy do not seek to imitate Jesus, and one questions whether lay Christians would allow them to remain at large if they were foolish enough to try. It is true that the average clergyman is far more interested in a "call" to a more lucrative post than in one to the New Jerusalem; and also that the man with an income of ten thousand a year commands far more attention than one with a wage of twenty-five shillings per week. All this is true enough; but if some of our popular novelists included in their training only a smattering of historic and sociologic study they would realise that much of what they complain—at six shillings per volume—is the fault of a religious system based upon an impractical and absurd ideal rather than the fault of men who are humbugs largely because their lives are taken up with the preaching of an impossible creed. Writers like Miss Corelli are in the position of one who rails at the man because small-pox has left him disfigured for life.

There are, however, reasons for complaints against the clergy, and these reasons are the more serious owing to the manner in which the clergy have of recent years emerged in the field of political action. To ignore the influence of about fifty thousand men standing in the position of teachers is at any time absurd; but when these men stand as the heads of organisations aiming at some degree of political action, and when their action is frankly determined, not by the interests of the nation at large, but by the interests of Church or Chapel, to ignore them means political and social suicide. Such a body of men cannot help having an influence for good or evil. And though they stood altogether aloof from political action, even this would represent a far from agreeable state of affairs. It is the plain duty of every citizen to take some part in the life of the society to which he belongs. This may be taken as axiomatic; the important question is always whether the educative influences bearing upon him have a tendency to make his social conduct helpful or the reverse.

Probably the first defence that a champion of the clergy would offer is that they are teachers of morals. If this is meant to cover the delivery of moral exordiums I do not know that anyone will dispute the statement. The clergy have always deluged people with moral maxims and the like, although the futility of the method has been exemplified by their own lamentations as to how little improvement was taking place. There is hardly a criminal in the country who could not give us all the moral precepts we get from the pulpits, and their proficiency in this direction has about as little deterrent effect on their own characters as a clergyman's exhortation to speak the truth has in preventing him slandering his opponents.

In reality, character—of which conduct is the expression—is a question of heredity in the first

instance, and, secondly, of a certain tone of mind that comes to us as a result of our general education. One cannot, of course, expect the clergy or anyone else to seriously modify that portion of conduct that comes under the heading of character, but it is certain that so far as conduct may be affected by a cultivation of feeling and by mental discipline, the influence of the clergy as a body is morally unhealthy.

Consider the feelings excited and maintained by religion. The most generous of them are limited by creed, the narrower by puny sectarian divisions. So far as people outside a particular creed are considered, it is as potential members of one's own party. The larger, healthier, humanitarian note is lacking. The fact is admitted in the appeals to "Christian men and women" and to "Christian feeling" made by Christian leaders when striving to spur their followers to behave decently. Of course, it may be said that this does represent the highest kind of feeling to these people, but the excuse carries with it its own condemnation. For that surely is *not* the best teaching which rests its loftiest appeal upon what is essentially a sectarian feeling. It is but a poor defence to argue that clerical training has so moulded the people that their better feelings can only be roused to activity by exciting feelings of this nature.

On smaller issues the phenomenon is still more patent. In Ireland Catholic and Protestant, in England Catholic and Protestant, Episcopalian and Dissenter, Jew and Christian, believer and unbeliever, find their social relations warped and often broken in consequence of religion. Political action is determined by religious considerations, measures opposed or supported as they retard or further the interests of Church or Chapel. And the temper bred in the field of religion is carried into life in general, with the result that questions of national interest are debated, not from the standpoint of the community at large, but from the point of view of the interest of this class or that occupation. There is nothing that one misses more in the speeches of our political leaders than the entire absence of anything like a broad, lofty, and national view of a question. The view is essentially of a sectarian character; and, I repeat, we are reaping here the harvest sown in Church and Chapel.

Much might be said here, by a defender of the clergy, as to the value of their work in reclaiming bad characters. And to this two things may be said. First, the influence the clergy may exert, and for which they claim the credit as religious professors, is exerted in quite as many instances by individuals in their normal social relations. Although more difficult, it would still be possible to compile a fairly lengthy list of persons who have received from others, without any religious trappings, the same help and inspiration to do right that the clergy claim for the credit of their caste. And, secondly, I believe the moral and social value of these conversions to be enormously overrated. It is, indeed, highly questionable whether character ever can be changed, whether we do not end life with the same character we start with, but with its *expression* modified or diverted from time to time.

How much broader or sweeter is the average character after conversion? Is the drunkard, changed by religious influences into a furious evangelical bigot, filled with hatred against all who do not agree with him, conniving at social and political injustice so long as it punishes his opponents, and guiding his actions by the sole interest of his narrow creed, a much more valuable social asset than he was before? I have my doubts. Alcoholic intoxication has been replaced by a species of religious dram-drinking, one form of morbid excitement has been replaced by another, and that is about all. The chief difference is the use of a number of phrases of a more or less ethical character, but often with a complete absence of anything like a socially healthy or helpful morality.

The case is still clearer as regards mental dis-

cipline; for this is one of the virtues that is almost totally ignored by the clergy of all denominations. They may insist upon the importance of right belief, but never upon the duty of forming right opinions after a careful survey of the whole of the ground. Their advice is all in one direction—to shun opposing opinions, whether oral or written, to hold oneself aloof from "dangerous" doctrines, and to cultivate a certain humility of mind that will lead to the acceptance of teachings, not because they are supported by the larger number of facts, but because they are nearest at hand and minister to the average person's dislike to mental exertion. And the result is what one might expect. Along with a mouthing of moral phrases there goes, with the average religious person, an absence of that finer intellectual appreciation of one's duties and responsibilities to humanity at large that constitutes one of the essential conditions of a healthy working morality.

The clergy are a far better instance of this Moral Anemia even than laymen. In ordinary life, social conventions serve to keep alive a certain sense of responsibility; but the pulpit appears to have an ethic of its own. And of this no better illustration can be found than that of the way in which the clergy have treated those men, dead and living, who have been, or who are, opposed to them. Let anyone recall the libellous stories circulated by the clergy concerning such men as Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh, and whole classes of unbelievers, and it will be agreed that, did the clergy carry the ethics of the pulpit into ordinary life, they would find themselves either in prison or shunned by decent men and women. Without the slightest evidence, men and women have been pictured as the vilest of scoundrels, charged with all manner of offences, and whole classes included in a general condemnation. Nor does it better the case to argue that some of these stories were *believed* to be true by those who circulated them. People have no right to circulate such stories without getting evidence; and, in these instances, the evidence did not exist. Even in politics some care is taken that charges against persons shall not be quite unsupported by facts. But in the pulpit the restraints, even of political life, are thrown off. And it is really time that we cured ourselves of the habit of reserving the epithet "criminal" for the man who picks a pocket or burgles a house, and letting off scot-free he who blasts the characters of men and women whose only offence is an intellectual disagreement. Emphatically, the man who picks a pocket is not nearly such a socially dangerous character as those who bring up the young men and women under their influence to misread history, misunderstand human nature, and circulate falsehoods about the character of large numbers of their fellow-citizens. Criminals, in a legal sense, these men may not be; but their character, from a *moral* point of view, hardly admits of discussion.

And yet it is perhaps the system, more than the man, that is at fault. There is a geographical morality, there is a class morality, and there is a caste morality. Each class and caste in the State has its own special moral rules, and the mischief is that the clergy has its own religious caste morality, that subverts the healthier social consciousness. Outside the pulpit the clergyman, as a member of society, may conform to the same rules as his fellow-citizen. It is when he enters the field of religion, when he mounts the pulpit steps, that the social responsibilities drop, and any course becomes justifiable so long as it promises to be for the "Greater glory of God." The story—probably apocryphal—told of Bunyan, who said, on seeing a criminal being led to execution, "There but for the grace of God go I," may be applied here. Were any of us in the pulpit, bound by its traditions and swathed in its religion, we all might behave even as the clergyman does. It is not the man that spoils the religion, but the religion that spoils the man. And this is the bottom reason for its destruction.

C. COHEN.

Jesus and the Gospels.

IN my article, entitled "The Originality of Christ's Teaching," which appeared in the *Freethinker* for April 10, 1904, I claimed that many Christian scholars who still believe in the historicity of Jesus are yet forced to pronounce a large number of the sayings attributed to him in the Gospels more or less spurious. In that class I ventured to place the late Dr. Martineau and the late Professor Bruce, both of whom frankly admitted that the Four Gospels are not strictly historical. Not long ago "An Open Conference" was held in the Central Hall, Manchester, at which Professors J. Hope Moulton, M.A., D.Lit., and A. S. Peake, M.A., replied to a series of questions that had been sent in beforehand. Part of Question 6, replied to by Professor Peake, was thus worded: "It has been said that the late Dr. Martineau and the late Dr. Bruce held the mythical theory of Christ. Is this true?" I was not aware before that those two distinguished scholars were ever claimed by the mythical school, nor am I convinced of it now. To maintain that there is mythical stuff in the Gospels is radically different from regarding Jesus as a pure myth. Every reader of the well-known work, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, remembers how passionately Dr. Martineau believed in the historicity of Jesus, although he argued convincingly that several of the Gospel stories must be looked upon as largely mythical. Professor Peake, in his answer, made this quite clear:—

"I am not quite sure what is intended by the phrase 'mythical theory of Christ,' because there is an ambiguity about it. I expect that to many minds here the term will suggest the view that Christ was a myth, that he never really existed. Of course neither Dr. Martineau nor Dr. Bruce ever held anything so absurd as that. But that is not the technical sense which the term bears. The term is often used to express the view that the account we have of Jesus in the Gospels has been very largely shaped under the influence of the mythical spirit, and thus various accretions have clustered around the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth."

Now, Professor Peake admits that Dr. Martineau may have been, to that extent, an advocate of the "mythical theory of Christ," but denies that Professor Bruce was virtually a member of the same school. It is with this denial that I wish to deal in the present article.

In his early years Dr. Bruce was a champion of Orthodoxy. Some of his first books, such as *The Training of the Twelve* and *The Humiliation of Christ*, were hailed with boundless delight by conservative theologians. But Dr. Bruce had a wonderfully open mind, and his intellect was ever on the alert for new light on old themes. Each new book he published was more progressive than its predecessor. His *Apologetics* was chiefly famous for its manly concessions to the Higher Critics, while *With Open Face* might have been written by Professor Schmiedel himself in his younger days. His Commentary on the Synoptical Gospels in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, under the editorship of Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, paved the way for his notorious article, "Jesus," which appeared posthumously in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. For years before he died Professor Bruce was suspected of heresy, while after his death his article on "Jesus" came as a veritable bombshell.

Professor Peake assured his Manchester audience that in this article Dr. Bruce "expresses rather a reconstruction of the life reached on purely historical principles and excluding theological presuppositions, than his own full belief." Let us see whether this is true or not. Referring to the Gospels, Professor Bruce says:—

"These documents are of varying value from a historical point of view. Critical opinion is much divided as to the fourth, that which bears the name of John, the judgment of many critics being that it is the least trustworthy as a source whether for the words or for the acts of Jesus. By comparison, the first three, from their resemblances called synoptical, are regarded by many as possessing a considerable measure of historical

worth. But even these, from a critical point of view, are not of equal value, nor do the contents of any one of them possess a uniform degree of historic probability. They present to the critic a curious, interesting, and perplexing problem still far from final solution."

Even that extract alone abundantly justifies my original observation. But I wonder what Professor Peake can make of the following reference to the accounts of the Passion:—

"The apostles would have to tell at once what they knew,—especially when preaching outside Jerusalem. Thus began to form itself the passion-chronicle: the main facts first, then this nucleus gradually gathering accretions of minor incidents, till by the time written records began to be compiled, the collection of passion-memorabilia had assumed the form which it bears in, for example, the Gospel of Mark. The presumption is that the collection as it stands there is the truth, or at least the truth as far as it could be ascertained. For modern criticism the story, even in its most historic version, is not pure truth, but truth mixed with doubtful legend."

Surely, here is the germ of "the mythical theory of Christ." Once it is admitted that in the Gospels there is "truth mixed with doubtful legend," the gates are opened and the flood of scepticism naturally flows in. Christian criticism should concede nothing unless it is prepared to concede all to sceptical demands. If there is myth in the Gospels at all, who is competent to fix the quantity of it? It is now simply a question of degrees. There are not many so narrow-minded and creed-bound as the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, who asserted, the other day, that the Four Gospels are absolutely trustworthy and authoritative; while great multitudes are prepared to admit, with Dr. Bruce, that although these documents are in the main historical, yet a certain amount of legendary accretion has clustered around them from which it is now most difficult to rescue the kernel of historic truth. Well, from this position it is only a step to that occupied by Professor Schmiedel, who maintains that the Four Gospels are in no true sense a biography of Jesus; and from this position again there is only a step to that so much adorned by Mr. John M. Robertson and numbers of other non-Christian scholars. According to Dr. Bruce, "in the present state of the inquiry a dogmatic tone is inadmissible." In a Christian pulpit, or in a purely orthodox journal, Dr. Campbell Morgan may indulge in as much dogmatism as he pleases, without much fear of contradiction; but in the world of open debate and scholarly discussion it is totally different.

In Professor Bruce's estimation Jesus was anything but omniscient: "The words of Jesus concerning the future show limitation of vision. In other directions we may discover indications that he was the child of his time and people." It is likewise admitted that his language concerning the Father shows a similar limitation of vision.

With these facts in mind, are we not justified in affirming that Professor Peake was guilty of throwing dust into the eyes of his Manchester audience when he told them that "Dr. Bruce certainly never held anything of that kind"? We have proved beyond a doubt that Dr. Bruce *did* hold the view that the Four Gospels are, to some extent, legendary, and that Jesus had his limitations. Is it not strange that in an article on Jesus in a Christian Dictionary of the Bible there should occur no mention of the Virgin Birth, the Angelic Song, and the Visit of the Magi; that the miracles, as such, should be utterly ignored; that no reference whatever should be made to the Atonement, and that, throughout, Jesus should be treated as a mere man? I think it was unjust towards Dr. Bruce to suggest that in his article he did not express his full belief. This is how Professor Peake puts it: "So much Jesus was on any showing; for his own faith, I do not doubt, he was much more." Without reflecting on that personal allusion, I assert most emphatically that so much Jesus was not on any showing. On Professor Schmiedel's showing he was unspeakably less, while on the showing of many non-Christians he never existed at all, except in idea.

The only conclusion to which we can come, therefore, is that, on the showing of Dr. Martineau and Professor Bruce, there is much in the Gospels that is purely mythical. How much could be pronounced mythical depended, in each case, on the intellectual and religious bias of the man. Had Dr. Bruce been born and bred in Germany, I believe he would have been a more destructive critic than Professor Schmiedel, who can only find nine absolutely credible sayings about Jesus in the Four Gospels. On Professor Schmiedel's showing, then, not only are the documents largely mythical, but Jesus himself is almost a pure myth. What a hopelessly confused state of things! As far apart as the poles are the extremes of Christian opinion! And each school curses all the others in the name of commonsense and reason. Even Professor Peake alleges that not one of the scholars who either doubt or deny the historicity of Jesus can claim to be an expert in this particular subject. But what is the real test of expertness? Is everyone who differs from me in opinion on that account an amateur? The truth is that the case for the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels is so utterly hopeless that its forlorn champions can do nothing but pour abuse and scorn upon their opponents, and seek to throw discredit upon their scholastic attainments. Dr. Soltan's little book, *The Birth of Jesus Christ*, is crammed with facts which disprove the Virgin Birth—has it been answered? Neither the Bishop of Worcester nor the Bishop of London has answered it, and yet they have both reasserted their belief in that superstitious dogma, cowardly ignoring all the arguments against it. "This is a revealed truth," they say, "and it is our bounden duty to believe it." Poor Mr. Beeby, because he could not believe it, had to be kicked out like a dog. Men like Canon Henson, because they are too strong to be attacked, are left severely alone to sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of the laity. It is by ecclesiastical authority, it is by the living tyranny of dead creeds, not by reason and argument, that such dogmas are thrust down the throats of unthinking people. Jesus and the Gospels are condemned at the bar of reason, but blind faith still clings to them, and anathematizes all unbelievers. The only begotten Son of the Highest, who became incarnate and lived a life of pain, and died a death of shame, that he might save the world from the wrath of God, has resolved himself into a mere man or a pure myth; but unreasoning belief still loves and adores him as Lord, and calls all doubters and deniers unregenerate sinners. But in spite of all the zeal and assiduity of its official and paid defenders, in the Pulpit and through the Press, Christianity is a rapidly dying faith. The people no longer believe in it. And yet we are told that it is marching on to glorious triumph while the crowds are marching jubilantly away from it.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

Does Woman Owe Anything to the Bible?

THE arrogance of Christian apologists is proverbial. Whatever is good in the world is claimed as the work of the Church and Christianity. The source of all morality is the Bible. The churches supported slavery and opposed emancipation as long as they could, and now they claim it as the work of Christians. They neglected and opposed education for the masses, and now assert it was Christians who established it. In fact, if you believed the assertions of Christians, all the good in the world is the work of Christianity and the churches, and all the evil is produced by the Devil and unbelievers.

It is a well-known fact that women are the chief supporters of priests and the churches. Without the women, or with them in the same proportion as men, many churches would be almost empty. And many men, out of the attendants, go to church occasionally for the sake of domestic peace, and to please

the women. And the priests repay the devotion of the women by flattery, and by telling them what great things the Bible and Christianity has done for them. It is Christianity and the Church that has emancipated woman and placed her on the high platform she occupies to-day. And the irony of the matter is that women, in their ignorance, believe what the priests so often tell them. It will be useful, therefore, to see from the Bible itself what the Bible and Christianity—for the two are one, and cannot be separated—has done for woman.

We first meet woman in the creation legend. As a matter of fact, there are two creation stories, totally different, by two different authors, as it is impossible that the same man could have written both. The Book is evidently a composite collection of fragments belonging to different writers, and different ages and nations. Two creation stories so different in character could not be the belief of the same nation.

In the first legend, man is created male and female at the same time. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. i. 27). This first story of creation ends with the third verse of the second chapter. Though it comes first in the Bible, it is evidently a much more modern myth than the second legend, as the thoughts in it show an advance in civilisation. In this account of the creation there is not a word about the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Serpent and the Fall, and so on. Had this first story been accepted by the world instead of the second fable, the whole theology of the Jews and Christians would have been very different in character to what it has been and is now.

Unfortunately, through some unaccountable aberration, the second legend was accepted, and the consequence has been disastrous ever since, and continues to be so even to-day. The story evidently belonged to a people in a low state of evolution. The idea of God collecting dust and forming a clay man, and then breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, is a very primitive conception of God and of man. It is doubtful whether any people ever had a lower idea of a God and the origin of man than is contained in this legend. Let the Bible speak for itself. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii., 7). The making of woman is more ridiculous than the making of man, if that be possible. When God found that it was not good for man to be alone, which is an after-knowledge, out of the ground he formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air for the purpose, evidently thinking they would be meet companions for man (Gen. ii., 18, 19). Finding he had again made a mistake, as the beasts and the fowls were not a help meet for Adam, he resolved to try again, and this is the way he did it: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. ii., 18, to the end of the chapter). I doubt that anything more ridiculous, absurd, and degrading to God, man, and woman than this story can be found in the mythologies of the whole world. And its influence on the destiny of woman has been disastrous. Her creation was a mere afterthought. The first thought of God was only a male man. His second thought was to make beasts and fowls a help meet for him. The making of woman was only a last resource. The whole story implies inferiority and subjection to man. She was only made to be a servant to man, like his beasts and his fowls. And this degrading idea of woman's position runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, as we shall see as we proceed. The whole Bible is a male book, by males, for males. Had woman anything to do in the production of the Bible it would have been a very different book from what it is.

In the account of the Fall, in the third chapter of Genesis, the chief blame is put on the woman and the chief punishment is pronounced against her. Adam put the blame on the woman, the woman put it on the serpent, and God put the greatest punishment on the woman. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii., 16). The key to the whole position of woman in the Bible is contained in the sentence, "he shall rule over thee." She was to be the servant and property of man, like his slaves and his animals. And this brutal Bible notion survives amongst ignorant men to this day, for many of them think they can treat their wives as they like, and even sell them when so disposed. That the sin of the Fall is laid to the charge of woman is not confined to the Old Testament; it is repeated in the New Testament. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii., 13, 14); "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. ii., 8, 9).

The same idea is embodied in what is called the Ten Commandments. The woman is classed with the property of man, such as his house, his ox, and his ass. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." (Exodus xx. 17). Throughout the Old Testament the inferiority of woman is implied. A father could sell his daughter to a man for a wife without consulting her wishes. Child-bearing defiled a mother, but not the father, and giving birth to a girl defiled her twice as much as giving birth to a boy. In the case of a boy the mother was unclean seven days, but in the case of a girl she was unclean two weeks. Of course the father was clean all the time. In the case of adultery the laws were severe against the woman, but not against the man. The power which the law gave to the man over his wife and daughter placed them completely at his mercy.

The estimate of the Preacher of woman is in agreement with her position throughout the Bible. "And I find more bitter than death, the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold this I have found saith the preacher, counting one by one to find out the account: which my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found: but a woman among all those have I not found." (Preacher vii. 26, 27, 28). Here, as elsewhere, woman is inferior to man, and worse than man. The reason for that is, man wrote the Bible, and woman had no hand in the making of it. Had the Bible been written by women it would have been an entirely different book. The God of the Bible is a male, because he was made by males. Had woman made a God she would have made a female one. But woman had no right of any kind, personally, economically, or socially. All the rights belonged to man. The right over self belonged to man only. The wife and daughter had no right except in the hands of fathers and husbands. Economically, wives and daughters had no right to anything. Everything belonged to the man; and, socially, woman had no rights. The only vocation of woman was to obey man and serve him, like a slave. She was excluded from every office, every authority and privilege. That was the rule. Exceptions prove the rule. She was excluded from the priesthood. The priests were all males. Of course, I only refer to the Jewish priests. And the Christian priests are no exception, they are all males. The twelve apostles were twelve males. Jesus, of whom women think so much, left them out in the cold. In the Church, all the offices, authority, and privilege were reserved for males. Socially, again, woman had no personal right or standing. The Sanhedrims were all males. The

scribes, lawyers, doctors, and officials were males. All avenues of profit, authority, and honor were closed against women, and jealously reserved for males. And owing to the influence of the Bible the position of woman remained in that hopeless condition until very recent times. In our own country, woman is only partially emancipated. She is not placed on an equality with man. Within the memory of living men and women, woman was barred from all colleges and professions. To-day she is not welcomed in any of them. Doctors and lawyers do all they can to prevent her admission to their unions. And her chief opponents are Christians, influenced by selfishness and Bible teaching. Parliament is closed against her, and she has no voice to determine who shall go there to represent her. There is much to be done yet before woman is thoroughly emancipated and placed in a position of equality with man, her natural place. And the chief barrier across her path of progress is the Bible.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops.

The oracle of the City Temple has joined the martyrs. Having refused to pay his rates, as a Passive Resister, he suffered a distraint upon the furniture at his anything but pauper home at Enfield. A silver lamp was seized and sold by auction. Of course it realised the £3 odd which the rate-collector wanted. Mr. Campbell is now a distinguished hero—as Nonconformist heroes go. Next time, perhaps, he will play up for two or three days in Holloway Prison. A martyrdom like that would last him for the rest of his lifetime.

Professor Massie, of Oxford, a leading Passive Resister, is one of the prospective Liberal candidates for Ipswich. As he aims at becoming a law-maker it is natural that he should feel it necessary, or at least advisable, to say something in justification of his rôle as a law-breaker. What he has to say upon the subject, however, only shows that Professors can be guilty of very bad logic. He points out that Lord Halifax has declared, on behalf of the English Church Union, that if the Nonconformists win at the next elections, and establish unsectarian religious teaching at the public expense, "there will be a general refusal of rates on the part of all Churchmen throughout the country." You see, therefore, Professor Massie says, that the principle of Passive Resistance is accepted by Churchmen themselves; so it is nonsense to accuse Nonconformists of singularity. But it was Nonconformists who started the game; the Churchmen merely threaten to follow suit—with the ace.

Professor Massie's argument is like that of a burglar who should fire at a householder, and get fired at himself in return; and then justify his own use of a revolver by arguing that the householder had one too.

The Education Council of the Congregational Union has prepared another hypocritical manifesto, which is being forwarded to all its representatives throughout the country. It positively reeks with the usual Nonconformist clap-trap about "religious equality" and "unsectarian instruction." Everything is done to shirk the plain issue which a good many Nonconformists already see to be inevitable. Congregationalists ought to be able to recognise that there must be "sectarian instruction," that there cannot be "religious equality," and that there cannot but be "religious tests," while religion is allowed at all in the public schools. The only possible way to banish sectarian teaching, to abolish religious tests, and to establish religious equality, is to introduce Secular Education. And, for our part, we believe the leaders of Nonconformity know this as well as we do. What they are fighting for is not religious liberty but the control of State education. Simply this and nothing more.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, who has never been known even to squeak a protest against the imprisonment of Peculiar People as felons for trusting to prayer when their children are sick, according to New Testament instructions; this very gentleman appeals to all the Free Churches to hold special prayer-meetings, asking the Lord "that the Government's licensing proposals may be brought to nought." If Mr. Meyer does not believe in prayer, this appeal proves him a hypocrite; if he does believe in prayer, his silence over the Peculiar People proves him something very much like a scoundrel.

Mr. Meyer has another prayerful proposal; namely, that Nonconformist ministers and Church parsons should meet together for "united prayer on behalf of the nation." The reverend gentleman appears to think that the Lord will listen better if his ears are thoroughly well battered.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley advises the *Daily News* to "keep to cocoa." This expression occurs in his first letter replying to that journal's attack upon his candidature in South Hackney. We know very little about the question in dispute, and we do not propose to discuss it. But we cannot help smiling at the silly airs of intellectual as well as moral superiority which the *Daily News* gave itself over Mr. Bottomley's second letter. "So far as the references to ourselves are concerned," it said, "we leave Mr. Bottomley's indecent epistle to speak for itself." "Indecent" is good; it is a word these pious people are very fond of, and perhaps they are good authorities upon it. But it is not true that the *Daily News* let Mr. Bottomley's epistle speak for itself. Calling it "indecent," to begin with, is an appeal to prejudice. But there was something worse. The headline printed in front of the epistle ran: "Another Vulgar Letter from the Financier." This is how the *Daily News* lets letters speak for themselves.

The *Daily News* might easily find something better to do than circulating missionary yarns. For instance, it might look after its advertisements, and decline to insert things which would never find a place in an "infidel" journal like the *Freethinker*. Does our contemporary believe in the honesty of advertisements that invite people to earn £15 weekly with a capital of only £10 without work or worry?

What pious yarns are told about "distinguished" men of God! And how silly some of them are! Here is a cutting from *Tit-Bits*:

"A pathetic story is told which well illustrates the goodness of heart of the Bishop of London. One broiling summer's day not so long ago Dr. Winnington Ingram visited a dying girl in an East-end garret. The patient, whose death was imminent, cried out for water, and the Bishop—he was Bishop of Stepney then—endeavored to accede to her request. But search where he would in the hovel, there was not a drop of anything with which to moisten the poor girl's lips. The kindly Bishop was not to be outdone, however. He walked half a mile to his house and returned soon carrying a supply of water."

This is how religious stories are written. Fancy a house in London with no water in it! However poor people are they must drink. And they could hardly depend upon water brought to them out of charity. No, they trust to the Water Company—just like their "betters." But even if the Bishop did find a house without water, why on earth should he walk a mile to fetch some? Couldn't he have popped in next door, instead of keeping a dying girl waiting at least a quarter of an hour? Are we to believe that the neighbors wouldn't have given a cup of cold water to moisten the poor creature's lips with? The story is simply idiotic.

The flirtation between Royalty and the Salvation Army continues. Perhaps we ought to call it by a more serious name. Before the breaking up of the Strand Congress a message was sent by "a thousand staff officers of the Salvation Army assembled in Council" to King Edward at Buckingham Palace. It was a loyal message, and it wound up with a pious hope "that the blessings of a full salvation may descend upon you and upon all who are dear to you." Which, we suppose, means that the King and all the royal family may reach heaven instead of dropping into the other place. King Edward, in return, sent his "warm thanks" and his best wishes for the success of the Salvation Army. He also referred to Booth as "your General" and to the gentlemen who sent him the loyal telegram as "your Staff"—which must be eminently gratifying.

Sir Charles Wyndham is a fine actor, but, as the saying goes, he should stick to his last. Speaking at a recent meeting of the Actors' Church Union, he talked about bridging the chasm which at present divided the stage from the Church, so that the mother and child might come together again; for, as he said, they all knew that the Church gave birth to the drama. But who are "they"? For our part, we deny Sir Charles Wyndham's statement. The Church fostered the old miracle-plays, and the miracle-plays went before the English drama; but to represent the Church as therefore the mother of the drama itself is downright absurdity. The Church always knew better. It hated the drama and tried to trample it out of existence.

"Happily," Sir Charles Wyndham said, "the two professions were beginning to appreciate each other." How nice! But are they two professions? Some years ago the late Dr. Talmage (we believe) made a savage attack on Sarah

Bernhardt, who was then playing in America. The great actress did not prosecute him, neither did she lose her temper. "You and I," she said, "belong to the same profession: why should we quarrel with each other?" That was her bright sarcasm. Talmage didn't admit the joint occupation—though the public had their own opinion on the matter.

"I believe God sent me to punch that man's head." So said the Rev. Henry Alban Smith, curate of Denver, Norfolk; but the Downham Market magistrates could not accept the theory of his inspiration. They fined him 20s. and 32s. costs for assaulting George Munns during a pastoral visit, and an inquiry why the said George Munns did not come to church.

Mr. J. Williams Benn was not thought at one time to be overburdened with religion, but now that he is Chairman of the London County Council and M.P. for Devonport he apparently fancies he ought to see to his character in this direction. Last week he attended the annual assembly of the United Methodist Free Churches, and warmly welcomed them to London, not in his official capacity, but "as a Free Churchman who admired the work of that democratic Church." (Great Applause.) Having put them in a good temper by a bit of flattery, which is warranted to work the trick every time, he proceeded to treat them to some humor, calculated, we suppose, for the level of religious intelligence. He said that he had the misfortune not to be born a Methodist (as if nature instead of training made Church members), but he had endeavored to overcome that drawback by marrying a Methodist, and he had found the experiment most satisfactory. (Great laughter.) Then he sailed off on a serious tack, and said that he felt assured that unless they brought the people under the influence of that holy religion which had brought them there that morning their social agencies must fail. (Tremendous Applause.)

We wonder if Mr. Benn meant it all. Does he really believe that the English people cannot be improved socially unless they all turn Methodists—or something similar? We should like to know.

What a relief it is to turn to the sincerer public life of "infidel" France, where statesmen, and even politicians, do not think it necessary to court religious prejudices! And why, oh why, was it reserved for the "democratic" Mr. Benn to be the first Chairman of the London County Council to play up to the orthodox gallery?

The Czar seems to be praying (as he has prayed before) for a son and heir. Several old women are said to be interesting themselves in the matter, although Providence shows no disposition to hurry up. A "prophetess" from Oriel claims that she can change the sex of children after their birth. What a pity she did not speak before! We suppose it is too late to work backwards and turn one of the Czar's daughters into a son.

The article on "The Tsar" in the new *Quarterly Review* is announced as "from the pen of a Russian official of high rank." Substantially it represents the Czar as suffering from the form of swelled-head which is apt to overtake rulers by the grace of God. When a poor "forked radish" feels himself called to govern a nation by divine right he is very likely to carry on in a way to set other people laughing—or crying. The Czar has come to look upon himself (this writer says) as the centre of the world, with a heavenly mission to set everything right on this planet. If he had a great political genius it would not be quite so bad. But he has nothing of the kind. He is quite a commonplace being, and in some respects even weak minded. "He is ever struggling with phantoms," we are told, "fighting with windmills, conversing with saints, or consulting the spirits of the dead." A very pretty person to preside over the destinies of a hundred million people!

Clergymen of all denominations in the Upper Thames Valley are wailing over the lax observance of the Sabbath in that district. Crowds of visitors are on the river, and the natives go to see the spectacle, so the churches are empty. But how is this state of things to be stopped? People cannot be compelled to go to church, and the entertainment doesn't attract them. We submit that the clergy should carry their complaints elsewhere. Let them seek the Lord. He is the only party who can help them.

The eight Sunday traders at Darlington who have been fined every week for more than three years have triumphed at last. The Bench decided to dismiss the charges last week. We offer our condolence to the local bigots—especially to those of the clerical brand.

During a recent thunderstorm a church was struck by lightning near Dover, grave damage being done to the steeple. "Providence" has not yet learnt to recognise its own buildings.

More "Providence." A cablegram from Manila states that a flood, caused by a cloud-burst, has destroyed San Juan del Monte. Two hundred lives were lost, and immense damage was done to property. There was a rainfall of seventeen inches within twenty-four hours after the cloud-burst.

Many deaths have resulted from the excessive heat, and some of them have occurred in the very House of Prayer. Mary Pimlott, for instance, aged sixty-two, of Davenham, Northwich, attended the Wesleyan church (on a Sunday evening too!) and joined heartily in the service. After singing two verses of the last hymn she fell backward and expired. There is no particular moral, of course, except that of Ecclesiastes—"One thing befalleth them, yea they have all one breath."

Mr. Bennett Burleigh, writing from Japan to the *Daily Telegraph*, utters a deal of what seems to us great nonsense about a possible new religion amongst the Japanese, and of a new Church in which all sects—Shintoist, Buddhist, Mohammedan, and Christian—are to lie down together. It is to have "one simple, clear doctrine, which shall appeal alike to philosophers and fools." What a funny doctrine, to be sure!

Editorial currency is given in the *Daily News*, which probably knows better, to missionary statements by the Rev. C. T. Collyer as to the wonderful spread of Christianity in Korea. Instead of repeating these statements by professionally interested persons, our contemporary should deal with the very opposite statements made by perfectly disinterested persons like Mr. George Lynch, the well-known war correspondent. Telling lies in England may deceive English subscribers, but it will not make a single fresh Christian in Korea.

Old Dowie is an exception to the proverb about prophets. He is more honored in his own country than he is abroad. The people of Zion City gave him an immense reception when he returned home, and his miraculous powers seem to have gathered fresh strength in consequence. Rain was wanted badly, and Dowie prayed for it. When he had wrestled with the Lord for the brief space of fifteen minutes clouds gathered from all points of the compass at once, and there was soon a tremendous downpour, such as Zion City had not seen for many months. Good Old Dowie!

Roman Catholic negroes at Baltimore demand to attend the church as whites. Priests reply that there is a special church provided for them. Blacks and whites will mingle, of course, in heaven; but not even the blood of Christ can unite them on earth. Yet the white Christians, when they get into debate with "infidels" especially, will talk by the hour about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and quote with great unction the text about God having made of one blood all nations of men that live in this world. They don't mean a word of it. Watch them when a "nigger" comes along.

Here is a pretty negro story from Oyster Bay, where President Roosevelt is enjoying his summer vacation. A negro clergyman entered a barber's shop and requested to be shaved. The barber replied that he did not shave blacks. "Why not?" asked the negro. "Your color is against you," said the barber. The clergyman then turned to the patrons in the shop, and asked them this question: "Are you gentlemen going to allow a Christian man of character and education to be treated in this way just because of his color?" No reply was vouchsafed, and the barber turned him into the street. This is Christianity! Any decent "infidel" would have played a better part. Yes, our mind goes back to a cold night many years ago when Fred Douglas, the black slave orator, walked about the streets of an American city because no hotel would let him have accommodation, and when Robert Ingersoll the "infidel," hearing of it, went out and found the hunted black man and took him to his own "infidel" home. Which was a finer thing than the finest oration ever delivered.

Rev. J. Stratton, who is a good member of the Humanitarian League, says in a letter to the *New Age* that it is folly to go to the Old Testament for the regulation of our conduct. We agree with him, and we admit that he is half a Freethinker, but we should like to see him "go the whole hog." Mr. Stratton says that he consults the New Testament, which is "perfect." Is it, indeed? In relation to the

subject of "Cruelty to Animals," which Mr. Stratton had chiefly in mind, we beg to ask him to point out one single humanitarian text in the whole of the New Testament. This is a plain question, and we invite Mr. Stratton to give it a plain answer.

Madame Heloise Lassas and the Rev. Paul Mailon have been cast in £500 damages for a particularly mean and cruel slander on Arthur John Chapman, whom they got turned out of his situation at Harrod's. The judge expressed himself very strongly against the defendants, who, he said, had been "guilty of despicable conduct."

George Stone, of Ladywell-road, Lewisham, is doing nine months' hard labor for embezzling some £500 belonging to his employers, Messrs. Hudson Bros., of 160 Bond-street. Prisoner posed as a religious man, and preached and lectured to the men under him.

The man who *must* thieve should at least keep his hands off ministers. Oswald Shepherd is now doing three years' penal servitude for stealing some things from men of God in North London. The things were not very valuable, and the sentence seems disproportionate, but it should be remembered that preachers are not overstocked with forgiveness. The Rev. John William Fall, of Upper Holloway, was relieved of a silver muffineer; the Vicar of St. Thomas's, Finsbury Park, was eased of a silver stamp box; and the Rev. J. Wood, of St. John's Park, was laid under contribution for an umbrella. Had the three articles been worth ten pounds Oswald Shepherd might have had ten years. We hope he will be a reformed character when he comes out of prison, but if he will go "lagging" again he should, for his own sake, give the go-by to the apostles of the religion of love.

Even the lunatics of different religions are not to be mixed up in Germany. Two new State asylums are being built in Westphalia, in order that Protestant and Catholic lunatics may be housed separately. We suppose this is the only way to keep them quiet. The worse the lunatic the more acute the bigotry. Was it not the Bishop of Exeter who, at a confirmation in the County Asylum, said that he had always found lunatics peculiarly susceptible to religious influences? Many a Freethinker has thought the same thing, but was too polite to say so.

According to the Rome correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, the Pope is "much afflicted by the sad beginning of his pontificate" in regard to France. The indiscreet action of the Vatican promises to lead to a complete separation between Church and State in France, and this would mean a loss to the Church of 40,000,000 francs yearly. This is the cause of the Pope's sadness. The loss of all that cash, or even the fear of it, is enough to make him feel melancholy.

The story of the Crucifixion doesn't seem to have any effect in the way of emptying gaols, but it is believed to have a deterrent effect on the gentlemen who do the flogging in the British Navy—where that degrading punishment is still retained. A man who recently came under the care of the Church Army was found to have the Crucifixion tattooed on his back. He explained that he had this done many years ago as a protection against flogging. It was believed that no one would wield the lash over such a picture. Well, if this be true, it is about the only good we ever heard of the Crucifixion.

A terrible case of religious mania has befallen a family named Lench, in Seesch. One of the daughters believed that she had seen in a vision the Virgin Mary, and this was taken to mean that death was approaching. All the members of the family stripped themselves naked, and waited to be taken up to heaven. Another daughter tied her four-years-old nephew to a tree and beat him till he died, as this was the surest way of securing heaven for him. Another niece was trampled to death by her infuriated aunt. When secured by neighbors and gendarmes every member of the family was covered with blood.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Dumont's *Souvenir Sur Mirabeau*, which Macaulay praised and Carlyle made great use of in his *French Revolution*, has just been translated for the first time into English. All the newspapers have had something to say about it—mostly gush; but all of them, as far as we know, have avoided mentioning the fact that Mirabeau was an Atheist. It would never do to admit, at least gratuitously, that a great man can be an unbeliever in "some God or other." So the British public is bamboozled by these gentlemen of the press in the interest of a prejudice which a good many of them do not really share.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during July and August.)

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—July 24, morning, Kingsland; August 14, Fails-worth; 21, morning, Kingsland; afternoon, Victoria Park.
- J. K. SKES.—Your letter arrived too late for notice in last week's paper. The meeting you refer to at Southend was broken up by Salvation Army Hooligans was evidently the same one that Mr. Howard wrote to us about. The local Salvation Army captain told one of the newspapers that the disorderly Salvationists must have come from some other place; but the explanation seems a trifle thin.
- R. LEWIS.—Accept our thanks for your good wishes.
- THOMAS MEYNELL.—We have some recollection of the case, but it is a vague one, though we are quite sure a complaint was raised. Sorry we cannot help you with a precise reference.
- J. L. G. MACKINNON.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops." Always pleased to hear from you.
- P. HORD.—There is no thought, at least at present, of reprinting our own or Mr. Cohen's articles on Herbert Spencer. Probably they would be helpful to some students, but there is a commercial side to such ventures.
- G. WEIR.—Pleased to hear of your activity at Leeds.
- W. J. MARSHMAN.—Your suggestion has been made before by others, and we may try to act upon it shortly.
- C. J. and MRS. DYE.—Received with thanks.
- W. CLAYTON.—The pious yarn has done duty ever since we can remember. Talmage, Joseph Cook, Dr. Hastings, and Dr. Torrey have all used it. It seems to have happened many times in lots of places.
- J. GIBBONS.—Thanks. See also "Acid Drops." Your comment is amusing.
- V. RAGER.—Quite so. Thanks. Kindly let us have the copy early for next issue.
- THE ROME CONGRESS FUND.—Already acknowledged £14 13s. Received this week:—A Friend £5, F. Bonte £1, C. J. £1, A. J. Fincken £1, W. Elcoat 2s., E. Jones 5s., J. Gibbons 2s. 6d., J. C. 1s., G. F. H. McCluskey 5s., F. W. Clemence 2s., C. Rickards 2s.
- G. F. H. McCLUSKEY.—That is the trouble with several. They do not feel quite sure about being able to go to Rome until pretty near the time. We can wait a little longer, but next week's *Freethinker* must have something definite.
- S. LEWIS.—The Christian religion is "impossible" because no one can practise it. Who tries to carry out the Sermon on the Mount? Dr. Magee, the late Bishop of Peterborough, said that any society that based itself upon that Sermon would go to ruin in a week.
- NORMAN MURRAY (Montreal) approves our attitude towards Dowie. He says that Dowie and his followers may be laughed at as lunatics, but should not be ill-treated.
- L. B. GALLAGHER.—Why should we trouble our head about a lunatic Christian writer who believes (or pretends to) that Mr. Foote gets, or ever got, £150 for a day's lectures? He would like to see 150 shillings to begin with.
- A. POOLE.—Our views on Atheism and Agnosticism, as well as those of Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, are set forth in our pamphlet, *What Is Agnosticism?* to which we refer you. Price 3d.
- F. W. CLEMENCE.—Glad to hear you are so pleased with the *Freethinker*. With regard to your query, our pamphlet, *Darwin on God*, would probably supply all you want. Price 6d.
- P. T. ROSS.—What you say is true, but we had better not get too near the hot embers of that political controversy.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- AMERICANS IN LONDON.—Some people seem very fond of eating other people's dinners. Secular Societies, to our own knowledge, during the past thirty years, have held scores of meetings to commemorate Thomas Paine. To talk about Paine commemorations as something novel in England is the veriest humbug. We regret to see American Freethought journals taken in by artful communications, but we cannot spend our time on detailed corrections. We have other work to do.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
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The Rome Congress.

I WANT to have a straight talk with the readers of the *Freethinker* on the subject of the International Freethought Congress, which is to be held at Rome the third week in September.

This Congress is a very important event. Other Congresses for many years have been working up to it. The Congress of Congresses, so to speak, is to take place in the City of Cities. There are larger cities than Rome, and, from an ordinary point of view, more important cities. But there are only two cities in the world with magical names. One is called Athens; and it stands for "the grandeur that was Greece." The other is often called the Eternal City; and it stands for "the glory that was Rome." "First name of the world's names, Rome," as Mr. Swinburne sang in the manliest splendor of his genius. What a city, and with what memories! The city of the ancient masters of the earth, the city of Cæsar, the empire city of the greatest polity the world has ever seen; the city from which, in spite of all its faults and failings, and all its vices and crimes, radiated the civilisation which made modern Europe possible. The city afterwards of the Papacy, and its chief possession; for the very name of Rome had a perpetual witchery, and, as Hobbes finely said, the great Catholic Church was but the ghost of the dead Roman Empire sitting throned and crowned upon its grave.

Christian doctrines were invented farther east—nearer Asia, the motherland of superstition. Rome invented but one dogma; the dogma of its own infallibility. It organised religion, as the first Rome had organised empire. Its genius was not metaphysical but practical, and its object was wealth and power. These it gained, and these it kept. And it keeps them still. For amidst the ruin of the Christian faith there is but one Church that stands firm and proud; the Church that existed long before all the Protestant Churches, and will long outlive the last of them; the Church that is Christianity historically considered; the Church with which Freethought will fight its final battles for the liberation of Humanity.

Ancient Rome, we are often told, was disgraced by gladiatorial shows, and arenas stained with blood. But modern Rome afforded a keener relish to the palate of cruelty. In the name of Christ it brought forth the best of men and burnt them alive. The Christian mob gloated over the dying agonies of murdered heroes. It was bad when gladiators were "butchered to make a Roman holiday"; it was worse when the elect of mankind were deliberately butchered in the very name of infinite justice and holiness.

The grandest of all the martyrs burnt at Rome was Giordano Bruno. Hunted over Europe for half a generation, he fell at last into the bloody jaws of the Inquisition. For seven years he was imprisoned and tortured. Never once in all that time did he see the face of a friend. But when at last they led him out of his dungeon for a mock trial, and sentenced him to be burnt to ashes at the stake, they found his noble spirit still untamed. He told his judges that they pronounced his sentence with more fear than he heard it. A week afterwards he met his fiery fate with dauntless fortitude. Never was death more desolate. From the stake to which he was bound he looked over a sea of faces, and all of them hostile. Not one man or woman whispered "brother!" as he made his last stand against bigotry and oppression. A courage almost superhuman was needed to sustain him, but it was not lacking in that supreme hour; the proud look never left his face but with life itself, and he turned away his head disdainfully when they offered him the crucifix to kiss as he stood wreathed in the flames of their hell upon earth.

Where that great crime was committed by the Church of Christ a memorial now stands to the most magnificent of martyrs. And whether it stand so long or not, the name of Giordano Bruno

will live when the walls of the Vatican have crumbled into dust.

To that Rome, the scene of that great crime, Freethinkers are now preparing to go from all parts of the world; and their assembly will show that Freethought is as international as the Christian Church. Representatives of Freethought will be sent from every "Christian" country to declare that the warfare against superstition is world-wide, and that the hostility to Christianity is conterminous with civilisation.

Will the British Freethinkers be behind those of other nations in this effort? Surely not. Bruno's visit to England was the one sweet oasis in the storm-vexed desert of his life. Let his name evoke the same hospitality. Moreover, it was English Freethought at which Voltaire lighted his splendid torch. The land of Thomas Paine should vie with the land of Voltaire in making the forthcoming Rome Congress a great demonstration of the Freethought forces of the world.

The National Secular Society—the old historic Society founded by Charles Bradlaugh—should be well represented at Rome. I have no right to speak for other societies; I have a right to speak for this one. And I call upon its members and friends—indeed, upon all the readers of this journal—to provide the necessary funds for a satisfactory British delegation to the International Freethought Congress. I see that £200 is being raised to send Dr. Wilson from Cincinnati; and as much, probably, will be subscribed to send Dr. Moncure D. Conway from New York. This should be a broad hint, and a stimulus, to the Freethinkers of the old country.

The time is now drawing near. By the end of July, although the fund will not be closed then, the N. S. S. Executive will have to appoint its delegates; and I trust it will feel justified in appointing a creditable number. I may add that I expect to go to Rome myself. I think I ought to—for the Society's sake. And I hope to be accompanied by some of my colleagues.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

So many Freethinkers who wish to go to the Rome Congress are unable to commit themselves absolutely just yet, that it is necessary to postpone definite arrangements for a little—certainly for another week. If it be decided to join the French party, going by special train from Paris, the latest date open is August 15. This would cost some £8 8s., to which would have to be added another £2 3s. for the journey from London to Paris and back. But a special party may be organised through Messrs. Cook for very little more per head, providing the number be not less than twenty. That number, at any rate, ought to be certain by next Tuesday (July 26), and it could be increased afterwards. We may add that the figure specified would include hotel accommodation. We expect to give full particulars next week. Meanwhile we may add two things; first, that our friends may be assured that the cost of the trip need not exceed £13 in any case, unless they lengthen the trips for their own pleasure; second, that they need not trouble about the childlike and bland letters they may receive on this matter from an agency that seems very much in want of patrons.

Mr. C. Cohen, who has had some fine meetings in Victoria Park, is leaving London for a three weeks' holiday by the "sea waves" which are anything but "sad" in this weather.

Mr. H. Percy Ward has concluded his Freethought mission at Birmingham. All the meetings were well attended, and the interest displayed warrants a hope of good results to the cause. Mr. Ward has gone on to similar work in South Lancashire.

The Liverpool Branch had a very successful picnic on Sunday (July 17). A most enjoyable drive in magnificent weather from Birkenhead to Burton Woods was followed by a dinner at Mrs. Venables', sixty members and friends participating in the function. A cricket match between "Married and Single" was attempted in the afternoon, but, after being ordered from three different fields by Sabbatarian

farmers, the game had to be abandoned. The drive home made atonement.

The South Shields "saints" gathered in strong force at the Holywell Dene picnic on Sunday. Other "saints" were present from Newcastle, Sunderland, etc. After tea there were games, music, and the inevitable camera; and the drive home, in perfect weather, left nothing to be desired.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, is working hard on his farm to "make up some of the losses he has incurred in advocating Infidelity." He says he is working seven days a week—with the bees; but none of his animals or employees work on Sunday. At this time of the year he is as jolly as a sandboy.

President Diaz is a very remarkable man. He cleared Mexico of bandits and revolutionists, and gave the country peace and prosperity. The country, in return, has gone on re-electing him President ever since. In 1891 President Diaz gave Mexico "the inestimable boon of free, secular, and compulsory education." These are the words of the *Westminster Gazette*, which, curiously enough, objects to the secular part of this "inestimable boon" in England.

The Vatican is bringing matters to a crisis in France. Orders were issued from the home of the Papacy to the Bishops of Laval and Dijon, telling the one to resign, and the other that he might consider himself relieved of his episcopal duties. The only offence of these Bishops, it appears, was their correct attitude towards the Republican Government. Naturally, therefore, the Government accepted these orders from Rome as a challenge. The Council of Ministers has resolved to demand from the Vatican the immediate withdrawal of these letters to the Bishops of Laval and Dijon. If the Vatican refuses to withdraw them, the Papal Nuncio in Paris will be given his passports, and this may be the beginning of the end of the Concordat.

It is rather odd that the *Daily News* should say that "such a state of things is infinitely to be regretted" in France, and "not least because it involves the continued assertion by a Christian Church of a right, not to fair treatment, but to political supremacy." Just as if any Christian Church ever fought for anything else, when it thought it saw its opportunity. The Anglican Church has supremacy in England, and the Free Churches are fighting to wrest the supremacy from her. That is all the Education struggle and the Passive Resistance movement mean.

Mr. Thomas Common, the translator of Nietzsche, sends us the third number of his *Notes for Good Europeans*, which is not priced, and is apparently only obtainable from the author at 8 Whitehouse-terrace, Corstorphine, Edinburgh. The article likely to be of most interest to Freethinkers is the one on "New Religious Formulae." Mr. Common is, we believe, nothing of a supernaturalist, but he is desirous of "enlisting religious influences on behalf of modern enlightenment"—which, even on his own showing, is a risky experiment. Amongst his "Short Notes" he girds at "the boasted 'rationalists' and 'freethinkers,'" and asks why they are "so irrational in many cases as to insist on principles which would practically result in the stupid, superstitious, and vicious getting the upper hand." This is rather a cryptic utterance, but if it alludes to the "population question" we think Mr. Common is lamentably mistaken. We thank him, however, for introducing us in the article aforesaid to a book we should like to see on *The Survival of the Fittest, or The Philosophy of Power*, by "Ragnar Redbeard," who writes as follows on the Christian religion:—

"Primitive Christianity cunningly appealed to a world of superstitious slaves, eager for some mode of escape that meant not the giving and receiving of battle-strokes. It organised them for the overthrow of heroic principles, and substituted for a genuine nobility based on battle-selection, a crafty theocracy founded upon priestcraft, alms-giving, politicalism, and all that is impure and subterranean. Truly has Christianity been called 'the fatal dower of Constantine,' for it has suffocated and is suffocating the seeds of heroism. For two thousand years it has absolutely overturned human reason, overthrown common sense, infected the world with madness, submissiveness, and degeneracy. Truly there is a way that seems the right unto a people, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." We should like to hear more of this writer. Mr. Common will perhaps oblige with a little further information.

The reward of all the virtues lies in themselves, for they are not practised for remuneration, the profit of having acted rightly is to have acted so.—*Seneca*.

"Spirit Fruit."—III.

NEW CHRISTIAN CULT WHICH IS NOW THE
TALK OF THE NEWSPAPERS.

UNIVERSAL LOVE, NON-RESISTANCE, AND COMMON OWNERSHIP OF ALL THINGS, INCLUDING WIFE AND CHILD,
THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLES.

(By Dr. J. B. Wilson, from the "Blue Grass Blade," Lexington, America.)

THE BLINDNESS OF WOMEN.

The reason that nunneries, free love, and polygamous institutions flourish to-day is due, first, to the excessive sentiment, and second, to the small perception of woman-kind.

But few women can see that they are in the mental toils of designing men, that their bodies as well as their souls are made a religious commodity of.

Take this one instance. There is not a woman of normal mind in the whole country who has been a mother, could be made to believe that other than her husband was the father of her child. But strange to say, the great mass of mothers believe that a ghost was the father of a child by an illiterate Jewish girl, some two thousand years ago. When woman can be made to believe this, they can be made to believe anything. There is no story told in the name of religion that they will not believe. Men have made all the religions of the world and, knowing the weakness of woman, they have made these religions, not only for the purpose of getting possession of woman's mind and soul, but of her body too. It is for this reason that all religions are founded upon a sex-basis, chastity figuring chiefly in some and indulgence in others, one being as unnatural and vicious as the other. Thousands of women have signed long petitions to Congress to oust Reed Smoot on account of the polygamous institution to which he is attached. These same women pass right by polygamous institutions every day of their lives and never give them a thought. The half million public women of the country and the million more who are not public, but who are privately living the same life, attest the almost universal practice of polygamy. The good women of the country are horrified at the honest practice of polygamy as practised by the Mormons and endorsed by the Bible and the God they worship, but they are totally blind to the hypocritical practice of polygamy as indulged in by their own husbands, brothers and sons.

Oh, would that woman might get this twist out of her brain—that she would wake up and see that she, herself, is the great Christian commodity, which depends not only upon the enslavement of her mind, but traffic in her body. Whether it be Mormonism in the name of Christ, Spirit Fruit in the name of Christ, Celibacy in the name of Christ, Brides of the Church in the name of Christ, marriage in the name of Christ, or Wednesday night prayer meeting in the name of Christ, it is all the same enslavement in degree.

A CASE FOR COMSTOCK.

The large daily papers have printed whole pages, inserting big illustrations in their exposition of Beilhart's Spirit Fruit Society. They have suggested and insinuated plainly that the basis of the cult is free love. They have described the beauty of some of the girls in the institution, and referred to them as "juicy fruit."

The words "Spirit Fruit" are always put in quotations. They have hinted at the sex-freedom of the Spirit Fruit Society so sensuously that it brings the blush to every cheek. Here is a case for Comstock. The law declares that obscenity is based upon language which would excite the passions of the young. Such language these papers have used. They have made the subject a matter of sensation and sensuous sport. Comstock hounded Ida C. Craddock to her death for discussing the sex relation from a scientific standpoint. Why don't he have all these papers indicted for discussing the sex relation in the Spirit Fruit cult from a sensational and salacious standpoint? Why don't he? The reason is plain. He is not looking for millionaire editors who print such erotic stuff along with whole columns of assignation appointments, but instead he is looking for the social, intelligent reformer and his little sheet.

Mr. Moore was sent to the penitentiary for publishing comment on the free love subject, which in no way tended to excite the erotic passions of youth, comment which was purely scientific; but the great daily papers have not stopped at "suggestion," but without any reserve, have fully described the lusciousness of Spirit Fruit.

A young buxom girl, by the name of Mary Herbeson, a convert from Chicago, has been the target of their amatory shafts. All the inmates of Spirit Fruit are called "Blessed." The inmates of other Christian institutions are called "Sisters"—some of them "Mother."

Well, what's in a name? They must have some name, and "Blessed" is just as nice as "Sister."

"Blessed" Herbeson seems to be the favorite at Spirit Farm. Here is the way the *Cincinnati Enquirer* starts out to describe an interview with Blessed Herbeson in its issue of June 5:—

INTERVIEWED "BLESSED."

"The *Enquirer* correspondent visited the 'Spirit Fruit' farm, and had an interview with the youthful convert of Jacob Beilhart. It was already quite dark when the house of the community was reached, and nearly all of its members were lolling on the veranda, resting after the day's toil. Several of the men were barefooted and several of the women were clad in a free-and-easy garment of the bloomer kind, their working attire. One of the men sat in a rocking chair with a woman in his arms, and when the correspondent asked for 'Jacob' the leader of the flock arose from a lounge on which he was lying with "Blessed" in his arms, and came forward. He was barefooted and with his trousers rolled up at the bottom. His appearance bespoke the content he claims to experience from the unconventional life he is leading. Learning that a little private conversation with him was desired, he invited the correspondent to his room upstairs, and, seating himself at a small writing-desk, was at his service. Readily consenting to the request for an interview with 'Blessed,' he called for the girl, who came bouncing upstairs and flung her plump, bloomer-attired body across the foot of a bed like the child that she is."

Somehow or other, Comstock is never able to discover "suggestion" and obscenity except when published by some poor devil who is friendless and without a dollar to defend himself. John R. McClain, the editor of the *Enquirer*, is worth ten to fifteen millions. Why don't Comstock go after him?

THEY'LL LEAVE SPIRIT FRUIT ALONE.

They will not bother Jacob Beilhart, and I will tell you why. He proves his position by the Bible and by the words and acts of Jesus Christ, and should the authorities interfere with him, Beilhart will expose some chapters in the Bible that the clergy are always diligently concealing.

Beilhart is safe from prosecution on the grounds of toleration of all religious belief. He claims that his cult is purely a Christian cult, and as distinctly a feature of Christianity as Catholicism or Methodism or any of the other Christian denominations. Like all the rest, he claims to have the only true interpretation. And why is this not consistent and possible, since all the others declare each other wrong? Here is an extract from one of Beilhart's sermons:—

THE CHRIST SPIRIT.

"It is a privilege to hold up the Christ Spirit, and as the honest hearts see it they will receive it and enter into the joy it alone can give.

"I have long since desired for this time to come, when I might stand before the world and prove to those who wish to know that the Spirit of Christ, that hopes all things, endures all things, and seeks not its own, is yet in the world.

"How can we preach a practical gospel unless we live it? And how can we live it unless we are tried and put into such environments as will reveal what is in us? I have promised you nothing except the joy and peace that comes by giving free action to this Christ Spirit of Love that lives for the service of all.

"Prophets, poets, teachers, and all have been talking of the One God who is All in All. 'He worketh all things after the council of his own will,' said Paul. Jesus declared to Pilate, who thought that he had power to act or refrain from action—'You have no power except it is given you of my father.' Jesus lived the perfect life and set the example, but the world demands a present living demonstration. History will not suffice. So it is given to us to reflect the true life and universal love, which always acts for the good of all, to the world to-day.

"All things are ready to serve this one purpose, for the time of the harvest is here, and all hungry ones who are ready to give their empty hearts to Spirit Universal will partake of the joy and peace which Jesus came to give the world."

THE EGG OF TYRANNY.

I quote this at length to show the public that Spirit Fruit is a purely Christian institution, and to show just what the Bible "leads to."

This is a dose for those to swallow who are always telling of the bad things Infidelity "leads to." It will open the eyes of many Christians. In fact, the world is fast finding out that the Christian religion itself is the egg of tyranny which hatches out nearly every young basilisk of vice in the world. It has hatched out wars and massacres, and slavery and inquisitions, and tortures, polygamy, celibacy, Spirit Fruit, superstition, ignorance, illegitimacy, prostitution, economic oppression, salvation, aristocracy, and what not.

It has warped and narrowed the human mind, and its only help to humanity has been the dispensation of charity, which in itself is degrading, as they have turned beggars themselves in order to feed beggars.

SPIRIT FRUIT IS COMMUNAL.

In this also it is exactly like the Christian heaven—only one class of angels tolerated.

"Universal love," "non-resistance," and the "common ownership of all things," including wife and child, are its cardinal principles.

These are exactly the same as those of the kingdom of heaven, and all of them are the impracticable, visionary dreams of cranks.

There is no such a thing in nature as "universal love," any more than there is universal quantity of mind, or universal memory, or universal taste for Limberger cheese. Each atom has its own distinct individuality, and every positive has its negative.

"Non-resistance" is next thing to *non compos mentis*. There can be no existence without resistance. Non-resistance was one of Jesus' cranky ideas, and more hell has been raised in his name than ever the devil was capable of. To save himself Jesus could not help but be resistant. He broke in among the money changers like a bull in a china shop, and, lashing them right and left, stampeded them all, and, besides, advocated force and even the use of the sword. Non-resistance is also a crank idea of Tolstoi. The elements are all at war. Man eats microbes, and microbes in turn eat men. Non-resistance means stagnation. Justice is not of spontaneous growth. Neither is liberty, nor the security of life. Nature has decreed that you must resist—must fight for it.

Common ownership is another crank vagary. You might as well say that all men should own brains in common. Nature has made some men acquisitive and some benevolent, and she has intended that these and all other faculties shall be exercised. This creates diversity, and the varied mind of man is thus directed in every direction searching out Nature's hidden meanings and uses. It is this exercise of every faculty upon which every development depends, and it is this variety of mind which operates for the general good. There is as little sense in saying that all men should possess in common as that all men should think in common.

Nature never made the sexes to love each other in common any more than she made them to be poets and mathematicians in common.

I see absolutely no difference between Beilhart's Spirit Fruit farm and Jesus Christ's Paradise.

I would not spend the time in writing up Spirit Fruit did it not give me the opportunity to show up Christian inconsistency. I have no doubt wearied some with the length of this article, but as the publisher of this paper is short on copy, I have just cantered along in order to help him fill up.

NATURE MADE MEN TO MIX.

I hope Infidels will never again attempt to organise a community of their own kind. The attempt of Owen in Indiana, and that at Liberty, Mo., ought to be lessons to them for all time. Nature has made variety that general adaptation may prevail, that each be fitted for certain plans and development. Men grow into a common bond only as they mix with and learn of each other.

If we would advance Freethought we must mix with enslaved minds. No general good can be brought about by isolation. Besides, Communism is selfish. It is also conceited—as much as to say, We are superior, or better, than the common herd.

All such communities depend in the first place upon a leader capable of getting donations. The man who can get money can get devotees—instance Dowie, Beilhart, and Mary Baker Eddy. The institutions keep going as long as the money comes in chunks, but this does not last forever. By-and-bye they find themselves in an overcrowded community, they have all got to scratch to live, they grow weary with the sameness of everything, and boom! she busts.

Communism means sameness, and sameness means stagnation, and stagnation means disintegration and death. There is only one solution to the existing evils: crush out monopoly, purify the ballot, and so regulate labor that every man will get just what he earns, and no more; take the clutch of the priest from the brain of childhood, that it may be free to develop its natural functions; and then this grand old world will be a beautiful world, and good enough for anyone, and the government as near perfect as anyone should wish or expect.

SPIRIT FRUIT DESTRUCTIVE OF HOME LIFE.

Since the law tolerates all forms of religious beliefs, the Spirit Fruit brand of Christianity advanced by Beilhart is just as legitimate as the celibacy brands advanced by others. Each interprets Christ in his own way, and this the law allows. Both alike pattern after Christ and Mary Magdalene. But both alike are the enemies and destroyers of home-life.

The State should wake up and put an end to all such forms of prostitution which are concealed under the guise of sanctity. I have respect for the poor girl, homeless, friendless, who takes to the street to ward off the pangs of starvation, but I have no respect for institutions like Beilhart's and nun-houses conducted by sleek-minded, lecherous rascals who are adepts in luring weak-minded women into their toils. No better example is offered than this of the corruption of home life under the guise of religion.

More and more it should dawn upon everyone that marriage should be taken entirely out of the hands of religion. Both State and religion too cannot control marriage at the same time. The State has given the largest share of its power into the hands of a class. Having thus surrendered its power, it is impotent to control marriage and divorce, and to protect woman and home as they should be protected.

I believe in

MARRIAGE AND THE HOME.

I believe in the State compelling every man to provide for and protect and clothe the children for whose beings he is responsible and direct them on their start in life. I believe that the State should guard with jealous care the ties which bind father, mother, and child. If there is anything pure and holy in this life it is the family union. I do not believe in free love. I don't believe in men and women procreating like dogs and cats. While I admit that there are exceptions to all rules; while I admit that there are, now and then, cases of sex freedom, in which more happiness exists than in married bondage; yet such cases are exceptional, and found only among the highly intellectual, and the naturally moral. But since the masses are generally ignorant, general degradation would be the general trend in all such cases—the degradation especially of women.

Since woman is burdened with bearing humanity, there comes a time in that period of gestation when she is helpless, when she must be provided for. Her burden grows heavy, and she is physically helpless. What would be her condition if she had not the protection of home and marriage? There is not a time in all that period when that little floweret of humanity is budding and blossoming under her loving heart, that her very nature and life does not require the presence and tenderness and comfort and care of the one with whom she has shared her love. The child will be a better child for it. And when she goes down into the valley and shadow to give it life, then, if ever, she needs home, protection, her husband's loving care, his pity; she needs to note his alarm and distress, and feel him at her side when the shadows hover dark over her.

I have sat at the bedside through the long vigils of the night and noted the agony of motherhood. I have no command of language to describe the pain I have witnessed. Ah! it would stagger you, it would break your heart, to see it. I have seen women, pale, weak, nervous, physically wrecked, thus go through life for ever after on account of that trial. Why do they have a tender attachment to their physician? Because they say to themselves: "He was with me; and he, and he only, good old soul, knows what I endured." It is affection knit by pain. I never look upon a great crowd, I never pass along the crowded street and view the surging mass of humanity, but instinctively the thought comes, "Oh, the pain of women! Oh, the everlasting, eternal debt of humanity to woman for her pains in bringing all these people in the world." Sum it up and think of it. And so I believe in home—it is woman's right; I believe in marriage and parental responsibility.

There is enough free love in the world without advocating more of it. There are but few Henry Leweses and George Eliots. The masses are ignorant, and free love to such degrades—especially degrades woman—and therefore it is against the general good.

There is no such thing as absolute freedom in anything. To every act is attached both a moral and physical responsibility. Owing to the inequalities of mind and matter, there can be no such thing as absolute free thought or absolute free love. It is our duty then to uphold that which is for the general good and oppose everything that leads to general degradation. We cannot change conditions; we can only modify them.

Let us get marriage out of the hands of religion, so that our youth may be educated in the laws of procreation, health, and selection. And when we do this, there will be no Beilharts and others of his kind to prostitute women under the dark guise of Christianity.

The much-admired *Republic* of Zeno aimed singly at this, that neither in cities nor towns we should live under distinct laws one from another, but should look on all men as our fellow-countrymen and citizens, observing one manner of life and kind of order, like a flock feeding together with equal rights in a common pasturage.—*Plutarch*.

The Training of a Genius.

When Willie was a little child
And just a small potater,
He ran the risk of being styled
A gross prevaricator.

He told such whoppers to his ma
She never could believe him,
He fabricated to his pa
With effort to deceive him.

At Willie's sin their grief was great;
They told the preacher pious,
Who said: "My son, recall the fate
Of Mr. Ananias.

"If you continue to disgrace
Your ma by things you utter,
You'll fall into a hotter place
And sizzle up like butter."

But Willie couldn't help himself,
And so he gave up trying;
He laid his conscience on the shelf
And made an art of lying.

The weird and lurid things he told
Were positively fearful.
His lies were hideously bold,
His manners bland and cheerful.

The neighbors said, "He'll go to jail—
We're sorry for his mother.
With such a vice he cannot fail
To do some crime or other."

But Willie's lying tongue was found
To be his winning feature;
He is to-day a far-renowned
Evangelistic preacher.

JOHN WESLEY.

Mr. Wesley was a believer in witches and wizards, and knew all about the Devil. At his request God performed many miracles. On several occasions he cured his horse of lameness. On others, dissipated Mr. Wesley's headaches. Now and then he put off rain on account of a camp meeting, and at other times stopped the wind blowing at the special request of Mr. Wesley. I have no doubt that Mr. Wesley was honest in all this—just as honest as he was mistaken. And I also admit that he was the founder of a church that does extremely well in new countries, and that thousands of Methodists have been exceedingly good men. But I deny that he ever did anything for human liberty. While Mr. Wesley was fighting the Devil, and giving his experience with wizards and witches, Thomas Paine helped to found a free nation, helped to enrich the air with another flag. Wesley was right on one thing, though. He was opposed to slavery, and, I believe, called it the sum of all villainies. I have always been obliged to him for that. I do not think he said it because he was a Methodist; but Methodism, as he understood it, did not prevent his saying it, and Methodism, as others understood it, did not prevent men from being slave-holders, did not prevent them from selling babes from mothers, and in the name of God beating the naked back of toil. I think, on the whole, Paine did more for the world than Mr. Wesley. The difference between an average Methodist and an average Episcopalian is not worth quarreling about. But the difference between a man who believes in despotism and one who believes in liberty is almost infinite. Wesley changed Episcopals into Methodists; Paine turned lickspittles into men.—*Ingersoll*.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

It should be some slight consolation to Infidels that the most powerful, learned, and consistent of the Christian sects condemns all Christians out of its pale to perdition as hopeless as can be the lot of Unbelievers. It is worth noting that the Papacy condemns all recusant bibliolators not less for heresies as to God than for heresies as to man. If a Lutheran or Calvinist went so far as to accept Transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, Purgatory, the whole hierarchy of the saints, with their prerogatives of miracle-working and efficacious intercession, etc., etc., but could not bring himself to believe in the infallibility and absolute supremacy of God's Vicar on Earth, Rome would excommunicate him as sternly as if he were an Anabaptist. The

Church of England, which is a great compromise, the Ideal of Expediency in the vulgar sense, ludicrous and contemptible to the pure reason, though it has much to say for itself politically and socially, does not venture to damn absolutely the souls of Nonconformists. Yet a sound and cultivated Churchman, while admitting that Dissenters may get to heaven, undoubtedly thinks that they travel thither in cheap and nasty excursion trains, and partake of beatitude of an inferior quality in some third-class refreshment-room.—*James Thomson* ("B.V.").

Truth and the feeling of integrity
Are of the heart's own essence—should they call
For sufferings, none repents the sacrifice.
Oh, happy he, whom Truth accompanies
In all his walks—from outward cumbrance free—
Pure of all soil—dwelling within the heart,
Light to his steps and guidance: oracle
To lead or to mislead, none doth he seek;
Consults no casuist, but an honest conscience;
Of sacrifices reckes not, and repents not.

Goethe (*Faustus* in "Faust").

Correspondence.

PROPAGANDA AT BATTERSEA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—One of your correspondents, H. T. Stevens, regrets "that no open-air Freethought work is being done in a district like Battersea," and so do I.

Perhaps he would be glad to know that Freethought lectures are delivered regularly every Sunday, at 3 o'clock, on Clapham Common, where H. T. Stevens would be welcomed.

Evolution, Old Testament, New Testament, Why I Do Not believe in Miracles, and the Virgin Birth of Christ, are some of the subjects that have been dealt with.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

FLOGGING IN THE NAVY.—DEFECTIVE OFFICIAL RETURNS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In his recent reply to Mr. Swift MacNeill, Mr. Pretzman, speaking on behalf of the Admiralty, stated that to give a special return of the number of young sailors subjected, during the last three years, to the "minor" punishment of the cane, would be too expensive. It is instructive to note how parsimonious the Admiralty can be when it is a matter of supplying the public with details as to these naval floggings! But it may be pointed out that it would be quite easy and inexpensive, in future annual returns, to show precisely what number of public canings has been inflicted, instead of mixing up the canings, as is now done, with other "minor" punishments—with the obvious purpose of evading careful scrutiny. The public has a right to have this information, and we shall continue to press for it.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane,
London, W.C., July, 1904.

Obituary.

On Monday, July 11, there passed away, at his home in Hull, one of those men who, whilst never making any national mark in Freethought, yet manage to impress more than a small circle with their views. Oliver Trumper was over seventy when he died, yet to the last he retained much of the vigorous appearance of his prime. His Freethought, like his politico-sociology, was of the militant character, expressed always by a man who could make his voice audible above the jeers and insults of opponents. Yet I do not remember that he himself ever descended to the use of personalities, contenting himself with exposing the fallacies of the other side. It was, however, as an ardent apostle of egoism that he came best to be known, and in the last few years his attendance at the meetings of the Hull Sunday Association was generally the occasion of lively proceedings. Preaching a gospel of strife and combat, is there not some wild irony in the circumstance of his being found to have passed peacefully away in his armchair at his cottage? Yet for all his "impossible" views, he made friends, who can think only kindly of this sturdy Freethinker.—P. H.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford-grove): 7, Mr. Thresh.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Members meet at the Perry Barr Tram Terminus 3 o'clock, thence per Brake to Sutton Park. Thursday, July 28, at the Coffee House, Bull Ring, 8 o'clock, Mr. A. Barber, "Goethe's Faust."

BOLTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Steps): H. Percy Ward will lecture on Friday (July 29) at 8.

DEWSBURY (Market-place): 3 and 6.30, C. J. Atkinson, G. Whitehead, and John Barker, of Batley.

Huddersfield (Market Cross): Saturday, July 23, at 8, G. Whitehead and C. J. Atkinson.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Armley Park): 11, Debate between A. Dawson and G. Weir. Subject, "Christ's Resurrection." Cross-flats Park, 7.30, G. Weir, "Miracles."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "God and Evolution." If wet, the lecture will be given in the Hall.

OLDHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Market-place): H. Percy Ward will lecture at 11, 3, and 7, and on Monday and Tuesday at 8.

OLDHAM ETHICAL SOCIETY AND SECULAR INSTITUTE (Market-place): 11 and 3, H. Percy Ward; also at Park Gates, 6.30. Monday (Market-ground), 7.30. Tuesday (Park Gates), 7.30.

PRESTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall-square): H. Percy Ward will lecture on Wednesday and Thursday (July 27 and 28) at 8.

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