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PRICE TWOPENCE

*O thou quick heart, which pantest to possess
All that anticipation feigneth fair !
Thou vainly curious Mind which wouldst guess
Whence thou didst come and whither thou mayest go,
And that which never yet was known wouldst know—
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking alike from happiness and woe
A refuge in the cavern of grey death ?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts ! What thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below ?*

—SHELLEY.

Overboard.

WE see by the *British Weekly* that "Mr. Campbell"—the Oracle of the City Temple—has been preaching "a striking sermon" on Jonah, with special reference to the withered gourd, which may be regarded as a fine companion to the barren figtree. Mr. Campbell was good enough to say that he had a very poor opinion of Jonah. He described him as "an exceedingly commonplace, selfish individual." But is not this rather rough on the poor old prophet ? He was testy, we admit ; but that is a common characteristic of the profession. He tried to evade a big, hopeless task, which was also dangerous ; but men of God have generally a tenderness for their own skins. It is really not fair to blame a man individually for the faults and failings of his species. And there is something more to be said. Jonah did at least one act of astounding generosity. We doubt whether Mr. Campbell would find it very easy of imitation. When the captain of that ship in which Jonah took a passage, while fleeing from the presence of the Lord, who is supposed to be everywhere ; when the captain of that ship, we say, went down below to see if the passenger who embarked at Joppa knew anything about the awful storm that threatened to destroy them, he found Jonah fast asleep (as you would expect to find a landsman in a tempest), with a smile of satisfaction on his Hebrew countenance. Rousing up the stranger, he begged him to call upon his god. They had called upon *their* gods in vain ; perhaps *his* god could still the angry waves. Jonah did *not* call upon his god, as he might have done, and then gone to sleep again. He owned up to being the cause of all the trouble. He even said that there would be no peace until they threw him overboard. Now this was very handsome conduct on his part, and the captain and crew must have seen it in that light, for they made another great effort before turning him into fishbait. It was only when they found there was no alternative that they took him at his word and cast him into the sea as a sacrifice to Jehovah.

We venture to think that Mr. Campbell would not hurry to be thrown overboard to still a storm. Nor would there be a rush for missionary jobs if ships had to carry a man of God to be thrown overboard in storms and serve as oil upon the troubled waters. Let us give the Devil his due. And let us be fair to Jonah. He had a lot to put up with—what with the whale and what with the Lord ; and Christians, at any rate, should not be unjust to his memory.

Mr. Campbell treated poor Jonah very unkindly. Selfishness, apparently, was not the worst thing

about him ; he was simply a nobody. Mr. Campbell stated that he "did not regard the Book of Jonah as literal history." This can only mean that the incidents recorded in it never happened. Jonah therefore—at least the Jonah of the *Book of Jonah*—never existed. The captain of one of the Joppa and Tarshish line of boats threw the poor prophet overboard ; but he was rescued by divine interposition from a watery grave ; and now, after the lapse of nearly three thousand years, Mr. Campbell throws him overboard again. And as the Lord no longer runs whale-excursions we may consider that Jonah has received his quietus.

Is this respectful to Jesus Christ ? Let us hear what "the Savior" said on this matter :—

"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas : For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

This looks like a plain endorsement of the story of Jonah's submarine trip. But the Higher Critics say it is nothing of the kind. They argue that Jesus took the story as it stood, without affirming or denying it, and used it as an illustration. No doubt this is a clever way out of the difficulty ; or rather it would be so if it were not for the next verse :—

"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it ; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

Surely this is something more than merely using a legend as an illustration. It includes a positive statement that Jonah did preach to the men of Nineveh, and that they did repent at his preaching. How otherwise could they rise up in judgment against the generation to whom Jesus was speaking ? One is obliged to say that if "the Savior" did not believe and endorse the Jonah story he had a singularly unfortunate way of expressing himself ; and must almost have shared the opinion of Talleyrand that the use of language is to *conceal* our thoughts.

On the whole, then, it seems to us that Mr. Campbell will have to throw over a good deal more than Jonah to ensure the safety of the ship. Common people, who have not liberal salaries at stake, will never understand that Jesus Christ, or any other honest person, meant the opposite of what he said ; they will prefer to think that he did not understand what he was talking about ; and, in the long run, that will mean throwing him overboard too.

We may further remark that throwing things overboard is the main occupation of the "advanced" clergy. They see that the Christian ship must be lightened if she is to weather the storms of criticism. She may founder eventually, but she will float for the present. So they keep the flag flying and fling away the cargo. Jonah is gone, Lot's wife is gone, Balaam and his jackass are gone, Noah's Ark is gone, Adam and Eve are gone. But that is not enough. More precious articles have to be abandoned. The virgin-birth of Jesus is dropping over one side of the ship, and his resurrection is dropping over the other ; while a little band of more desperate salvage-men cry out, "Let us drop the whole blessed lot of miracles astern."

It must not be supposed that the clergy find lightening the ship an agreeable task. They hate it. The proof of this is the hatred they bear to those who compel them to do it. They are obliged to fight the storm, but they detest those who raised the wind and waves. After all, no Church ever progressed from within; the motive force has always come from without. Environments change first, and organisms afterwards. Life is the continuous adjustment of the internal to the external. Those who fancy that the Protestant Reformation was a sudden movement forward, through a spontaneous impulse of the Christian Church, do not understand the history of modern Europe. The Protestant Reformation was but one effect, and by no means the most important one, of such vast and revolutionary causes as the new astronomy and the invention of printing. These produced a ferment in the human mind, and out of that ferment sprang many things besides the Protestant Reformation. A far more important thing—the French Revolution—had to wait for another two hundred years; and its echoes are still booming over this planet.

There is another word to be said before we conclude. Sceptics smiled at the story of Jonah seventeen hundred years ago. It has taken all that time to make even the "advanced" clergy ashamed of this puerile narrative. They declared that their religion was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; yet they threw its sanction over yarns compared with which Jack and the Beanstalk is high-class literature. Can such a religion be of divine origin? Can we trust a religion which made such drafts upon human credulity? Would a wise and benevolent God have entangled the minds of men for sixty generations in a mesh of childish legend, which was bound to stop their intellectual progress and hinder their moral and social development? What sensible, disinterested person can believe it?

G. W. FOOTE.

The Nature of Man.

(Concluded from p. 499.)

THE greatest of all the disharmonies of human existence, as has been already pointed out, is the disharmony of death. Not death *per se*, but death coming, as it does in the vast majority of cases, while there is still a strong desire for life. Scientifically death may be described as a function for which there exists no corresponding instinct. There is an instinct for all else that occurs—why not for death? As Professor Metchnikoff points out, there is an instinct existing with infants for sucking, and this dies out when the use for it has disappeared. Corresponding instincts—sexual, family, social—are developed in their appropriate seasons, and are related to the normal circumstances of our environment. But here is one of the largest facts of existence, death, for which there is no corresponding instinct. There is an instinct for life; why not for death? It is plainly a case of disharmony, and human nature cannot be regarded as properly adapted to its environment until death is met as something that *satisfies* the conditions of the organism.

Religions and philosophies have invented various plans to overcome this imperfection of our constitution. In a couple of chapters Professor Metchnikoff passes these theories in review; and dismisses them as worthless. Although he believes, with all competent students, that the idea of a soul, or double, living on after death has arisen from primitive man's mistaken interpretation of dreams and other subjective phenomena, its historic value is that it has been an attempt to harmonise the fact of death with the love of life. This has taken the form of treating death as a mere interruption in the course of life, to be resumed in some other sphere. But this theory can only *pretend* to meet the case so

long as it is believed, and the progress of modern knowledge "has diminished the number of believers in the persistence of consciousness after death, and complete annihilation at death is the conception accepted by the vast majority of enlightened persons." The religious remedy thus becomes more and more of a failure. All evidence, all analogy, is dead against the belief in immortality; and Metchnikoff dismisses it with the curt comment that it is without a single argument to support it.

The philosophical remedy, although of a higher kind than the religious one, is yet inadequate. All that philosophy can do is to point out the absurd character of popular superstitions concerning the after state of the dead, and to preach courage and resignation in the face of the inevitable. So far as this latter teaching is concerned, it is indisputable that its best form is to be found in the pre-Christian or Pagan writers. Running right through the best Greek and Roman literature there is the teaching that death is to be met with calmness and faced without fear. The most there is to fear is loss of consciousness; and fear on this account is due to the psychological illusion of people fancying themselves as conscious of their own want of consciousness. Pagan literature is practically destitute of that morbid fear of death and unhealthy belittling of life that is so characteristic of Christian writings. The Pagan world regretted death. Christianity taught men to fear it; and by constantly dwelling upon death and the terrors of what would come after, Christianity so debauched the human mind that life itself became insignificant when contrasted with the fact of death.

But philosophy with all its efforts does not meet the case. Men may, and do, meet death without fear, but still the love of life exists side by side with the courage that enables one to go calmly forth into the unknown. If they could they would live on. The desire to live on is still strong; and so long as this is the case man's instincts are not properly adapted to his environment.

After philosophy and religion comes the turn of science. Can science succeed where all else fails? Professor Metchnikoff says Yes; and, although much of what he says is connected with subjects upon the precise value of which only an expert could express an authoritative opinion, his theory, to the layman, sounds plausible.

There are two questions asked by Professor Metchnikoff. First, What is old age? and second, Why do we not all develop a desire for death? The answer to the first question, and, partly, also to the second, is supplied by the author's phagocyte theory. Old age as it exists to-day is only natural in the sense that disease is natural. Senile degeneration is, in the author's opinion, emphatically a case of disease, consisting in the atrophy of the higher and specific cells of a tissue, and their replacement by a lower kind of structure. The body is a veritable battle-ground for different species of phagocytes, some harmful, some beneficial to the organism, and some beneficial under certain conditions. So long as these phagocytes are able to live on their natural enemies, the microbes, all is well. But when this food gives out the phagocytes invade other portions of the body, the liver, the kidneys, the brain, and devour those cells that subserve the higher functions. In old age, therefore, we witness a conflict between the higher and the simpler elements of the organism, and senile degeneration marks the triumph of the latter—a victory signalled by a weakening of the intellect, digestive troubles, and want of sufficient oxygen in the blood. It follows, then, that one means of fighting against old age, in a pathological sense, would be to strengthen the higher elements of the organism, and to weaken the aggressiveness of the phagocytes. This Professor Metchnikoff proposes to do by the injection of prepared serums which will sufficiently strengthen the higher cells of the body against attack. How far this may be done is a question for experts, but it is at least, as I have said, plausible as suggesting one way of resisting disease

until such time as further evolution has better adapted man to his environment.

But how does all this affect the question of the instinct of death? In this manner. In the first place, one must discriminate between a physiological and a pathological death. At present a physiological death is rare—so rare that Professor Metchnikoff has been able to collect records of but one or two clear instances. Death *should* occur when the cells of the body are physiologically exhausted. Actually death is brought about by disease in the manner described. It is, therefore, a violent process occurring while the instinct for life is still strong. But suppose life were prolonged to such a degree that death was the result of complete physiological exhaustion. Obviously, in such a case we should have existed long enough to have worn out the desire to live, the cycle would have completed itself, and death would come as the satisfying of a craving for rest, rather than as the interruption of a still active wish to live. We fear to die because we do not live long enough; the revolt at death is the cry of the organism for a complete life.

Such is Professor Metchnikoff's theory, and it is at least rich in suggestiveness. The theory that a complete life should develop in turn instincts that will meet all the essential facts of existence is philosophically sound and in accord with the general theory of evolution. And its significance in relation to religion is important: so long as the desire for life exists up to the very moment when death occurs, the religious world can still point to and build upon the existence of this instinct to bolster up the belief in immortality. Once it is seen in its true light as a simple case of disharmony that may be remedied either by positive science or by the more gradual process of evolution, this, taken with what we know of the origin of the belief in a soul, completely destroys the bases of supernaturalistic beliefs. Professor Metchnikoff's book is one to be studied closely by all classes of thinkers; and to a Freethinker the book is the more welcome for speaking out plainly on topics on which our own scientific workers are so painfully reticent.

C. COHEN.

"The Awakening of a Soul."

SUCH is the title of a recent sermon preached by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, M.A., at the City Temple. The text reads thus: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Genesis xxviii. 16). According to Mr. Campbell, the dream or vision vouchsafed to Jacob during his sleep marked a new starting-point in his life: "Whatever the dream may have meant, there can be no doubt that next morning Jacob began a new life." Prior to the dream he had been grasping, crafty, covetous—a veritable supplanter, but subsequent to it he led an entirely new life, being God-fearing and noble-hearted. The great point of the sermon is that at Bethel Jacob saw and realised God, and that in consequence his character was completely transformed. Now, what grounds are there for such a statement? What proof is there that Jacob began a new life next morning?

It is well known to Hebrew scholars that the life of Jacob is related by three distinct authors, known as the Jehovist, the Elohist, and the Priest. These three accounts were combined into one, with more or less skill, by a compiler, who must have flourished at a very late date. According to Professor Driver, Genesis "assumed its present form, in all probability, by two main stages. First, the two independent, but parallel, narratives of the patriarchal age, J and E, were combined into a whole by a compiler, who sometimes incorporated long sections of each intact (or nearly so), and at other times combined elements from each into a single narrative, introducing occasionally in the process short additions of his own. The whole thus formed (J E) was afterwards combined with the narrative P, by a

second compiler, who, adopting P as his framework, accommodated J E to it, omitting in either what was necessary to avoid needless repetition, and making such slight redactional adjustments as the unity of his work required." I like quoting from Canon Driver, because he is generally regarded as one of the sanest and most cautious of the Higher Critics. In his opinion, "the two sources, J and E, date from the early centuries of the monarchy, J belonging probably to the ninth, and E to the early part of the eighth cent. B.C. (*before* Amos or Hosea), and the third source, P—at least in its main stock (for it seems, as a whole, to have been the work of a school of writers rather than of an individual)—belongs to the age of Ezekiel and the Exile." Thus we see that the most ancient known source of the life of Jacob dates eight or nine centuries later than the period it describes, a fact which makes it impossible to regard it as in any true sense a historical document. Is it any wonder, then, that such a critic as Winckler comes to the conclusion that Jacob is a mythical character?

Furthermore, there are two different and contradictory accounts of Jacob's visit to Paddan-Aram. According to the one, the object of Isaac and Rebeka in recommending it was to prevent Jacob from contracting a marriage, after Esau's example, with one of the daughters of Heth, while the other represents it as a cowardly flight because of the anger of Esau, whom he had robbed of his birth-right. P knows nothing of the miserable family squabble recorded by J in chapter xxvii., 1-45, nor does he refer to any incidents supposed to have occurred during the journey to Paddan-Aram. His account of the whole affair is brief and to the point (ch. xxvi. 34, and ch. xxvii., 46—ch. xxviii., 9). Which account is to be taken as correct? One would imagine that Mr. Campbell accepts both as true, ignoring the contradictions. Criticism commands us to reject them both as necessarily unhistorical. As legends or myths they are intensely interesting, but possess no value whatever from a biographical point of view.

But even on the supposition that the story of Jacob is literally true, there is no foundation for the contention that the dream at Bethel wrought the regeneration of the man's heart and character. If he obtained the blessing of the first-born by playing a fraudulent trick upon his aged father before leaving home, was it not through cunning that he acquired enormous wealth in the service of his uncle Laban? Uncle and nephew were chips from the same block, and neither the one nor the other cared much for truth and honesty. After becoming immensely rich on his uncle's lands, "Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had," taking with him some stolen property as well. When Laban overtook him, we can see two sharpers face to face. J and E represent Jacob as indulging in much pious talk; but where are the deeds of piety which he would or could not have performed had it not been for that strange dream at Bethel? What good thing did he ever do that an ordinary natural man would or could not have done in similar circumstances? Mr. Campbell says: "We come upon him at Bethel, after he has deceived his father and robbed his brother. He is in flight from his home; he is keeping a lonely vigil in the wilderness; but he has one thing that Esau never had. The older Jacob grows the more we can discern this essential difference between the two men. He had a susceptibility to God that meant a possibility of higher things. Esau was a good animal; Jacob had in him the makings of the spiritual man." But where is the proof that Jacob performed nobler deeds than his brother Esau? It is all very well to make bald assertions from a pulpit, which cannot be openly challenged; but what we want is evidence, which even the documents themselves, taken as they stand, do not furnish. Indeed, there are incidents related (ch. xxxiv.) in connection with which Jacob's speech and conduct were not worthy

of a man who had seen God face to face, and triumphantly wrestled with him. Even the *Speaker's Commentary* admits that at Shechem Jacob showed inexcusable weakness and timidity.

But if it cannot be proved from the narratives in Genesis that Jacob's character was fundamentally different and better after the dream than it had been before, the point of Mr. Campbell's sermon loses its force. In the Biblical and ecclesiastical sense, to be born again is equivalent to having a vision of God. Regeneration means the entrance of God into a man's soul. After that great event has taken place the man has within him a divine guest, the Holy Ghost, who never leaves him, and whose object is to eliminate all evil tendencies from his nature. But, as a matter of fact, religiously regenerate people are not ethically superior to others who make no profession of religion. Church members are not, on an average, better than so-called people of the world. You know a man who glories in the luminous moments, in the Pisgah outlooks on the Promised Land, and in the transfigurations on the Holy Mount, so frequently vouchsafed to him by his gracious Lord; but you cannot forget that in business he is hard, and mean, and tricky, and requires to be constantly watched. The prophet may spend days and weeks in the mount with God; but the moment he comes down he is full of cruelty and murder, and issues this inhuman command: "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." Judging by the historical books of the Old Testament, companionship with God was not usually elevating and ennobling in its influence upon character. Nor is it so in our own day.

The other day I attended an evangelistic service, when I heard this as the last, supreme appeal: "Do you want to be lost forever? Would you like to burn in hell through endless ages? Believe the Gospel I preach, and you shall be saved this very moment." Another said: "There may be a murderer within reach of my voice, or an adulterer, or a drunkard, or a thief; but whosoever believeth on Jesus Christ shall become an heir to eternal glory, and be as clean in God's sight as the angels before the throne, at once." That is an immoral, wicked gospel; and yet, in one form or another, it is being preached from an overwhelming majority of pulpits throughout Christendom. He who says that he has had a vision of God in Christ may sing hymns with seraphic rapture, and pray with transporting fervor, and enjoy ecstatic dreams of the blessedness of heaven; but it does not necessarily follow that he becomes a more useful member of society, or takes part in any works that aim at the betterment of earthly conditions. I know well that Mr. Campbell himself insists on good living as a test of true religion, and severely condemns the immoralities and the selfishness of Christians; but cannot he see that many non-Christians are pre-eminently moral, self-denying, and philanthropical? They believe neither in Christ nor in God, nor does the vision of immortality ever break in upon them; and yet they love their neighbor as themselves, and serve him with untiring devotion. In the technical sense, they have no religion; but they are good citizens, and, as such, sources of help and succor to the whole community.

The awakening of the soul in man takes place when he realises that he cannot truly prosper himself unless he contributes to the prosperity of society. The soul is not an independent entity; it is the man himself at his highest and best. The soul is the life of the man; and a man finds his life the moment he learns how to use it. To save the soul, in the theological sense, is to insure it against hell-fire, and give it a certificate for heaven. To save the soul, in the ethical sense, is to devote it to the highest earthly service, and to make it subservient to the truest welfare of mankind here. The thought of God has always hindered human

progress, and the love of Christ tends to loosen earthly ties. God is an imaginary or ideal being, and in the dream of him the earth dwindles and material interests pale before the dazzling glory of the Supernatural world, and the present is swallowed up of the future. Surely, even Mr. Campbell must admit that supernaturalism has not permanently benefited mankind, and that the tendency of such a sermon as the one under consideration is to produce an other-worldism which cannot be conducive to the noblest social welfare.

Towards the close of his sermon Mr. Campbell says: "I am unwilling to stop without trying at least to make the difference, the essential difference, in some man's life that was made in Jacob's and Nathaniel's." We have already seen that Jacob was essentially the same character after that he had been before the dream, although we do not know enough about him to be dogmatical. But we know nothing about Nathaniel, either before or after his meeting with Christ. His very name, even, is introduced in a deeply unhistorical atmosphere. How huge a structure is erected upon how slight a foundation! Mr. Campbell imagines a biography, and then draws inferences from it; and his deductions are quite as valid as his history.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

Two Defenders of the Faith.

IT would seem that we are nearing the end of that fearful and wonderful "defence" of Christianity of which the *Clarion* has been the scene for the past six months. The last shots are being fired, and Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Mr. George Lansbury are amongst the final "rifles" to go off. Here are samples, taken almost at random, from Mr. Chesterton:—

"And as I read *God and My Neighbour*, the conviction gradually dawns on me that he thinks theology is the study of whether a lot of tales about God told in the Bible are historically demonstrable. This is as if he were trying to prove to a man that Socialism was sound Political Economy, and began to realise half-way through that the man thought that Political Economy meant the study of whether politicians were economical.

"Complete Agnosticism is the obvious attitude for man. We are all Agnostics until we discover that Agnosticism will not work. Then we adopt some philosophy—Mr. Blatchford's, or mine, or some other; for, of course, Mr. Blatchford is no more an Agnostic than I am.

"Are you surprised that the same civilisation which believed in the Trinity discovered steam?"

Assuredly not even the most militant Freethinker need take alarm over the havoc which such trifling is likely to make in our ranks. The people who would be "brought to religion" by Mr. Chesterton are much more likely to find their way to Bedlam first. Indeed, Mr. Chesterton himself has fallen off considerably from his earlier efforts. When he first began, a couple of years ago, he used, by recklessly inverting the commonplace, occasionally throw up a bright sentence or two; it was inevitable. Then, however, he was "discovered," and editors, right and left, in search of bright copy, commissioned the desperately clever young man for articles on this, that, and the other subject. Nothing loth, Mr. Chesterton played up to his opportunity and poured out columns on everything from Browning to billiard tables. And already we have got down to very poor fooling. That also was inevitable. If you start out with the intention of seriously studying and criticising, you may well succeed, incidentally, in being clever too; but if you set out solely with the desire of being "clever" you will probably only succeed in being dull. Mr. Chesterton has exemplified the rule. His monograph on Browning was as entertaining as Captain Kettle for a seaside holiday

—until you got half through; then you wearied of the eternal epigram-hunting and voted Captain Kettle or Sherlock Holmes better value. And in the latter case you were free also from the oppressive performance of a superlatively smart young man, conscious at every turn of his superlative smartness.

One thing, however, may well be said in final criticism of Mr. Chesterton. Christianity—or the various doctrines from time to time covered by that title—consisted and consists, for the most part, of ignorant guesses and primitive speculations. But howsoever ignorant and primitive, these guesses and speculations obtained their vogue because the mass of people believed them to be true. Priests and popes, like all politicians, had their tricks and their subterfuges, but the mass of European people in the day of Christianity believed that it represented the truth about man and the universe. Christianity never derived its strength from intellectual tight-rope dancing or the performances of infant prodigies. And when it comes about that Christianity has to fall back on the Chestertons for defence, its day is already plainly past.

Quite a different type of defender of the faith, however, is Mr. George Lansbury. He does not say very much, as we shall see, but at least he is serious; and, in view of his services in the Labor movement, deserves respectful treatment.

Mr. Lansbury tells us that thirty years ago he was confirmed as a member of the Church of England. And he says that "during the first few years I was filled with a real enthusiasm, born of the belief that Christ came to be an example and an inspirer of each one of us, to work on behalf of others." This is interesting and important, for it will be clear, I think, to anyone who reads Mr. Lansbury's account that he really never was reasoned out of this early dogmatism. It is curious that, whilst thousands of men have been converted from Christianity, and live and die as Freethinkers, the few Freethinkers or pseudo-Freethinkers who are converted to Christianity are always found to have merely reverted to an early belief which they strongly held. I don't know of any case of a man brought up without theological prejudice in youth being "converted" to Christian dogmatism in his manhood.

As to Mr. Lansbury's Agnosticism, this is his own account of it:—

"About fourteen years ago I came in contact with some good men connected with the Socialist movement who were also Agnostics, and they convinced me that in the development of society Socialism was bound to be borne. I read Marx and Engels, sat at the feet of Stanton Coit and others of that school, and at last gave up my religion, and for at least ten years professed myself an Agnostic."

There is nothing here to show that he ever mastered the anti-theological case. Marx and Engels may have been admirable guides on the sociological problem, but the question at issue is the philosophical problem, and that Mr. Lansbury does not show in this article any evidence of having probed. The mention of Dr. Stanton Coit would even seem to confirm the suspicion that Mr. Lansbury simply drifted into a humanitarian sentimentalism without any very solid intellectual basis. So that he even curiously tells us himself, not that he was an Agnostic, but that he "professed" himself an Agnostic. The truth is Mr. Lansbury was never an Agnostic in the philosophical sense at all, and the "conversion" is really nothing remarkable.

What did "convert" him, anyhow? He says that four years ago he began to ask himself "whether the men and women I worked amongst were worth the trouble and pains bestowed upon them, and whether, after all, it would not be much better to think of my wife and family, and leave others to fight for themselves." In other words, Mr. Lansbury's faith in human nature began to give way, which was a rather characteristic beginning of a religious feeling. But Mr. Lansbury is obviously truthful, and he goes on:—

"During this period, it is true, I was very ill; but

the fact is I was heartsick—heartsick because of the dreadful set-back every movement for the good of the people seemed to be suffering from. One day the thought came to me: Was I right in giving up my old faith, and, if I had it again, would not that carry me through all difficulties, as it had done thousands before me?"

To anyone with the least penetration it is quite clear what had happened. Mr. Lansbury, in a time of illness, of physical weariness and therefore moral lassitude, reverted to his early faith. Not the robust man, but the sick man, went back to dogma. Mr. Lansbury's story is not "clever," but it is honest, and therefore illuminating. He goes on to tell us of the vital need, which his own experience has taught him, of honesty and unselfishness amongst Labor leaders. All of which has, of course, nothing to do with the question, since Mr. Lansbury must know that there are hundreds of thousands of Christians, not Labor leaders, who need to cultivate these virtues too. Does Mr. Lansbury as a Socialist, for instance, think the exploits of the Bishops of his own Church in the House of Lords conspicuous examples of honesty and unselfishness in public dealing? If he does, he ought to reconsider his politics. If he does not, why should he recommend Christ as a cure to Labor leaders when the same medicine has produced so bad an effect on those who might be expected to have it in its full strength? The sins of the Labor leaders, whose religion by the way is not specified (for he told us before that he met "good men" who were Agnostics), have sent him to the Church of England, but the sins of the Bishops do not count.

"All this," he says [meaning the aforesaid sins of the Labor movement] "has taught me that Stanton Coit was right, and I wrong, when I contradicted him on his saying at Bow, many times, that the Labor movement, without a moral basis, was bound to come to grief. I find my moral basis in the teachings of Christ, and I find those best expressed for me in the Church and its services."

Apparently, Dr. Stanton Coit is a versatile man. He converted Mr. Lansbury to what the latter imagined was Agnosticism, and now he has reconverted Mr. Lansbury to the Church of England; though it must be admitted that very little seems to have sufficed for the latter. Dr. Coit, it appears, merely said that the Labor movement must have a moral basis, and that was enough for Mr. Lansbury. Well, the question is forced on us, What on earth kind of philosophy did Mr. Lansbury harbor in his "Agnostic" days? He told us it was the influence of "good men connected with the Socialist movement who were also Agnostics," together with the teaching of Dr. Coit, which made him give up religion. Now Dr. Coit is immaculate, for he has taught the need of a "moral basis," and the "good men" can hardly have made Mr. Lansbury unmoral. What right, then, had he to call his moral misconception Agnosticism? Does he mean to say that Mr. Blatchford or Mr. Hyndman has no conception of morality, but that the Archbishop of Canterbury has? Surely there is something impudent in the suggestion or implication that Agnostics who are also Socialists are moved by low, sordid, and selfish ideas, for that is what Mr. Lansbury's argument comes to, if it comes to anything at all.

The fact is his "argument" comes to nothing at all. In the final passage he makes a pathetic confession that would disarm all criticism if he had maintained silence:—

"I conclude by saying that for me it is enough that Christianity helps and sustains me in my hours of trial and trouble, and gives me just the spurt I need to work with, and on behalf of, others, and makes me a little less selfish than I otherwise should be."

It reads like a testimonial for a new American food or a patent medicine. Two teaspoonfuls of Christianity in a tumbler of water, three times a day, gives Mr. Lansbury "just the spurt," neither too much nor too little, but "just the spurt" he needs. From beginning to end, it will be noticed, neither Mr. Chesterton nor Mr. Lansbury have said one word about the *truth* of Christianity. The only thing Mr.

Chesterton does is crack jokes; the only testimony of Mr. Lansbury is that, in a delicate state of health, Christianity acted as a tonic. But it would be as reasonable to prescribe morphia for physically robust men as to thus recommend Christianity to mentally robust men. The healthy man does not require drugs of any kind. And though we may well sympathise with the invalid, it is trying our sympathy rather hard when the invalid in a column article insists that we should all undergo the treatment which he finds necessary. We are not all sick men, and if the Labor movement needs honesty and unselfish spirit, as Mr. Lansbury says, there is something else we may well wish its leaders also—good health.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Not the Fault of the Men.

AN article in the *Daily Express* of July 28 attributes non-attendance at church and chapel services to "the fault of the men." Ornate ritual, powerful preaching, eloquent prayers, all the tricks and devices invented by parsons and religious people generally, fail of the desired point. The men will not come, and the majority of all the worshipers everywhere are women.

There is a reason for this—a very good one. It is not the fault or perversity of the men where the blame lies. It is the fault of Religion itself. Men are guided by their reason: women are swayed by their emotion. That's why there are more women than men at church. Men are repelled by the doctrines and dogmas announced, the unnatural and supernatural claims advanced, the dictatorial priestly or pastoral influence exerted, the underhand, sophistical, ecclesiastical, and jesuitical methods employed to beguile and snare them, by fair means or foul, and this in all the churches, sects, and denominations. And men—manly men—see through the pretensions, the subterfuges, the hypocrisies, the manifest deceits. They are not to be cajoled into church-going. They prefer a quiet Sunday at home or in the garden, or a pleasant drive with a friend, or a nice walk or a good smoke, rather than being shut up in a pew and listening to the usual tedious homily, or the needless if fervent exhortation, or the usual diatribe and rant about "sin." Men get weary of these things, and prefer to stay away.

But women are swayed by their emotions, and we do not say it to their discredit. However, the church attitude suits them, the devotional manner and expression are agreeable to them, the priest and the pastor seem semi-divine, the favorite cleric appears half-way between man and angel. He is the repository of confidences, and he is often told things he ought not to know by the dear female lambs of his flock. Between the woman and the clergyman there gets to be a good understanding; they are *en rapport*, much more so than a man would be with a clergyman, and the association or the intimacy is not always productive of good. No doubt many clergymen and many women are nothing more than good and cordial friends. It is not auspicious, however, when the relation extends beyond this limit.

Clergymen depend upon the emotional or feminine element in their congregations, and count and plan on it more than on the more rugged masculine traits. There is a femininity even in the garb of the clergy—the long cassock, the becoming surplice, or the richly-wrought vestment. Clothes influence all of us, more or less. Even the clerical ordinary dress has, like the soldier's or the policeman's, a certain effect. And women are peculiarly sensible to such things, and like them; and the well-built, handsome rector or minister, or the charming curate or religious teacher, are all the more attractive if duly attentive to their sacerdotal, ceremonial equipments, or their every-day, well-fitting garments. And it is only natural that a class which is so petted and upheld by women should appreciate the fact and return it in kind, and are, we may be sure, not

forgetful to use it for all it is worth—as they usually do.

Men are more attracted by the theatre than by the church, and often learn better, nobler lessons from the stage than they do from the pulpit. Actors thus preach better sermons to their audiences than many clergymen do—more thrilling, or more full of eloquent feeling, or more in touch with life as it is. And that is another reason why theatres are full while churches are not. The drama reaches the heart or the sensibilities of the auditor just where the sermon fails to move or convince the hearer.

Lastly and chiefly, the faith and presentation of religion to-day does not appeal to men's rational convictions. They see that the already undermined edifice is tottering to its fall. Permeated as it is with unreality, self-seeking, self-interest, hypocrisy, and deceit, men see the hollowness of it all, and the inevitable, approaching ruin. They grant whatever individual excellencies there are in any good priest or faithful minister or earnest religious teacher; but the system as we know it is doomed. Spasmodic efforts will be widely made to revive it from its senile decay and its decrepit old age, but it must fade and pass away at the last. And perceiving this in advance is plainly, and honestly, why men do not care to go to church.

GERALD GREY.

Acid Drops.

The late M. de Plehve, the assassinated Russian Minister of the Interior, changed his own religion three times, yet he held that freedom of conscience was the worst kind of freedom. He was cut out for a tyrant in the same way as the worst boys are said to make the best monitors.

The *Moscow Gazette*, a very orthodox organ, whose conductors would shudder at the idea of "infidelity," declares that Russia should adopt the policy of "no quarter" in the war with Japan. Apart from the savagery of this proposal, it should be remembered that the Russians might suffer from it more than the Japanese. Up to the present, the honors of this struggle lie with the Heathen, and not with the Christians.

The Christian Russians cannot reconcile themselves to the fact that the Heathen Japs are beating them. Admiral Loshchinsky, for instance, writing from Port Arthur to St. Petersburg, refers to "the enemy" as "strong, cunning, and vile." By this word "vile" he simply means that they are winning. "The chief thing," this holy Russian says, "is to pray to God, and his holy Saint Nicholas, for they will not abandon us." What stuff this is when the Japanese ring round the doomed fortress is drawn smaller daily! God and St. Nicholas will not be able to stem the tide of battle for the garrison when the Japanese guns have finished their deadly work and the last attack is delivered. Every man of sense knows this well enough—whatever he may say in church or chapel on Sunday.

Some of our readers will recollect that we made fun of Mr. W. T. Stead's pious praises of the young Czar of Russia. They will also recollect that, in spite of Mr. Stead's fresh plaudits, we laughed at the Czar's convention of a Peace Congress. We said that it reminded us of a Congress of Burglars, called to consider how to diminish the risks and expenses of their profession. There was not the slightest idea of leaving off burglary.

Subsequent events have justified our reading of the Czar. No honest man can have a shred of belief in him after his infamous doings in Finland. And now, only a few years after the Peace Congress, the Czar is the sworn friend of every brutal reactionist in Russia, and has provoked a tremendous war with Japan, which threatens him with ruin and humiliation. We are glad to see that Prince Kropotkin, writing in the *Speaker*, expresses satisfaction that the legend (which has had such a good run in England) that Nicholas II. is a well-meaning ruler, is coming to be appreciated at its just value. The Czar is undoubtedly pious, and just as undoubtedly he has all the political vices that generally accompany that characteristic. Pious Mr. Stead will have to find another object of his enthusiastic, but well-calculated, laudation.

The German Government, to oblige the Russian Government, started a prosecution against nine German subjects

at Königsberg on the charges of treason against the Russian realm, *lèse-majesté* against the Czar, and smuggling forbidden literature across the Russian frontier. Such a prosecution seems almost incredible, but what may not be expected when a half-and-half despot is cultivating the good graces of a "whole-hogger"? Fortunately the trial of these men attracted great public attention, and this secured their acquittal. It was, indeed, less a trial of them than a trial of the Russian Government. One witness brought forward by the defence was Dr. von Reussner, a Russian subject, though bearing a German name. He is a recognised authority on Russian jurisprudence, and formerly held the chair of law at the University of Tomsk, in Siberia; a position which he resigned because he declined to obey the authorities who ordered certain students attending his classes to be whipped for insubordination. Dr. Reussner testified that the Russian subject has no rights. First, he dealt with the great right of religious liberty which is recognised in every other modern State. His testimony on this point is admirably summarised by the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*—

"Dr. von Reussner stated that it is a criminal offence to leave the State Orthodox Church for another confession. The history of the Molokani, the Old Believers, and the Stundists is evidence enough of this. The punishment, in some cases, of change of faith is put down in the penal code as banishment for life to Siberia; in other cases, to confinement in a monastery until the recalcitrant is penitent and promises to return to the Orthodox fold. It is perfectly well known that scores of settlements in Siberia, in the remote districts of Trans-Caucasia and along the Lower Volga, were founded by dissenters from the Orthodox Church, who were banished to those regions for conscience sake. In the province of Kieff alone hundreds of happy and flourishing homesteads were broken up by administrative order, and their owners sent to the Caucasus, because they refused to attend the Orthodox services or taught the perfectly harmless Protestant doctrine associated with Russian Stundism. These men were loyal subjects of the Tsar; in most cases they were superior to their orthodox neighbors in the qualities that go to make a good citizen; but because they declined to worship icons, or pay the Pope's dues, or go to Confession, they were broken, and harried, and transported to countries as foreign to them as Arabia or Persia is to the average Englishman. There is even provision in the Russian penal code that the children of recalcitrant sectaries are taken from their parents and placed under orthodox tutelage. This is done to save their souls."

Heathen Japan, Holy Russia's antagonist in the present war, allows complete religious liberty to all her citizens. Compare the Heathen country with the Holy country where you like, and the verdict is almost at every point in favor of "those who know not Christ."

One of the "Immediate Practical Objects" of the National Secular Society is "The promotion of Peace between nations, and the substitution of Arbitration for War in the settlement of international disputes." Peace is not a party question. It is not even, primarily, a political question. It is the interest of all men except the enemies of mankind. For this reason we are not going out of our way in begging Freethinkers not to lend themselves to a cheap and easy rage against Russia on account of her interference with British shipping on the high seas. Russia, if we may say so, is wrong in the present war with Japan, and her arbitrary principles of government have influenced her dealings with British vessels under the right of search. But there is more than this in the matter. It is so galling to Russia's pride to be beaten by Japan single-handed that she is under a strong temptation to "save her face" by extending the area of conflict, so that she may submit in the end to more Powers than one and not have to make terms of peace with a single Asiatic Power. It is quite possible, therefore, that she may deliberately incense Great Britain. But this very fact ought to keep us cool and patient. To be dragged into war in such a way is simply to play the game of the Russian Bear. And only fools allow themselves to be forced into a fight which they have every personal and public reason to avoid. Should the worst come to the worst, Great Britain has ways of protecting her commerce without resorting to a declaration of war; and it is the business of our statesmen to perceive these ways and pursue them.

Lascar feuds at the Royal Albert Docks are said to be due to "tribal and religious" differences. Good old religion!

Jesus Christ said that if anyone took away your coat you should give him your cloak also. But the Rev. G. W. Mennie, rector of Milton-next-Gravesend, does not believe this—or else he believes it too literally. It appears that the reverend gentleman's garden has been visited in the night, and he has notified through a local paper that if the thief will come again he will find a retriever let loose to receive him.

The "Highland Brigade" who have legally captured all the Free Church property are not loved in Aberdeen. It is felt that "broader" theology which is now taught in Divinity Hall will soon be a thing of the past if the "Wee Kirkers" come into possession. The orthodox Highlanders are known to be mortal foes of what is called the Higher Criticism; that is to say, as much of the results of scientific criticism of the Bible as can no longer be ignored in educated circles. Some of the "Wee Kirkers" would probably empty a midden (if they could) over the grave of Alexander Bain, and annually burn an effigy of Robertson Smith.

Blackpool Town Council has declared war against phrenologists, physiognomists, palmists, &c. But why start on these struggling sinners? Isn't there a Roman Catholic priest in Blackpool who takes money to pray souls out of purgatory? Not that Church of England parsons and Dissenting ministers are not as bad in their way. They are all in the same line of business at bottom. Telling what they don't know to people with more money and leisure than sense and information.

If Christianity had had its way Modern Science would never have existed. But its rule is to make use of what it cannot destroy—and even to boast of having produced it. Hence we see General Booth "doing" England (good word, that!) on a motor-car. He is rushing, hooting, and, we dare say, stinking along; stopping three or four times a day by appointment to "say a few words" to people who want to hear Jehovah's right-hand man. He will be followed by a Press car. The Jap generals won't have reporters, but General Booth is more accommodating.

General Booth is elated at the success of his recent International Congress and his interviews with the King and Queen. He is now yearning like Alexander for new worlds to conquer. He declares that "new fields must be entered." "We cannot," he says, "much longer withstand the entreaties of China, Mexico, Burma, and the nationalities of Eastern Europe." Fancy these countries "entreatings" General Booth to give them a turn! It is one of the jokes of Christian missionaries that the "heathen" are always dying to receive them.

King Peter of Servia has not been "anointed" yet. Perhaps the smell of the blood is not quite gone. When the anointing shall be done is being discussed between the government and the clergy. Both have an interest in the business. We have no interest in it ourselves. We have heard of anointed rogues, and we dare say anointed kings are often no better—in spite of their superior ointment.

The Birmingham City Council, in taking over the Roman Catholic pupil teachers' centre, has agreed "That the entire teaching staff shall be Roman Catholic," and "That the religious instruction and training of these teachers shall be retained by the Roman Catholics." The Anglicans have obtained somewhat similar conditions. The Free Churches protest, and repeat their stale verbiage about "sectarian policy." When will they have the sense to recognise that the only remedy is to banish religious teaching altogether from the State schools? While religious teaching is retained, it is only natural that Catholics and Anglicans should prefer their own patterns to those of the Nonconformists. Leave religious teaching to voluntary agencies and all the trouble ceases in a moment—for the simple reason that there is nothing left for sects to quarrel about. Men quarrel over the Trinity, but you can't get up a row over the Multiplication Table.

The *Serwick Advertiser* publishes a letter from Dr. Clifford to the Rev. R. B. Goodwin, who asked for his opinion concerning the teaching of the Shorter Catechism in public schools. Unlike most of Dr. Clifford's letters this is a short one, and we reproduce it in full:—

"I have not a moment's hesitation in saying that the teaching of the Shorter, or any other theological and sectarian Catechism, at the public cost, is a flagrant injustice. It is contrary to the spirit and letter of the law. It is contrary to fair play. It would be quite as just to teach Mormonism or Romanism. The plea of 'a conscience clause' is a delusion. Do not rest till you have secured fair play by the ejection of the teaching of anything theological and sectarian from the schools of the State. We shall have no peace till this is done."

What a past-master Dr. Clifford is in the art of humbugging—at least on this particular question! How ingeniously, if not ingenuously, he uses the words "theological" and "sectarian"—as though there could be any religion (as he understands the word) which is *not* theological, or which is *not* sectarian! How peremptorily he

declares that the Conscience Clause is "a delusion," although it was a splendid stroke of religious liberty when Dr. Clifford and his friends offered it to the Freethinkers! The long and the short of this gentleman's argument is that any religious teaching which he disapproves in public schools is "a flagrant injustice," while any religious teaching which he approves is perfect equity.

"It would be quite as just to teach Mormonism or Romanism," says Dr. Clifford. Quite so. It is quite as just to teach one form of religion as to teach another—at the public expense. This applies to Dr. Clifford's own religion as well as to other peoples.

In a later long-winded letter to the *Daily News*, in answer to a rather inoffensive clergyman, Dr. Clifford declares (for the thousandth time) that "the Anglican Church has uniformly subordinated the education of the citizen to the advancement of its own interests as a religious institution." We agree with him. But what right has he to draw up the indictment? What the Church of England has done in its way the Free Churches have done in their way. The interest of all of them in education is purely ecclesiastical. The parsons want children to grow up and come to church. Dr. Clifford wants them to grow up and come to chapel. And each side is prepared to do what is necessary to its desideratum.

Not a word has been vouchsafed yet in reply to our exposure of the vile act of persecution committed by the Nonconformists on the Lambeth Board of Guardians, under the ringleadership of the private secretary of that noble Passive Resister, the Rev. F. B. Meyer. It will be remembered—at least we hope so—that the Nonconformists got a lady nurse discharged because she was a Roman Catholic. This infamous proceeding, which Nonconformist Churches and Nonconformist journals do not condemn, shows Freethinkers, at any rate, what these men's "love of liberty" really means.

The Churches of Christ have been holding their general annual meeting at Wigan. They do not appear to be numerous, but they are the real article, and all the other alleged Churches of Christ in this country are rank counterfeits. The President-elect of this Conference of the true Churches of Christ hails from North Britain, and his name is James Anderson. In his address he showed the absurdity of Evolution, and prophesied the "utter defeat and disgrace of the so-called Higher Critics." This gentleman should be stuffed—when he is dead, of course; we don't mean murder—and exhibited in a museum of antiquities. He would figure as a rare and valuable specimen.

The "Bible Christians" have been having their hardy annual at St. Austell, in Cornwall. Other Christians, we suppose, are *not* Bible Christians.

One of the speakers at the Bible Christian annual said that many congregations could not tolerate theological sermons, and that the more thorough the sermon the less was the attention and interest. How sad!

Bishop Potter, of New York, intends that Christianity shall keep abreast of the times. There is a lot of drinking going on, and the Church should look in the performance somewhere. Accordingly he has started a model saloon called the Subway Tavern, which is doing a roaring trade. The advertisement whets people's curiosity, and the saloon wets their thirst—which is very pronounced in the present hot weather. No doubt the place would be rather attractive to the gentleman who turned all that prodigious quantity of water into wine at that marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. But the gentleman's apostles in the United States are very indignant with Bishop Potter. They say it is shocking that a minister of the Gospel should have anything to do with intoxicating liquors. Bishop Nicholson, of Milwaukee, calls Bishop Potter's act disgraceful. Perhaps he is right. But we do not feel called upon to discuss the internal affairs of the Christian Church. All we venture to do is to suggest that a Church committee might consider this matter in all its details, and it might assist their deliberations if they held their meetings in the Subway Tavern.

St. Philip's Church, Regent-street, London, is coming down; and this involves the fate of some heavily-stocked wine-cellars belonging to Messrs. J. Lyons and Co. These

cellars are under the sacred edifice, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have to pay Messrs. Lyons £10,409 compensation. Wine-cellars under a church are, of course, no new thing. The wine helps to keep the church, and the church helps to keep the wine.

The Additional Curates' Society announces that the contributions received during the seven months ended July 31 amounted to £14,576. Right opposite this announcement, in the newspaper before us, is the report of an inquest on a St. Pancras baby, two years old, killed by being fed with fried fish. Some people may ask what these two things have to do with one another. Well, a good deal. Both are illustrations of England's want of common sense. Money is wasted on curates instead of being spent on education; and mothers have their babies christened to give them a chance of heaven, and then kill them by a monstrous disregard of the elementary principles of their earthly welfare.

A wealthy country gentleman named Quanquin has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for having placed a number of large stones on the railway line at Dijon. He explained to the court that he was bored to death, and his only object was to get a little excitement by watching wagons run off the metals. When this gentleman is free again we suggest that he should join the French division of the Salvation Army. He might thus secure a little excitement without endangering the lives of his fellow-citizens. Perhaps they would let him play the cornet, or beat the big drum, or walk backwards at the head of a procession. Things of this kind help to relieve the monotony of existence. And if the gentleman finds his wealth a hindrance the Salvation Army will ease him of that with the greatest pleasure.

A strong movement has arisen in several German States for the omission of the Apostles' Creed from those services which are regarded as associated with the routine life of every citizen, namely, baptisms, confirmations, and marriages. This movement is confined to the Protestant States, and has little or no existence in Catholic areas. It is not proposed to omit the creed from the ordinary church services, attendance at which is optional, but liberal Lutherans say they ought, at any rate, to agitate that the repetition of the formula should not be compulsory at services which, as society is at present constituted, no one can omit without social disadvantage. In Baden and other South German States the Liberal laity are sending in mass petitions to the consistories in favor of their view, alleging that, as science has proved that many of the positions assumed in the Apostles' Creed are untenable, its repetition is offensive in services which are intimately associated with the secular and social life of the nation.—*Daily Telegraph*.

"Providence" is still incapable of recognising its own buildings. During the storms of August 4 the tower of St. Mary's Church, Brecon, was struck by lightning, and Bath Abbey had its south-eastern pinnacle knocked off.

"Providence" no more watches over its agents than it watches over its buildings. A recent day's news contained the drowning of two clergymen; the Rev. A. G. Henley, vicar of St. Mark's, Mansfield, Nottingham, and the Rev. H. St. Helier Evans, Rector of Brampton Abbots, Herefordshire. Both were drowned while bathing, one near Kingsbridge, and the other in the Wye.

At the village of Brodno, in Northern Hungary, the inhabitants raised an alarm by ringing the church bells. In a frenzy of religious excitement they seized hold of an unfortunate young man whom they suspected of being a Jew whom they suspected of arson. That was sufficient proof of his guilt. So they dragged him into the village, and killed him with sticks, stones, and scythes. And when they had knocked and carved him to pieces they cried, "Serve the Jew right." But it turned out that the murdered man was a railway official named Vlasics, nephew of an ex-Minister of Public Instruction, who was on an excursion.

Some extraordinary things are done in the name of the law in Christian England. A man was sent to prison some time ago for not paying money due to his wife on a separation order. His defence was that he was unable to pay. Immediately on his release he was rearrested by the police on account of the arrears that had accumulated during his imprisonment. That takes the cake.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during August.)

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—August 14, Failsworth; 21, morning, Kingsland; afternoon, Victoria Park.
- J. D. writes: "I see from the *Freethinker* that you have decided to go to Rome to attend the Congress, in behalf of which I enclose two guineas. I hope you will have in every way a pleasant time, and give us all an account of it when you return." This is what we intend to do. Our readers may look out for a first-hand report of the Congress, and perhaps of some other matters. One correspondent, who says that we first taught him to love Shelley, begs us to visit the corner of the Eternal City where rest the ashes of Keats and those of the still greater poet who sang his requiem in "Adonais"—and to write an article on our visit when we return home.
- E. WATSON.—We cannot undertake to answer such questions through the post. Your Christian Israelite friend who says he heard Mr. Foote say from a public platform "that he fully recognised that there was a God, and that if any man did not believe in a God then that person was a fool" is a gentleman with a romantic memory. Mr. Foote never said anything of the kind. He has been a professed, and even a militant, Atheist for more than thirty years.
- F. RICH says: "I hope your readers will rally up and make the Rome Congress Fund look more respectable than it does at present. It should be the desire of all Freethinkers to assist in making their voices heard in the hotbed of priestcraft."
- T. HOPKINS, a humorous friend, not without a vein of seriousness, advises us not to drink water at Rome, as it is a dangerous drink in a city which "has been stewing in filth for centuries." With regard to the N. S. S. delegation he says: "You say you want £90 for this job, and if the Freethought party don't chip in see what a six-shooter can do for it; it ought not to insult a world like this with its presence." This ought to act as a galvanic shock on some pockets.
- ROME CONGRESS FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £34 9s. 6d. Received this week:—J. D. £2 2s., T. Hopkins £1, F. Rich 2s. 6d., W. C. Middleton £1 1s., J. Shipp 2s. 6d., J. B. (B. on T.) 2s., H. Organ 1s., J. Henson 2s. 6d., J. Mohr 2s. 6d., W. Clarkson £1, J. Charlton 1s. 6d., W. C. Schweizer 2s. 6d.
- J. BLACKHALL.—The notion that the editor of the *Freethinker* cannot possibly answer the Rev. W. R. Chesterton, of Benwell, is a nice little bit of self-flattery on that gentleman's part. We saw nothing to answer in his sermon. All that seemed necessary was a lesson in controversial manners—which we gave him.
- J. A. SHARPLEY.—Much obliged. We will deal with Mr. Aked next week.
- T. COMMON.—Thanks for your letter and the previous number of your "Notes for Good Europeans," which we shall look through carefully. The lecturer you mention is of no importance from an intellectual point of view. Since our reference to Ragnar Redbeard we have come across his book. It was kindly sent to us by Mr. Bertram Dobell, the bookloving bookseller, who saw by the *Freethinker* that we wished to see it. Mr. Dobell had read the book himself, and gave us his opinion of it. We shall see presently whether it coincides with our own. He is a good judge, anyway.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- T. P. (Masbro).—No room this week. Will answer your questions in our next.
- G. JACOB.—Thanks for cuttings.
- J. SHIPP.—Your good wishes are appreciated.
- J. POLLITT.—We wish all success to your anniversary services at Failsworth.
- H. ORGAN.—Too late for this issue. We shall have something to say about the reverend gentleman's sermon on Angels next week. Glad to hear you continue to derive so much pleasure from reading the *Freethinker*; still more glad to hear that your wife reads it regularly with profit. We highly value lady converts. They are stancher than the men. We have known many men ashamed of their Freethought to the extent of hiding it carefully. We never knew a woman with that particular weakness.
- W. CLARKSON, subscribing to the Rome Congress Fund, "trusts it will be closed early." We are afraid it won't. The heat-wave seems to have made the "saints" lethargic. A week's cool weather ought to be worth £50 to the Fund. We are praying for it.
- G. L. MACKENZIE.—Your welcome verses will appear in our next.
- J. HENSON and J. MOHR, secretary and delegate of the Bristol Channel District of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, subscribe towards the Rome Congress Fund, and wish they could send more. As things go they are generous and bold to send what they do.
- J. CHARLTON.—Your "second mite" towards the Rome Congress Fund is acknowledged in list. We wish other "mites" would walk up as promptly.
- W. C. SCHWEIZER.—You have sent too much now; so we have credited you with another 2s. 6d. in the subscription list. Accept absolution and benediction.
- R. BRANWELL.—Renan's *Vie de Jésus* is one of the most interesting, and at the same time one of the least valuable, of all his writings. From a scientific point of view, it is infinitely inferior to the great work of Strauss which preceded it. Taine well said that Renan had substituted a romance for a legend.

The *Vie de Jésus* is indeed a romance; it has even been called a Parisian romance—with the smell of patchouli on every page. Of course the book is of value as a landmark, but it has no other value now, except as a piece of fine composition. The long Preface to the thirteenth edition shows that Renan himself had really left the *Vie de Jésus* behind him. This is further shown by the long Appendix on the Fourth Gospel. No edition of the book before the thirteenth does any sort of justice to Renan as a Biblical critic. Even the text of that edition, he says, had been "revised and corrected with the greatest care." The only English translation we know of was first published in 1863, before the appearance of the thirteenth French edition. This is the English translation now on sale in more than one cheap form, and, in view of the foregoing facts, we are unable to recommend it. Forty years ago the English translation was an act of progress; its republication in the twentieth century is simply a bit of book-making.

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

The Rome Congress.

I DO not propose to say a great deal about the Rome Congress Fund this week. I will give the readers, and myself, a little rest. Next week I shall have to be at them again. In the meanwhile I may observe that the sum I asked for has got to be raised somehow, and the sooner they provide it the sooner they will find peace. Spurgeon used to pride himself on being a good beggar, and I have had some practice in that line myself; but the people he begged from must have had better means than the people I beg from, or a more coming-on disposition. Can it be that Freethinkers do not take this Rome Congress quite seriously? Are they loth to send some of their best lecturers abroad even for a week or ten days? Have the enemy threatened to cut off communications? Or what is the matter?

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

We are pleased to state that the Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged for all the Sunday evenings in October, when Freethought lectures will be delivered under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. Mr. Foote will start this course of lectures, and will be followed by other speakers, who will be announced in due course. Mr. Foote's opening lecture at the Queen's Hall will be his first lecture after returning from the Rome Congress.

West Ham Freethinkers are reminded that the fine Stratford Town Hall has been engaged again for the first two Sunday evenings in September. Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen will deliver the lectures on these occasions, and the admission to all seats will be free. Questions and discussion will be allowed as usual. Posters and smaller announcements of these meetings are being printed, and local "saints" are earnestly invited to assist in displaying and distributing them. Supplies according to requirement can be obtained by applying to Miss Vance, secretary of the Secular Society, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

The popular sixpenny edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*, issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and published by the Pioneer Press at the *Freethinker* publishing office, is really a new edition, and not merely a textual reprint of the old half-crown edition. Certainly the work has not been re-written, but it was first type-written and then carefully revised, the author's pen having been busy upon it for a great many hours, improving the composition within allowable limits, correcting printer's blunders here and there, and sometimes adding a paragraph, or even occasionally a whole page. The work also contains two fresh chapters on "Bible Ghosts" and "The Devil"—the latter closing the volume, as the author thinks quite appropriately.

Finally, there is a postscript, in which the author explains that he was a pioneer and not a parasite of Bible Criticism, and not the exploiter of a recent controversy. Instalments of *Bible Romances* were published more than twenty years ago—including the chapter on "A Virgin Mother," which set forth all the main facts relating to the "Virgin Birth of Christ" from the point of view of comparative religion; facts which are now being paraded by some writers as though they were remarkable new discoveries. Mr. Foote's plain exposure of the Virgin Birth story was so much a piece of pioneer work that it was actually denounced by Dr. Stanton Coit from his Sunday morning platform at South Place Institute. We wonder what Dr. Coit thinks about that matter now. Mr. Foote, for instance, ridiculed the idea of a little Jew boy being of miraculous birth for having no father; the miracle would have consisted in his having no mother. Twenty years later Sir Oliver Lodge says substantially the same thing in the high-class *Hibbert Journal*, and advises the Church to do a sensible and decent thing by providing Jesus with two natural parents instead of one.

Dr. Coit, in denouncing "A Virgin Mother," paid a high tribute to Mr. Foote's literary powers. He did not notice, however, that *Bible Romances*, while written in a popular vein, was packed wherever possible with the best results of evolutionary research. The footnote references, which have been preserved in the sixpenny edition, show the wide area (of subjects and authorities) from which information had been collected. *Bible Romances* was meant to be instructive as well as entertaining, and every point of criticism to be backed up with strong evidence. Such, at least, was the author's intention. How far he succeeded must be left to other judgments.

Mr. Foote has to pay the penalty of being too honest a critic of Christianity, and of being so too much in advance of other people. Writers now state with acceptance what he stated long ago amidst hootings and yellings. Of course he will never be forgiven—until he is dead. The prejudice against him will last as long as he lives. Nevertheless an effort will be made to bring *Bible Romances* before the general public through the ordinary channels of distribution. Meanwhile the "saints" in all parts of the country, and even in other lands where the *Freethinker* goes, might help to circulate the work by buying copies and giving them away judiciously to friends and acquaintances. The price per copy is sixpence net, but the carriage will be paid on "free distribution copies," or copies will be supplied at the rate of 5s. per dozen, leaving the purchaser to pay carriage on delivery. A considerable amount of useful propagandist work could be done in this way at a very moderate cost. And really the general body of Freethinkers should cooperate in disseminating their principles, instead of leaving everything to their "leaders."

The Failsworth Secular Sunday Schools hold their Annual Services to-day (Aug. 14), when Mr. C. Cohen will deliver two addresses, and hymns and choruses will be sung by the Choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band. Collections will be taken up in aid of the School Funds, so we hope the local "saints" will attend adequately provided for this purpose. Absent friends can send donations to the secretary—James Pollitt, 3 Robert-street. There should be a good gathering both afternoon and evening.

Mr. H. Percy Ward has just finished a month's open-air campaign, having delivered thirty-one lectures in Leeds, Birmingham, Wigan, Barrow-in-Furness, Oldham, Preston, and Bolton. New Branches of the N. S. S. are being formed in two of these places. Mr. Ward's meetings were all well attended and without the slightest disturbance; which is a welcome change from some previous experiences. Mr. Ward will now be busy again at Liverpool, where he is lecturer and organiser to the local N. S. S. Branch.

Mr. J. M. Remsburg's new book, *The Bible*, is already in a second edition. It is published at the office of the New York *Truthseeker*, and the price is a dollar and a quarter. We congratulate Mr. Remsburg on the success of his valuable work.

Mr. R. J. McHugh describes in the *Daily Telegraph* a Japanese Memorial Service he witnessed outside Feng-huan-cheng. After the official and orthodox ceremonies there came a remarkable speech by General Nishi. A distinctly Secular ring was apparent in his concluding words. "Our hearts," he said, "bleed at the thought of you, noble dead. Lie in peace, precious souls, rest comforted in the sweet consciousness that your brilliant exploits shall be emblazoned in letters of gold on the pages of history, and that your grand examples of self-sacrifice shall be handed down to

your successors from generation to generation. Situated as we are at the front, we are ill-provided to make fit preparation for this occasion. Meagre are our offerings, but in the hope of in some degree compensating for our shortcomings, we commend our praise and gratitude to the consecrated memory of the dead."

The bright writer of "Zechariah Twaddle's Notions" in the *Yarmouth Mercury* refers pleasantly to the freethinking correspondence initiated in that journal by Mr. J. W. de Caux, and what he says is another proof that humor is a near relative of common sense. We make the following extract:—

"When this ere *Agnostic* argifyin first cum into the *Mercury* I got that wild, and hed such terribel nite swets, that I couldn't sleep for feer Christianity should bust up and everything go to the dowst. I rit to the Editor to say as how I shouldn't buy another bloomin *Mercury*. 'My dear sir,' says the Editor, in a note to me, 'your penny won't be missed, for the *Mercury* is still going in its thousands. But you, as an Englishman, surely believe in fair play, and a free press. People have a right to their opinions, and because you disbelieve the doctrine of "Nothings" is it safe for you to say they may not be right as well as yourself? Surely, when you get over 50 columns of closely-printed reading matter for a penny, and afterwards find the paper worth three-farthings for lighting the fire, you need not begrudge two columns that greatly interest other people, even if they do not please you. You don't suppose we print the *Mercury* solely for your edification alone? You could skip them if they gall your narrow little soul. Why! hundreds say your wife's *Notions* alone are worth the penny!' Well, frinds, when I got the letter, I could hev shot that blissed Editor, but I sleeps on it, and in the mornin thinks he wasn't far rong. And bliss my left wentrickle! if I aint lernt more theology reedin Dr. Samuel Adams and Mr. de Coox, and others, than I ever lerat in chirch, or Tin Kittle—the parsons soft-sope things over so, and fare to be afraid of givin you the nakid truth—no, they shoves theology into bathin drawers, so to speak."

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, whose verses will be familiar to many of our readers, managed to get a letter in the *London Sun* on the £2,000,000 religious lawsuit in godly Scotland. He said it was a proof that both sides are anti-Christian; since Jesus said, "Lay not up treasures on earth," and, "If anyone sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, give him thy cloak also." "If the 'Son of Man' were alive to-day," Mr. Mackenzie adds, "he, doubtless, would quote the greatest of the sons of men, and say: 'A plague o' both your houses.'" We regret to say that we are afraid Mr. Mackenzie would not have got that letter into one of the Liberal papers.

The Trend of Modern Judaism.

It is pretty generally recognised that the efforts of the various Christian Churches to convert the Jews are practically wasted. At any rate there are no visible results at all commensurate with the amount of money and time expended on missions to the Jews in the past. Indeed the number of wary Israelites who have been caught by the blandishments of the Christian missionary has been so small up to the present that the expensiveness of the Jewish convert has passed into a common jest. It is not surprising that the zealous disciples of Christ make so little headway amongst the present-day descendants of Abraham. In all ages the Jew has had a keen eye for a bargain, and even in the matter of religion he is not likely to entertain any idea of a transfer, unless there is some advantage to be gained by the transaction. We say this in all seriousness, and not in sarcasm. For in sober truth the faithful remnant of the erstwhile Chosen People have nothing to gain ethically at the present day by discarding their venerable (if mistaken) faith, merely to replace it by the newer (and at least equally erroneous) creed of the Christian Churches.

We are far from admiring supernatural religion in any of its forms, but it would be unjust to withhold a certain measure of appreciation of the indomitable courage and tenacity wherewith the Jew has clung to the religion of his fathers in the face of centuries of persecution, contumely, and expatriation. The history of the Jewish race is unparalleled in the annals of mankind; and the fact that Judaism still exists as an homogeneous and not inconsiderable sect, despite the vicissitudes through which it has passed, seems to us a much more wonderful thing than the vaunted rise and triumph of Christianity.

For let it be remembered that, unlike Christianity, Judaism has never been patronised and encouraged by emperors, or princes, or nobles, for their own selfish ends; nor has it during the last two thousand years ever had the support of the secular arm for the enforcement of its tenets or the vindication of its authority. Judaism has relied neither upon the rack, the thumbscrew, nor the dungeon to preserve the purity of its doctrine, nor has it found it necessary to resort to mental terrorism to secure the allegiance of its followers. The Jewish race has been the veritable Ishmael of the nations. Every man's hand has been against it; and time and again the Jew has been made the scapegoat for the sins of others. In the campaign of calumny, abuse, and persecution from which the Jew has suffered, no one has been more active than the orthodox Christian. Of course, the Christian zealot could always plead that he had the sacred memory of his slaughtered deity to avenge. We are not concerned to deny that the Jew may have made himself otherwise obnoxious occasionally, but it seems to have been very much a case of giving a dog a bad name, with the usual result. A people who could crucify God himself were considered capable of any conduct however dastardly, and were frequently treated accordingly.

During the centuries in which the nations were under the bondage of the Church, to be a Jew was to be regarded as the vilest thing that crawled on the earth. Opprobrium, obloquy, and oppression were his daily portion, and his sufferings were none the less bitter that they were so frequently quite unmerited. Treated as a noxious reptile, it is not to be wondered at that the Jew sometimes distilled poison to the injury of the social organism. Social ostracism and public scorn are scarcely calculated to have a sweetening and elevating effect on the disposition and conduct of the average human being.

In so far as the Christian oppressors of the Jews were actuated by religious motives and animated by a holy horror of the people who had rejected their Savior and compassed, or acquiesced in, his death, their attitude is not very intelligible. But it only furnishes another example of the mass of inconsistencies that go to make up Christianity. Because, instead of being angry with the Jews for crucifying Christ, the Christians ought to be grateful to them for having done so, and by that means consummated the glorious work of salvation! Did not Christ come for the express purpose of dying for the human race? Why, then, reprobate the Jews for merely accomplishing the will of God? Consider what a muddle would have been made of man's redemption if everybody had declined to put the Son of God to death! Jesus Christ would have been compelled to die in his bed at a more or less advanced age, like any son of an ordinary respectable earthly father and mother, unless his heavenly father spirited him up to the clouds again without dying. Otherwise he would be still roaming about the world like the Wandering Jew of legendary fame, looking for someone to make an end of him. In any case the remarkable scheme devised by God for outwitting the Devil would have been completely spoiled, and we would still be languishing in the slavery of Satan. All things considered, therefore, believers in the Christian dispensation would seem to be deeply indebted to the Jews for so accommodatingly lending themselves to the Divine purpose. Instead of evincing any gratitude, however, Christians have consistently displayed the most vindictive and, to a large extent, unreasoning hatred for the Semite. That the anti-Semitic spirit is by no means extinct has been fully demonstrated by last year's atrocities at Kischeneff, in Bessarabia and at Homel. So that not many of the sons and daughters of Judah are likely to be won over by the sweet reasonableness of the Gentile creed.

We have already said that the modern enlightened Jew has nothing to gain ethically by embracing the Christian faith. It may be added that in some of its theological conceptions Judaism is on a higher level than Christianity, and approximates more

closely to the teaching of science. For instance, the Jewish idea of God as being eternally one and indivisible is much more in accordance with scientific truth than the incomprehensible Trinitarian nightmare of the Christian creed. So, also, their unhesitating rejection of any necessary mediator between God and man is much more agreeable to reason and common sense than the absurd expiatory sacrifice of Calvary. But the Jewish religion has always consisted largely of forms and rites and periodical observances. Such religious accessories, whatever living significance they may originally possess, inevitably tend to become meaningless, and in course of time they are performed in a purely perfunctory fashion. It is not in the power of any religious ritual and ceremonial, however elaborate and ornate, to permanently satisfy the restless mind of man.

Signs are not wanting that of recent years the educated Jew in this country has been developing an independence of thought on religious questions, and is not merely content to walk in the way of his fathers. No doubt a certain section of the Jews still adheres most earnestly and unquestioningly to the old rules and regulations of their religion; but the intelligent modern Jew—like those on a similar mental plane within the Churches—is becoming alive to the fact that much of his creed and practice is obsolescent, and hopelessly incompatible with modern conditions of life and modern tendencies of thought. The character and tone of recent Jewish literature sufficiently indicate the trend of modern Jewish thought, and the trend is not in the direction of Christianity, but towards Agnosticism and Free-thought. The tendency towards freedom of thought and outspokenness of language is none the less marked and gratifying that many of these books are avowedly written in the best interests of Judaism itself.

Take for example such a work as C. G. Montefiore's *Bible for Home Reading*. It is really a remarkable production for a Jewish writer when we consider that the Jews are much more concerned than any other religious body in maintaining the integrity of the Old Testament. Mr. Montefiore practically associates himself with Professors Cheyne and Driver in their criticisms and conclusions regarding the earlier books of the Bible. He admits quite freely that the anciently-accepted chronology of the Old Testament is erroneous. "The world is millions of years, and man is thousands of years, older than these Hebrew writers knew of." He tells us the story of Creation is "a pure work of fantasy." And further, "the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel are but the written forms of very old and popular legends." He accepts also the fact that the books of the Old Testament were neither written by the persons whose names are attached to them nor do they belong to the periods to which they were formerly ascribed. He does not dispute the assertion that David was not the author of the Psalms, nor Solomon the author of Proverbs. He admits that "many of the Prophecies were not, and never can be, fulfilled." And much more to the same effect.

Even more important are Mr. Montefiore's reflections on the moral teaching of the Bible. He leaves Joshua and Judges out of his volumes, on the plea that they are tales of bloodshed and slaughter, and as such unsuitable in a Bible for home reading. He holds that while it may not matter very much if we allow children to believe that Elisha "made iron swim," it *does* matter very seriously if we allow it to be believed that God sent two she-bears out of a wood to destroy forty-two children because they called rude names after a passing stranger. It may be noted in passing that in dealing with this and similar gems of Scripture history Mr. Montefiore seems chiefly anxious to rehabilitate *God's* reputation. Those of us who are more concerned about the development of our children's characters are strongly averse to teaching a child *any* lies whatever. And we think it is putting it very mildly indeed to say, as our author does, that "it is both

morally and educationally very doubtful how far it is advisable for a parent to teach something which he does not believe himself." We should hope that it is only religious people who imagine for a moment that the cause of truth and righteousness can be advanced by the teaching of lies. And while we agree with Mr. Montefiore's objection to those Old Testament stories that are "morally or metaphysically inconsistent and illogical," we are no less opposed to such of the episodes as are historically false.

But the scholarly joint-editor of the *Jewish Quarterly* displays such a welcome liberalism of view in dealing with the Bible that we are not disposed to quarrel with him. We would have wished to quote further from the *Bible for Home Reading* to show how completely its author identifies himself with the best modern Biblical critics, and for the purpose of fully demonstrating that tendency of cultured Judaism towards Rationalism which we have alluded to. But we must forbear. We had hoped also to refer to one or two other productions of the modern Jewish school—notably *Thoughts on Judaism*, by Lily H. Montagu—but, for the present, space forbids. Perhaps, however, enough has been written to indicate that, whether the disintegrating process in connection with Judaism be rapid or gradual in its operation, we need not fear that Christianity will be the gainer.

It is interesting to note in conclusion that, in the opinion of so intelligent and competent a critic as C. G. Montefiore, the Jew takes exception to the New Testament as presenting "a one-sided conception of faith containing within it the seeds of persecution and fanaticism, and sometimes tending to the severance of morality from religion." Whatever may be said regarding the latter clause of this indictment, there can be no doubt as to the truth of the first section of it. And it does not augur well for the success of Christian propaganda amongst the Jews that the very best Hebrew thought is so frankly critical in its attitude towards New Testament and Old Testament alike.

G. SCOTT.

Three Great Omissions.

How is it that religions of all kinds are able to live in the face of all the discoveries made by science? That all religions are nothing but superstition may be taken for granted, I think. Or, if that statement is too strong, we may safely say that all are rooted in delusions. The first foundation of all is the same. The essence of all is identical. The most refined religion is a descendant of the first and lowest type, as man is a descendant of a savage ancestor. Therefore, the highest form of supernatural religion is as truly a superstition as the lowest was. Even Christians would admit that worshipping man as a chief or a ghost, and making idols gods, and fountains, rivers, animals, and even the sun a deity, was a gross superstition. But I doubt whether the worship of an idol, in which the devotee believes a god dwells, is any more absurd than worshipping a god who is an impersonal idea only.

One would have thought that the increase of intelligence, the spread of knowledge, and the wonderful discoveries of science, were enough to destroy superstition and establish rationalism on a firm foundation. But they are not. Superstition is as rampant to-day, in the mass, as ever it was, as is proved by the easy way revivalists and impostors manage to affect and gull the multitude. During March this year (1904) a religious revival has taken place in Illinois and Iowa. Theatres, public-houses, and dancing-halls have been closed. Church attendance has been quadrupled. Balls have been given up, and fashionable bar clubs have been disbanded. Crowded excursion trains ran to the district from a radius of a hundred miles. All this was the work of a young man bearing the appropriate name of Rev.

W. A. Sunday. Could such effects be produced unless the bulk of the people were ignorant, credulous, and superstitious? I think not. Such results would be impossible in a district populated by rationalists, whose reason controls the emotions. And it is not the toilers only that are easily affected. The Christian Science fad is spreading. In the course of two or three years they have become numerous enough in Manchester to build a church in an aristocratic part of the town, which was opened in the month of April. The opening was attended by aristocrats, ladies and gentlemen, who gave their testimony. An alderman and a doctor, besides others, told the audience what the new religion had done for them. Evidently, from the bottom to the top of society, there is abundance of material ready at hand, not only to supply the churches, but also for false teachers and impostors to work upon.

Signs are not wanting that the monster Superstition is awakening. The owners and custodians of delusions, the priests of every religion, alarmed at the spread of knowledge and the losing of devotees, are using every possible means to restore their influence over the people. And as the masses are so easily deluded, there is no telling what the result will be. Even some of the Free Churches are beginning to introduce the priestly paraphernalia into their services, with the object of increasing the gullibility of the congregations; it cannot have any other utility. And when we observe the rise of Mormonism, Spiritism, Salvation Army, and other delusions, the possibility of a revival of superstitions becomes apparent.

Superstition seems to be a second nature in man. It is almost as difficult to change his bias as it would be to change the skin of an Ethiopian. And in addition to his inherited bias, nearly all his environments are arranged to confirm and perpetuate his credulity. Rulers and all the upper classes want to keep him in ignorance, to be a slave to them. But the great instruments to uphold credulity are the Churches and their priests. They keep the people in ignorance by withholding knowledge and teaching errors. The children in the schools are held in their deadly grip. They have learning, leisure, wealth, and authority unlimited at their command, and they employ all dexterously to enslave the minds of the people. Till all religions and Churches are destroyed, or their teaching changed, or their power curtailed, there will not be much chance to establish Rationalism.

Superstition is kept alive by the organised priesthoods and Churches. The creeds of all religions over all the world are so absurd that they would soon become dead myths were there no Churches and priestly vested trade interest to keep them alive. And why does Rationalism progress so slowly but for want of organisations to teach and defend? Rationalists, though with reason and intelligence on their side, are, as a rule, only a mob fighting against disciplined armies. No wonder credulity holds the field and Freethought struggles to live. Rationalism will never do justice to itself and the world without better organisations, under some name or other—call them churches, leagues, societies, guilds, unions, clubs, or any other name, as may be desired. The name will matter little so long as disciplined armies are formed to conquer the world for Rationalism.

Had Voltaire conceived the need and utility of forming rational churches under some name or other, is it not a certainty that Freethought would have been now stronger than it is? The intellectual power, enthusiasm, perseverance, resources, popularity, and influence of Voltaire were so great that he could have formed societies by the hundred had he conceived such a thing desirable. The same remarks may be applied to Robert Owen at the beginning of last century. His philanthropy, enthusiasm, energy, and persistence, with his altruistic ideas and schemes made him popular with kings, princes, and poor, and his influence at one time was so vast that he could have established social churches by the hundred had he thought it

was necessary to establish the doctrines he taught. And during the latter half of last century Ingersoll, thinker, writer, and eloquent lecturer of America, was so popular, and his electric influence over his crowded audiences was so great that he could have formed a Secular Church wherever he lectured had he thought such a church was needed. But neither of them conceived the idea of a church or society necessary, and that is the three great omissions at the head of this article.

I may be wrong, but I cannot divest myself of the idea that the world, and especially Rationalism, has suffered a great loss because such giant leaders did not form some organisations to carry on and perpetuate the work that they so nobly performed.

The intellectual power of Voltaire, Owen, and Ingersoll was very great; the influence which their intellectual activity created had immensely greater power; and had they formed churches or societies to crystallise their teaching, the power created would have been vastly increased. Had Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and many others followed the same policy as Voltaire, Owen, and Ingersoll did, their preaching would never have had the success they secured. Whatever power as a preacher Luther had it was magnified greatly by gathering and forming the converts into churches.

Without forming unions of some kind, and under some name, to gather in the converts and utilise their service, I can see but little chance for Free-thought to prevail against the churches. The few societies existing do not secure the women and children, and without these no movement will long succeed. As a rule, the women and children of Rationalists are retained by the churches and are lost to Free-thought. If the cause of truth is to succeed a remedy must be found. The tactics of the churches, to some extent at least, must be adopted. Free meetings must be established, where the poor man with his wife and all his family may attend. This is impossible under present arrangements. And something more than attending meetings to hear lectures, debates, and addresses is required. There is an enormous amount of work to be done to make the world anything like what it ought to be, and might be, if all did their duty. Rationalists ought to show by work for man that faith in this world is superior to supernaturalism, and can produce enthusiasm and sacrifice in the work. The greatest need of the world is a better social system to abolish the huge poverty and misery existing in the midst of huge wealth. It would help the success of Free-thought if Rationalists by themselves, or in union with Socialists, were to make the reconstruction of society a plank in their propaganda. A propaganda of a mere destructive criticism will never win the populace. The churches are losing their hold on the masses because they do nothing but talk. To gain those lost to the churches Freethinkers must do, as well as talk, otherwise they will be no better than the churches which they attack. To make Free-thought a permanent success the omissions of the past must be remedied, and all means employed successfully by the churches must be copied and improved—if that be possible.

R. J. DERFEL.

"Mark Rutherford."

This is a book that ought to be well known to Freethinkers. I am ashamed to say that I have only to-day made its acquaintance, although my copy is one of the eighth edition. Nor do I know when the first edition appeared. From its style I guess it to have been written at least forty years ago; that style is very simple, warm, and compact, and the story is managed with a pleasant skill which never permits any dullness in its movement. It is quite free from what the French describe as *longueurs*, and it is above all sincere in thought and clear in conception. The pictures of the two Freethinkers, Edward Gibbon Mardon and Woollaston, the bookseller and publisher, are excellent, and so lifelike that

one is prepared to learn that they were, indeed, studies from the life. Not less good is the sketch of Woollaston's niece Theresa and the slighter sketch of Mardon's daughter, a pure piece of artistry of unusual excellence. The other characters are rather types than individuals, though types in some instances of whom Rutherford might well have met the originals. Snale, the draper-deacon, for instance, and his wife, are set down without malice or extenuation, and their portraits are, notwithstanding the remorseless exposure of their natures, absolutely free from all taint of caricature. George Eliot might have accepted the authorship of this book, and perhaps one would not be far wrong in attributing to it some traces of her influence. On the other hand, there is a restraint in the drawing of the most lovable characters in it that George Eliot would hardly have improved on herself, I think, had she had the drawing of them. Writing of the Unitarians in a small market town—I do not understand from the *Autobiography* precisely what opinions Rutherford eventually reached to, but he clearly passed well beyond Unitarianism—the author says:—

"The Church and other dissenting bodies considered us as non-Christian. I often wondered that Mr. Lane retained his business, and, indeed, he would have lost it if he had not established a reputation for honesty which drew customers to him, who, notwithstanding the denunciations of the parson, preferred tea with some taste in it from a Unitarian to the insipid wood-flavored stuff which was sold by the grocer who believed in the Trinity."

That is very "George Eliot-ish"; but here is another quotation which goes straighter to the mark than George Eliot cared often to do on the same subject:—

"The Christ-idea was true whether it was ever incarnated or not in a being bearing his name." Rutherford asserts to Mardon. "Pardon me," said Mardon, "but it does very much matter. It is all the matter whether we are dealing with a dream or a reality. I can dream about a man's dying on the cross in homage to what he believed, but I would not, perhaps, die there myself; and when I suffer from hesitation whether I ought to sacrifice myself for the truth, it is of immense assistance to me to know that a greater sacrifice has been made before me—that a greater sacrifice is possible. To know that somebody has poetically imagined that it is possible, and has been very likely altogether incapable of its achievement, is no help. Moreover, the commonplaces which even the most Freethinking of Unitarians seem to consider as axiomatic are to me far from certain, and even unthinkable. For example, they are always talking about the omnipotence of God. But power even of the supremest kind necessarily implies an object—that is to say, resistance. Without an object which resists it, it would be a blank; and what then is the meaning of omnipotence? It is not that it is merely inconceivable; it is nonsense, and so are all these abstract, ilimitable, self-annihilative attributes of which God is made up."

I need quote no more, and will merely add that though the book is short it is full of matter, keen observation, and quietly-expressed imaginative passages; and if it errs at all it is in a certain reticent touch here and there, which to me adds a charm to it, in that it enables me to fill in in my own way the outlines to which the author has here and there confined himself—or herself, for I have not yet quite decided that *Mark Rutherford* is not the work of a woman.

Fisher Unwin is the publisher, and the book can be bought for one shilling. There are other books by the same writer, but I have not yet read any of them. SIRIUS.

John Morley on Voltaire.

"No writer ever used so few words to produce such pregnant effects. Voltaire's alexandrines, his witty stories, his mock heroics, his exposition of Newton, his histories, his dialectics, all bear the same mark, the same natural, precise, and condensed mode of expression, the same absolutely faultless knowledge of what is proper and permitted in every given style of written work.

"That circumfusion of bright light which is the highest aim of speech was easy to Voltaire in whatever order of subject he happened to treat.

"His style is like a translucent stream of purest mountain water, moving with swift and animated flow under flashing sunbeams.

"In the realm of mere letters, Voltaire is one of the little band of great monarchs, and in style he alone remains of the supreme potentates. He is the most trenchant writer in the world, yet there is not a sentence of strained emphasis or over-wrought antithesis; he is the wittiest, yet there is not a line of bad buffoonery. Voltaire's letters are wittier than any other letters in the world. For lightness, swiftness, grace, spontaneity, you can find no second to them at however long an interval. Humanity, armed, aggressive, and alert, never slumbering and never wearying, moving like ancient hero over the land to slay monsters, is the rarest type of virtues, and Voltaire is one of the master-types."

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, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies; Brockwell Park, 3.15, a Lecture; 6.30, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford-grove): 7, F. A. Davies.

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.: Sunday, Members meet, Tram Junction, near Station, Dudley, 3.30; Thursday, August 16, Birmingham Coffee House, Bull Ring: A. Barber, "Colonel Ingersoll's Ethics."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Coffee Tavern, Fleet-street): 8 p.m., "Robert Burns's Attitude to Religion."

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Annual Services—C. Cohen, 2.45, "The Question of a Future Life"; 6.30, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?" Hymns, etc., by the Choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Armley Park): 11, G. Weir, "Christianity and the Unemployed"; Crossflats Park, 7, "The Bible and Beer."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Islington-square, H. Percy Ward, 3, "How Priests Slander Atheists"; 7, "Is Man a Marionette?—A Reply to Dr. Aked." Monday, 8, Haymarket, Birkenhead; Tuesday, 8, Edgehill Church.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "Labor Politics."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School-rooms, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting—Autumn Lectures, etc.

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