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The sum of all humanity, and the height of moral perfection, is BEAR and FORBEAR.

QUARLES.

Creation.

AN OPEN LETTER TO A BISHOP.

YOU have been good enough, my lord, to write a curious little volume on "Creation." It is the first of a series entitled "Helps to Belief," which naturally attracted my attention. I happen to require as much help to belief as any man I know, and accordingly I invested ninepence in a copy of your production. Unfortunately it has not recompensed me for the outlay. My unbelief is rather confirmed than shaken, and I am farther off than ever from the repose which is to be found on the pillow of faith. I have, however, read your volume with great care, and I venture to offer a few remarks upon it.

Let me first congratulate you on an admission. You say:—

"The very difficulty, so to speak, with regard to the theological view of the opening of the book of Genesis is, that theologians will not consent to regard the document as a lesson addressed merely to the infancy of humanity, will not allow it to be regarded as a childish thing to be put aside by the human race in its manhood."

Your language is skilfully guarded; it might be read in either of two opposite ways; yet I interpret you as I would a Sibylline oracle, and take the most favorable meaning. Regarded in that light, your description of the Creation story is admirable; it does credit to your candor and intelligence, as well as your style. I thank you for the phrase. "A childish thing" is the finest commentary on the first chapter of Genesis. The very epithet "childish" is supremely felicitous. What is childlike in infancy is childish in manhood; what was excusable in an age of ignorance and barbarism is contemptible in an age of science and civilisation.

Let me next indicate a few points on which I have the honor to agree with you. "Creation," you state, "begins and ends with the formula 'God said.'" Yes, my lord, that is the alpha and omega of the mystery. In the language of Hamlet, it is "words, words, words." Logomachies, in theology and metaphysics, pass current for realities; but the first attempt to define them in consciousness exposes their vacuity. "God said let there be light, and there was light," is the statement of Genesis; similarly the Hindu scriptures declare that "Brahma said let there be worlds, and there were worlds"—and the one text is as true as the other.

You affirm that Genesis makes "no pretension to being a scientific history." The discovery is rather late in the day, for your Church has, during the better part of two thousand years, insisted on the contrary doctrine; and from the days of Galileo until now it has persecuted to the full extent of its power the scientific men who, in the words of Professor Huxley, have refused to degrade nature to the level of primitive Judaism. Nevertheless, as you disclaim this "pretension," it may for the moment be dismissed. You appear to admit that Genesis is not "a scientific history," and the admission shows you are fully aware that Hebrew mythology can no

longer be opposed, as a divine truth, to the teachings of Evolution.

You assert that such "truths" as the Incarnation and the creation of man in God's image "belong to a high ethereal region to which it is impossible for either philosophy or science to rise." One half of this sentence, my lord, is perfectly true. Philosophy and science cannot breathe in the attenuated atmosphere of faith, nor are they able to see through the clouds of mystery. The very language you employ when you speak as a theologian is foreign to them. "Creation," you exclaim, "is a mystery, heaven and earth are mysteries, but through all these there shines the light of a living God—He, too, a mystery." How one mystery illuminates another mystery is a curious problem which philosophy and science will gladly leave to the "high ethereal" intellect of the pulpit. They may accept your statement, however, without feeling that it amounts to a revelation; for to the eye of reason a mystery is nothing but ignorance or self-contradiction. A galvanic battery is a mystery to the savage, the telephone is a mystery to country clergymen, and the origin of life is still a mystery to biologists. On the other hand, the Trinity is a mystery to the arithmetician, and Almighty Goodness and Wisdom is a mystery to those who see and feel the existence of evil. In the one case, the mystery is an unexplained fact; in the other case, it is a contradiction between a fact and a theory. Mystery, in short, is mist; sometimes cloud and sometimes smoke. The cloud is ignorance, and the smoke is theology.

Persons who deal in mystery, my lord, are apt to contract a taint of insincerity. I am sorry to see you referring to Moses as the author of Genesis, and still more to see you referring to "some ancient documents" which he used in its composition. Surely your lordship is aware that no single scrap of the Old Testament can be carried beyond the tenth century before Christ, which is several hundred years from the supposed date of Moses; surely your lordship is aware that no Jewish "documents" existed at the time of the Exodus.

You display the art of a professional pleader, my lord, in dealing with Professor Haeckel's remarks on Genesis. While rejecting it as a "divine revelation," this great Evolutionist says it "contrasts favorably with the confused mythology of Creation current amongst most of the other ancient nations." You subsequently allude to this as "a striking tribute to its scientific character." Nay, more, you convert *most* into *all*, and exclaim "From Moses to Linnæus! A tremendous step; and before Moses no one."

Without dilating on your perversion of Haeckel, I would ask you, my lord, whether you are ignorant of the fact that the Creation story in the first chapter of Genesis was borrowed from the mythology of Babylon, as the story of the Fall in the second and third chapters was borrowed from the mythology of Persia? Should you be ignorant, your ignorance is inexcusable; should you not be ignorant, your pretence of ignorance is unpardonable.

You deal at considerable length with the word "create," but you evade every difficulty it raises. You rush off to the Greek, the Sanscrit, and so forth; but you never refer to the Hebrew, which is the original language of "inspiration." The Hebrew *bara* does not express absolute creation

out of nothing, for such a metaphysical absurdity never entered into the heads of the ancient Jews. For this reason, perhaps, you journeyed north, south, east, and west, instead of staying at home, and consulted every language but the one containing "the oracles of God." You do not wish to be precise. You "define creation as the embodiment of thought in an objective form," which leaves the matter indeterminate. An artist embodies his conceptions by means of pre-existing materials. Do you imply the same of God? If you do, you assume the eternity of matter; if you do not, you assume creation out of nothing. This is the doctrine upheld by your Church, and you should plainly avow or disclaim it. Bishop Pearson, whose *Exposition of the Creed* is still a standard work in your colleges, gives forth no uncertain sound. "Antecedently to all things beside," he says, "there was at first nothing but God, who produced most part of the world merely out of nothing, and the rest out of that which was formerly made of nothing." You, my lord, express yourself more obscurely. You state that the material universe—in contradistinction, I presume, to the immaterial universe—points to "some kind of origin." And you add that "the existing *cosmos* testifies in a thousand ways to a pre-existent *chaos*, out of which *cosmos* has grown; according to modern language it has been *evolved*; God created the *chaos* and evolved the *cosmos*."

This is what your lordship proffers as a help to belief! Why did you not adduce one of those "thousand" testimonies to *chaos*? Can you really conceive *chaos*—a universal confusion, in which things happen at random, and nothing is anything? Do you know of a single Evolutionist who teaches that matter once existed without its properties? Are not the properties of matter the same in a comet as in a planet? Do you know so little of the nebular hypothesis as to suppose that Professor Tyndall's "fiery cloud," of which worlds are formed, is the primitive substance of *chaos*?

You refer to the nebular hypothesis, my lord, as though you firmly embraced it: but you fail to recollect, or you forget to mention, that the great French astronomer Laplace, whose account of this luminous theory you summarise, was a convinced Atheist. You proceed to assert that there must have been "something" behind this "primitive cause of the existing *cosmos*." "Whence," you inquire, "came the particular constitution of the materials, and the laws by which the constituent particles of the matter are governed?" The sentence is extremely vicious. You are guilty of tautology, for the "constitution" of matter and its "laws" are the same thing. You are also guilty of begging the question, for in asking whence they came you assume their advent, which you may justly be called upon to prove. The *petitio principii* is a favorite fallacy with theologians. I find a beautiful instance in another part of your volume, where you innocently observe that "we cannot contemplate Creation, without regarding the Creator." The remark is a truism, my lord; Creator and Creation imply each other, and by designating the universe a Creation you beg the whole question at issue.

G. W. FOOTE.

The above Letter was written many years ago, and is now reprinted in view of the increasing importance of the subject.

(To be continued.)

I am a believer in the home. The hearth-stone is the foundation of the great temple. Honor, place, fame, glory, riches—they are ashes, smoke, dust, disappointment, unless there is somebody in the world you love, somebody who loves you; unless there is some place that you can call home, some place where you can feel the arms of children around your neck, some place that is made absolutely sacred by the love of others.—*Ingersoll*.

Religion and Reason.—II.

(Continued from p. 755.)

THE concluding articles of Dr. Horton deal with the relations of Science and Religion. The "widespread impression" that science has discredited the Christian religion Dr. Horton believes is "totally erroneous." Well, if so, one would like some explanation as to what the comparative discredit into which Christianity has fallen is due. One has only to look back sufficiently far in the history of Christianity to reach a period when practically all believed in it. And even the few who doubted, for the larger part, accepted fundamental religious beliefs. To-day no one would deny that, even though the majority still profess a belief in a religion of some sort, a very large number of people have completely rejected religious beliefs, a still larger number hold them in a very tentative manner, and only a minority are actually influenced by them. What is responsible for the change? It is really too late in the day to ascribe it to weakness of intellect or looseness of character. True, certain religious apologists continue to do so, in a rather oblique manner; but it would be taking them more seriously than they deserve to say that they really believe their own explanation.

The only reply that Dr. Horton could make would be that the conditions of life have changed, and that a modern environment suggests doubts and difficulties that were unknown to an earlier generation. This would be a correct enough answer; but it suggests the further inquiry as to what are these changes in the environment, and to what are they due. It is unquestionable that the growth of communication between different peoples, the multiplication of books, the diffusion of education, and kindred agencies have all co-operated in bringing about a state of mind that is inimical to Christianity; but this, after all, is only the practical effect of science. Science does not exist *in vacuo*. It has a very practical aspect; and this expresses itself, through invention and the diffusion of knowledge, in a profound modification of our whole environment. People do not nowadays give up Christianity—they outgrow it; and they outgrow it because the formative influences around them are so different to those which operated upon our predecessors.

With the uncandid candor that characterises Dr. Horton, he admits that many men of science repudiate the "verities" of spiritual life. And to this he has a threefold answer. First, someone—Dr. Dennert, of Berlin—collected the names of some two hundred and forty-two prominent men of science in ancient and modern times who were believers. Prodigious! Limiting ourselves to the last two thousand years, there were actually four "prominent men of science" in each generation who were believers in religion. A most remarkable result, truly! I am accepting the genuineness of the figures, and also the reliability of the method of research. Nor will I do more than hint as to the value of such evidence belonging to a period when the accusation of Atheism meant imprisonment and death, and when such men as Vanini and Bruno were murdered on charges of heresy. It is enough that Dr. Horton finds proof of the agreement of religion and science in the fact that an average of four scientists in each generation since the birth of Jesus have been true to the faith.

The next reply exhibits Dr. Horton in his character as the Bayard of Nonconformist courtesy. "It is quite possible," he says, "that some scientific men are deficient in reverence, in family affection, or in aesthetic taste; but this is purely accidental, and must no more be attributed to their science than any other defect which the students or leaders of science may be subject to. They are merely sports of nature, and it is a grotesque mistake to attribute their spiritual blindness to their scientific knowledge."

It is, I repeat, characteristic of Christian taste to

bracket unbelief and an absence of family affection together. Anywhere else, but in connection with religion, such a method would be repudiated by all decent men and women. In the pulpit, however, ignorance, impertinence, and exhibitions of bad breeding are accepted as so many evidences of religious zeal. Only one would like to inquire, as no names are given by this Hampstead preacher, whether Charles Darwin or Professor Huxley are instances where absence of belief and deficiency in family affection run together? Such a statement as the above well becomes the preacher of a creed that for centuries did its level best to extirpate family life from civilised Europe, and only, at best, tolerated it as the lesser of two evils.

The charge of "spiritual blindness," is one of those well-worn pulpit expressions that appeal to religious groundlings, but which is as stupid as any expression could well be. It is no doubt an effective and affecting sight to see men like evangelist Torrey or Dr. Horton, or a Salvation Army preacher discoursing from their own lofty elevation on the "spiritual blindness" of poor, unenlightened men like Spencer or Darwin or Haeckel or Swinburne or Meredith. And the pitiful picture of it all is that none of these latter seem to at all feel their sad affliction. They say they do not reject the "verities of the spiritual life," but that they cannot see them, and that what are presented as verities are actually illusions. And, instead of pleading guilty to the charge of blindness, and permitting so enlightened and courteous a guide as Dr. Horton to take them by the hand and lead them along the road of development that culminates in Lyndhurst-road Chapel or a midnight evangelistic service, they return the charge, and declare that such men are in the condition of people suffering from color blindness; that they mistake illusions for actual facts, and misinterpretations for explanations. And they not only have the boldness to make such a charge, but the effrontery—almost criminal effrontery—to prove it! For they actually go so far as to prove that all the *facts* upon which religion builds, and which are, of course, admitted by all, admit of a *non-religious* explanation. They accept the stories of people believing themselves to be inspired by God, or the recipients of visions, but point out that these beliefs have a purely nervous or neurotic origin. They even accept the fact of the universality of the God idea, and show how this had its origin in the same frame of mind that leads young children to read feeling similar to their own into their inanimate playthings. It is a sad state of "blindness" for cultured people to have to get into, but unfortunately it is a prevalent one. Dr. Horton may well thank God that he is raised so far above the level of a Spencer or a Darwin, only his gratification should be tempered by a gentler pity. Let him say, with Bunyan, "There but for the grace of God goes R. F. Horton, preacher of Hampstead and the Chesterfield of Nonconformity."

If the above replies are not adequate, Dr. Horton has still another. This is the familiar one that religion lies quite outside the scope of science. "By its very definition, by the nature of its material, and by its method, it is excluded from handling these things of the spirit." But if this is so, it would strike one that the testimony of the men of science cited in favor of religion is absolutely worthless. If religion really lies outside science, if science is excluded by spirit and method from dealing with religion, there can be no scientific testimony either for or against. This is a very simple and a very obvious conclusion; but one has to explain the simple and point the obvious when dealing with religionists.

As a matter of fact, however, the statement is not true. The instances cited by Dr. Horton in proof of his statement are ridiculous. He explains that science, as such, is unable to explain such "obvious things as human affections and emotions"; and, further, if we are to limit ourselves to science, "the world of mind, the world of morality, the notions of moral progress and civilisation, are just as unreal

as the spiritual realities which they definitely attack." Really the difficulty of dealing with such a statement lies in its utter absurdity. The man evidently imagines that science proper is concerned only with masses of matter and physical forces. Has he never heard of psychology as a science? Has he never heard of ethics as a science? Does he not know that the causes that determine human thinking and human conduct are in their way as determinate as the causes that determine purely chemical phenomena? Of course, we have not reached the same exactitude of knowledge in the one case as the other; but the principle is there all the same. A quarter of a century after Spencer published his *Data of Ethics* we are informed that science cannot deal with human affections! In the face of the hundreds of modern books on experimental psychology we learn that mental phenomena are outside the region of science! And the man who makes this discovery is an M.A. and a D.D.!

It is pleasant to learn that religion does owe science something. The work of scientific criticism, says Dr. Horton, has been to clear from Christianity the non-essentials, and leave the really essential element stronger than before. We have all heard this before; the only puzzling thing is, What are the essentials of Christianity? Dr. Horton gives one illustration, and a curious one it is. In the early half of the thirteenth century a volume was written to show that the air swarmed with malignant demons, who were the cause of all human infirmity and disease. And he concludes: "It is no matter of regret that the growth of science has eliminated little by little this terrifying demonology." Well and good; but why select this poor monk in the thirteenth century as a sample? The belief in demons and witches was very common among Christians *five* centuries later. And it was part of the common stock of Christian beliefs from the very first. Nay, did not Jesus himself go about casting out devils, and holding communion with them? The belief in demons was part of the teachings of Jesus, part of the belief of all Christians, great and small, until almost our own day. It is quite characteristic of Nonconformist notions of honesty of speech to write as though this belief in demons was only a mediæval and Catholic product.

And, after all, it is to be noted the belief was destroyed, not by the purifying influence of the superior religionist, but by the poor, blind, materialistic man of science. How long should we have had to wait for religious teachers, with their developed "spiritual faculty," to correct these and other false beliefs? For the curious fact is that in the whole of human history religion, as religion, has never brought to mankind a single verifiable, unquestionable truth. All that we know has come to us by one road, and by one method. The religious teacher has all along been propounding teachings in astronomy, in geology, in biology, in sociology, that have been discredited and discarded so soon as exact knowledge was obtained. The work of science, says Dr. Horton, has been to purify Christianity. Exactly. But the only way to purify an absurdity is to kill it.

C. COHEN.

"John Wesley's Idea of a Christian."

LAST winter, in connection with the Central Hall Wesleyan Mission, Manchester, there was arranged a series of Popular Lectures, by leading divines, on "Is Christianity True?" Most of those lectures were critically treated in these columns. This winter another "series of Popular Lectures by Eminent Men in the world of Religious Thought" is being given under the same auspices. The first lecture on the "Miracles of Christ," by Principal Fairbairn, was criticised in the *Freethinker* a few weeks ago. The second is on "John Wesley's Idea of a Christian," by the Rev. John S. Simon, Governor of Didsbury College.

It may be pointed out, in passing, that the order observed in these two series is a curious anachronism. It is surely premature to prove that a thing is true before you know what it is. Every intelligent discussion should commence with a definition of terms, otherwise endless confusion and needless annoyances are bound to ensue. But the Central Hall lecturers devote their first series to the attempt to prove that Christianity is true, and their second to the almost as difficult task of explaining what Christianity is. This is closely akin to putting the cart before the horse. It is difficult to know how so gross a tactical blunder could have been committed.

"What is Christianity?" Twelve eminent men have been retained to answer this supremely hard question. Principal Fairbairn was the first to tackle it; but all he did was to contend that miracles are possible, and that without them there could have been no Christianity. Mr. Simon contents himself with giving us what he calls "John Wesley's Idea of a Christian." In John Wesley we come into contact with a truly great and good man, whose one aim in life was to benefit his fellow-beings; and his views on any subject cannot fail to be interesting. He gave utterance to many noble and beautiful sentiments. But in the lecture under consideration Mr. Simon is more in evidence than the founder of Methodism, so that after all we are compelled to listen to two voices, and not to one.

Let us deal with Mr. Simon first. Here is a characteristic sentence: "I admit at once that it is impossible to give an exhaustive description of Christianity." Pray, is it not true that all knowledge can be expressed in words? Is not our inability to describe a thing a conclusive evidence that we do not understand it? "I hold," says Mr. Simon, "that Christianity is bigger than any description of it; that when all human descriptions fail, it remains." But how does he know that? By what means does he discover the bigness of Christianity if it is bigger than it has ever been described to be? How does he get at Christianity at all if not through some formal descriptions of it? To say that "the sun shines on, never troubling itself with the descriptions given of it," is to beg the whole question at issue. Astronomers have ascertained the exact magnitude of the sun, and the nature of the material of which it is composed. On what authority does Mr. Simon allege that "Christianity is bigger than any description that has ever been given of it"? Is it bigger than the New Testament representation of it?

Coming to John Wesley's idea of a Christian, we find that he describes him, in general terms, as one who "thinks, speaks, and lives according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ." But where is the "method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ" to be found? Is it discoverable in the Sermon on the Mount? But Bishop McGee maintained that if people thought, spoke, and lived according to that method, society would tumble into ruin in a wonderfully short time; and Bishop Gore assures us that much in that document is not meant for us at all. And yet, if the Sermon on the Mount is not an essential part of "the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ," of what does the method consist? If the Sermon on the Mount was embodied in the method of Christ as conceived by John Wesley, all we can say is that there never has been a Christian yet. Certainly there is not one walking in flesh and blood on the earth to-day. Let anyone read and study the entire Sermon on the Mount, phrase by phrase, and then let him ask himself whether he lives, or whether he knows of anybody else who lives, in harmony with all the sentiments therein contained. John Wesley's description of a Christian is fundamentally inaccurate. No one lives, or tries to live, "according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ."

John Wesley was a large-hearted, generous, and tolerant man. It would do us all good to ponder the following sentiment:—

"Lay so much stress on opinions that all your own,

if it be possible, may agree with truth and reason; but have a care of anger, dislike, or contempt towards those whose opinions differ from yours.....Condemn no man for not thinking as you think. Let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself; let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God."

Here is another exceptionally courageous expression:—

"Orthodoxy, or right opinions, is at least but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all."

No wonder that such an assertion provoked great hostility wherever the great man was permitted to make it. John Wesley was also of opinion that "religion does not lie in doing what God has not enjoined, or in abstaining from what he hath not forbidden." Of course, by God, in such connections, is really meant John Wesley himself, or the Bible as interpreted by John Wesley. The Methodist apostle hated all superstition, except the superstition in which he himself believed. Mr. Simon informs us that the word "superstition" denotes excess of believing. John Wesley's beliefs meant religion; but any beliefs, held by others, in excess of his own, he christened superstitions.

We now come to Wesley's definition of a Christian:—

"A Christian is a man who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.....And this commandment is written on his heart, 'that he who loveth God, love his brother also.'"

With all due deference to the illustrious reformer, I submit that the above is not the definition of a Christian. It can be seen at a glance that it embodies not one distinctively Christian element. It is simply the Old Testament description of the righteous man. Mr. Simon says: "In my opinion Wesley's definition of a Christian will survive as the fittest." In that case, *Christian* is a term utterly devoid of any special content. A religious Jew is a Christian. A good Mohammedan is a Christian. Indeed, Wesley's definition of a Christian is exactly what Jesus is said to have quoted from the Old Testament as a summary of Judaism. If that definition is sufficient, it follows that Jesus was not the founder of a new religion, but one of the most advanced prophets of the old.

Taking the definition as it stands, we are bound to say that a Christian is a man with his head up in the moon. He lives in dreamland, and may be characterised as a sublime visionary. He walks by faith, not by sight. His fellowship is with imagined realities, with spectres of the mind. A picture of God, painted from the inner consciousness of innumerable people in the past, has come down to him. To this elaborate portrait he has added a few touches of his own, and this man-made God is the object of his supreme affection. This is the being before whom he bows his head in lowliest worship, and to whom as well as of whom he sings seraphic songs. Yes, Christianity is only another name for Judaism, for both alike are founded, not upon knowledge, not upon well-attested facts of history, but upon a fascinating dream of the imagination. Religion means union and communion with God not through knowledge but through faith. A Christian believes, imagines, that God is, and that he is love, and cares for mankind. He believes, imagines, that this loving God speaks to him, woos him, longs for his confidence, and is prepared to accompany him through the world. But *does* God exist, *does* God love and help men? At times, even the brightest Christians doubt it. It is the toughest task of their lives to keep their faith strong and radiant; and sometimes they are bowed down by the sense of total failure.

We are often reminded by apologists that Christianity is an irresistible spiritual force which gives a man conquest over both himself and his circumstances. As illustrations of the truth of this

statement we are pointed to reclaimed drunkards, redeemed robbers and murderers, and transformed scoundrels and swindlers; and the cry is raised, "Behold what mighty miracles the Christ performs on human beings." No doubt many of those who thus argue verily believe what they say; but has it ever occurred to them to ask themselves why their all-powerful and all-loving Savior performs *so few* miracles of grace? A drunkard here and there is reclaimed through or by the Church; but the world teems with drunkards who are not reclaimed. God is said to love the world of lost humanity, and Christ is said to have died for all mankind—why is the number of the redeemed so miserably small, and why must all reclamations take place through some formally registered agency? Men pour their hearts out in passionate prayers to Jesus for deliverance from the craving for drink; but they do it in vain. It is passing strange that those who are too-deep sunk in vice to be saved through human sympathy are likewise beyond the reach of the all-conquering Christ. Facts such as these show conclusively that Christianity is not the irresistible spiritual force it is represented to be. And the further fact that it can apparently accomplish nothing except through duly organised and energised agencies causes thousands of intelligent people to disbelieve in it altogether, and to regard Christians as people who build castles in the air and mistake dreams for realities.

The love of our neighbor insisted upon by Judaism and Christianity alike is not a religious but a purely social virtue, while the love of our enemies is a virtue altogether beyond human attainment. Wesley says that the love of enemies is essential to Salvation. "We cannot be Christians," affirms Mr. Simon, "if we hate our enemies." Then he adds: "I think that the power which God gives a man to love his enemies is one of his most astonishing gifts. That gift is in the possession of some persons. They go about this earth manifesting nothing but peace and goodwill to all mankind." Personally, I have never known such persons. There are many who profess to love *imaginary* enemies. These they love on their knees in their private chambers, or at church on Sundays; but when real, living enemies cross their path their love goes out like a candle in the wind. How many Christians were there on the British side, or among the Boers, during the South African war? How many Christians are there in Russia during the present war with Japan? How many are there in any community who cherish affection towards those who are doing their utmost to bring about their destruction? Most Christians fail to be even just to their enemies. To love enemies is not natural. There are no indications that Jesus himself ever performed such a miracle. The poor men who nailed him to his cross, and for whom he is reported to have prayed so pathetically, were not his murderers, nor is it probable that they were his enemies. But did he love the Pharisees, who plotted against him and wrought his downfall? Read Matthew xxiii., and you have your answer.

"What is Christianity?" Mr. Simon's attempt to define it is certainly not a success. He has neither "cleared our minds" nor "excited our interest." Even the Christian he describes exists only in imagination; and if such a person were to appear in actual life—a person who literally lived up, or down, to the Sermon on the Mount—he would prove a hindrance rather than a help to his day and generation. Society needs, not saints, whose citizenship and hearts are in heaven, but servants who will work with might and main for the common good. The qualifications for this service are, not communion with the supernatural, heavenly-mindedness, and the love of God, but an intelligent insight into the nature of the social problems to be solved, a resolute determination to actively contribute to their solution, and hearts aflame with what the late Professor Seely so aptly called the "enthusiasm of humanity."

J. T. LLOYD.

Real Christianity.

"The goal of Christianity was not in any way the perfecting of human society, nor the increase of the sum of happiness of the individual. Man strives to endure the least evil possible upon the earth and the few days that he will pass there. But when he has been told that the earth is upon the point of finishing, and that life is nothing but a day's trial, the insignificant preface of an eternal idea, what good is there in beautifying it? They do not set themselves to adorn it, and to render comfortable the hovel where they must wait but an instant."—RENAN, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 346.

"It was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful."—GIBBON, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xv.

"To teach the certain speedy destruction of earthly things, as the *New Testament* does, is to cut the sinews of all earthly progress; to declare war against intellect and imagination, against industrial and social advancement."—PROFESSOR F. W. NEWMAN, *Phases of Faith*, p. 136.

"If we are born for heaven, we are lost for earth."—FEUERBACH.

WHAT is Christianity? Some tell us that it is contained in the Sermon on the Mount. Others declare that it can be more briefly stated as "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man." The late Professor Drummond produced the shortest—and silliest—definition of the faith when he declared that it was contained in one word—Love! As "love" is a word of one syllable, it is difficult to see how this definition can be still further reduced, unless a single letter of the alphabet is adopted as a symbol of the faith.

Let us turn from such childish folly, and consider what Christianity was before modern civilisation lopped off its most essential teachings, until we are now asked to believe that it can be defined by a single word.

We shall not apply to Westminster Abbey, the City Temple, the Tabernacle, or even to General Booth for a statement of fundamental Christianity.

Fancy Jesus Christ behind a big cigar, like the late Mr. Spurgeon; or bowling along in his carriage, like Dr. Campbell, to denounce the vileness of working men (after two thousand years of Christian teaching); or touring in a motor car, like General Booth; or, like his official representative in this country, the Archbishop of Canterbury, travelling as the guest of the multi-millionaire, Pierpont Morgan!

These men shout loudly about their Master, Jesus Christ; but they all agree in ignoring his fundamental teaching as to the renunciation of the world and all its works. If Christ saw these modern Pharisees rolling along in their luxurious carriages, waited upon by obsequious servants, amid luxurious surroundings, he would probably wax as fluent as he is reported to have done when his countrymen refused to receive him as a prophet.

To see what genuine Christianity is, we shall examine it as recorded in the Gospels, expounded in the Epistles, and as taught by its most influential teachers during its subsequent career.

The keynote is struck by the uncouth figure of John the Baptist coming from the wilderness, clothed in camel's hair, crying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Fit representative of the new religion, and type of the coming barbarism that was to destroy civilisation for nearly a thousand years.

John the Baptist was a Christian before Christ; he had given up the world and "forsaken all" to concentrate his narrow mind on a feverish struggle to enter the kingdom of heaven, in comparison with which all else was as dust and ashes.

The cardinal teaching of Christ was how to avoid hell and gain heaven; nothing else was of the faintest consequence; "for what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* Life on earth was merely a painful pilgrimage; the real life did not begin until this life was over, and the sooner it was over the better. Riches are especially denounced as distracting the

* Mark viii. 36.

thoughts from heavenly things. Dives goes straight to hell merely because he is rich; for nowhere do we read that he was a bad man, and he must have had a certain amount of charity to have supported the presence of the loathsome Lazarus within his gates. Those who attack the character of Dives would be the least likely to follow his example. The parable merely illustrates the teaching of Christ, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation"; Lazarus representing the supplementary dictum, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." As Professor Francis Newman pointed out, "It is not mere compassion for the destitute that is enforced; much rather is wealth treated as unsaintly—an unrighteous thing, that will lessen our *compensation* in heaven.....By shovelling away wealth, we are to buy treasures in heaven." It has been said that the doctrine of the renunciation of private property was intended for the twelve apostles only; but, adds Professor Newman—

"the remarkable tale of a rich young man, narrated with close agreement in three Gospels, is quite decisive. He asks: 'What shall I do (besides keeping the commandments of the second table) that I may inherit eternal life?' Jesus replies: 'Thou lackest one thing. If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Thus it is *not* on the twelve apostles *only* that he lays this charge, but upon all who will buy the *pearl of great price*, all who desire to win heaven as the paramount object, whatever the sacrifice. He does not say, 'Rather lose all your possessions than be false to your religious convictions,' but 'Fling away your wealth in order to earn heavenly remuneration for your sacrifice'; a very different doctrine indeed."

We are told that the young man "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." And Jesus, turning to his disciples, said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."§ Again, we read of those who hear the word, "and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word";|| and are adjured not to lay up treasures upon earth, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."** Not only are riches denounced, but the fundamental tenet of his teaching was the renunciation of private property. "This," says Professor Newman, "pervades his discourses from beginning to end." He roundly tells his hearers "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."†† They were enjoined to "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat nor yet, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."‡‡ They were to take "no thought for the morrow"; and that there shall be no mistake as to his meaning, he points to the fowls of the air, who "sow not, neither do they reap," and the lilies of the field, who "toil not, neither do they spin"; the reason given being that "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Even the natural affection given to father, mother, wife, and child are to be suppressed, as they are liable to distract the attention from the kingdom of heaven; those who forsake them "shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."§§ Not content with even this extreme teaching, he boldly declares that "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."||| Not, be it observed, that they had done anything to be hated for, but simply that the affections may be concentrated on the kingdom of heaven.

Paul held the same doctrine of the worthlessness of this life in comparison with the life to come. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, which the vast majority of Christians agree with the Orthodox Version of the Bible in attributing to Paul, he says: "We have

here no continuing city, but we seek one to come."** And again, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, ascribed to the same author, he declares that "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."† In his Epistle to the Philippians he says that for Christ's sake "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." The reason given being, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."‡

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

Gods and Men.

ALL theology is anthropomorphism—the making of gods in man's image. What is the God of our own theology, as Matthew Arnold puts it, but a magnified man? We cannot transcend our own natures, even in imagination; we can only interpret the universe in the terms of our own consciousness, nor can we endow our gods with any other attributes than we possess ourselves. When we seek to penetrate the "mystery of the infinite," we see nothing but our own shadow and hear nothing but the echo of our own voice.

As we are so are our gods, and what man worships is what he himself would be. The placid Egyptian nature smiles on the face of the Sphinx. The gods of India reflect the terror of its heat and its beasts and serpents, the fertility of its soil, and the exuberance of its people's imagination. The glorious Pantheon of Greece—

Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love—

embodies the wise and graceful fancies of the noblest race that ever adorned the earth, compared with whose mythology the Christian system is a hideous nightmare. The Roman gods wear a sterner look, befitting their practical and imperial worshippers, and Jove himself is the ideal genius of the eternal city. The deities of the old Scandinavians, whose blood tinges our English veins, were fierce and warlike as themselves, with strong hands, supple wrists, mighty thews, lofty stature, grey-blue eyes and tawny hair. Thus has it ever been. So Man created god in his own image, in the image of Man created he him; male and female created he them.

Acid Drops.

"A Working Miner" sends us a long and interesting letter on the Welsh revival, with a picture-postcard of Mr. Evan Roberts and his five lady helps. All six members of this soul-saving troupe look quite up to business, and we can well understand their prosperity. Mr. Evan Roberts, we are informed, was recently earning some five shillings a day as a miner. Apparently he does better than that above ground. Our correspondent assures us that for his two days' mission at Yuysyawl the revivalist received £8 besides his maintenance. Of course we do not vouch for the accuracy of this information. We simply give it as we received it. But our correspondent *ought* to know; and if what he tells us is true, it follows that this wonderful God-inspired Welsh evangelist is playing a very old game with a very good grace.

Mr. Evan Roberts, his lady helps, and his casual ministerial assistants, work up the excitement until the congregation hardly know which end they are standing on. Half-a-dozen at a time offer up prayers in Welsh or English, or both together; then half-a-dozen hymns are sung simultaneously. This babel is diversified with pious acrobatics. And the tumult is kept up hour after hour, sometimes till long after midnight. The "converts" at the place already referred to are reported to be over eighty—out of a population of about five thousand; and those eighty consist for the most part of young children, the rest being grown-up

* Luke vi. 24.

† Luke vi. 20.

‡ *Christianity in its Cradle*, p. 58. § Matt. xix. 24.

|| Matt. xiii. 22.

** Matt. vi. 19-20.

†† Luke xiv. 3.

‡‡ Matt. vi. 25.

§§ Matt. xix. 29.

||| Luke xiv. 26.

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† 2 Cor. v. 6.

‡ Phil. iii. 8, 11.

persons who have generally been converted before, and often more than once, at some previous period of their lives.

It is not clear why a religious revival was needed at the place our correspondent writes from. Ynysybwl was utterly given over to religion already. It has eight Nonconformist places of worship, besides the Church of England and the Salvation Army, for its five thousand souls. For the last five years, at least, it has been impossible to conduct successfully an elementary class in any branch of Science or Art; not even an evening continuation school during the winter evenings. Bible-classes and prayer-meetings are all over the shop. It is religion, and nothing but religion, not only on Sunday, but on every other day of the week. And it is to such hot-beds of piety that the Welsh revivalist addresses himself. He knows his business—and he looks it.

Mr. Paul Elgood, in a brief letter to the *Daily News* on the Welsh revival, says that allowance must be made for the Celtic temperament. "Its emotional force," he says, "is marvellous. I have seen in Ireland at the Passion sermons on Good Friday men moved to howling sorrow for their sins, but before nightfall the police have been compelled to arrest them for being drunk and using obscene language."

This reminds us of what Shelley said, in the Preface to *The Cenci*, about the character of religious devotion in Italy. The passage is a long one, but it should be read in its entirety. "Religion in Italy," the poet wrote, "is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check."

There you are, reader. A fine piece of prose like that is not met with every day. Yes, there is a soul of good in things evil; at least, there is a great law of compensation running through nature. Had it not been for the silly and maleficent Welsh revival, you would not have had the pleasure of reading that superb Shelley passage in this week's *Freethinker*.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, in the *Daily Mirror*, asks a very pertinent question of Mr. E. Neak, who said that he had received hundreds of answers to prayer, including the saving of the lives of his wife and son. Mr. Mackenzie wished to know why Mr. Neak had not used his marvellous power to empty the hospitals. We dare say Mr. Neak will go on keeping a good thing to himself.

Mr. A. J. Waldegrave, of Watford, appears to be a member of that worthy but not very numerous body, the Moral Instruction League. Writing to the *Daily News*, he explains "where the League parts company with the negative policy of the secularists" (Small s, please.) The point is that "the moral training of the future citizen must not be left to take its chances outside the school curriculum." From which it is perfectly clear that Mr. Waldegrave does not know the first Education Act, nor what has been going on, more or less, in the Board schools for the past thirty years. No new law is necessary in this respect. Teachers are authorised already to give moral instruction to the children. In addition, they are authorised to read the Bible, and comment upon it, and give from it instruction in the principles of the Christian religion. Now it is simply that addition which the Secularists want to get rid of. And as the Moral Instruction League, apparently, wants to get rid of it too, it is difficult to understand its superfine sneers at "the negative policy of the secularists." (Small s again, please.)

Mr. Waldegrave must be a very innocent person if he imagines that it is a simple thing to have moral instruction given by the school teachers "systematically and thoroughly." *Systematic* moral instruction must be given on certain principles; and to suppose that these are the same for Christians as for "Unbelievers" involves a display of childish ignorance. Christians and Atheists, for instance, cannot teach morals "systematically" in the same way.

And this is the point which the Moral Instruction League has never had the sense or courage to face.

We have already referred very briefly to Dr. Clifford's article on Reincarnation and a Future Life in the Christmas number of the *London Magazine*. We now give it a little more attention. Dr. Clifford does not believe that we have lived before; in fact, he dismisses it as a superstition. But he is quite sure that we shall live again. He does not see any superstition in that. Nor would anyone expect him to. Why should a tradesman cry "stinking fish"—whatever the condition of his vendible?

Dr. Clifford does not know *where* we shall live again. He is only cocksure that we shall live *somewhere*. But the place is of no importance; the life itself is the only thing that matters. Dr. Clifford says that what Christianity insists on is "the continuousness of the personal consciousness and its qualities—content, enjoyment, and progress to perfection." Does he mean that this is taught in the New Testament? If he does, we do not agree with him. The doctrine of natural immortality, as Mr. Gladstone pointed out, is not taught there. Everything in that book is staked on the resurrection from the dead; which is a *renewal*, and not a *continuity*, of personal consciousness. And as for "content" and "enjoyment," are we to understand that these are the lot of the lost as well as the saved? If so, neither is this the teaching of the New Testament. It seems that Dr. Clifford runs a Christianity of his own, and makes it suit himself and his congregation.

The Pope has issued a fresh instruction against women being included in church choirs. Paul said "I suffer not a woman to teach." The Pope says "I suffer not a woman to sing." Is it a consequence of the Catholic idea of woman's inferiority? Or do these celibate priests fancy that all other men are as inflammable as themselves?

"Providence" might have looked after churches at one time. It certainly does not do so now. Churches are often damaged in thunderstorms and are sometimes destroyed by fire. The latest case we have noticed is that of the Seamen's Chapel, Derrick-street, Rotherhithe. After a service one evening the stove ignited the Communion rail—in spite of its special sanctity, and the flames spread to the pulpit and the rest of the woodwork. Profane firemen had to be called in to minimise the mischief, and by the aid of science they succeeded.

An Edinburgh minister is reported to have astonished his congregation by declaring that, sooner than see the United Free Church of Scotland *not* free, he would throw up his pulpit and go out and earn an honest living.

"Chilperic" in his fine article on Robespierre in last week's *Freethinker* remarked that if we took the trouble to enquire into that great upheaval called the French Revolution we should "find it difficult, if not impossible, to learn that Atheism had anything to do with it." Robespierre, the very incarnation of the Reign of Terror, was a fanatical Theist, who regarded Atheists as enemies of mankind, and even induced the French Convention to decree that the belief in God and Immortality is necessary to human society. Robespierre talked so much, in fact, about "the Supreme Being" that one of his colleagues said, You sicken me with your Supreme Being.

Robespierre, we repeat, was a fanatical Deist. Yet we find that the fact was either misunderstood or misrepresented by so clear and honest a mind as Wordsworth's. The great English poet had lived in France, and had at first hailed the French Revolution as a grand effort of emancipation. And he had written the *Prelude*, in which reference to Robespierre occurs, so near the Revolution at 1800-1805, although the work was not published till after the poet's death in 1850. How curious, then, is it to read the following:—

I paced a dear companion at my side,
The town of Arras, where with promise high
Issued, on delegation to sustain
Humanity and right, that Robespierre,
He who thereafter, and in how short time
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.

Robespierre wielded the sceptre of the "Theist crew"—if we may copy Wordsworth's manners in this passage.

There are splendid and noble passages in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. But this Robespierre passage is not one of them. It is worthy of Robespierre's own discourse on the Supreme Being, which Carlyle called "the scraggiest prophetic discourse ever uttered by man."

The following letter from Kate Cording, of the Fellowship Cottage Lost Cat's Shelter, Islington, to the *Daily News*, is worth preserving in our columns:—

"I have just had to destroy by chloroform a cat so horribly mutilated, evidently by some fiend in human form, that I feel constrained to write to you about it.

"It was picked up by a lady living at Kennington, who hurried off with it to this Shelter. When we came to examine it, we found its tail had been literally torn off, not cut, but wrenched off close to the root!

"This is a sample of what is being done to cats in the streets of London. They are brought here as living skeletons, eaten up with disease, suffering from stake thrusts, half-dead from cruel mauling, they have their kittens in the street, and boys kill them, and yet we fancy this is a Christian country, and we are the most civilised and the most humane nation in the world!"

There is no "fancy" about this being "a Christian country." We believe it is only in Christian countries that such things happen.

Christian England believes herself to be at the top of civilisation; yet Mr. Rider Haggard, speaking recently at Exeter on Rural Housing, said that he had seen people in England herded together under conditions which Kaffirs or the wild tribes of Western Africa would not submit to.

An awful Passive Resistance "martyrdom" is reported from Cornwall. The Rev. J. Ball, of Hayle, has been sentenced to one day's imprisonment. His terrible sufferings call for vengeance on somebody.

Mr. William Williams, a Carmarthen Passive Resister, begged to call the attention of the Bench to the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the Book of Revelation. Whereat there was a general burst of good-humored laughter. "But I am on the right lines," said Mr. Williams. "Perhaps so," said the Clerk, "but you are beginning at the wrong end." So there was more laughter—in which Mr. Williams did not join.

The proposal of Sunday evening promenade concerts at the Spa, Scarborough, has aroused the bitter indignation of the Rev. Dr. Eyre, vicar of All Saints.' He calls it "a piece of barefaced, cold-blooded, money-grabbing Mammon worship"—which is his way of stating that somebody will make money out of the concerts. Just as though the reverend gentleman did not make money out of his sermons, and perhaps a deal more than they are worth. Dr. Eyre summons all the Churches in the town—for it affects the interests of all of them—to make "a firm, formal, and united protest" against this shocking outrage on clerical Protection. Free trade in Sunday entertainments cannot be tolerated.

Sabbatarians at Rugby have petitioned the Urban District Council to do something to check the growing Sunday non-observance, which is "contrary to the statutes of the realm and the general sentiment of the people." Sunday trading is particularly aimed at. There is awful sin in selling ginger beer, lollipops, and "smokes" on the Lord's Day. If it continues, Rugby may expect to be overtaken by the fate of the Cities of the Plain.

James versus Jesus.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—JAMES ii. 10.

To break a single statute is to break the blessed lot,
Says God in certain dicta he enjoined St. James to jot.
This God-cum-James's dictum makes the child as old's his dad;
The small as big's the bigger, and the sane as daft's the mad.

The less includes the greater, and the part equates the whole,
Are axioms to the godly man who seeks to save his soul;
But folk who save their bodies universally agree
That greater aye includes the less, and, three times one are three.

Poor James and God were giddy, for it seems they never saw
The funny implications of their topsy-turvy law;
When Jimmy meets his Maker, there is sure to be a row
About the implication which my hymn's unfolding now:

The Gospel shows that Jesus broke the Law of Sabbath Day,
And, *thereby*, broke the other Laws, as God and Jimmy say;
'Tis therefore clear that Jesus was—I state the fact with grief—

A murderer, idolater, adulterer, and thief.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

TWO SORTS OF "MIRACLES."

What Schopenhauer said of religions is particularly true of miracles—they require darkness to shine in. Science is daily revealing to us the most marvellous truths, which dwarf the wonders of theology into insignificance. Instead of raising one man from the dead, it saves millions of lives; instead of curing one blind man with clay ointment, it places ophthalmic hospitals at the service of a myriad sufferers; instead of feeding a casual crowd, once in a millennium, by the supernatural multiplication of loaves and fishes, it enables us to carry on a gigantic system of commerce, which sustains multitudes who would otherwise be unable to exist; instead of smiting a rock, and calling forth a spring for a thirsty crowd, it brings a regular supply of water, year after year, to the great cities of our modern civilisation; instead of enabling one man to walk the waves in a tempest, it constructs gigantic ocean steamers that ride the wildest storms, and convey their passengers with comfort and safety across the trackless ocean. Truth is greater than fiction, and science is mightier than miracle.—G. W. FOOTE, in "*Letters to the Clergy*."

Orthodox religion has always been and always will be the enemy of happiness. This world is not the place for enjoyment. This is the place to suffer. This is the place to practice self-denial, to wear crowns of thorns; the other world is the place for joy, provided you are fortunate enough to travel the narrow, grass-grown path. Of course, wicked people can be happy here. People who care nothing for the good of others, who live selfish and horrible lives, are supposed by Christians to enjoy themselves; consequently, they will be punished in another world. But whoever carried the cross of decency, and whoever denied himself to that degree that he neither stole, nor forged, nor murdered, will be paid for this self-denial in another world. And whoever said that he preferred a prayer-meeting with five or six queer old men and two or three very aged women, with one or two candles, and who solemnly affirmed that he enjoyed that far more than he could a play of Shakespeare, was expected with much reason, I think, to be rewarded in another world.—*Ingersoll*.

STORIES OF ARMY CHAPLAINS.

Interesting and amusing "Army Reminiscences" are told by Chaplain C. C. Bateman. Among others is that of a colonel who interrupted the chaplain on one occasion in the middle of the latter's discourse by calling out, "Cut it short, chaplain! Cut it short!"

"Who will stand between me and my Maker in the day of judgment, if I be not permitted to perform my whole duty by this waiting congregation?" exclaimed the irate chaplain, with flashing eyes.

"I will! I will!" roared the colonel.

At this juncture the trumpeter is said to have sounded "Recall from fatigue," and the congregation arose and went to dinner.

Another not less interesting story is told at the expense of a chaplain of the old school who was noted for the length and dryness of his discourses. It was the custom of the commanding officer to send under guard all prisoners confined in the guardhouse over Sundays to hear the chaplain preach—"as a special punishment." This practice, coming to the knowledge of the superior authority, was "discontinued on the grounds that the punishment so inflicted is both cruel and unusual."

—*Army and Navy Journal*.

A COMFORTING PASSAGE.—An Irishman in New England, falling sick, sent for a priest. The priest sat down by the bedside, and for the sufferer's comfort read a few lines from a copy of Thomas à Kempis, which he chanced to have in his pocket. "That's foine," said the patient; "read it again." After the second reading he again requested a repetition of the passage. Then he said: "Plaze, yer riverince, wud ye sit on the bed by me and read it again?" Again it was read, and this was followed by another request for the same passage. "Before I read it again, Pat, tell me why it comforts you so," said the visitor. "Because, your riverince," answered Pat, "this is a prohibition town, and ye've got a rich breath."

DESPERATION.—A Scotch minister who was in need of funds thus conveyed his intentions to his congregation: "Weel, friends, the kirk is urgently in need of siller, and we have failed to get money honestly, we will have to see what a bazaar can do for us."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, December 4, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30, "God, Man, Free Will, and Morality: with Reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's Opinions."

December 11 and 18, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—December 4, Leicester; 11, Liverpool.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 11, Manchester. January 22, Birmingham. February 12, Leicester.

SICKNESS at home has rather handicapped Mr. Foote this week, from the editorial point of view; and, in the circumstances, he begs indulgence for any shortcomings in this number of the *Freethinker*.

C. W. BOOTH.—You need not take the trouble to write to President Roosevelt. He has had his attention drawn any number of times by American Freethinkers to his outrageous libel upon Thomas Paine. But he lets it stand—probably for the reason he wrote it.

J. LEWIS.—We are not able to tell you if Mark Twain's *Christian Science* is yet published on this side of the Atlantic.

W. T. GRAHAM.—Mathilde Blind's *Life of George Eliot* would probably serve your purpose. We think the price is 2s. 6d. With regard to what your Christian friends told you about the late Professor George Romanes, you may regard it as sheer nonsense. He did not go back upon Darwinism. He remained a Darwinian to the end. But on his death-bed (he died slowly) he was, apparently, brought back to a vague form of Christianity by the united efforts of his wife and Canon Gore, now Bishop of Worcester. For the rest, please believe that we are glad to hear from you, and to know that our own writings have counted for so much in your mental enfranchisement.

F. J. GOULD.—We can easily understand that you are very busy now, with your new duties as Town Councillor added to the old ones; still, we are glad to know that you hope to write something more for the *Freethinker* "before long." Your being on the Education Committee at Leicester is "all right."

HARROLD ELLIOT.—J. M. Wheeler's *Life of Voltaire* would help you. It can be obtained at our office for sixpence; postage another penny. John Morley's monograph on Voltaire should be obtainable in the nearest Free Library. Parton's *Life of Voltaire*, in 2 vols., is the fullest, but it is expensive.

T. J. T.—Sorry you had not time to introduce yourself on Sunday. Shall always be pleased to hear from you.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

J. E. EAGLESON.—We are obliged to you for your efforts to promote our circulation.

W. JONES.—We have looked through the *Pendleton Reporter* cuttings, but can hardly follow the subtle and sordid squabble amongst those pious folk. Is it worth unravelling?

W. C. T.—Thanks for cutting. We have not yet been favored with the name and address of the "well-known Atheist" who was "converted" by the Welsh revivalist at Abercynon.

W. C. SCHWEIZER.—Your letter (through an accident) did not reach us until after we returned from Liverpool. Hence our silence on Sunday.

A. ANNOT.—Thanks for cuttings, etc. Pleased to hear that you find *Bible Romances* a good book to lend round, and that your landlord is at present "devouring" it.

C. E. SMITH, 30 Woodbury-park-road, Tunbridge Wells, would be glad to hear from any Freethinkers in the neighborhood.

W. ROBERTSON.—Thanks for trouble, but the stuff you send us from the *British Workman* is beneath contempt. It is impossible to criticise sheer imbecility.

W. C. G.—We understand that William Hone did undergo some obscure species of conversion in his old age. We will deal with the other cutting next week.

G. J.—Thanks for cuttings.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Proof in due course.

WORKING MINER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. R.—We simply stated the facts as to the "refused" advertisement. The denial is an effort of imagination. And what is now said about the "editing" of Ingersoll is in flat contradiction to the editorial Preface.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote begins to-day (Dec. 4) a special course of Sunday evening lectures in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London. If they are as successful, from all points of view, as they should be, they will be followed by a longer course of lectures in the new year, when Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd will also figure in the program. London Freethinkers should, therefore, advertise these December lectures amongst their friends and acquaintances, and do their best to pack the hall on all three occasions. They are also earnestly invited to come prepared for reasonable liberality in respect to the collection. The expenses of such meetings are heavy, and those who really care for Freethought will feel that the "free admission" does not relieve them from the obligation of payment. A fair voluntary contribution should balance the saving of the price of a seat. Some may only be able to contribute something less, but others can well afford to contribute more.

Mr. Rhodes, the afternoon chairman, had to call a loud-mouthed Christian to order. This person asked a question that did not arise from the lecture, and Mr. Foote declined to answer it. Whereupon the loud-mouthed Christian thought he had a right to complain till the end of the sitting. But of course he was undeceived. After the evening lecture some genial opposition was offered by a Birkenhead working man who had been in the army. He spoke with sincerity and was listened to with courtesy, nor did the lecturer hurt his feelings in reply, for he was smiling and pleasant all the time. It is really good to come across a Christian opponent with sense and good-humor at a Freethought meeting. We get so much of the opposite sort.

Mr. Foote had fine audiences at Liverpool on Sunday, the hall being packed in the evening, and the meeting full of enthusiasm from beginning to end. Many ladies were present, and were not the least interested hearers. Mr. Hammond, who presided, made an earnest appeal for new members, which we hope was as successful as it deserved to be. A good collection, also, was taken up for the N. S. S. Benevolent Fund, which the chairman said had been several times drawn upon for the relief of distressed Freethinkers in Liverpool.

The Liverpool Branch committee are going to distribute back numbers of the *Freethinker* at the meetings of the Torrey-Alexander mission, and a large consignment has been forwarded from our publishing office for that purpose.

Mr. Cohen lectures in the Secular Hall, Leicester, this evening (Dec. 4). His subject, "Old Problems and Modern Answers," should attract a large audience.

Mr. H. Percy Ward delivers three lectures at Coventry to-day (Dec. 4). In the morning he is to lecture out of doors, at Pool Meadow; which is rather a trying ordeal in the present weather. In the afternoon and evening he lectures in the Baths Assembly Hall. We hope he will have good audiences. The local "saints" will doubtless do their best to secure large attendances.

We were happy to hear at Liverpool that Mr. Ward is working hard there and making steady headway. His meetings increase, and so does his hold upon them; and the Branch is growing more and more prosperous.

Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, both Atheists were two of the principal speakers at the recent debate, organised by the Humanitarian League, on Non-Resistance. The chairman, Mr. Green, also a Freethinker, made a protest against the introduction of Jesus Christ or any other "authority," and said that it was the meeting's business to think for itself. It was rather odd that the debate was opened *against* Non-Resistance by a Christian minister, the Rev. Aylmer Maude, and continued *in favor* of Non-Resistance by an ex-soldier, Captain St. John.

We beg to call attention again to the remarkably cheap edition of David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural*

Religion which is advertised on our last page. As we stated last week, it is one of the finest, subtlest, and most daring works of one whom Huxley called the greatest thinker of the eighteenth century. The *pros* and *cons* are advanced with extraordinary power and impartiality. Hume holds the balance so evenly that it is only by reading between the lines that one sees how he himself inclines to Agnosticism. The work is characterised, too, by all the charm of Hume's philosophical style. In short, the book is one that every Freethinker should keep by him, and read again and again; as, of course, it is one that a Freethinker might lend without apprehension to his most tender-minded acquaintances. And the price of this book of more than a hundred pages is only *fourpence!*

Under the heading of "The Book of a Sect" the following admirable letter appeared in a recent number of the *Daily News*, from the pen of Mr. J. Arnold Sharpley, of Liverpool:—

"I wish the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare had thought somewhat more deeply before making such a sweeping statement as that which he is reported to have uttered as President of the Metropolitan Free Church Federation. He says: 'The Bible is not the book of a sect, but of the nation.' Is it not true that the Bible is the sacred literature of the Christian religion? And is it not equally true that the Christians are a sect, or section of the community? The Jews, who are part of the nation, object to the New Testament, while the Mohammedans and those of many other faiths have their own holy writ and naturally cannot look with equal favor upon the Christian Bible.

"Again, the numerous labor churches, ethical societies, rationalistic organisations, as well as the agnostics, freethinkers, and the many branches of the National Secular Society, all strongly object to the Bible being used in the public schools as an ethical text-book, mainly because the Christians look upon it as their sacred writing, and because the Christian teachers can hardly be expected to teach from its pages without introducing their own particular denominational bias."

Of course there is nothing substantially new in this letter, nor is it easy to say anything new on such a well-worn theme; but the points are put with terseness and power, and we wish the correspondence columns of newspapers were more often utilised in this way.

Mr. Edward Clodd has contributed a letter to the "Do we get our Deserts?" correspondence in the *Daily Chronicle*. Our readers will be glad to see the following extract, if they have not already seen it:—

"Thus far, the correspondence, interesting and inconclusive as it is, has been in the hands of the suffering and the complacent. The former, starving or suffering, seemingly through no fault of their own, ask, Why this should be? To talk to them of 'deserts,' of discipline, or of 'the creature made perfect' by travail, is the sheerest mockery, since it assumes a paternal government of the world, which the experience of a vast majority of mankind refutes.

"These preachers of resignation to the hungry and the victims of incurable agonising diseases fail to escape from the local and the personal into the great fields of past and present, with their awful story of struggle, and their body of problems which remain unsolved, which are, to the thinking of some of us, insoluble.

"The content of the complacent is wholly subjective; it may, and does, sustain them, even in the face of personal sorrow, but it has no validity for others. It is found mainly among those who recognise that all the logical dogmas are discredited, and who take refuge in the nebulous world of ideas. Did they face the facts, they would stand, where many of us stand, before mysteries which words only deepen."

We presume the "mysteries" are not scientific, but religious, and do not much trouble Mr. Clodd himself.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 10. Mr. G. W. Foote will act as chairman, and will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Roger, Davies, and other well-known Secularists. There is some talk of M. Furnémont, honorary secretary of the late Rome Congress, and of the International Freethought Federation, being present at this function. We are not in a position however, to make a definite announcement at present, although we hope to be able to do so shortly. Meanwhile we may state that the dinner will, in any case, be followed by brief speeches to appropriate toasts, and by good vocal and instrumental music. The price of the tickets is four shillings inclusive.

The *Journal de Charleroi* gives a lengthy extract (in French) from Mr. John Lloyd's recent article in our columns on the Origin of Life.

The Christian Missionary In Japan.

SINCE the eventful year when Japan astonished Europe by the manner in which she handled her gigantic, but unwieldy, opponent in the Sino-Japanese War there has been a perfect spate of literature dealing with the island kingdom of the Far East. To the large number of volumes which have appeared within the last few years treating of every phase of Japanese development, the well-meaning gentlemen engaged in missionary enterprise in Japan have contributed their fair quota.

It is always interesting—and frequently amusing—to view the manners, morals, and customs of a foreign nation through missionary glasses. Interesting—because any recognition of the inherent good qualities of a heathen race by a Christian missionary is usually so grudgingly given that it is all the more valuable. Amusing—on account of the average Christian missionary's complete failure to perceive that, more often than not, his description of the intellectual and moral condition of a heathen nation (such as Japan, for instance) must inevitably suggest to the thoughtful reader that it is doing quite well without Christianity.

Few clerical authors have been more candid in their treatment of missionary work in Japan than the Rev. R. B. Peery of the Lutheran Mission. In his book on Japan he devotes a couple of chapters to consideration of the hindrances to the spread of Christianity in that country, and of the peculiar problems the missionary has to face. We are bound to say that, although he tells us elsewhere that "Japanese missions have been a brilliant success," he displays a remarkably practical recognition of the tremendous difficulties which lie in the path of the Christian propagandist in Japan, and he in no way minimises the herculean nature of the task to be accomplished ere the "banner of King Immanuel" waves "over all this fair land" of the Mikado. He does not venture to anticipate that the latter consummation will be achieved in the present century, and we think—judging even from his own testimony—that he evinces wisdom in his caution.

We gather from the Rev. Mr. Peery that one hindrance to the spread of Christianity in Japan is that the natives of the country are too tolerant. Mr. Peery admits that the Christian religion is *exclusive*, and apparently the Japanese do not relish exclusiveness in religion. We surmise that the word *exclusive* is merely Mr. Peery's euphemism for *intolerant*. Christianity—being the only true religion—is necessarily intolerant of all others, and we have little doubt that if it could secure an effective hold in Japan it would speedily eradicate from the minds of the people that foolish preference for toleration which stands in the way of the Christian missionary at present. We think it is a point in favor of the heathen nation that she is too tolerant and liberal in thought to accept the narrow tenets and dogmas of the Christian churches.

Another hindrance which has operated with great power throughout the whole history of the Protestant missions in Japan is (according to Mr. Peery) the past record of Christianity. We are very glad to learn that the Japanese are disposed to keep in remembrance the historic past of the Churches of Christ. We are familiar in this country with the attempts—which have sometimes been all too successful—of Christian apologists to gloss over those incidents in the evolution of Christianity of which they have now the grace to be ashamed. We could wish to see a much more widespread tendency to emulate the Japanese in this respect. It is, at any rate, incumbent on Secularists to keep reminding the world that Christianity—like the heroine of the problem novel—has a "past," and a somewhat malodorous one at that.

We note that both Mr. Peery and Mr. Moore (another missionary who has written a book on Japan) ascribe the slow progress that Christianity is making amongst the astute heathen as being in part

due to the fact that the foreign element in Japan set such an "ungodly example." We think this is very likely. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is a Biblical text the force and application of which the Japanese have not been slow to grasp. The *Christian* nations of Europe have dumped down throughout Japan, and the Far East generally, some choice specimens of the human product of several centuries of Christian civilisation. The Japanese have seen the sample and they are not taking any.

Both the above missionaries agree that, amongst the educated Japanese at least, what Christianity has to contend against nowadays is not so much active hostility as indifference and contempt. These, if not the most effective weapons wherewith to combat the Christian evangelists, are evidently very galling to the *amour propre* of the apostles of the true religion. To treat men who are burning with zeal in the cause of the Lord, and pining (more or less) for martyrdom, as if they were of no consequence, is to wound them in their most tender susceptibilities.

At the last Church Congress in England we were told there are 130,000 Christians in Japan at present. Missionary statisticians have all Mr. Gladstone's love for dealing in round numbers, so that a liberal discount should probably be allowed on that total. Mr. Moore states frankly that "statistics in regard to missionary work are hard to obtain, and not very reliable." He places the figure at 100,000. Personally, we are doubtful if there is even this latter number of genuine Christians in Japan. To be sure it might be urged that even in nominally Christian countries the percentage of real Christians to the whole population is not very large. It is difficult at the present day to determine what actually constitutes a Christian. But when we allow due weight to the Rev. Mr. Peery's statement that in Japan not one in three comes to the mission station with sincere motives and good intentions, together with his admission that there are many *honest inquirers* who have no means of support, and look to the missionary for help, we are disposed to be sceptical regarding the value of the conversions effected. We know the class of convert attracted by the eleemosynary and philanthropic institutions run by the Churches in our own country, and we rather suspect that the "honest inquirers" in Japan who have to be *assisted* by the missionary may help to swell the mission returns and empty its coffers, but are not likely to do much to spread "the kingdom of Christ." Wherever a cause has money to spend it can always command supporters—of a kind.

The multitude of warring sects into which Christendom is divided affords an instructive object-lesson, the effect of which is not lost upon the intelligent people of Japan. They are not blind to the absurdity of people who are themselves unable to come to a common agreement as to what is false and what is true in religion presuming to evangelise a nation that has perhaps as much to teach as it has to learn. Mr. Peery admits in one of his candid passages that the Japanese people do not want Christianity. He even goes so far as to say that "the religious cravings and instincts of the people are, on the whole, satisfied by their native religions." In the name of wonder, then, why does not he—and others of his kidney—go home and expend their missionary zeal on, say, the "Bowery" at New York or the slums of Chicago? They might, indeed, find there even a greater distaste for Christianity than is to be found in Japan. We are thoroughly convinced they would discover a tremendously greater need for moral regeneration.

In his book, *The Gist of Japan*, Mr. Peery displays a keen sense of the importance of the missionary calling, and furnishes us with rather an imposing list of the qualifications essential to the making of a successful missionary. We are strongly of opinion that those human paragons who come up to the combined mental and physical standard fixed by Mr. Peery are not at all likely to develop a bent towards foreign mission work. It seems that "in order to

successfully combat the subtle philosophies of the East, to show the fallacies of the prevalent sceptical philosophies of the West, and to command the respect of the people," the missionary to Japan should have "a thorough intellectual training." Well, if any missionary in embryo fancies he is qualified "to show the fallacies of the sceptical philosophies of the West," why run away to Japan to do it? There is plenty of work cut out for such an intellectual marvel here in Europe. If there is a single clergyman—missionary or otherwise—who can confute the arguments of atheistic or sceptical philosophers we should very much like to hear of him. Even in Great Britain he might find his hands sufficiently full. He is just the very man all the churches are sighing for, and it would be a great pity that one-time Christian nations should be allowed to fall an easy prey to the sceptic while this wonderful genius is demolishing sceptical philosophy in a heathen country. Can it be that the type of individual whom Mr. Peery has in mind is likely to more effectually expose Western sceptical "fallacies" where he has the field to himself, and before such auditors as usually gravitate towards a mission station?

The already mentioned Rev. Herbert Moore, who has been in Japan on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, informs us that the Japanese have never been a particularly religious people, and that what faith they had will not stand the light of scientific examination. With regard to the first part of this statement he is flatly contradicted by the American missionary Peery, who tells us the Japanese are by nature a religious people. Who shall decide when missionaries disagree? With respect to Mr. Moore's second assertion, as we are not aware that *any* brand of religious faith will stand "the light of scientific examination" we think the Japanese have no particular reason to be disconcerted about the matter.

There is one very powerful hindrance to the progress of Christianity in Japan (and elsewhere as well) which is obvious enough to the outside observer, but which, so far as we have noticed, does not often force itself on the attention of the missionary. At any rate he manages to ignore it in his reports for home consumption. We refer to the scale of comfort and the style of living that the missionary deems it necessary to maintain abroad. The candor of Mr. Peery is positively refreshing when he proceeds to draw out his little schedule of personal requirements on the due satisfaction of which he considers the full efficiency of the missionary to depend. It is essential, of course, that a missionary in Japan should be paid "a liberal salary." It touches our heart strings to learn that the birth of a child to a missionary means a cash outlay of 150 to 200 dollars. We have not heard that a missionary, any more than anybody else, is *compelled* to have children. In any case, however, we think we are within the mark in saying that perhaps ninety-nine out of every hundred *Japanese* babies manage to get born at a very much smaller cost than thirty or forty pounds sterling.

Not only does the missionary require a liberal salary, but he needs an additional allowance for each child. The mission boards should, it seems, put a premium on the fecundity of those attached to the mission stations. It would probably be the most reliable method of securing a considerable annual increase of the Christian population in Japan. Then it is desirable that the missionaries should leave their fields of work during the summer season and spend six weeks or two months in sanatoria among the mountains or by the seashore. Mr. Peery considerably explains that the *native* helpers at the mission station do not need a vacation, as they are inured to the climate. We are further told that at certain intervals a missionary should be allowed a twelve or eighteen months' furlough, and should, of course, be provided with adequate means for enjoying his holiday.

According to Mr. Peery, the missionary also wants

Western furniture, pictures, musical instruments, etc., as well as plenty of books and newspapers. Moreover, the people at home should not forget to send him out presents. The missionary must also have money to send his children to his native land for their education. Presumably they would be hopelessly contaminated in the eyes of their parents were they permitted to attend the really excellent schools so lavishly provided in Japan. The missionary also wants—and gets—a great many other things which we have not space to enumerate. But it is abundantly evident that these modern apostles of Christ and disciples of the homeless Nazarene are by no means inclined to make their way to heaven a *via dolorosa*. When we reflect that these things, which merely to read of rouses our indignation, are daily before the eyes of the Japanese people, we are surprised that the attitude of the bulk of the population towards Christianity is not something stronger than “indifference or contempt.” It is very much to the credit of the Japanese that their uniform politeness and good humor serves to maintain their equanimity in the face of the audacity and arrogance of the Christian missionary. Orientals are proverbially patient. At the same time we may safely assume that the lives of the missionaries themselves, so full of beautiful Christian asceticism and self-denial (!), form no small obstacle to the triumph of Christianity in Japan. For which we need not shed tears.

G. SCOTT.

Correspondence.

ATHEISM AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—The article by “Chilperic,” in the last issue, on Robespierre, is admirable and entertaining, like all that “Chilperic” writes. The only thing that causes me to write is an undertone, as it were, with which I find myself in some slight disagreement. At any rate, his article gives me a peg on which to hang some reflections. Atheists ought surely by this to have got beyond the stage of piously washing their hands of the French Revolution as a horrible evil, for which, so to speak, they were really not responsible. Besides, there always seems to me to be just a little inconsistency in the way Deism is treated in this connection. We claim Paine for Freethought and throw Robespierre to the pietists, when both Paine and Robespierre were Deists. If Deism is to be debited in the person of Robespierre with the blood shed in the Reign of Terror, then it should be credited in the persons of Paine and Voltaire with their humanity and their courage.

The truth is that the French Revolution was the result of the misery and servitude of the French people and the extravagance and debauchery of the French aristocracy. It was the political expression of the desire to find a remedy for the misery, and also of the philosophical speculation of the previous half century. And with all its passion, it was the most light-giving and emancipating episode in modern history. That during its course wild things were said and done, and that passion got the better of reason, is not really surprising, all things considered.

But whilst Freethinkers do not in the least desire to defend its excesses, they must often, I should think, be nauseated at the spectacle of all the pietist tears shed over those excesses. Those tears are purely partisan tears, and are never shed at the infinitely worse horrors of the Inquisition or the horrors of the religious persecutions under Elizabeth or under Mary in England, or the Puritan horrors of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland. As Mr. John Morley, in an incidental phrase in his *Diderot*, puts it: “All the revolutionary excesses put together are but a drop compared with the oceans of bloodshed with which Catholicism and absolutism have made history crimson.” No; the French Revolution is conceived as the work of wicked Freethinkers, whether Atheists or Theists is a small matter to the pious, and it is as the supposed work of Freethinkers that it is condemned.

Now by washing our hands of the Revolution, as it were, we rather countenance the idea that it was a discreditable episode in the history of the world. It would, of course, have been wholly to the good if the French Revolution had been achieved without any violence whatever. The ideal of

politics for the humanitarian is peaceful progress, accomplished with the minimum possible of hurt and inconvenience. But the ideal is hard to realise. In the case of the French Revolution, there would have been little or no violence if it had not been, in the first place, for the long oppression of the people, which had made them and their leaders ready for savage reprisals, and if it had not been, in the second place, for the incompetence and bad faith of the king, who never sincerely gave the new constitution a chance, and the intrigues of the *émigrés* which fanned popular passion to flame. It is generally the violence or bad faith of power that begets popular violence.

When we turn to the personal case of Robespierre, it is rather sad. In his compassion for animals, his tenderness for his sister, and his personal cleanliness of life, I do not see anything to sneer at, as “Chilperic” seems to see. These facts rather deepen the whole tragedy. Nor is it fair to charge his political fanaticism against his Deism. Christians might with as little justification charge it against his lack of Christianity, as in fact they do. In truth, however, we are only entitled to attribute criminal or anti-social conduct to a given creed when we can reasonably show that that creed fostered or stimulated, or provided a ready mask for, the conduct in question. Philosophically, it would be neither here nor there to point to the fact of a Vegetarian being convicted of manslaughter, unless we sought to show some connection between eating vegetables and crime. Thus we are perfectly entitled to charge the crimes of the Inquisition to Christianity, because the doctrine of salvation by faith and eternal hell did admittedly furnish a motive for putting heretics to death. Did Robespierre's Deism, however, make him a persecutor? I confess I do not see it. Paine was a Deist and set himself against persecution. The fact is, there is the political fanatic which is a slightly different type from the religious fanatic, though, of course, all fanaticism stands for unreason. In the case of the political fanatic the “salvation of the State” is the motive, and everything is sacrificed to this end. Robespierre was such a type. If I may be pardoned the modern instance, I think Joseph Chamberlain, who is not by any means an orthodox Christian, would, under very little more provocation, have developed into a Robespierre during the Boer war, as indeed he approached such a type.

Let us all hope that Atheist statesmen in the stress of political passion will always rise above fanaticism of this kind. But do not let us make any extravagant claims. In the conduct of some modern French Atheistic politicians I think there is occasionally just a little of that spirit which their opponents have familiarised them with. The possibilities of human error are endless. And Atheism does not offer itself as some magical creed which will act as a miraculous purge of all the baseness and unreason in man. Those kind of foolish claims we must leave to the religionists. What is claimed for Atheism is that it clears away a great error and a fundamentally wrong conception of humanity, and that it thus clears the way of at least one gigantic stumbling-block in the path of human progress.

FREDERICK RYAN.

FREETHINKERS AND MARRIAGE: AN IDEA.

[We think the importance of the subject, whatever opinion be held concerning it, warrants the publication of the following letter. We might have shortened it, and struck out the initial paragraphs, but it seemed better, on the whole, to print it in its entirety, and let the writer speak exactly in his own way. We merely omit his name and address, which, for the sake of one paragraph, we think had better be withheld.—EDITOR.]

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—In the belief that true genius never deems a compliment flattery, I preface this letter with the frank and hearty avowal of the pleasure and profit it affords me weekly to read the *Freethinker*.

You have doubtless been told the same thing so often, and in so many different ways before; you must, moreover, have a self-consciousness of the power of your own paper; that perhaps—no, indeed—it cannot surprise you to learn that you number now amongst your readers a man whose sympathy as a fellow Freethinker, and whose allegiance as a lesser thinker you are in the fullest possession of.

But, as I have already said, please consider all this as prefatory only. What I really wish to lay before you is an idea.

Ideas, as you know, have not much real value as long as they remain such, nor can their value be always arrived at till they are put to the practical test of experiment. My idea is, I think, one that will both bear and come well out of any experimental test, if judiciously applied.

Has it ever occurred to you that among the many handicaps under which we Freethinkers labor, there is one in particular, tending not only to our own personal detriment,

* *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, 1 vol. ed., p. 131.

but also—and this is a far more serious consideration—to the crippling of the Freethought movement in progressive generations? This handicap, dear sir, is, if I may name it for convenience of reference, the Handicap Matrimonial.

I have had to run under it myself, and it goes without saying, since I speak of the matter in this connection, that I lost the race. My rival, a smug-faced, hymn-singing humbug, was not only the favorite all through, but also, in the end, won.

Naturally, at this stage of the confession, the question presents itself, Was it not a case of the better man winning—a sort of survival of the fittest? A question I cannot, for a very obvious reason, be expected to answer.

I am, however, justified in pointing out that he had, in the first place, abundance of opportunity, she being, like him, an assiduous chapel-goer; and, in the second place, there was too strong a prejudice on her part—the Handicap Matrimonial, in fact—to permit her to have much to do with a man of a pronounced freethinking habit. I recollect, with partial amusement, some of the long string of peculiar questions she put me in a very pretty spirited manner. "Did I believe," she wanted to know, "in a hereafter?" My cynical smile, more eloquent than words, put, of course, an end to a position that was positively becoming painful.

And so, you see, the other fellow's going to lead her to the altar. Altar, forsooth! Why a legal contract should be entered into at an altar for preference, I cannot quite understand.

But to come to the idea I have threatened to inflict on you. I throw it out with great diffidence, in fear of my own daring.

How would it do, then, to reserve a small corner in one of your columns for advertisements and correspondence of a nature tending to matrimony? I do think the innovation would be hailed with glee by many, if not all, of your juvenile readers—especially the women.

I say especially the women advisedly, without the slightest desire to fail in gallantry to the fair sex. Their difficulty must of necessity be greater than that of the men—I speak, of course, of us Freethinkers only—since they cannot, like Christian maidens, go to P.S.A.'s and chapel picnics, and all that sort of thing, to see and be seen. This mutual sight-seeing is, as a rule, the first step, from which the Freethinking girl is, *ipso facto*, barred. Besides, I am very much afraid that the opinion generally held, or rather inculcated into the minds of those who would never otherwise come to hold it, is that "Freethought" is synonymous with "Free love." With this unfavorable predisposition on the side of a man or girl, it is almost natural that he or she should fight shy of a possible partner coming under the terrible ban. To try and combat this foolish prejudice would be "love's labor lost." One cannot hope to tear down in a single conversation the heap of superstitious rubbish accumulated in a lifetime. And a second conversation, at least on the same subject, is invariably denied.

Even when unions do result, if the mother be the Christian, the odds are that the Church or Chapel will eventually reap the harvest. Vain would it be for the father to lift the voice of reason against the pressure of sentiment and circumstances. Away would go the bairns to be ground in the Bible mill.

Take, on the other hand, the union cemented by the nobility of Freethought, where broad mind allied to broad mind left to the world a heritage of Freethinkers. And suppose this done again and again through the generations: we should be building up in this manner a veritable tower of strength.

The prospect I thus conjure up is, I will admit, somewhat utopian. It does not follow, I know, that a marriage must necessarily be a happy and desirable one because the contracting parties are both of them Freethinkers. The consideration of the ultimate conditions of a marriage do not, however, weigh very much with young people desirous of getting married, and yet unable to meet definitely with a suitable partner for life. The more important consideration is always the immediate one, the difficulty that arises "Where and how to find such a partner?"

For us who have at present no fixed places to gravitate to and meet in, who are scattered all over the world, this is a really formidable difficulty, of which I am afraid that even the adoption of my idea—that is, the establishment among us of a Matrimonial Bureau—would not provide a complete solution.

Where would be the harm, though, in giving it a fair trial?

X.

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING IN PRISON.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—The Rev. Canon Horsley's glowing account of the advantages of imprisonment would be more convincing if he had ever been a prisoner himself. Moreover, those who

have read his *Jottings from Jail* (1887) will remember that at one time he was equally enthusiastic over the use of the treadwheel. This instrument of torture, now happily discredited and abandoned, was eulogised by the Rev. Mr. Horsley "as supplying a form of real and therefore deterrent, hard labour, which cannot be shirked, injures no one, and supplies motive power which can readily be utilised in grinding flour and other ways."

HUMANITARIAN.

LOST ADDRESSES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you allow me, through your column, to address a word to any members of the N.S.S. who may feel hurt at not receiving a notice when their subscriptions become due; but as I have so many letters returned marked "Gone away," I would beg them, before they allow themselves to feel aggrieved at my want of attention, to ask themselves if they are still at the last address they have given me.

Possibly members of the other societies of which I have the honor to be Secretary may find the same hint of service.

E. M. VANCE.

The Passive Resister's Song.

I want to be a martyr,
And with the martyrs stand;
A halo round my forehead,
A brick-bat in my hand.
I want to join the rabble
And caterwaul and cheer;
I want to break the bailiff's neck
And bash the auctioneer.

I want to be like Jesus,
A knotted scourge to twine,
And whip the wicked magistrates
Until they howl and whine.
I want to stand in p'lice courts
And shake my fist, and yell:
I want to jump upon the law
And roast it over hell.

I'm going to hustle England,
And make it truly free;
In fact, I'll spread myself around
Till all believe like me.
And God and me will shortly
Make Britain good and great
By help of stones, dead cats and dogs,
Bad eggs, and Billingsgate.

I want to go to prison
And gain a martyr's crown—
I want my friends to pass the hat
And plank their dollars down.
I want to pose and swagger,
And be as big as God,
Until in Heaven I teach him
The way to wield his rod.

C. D. STEPHENS.

A SCOTCH COLLIE'S RELIGION.—At the disruption in 1843 the bulk of the shepherds joined the Free Kirk. But one collie held by the Establishment principle, and refused to "come out." Every Sabbath he went alone to the Established Church, where he had been wont to accompany his master. His master refused to coerce him. "Na, na," he said, "he's a wise dog; I'll no meddle wi' his convictions." The collie's adherence to the Establishment had, however, a disastrous end. He was accustomed to lie during the sermon on the pulpit stairs, no doubt better to hear the discourse. Below him were placed the long stovepipe hats of the elders. On one unfortunate day he fell asleep, rolled off his step, and managed to get his head firmly fixed inside one of the hats. Bitterly mortified, the dog fled from the kirk, and ever afterwards, as his master said, "had nae trokings wi' religion."—*Spectator*.

INCONGRUITIES.—The Rev. Dr. Rainsford was arguing with a youth of his parish about the evils of young men smoking cigarettes. "What would you think," said he, "if you met an angel coming along with a cigarette in his mouth?" "Well, doctor, what would you think if you saw an angel with an umbrella and a pair of patent leathers?"

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): G. W. Foote, "God, Man, Free Will, and Morality: with Reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's Opinions." Doors open 7, Chair taken 7.30. Discussion invited. Admission free. Reserved front seat, 1s.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: J. Earl, subject, "Was Jesus Divine?"; 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (79 Grove-road, Holloway-road, N.): 7, Debate, "The Future Life Superstition." Open Discussion.

TOOTING S. D. F. (Welcome Hall, High-street, corner of Beechcroft-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Economics of Religion."

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD BRANCH N. S. S. (Jaycock's Temperance Hotel): 7, George Whitehead, "Christianity and Astronomy."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring Coffee House): Thursday, December 8 at 8, A. Barber, "Haeckel."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Baths Assembly Hall): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Theism Confuted and Atheism Vindicated"; 7, "After Death—What?"

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Percy Redfern, "The Riddle of Man."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Thibet and Frontier Wars"; 6.30, "A Study in Hells." Committee meets at 1 p.m.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, Dec. 5, at 8, J. Glen, "Alcoholism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, J. Arnold Sharpley, "The Children's Franchise"; 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "Scientists and Theology." Monday, at 8, Rationalist Debating Society.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "Atheism or Theism: the Final Issue."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, "Mrs. Hodgson Bayfield. "The Political Position of Women."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, George Berrisford, "Religion versus Science."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Dec. 8, at 7.45, T. T. Lodge, "Free-will, Consciousness and Action."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, business meeting.

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