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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Joking decides great things,
Stronger and better oft than earnest can.*

—HORACE (Milton's translation).

The Conversion of Ingersoll.

A YEAR or two before his death the conversion of Ingersoll was earnestly prayed for by all the Christian Endeavor societies in America. Myriads of them—it is said *millions*—fell upon their knees and begged God to soften Ingersoll's hard head, and enable him to become a true believer. Perhaps their prayer was heard; certainly it was not answered. Ingersoll died suddenly, of heart failure, with a smile upon his face. He had been saying something pleasant to his wife; that was the cause of the expression which death stereotyped. But the smile was in every way appropriate. It was symbolic. He smiled at superstition, and he had a pitying smile for the weaknesses of his fellow-men. His denunciation was splendid, but his smile was a revelation. It was like the shimmer of sunlight on the sea. You could bask in it.

Ingersoll died without giving a sign that he had found the Lord. "Ah," said some of the bitter ones, "but the Lord has found *him*." They meant that God had not converted him, but killed him—which was the next best thing.

It appears, however, that Ingersoll has been converted since his death. Some of our readers will think this strange. But why? It is so hard to convert a living Ingersoll! Yes, but it is so easy to convert a dead one. A single soul-saver will convert all the corpses in a city cemetery—if you take his word for it. And what else have you to go upon? Silence gives consent, and the dead say nothing.

We beg pardon. That last statement was too sweeping. The dead say nothing usually. But now and then they talk till you wish they would stop. And this has happened to Ingersoll.

It is all through the Spiritualists—or, as they ought to be called, the Spiritists; for why should they monopolise the word "spiritual," and is not their speciality "spirits"? We opened the *Progressive Thinker*, Chicago, one of our exchanges, and right across the front page we read in big letters, "Has Ingersoll Changed His Views?" We were ready to cry "No" at a venture. We were prepared to put our last dollar on it; and the man who runs a Freethought paper knows as well as anybody what a last dollar is. But our eye caught a lot of large, well-spaced type under this bold heading; and as we belong to a Society whose motto is "We seek for Truth" we thought we would act up to it and spell out the news from—well, we don't know where; for, after the most careful examination—yea, and re-examination—we cannot make out Ingersoll's new postal address. There is nothing to show whether it is up or down.

We must say at once that Ingersoll's conversion does not come direct from our Spiritist contemporary, the *Progressive Thinker*. It comes direct from the *Kokomo Tribune*. We never heard of that production before, but it is an American paper, and all American papers are great papers. Yes, we, in our humble way, are prepared to learn from the

Kokomo Tribune. We dare say it has much to teach us. And we have questions to ask it. For instance, has it any connection with Cocoa, and can it throw any light on the simian face in the nut of that name? Nor let it deem the question to be frivolous; for this is a scientific age, and nothing is frivolous to science, which takes an equal interest in elephants and fleas. Moreover, we venture to say that this question is as important as many others that call for attention at Spiritist *séances*.

But to the point. Ingersoll turned up at a Spiritist *séance* in Kokomo. This *séance* was conducted by a medium called Edward Winans, who had recently been "exposed" in the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, which declared that he "had been practising a fraud for nineteen years." Some people would say that this explains his proficiency.

Mr. Winans got up in the corner of a room, protected by a small curtain, and handed out written messages from dead men—messages which it was utterly impossible that he could have written himself. Of course! One of these messages, covering five pages, was from Ingersoll.

Let us take the first paragraph of this remarkable communication:—

"Did you ever think of thought? Do you know, friend, what thought is? Did you ever comprehend its powers and possibilities? If you did not you will find an interesting field for mental speculation in this domain. There is no subject more interesting, important, and less understood than that of thought."

Is it not evident that neither Edward Winans nor any other medium could write like this? Ingersoll's readers will recognise his style; his originality and lucidity, his brilliance and wit, his vividness and poetry. All the charm of his literary manner is in this exquisite paragraph. Who but the Master himself could draw the bow of Ulysses? Who but Ingersoll could speak in this way?

The rest of Ingersoll's message, from God knows where, is on a level with the paragraph we have given, which may be taken as a fair sample from bulk. We will not dazzle and intoxicate our readers by printing it in full.

What strikes us most is the amazing truths that dead men discover. Ingersoll says in this message from the spirit-world that "Man, with all his wonderful power, could not make a little bug." Ingersoll could not have known that when he was living. He had to die to find it out. Happily the spirit of Ingersoll intimates that we shall all make similar discoveries, when death withdraws "the impenetrable veil," and we see things as they are.

Towards the end of the message Ingersoll became incoherent and unintelligible. Probably he was overpowered with the wonders of his new existence. But his natural kindness of heart shone through everything. He could not refrain from putting in a good word for poor persecuted Edward Winans.

"So, dear friends, give to each other your best thoughts, and stand by your medium, for through your medium is the avenue that, by which your loved and departed friends can reach you. Blessings rest upon you all to-night. So long."

We reproduce the dead Ingersoll's words exactly—grammar and all. It was so like him to break the silence of death by doing a good turn for a man who wanted it badly! We congratulate the happy medium.

G. W. FOOTE.

Woman and Christianity.

WHAT are the essentials of success in the pulpit? Are they oratorical ability, a good presence, sympathetic manner? Well, all of these things may help; but they do not seem to be essentials. Popular preachers may be met who are deficient in one or more of these qualities. The great thing, the essential thing, would seem to be—*cheek*. Not a fancy variety or a rare kind of cheek, but good, plain, old-fashioned, every-day kind of cheek—the kind of impudence that enables a three-card operator on a racecourse or a gutter auctioneer of sham jewellery or quack medicines to rake in the money of an easily-persuaded public. To achieve success in the pulpit one must be able to propound with a straight face theories that we know to be untrue, to teach fiction as fact, to hold up half-crazy or semi-criminal revivalists as the superiors of Plato or Spencer, to vilify men and movements in the name of a superior morality, to put forward as axioms theories of the most questionable character, and statements that no one questions as the outcome of profound study and encyclopædic knowledge. And to do all this successfully one needs simply *cheek*—a cheek that age will not wither nor exposure destroy.

Like the body of a waxwork figure which only needs a change of heads to convert an effigy of Napoleon Bonaparte into one of Dan Leno, the above would serve as an introduction to any number of our modern pulpiteers. But as most general reflections are suggested by a particular instance, so on this occasion it was a sermon by the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, of Westminster Chapel, that caused me to reflect upon the value of cheek in a clergyman's outfit. Mr. Morgan's sermon was on "The Ministry of Women," a subject, one would think, that offered but small scope for the praise of either doctrinal or historic Christianity. To one who really knows the history of Christianity it would seem that the wisest course, even in the pulpit, would be silence. Instead of this, one meets with endless dissertations as to how much woman owes to Christianity, how it has clothed her with dignity and freedom, and what a terrible position she would now be in if Christianity had never existed.

Mr. Morgan is, wisely, very general in his statements, although he commits the fatal mistake of giving one or two New Testament references, trusting, probably, to his audience not looking them up. He believes, however, that the "example of the Apostolic Church is intended to be the model to the end of time," so that this would seem definite enough, if only people could settle what was the practice in the "Apostolic Church." Mr. Morgan does not tell us with any great degree of definiteness. He explains that he is not going to deal with the subject of woman's right to preach, but "I believe if God gives a woman a gift of speech she has a right to exercise it in the Christian Church," which is decidedly *un-Apostolic*. And then comes a remark which reminds one of Bret Harte's "Ways that are dark and tricks that are vain," and which proves that these are not the exclusive property of Celestials. "There can be no doubt," says Mr. Morgan, "that women were definitely appointed to Christian service in connection with the Apostolic Churches. Paul, in his letters to Timothy, gives very careful and definite instructions to some such." Yes, he does, and anyone who cares to read through the Epistles to Timothy will see that, in citing these, Mr. Morgan is far from deficient in what I have called the essential item in a preacher's outfit.

Paul gives in the course of these two letters—which, by the way, were in all probability not written by Paul at all, and are certainly among the most doubtful of the writings attributed to him—beyond anticipating old Weller's advice to "beware o' vidders," and general instructions for the regulation of women, emphatic advice that women are *not* to

preach, whether they have the "gift of speech" or not. It is in these epistles that there occurs the famous, or infamous, texts, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man." Yet it is to the Epistle to Timothy that Mr. Morgan refers his hearers! One almost feels inclined to withdraw the common word cheek, and substitute that of genius. The impudence is of such a daring and thorough-going description.

Women, says Mr. Morgan, were "definitely appointed to Christian service." Of course they were. And so were negroes *definitely appointed* to service in American society prior to the civil war. But their definite appointment was not a badge of dignity, but of degradation. Such dishonesty of speech would not be tolerated for long anywhere but in the pulpit. What Mr. Morgan wishes his hearers to infer from his sermon is, that women were placed upon the same level as men in the early Church. What he must *know* is, that the badge of inferiority and subordination was everywhere, and by everyone, placed upon her, and by none more emphatically than Paul, with his idiotic argument that man is the superior of woman *because* he was created first. It is small use challenging one who entrenches himself in that coward's castle, the pulpit; but one can, nevertheless, defy Mr. Morgan, or anyone else, to show that women ever held anything in the early Church but the meanest of positions, and even these were taken from them within a very brief period.

The whole Christian conception of woman was decidedly lower than that current among either Romans or Greeks. Let anyone compare Paul's injunction to wives to obey their husbands as Sara did Abraham, to learn in silence with all subjection, to recognise her husband as in the same relation to her that Christ is to the Church, with the speech put into Brutus' wife's mouth by Shakespeare—taken from Plutarch—demanding to know her husband's mind, "by the right and virtue of my place," otherwise "Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife." Can one conceive a sentiment of this kind developed by Old or New Testament influences? What the Old Testament did was to stamp woman with the mark of inferiority, and the New Testament and the early Church developed with infernal energy the conception of woman as the origin of evil, the cause of man's fall from grace, a creature existing only to inflame man with the vilest of passions, her iniquity culminating in the sacrifice of Jesus himself.

The official position of women, says Mr. Morgan, lasted at least towards the end of the second century. I have already indicated what this "official position was," and columns might be filled with the vituperations of Christian writers directed against women. But Mr. Morgan is correct in saying that it grew worse later; although it might have occurred to a rational individual as exceedingly curious that woman's position grew worse as Christianity grew stronger. It is a mere matter of fact that step by step with the growth of Church law, and the influence of Christianity upon common law and social custom, her legal and general position women sank lower and lower. It was under common, or Church, law that married women were robbed of the right to hold property, the right to share an inheritance equally with brothers, all property going to "the worthiest of blood." Blackstone admits this to be a distinction quite unknown to Roman law. It was under Church law that women could not attest a will, nor give evidence in any criminal suit, nor bring an accusation against a man save for personal injury. Church law also held, as late as the thirteenth century, that a husband could transfer his wife to another man for a definite or indefinite period. Church law denied women benefit of clergy until the time of Elizabeth, and held in common with civil law, until the time of Charles II., that husbands could beat their wives whenever they deserved it. And it was in the same century, nearly seventeen centuries after the alleged birth of Christ,

that a Christian writer gravely propounded the theory that as Nature aims at perfection it aims to produce men, that when a woman is born it is due to an error, and that, consequently, "Woman is an animal produced by accident."

What I have already said may enable readers to realise somewhat the cast-iron impudence a preacher must possess to claim that Christianity has improved the position of women. But another, a final, expression of Mr. Morgan's will make it plainer still. The decline in the status of women under Christianity he attributes to "that sad system of monasticism which cast its blighting shadow over the whole of Christendom."

I am not going to dispute the evils of celibacy, but merely emphasise the fact that this is the most Christian of teachings and the oldest. The figure-head of Christianity was a celibate. Paul was a celibate—by compulsion, says a Rabbinical tradition. His reason for permitting marriage was only that it staved off a worse evil. The doctrine of a virgin birth labels marriage as more or less unclean. Paul wished that all were as himself—celibate. It was a Christian Bishop that declared married people were outside the pale of salvation; a Christian Father who described wives as women of the second degree of virtue who had *fallen into matrimony*. It was the great Origen who said all marriage was unclean; and Jerome that it was at best a vice. Of course the celibate ideal is a vicious one, and its resultant monasticism a social evil; but this does not prevent their being Christian, nor their being preached for centuries by the great leaders of Christianity.

The truth is that the whole influence of Christianity on marriage was bad. When Christians denounce the polygamy of Mohammedan countries they forget, or do not know, that polygamy is as much a Christian affair as a Mohammedan, and that it is to purely Pagan influences that we owe the growth of monogamy. Paul gave it a backhanded support by his special injunction that bishops and deacons were to have but one wife each. Martin Luther said polygamy was a permissible practice. Bishop Burnet said that a plurality of wives was quite lawful *under the Gospel*, and Milton declared that polygamy was "a true marriage," and "allowed by the law of God."

It is merely repeating, in another way, what has already been said, to say that the Christian influence on the family was also bad. With woman treated as a mere object, robbed of legal standing, and reduced to the Biblical level of a mere article of property, and with marriage tolerated as an unavoidable evil, what could one expect but the growth of a hardness and harshness of character that we have not yet outgrown? We are all the outcome of our heredity, and when we look at and regret the lack of a keener sympathy, healthier instincts, or a higher humanity, let us bear in mind, in spite of the claptrap of the pulpit, that we are reaping some of the natural results of nearly fifty generations of Christian domination.

C. COHEN.

"The Inspiration of the Old Testament."

ANOTHER Didsbury College Professor, the Rev. Arthur Moorhouse, M.A., B.D., makes his contribution towards a definition of Christianity, in the third of the present series of Manchester Mission Lectures. It is difficult for ordinary people to understand how a lecture on the "Inspiration of the Old Testament" can render any assistance in the stupendous task of discovering what the Christian religion really is; but we must take the document for what it is worth on other grounds, and pronounce judgment upon it accordingly. Professor Moorhouse is a firm believer in the theory of evolution, and in the Higher Criticism of the Bible. He frankly admits that Christianity is evolved Judaism, or, in other words, that the New Testament is the "com-

pletion of a long evolutionary process," of which the Old is the record. He readily grants that the Old Testament is by no means a perfect book. Its astronomy, geology, botany, and history are radically defective. Many of its so-called facts are fables, and most of its stories legends. Such admissions are most important, in that they vitally bear on any theory of inspiration.

We are assured by Professor Moorhouse that God is the real author of the Bible. But of how much of it is God the author? Surely not of its mistakes and contradictions and crudities. But if its astronomy, geology, botany, chronology, genealogies, and histories are not inspired, of what else in it can inspiration be predicated? All the elements in it that can be subjected to reliable human tests have been proved to be fallible and faulty, as the Higher Critics vigorously contend—what other elements does it contain in which its inspiration may be supposed to lie? Professor Moorhouse tells us that there are "facts, on account of which we call it an inspired Book"; but he omits to tell us what those facts are. It is easy enough to assert that "inspiration, in its strict and proper sense, is a word which can only be used of the Bible," or that "the Bible is the only inspired Book we know," and it is equally easy to shelter from attack behind the admission that inspiration cannot be defined; but what we require is some positive proof that the Bible is immeasurably superior to all other books, and this is not forthcoming. The late Professor Robertson Smith did more than any other English scholar towards bringing the Bible down to the level of other literature. As an exponent of criticism, he said: "The Bible is full of mistakes and anachronisms and discrepancies and crude ideas." As a victim of traditional theology, this is what he said: "Of this I am quite sure: that the Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God, that no historical research can deprive me of this conviction, or make less precious the divine utterances that speak to the heart." Professor Moorhouse occupies precisely the same inconsistent position. With one hand he hurls the Bible from its ancient throne, with the other he lifts it up again and recrowns it.

To the scholar, the Old Testament is a purely human document. It bears no marks of divinity at all. But, according to the Christians, we must not approach it as critics, but as humble believers. The lecturer says:—

"The Old Testament will prove its own inspiration to any and every man who is willing to read it with an open mind and a humble heart, and it will do this the more to any man who diligently studies it with devout prayer to the Holy Spirit, who inspired these holy men to write it for our instruction."

Of course, all things are possible to faith. The biggest lie under heaven is true to him who believes it. To devout students, who ever "pray to the Holy Spirit," the Scriptures are bound to be inspired. But devout students are of necessity prejudiced. They cannot read with open minds, their humble hearts having closed their eyes to the light. No mind can be open while chock-full of preconceptions. People brought up in a Christian country and by Christian parents are naturally biased in favor of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. They cannot read the book with open minds. Their first duty is to empty their minds of every prejudice, and fill them with the love of truth, as such. But having cleared their minds, what will they find in the Bible? A strange mixture of truth and error, of light and darkness, of reason and superstition; not a revelation of God, but of man, not light from beyond the stars, but a fair representation of the varied life of man on earth.

Let us follow Professor Moorhouse for a moment. He claims that the Bible "does not profess to teach physical science." As Galileo said, "it was not given us to teach us how the heavens go, but to teach us how to go to heaven." Again, the object of the Bible is not to relate accurate history, "because

the facts of history can be discovered by diligent search." The Professor makes the astounding statement that the Bible "does not profess to tell us the beginnings of human history," because "Archaeologists may some day discover all that." Then he admits that "the voice of God cannot be heard with equal clearness and distinctness in every part of the Book," that there are "degrees of inspiration," and that "there are parts of the Old Testament where inspiration is at a minimum." But while making these admissions he declares that "to every man who wishes to live a good life, to the man of God seeking equipment for the service of God and his fellows the Old Testament Scriptures are invaluable and infallible." But when he tries to explain wherein the invaluable and infallibility of the Old Testament consist, Professor Moorhouse becomes painfully vague and mystical. "The first two chapters of Genesis," he says, "were not designed to give an account of the creation of the world after the method of our modern scientific writers. . . . The writer's aim was not scientific, but religious." Again:—

"The first three chapters of Genesis do not profess to be history in our sense of the word. By history we mean an accurate description of events, in an accurate sequence, based on contemporary records. These chapters deal with events which were, of course, prehistoric, and of which there could be no human record. Nor is there any valid reason for thinking that this is history miraculously dictated."

But these opening chapters of Genesis are set in the strictly historic form. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," etc., etc. The same form is observed all the way through. Surely, this was meant to be taken as an accurate account of the Creation of the world, of the making of man and his grievous fall; and it was accepted as such by the Church until science began to contradict it by telling a very different story. It is science that has discredited Bible history, and defenders of the Bible try to acquit it of the charge of inaccuracy by asserting that teaching history is not its function. "Let me repeat," adds the Professor, "it was no part of the writer's purpose to teach history, as such. He is a religious writer, bent on teaching spiritual truth. He takes a legend current among his own people and kindred nations, about the origin of the world, and strips it of all its fantastic heathen associations. He gives us a dignified and reverent statement of the facts as he conceived them; and using this as a framework, he paints for us a picture which is true for all time, and which sets before us profound spiritual lessons suited to every capacity." This is theological quibbling of the worst type. Science and criticism having expelled him from the field of history, the Christian apologist now seeks refuge in a world of dreams and shadows, into which his opponents cannot follow him. It has been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the science and the history of the Bible are shockingly inaccurate, but its religious teaching, we are told, is absolutely infallible. But that is the city of refuge of cowards. Do you imagine that men who did not know history, or who told the little history they knew with a national and priestly bias, were yet inspired of God to grasp the providential purpose behind the events they so erroneously recorded, or to point out the true meaning of history?

In the following extract we reach a greater depth of absurdity still:—

"The facts of history and physical science can be discovered by diligent search. But there are other things—and they are the things which matter, the things which belong to our peace—which, with all our searching, we cannot find out,—the feelings and purposes of God towards us and our true destiny in the light of our relation to him. These things the Bible tells us, and the Bible alone. This part of the Bible story, the moral and spiritual teaching embodied in the facts recorded, was not derived from Babylonian nor

from any other human sources. These are truths of revelation which come direct from God. Inspiration has to do with these things."

The contentions of the Bible League are intelligible. One can understand the people who solemnly declare that they believe every word in the Bible from cover to cover because God is its author; but to admit its scientific and historical fallibility, and at the same time to affirm its moral and spiritual perfection, is sheer nonsense. In the sphere wherein it is possible to test its various statements it has been found wanting; and yet in the sphere in which it cannot be tested, the newer apologists characterise it as the very word of the living God. According to Professor Moorhouse there are two elements in the Bible, the human and the divine. The human element is accountable for all the blunders and contradictions and false teachings in the volume. Yes, the human element has been thoroughly discredited and condemned; but "the divine element remains what it was"—perfect, complete, infallible. But how did this divine element find its way into the Book? If it passed into it through man, must it not partake of man's usual imperfection? Its existence is a pure myth, as incapable of demonstration as the existence of God himself.

But neither directly nor indirectly does this lecture help us to understand what Christianity is. It is a common saying that the Old Testament Dispensation was a direct and special preparation for Christ; but the preparation proved a total failure. Jehovah had his chosen people under his own tuition for the space of two or three thousand years; and the one object he had in view was to excite within them a burning desire to see and accept the Messiah. But when the Christ appeared the people thus divinely trained to welcome his advent cursed him as a wicked impostor. "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." The Jews have never been a Christian nation. From this point of view, it is undeniable, and all must agree that the Old Testament Church utterly failed to fulfil its heaven-appointed mission.

The Old Testament contains many true and beautiful sentiments; but only a blind partisan would dream of pronouncing it infinitely superior to all other religious writings, as Professor Moorhouse actually does again and again. He says: "Compare the later prophets with their greatest contemporaries, Confucius, Buddha, Plato, and their superiority is obvious to the most casual reader." That statement is monstrously untrue. There are thousands of readers quite as intelligent and careful as the Professor himself, to whom such superiority is anything but obvious. They have made the suggested comparison, and the conclusion to which they have been forced to come is that, taking them all in all, the Jewish prophets did not occupy a higher ethical ground than all their Pagan contemporaries. They have compared the Ten Commandments with other contemporary moral codes; but they cannot conscientiously say that the former are "immeasurably beyond" the latter. Nor are they convinced that Jehovah was the moral superior of all contemporary deities. Jehovah was cruel, revengeful, bloodthirsty, unjust, and immoral. Even by the later prophets he is depicted as a heartless avenger (Amos iv. and viii.; Zechariah xiv. 16—18). If the Old Testament is studied in the light of reason, and not in that of an inherited and unreasoning faith, it will be seen that it is a purely human document—imperfect, faulty, self-contradictory, often misleading, and possessing absolutely no moral authority, although to the scientist and the historian it must always prove both interesting and instructive.

J. T. LLOYD.

Orthodox religion is a kind of boa-constrictor; anything it cannot dodge it will swallow.—*Ingersoll*.

Modern Virgin^e Worship.

To the average outside observer—we refer, of course, principally to the Christian observer—few phases of Roman Catholicism appear so objectionable as its encouragement of Virgin worship. We do not now allude to the strong approval that the Church of Rome extends to the cult of virginity in the female and of celibacy in the male. Our reference is to the extravagant honor that has been—and still is—paid to the memory of the Jewish woman who is supposed to have given birth to Christ about nineteen hundred years ago. Women who gave birth to a child and retained their virginity (that is, so far as human intercourse is concerned) were not uncommon—a long time ago. The myths, and legends of antiquity are full of stories of women who brought forth children having a god for their father. It would never do for the Christian God to play second fiddle to the pagan deities in the matter of achieving the seemingly impossible.

We do not hear of these kind of things happening nowadays. Imagine how the Christian believers in the virgin birth of Jesus would laugh if a similar claim were made by, or in behalf of, anyone now living! It is true, and it is unfortunate for the mothers, that there are too many children born into this world at the present time without any visible or avowed father in the flesh. But we do not nowadays entertain the idea of ghostly paternity in such cases. Nor, however leniently we may judge the mothers, can we muster up any faith in their continued virginity. Yet otherwise sane husbands and fathers, who, if their own wives came to them with such a tale as was foisted on St. Joseph, would be travelling around with a horse-whip or revolver ready for use, or filing a petition for divorce, can bring themselves to believe that a couple of thousand years ago a woman on earth conceived a child to somebody in heaven. We held that belief ourselves for a number of years.

We have no present intention of entering into an examination of the legend of the Virgin Birth. The majority of those who examine the question in a scientific spirit and without sectarian bias are satisfied that the Christian version of the legend has no better foundation in fact than the versions which crop up in the older religions, or the stories of semi-divine, semi-human offspring of the gods which are recorded in the *Iliad* of Homer. The main difference between the Christian and the older legends is that the former is a more refined presentation of the story. In fact, in the hands of some Christian thinkers the crude, primitive story of a man-god has been so modified and refined upon that the phrase "Son of God" has come to mean nothing more than the relationship that every good and righteous man bears towards his Father in heaven. In this point of view we are all children of God if we attain the requisite sanctity, and Jesus is only Son of God in an especial sense because he is the supremely perfect man. Thus the conception of a God incarnate fades away into a mere mystical sonship.

The Church of Rome, however, with her 200 million adherents, steadfastly maintains the doctrine of the actual appearance on this earth of God himself, and she still pays all but divine honors to the woman in whose womb he is alleged to have miraculously taken flesh. We are quite well aware that the excessive adulation paid to the Virgin Mary by the multitude is not relished by the educated and intelligent section of Roman Catholics. Nor is Mariolatry carried to such extremes in Great Britain as it is in more Catholic countries. Yet even here amongst the unlearned, and pre-eminently amongst the women and children, devotion to the Virgin forms the major portion of Roman Catholic worship.

Worship of the Virgin is consistently encouraged by the Roman Catholic clergy. The present Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, who was elevated to the See in the latter part of 1902, devoted his first Lenten Pastoral entirely to this subject of Virgin

worship. Think what it means! A Christian archbishop, placed over his flock in one of our most important industrial centres, where people are grappling with multitudinous moral, social, municipal, political, and educational problems, has no better message to convey in his first charge to his people than a recommendation to increased devotion to the Virgin Mary! And this is the twentieth century of Christianity! It is somewhat apart from our subject, but we cannot refrain from saying that when we consider the vast power which the Church of Rome enjoyed for so long—and still enjoys in a modified degree—of guiding humanity according to her will, we are moved to wrath that she has misused it with such criminal imbecility.

In the Pastoral Letter alluded to, which occupied a column and a half of newspaper type, the Roman Catholic Archbishop held up the glorious example of the Virgin Mary, particularly to women and mothers. They should regard Mary as their model, and strive to imitate her in her life and virtues. It might have been somewhat to the purpose if Roman Catholic wives and mothers had been told by the virgin-worshipping Archbishop what specific details in Mary's career they should endeavour to copy. The one outstanding fact (or fiction) in the life of Mary is her virgin conception of Christ, and it is scarcely possible to emulate her in *that* respect. Modern women are quite unable to compete with Mary and the other legendary virgin-mothers, and we should not advise them to try. Parthenogenesis has completely gone out of fashion, so far as the human species is concerned. And, as we have indicated, modern husbands are not likely to be so complaisant as Joseph was. In the present century the angel story would be considered rather thin.

But, jesting apart, it is pure theological clap-trap to ask us to contemplate the sublime virtues of Mary. What real knowledge have we of the life and conduct of the reputed mother of Christ? If the life of Jesus is an absolute blank from his childhood until within a few months of his death, the life of his mother is wrapped in even denser obscurity. There is nothing to be learned from the example of the Virgin Mary, because there is nothing known of her life that can be of service to us to-day. The truth is that just as the figure of the Christ presented for our admiring worship is a purely fanciful creation, so also the orthodox conception of his Virgin mother, to whom the devout Roman Catholic delights to pay honor, is far removed from actuality. Just as the man Jesus was transformed into a God, so the woman Mary was transformed into a Goddess. All sorts of miraculous stories and imaginary attributes have clustered themselves round the memory and character of Mary, and she who was once a carpenter's wife in Palestine has become the puissant Queen of Heaven, second only in importance to God Almighty himself.

The Franciscan order of monks have always been conspicuous for their zeal in the cause of the Virgin Mary. For many a long day a bitter and animated controversy was waged between the Franciscans and the Dominicans over the disputed question of Mary's Immaculate Conception. The Franciscans were the staunch upholders of Mary's honor and dignity on this debated point, while the Dominicans as vehemently maintained that Mary, in her conception, was not distinguished in any way from the rest of the human race. All this, of course, was long before the infallible Church of Rome had discovered—with the assistance of the Holy Ghost—that belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin was essential to salvation. It was not till so late a date as 1854 that the Holy Ghost made himself (or should we write *itself*?) clearly intelligible in this matter. But all along, both before and since the definition and promulgation of Mary's sinless conception as an article of faith, the Franciscans have never faltered in their adulatory allegiance to the Christian successor of the Egyptian goddess Isis. It was a Franciscan preacher whom the writer heard commit himself to the astounding statement that this world

and all it contained, even man himself, was formed for the honor and glory of the Blessed Virgin! Surely the extravagance of Mariolatry could not farther go.

One need but turn to the pages of an ordinary Roman Catholic Hymn-book for evidence as to the extent to which Virgin worship enters into the religious practice of the Church of Rome even today. We have before us a copy of a hymn-book that is largely circulated amongst English-speaking Roman Catholics. It is a cheap, popular edition, specially prepared for use in church and school. It contains between eighty and ninety hymns, and of that number no less than thirty-six are addressed to the Virgin Mary. The rest are divided amongst the members of the Trinity, the angels, some saints, etc.; but even in these latter hymns there are many references to the Virgin. And it is an unquestionable fact that prayers to the Virgin are the most frequently repeated of all prayers in the Roman Catholic Church. So little does the average Roman Catholic regard Christ's solemn assurance: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you." The typical devout member of the Roman Church lacks the necessary straightforwardness to make direct application to the putative fountain of all gifts and graces. He must grovel before a statue or picture of the Virgin and light candles in front of it. He has a quite sycophantic relish for utilising back-stair influence in the court of Heaven.

But, as we have shown, Roman Catholics are incited to have recourse to the Virgin Mother in all their trials, temptations, and difficulties by the highest ecclesiastical authorities. The late Pope, in his Encyclical recommending the form of prayer known as the *Rosary of the Blessed Virgin*, gave proof of his Marian infatuation by asserting that "as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by his Mother." Apparently the mediatorship of Christ between the soul and its Maker is not sufficient for the Church of Rome. There must be still another go-between if the Almighty's strange scheme for man's redemption is not to remain inoperative.

The importance which the cult of the Virgin bears in the Roman Church is further evidenced by the scale on which the jubilee of the Immaculate Conception is being celebrated in the city of Rome in the present year. It is just fifty years since the definition of this dogma was given to the world, and for a whole month—from the middle of November till the middle of December—special services and ceremonies are being held in Rome to celebrate the golden jubilee of the event. Wax candles will be burned by the score, new banners will be rigged up, beads and miraculous medals will be disposed of by the dozen, and offerings will pour in from "the faithful." In fact there will be a nice, lucrative little time for somebody in the Eternal City. What would Rome do without the Papacy? The Vatican has been the city's most valuable commercial asset. The farce of Roman Catholicism pays, and so long as it does pay it, like other farces, will be kept running, with Virgin-worship and all the rest of the attractions.

G. SCOTT.

PAUL AND THE EPHESIANS.

Paul du Chaillu, the one-time African explorer, performed a Good Samaritan act one night in assisting along the street a very intoxicated stranger. The man told him where his home was, and, after considerable difficulty, Du Chaillu got him to his door. The bibulous one was very grateful, and wanted to know his helper's name. As the explorer did not particularly care to give his name in full, he merely replied that it was Paul. "So it'sh—hic—Paul, ish it?" hiccoughed the man, and then, after some moments of apparent thought, inquired solicitously, "Shay, ol' man, did y'ever get any—hic—any ansher to those lo-ong lettersh y' wrote to th' Ephesians?"

—*Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury.*

Acid Drops.

The *Daily Chronicle* has been taking up a new question (although not new to our readers), "Is the Bible Inspired?" Starting with the views of the Dean of Westminster, which are those of the Higher Critics generally, it proceeded with the views of the Rev. H. W. Webb-Peploe and Dr. Campbell Morgan. Mr. Webb-Peploe abjures the Higher Criticism and all its ways. Probably he does not see that the Church must either bend or break. He says that if the views advanced by the Dean of Westminster are correct, and the Bible has no further authority than he gives it, then "it seems impossible for us to believe that God has really spoken to man." Which is a conclusion in which we heartily concur.

Mr. Webb-Peploe points out that there are many passages in the Bible in which "the writers give us, as they say, the very utterances of God himself." "Consequently," he argues, "we have either the very voice of God, or we have the false and wicked fabrications of man." He adds naively that "if we could get to the original we should find that every word was directly inspired by God." But what an "if" is this! Where is the original? If he means the original manuscripts, he must know that they are irretrievably lost, supposing they ever existed. If he means the original text, he must know that there are thousands of different readings of various passages in the Hebrew and Greek. Surely, in the face of these facts, getting at the original is a huge joke.

Let us follow the reverend gentleman a step further. This is what he says:—

"Personally I have no hesitation in believing the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Of course, that does not apply to translations or to copies transmitted in dangerous circumstances through the many ages that have passed." But these translations are the only Bible the people have, and these copies are the only Bible the scholars have. There is absolutely no other. For the earliest manuscripts of the Old Testament belong to the ninth century, and the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament to the fourth century—more than three hundred years after the death of Christ. What is the use, then, of talking about "verbal inspiration" if it does not apply to the documents which exist, but only to documents that are supposed to have perished long ago in the stream of time?

The common garden Christian holds up his Bible, the only Bible he knows, the English Bible, and asks whether it is inspired? "Yes," reply the Higher Critics, "it is inspired in a general way; here a little, and there a little, and sometimes not at all; it is not inspired in detail, but it is inspired wholesale." And the poor common garden Christian looks flummoxed. But in rushes Mr. Webb-Peploe. "Stay," he cries, "the Bible is inspired in a better sense than that; every word of it is inspired." Whereat the poor common garden Christian looks relieved. "Ah," he says, "I thought so; this blessed book is inspired from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation. I'm so glad I met this reverend gentleman. He has given me peace of mind." But this is not the end of the chapter. Mr. Webb-Peploe puts in a qualification. "Wait a minute," he cries, "you slightly misunderstand me. I don't mean that the Bible you hold in your hand, the English Bible, is inspired in every word. Oh dear no! Nobody can quite say that I mean that the original Bible is inspired in every word—the Greek of the New Testament and the Hebrew of the Old Testament." "Hebrew did you say?" exclaims the poor common garden Christian; "What, must I learn Yiddish? My God, I'm lost." And he weeps, refusing to be comforted.

After the Rev. H. W. Webb-Peploe comes Dr. Campbell Morgan—the much-photographed gentleman, who has to sustain his massive, genius-stocked brain with his lifted right hand. This gentleman is rather more cautious. He is sure that the Bible is inspired, but he does not quite understand the meaning of inspiration. He stands for the divinity of the whole of the Old Testament, but refuses to be bound by any man's interpretation of it—not even his own. Which is pretty safe hedging. Nor does Mr. Campbell Morgan commit himself definitely in another direction. He declares that he "believes to be literally true" at least "half the supernatural stories which are now being discredited." But he prudently refrains from specifying one of them. Finally, he urges that "The attitude that men take up towards the Scriptures is being determined, and must be determined, by their attitude towards Christ." By which he appears to mean that if Christ was not an ignorant man, but an omniscient God revealed in human form, we must

believe that "he was infallible in all that he said," and consequently that we have his testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and to the historical truth of such stories as those of Jonah and the whale and Lot's wife. But this point has been dealt with by the Higher Critics. Dr. Campbell Morgan's difficulty is not a new one. Moreover, he falls into a pit which the Higher Critics skilfully avoid. They are not such fools (we speak of their heads, having nothing to do with the rest of their machinery) as to stand or fall, and make their Savior stand or fall, by the literal truth of ridiculous yarns about a missionary taking a three days' trip inside a whale, and a woman being suddenly turned into a statue of rock salt. And they are really wiser in their generation than reverend gentlemen like Mr. Webb-Peploe and Dr. Campbell Morgan. They prefer to let Christianity bend. They do not want to let it break. They cannot afford it. Neither can the other gentlemen—if they could only see it.

The second brace of men of God captured by the *Daily Chronicle* were Dr. Guinness Rogers and the Rev. Silas Hocking. Dr. Rogers rejects the verbal inspiration of the Bible and scorns the idea that any man's salvation is in any way dependent upon his view of the Book of Genesis. "I hold," he says, "that the Catholic faith is summed up in one article, and that is Christ." To which we will only say "Christ!" Mr. Hocking, who is a novelist as well as a preacher, and may therefore be supposed to sympathise with the Bible fictionists, takes a limited view of Bible inspiration. God, in a certain way, inspired the Old Testament writers, but they made lots of mistakes on their own account. Perhaps we should put it in this way—and we make Christian apologists a present of the idea: sometimes the volt power was high, sometimes it was low, and sometimes the current went off altogether. And the result was that the writers sometimes said horrible things about God, representing him as ordering bloodshed and cruelty. Mr. Hocking says that they were "clearly mistaken." "It is unthinkable to-day," he adds, "that God would command any individual or any number of individuals to go out and murder helpless women and children." Yes, it is unthinkable; but the change is due to persistent Freethought criticism. As recently as twenty years ago it was a common argument that the people whom the Jews exterminated were too wicked to be allowed to live. This argument is still used in the lower circles of Christian Evidence; though the obvious reply to it is that the wickedness of those murdered people is based entirely upon the word of those who murdered them and took possession of their property.

"Some portions of the Bible," Mr. Hocking says, "I regard as of no value at all, either ethically or religiously." No minister of religion would have said that fifty years ago. Freethinkers said it then, and many of them paid the penalty of being in advance of their age. Now the leading Christians have caught them up—and fancy themselves pioneers!

Mr. Hocking would clear some portions of the Bible right out of it. Take the Song of Solomon. "Personally," he says, "I do not think it has any right to be in the sacred canon. It is an Oriental love-song at best." Well, what of that? Is not a love-song at least as good as tales of slaughter? It is the Christians, apparently, and not the "infidels," who want to relieve the Bible of its poetry. Amidst the stories of brutal lust and wanton bloodshed, it is good to come across a simple human story—however highly colored here and there, in Oriental fashion—of a beautiful peasant girl who remains faithful to her peasant lover in spite of the wooing of a mighty king. Yes, there is true poetry in the Song of Solomon; and the rendering of the Authorised Version is superb. "I sleep, but my heart waketh" is worthy of a great poet. We suspect it is worth more than all those parts of the Bible which Mr. Hocking values "ethically or religiously" put together.

That tremendously swelled-head person, the Rev. Dr. Horton, who has worked himself into a belief that he was inspired to write his last book, makes his little contribution to the *Daily Chronicle* "symposium" on the Bible. He looks forward to the time when the "principles of criticism which have dealt hitherto mainly with the Old Testament must be applied to the New Testament also." But he has no more fear for the New Testament than he has for the sun in the heavens. Very likely. But even if he had any fear he would not admit it, so what is the use of his talking? Everybody knows what he would say on such a point.

Dr. Horton goes on to say that "no critical theories of the New Testament narratives can ever obscure the person and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh yes they can. They can show that everything in his story is legendary or mythical, and that his teaching no more

belongs to him personally than do the incidents of his career. Dr. Horton's boastings are inspired by Dutch courage. He is playing a game of brag.

The *Daily Chronicle* has a "Saturday Pulpit," and all sorts of men of God drone from it. The last was the Rev. J. C. Greenbough, who wrote on "Nonconformity's Influence over English Village Life." Incidentally he made a very unfortunate admission in regard to the overlapping of denominations. "Each religious body," he said, "has been eager, sometimes too eager, to be represented in places where there was no pressing call for it. And it is no uncommon thing to find four or six chapels, and even more, where there is hardly population sufficient to justify the existence of more than one." We have noted this sort of thing ourselves. It is really the rivalry amongst these various denominations that keeps them going. Remove that rivalry and religion will sink into a very jog-trot affair.

Robert Burns's family Bible was sold at Sotheby's on Saturday, December 10. It contained entries of the births of himself, his wife, and his children in the poet's own handwriting. Mr. Quaritch bought this "treasure" for £1,560. The Bible itself was worth perhaps twopence. Its connection with Burns gave it the other £1,559 19s. 10d. value. So the Bibliolators need not boast.

A man called John Daniels is alleged to have tried to travel in South Africa with a ticket "on the spiritual railway from the sins of earth to the heavenly mansions. Fare, nothing to pay." He forgot that the heavenly mansions have to be reached by balloon.

Evan Roberts, the young Welsh revivalist, who has deserted five shillings a day in the pit for a better job, has "visions" and what Mr. Stead called "tips from heaven." He says that he is convinced by "vision" that the revival will now spread to England, and thence all over the world. A large order! These soul-savers soon get swelled heads.

How the dealers in religion are bustling up to do the best business they can over the Welsh revival. Booth is naturally the first in the field. The Grand Old Showman never lets anybody get in front of him. Even the Rev. F. B. Meyer, who is sorry he cannot go to Wales personally at present, has sent down "one of his workers, Sergeant Grout." Who on earth is Sergeant Grout. Is Meyer running a little Salvation Army on his own?

With regard to the Welsh revival, the *Daily News* correspondent says that "the merely ethical aspects of the movement are incontestable. Billiard tables are deserted." That is the only illustration given. We suppose, therefore, that, according to the Nonconformist conscience, a game of billiards is a deadly sin.

Other things besides billiard tables are deserted. Homes are deserted while women attend day and night prayer-meetings. Work is deserted while men riot in religious excitement. It is simply a form of intoxication.

The *Daily Telegraph* feels free to speak plainly of religious revivalism as far away as Wales. "One of the certain results of all this," it says, "will be a distinct increase in the Welsh lunacy statistics." It also remarks that, in these cases, when the religious frenzy has cooled down, it "is usually found that people remain much the same as before."

Tolstoi is true to his colors. He does not welcome the demand for constitutional government in Russia. The only real reform, he declares, must come "through a religious and moral regeneration of individuals." He has hold of one side of the truth, but he does not see how important the other is. Christianity blinds him.

Rev. R. Meddings, vicar of St. Andrew's, Grimsby, is a very particular gentleman. He raised a conscientious objection to the distribution of Christmas hot-pots to the poor, on the ground that Christmas day this year falls on a Sabbath. The Mayor smilingly offered to take the consequences of this "desecration" himself.

"May the Lord have mercy on my soul" wrote John Douglass, bricklayer, of Gateshead, before murdering his imbecile crippled son and then hanging himself. He was not an Atheist, anyway.

We are informed that Francis William Griffin, agent, who has just been sentenced at Bristol Assizes to five years' penal servitude, was a deacon of Broadmead Baptist Chapel.

Not much hangs upon that fact, of course; but what a clatter the religious press would have made if he had been on the committee of a Secular Society!

"Nowadays," *Reynolds*' says, "the only true Christians and Humanitarians seem to be the Secularists." One half of this complaint is accepted with thanks. The other half is returned without thanks. We beg to assure *Reynolds*' that no sincere Freethinker feels flattered by being called a Christian.

"I am very much impressed," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "with the power and responsibility of the human race, and with the *management of this planet*, which seems to be given to it so that things will not improve unless we improve." The italics are ours, although the fact that Sir Oliver is pleased to express to God Almighty his pleasure at the way he manages things ought to be emphasised. There ought to be joy in heaven over a testimonial from so high a quarter. We sincerely hope that the Lord will take it as it is meant, in a kindly spirit, and so overlook the very poor nature of the reasoning therein. "Things" obviously mean human affairs, for other "things" are not affected by our conduct one way or the other. So that Sir Oliver is really saying, "It is a proof of Divine Wisdom that we do not improve unless—we improve." And one wonders how on earth we could improve if we got worse. There was once a clergyman who thanked God that death came at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. Sir Oliver and he are evidently kindred spirits.

A. E. Clarke, editor of the "Old Paths" Series, writes to the Portsmouth *Evening News* on "The Rationalistic Portent of the Churches." This gentleman has an eye on the enemy within the gates. "Infidels like Foote and Blatchford," he says, "rejoice in the work of men like Canon Hensley Henson and R. J. Campbell as heralding the disappearance of the supernatural Christ."

Dr. Clifford, speaking at Leeds in favor of Disestablishment, according to the *Daily Chronicle* report, "denied that the object of the Liberationists was to desecrate the State and to secularise it." We are glad to hear the reverend gentleman telling the plain truth now and then. He and his Free Church friends have an ecclesiastical quarrel with the Church of England. That is the secret of all their Liberation efforts, and of all their complaints against the new Education Act. They want to see the State Church disestablished, but they do not want a secularised State. They want a worse form of Established Religion than that which at present exists. They want to control religious education in the nation's schools, they want every other privilege the law can allow them without direct Establishment, and they want, in addition, to work for their special interests through the medium of political organisations. For this reason a good many Freethinkers are in no hurry over Disestablishment. King Log is not worth getting rid of for the sake of King Stork.

"Resist not evil," said Jesus Christ. But the vicar of Arreton, a village in the Isle of Wight, is of a different opinion; perhaps not in church, but certainly in his own house. There was a strange head under the table in his dining-room, and he went for it with a poker. Presently the head, streaming with blood, made off with the body and limbs behind it. "If one smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also," reads very well on Sundays. On other days in the week the vicar of Arreton says, "Get in the first blow—with the poker."

Under the "Acid Drops" heading in the *Freethinker* of November we devoted two paragraphs to the report in the *Rosendale Free Press* of a sermon preached in Goodshaw Baptist Church by the Rev. J. E. Ramsden. We have since received a letter (dated Dec. 5) from the reverend gentleman which is evidently meant to be very sarcastic. He tells us, amongst other things, that the writer of "Acid Drops" is "a dead failure as a funny man." Well, we are not going to discuss the point; *de gustibus*—but the proverb is somewhat musty. We will venture to suggest, however, that Mr. Ramsden may not be the best judge in the world of "fun" at his own expense.

Mr. Ramsden refers to the "spare material" we had to go upon, and he says other things which imply that the *Rosendale Free Press* report was not only brief but inaccurate. This may be quite true; for the average reporter is not an expert in theological controversy. Still, it seems to us that the reverend gentleman should address his complaint to the local editor, instead of trying to be sarcastic with us, and, not being able to keep it up, to scold us about our "literary buffoonery and flippancies."

Mr. Ramsden favors us with a copy of a later discourse of his, delivered on November 13, and begs us, if we have "anything at all to say, to say *something*"—which we take as a lesson in wit for the writer of "Acid Drops." This discourse is on "Modern Unbelief." Turning over its pages we caught sight of our own name, and we will say "something" about the passage in which it occurs. But first for the passage itself; here it is word for word:—

"G. W. Foote, in the *Freethinker* of November 6th. quoted with approbation the story of the two Greek youths who yoked themselves like a pair of oxen, and dragged the car in which their mother sat to the feast of Hera. The gods were so pleased with their devotion that they bestowed upon them the best reward in their power to give—that was death—total oblivion and nothingness. I have looked in vain in the columns of this week's papers to see the account of the suicide of G. W. Foote, the editor of the *Freethinker*. For if death is the highest of rewards, it is clearly inconsistent not to embrace the first opportunity of meeting it, while to marry and propagate the miserable species is to multiply misery. I can only conclude that he hasn't the courage of his convictions, or that his so-called convictions are only for public placard purposes, and of no practical use or value."

Now this may be very witty, and we dare say the last sentence is a striking lesson in good manners. But the whole passage is vitiated by its essential inaccuracy. G. W. Foote did *not* express "approbation" of that Greek story. G. W. Foote did not even *quote* it. It occurred in an address by Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, which we reprinted (with due acknowledgment) from the *Liberal Review*, of that city. Neither did Mr. Mangasarian quote the story "with approbation." He gave it as an illustration, to show that modern European pessimism was, after all, an echo of ancient thought. He was no more *responsible* for it than Robert Browning was responsible for the similar idea which he worked up in his noble poem "Pheidippides." Indeed, if Mr. Ramsden had taken the trouble to *read* the article, he would have seen that Mr. Mangasarian's own ideal was not pessimism at all, but "Work and Thought and Love."

Probably our readers will agree with us that this wonderful sample of Mr. Ramsden's accuracy is sufficient to excuse us from following him in any further detail. We believe Mr. Ramsden is a young man. We have room for hope, therefore, that he will do better in future.

Mr. George Harwood, M.P., delivered one of the Sunday afternoon lectures at the Central Hall, Oldham-street, Manchester, by which it is sought to settle the lash of modern "infidelity." Most of the lecturers have been men of God, and perhaps it was thought that an M.P. would be a change; or it may have been thought that as Mr. Harwood was once a man of God himself he was still eligible for one of these discourses. According to the *City News* his address was "strikingly suggestive." Perhaps it was; but suggestive of what? To us it is suggestive of thimble-rigging. The honorable gentleman started by saying that husbands and wives, parents and children, had really never seen each other, and never would. No doubt this is true enough on the "spirit" theory, but it is absurd from the point of view of common sense, and people would all laugh at it if it were not offered to them in the sacred name of religion. Mr. Harwood's argument, of course, was that, as we cannot see each other, we must not expect to see God. But this argument, even if sound, is merely negative; it does not positively bring us any nearer to an actual Deity. Nor does Mr. Harwood advance his cause by talking absolute nonsense about Atheists. "I have never in my life," he said, "met an Atheist. I have met people who think they are Atheists." Which can only mean that Atheists do not know their own minds, and that Mr. Harwood knows them better than they know themselves. And such impertinent rubbish as this is applauded by orthodox audiences!

Mr. Harwood could easily find as many real Atheists as he might desire to see in Manchester. If he preferred to make investigations in London we could introduce him to plenty. He might start with Mr. G. W. Foote, whose Atheism is hardly open to question, and who has paid the penalty of being a militant one by spending twelve months of his life in a Christian prison under the infamous "Blasphemy" laws. Mr. Foote's able and loyal colleague, Mr. C. Cohen, might come next; half-an-hour with him would convince Mr. Harwood that there *are* Atheists about. Mr. John Lloyd might also be interviewed. Having given up a good position and good prospects (as the world reckons them) in the Christian Church for the difficult and unprofitable work of a Secular advocate, he should easily satisfy Mr. Harwood that real Atheists are something more than a dream. That is, if Mr. Harwood *wants* to be satisfied. But does he? We have our doubts.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, December 18, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30, "The Virgin Birth of Christ."

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road Leyton.—December 18, Forest Gate.
- J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 22, Birmingham. February 12, Leicester.
- A. D. CORRICK.—Pleased to hear that you "followed with closest attention and enjoyed very much" our first lecture at Queen's Hall. You ask us whether we can see our way to write on "the question of praise and blame in relation to the Determinist position." We intend to do so shortly. With regard to the Josephus passage, the real difficulty is to find any reputable scholar who defends it. The question is no longer in dispute. That is why declarations about it are not now to be expected.
- F. DANIELS.—(1) We can only repeat that we *know* nothing about eternity, but if we *must* have an opinion we should prefer to believe in the eternity of the universe of which we know something rather than in that of its alleged Creator of whom we know nothing. In other words, infinite extension from *some-where* is more intelligible than infinite extension from nowhere. (2) We do not regard matter and force as two entities, any more than we regard a man and his power as two entities. Epigrammatically, we may say that force is the activity of matter, and matter is the substance of force. They are ultimately one. (3) We repeat that everybody has a sufficient practical conception of time and space. When you come to definitions the trouble begins; you get blinded with the dust of metaphysics. The same happens if you try to define (say) *love*. Suppose you call it "a strong affection between two conscious beings." Does that make it any clearer? And if you define *time* as "duration, continuity or succession of existence," does that make it any clearer?
- JOSEPH CLOSE writes: "I notice a Freethinker has read your journal for fifteen years, and awaits its appearance anxiously every week. Well, I have read it since I heard you lecture in Sunderland in March, 1884, and feel like a fish out of water if it does not make its appearance in my house every Thursday morning." This correspondent is thanked for the names and addresses he has sent to our publishing office; also for sending last week's *Freethinker* to a party he mentions.
- W. JONES.—Thanks for cuttings.
- MANCHESTER FREETHINKER.—We should have been pleased to insert a "Sugar Plum" calling special attention to Mr. John Lloyd's visit to Manchester last Sunday, but no one thought it worth while to send us a reminder, and we really cannot make bricks without clay. We only see the proof of the week's "Lecture Notices" when all the other pages of the *Freethinker* are ready for the press.
- F. S.—We are obliged for cuttings, which were too late for last week's issue, but have been useful this week.
- NORTH BRITISH FREETHINKER.—It is, as you say, a very odd idea that transferring a Freethinker from one Freethought Society to another is Freethought progress. Real progress consists in making fresh Freethinkers, but that is a harder work, requiring higher gifts.
- T. ROBERTSON.—Delighted to hear such a good report from Glasgow. You have a good body of stalwarts there, and a strong working committee, but much of the success is owing to your own efforts, which you perform so unobtrusively. There is a Russian professor in Paris who talks about the coming invention of comparative immortality. We wish he would hurry up his invention, if only to secure your longevity.
- E. PURCHES.—Thanks for cuttings. The "sickness" you kindly enquire about was Mrs. Foote's, who was in bed a fortnight and suffered a great deal, but is now up and mending.
- ALERT.—(1) The *Freethinker* motto, in the issue dated November 13, which you think one of the finest sentences you ever read, is the tenth Aphorism (first Book) of Bacon's *Novum Organum*. The translation is Wood's, included in the "Bohn's Library" volume of "The Physical and Metaphysical Works of Lord Bacon." (2) There are many editions of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The one in seven volumes at 3s. 6d. each, recently edited by Professor Bury, is perhaps the best you can get, if you can afford it. A cheap edition, at 1s. per volume, is now being published by Grant Richard. (3) There is no English edition of Lucian's Works except the one translated some hundred and forty years ago by Franklin and others. There are excellent French editions of Lucian.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks once more for your valued cuttings.
- W. P. PEARSON.—We hope you will have good meetings to-day at Liverpool.
- W. H. HOWARD NASH.—We cannot answer questions arising out of Mr. Lloyd's article in another journal—even though you have, as you say, written to that journal in vain. Why not write to Mr. Lloyd direct? No doubt you would get a courteous reply.
- J. R. WEBLEY.—We do not *know* who the parties are, but we can give a shrewd *guess*. Very glad to see your handwriting again, and to note that you keep so cheerful. Will try to call upon you one of these days.
- H. MARCHANT.—Order passed over into the proper hands.

W. BINDON.—Bradlaugh did not have "a warm place in his heart for Spinoza's God." Bradlaugh admired Spinoza, but was himself an Atheist, and believed that Spinoza's Pantheism was really Atheism.

SEVERAL Freethinkers have called at our office with press cuttings relating to the case of a young woman sentenced on Monday at the Old Bailey to nine months' imprisonment for forgery: in connection with which case a certain "Hyde Park lecturer" was mentioned by the police. We have no personal acquaintance with this lecturer, and he never has been connected with the N. S. S.

S. PEMBERTON.—Roman Catholics, all over the world, number about 150,000,000. Buddhists number more than 500,000,000.

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 delivers the last of the present Queen's Hall course of lectures this evening (Dec. 18). His subject will be seasonable—"The Virgin Birth of Christ." It is not only seasonable, but the theme of much discussion *inside* the Christian fold to-day. The hall ought to be crowded on this occasion. Freethinkers should try to bring along some of their more orthodox friends. There are *free seats*; in fact, *all* are free with the exception of a few reserved front seats at one shilling.

A great many questions were asked after Mr. Foote's lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening. Some were asked aloud; others were handed up in writing. One of the latter was from a school-teacher, under the London County Council, who asked how he could possibly help being a hypocrite under the present system (connived at by Dr. Clifford and the other Nonconformist leaders), when he had to teach what he did not himself believe. Mr. Foote replied that he could not judge another man in such circumstances. It seemed to him that, unless the unbelieving teachers could take concerted action, the individual teacher might do best by stopping where he was and trying to liberalise the children's minds as much as possible. After the lecture another school-teacher told Mr. Foote that in *his* school, amongst eight teachers, no less than six were Freethinkers, who hated the task imposed upon them by Dr. Clifford and his like.

One gentleman asked why simple people should be robbed of the consolation which religion gave them in their misery. Mr. Foote replied that the consolation *kept them* in their misery: an observation which was loudly applauded.

Mr. Cohen's evening lecture at Liverpool on Sunday brought up a stock Christian opponent, who asked that Christianity should be judged by its fruit. Mr. Cohen obliged him with an eloquent reply on these lines, which was greeted with loud and prolonged applause.

Liverpool "saints" should turn up in strong force at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, to-day (Dec. 18). There will be free admission in the afternoon and a charge for admission in the evening. The takings on both occasions will be a kind of "benefit" for Mr. H. Percy Ward, organiser and lecturer to the local N. S. S. Branch. Mr. Ward, of course, will be the lecturer on both occasions.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's *Brimstone Ballads* includes a large number of pieces that were first published in the *Freethinker*. It will interest some of our readers, at any rate, to hear that Mr. Mackenzie's wicked volume is much appre-

ciated as far away as the Falkland Islands—about four hundred miles north-east of Cape Horn. A gentleman who stayed at the principal hotel in Port Stanley was told by the proprietor: "There's a book in the bar that will probably interest you; every one who comes into the bar reads it, and I believe every one in Port Stanley has it nearly by heart." It was a copy of *Brimstone Ballads*. The proprietors had sent to London for it when it came out.

Rev. Stewart D. Headlam has always been theoretically in favor of Secular Education. Originally, indeed, he won his seat on the London School Board on that policy; but afterwards, in what we have always regarded as one of those moments of weakness that overtake the best of men, he accepted the so-called Progressive ticket, which included religious teaching based upon the Bible. We are glad to see, however, that Mr. Headlam is once more acting upon the good old lines. He is perhaps the leading spirit in the Guild of St. Matthew—an association of Church clergymen—and is therefore a party to the Guild's election manifesto to the "Christian People of England"; in fact, he has signed it, with the Rev. Conrad Noel, on the Guild's behalf. The following paragraph relates to the Education question:—

"We have always maintained that there is only one fair solution, namely, that the State should do its work and the religious bodies theirs. Secular schooling, absolutely under the control of the State and municipality, supplemented by the teaching of the Catholic faith as part of the Church life and home life, and not at the expense of the community, is our claim; and the most acute observers of all shades of thought are beginning to see that our policy is the only one which will give the country educational peace."

Here are Church clergymen upholding logic and justice. How many Nonconformist ministers are doing the same thing?

Mr. Sidney Lee, in his newly published *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century*, says that Kit Marlowe and Sir Walter Raleigh "debated together the evidences of Christianity, and reached the perilous conclusion that they were founded on sand." Whereupon the editor of the *Academy* says: "Surely this is mere prejudiced gossip?" But why? We do not know what source of information Mr. Lee relies upon for the first half of his statement. For the second half he has ample evidence. The Atheism of Marlowe was evidently a matter of common notoriety, and Raleigh's scepticism was so well-known privately that the taunt of "thou Atheist" was hurled at him during his trial for treason. Surely there is something very belated about Mr. Teignmouth Shore's "surely."

We see a report in the English papers that M. Celestin Demblon, whom we had the pleasure of meeting at Rome, and who was mentioned with much appreciation in our Congress Notes, has "deserted Belgian politics for the stage." We referred to the fact that he was an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare, and had translated *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* into French. Report says that he is going to appear as Macbeth.

The Glasgow N. S. S. Branch is still on the flowing tide of prosperity. All the special lecturers during the present season have had overflowing meetings, and we are informed that fully £300 stands to the credit of the Endowment Fund. This Fund is one to which the Branch is seriously applying itself, with a view to providing more commodious premises in the near future. Not that the Branch is in any way limiting expenditure on necessary work; on the contrary, a considerable sum has been spent upon literature, and efforts are being made to promote the movement by means of lectures in the local townships.

Glasgow "saints" should give a hearty welcome to Mr. G. Scott, who makes his *debut* this evening (Dec. 18) on the Freethought platform in the Secular Hall. Mr. Scott is described to us by one who should know as "a clever young speaker." He has lately been contributing articles to the *Freethinker*, from which we are quite prepared to hear that he is "a well-informed and creditable advocate." His subject is appropriate and should be attractive—"Why I Left the Church of Rome." In honor of the occasion the orchestra will render a selection of high-class music from to 6.45.

We call attention once more to the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive, which is to take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday, January 10. Mr. G. W. Foote will occupy the chair, and will be supported by Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. J. Lloyd, Mr. Victor Roger, Mr. F. Davies, and other well-known Secularists. After the dinner, which is sure to be a good one, there will

be some brief speeches to appropriate toasts, and some first-rate vocal and instrumental music; all of which is included in the price of the ticket, which is only four shillings.

Several provincial friends have intimated their intention of being present at the Annual Dinner. All the London "saints" will be delighted to see them; they will have a very hearty welcome, and the more the merrier.

Arrangements will be made, if possible, in the new year for a monthly social gathering of London Freethinkers; not a dinner, of course, but something more modest and inexpensive. We hope a more definite announcement may be made on the evening of the Annual Dinner. In the meanwhile, those who have suggestions to make, or who happen to know of really suitable places for such a function, should communicate with the N.S.S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

Friends of the *Freethinker* are once more reminded of the fact that we are willing to post a weekly copy to any addresses they will kindly send us of persons who are likely to be interested in such a journal. A great many persons would become subscribers to the *Freethinker* if they only knew of it. And where persons have some liberality to start with a journal like the *Freethinker* will frequently become, after half-a-dozen copies have been read, a very welcome weekly visitor.

The following is a very interesting extract from a letter by "An Ex-Catholic" in the *Birkenhead and Cheshire Advertiser* (Dec. 7):—

"Like all others I was born an Infidel, but the day after birth two persons called god-parents took me to a priest who pretended to cast the devil out of me. Then these god-parents told the priest a lot of lies about me, saying I believed in each and every tenet of the Church of Rome. Just think of believing anything at all at the age of one day! However, the priest, though aware of these lies, proceeded to wet my pate with some drops of water and to enter me in his book as Baptizatus (dipped), though I had not been dipped in any sort of liquid. In pursuance of this function the religion of Rome was industriously drilled into me at home as early as I could understand anything, then at school and at college. At twenty-one years of age I was a divine, and when I had become an expert at divining I was made a priest, and thenceforward continued for years to serve at the altars of the Roman Church and to interpret her oracles on all matters incomprehensible and unknown. But at length the days of my simplicity came to an end. Study, observation, and reflection, gradually opened my eyes and brought me to the conviction that the Church of Rome is not divine, but human, in her origin, and has evolved by a natural process; that her doctrines are not true, her practices burthensome and her influence baneful. Up to my fiftieth year I had thought, like Mr. Gabrielson, that I held the truth; but, on examination, the truth turned out an illusion. The results of these conclusions was my exitus from the Church I had served for thirty years. Let me add that this severance was accomplished not only without pain, but with sensible pleasure and relief; nor have I these last ten years the least craving after religious creed or rites."

We happen to know the writer of this letter, and can vouch for its being a genuine case.

We are glad to see that the management of the Rowton House at Birmingham has refused all applications from ministers to hold religious services there. It was desired to make the inmates feel that they were free, and that the place was their home; and it was feared that "the controversial subject of religion" would put an end to all harmony.

A NEW VERSION.—Jennie was telling her parents of her first day's experiences in school. "Were you interested in what your teacher told you?" asked her mother. "Oh, yes," replied the young scholar. "Teacher gave us such nice proverbs to learn. 'What were they? Can you remember any?'" Jennie thought a moment. "I'm afraid I can only remember one," she said. "And what was that?" "Teacher says that God always provides the wind for the shorn lamb."

Chicago is not regarded by the rest of America as a pleasant place of residence. This story of the Chicago man who died and found himself in another world will illustrate the common view. He was walking about, looking like a stranger, when a fellow-countryman noticed him, linked an arm, and said, "Well, sonny, how are you making out?" "Oh! it's bully," said the Chicago man. "Heaven is a darned sight better than Chicago." "Heaven!" exclaimed his companion. "This ain't Heaven!"

The Welsh Frenzy.

THIS deplorable religious craze, of which we have read so much latterly, is like the "Phrygian Frenzy," a revival excitement in early Christian times, which the Church had to smother with a relentless hand, so great was the mischief wrought. Then, as now in Wales, the demon of disorder and religious insanity possessed believers, and men, women, and children went howling about, roused to fearful terrors and excesses by the revivalists of that time, or, fancying that a new Pentecost had come, imagined that "the mighty power of the Holy Ghost" had descended on them.

Crowds pack the Welsh chapels, and those who cannot get in gather outside in the snow and bitter cold, and on bleak mountain sides, "to confess their sins," while the chill stars look coldly down on their insensate folly. Some become raving lunatics and have to be properly dealt with; hosts of young people fill the penitential benches bewailing their misdeeds, as well they may, for the standard of morality is said to be a very loose and low one in Wales; while the young evangelist, Evan Roberts, adjusts his blue silk tie and unconsciously fingers his red silk handkerchief, as the papers report, and seems as mad as his deluded followers and victims.

Ministers, we read, "have gone to be warmed at his Welsh fire," their ordinary religion not being fervent enough. Ardors of sensual as well as spiritual heat are kindled at these revivals, as at all others, for sexuality and sanctity are often intimate companions, and work side by side, as they always have done. Many souls have been "saved"—possibly—but probably many more have been created. "With Jesus to love me, all will be well," the miners sing on the Taff Valley trains, but their thoughts and desires are for other arms than his to be "safe" in, and no doubt they find them. It is only the old story over again; extreme religious excitement lapsing into erotic excesses.

But the Welsh Frenzy goes back to the Day of Pentecost for its origin, and the myth of the "cloven tongues" for its pretensions. And all through Christian history, in all its developments, this "outpouring of the Spirit" has been attended with numberless evils. To be "converted," to have "a new heart," to "receive the Holy Ghost," all these have caused numberless delusions, errors, and sometimes crimes. Every Christian sect pretends to confer this divine power, highly concentrated in bishops and such, or in priestly and ministerial acts, or diffused as a gaseous, volatile essence in all revivals like this in Wales.

But the true holy spirit is "the holy spirit of man," whose power is felt on earth. That "blessed unction" does not need to proceed from above, but is "comfort, help, and fire of love," communicated among all the good, the true, the loving, here and now. Better than all conversion antics and revivalist appeals, better than all "confessions of sin," higher than all religious superstitions, purer and deeper than the imagined effusions of any "Holy Ghost," is the true, free, loving spirit of Humanity.

GERALD GREY.

Creation.—III.

AN OPEN LETTER TO A BISHOP.

FROM metaphysical arguments, my lord, I turn to what you say on Design. "The argument from design," you allege, "is, in fact, one of the foundation stones of natural theology, and remains unshaken." But I doubt if you really mean this, for if the argument is "unshaken" it is difficult to see what induced you to support it afresh. "Helps to Belief" is a title which implies that belief is enfeebled.

You have the sense to drop Paley's preposterous illustration of the watch, and you dilate upon the

human eye, which is an optical instrument so "delicate and complicated" that it must be held to "indicate design," and to deny it is "something like an absurdity." Again, my lord, I say you are begging the question. However delicate and complicated an organ may be, if we discover how it became so we have explained it; and if the process, at every stage, has shown nothing but the action of natural causes, what necessity is there for a supernatural hypothesis? When Napoleon said to Laplace that his system left no room for God, the great astronomer replied, "Sire, I have no need for that hypothesis." The law of parsimony forbids the assumption of occult causes when known causes are adequate to account for the phenomena.

Now, my lord, it is indisputable, and you are well aware of the fact, that the human eye did not spring into existence suddenly. We are able to trace the evolution of this organ down to its beginnings in low forms of life, where it is but a local susceptibility to the stimulus of light. To this you reply that the result is no "less ingenious or an indication of design, because you can trace the process by which the result is attained." The ingenuity, my lord, is not in the result, but in the process. You must find it there or not at all. You seem to admit Natural Selection as an established truth, but is it not incompatible with Design, except in that universal sense in which Design can only be an assumption? If adaptation can be explained as a result, without introducing design as a cause, theology has nothing to gain by pointing to any organ, however exquisitely developed. And if Natural Selection involves, as it does, the elimination by wholesale massacre and torture of countless unfit specimens, does not this conflict with all our notions of the wise use of materials and the intelligent adjustment of means to an end?

There is also, my lord, an aspect of the case which you prudently conceal. According to your theory, God has been making eyes for hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of years. How is it, then, after such long and extensive practice, that he produces so many failures? How do you account for short-sighted eyes, and even blind eyes? What is your explanation of ophthalmic hospitals? Would not any human workman be laughed at who turned out such multitudes of mistakes?

You declare, my lord, in the language of Paley, that "a man cannot lift his hand to his head without finding enough to convince him of the existence of God." In a certain sense the remark may be true. Should the head be dirty, the man might find one of those objects which satisfied the magicians of Egypt that Moses and Aaron were inspired, and induced them to exclaim, "this is the finger of God."

For the purpose of your case you dwell upon the greatness of man. Your language savors more of the platform than the pulpit. Century after century your Church has taught the doctrine of the Fall, and man's utter depravity. You, however, speak of his "front sublime," which, if the human race be taken as a whole, is positively absurd; you speak of his "grand powers," which are difficult to find in a savage who can only count three; and of his "exalted instincts," which are not discoverable in countless millions of mankind. Thus you praise "God's handiwork" to prove his wisdom and beneficence; while, in the pulpit, you go to the other extreme to prove the doctrine of original sin.

Pursuing the Design argument, you point to "the truth" that "every arrangement in a plant or animal accomplishes some definite end." What then, you ask, is "the justifiable conclusion as to the origin of the organism? Is it not this, that the organ is the outcome of a creative mind?"

Supposing the statement to be true, your conclusion is not a necessary one. In the struggle for existence the superfluous is harmful, and its possessors would tend to extinction. In the long run also, as organs grow by use and atrophy from disuse, the useful organs would flourish and the useless decay and disappear. There is no magic in the process, and nothing magical in the result.

But your statement is not true. Man himself possesses rudimentary organs, which are of no service; they fulfil no function, being useless relics of a long anterior state. One of them, the vermiform appendage of the cæcum, has been known to harbor seeds, which have set up inflammation and caused death.

Man has a rudimentary tail; rudimentary muscles for moving the ears and the skin; rudimentary hair over the body; and rudimentary wisdom-teeth, which are a great nuisance, and a common cause of neuralgia. Through the law of inheritance, likewise, the generative and nutritive organs of one sex are partially transmitted to the other. Perhaps your lordship will be good enough to inform me what "definite end" is served by the rudimentary mammæ in men?

You merely allude to these things, my lord, as "very exceptional cases," as though a theory need not cover all the facts. You even venture on the remark that "exceptions prove rules," which is not an admitted law in any system of logic I am acquainted with.

You also observe that these "exceptions" only raise "a plausible objection" to the Design argument. Haeckel considers them "a formidable obstacle," and I prefer his opinion to yours, especially when I watch your curious attempt to explain away "the plausible objection."

"A friend once presented me with a warm garment of exceedingly ingenious construction, and bade me wear it during the coming winter. I did so, and for some time I had two feelings with regard to the garment: one, that of admiration of the ingenuity of its construction; the other, that of gratitude to my friend for thinking of me and trying to keep me warm. But one day an observing neighbor, with a keen eye and much penetration, discovered a button which appeared to be of no use. I may say that the explanation of the button was that it was an essential part of a garment, somewhat like mine, and which my friend had originally intended to give me; but in the course of the construction he had determined to adopt a somewhat improved form, and so the tailor altered the pattern, but omitted to remove the button. My observing neighbor suspected that this was the case; for my own part I had no strong opinion on the subject. It seemed to me that, button or no button, the garment was admirably contrived, and that the kindness of the giver was beyond a doubt."

God then, my lord, forgets the buttons! It is a poor compliment to his omniscience. He decided to make things in one way, altered his mind, left in some of the old pattern through inadvertence, and hence the presence of rudimentary organs. How charming! How pretty it would be in a nursery book! Do you really mean it, my lord; and do you really see any analogy between the making of a coat and the growth of an organism?

Turning to the mental and moral aspects of the world, you are confronted, my lord, with the existence of evil. You are obliged to admit the presence of "phenomena which it seems difficult to reconcile with the most obvious notions of perfect benevolence." You allow that God "permits the existence of much which is evil," and you are ashamed to fall back upon the orthodox theory of Satan, who does all the harm while the Deity does all the good. Accepting evolution, at least up to the point of man's "soul," you must be perfectly aware that pain and misery are not on the surface of things but part of their very texture; and that Natural Selection acts through a struggle for existence which makes the earth a shambles. "Kill or be killed" is a strange rule of life for Beneficence to impress on its creation. You see this, my lord, and you have two ways of surmounting the difficulty.

First, you say that the abounding evil of this world is "inconsistent with certain conceptions which we have formed." It is to be presumed you mean that God's ways are not our ways. I concede the fact, my lord, but how is it to be reconciled with your theory? Why do you call the Deity "good" if

you mean that his goodness and ours are different "conceptions"? Can you expect me to worship a God whose beneficence has to be vindicated by arts which insult my understanding? Let me remind you of the memorable protest of Mr. Mill in his reply to Dean Mansel, whose footsteps you follow with a faltering tread. "I will call no being good," he said, "who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

Secondly, you suggest that God was hampered by unfavorable conditions. "Perhaps, if we knew all," you say, "we should know, as in our ignorance it may be permissible to guess, that the method of Creation actually used by the Creator was the only one possible in the nature of things." You say again that God is carrying out a purpose, and that he knows the best, or "perhaps the only way of doing it." You also surmise that "he was pleased to submit himself to limitations."

If the Deity submitted himself to limitations, who imposed them? If he had a choice, as your language implies, is he not responsible for the selection? Did he not create "the nature of things," and if it was unsuitable could he not create another "nature of things"? Can you conceive any limitations of Omnipotence? Is it possible to imagine Omniscience doing "the best in the circumstances"? You trust that "somehow things will come right at the last." But is not this the language of blind faith? Is it not also an admission that things are wrong at present?

I see no force in your remark that "he who does not believe in God does not get rid of the evil and sorrow." He may try to lessen them, my lord; and he gets rid of the belief in a monster. At the very worst "The grave's most holy peace is ever sure," and meanwhile it is a comfort to think that,

No Fiend with names divine
Made us and tortures us; if we must pine
It is to satiate no Being's gall.

In your opinion "Atheism is connected either with the excessive ingenuity of a subtle intellect, or with moral considerations of a perverse and morbid kind." I differ from you, my lord; but I allow that you have cleverly dressed up the old fiction that every Atheist is a fool or a rogue.

Atheists are not to be deceived by phrases. When you say that "life must have come from a fontal origin of life" you are only making a "mystery" more mysterious. When you say that "the egg contains a principle of life, which postulates a giver of life," you are once more begging the question.

You are an Evolutionist except at the beginning and the end. You assume that God created life, and you are loth to believe in the natural genesis of man. You remark that the "missing link" is "not to be found in any of the geological records of the past." How do you know that? The geological record is imperfect, and the preservation of "missing links" is not a natural necessity. Nor have geological investigations been made in any part of the world where the human race could have originated. You smile at Haeckel's belief that "the remains of our early progenitors are embedded in the depths of the Indian Ocean," and you remark that "an imaginary continent is, of course, not science, and does not really help us." The continent, however, is not so "imaginary." Certainly it is not so imaginary as the supernatural theories you introduce to account for what we do not understand, and to contradict what we do. Nor is it so imaginary as the "distinction" you find in Genesis between the life of man and the life of the lower animals. The Revised Version informs us that the "living soul" or "breath of life" was common to both.

The "soul" elicits one of your characteristic sentences. "Here," you say, "Science fails us altogether, Philosophy speaks with a doubtful accent, and Theology remains master of the field." True, my lord; theology is always master of the field of

ignorance, and where our knowledge ends our religion begins. What we know is Nature, what we do not know is God. Science is ever widening the circle of light in which we live and work, and on the border of darkness the theologian plies his trade, passing off as the voice of the Infinite the echo of his own babblings.

G. W. FOOTE.

Freethinkers and Friendship.*

When the sighing gentle shepherd went a-sueing
 "The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she,"
 And failed to fascinate her with his cooing,
 He meekly vowed he'd "lay him down an' dee."
 When "X," the modern lover, goes a-wooing,
 No sentimental twaddle twaddleth he:
 Should the lady to his pleading answer "No!"
 He founds a Matrimonial Bureau.

A HEALTH to "X."! A health and help-mate! Few sighing lovers can bear "the pangs of despis'd love" so lightly. Fewer have the pluck to demand that public conveniences be provided for the meeting and mating of men and women; although Equality of Opportunity to court is as reasonable a demand from a love-sick Secularist as Equality of Opportunity to work from the world-weary unemployed. I am with "X." The movement wants wiving.

Go seek a wife, and let a wife be sought,
 And let the man who seeketh be the seeker;
 And in his seeking let him nothing seek
 But wife! wife! wife! O for a wife, ye gods!

What a young man misses most in the Freethought movement is the society of women. And, until Secularists devote more attention to the social element, it is certain that women will never be attracted in large numbers to the movement. We cannot even retain those pioneer women who volunteer their services. The overpowering zeal for "the cause" which prompts them to offer their aid soon suffers from frost-bite. Only women natives of Greenland can withstand the temperature of Freethought circles. All others are starved out of the societies.

Through sheer lack of opportunity to cultivate the social side of life, many promising young Atheists—men as well as women—gradually develop a fine faculty for shirking their share in the work of religious reform. And this lapsing will continue so long as special attention is not given to the social side of our work. The Freethought movement suffers from social anæmia. It has abundance of brains, but lacks blood. The crimson element of life flows sluggishly in the veins of Freethinkers. We do not feel our life in every limb. The lighter and brighter side of life we neglect—to our own undoing. We take things too seriously. We feed the head and starve the heart of the movement. When will we learn that the affections are as much in need of cultivation as the intellect?

Love takes up the harp of life, but Indifference cuts the chords. So long as we are indifferent to all that interests and attracts the fair sex and the younger men, so long shall we have cause to lament the lack of the ladies' help.

They do these things better in the Churches. Ever with its finger on the pulse of the world, the Catholic Church, for instance, makes a special feature of catering to the social instincts of its young members. A visit to the League of the Cross clubs is a liberal education to the Freethinker who would learn how to strengthen his Society.

The lack of convenience for meeting and associating with people of their own way of thinking has been experienced by most Freethinkers. I have been hanging on to the skirts of the Freethought movement for thirteen years, and, to-day, can count upon my fingers the friends I have made in the movement during that time. This may be my own fault. We proud, romantic, melancholy Scots don't make friends readily. But I submit it is a question of opportunity rather than temperament.

I have no intention of assisting "X." to form a Matrimonial Bureau for Freethinkers; but I am with him in the desire for better opportunities for meeting and associating with Freethinkers of the sweeter sex. The encouraging light that lies in the frank, loyal eyes of warm-hearted, broad-minded women in sympathy with us is the most valuable asset we possess. Let us draw on this asset.

FRED. L. GREIG.

* See letter on "Freethinkers and Marriage," by "X.," in the *Freethinker* for December 4.

The Author of "The Elements."

DR. GEORGE DRYSDALE, author of *The Elements of Social Science*, died at Norwood, London, on November 19, in his seventy-eighth year. Born at Edinburgh, he was educated at the Academy of that city, and afterwards at Glasgow University. He studied medicine and graduated in that Faculty at Edinburgh. He practised as a physician for many years.

Dr. George Drysdale was a remarkable linguist, possessing a thorough knowledge of Latin and Greek, besides being conversant with Russian, French, German, and other modern tongues. He wrote and published many pamphlets on social and medical subjects, dealing, amongst others, with the Land Question, International Federation, Home Rule, the Extinction of Infectious Diseases, etc.

It is, however, as the author of *The Elements of Social Science* that Dr. George Drysdale will be chiefly remembered. That well-known work was first published in December, 1854, by Mr. Edward Truelove. "Had it not been from the fear of causing pain to a relation," he wrote in the preface, "I should have felt it my duty to put my name to this work." The book has been translated into almost every European language, and several editions of the German, French, and Italian versions have been issued. Not long ago permission was given to publish the work in Japanese.

The exposition of the doctrines of Malthus and John Stuart Mill on the population question was the absorbing aim of Dr. George Drysdale's life. He assisted, both by pen and purse, many of the advanced movements of his time. The initials "G. R." were familiar to readers of the *National Reformer* for many years as those of a ready writer and generous subscriber.

Dr. George Drysdale was an Atheist; and there was no ceremony of any kind at his simple funeral on Nov. 23. His one object was to ameliorate the condition of the "poor and suffering," to whom he dedicated his book.

GEORGE STANDRING.

Obituary.

WITH regret I record the loss of Mr. Edward Self, of Sudbury, Suffolk, who met his death by falling from a scaffolding, upon which he was engaged, on Thursday last, December 8. Mr. Self, who was sixty-five years of age, had been a staunch, generous, and fearless supporter of our cause for more than half his life; and the universal respect and esteem in which he was held by his employers and fellow-townsmen, although only one other in the town shared his views, was amply proved by the large attendance at the graveside. By the kind and prompt action of his brother Secularist, who holds an important position in the town, I was enabled to represent the N. S. S., and read the Secular Burial Service in accordance with the deceased's oft-expressed wish.—EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

Correspondence.

"JOHN WESLEY'S IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I refer to our worthy writer, Mr. Lloyd, who on page 773 of the *Freethinker*, makes a most remarkable statement, the importance of which constrains me to ask him to amend it if possible; not that I wish to dictate to my superior, but I pray for an opportunity to merely suggest. His words are: "The love of our enemies is a virtue altogether beyond human attainment." Then, again: "Personally, I have never known such persons." Now, is personal hatred the proper condition of the human mind? Are we justified, as *learned* Freethinkers, in personally hating anyone? Can Mr. Lloyd call a person to mind whom he hates with all his heart and nature? Truly, we may hate the habits and lack of goodness so painfully manifest in our enemies. Human goodness is not a gift from some "God," but is an acquisition. To hate our enemies injures ourselves as well as them. No well-trained thinker, such as Mr. Lloyd, could possibly keep hatred up for any length of time. Well, to be short, is hatred the result of our ignorance of human nature? Love is natural, while hatred is a temporary affair. We may hate a picture without hurting ourselves, but when we fervently hate a fellow-creature we dislike the sensations we experience. This seems to me psychological evidence of wrong-doing. Hatred is always stronger in the illiterate than in the learned. However, I am open to correction, and to learn.

CHAS. BAKER.

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.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Virgin Birth of Christ."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament; 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Three Isms: Godism, Secularism, Socialism."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Atheism or Theism, the Final Issue."

COUNTRY.

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Home Service.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, D. G. Lindsay, "What is Liberalism?"; 6.45, G. Scott, "Why I Left the Church of Rome." Selection of music from 6 to 6.45 p.m.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, December 19, at 8, in Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, Sauchiehall-street, Charles Watts, "Rationalism: Its Philosophy and Aims." Tuesday, December 20, "Religion and Education: From an Ethical Standpoint."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Benefit of H. Percy Ward. Mr. Ward will lecture:—3, "Torrey on Infidelity"; 7, Christian Missions in Heathen Japan."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Rating of Land-Values."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, December 22, at 8, E. Copland, "The Declaration of Paris."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, W. C. Schweizer, "Christianity is Sun Worship"; 7, "The Re-birth of Japan." Tea at 5.

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

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