

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

God was my first, Reason my second, Man my third and last thought. Man alone is and shall be our God. Outside man is no salvation.—FEUERBACH.

The Art of Thinking.

THE majority of people never think. In religious matters, thinking is inimical to believing. Savages are voracious believers, superstition being the very breath of their life. Among civilised people, the extent of the area covered by faith is determined by the quantity of education and knowledge possessed. The moment a well trained intellect is brought to bear critically upon religious beliefs their number begins to diminish. In other words, the more a man thinks the less he believes. This is a truism, you will tell me, and I agree with you; but it is a truism so atrociously disregarded that it is necessary to put special emphasis upon it. Christians generally give it no heed whatever, and many of them even doubt its truth. It was only the other day that one of our most sensational newspapers hinted that Freethinkers are usually people free from thinking. The fact is, however, that Freethought is the outcome of long and deep thinking, while faith is possible to most Christians simply because they do not think. Were they to think honestly they would cease to be Christians.

Here is a typical Christian young man. He was brought up in the Sunday School and in day schools controlled by the Church. From earliest childhood he was taught to regard the Bible as the Word of God, to repeat catechisms, confessions, and creeds, to look upon the clergyman as a man of God, and to subordinate his own judgment to that of his superiors. The result is that his religious beliefs are purely traditional and mechanical, and that he cannot intelligently defend a single one of them. He understands his business and prospers in it; but his religion is a thing he puts up with merely because he cannot help himself. Yesterday he had an eye-opening conversation with a Secularist, during which the subject of morality cropped up. Here are a few of the questions asked by the Secularist and of the answers given by the young Christian. "Why is one thing right and another wrong?" "Because God commands the former and forbids the latter." "How do you know God commands the one and forbids the other?" "I learn it from the Bible, which was Divinely given." "How do you know that the Bible was Divinely written?" "Because it is infinitely superior to all other books in the world." When asked to justify that last answer he could only say that it was the answer which all the ministers of the Gospel gave, and that surely they ought to know because they were ordained of God. He is under the impression that certain things are right and certain other things wrong simply because God has decreed that they should be so. Consequently, if there were no God there would be no right and wrong.

Thus we find that this Christian young man has never learned to think for himself. He believes blindly, and when by argument driven to a corner he is dumb. And he is typical of the great majority

of Christian young men. In most of them there is the making of strong, consistent, beautiful characters, but their religion checks their true growth and development. All their good deeds are performed in the hope of securing God's approval and reward. It would not be worth while to observe the moral law if there were no heavenly blessedness to be reaped after death. Thus it is the hope of heaven and the fear of hell that are the chief incentives to morality. But if our young people were taught to think rather than to believe they would soon perceive that religion engenders a spirit of degrading selfishness in all its devotees. They would understand that Christianity is a house built upon the sand, and that when the rain of argument descends, and the floods of reason fall, and the winds of common sense blow, and smite upon that house, it tumbles headlong into dismal ruin about their ears.

The most curious thing is that people who display fine intellectual capacities in business, in politics, in society, and in the home, are yet often hopelessly superstitious and irrational where religion is concerned. They admit that the evidences are by no means satisfactory; but somehow they have the feeling that to believe is to be on the safe side. They are afraid to think in this region. Thinking might convert them into sceptics. An aged minister, writing recently to a friend, said: "I have never considered the arguments against the faith. Somehow I have always feared even to look in that direction." George Borrow, however, did more than look towards that region: he even began diligently to investigate it for himself, and what he says about it is most instructive. In his *Romany Rye* we find these suggestive remarks:—

"I descended to the bottom of the dingle. It was nearly involved in obscurity. To dissipate the feeling of melancholy which came over my mind, I resolved to kindle a fire; and having heaped dry sticks upon my hearth, and added a billet or two, I struck a light, and soon produced a blaze. Sitting down, I fixed my eyes upon the blaze, and soon fell into deep meditation. I thought of the events of the day, the scene at church, and what I had heard at church, the danger of losing one's soul, the doubts of Jasper Petulengro as to whether one had a soul. I thought of the various arguments which I had either heard, or which had come spontaneously to my mind, for or against the probability of a state of future existence. They appeared to me to be tolerably evenly balanced. I then thought that it was at all events taking the safest part to conclude that there was a soul. It would be a terrible thing, after having passed one's life in the disbelief of the existence of a soul, to wake up after death a soul, and to find one's self a lost soul. Yes, methought I would come to the conclusion that one has a soul. Choosing the safe side, however, appeared to me playing rather a dastardly part. I had never been an admirer of people who chose the safe side in everything; indeed I had always entertained a thorough contempt for them. Surely it would be showing more manhood to adopt the dangerous side, that of disbelief; I almost resolved to do so—but yet in a question of so much importance, I ought not to be guided by vanity. The question was not which was the safe, but which the true side? Yet how was I to know which was the true side? Then I thought of the Bible—which I had been reading in the morning—that spoke of the soul and a future state; but was the Bible true? I had heard learned and moral men say that it was true, but I had also heard learned and moral men say that it was not: how was I to decide? Still that balance of probabilities! If I

could but see the way of truth, I would follow it, if necessary, on hands and knees; on that I was determined; but I could not see it. Feeling my brain begin to turn round, I resolved to think of something else" (*The Romany Rye*, pp. 83, 84).

There is much in that extract that is in the highest degree sensible. To a man of Borrow's temperament it was impossible either to believe or to disbelieve blindly, and so, face to face with the difficulties of the case, "Mr. Romany Rye" resolved to dismiss the subject. Many Christians prefer to comfort themselves with the assumption that they are on the safe side. If we are mistaken, they say, if our beliefs turn out to be nothing but dreams, we are, at any rate, on the safe side, while our opponents are on the perilous side. But their reasoning is entirely fallacious. It is the unbelievers who are on the safe side. Suppose that they are in error, suppose that God exists, that man has a soul, and that there is a future state, the unbelievers who make the most and best of the present world, living unselfishly and nobly, devoting themselves to the best interests of society, are eminently prepared for whatever lies before them. In any case, they are on the safe side. But if there be no God, no soul, and no future existence, Christians are stupendous losers, because they waste so much precious time and energy upon unrealities. They sacrifice the present in the interest of a future that never comes. They miss this real world in which we all are in the vain search for an imaginary world beyond the stars. They have but faith, and even their faith is constantly threatening to break down. Indeed, their chief work consists in keeping their faith alive. Unbelief is perpetually knocking at their door; nay, it often forces the door open, and enters, and engages faith in a life-and-death combat. They have but faith at the best, and that best is so seldom realised that their whole life on earth is a continuous and painful warfare. Well, if their faith fails them at the last, if death ends all for individuals, then I affirm, without a moment's hesitation, that it is they and not we who are disastrously on the wrong side. If there be a God and a hereafter. Secularists stand to gain: there is more in store for them than they ever imagined; but if not, Christians shall lose their all, as St. Paul so pathetically puts it: they "are of all men most pitiable."

Nothing can be clearer than that rational thinking is fatal to all forms of belief in the supernatural. The thinker cannot believe anything concerning any subject without evidence. Christianity must be believed without evidence, or not at all. Not one of its so-called "fundamental truths" is supported by a single scrap of proof. Indeed, according to St. John's Gospel, it is belief without evidence that is the highest sign of piety: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (St. John xx. 29). To the thinker such faith is an outrage upon human nature. Christianity says to a man, "Believe and thou shalt be saved," while reason says, "Know thyself and thy relations to the world, and try to live up to the self-knowledge gained, and thou shalt become more and more perfect unto the end, and the community shall be the better for thy life." The thinker does not take long to determine which is the true gospel. He is compelled to walk by sight, and not by faith, to set his mind on the things that are on the earth, not on the things that are above, and to bestow his affection upon visible fellow beings in a visible world, not upon invisible and unknowable beings in an invisible and unknowable realm. It would not be fair to charge all Christians with being thoughtless or unthinking; but it is perfectly true that, as Christians, they dare not think. As Christians their only duty is to believe and obey without asking the reason why. Their thinking, planning, arranging, scheming, providing, is an open insult to the Lord. Someone said, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry"; but the powder would nullify and mock the trust, while the trust would render the powder an absurdity. Christ claims to be Lord and Master, or

—nothing. God's will is absolutely supreme, so that there is no room for any other will whatsoever. Such is the teaching of the Bible, and such is the faith of Christians. But reason contradicts this faith at every turn, and life gives the lie to every supernatural belief, and makes it utterly ridiculous. Reason makes its own intelligent calculations, and dismisses God. Reason follows its own dictates and disowns the Lord.

The signs of the times are unmistakable. In ever-increasing numbers mankind are slowly acquiring the art of thinking for themselves, and in precisely the same ratio religious beliefs are dying out. Superstition dies hard; but it is dying, and herein we rejoice and are of good courage.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Defence of Thomas Paine.—VI.

CHARGE VI.—PAINE AND WASHINGTON.

THE sixth charge against Paine is, according to Dr. Torrey, unquestionably true:—

"(6) That because George Washington, who in earlier days had been his friend and had shown him much kindness, felt compelled to withdraw his support from him in these later days, Paine accused Washington of treachery, and wrote a long and bitter attack, trying to besmirch Washington's military career, as well as his policy as President."

This is an impudent misrepresentation. Thomas Paine owed nothing to George Washington. It was Paine's great services to the cause of American Independence that made Washington his friend. Paine never received a penny or a favor from him. The "kindness" is entirely imaginary. Nor did Washington "withdraw his support" from Paine "in these later days" on the ground suggested by Dr. Torrey. The facts of the case are very simple. Paine was arrested under the new Republican law in France against "foreigners"—in spite of the fact that he represented a French constituency. If he was a foreigner in France, to what country did he belong? Not to England, for he had been tried there for the authorship of the *Rights of Man*, and sentenced to outlawry. He was certainly an American citizen. On the proclamation of the United States as an independent nation all the subjects of King George within that territory became American citizens by a political necessity. Thomas Paine was therefore as much an American citizen as George Washington. Besides, he had written and fought for the Republic, and had been thanked and rewarded by Congress for his services. If he was not an American citizen what was he? When he was imprisoned in Paris as "a foreigner" it was natural that he should apply to the American government for assistance. Had his liberation been demanded he would have been set free. A word from Washington would have opened his prison door. Why did not Washington utter that word? He had called Paine his friend, he had entertained Paine at his house, he had spoken of Paine's services to the American cause as second to none. He was bound in honor to save Paine's liberty and perhaps his life. But he did nothing. He took no notice. He was coquetting with England just then, and Paine was hated by the English Government. He did not like the Republicanism of Paine in the *Rights of Man*. He was not sympathetic with the French Republic. He could not afford to be thought anything but unfriendly to Paine's "infidelity," although he was reputed to be little better than a Deist himself. These were some reasons for his silence. But there was another. Gouverneur Morris, the American minister at Paris, played the traitor, suppressed Paine's letters and applications as far as possible, sent home false accounts of Paine's position, character, and principles, and did his utmost to bring about Paine's destruction.

President Roosevelt has written a Life of Gouverneur Morris. In it he calls Paine a "dirty little

Atheist." Paine was fastidious in personal appearance; he was inches taller than Mr. Roosevelt—at least before that gentleman became President of the United States; and he wrote with great eloquence in favor of Theism.

Gouverneur Morris does appear to have misled Washington to some extent. So much must be said in the first President's favor. But nothing can be an adequate excuse for his leaving Paine to rot in a French prison, for no crime except that of being a foreigner.

Paine did not know the part played by Morris. He could only attribute his being neglected to Washington's cold callousness. He had a grievance as an American citizen; he had a greater grievance as a friend. He was wounded in the heart. When he wrote his open letter to Washington he was animated by a most natural indignation. His was not an icy, calculating nature; it was warm and spontaneous. If his pen shed the light of intellect over the page, it also shed the warmth of emotion. I believe that Dr. Conway's observations are perfectly just and sound:—

"It is easy for the Washington-worshipper of to-day to condemn Paine's pamphlet, especially as he is under no necessity of answering it. But could he imagine himself abandoned to long imprisonment and imminent death by an old friend and comrade, whose letters of friendship he cherished, that friend avowedly able to protect him, with no apparent explanation of the neglect but deference to an enemy against whom they fought as comrades, an unprejudiced reader would hardly consider Paine's letter unpardonable even where unjust. Its tremendous indignation is its apology as far as it needs apology. A man who is stabbed cannot be blamed for crying out."

Paine, says Dr. Torrey, wrote a long and bitter attack on Washington. Washington had left Paine to the misery of imprisonment and the daily possibility of a violent death. Which was the greater offender against ethics and humanity?

Let there be no mistake. Paine's indignation was not vulgar abuse. It was measured and terrible. Look at this paragraph:—

"I do not hesitate to say that you have not served America with more fidelity, or greater zeal, or greater disinterestedness, than myself, and perhaps not with better effect. After the revolution of America had been established, you rested at home to partake its advantages, and I ventured into new scenes of difficulty to extend the principles which that revolution had produced. In the progress of events you beheld yourself a president in America and me a prisoner in France: you folded your arms, forgot your friend, and became silent."

This is the language of a great writer. Only a man born to wield a pen could have put so much fact, feeling, argument, and picture into three sentences. Many attacks were made upon Washington: this is the only one that lives. It has the merit of Paine's splendid style at its highest; and it has the savor of wounded affection—the savor that there is in tears and blood.

Ingersoll said that he was with Paine in this quarrel with Washington. So am I. Others may judge for themselves.

I wish to say, for the rest, that George Washington—"no immeasurable man," as Carlyle called him—is not God Almighty, and that to attack his statesmanship and soldiercraft is not blasphemy. If Paine was mistaken in his criticism, let him bear the burden of an error of judgment; but it is ridiculous to deny either that he had a right of complaint or that he had a right to criticise even George Washington. To listen to some Americans one might imagine that all the divine right of Kings had fallen in a lump on their first President.

CHARGE VII.—PAINE AND NAPOLEON.

It is rather curious that Paine, the poor, wretched "infidel" as the clergy have styled him, came into contact with nearly everybody worth knowing in the public life of England, France, and America, and formed personal friendship with many of the most distinguished. Napoleon told Paine that he slept

with the *Rights of Man* under his pillow, and that the author ought to have a statue of gold. He consulted Paine about a descent on England, and invited him to accompany the expedition. Paine consented, because he understood, as he said in a letter to Jefferson, that "the intention of the expedition was to give the people of England an opportunity of forming a government for themselves, and thereby bringing about peace."

Dr. Torrey bases his Seventh Charge on these facts:

"(7.) That Paine tried to stir up an invasion of England by Napoleon, and subscribed 100 livres in 1789 toward a descent upon England; and that again in 1804 he was rejoicing in the hope of such an invasion being made."

Of course this chronology is wrong. Napoleon was unknown in 1789. Dr. Torrey means 1798. For the rest, this Seventh Charge is sheer silliness.

Paine was not an English citizen. He was an American citizen. He had been outlawed by the English government. In France he was a temporary citizen by adoption, having been elected by more than one French constituency to the house of representatives. Why should he feel any tenderness for the English government, which was the centre of the reactionary movement throughout Europe, and the constant enemy of peace? "If Paine," as Mr. Stead says, "entertained hopes that the French would invade England, he shared the sentiments of many distinguished Englishmen of that time." There are myriads of Russians who wish victory to Japan. Why? Because it will be the means of breaking up the tyranny which curses them at home. Thousands of liberal Englishmen had a similar hope a hundred years ago. Napoleon was not then "the Corsican ogre." He was the victorious soldier of Democracy, destined to carry the spirit of the French Revolution through European feudalism. And really, if a decent and intelligent Englishman had to choose between Napoleon and George the Third, with George the Fourth in reversion, he might easily be pardoned for preferring the foreigner. When one reads Hazlitt's impassioned tribute to Napoleon, or Heine's matchless description of Napoleon as his young eyes saw him at Düsseldorf, one understands something of the devotion with which liberals in England, Germany, and elsewhere regarded the great man, who also looked a great man—who threw the sword of his genius into the scale and saw it outweigh all the hereditary thrones of Europe.

Conclusion.

My task is completed. I have dealt with all the Seven Charges against Paine, and I believe I have successfully vindicated his reputation. I had previously done the same service to the memory of Ingersoll. And now I have another word to say. Against the fictitious Thomas Paine of these Seven Charges I place the actual Thomas Paine of history; the Paine who, when he heard a great man say "Where liberty is, there is my country," finely replied, "Where liberty is not, there is my country"; the Paine who wrote "The world is my country, and to do good my religion," and acted up to those noble principles; the Paine who pleaded the cause of his fellow Excisemen, and was paid with ruin; the Paine who pleaded the cause of American liberty, and penned the stirring words that put fresh life into the despairing soldiers of the infant Republic; the Paine who first spoke the bold word Independence; the Paine who assisted in drawing up its ever-memorable Declaration; the Paine who first foreshadowed the United States of America; the Paine who gave the American nation the writings that would have brought him affluence; the Paine who invented the arched iron bridge, and proved himself one of the world's practical benefactors; the Paine who answered Burke's attack on the French Revolution with the immortal *Rights of Man*; the Paine who narrowly escaped hanging for this brilliant service to liberty and justice; the Paine who helped to establish a Republic in France, and risked his life again in

implored the Republic not to stain itself with the blood of Louis the Sixteenth; the Paine who, with death staring him in the face, went on writing the *Age of Reason*, in the belief that mental freedom was the only firm basis of every other freedom; the Paine who flung aside interest and ambition, and welcomed odium and obloquy, in order to shed abroad the light of truth; the Paine who was ever a brave, disinterested soldier in the war of human liberation; the Paine who first uttered that magical expression, the Religion of Humanity, which afterwards fascinated the poetical genius of Shelley and the philosophical genius of Comte; the Paine who never had a thought for himself that was inconsistent with the welfare of his kind; the Paine whose very failings were only the defects of his great qualities; the Paine whose very virtues were the cause of all that mountain of slander which the deluders, oppressors, and despoilers of the world have piled upon his grave. No man was ever more hated by the hateful: and this is the loftiest praise.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and Politics.

A LIVELY discussion has been going on in *The Times*, as well as in other journals of a more religious character, concerning the relation of Christianity to politics, and incidentally the relation of religion to the State. One side maintains that politics has no proper place in Christian teaching, the other that the Christian preacher is bound to lead his congregation in politics as in other matters. Neither side seems to be getting much "forrarder" in the discussion, principally because it is conducted by believers, and neither side seems to have settled on anything like definite principles. The *Christian World* is of opinion that religious convictions do not absolve people from interest in national concerns—which is the kind of fatuous comment this journal is in the habit of making. For no one has said that it did; the question at issue being whether the pulpit was or was not the place to ventilate political opinions, and whether the clergy, particularly the Nonconformist clergy, are justified in propounding sectional political views as though they were part and parcel of Christian teaching.

One can quite appreciate the difficulty of the *Christian World's* position. To begin with, there is the fact that while the Church of England is, in the main, the Church of the "classes," the Nonconformists are bound to appeal to the "masses," and to get this support must profess an interest in reforms more or less popular in character. To throw back their clergy upon purely Christian doctrinal teaching would at this time of day leave them quite out of the running. The diffusion of social theories, the growth of a Labor party, joined to the spread of heresy, has been most rapid among just the class of society to which Nonconformists look for support; and it is this, more than anything else, that has led to the development of the Nonconformist political parson. While the further fact that the legislation of the present Government has favored the Church of England has also induced the Nonconformists to strain every nerve to rouse antagonism, and so work for a change of Government that may be more favorable to the "Nonconformist Conscience." The plain and unadorned truth of the situation is that it is without State patronage, but wishes to obtain it. It is politically in opposition, and uses whatever forces it may to achieve the object it has in view.

To refrain from introducing political topics is, therefore, for the Nonconformists to risk the support of large numbers whom they hope to use against their religious rivals. And to introduce politics is to run the same risk in another direction. This is to lose the support of a section of the members they already have. No one who knows the Labor world or the political world will venture on the assertion that Nonconformist employers are any different from, or any more favorable to reforms, than other

people. And to enter on a really whole-hearted reform crusade would be to offend this section of the Dissenting world. And nowhere is the man with the long purse worshiped more than among the Dissenters. Frothy denunciations of evils no one defends, flatulent eulogies of virtues no one decries, with dare-devil advocacy of reforms that have a respectable following, may occur; but this is all. To expect any of the Churches either to initiate a reform or to advocate a reform that is struggling for existence is to expect them to run counter to their traditions and, more important still, their interests.

The hollowness of the religious interest in social subjects is shown by the fact that the discussion of social matters is directed by purely religious considerations. Consider the interest shown by the clergy in education to that shown in housing or sanitation, or the employment of labor. In the one case their interest in the schools is keen because their professional interests are involved, because they recognise how important it is that the schools should be made the training ground for Church or Chapel. In the other case their interest is lukewarm, because neither Church nor Chapel benefits by their discussion, but is likely to lose thereby. Nor does it need much study to show that such schemes of social work as are undertaken by the clergy are animated far more by a spirit of sectarian rivalry than aught else. Mr. Charles Booth made it quite plain that the religious charities of London were valued, by the churches, chiefly as a means of bringing people to church; and the same is true of whatever interest is shown in social matters. The main question is, How to get the people into church or chapel? Were the places of worship always full, social topics would very seldom arise. It is because they are not always full that some interest in living topics has to be shown. And it is significant that it is the popularity-hunting parson, or the church that has a fluid congregation, one that depends upon a succession of fresh visitors, from whom we hear most concerning the social message of Christianity.

The real question that lies behind the *Times* correspondence is that of the relation of Christianity to the State. And here the modern Nonconformist occupies a hopelessly illogical position—so illogical that it has never been put into practice. The theory that the State should stand absolutely aloof from religion is one that no Christian ought to agree with. No one who believes that right religious belief is a matter of supreme importance can agree that the State should remain absolutely indifferent whether the people have a religion or no. If right living is dependent upon right religious belief, the State has as much justification for enforcing religious observance as it has for anything else it undertakes. While, if it is admitted that the duties of the individual towards other individuals, separately and collectively, can be discharged without religious belief, then it is admitted that religion is not essential to right living. An unbeliever will agree that the State should not undertake religious functions, others will lean to this view in proportion to their uncertainty as to the truth of religion, but a staunch Christian cannot. And as a matter of fact Christians never do. Nonconformists pretend to, but they are willing to take all the State aid they can get, and, like *Oliver Twist*, ask for more.

There are two conditions under which religion exists in the State. Either social affairs, the State itself, is judged and directed from the standpoint of religious beliefs, or religious beliefs are judged from the point of view of social and political requirements. Either a theocracy or an atheocracy. The first, the one that firm believers have always striven for, is responsible for most of the evils associated with religion in general, and with Christianity in particular. Jew hunts, witch burnings, heresy hunts, with all forms of persecution have resulted from the attempt to rule society in accordance with the requirements of religion. And it is only an act of justice to point out that those responsible for these persecutions were often actuated by the highest

sense of duty. To them heresy or blasphemy was the mother of evils because the chief of evils. The heretic was a plague spot on society, he was a centre of contamination, and the necessity for his destruction was the greater as the religious belief was stronger. The results of trying to regulate life in accordance with religious beliefs, are written in some of the most deplorable pages of European history, in the physical and mental stultification of the race, and its condemnation is now so complete that one can hardly find a responsible person to argue in its favor.

The second condition, that religious beliefs are to be judged from the standpoint of social utility is one that finds some favor with many modern religious "liberals," but it is one that is ultimately fatal to religious beliefs. For just so soon as people begin to discuss religions from this point of view they begin to realise that there is not one of the functions of social life that cannot proceed as well, or better, without religion than with it. It is, indeed, the criticism of religion from the standpoint of social utility that is largely responsible for its decay in the public estimation. The abstract love of truth appeals to few. Thousands who would remain unaffected by arguments proving the Christian creed to be lacking adequate proof, are affected by the consideration that all the time and energy and money expended on religion is sheer waste. The argument of utility has thus proven itself a two-edged weapon. To the Freethinker's charge that Christianity was not true, the believer retorted that it was useful, and pointed in justification to the good work done by religious people, to the institutions founded by Christians, etc., etc. But to this also the unbeliever has a perfectly satisfactory reply. Good works are not the exclusive production of Christians, and Christianity, as such, cannot be credited with their existence. Men and women are human beings before they are Christians. Human qualities did not begin with Christianity, are not confined to it, and will not cease to exist with its disappearance. A commonplace, and yet an important one; for the whole discussion hinges on its appreciation. Hitherto Christianity has gained credit by exploiting human nature. It has claimed credit, as religion, for that which belonged to humanity. The trick has succeeded with many, and for a long period. But the awakening is at hand, and just as art, science, and philosophy have already shaken themselves free from religious control, each now claiming independence and self-sufficiency, so human nature as a whole is steadily lifting itself free from the weight of superstition, and finding within itself all that is has hitherto sought in some other sphere.

C. COHEN.

"What Think Ye of Christ?"

I MAY perhaps indulge in two words of an introductory character. I sometimes think—I am not grumbling—that, with all the splendid propagandist work our party is doing, we are apt to lose sight of the fact that Christ is the essence of Christianity; that even if the defenders of the faith could show as good a historical case as they have pretended to show, and that we felt powerless to make a breach in the ramparts of their "Evidences," still the Christ would have to be judged by rational and moral standards like any other historical personage. I no more believe Christ to be historical than I believe Jupiter, Thor, or the Man in the Moon to be so. But, for argument sake, I would give them their Christ and wish them luck of him, and then turn upon him and criticise him, just as I would Julius Cæsar, Oliver Cromwell, etc. This appears to me the strongest ground the Freethinker can take, though I do not in the least undervalue the work done in other parts of the field of battle.

One more prefatory remark. Sundry parties, since I retired to my farm, seem to assume as a matter of fact that I must have become more Christian by getting into the country! The reader will soon see that there is no sort of warrant for this assumption. I am as far as ever I have been from "needing Christ," from wanting him, from respecting him, from tolerating him; and the reason for that is found in the New Testament, wherein my utter rejection of Christ is very much more than justified.

After this brief introduction, I waive for the present the impossibilities related of Christ, and take him as sketched in the Gospels, etc., giving my own views of the material thus furnished to my hand.

The first public act of Jesus was going to be baptised by John the Dipper. This showed him to be a paltry superstitionist. The man who really thinks a dip in water, a sprinkling or an aspersion with water, can have any moral significance or can be a duty must be so far insane, or else too contemptible to be further studied, except pathologically. To believe that water applied to the skin can purify the moral character, or in any way improve it, marks as low a depth of pious absurdity as almost any item of religion that can be named. Yet those who preach, teach, and practise this absurdity, a survival from savage times, claim to be civilised and enlightened people.

Nor is that all. John baptised none but sinners, open wrong-doers, people who very much required to repent and be reformed. When Jesus, therefore, went to be dipped he had not as yet thought of playing the rôle of Simon Pure or of parading himself as the sinless one. With crowds of wrong-doers he sought baptism; John understood at once the implication, so to be sure did the people. There is Mary's son amongst the penitents; and no one deemed him out of his proper place. Nor do I. I cannot possibly regard as sinless a man who felt the need of "baptism unto repentance of sins." I would not despise a "sinner," especially one sorrowful enough to resolve upon reformation; but if after publicly proclaiming himself a penitent sinner he endeavored to play himself off on me as one who had never sinned, I should treat him with scant courtesy—as I do Christ.

Immediately after baptism, Jesus, like so many other penitents, went to the Devil—was driven by the wind or pneuma or spirit into the desert "to be tempted of the Devil." This is one of the most comical of all the comicalities of the Bible, although the comedy may be commixed with tragic elements. Let us note. The Devil and Jesus were brothers, if theology speaks truly; both descended from heaven according to the Bible; both were butts of "the wrath of God," and both "descended into Hell." Of the Devil we know nothing but what his worst enemies have reported and spread; and they never gave him an opportunity of refuting their allegations—the Devil has never got his due from God or any of the godly. I hold no brief for that gentleman; but there is no record of his ever having had a fair trial, or any trial at all.

But here in the Gospel we have the Devil presented to us as a real historical person, one who could eat, talk (to some purpose also), fly, carry a good weight through the air, and perform the greatest of all miracles—he showed Jesus both hemispheres of the earth "in a moment of time" (Luke iv. 5), with all the details well filled in too! A showman of such ability must have been worth visiting certainly, and the "temptation" here evidently consisted of graphic and startling instruction. The Devil appears to have been the only schoolmaster Jesus ever had; but even he failed to educate him—he stayed with him but a month and nine or ten days, and then began to preach by echoing John the Baptist.

In the "temptation" the Devil behaved as a gentleman, did his best to amuse and instruct his younger brother, and gave him an opportunity to work the best miracle in his power, and seems to have aimed at making up their long family quarrel

and putting an end to the deadly feud that had destroyed the "harmony of heaven." But Jesus would have none of him; he who taught forgiveness had no forgiveness for his brother. He behaved as a fool or much worse. Here was an opportunity of doing one of two things, converting the Devil or arresting him. If Jesus had done either, he would have controlled the author of all sin and mischief—if theology does not lie—and would thus have taken the first step in working out the salvation of the world. Had he converted the Devil and marched arm-in-arm with him through Judæa he might have converted every Jew and every Roman in the land. Then he never would have been sold by Judas, forsaken by Peter & Co., arrested by the authorities, and never have mounted the cross.

I can't forgive Jesus for not forgiving the Devil, considering what he taught about loving enemies. Why did the preacher never practise his own precept? How was it the author (?) of the parable of the "Prodigal" showed nothing but enmity for his own brother, Satan? In this interview with his exiled relative he missed or flung away the grandest opportunity that could have been offered to show an example worthy of imitation; but Jesus proved an utter failure, and much worse. The Devil was but a political offender, a reformer who saw that God had too much power and was a mere stupid despot, as the Bible shows; and he ventured all to introduce some measure of "Democracy" into the "kingdom of heaven." For this God the Father and God the Son hated him beyond expression, and let slip no opportunity of defaming and injuring him. And Jesus was as narrow-minded as his dad.

Another item must not be passed over. Jesus fasted for six weeks or so. Why? Merely because he was a slave to barbarian superstition. The Devil saw through it, of course, and suggested food. But he might as well have tried to reason with an Indian fakir, a circumcising Jew, or a Popish penitent! Bah! A water-dipper and a champion faster, the great exemplar for mankind! The lunatic asylum is the only fit place for him and his real followers. Put them in safe keeping, poor creatures. Don't allow them to be at large.

After seeing the Devil Jesus began to preach, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What he meant has never been explained, though tons of paper have been covered with commentarial and pulpitic jabber on the subject. Clearly he has never understood his own Gospel, and had no better notions of a kingdom than the worst of Asiatic despotisms offered. (See Matt. xxii.). Jesus at once began to cheat such dupes as he could influence, called them off from their honest toil and occupations, their wives and families, and turned them into loafing vagabonds. To secure their friendship and obedience he flung out the maddest of all mad promises. (Mark x. 28, 29, 30).

Nothing more unscrupulous (if not mad) than this can be quoted, I believe, from any book in the world. Jesus is determined to have the fellows, and they are resolved to extort from him all they possibly may. Needless to say, Christ's promise was one that could never be fulfilled, though we may admit that neither he nor his dupes perceived that. But fancy the nations being at the beck of such a leader! A being who runs his kingdom on no lines but absolute obedience secured by absolute bribery and terrorism! Even the policy of the popes, at their worst, could only equal that of Jesus by including in it the essence of the Gospel. The worst of bubble company promoters are honest men compared with Jesus.

I have not time, and you could not spare the space for an exhaustive treatment of the character of Christ; therefore I must make a selection from the materials offered. Jesus, say the Christians, knew all things. He deliberately came to the Jews wearing an impenetrable disguise; he wilfully deceived the entire nation, for even his own family and his disciples never could understand him, for he spoke in enigmas and behaved like a professional

cheat. If he had enlightened the Jews and given them to understand who he was, they would never have molested him. He compelled them to regard him as a blasphemer, whom by their law (which he and his father had bound upon them) they were compelled to put to death. This conduct, which he had made inevitable, he pretended to regard as a giant crime, the guilt of which rested upon the Jews, young and old. And because they treated him in the only way left open to them, because they did to him what he had foreordained they should do, he destroyed the nation with a destruction unparalleled in human annals.

To hasten to a close. Because Christ was and did what I have already indicated; because he showed himself such a savage in the Apocalypse; because he declared his object to be to deceive men (Mark iv. 11 and 12); because he declared that he came to stir up strife and send a sword; and because he threatened to destroy the world itself and damn all unbelievers—for these all-sufficient reasons I regard Christ as the most absolutely hateful character in all literature.

Nay I add that I am of opinion that we shall never do our duty to mankind until we have destroyed the superstition of Christ root and branch, until we have led men first to hate him, and then to ignore him for all future time. At present the clergy, driven from his godhead and his miracles, are trading upon his utterly fictitious character. We must stop that; and the sole way to do so is to exhibit what the New Testament itself relates of him.

JOS. SYMES.

Liberator Farm, Cheltenham,
Victoria, Australia.

Alexandre Dumas.

1802-1870.

"O Dumas! O thou brave, kind, gallant old Alexandre! I hereby offer thee homage, and give thee thanks for many pleasant hours."—THACKERAY.

THE publication in English at a popular price of an entirely new translation of the romances of Alexandre Dumas is worth more than passing attention. It includes many novels not hitherto translated, and will, when completed, run to nearly eighty volumes. The series started with the immortal *Three Musketeers*, and includes a brilliant biographical sketch by Andrew Lang, the most delightful of living critics.

There is a fitness in the fact that while Flaubert, the exponent of realism, the artist of a strictly impersonal art, had hardly a life, much less a story of his own, outside his work, Dumas, on the contrary, that Prince of Romancers, should even before his death have been the subject of many a flourishing legend. Nor is one's pleasure in this antithesis seriously diminished by the obscuration of the historical reality of a fog so dense that it is well-nigh impossible to separate truth from falsehood.

Son to a marquis and grandson to a negress, a social anomaly, penniless and unapplied, Dumas carried everything before him by sheer courage and audacity. He made and squandered half a dozen fortunes, built himself a palace on a scale of Oriental splendor, and supported a retinue of flatterers and parasites. For a time he had the world at his feet. He died finally in obscurity after a graceless old age, a jester to the end. "I am accused of prodigality, and yet," pointing to his last louis, "there are the twenty francs with which I came to Paris." And yet in the midst of his riotous existence he had managed to produce some score of novels a year and write himself down a genius with Balzac and Moliere. He was no mere workman, condemned to the hard labor of literature and galled by its chains. He was a born story-teller; and, indeed, there is about the man a boyish irresponsibility which disarms criticism. When D'Artagnan tucks his naked rapier under his arm and,

with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, comes stalking through our imagination, we are their willing prisoners. We never tire of these gallant swordsmen, kind friends, and true lovers. Who reads the story of their adventures but wants to go on reading the sequel, and the sequel to that, and, if possible, yet another sequel.

In spite of the vivid light which flashes upon his scenes, it must be confessed that Dumas cared little for detail. For the poignant epithet, the right word in the right place, the little illusory trait, the shades of expression, for these secondary literary characteristics he had neither patience nor time—certainly not the time. His method of production made it impossible for him to produce the close-grained fabric of brain-spun gossamer for which Flaubert and Maupassant became noted. There is always a looseness about his stuff. But he did succeed in getting together a structure which, for all its interstices, makes in outline a large and imposing effect.

A scene painter he may have been, a babe in psychology, but he was more of a man than the author of *Madame Bovary*. Dumas had no physiology to speak of, but with what gusto he describes the prisoner of the Chateau D'If cutting himself out of the sack, fifty feet under water. His own great gifts of industry, brilliance, ingenuity, were playthings to him. He scattered wit as he squandered wealth, lavishly, with both hands.

And yet while it is this quality which gives his best work its durability, the secret of his success is to be found as much in the democratic tendencies of the time. Of his energy we have already spoken. But besides this the historical novel as conceived and propagated by Dumas, an historical romance vastly different, be it said, from De Vigny's, was to the last resort, a popular protest against the aristocratic determination of history. It was a violation of the privacy of princes and an assertion of the private individual as against the exclusiveness of courts. In this sense it has continued our day to be the accompaniment of a democratic diathesis. Even should the age rewrite history in its own guise, hardly should it persuade us to the same heartfelt satisfaction in the impersonal operation of social forces, however irresistible, as we have been wont to find in the spectacle of a king or cardinal outwitted by some braggardly Gascon, like our old friend, the hardly and vainglorious D'Artagnan. What a feast of spirited romance does the great Dumas spread, with an Oriental prodigality, before the feet of his admirers. Among his many books there is, of course, much that is uneven in quality, for no writer who gaily confessed, as Dumas impenitently could, to the production of over a thousand volumes, could possibly expect to write day in, day out, with a full pen from an everflowing and impeccable imagination. But granted these lapses, yet how surely his glittering masterpieces provoke our admiration before the imperishable wealth of a genius to whom everything in the narrative art seemed possible. The printed page glows with fancy, every chapter has a dozen jewels of escapade and romance. *The Three Musketeers* alone opens an enchanted region. *Twenty Years After* makes a playground of the arid plain of history! Here in the pages of the prince of story-tellers are the very life and breath of the days that are forgotten. For Dumas life is a broad and sunny country, in which every tree and every bush conceals a possible escapade. The whole duty of man is to be true to his love and cause, and if it leads to drawn swords—well we can at least quit us like men.

If we win, we shall live to love and fight another day. If we lose, it is the common debt; we can but die once.

Perhaps it is not an ideal life, and indeed, it makes no claim to have said the last word, or perhaps any word at all, upon the true philosophy of existence. But, contrasted with the pinched and wizened philosophy of orthodoxy, how fresh it seems, how

young, how invigorating, to take the old road with Dumas and ride once more into the forest of Romance. Life can never grow too tired or too old for that quest and that unfailing recompense.

MIMNERMUS.

A Rational View of Life.

IN a sense, life is a great mystery, always has been, and probably ever will be. A mystery is a thing unknown, unknowable, or beyond human comprehension. Many things that were once, and not so long ago, incomprehensible to man, are intelligible enough now. And no doubt, in the future, many of the remaining mysteries will be solved. Human life had an origin. The earth was once in a state that no life was possible. And it will be again in a state in which life cannot exist. That is the teaching of science. But whether intelligent life existed in the Universe before human life began to evolve on this earth, we have no means of knowing. We may imagine and argue that life, like the Universe, is eternal, and therefore never had a beginning, and never will have an ending. As matter cannot be destroyed, it is a natural inference that it never had a beginning, and quite as natural to suppose that all life is an attribute of matter, inherent in it and never existing apart from it.

The mysteries of life and existence are very attractive and interesting. No doubt that is the reason why so much time and thought are devoted to them. But I have often thought that it is time for mankind to give, if not less attention to the mysteries, at least far more to what is now fully known.

The past cannot be altered or recalled. We had no share in our existence, and no choice to be or not to be. We were not consulted as to when, how, or what to be. We are no more responsible for our existence or conditions than a vessel formed by the potter is responsible to him for its form and quality. We are all of us creatures of circumstances, and product of powers existing before us and outside of us, though partially in us as well. Call the powers Nature, Fate, or God, as you will; the name will not alter the fact. We have not made ourselves nor our environment. We are the work of powers that we cannot resist; and we cannot unmake ourselves, or change ourselves into something else.

We are as helpless in regard to our future after death as we are to the past before we were born. We can no more alter the future than we can change the past. What is to be is as certain as what has been. There is no chance in the universe. We may dream, imagine, speculate, and argue; but all our fancies will alter or create nothing. If there is a conscious individual immortality for man after death he will have it, whether willing or not. His doubting or denial cannot abolish what is to be. Man has no power to refuse what is to be. On the other hand, if there is no conscious individual immortality for man, his desire for immortality and his affirmation that man is immortal will not make him immortal. If there is immortality we shall have it; if there is not, we cannot have it, however strongly we may long for it. Neither doubting or believing can have any effect on what is to be.

Speculations about the past and the future are very attractive and interesting. Otherwise great minds would not have spent their precious lives to study them. But it seems to me doubtful if the study of them has been as instructive and beneficial to mankind as the contemplation of other matters would have proved to be. As the past and the future are enveloped in impenetrable darkness, and as the present is open and clear around us, it seems to me obvious that it is our duty and interest to devote our chief efforts to make this present world as beautiful, lovable, healthy, good, and joyful as possible for all its inhabitants.

Knowledge of the past and the future is not necessary to enable us to make this earth a paradise for man. This fact does not depreciate knowledge of any kind in the least. Every knowledge is good and beneficial, and it is our interest and duty to know all that is knowable, on everything, as soon as we can. The more we know the better, for knowledge is power. Without knowledge little or nothing would have been possible. But the fact I want to drive home is that the knowledge we already possess is sufficient to enable the people, by efficient organisation and application, to place all in circumstances of comfort and of average security and happiness, without any more knowledge than we already possess.

All the sciences are valuable and full of interest, and so are the arts. The history of their development is important and precious. The more men know of biology, anthropology, history, geology, philology, astronomy, architecture, agriculture, chemistry, industry, and all other sciences and arts, the better it will be for the world. But it is not necessary for all to have expert knowledge. As a matter of fact, it is impossible. It is sufficient for the few to be experts to teach and guide the many. The application of knowledge to practice is the important thing to society.

Knowledge and skill are now common property, and sufficient to enable men to provide all that is necessary for comfort and security, without much or any knowledge of the origin and evolution of the different arts and sciences. Men can provide food, build houses, make clothing, manufacture tools, furniture, and machinery, construct railways, build ships, and make all such things, without knowing the history of the arts, crafts, and sciences, according to which the work is accomplished. The workers know the practical parts, and have got the skill to do the work needed; and that is enough. We can provide food, clothing, houses, furniture, tools, and machinery, and all things necessary to make life comfortable, in sufficient bulk to satisfy the need of all. There is no need for any to be poor and miserable. Poverty is caused by wasting time to pry into the past and future instead of mastering the circumstances of this world, and that now, and stopping the exploitation of the toilers by the idle rich classes. There should be no rich idle class and no poor slave class; and there would be neither if the masses ceased to gaze on the sky and waste their time to study the past and speculate about a world to come, of which no one knows anything, not even that there is one.

It is time to abandon the gods and the ghosts. Even if the gods and ghosts existed, they require no service from man. But the gods of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Assyria, and all other countries had no existence except in the imaginations of men. I should think all intelligent men would acknowledge that all the services, sacrifices, and worship rendered to all the heathen gods was waste of time, energy, and means, without any real good received in return. All would also agree that the vast number of priests and attendants were parasites that did no real good to anybody except themselves by their priestly service. And what better are all the religions of to-day than the heathen religions from which they have evolved, except in outward show and refinement? All of them are as baseless as the myths of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Assyria, and the priests of all the sects are as truly barren and useless parasites as the priests of Baal or Jupiter.

The only rational conduct on our part is to leave the gods and ghosts alone, and devote all our attention and energy to make this world a paradise for all the people. Till the gods and ghosts show themselves, and ask us individually and collectively for our service, it is no disrespect to them or a denial of their existence to ignore them. Whilst we are here let us give all we have to the service of man in this world. To make the best possible use of this present world is the best possible preparation for another, if there be one. This world can be improved. It has

been improved already; but there is room for more improvement. The improvement is the work of man, and not the gods and ghosts which so many waste their lives to serve. If all men were to combine their skill, efforts, and enthusiasm to provide comfortable environment for all, the possibilities of manliness, goodness, greatness, and happiness would be beyond conception. Make all the world for all the people, as it ought to be, and a better heaven could not be found or desired.

R. J. DERFEL.

Nature and the Lover.

On such a day all—all things smiled for me—
All tongues! all ears—perfume for melody.
Trees flung their arms o'er many a fairy stream
Of flowers a-dance—soft butterflies a-dream—
Sweet-throated buds—sipping, 'neath grassy walls
Celestial music from dim waterfalls,

Lilies o'erslept their leaves—then laughed, and gave
A fresh field-song to the green glancing wave;
To listening ears that sailed and sang with glee
Through meadows smiling like a lovely sea.
Ears that were tongues lifted their voices high
To the wide wanton rivers of the sky.

Where wild stars clustered lotus-like until
The foam of heaven 'gainst many a stately hill
Dispetalled all their blooms. They fell like rays
Gathered of tears on my new wondering gaze.

O tell me, in the day that yet may be
Shall Nature smile again—again on on me?
For all her kindness fell from one sweet face.
In two eyes Heaven love's star found hiding place.
A river slumbered with my maiden's hair.
Her lips were music—when the world was fair.

Since such a day long nights of violet wing
Discordant shapes to flooded rivers flung.
O'erburdened clouds float overhead that flee
From unknown winds to final tragedy.
Down Earth's sad face the sudden tears gush free
To bitter hollows of the salt, sad sea.
O woeful tumult! Ocean is a-throbbing
As 'twere her heart in sympathy out-sobbing;
Knowing a world of tears must rush and roar
Upon her breast for ever—evermore.

GEORGE ELLIS WOODWARD.

ST. GROUSE'S DAY.

("LET US GO OUT AND KILL SOMETHING.")

Who says we lack, in this lethargic age,
Some fiery-hearted faith, some high emprise,
With power to lift and quicken us? He lies!
For mark how Britain's sanguine sons engage
In wild Saint Grouse's arduous pilgrimage,
And throng her heathery shrine 'neath northern skies.
If haply, where her moorland altars rise,
Their sacrificial zeal they may assuage!
Once more the holy Twelfth has dawned, and lo!
From distant shires devout enthusiasts speed
That beatific function to fulfil.
Sport calls. Enough! Nought else they hear or heed:
In rapturous exaltation out they go—
With one sole passionate intent—to kill.

H. S. S.

GENIUS.

Have you never gazed upon a beclouded headland
running out beyond eyeshot into the deep sea? Each of its
hills contributes to its make-up. No one of its undulations
is lost upon it. Its bold outline is sharply marked upon the
sky, and juts far out amid the waves; and there is not a
useless rock. Thanks to this cape, you can go amidst the
boundless waters, walk among the winds, see closely the
eagles soar and the monsters swim, let your humanity
wander in the eternal uproar, penetrate the impenetrable.
The poet renders this service to your mind. A genius is a
headland into the infinite.—Victor Hugo.

Many a man thinks that it is his goodness which keeps
him from crime, when it is only his full stomach. On half
allowance, he would be as ugly and knavish as anybody.
Don't mistake potatoes for principles.—Carlyle.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—August 20, Victoria Park; 27, Victoria Park. OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£145 7s. 7d. Received this week:—Newport (Mon.) 5s., W. Stewart 1s., T. Collier 1s. Per Miss Vance: Miss A. M. Baker £1, J. Crompton 5s.

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£10 11s. 6d. Received this week:—A. Lewis 2s. 6d. Per Miss Vance: Madame Forrer 10s., C. J. 10s., France Nonagenarian 10s., Chas. T. Hall 5s., A. J. Fincken 12s. 6d., W. A. Fincken 10s., R. Miller 10s., R. Fincken 4s., H. L. Fincken 5s., G. Fincken 2s. 6d., A. Fincken 1s., Worker 6d., Poor 6d., C. F. Fincken 6s., J. Crompton 10s., Miss Hutty 1s.

RIDGEWAY FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£4 7s. 6d. Received this week:—M. J. Charter 2s., Mrs. Siger 1s. 6d., Miss Hutty 1s.

H. TUCKER.—Your suggestion shall be considered, though we doubt its feasibility.

Most of the answers to correspondents have to stand over till next week owing to the Editor's absence from London.

A. NOTLEY (Hetton Downs) writes: "We are all delighted at the way you are doing the Torrey business." He adds that they are forming an N. S. S. Branch at Hetton-le-Hole.

W. ROBERTSON.—It shall be dealt with.

T. COLLIER.—You wish to know when 20,000 of our Torrey pamphlets have been distributed. The number is nearer 250,000. The first lot printed, early in February, was 40,000.

W. H. THOMAS.—Thanks for cuttings. There is something peculiarly appropriate in De Rougemont figuring at revival meetings in Pontypridd. It is an environment in which romance flourishes; we may take it as an illustration of the old adage, "Birds of a feather," etc.

MISS ALICE M. BAKER, daughter of the late Daniel Baker, of Birmingham, sends a contribution to our Torrey Pamphlet Fund, and hopes that Mr. Foote's "splendid" defence of Paine will be issued in pamphlet form. The matter is worth considering, and the suggestion is duly noted.

TORREY PAMPHLETS.—Correspondents will greatly oblige if they will note that the two pamphlets, *Torrey's Converts* and *Torrey and the Bible* are at present out of print. Due notice will be given when a fresh supply is available.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

There are no "Acid Drops" in this week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote is away for ten days' rest and change, and his friends will not mind the absence of the paragraphs for once. Had he written them as usual it would have spoiled his little holiday; in fact, he might as well have been at home. Mr. Cohen is holidaying too, and we did not care to worry him; neither is there any reason why Mr. Lloyd should be asked to do work he is unaccustomed to, and which he would therefore find heavy—in the dog-days. Readers who miss the "Acid Drops" this week may rely upon finding a good quantity (and quality too, we hope) next week.

Mr. Foote will have (for the last time) something special to say next week about the Paris Congress. While we are writing this paragraph, a long way from London, we do not know how the subscriptions to the Congress Fund are coming in, as we have only received Saturday's letters (Aug. 12), and the bulk of subscriptions always come in on Monday and Tuesday. We hope, however, in any case, that the members and friends of the National Secular Society will see that the effort to have it properly represented at the Paris Congress is well supported. There is the *Entente Cordiale* to be thought of, as well as International Free-

thought. Freethinkers, of all people, should show their appreciation of the growing friendship between Great Britain and France, which makes for peace and civilisation. A good delegation of English Freethinkers will be especially welcome at the Paris Congress.

The N. S. S. is sending, up to the present, thirty delegates to the Paris Congress, including the six special delegates appointed by the Executive. There is no doubt this number will be augmented by a number of visitors who will accompany the delegates. It will interest all who intend visiting the Congress to know that the Freemasons of Paris have arranged, on September 3, for delegates only, an ascension to the top of the Eiffel Tower, with a dinner, to be followed by dramatic and musical entertainments, fireworks, etc., at a total charge of three francs.

Mr. Cohen addressed two very large and attentive audiences in Brockwell Park on Sunday last. To-day (Aug. 20) he lectures at Kingsland (Ridley-road) in the morning at 11.30, and in Victoria Park in the afternoon at 3.15. We hope there will be good meetings at both places.

Dr. E. B. Foote, the veteran American Freethinker, who is held in universal honor amongst advanced people of all descriptions in the United States, writing to us recently, said: "I am glad to see from the *Freethinker* that you are going to try to take things a little easier during the summer. Although we should miss you very much from the columns of the *Freethinker*, I am sure your readers would be quite willing to have you leave the paper in the hands of Mr. Cohen or Mr. Lloyd, and give your tired brain two or three months of uninterrupted rest." This is kind advice, but not exactly possible at present, though it may be some day.

We have received a letter from Mr. C. P. Farrell, the late Colonel Ingersoll's brother-in-law and publisher, who continues (with his family) living with the Ingersoll household as he did during the Colonel's life. There never was a happier or sweeter household. Ingersoll's married daughter, with her husband and children, also formed a part of it. They did not believe in dispersion. It is said that when Mr. Brown, the banker, proposed to marry Miss Eva Ingersoll, her father said it would be all right if he came and joined them; adding, in his characteristic way, that he didn't mind gaining a son, though he objected to losing a daughter.

Mr. Farrell, we regret to say, has been very unwell, and the letter he sends us is the longest he has written for eighteen months. Of course we appreciate the compliment while deploring its conditions. We hope Mr. Farrell will soon be himself again. His daughter's recent marriage ought to act as a tonic. We remember meeting her when we were in America in 1896, and a very bright, intelligent girl she was. Her husband is a brother and partner of Mr. Walston H. Brown who married Miss Eva Ingersoll. We had the pleasure of spending several hours in Mr. Walston H. Brown's company, and we are prepared to say that Mr. Farrell's son-in-law comes of an excellent stock.

Mr. Farrell helped Mr. Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, in sending us the matter which enabled us to settle the hash of the Rev. Dr. A. C. Dixon—Ingersoll's traducer. He congratulates us on the use we made of it. "Mr. Stead's article," he adds, "pleased us immensely." Of our Torrey pamphlets he says: "They have done great good for the cause you so nobly espouse and the grand men you so ably defend." "We read with the greatest interest," he adds, "all your articles in the *Freethinker*."

Mr. H. Percy Ward has been, and still is, helping the new Wigan Branch which he assisted in forming. The Branch is trying to obtain the use of the Co-operative Hall for a course of lectures each month during the winter. Mr. Ward reports that his open-air meetings have grown larger lately; and (a capital test) the collections are really good. Mr. Ward further says that the Secular Hall Fund started by the Branch is prospering, several substantial sums having been guaranteed.

"I am delighted," Mr. Ward says, "at the huge success of your unmasking of that godly liar—Torrey. I consider that the whole Secular movement owes you an infinite debt of gratitude for your thorough and persistent labor of love in vindicating the reputation of two of Freethought's noblest dead—Ingersoll and Paine. Your triumph over Torrey is complete."

The Rev. Dr. Torrey, formerly of Chicago and now of London, has been conducting a revival in the latter city. One of his methods of boosting divine truth consisted in telling lies about Paine and Ingersoll. Editor Foote of the

London *Freethinker* got out a pamphlet, which he distributed at the Torrey meetings, vindicating Paine and exposing the revivalist. He also sent to the *Truthseeker* office for documentary evidence in the case of Ingersoll. This was furnished, and Mr. Foote exposed Torrey again. The revivalist seemed not to mind being convicted of lying—possibly it was not his first conviction—but it troubled his friends, among them Mr. W. T. Stead, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, who implored him to square himself if he could. Torrey shuffled and prevaricated. Stead was insistent, and finally wrote an article for the *Review of Reviews*, going over the whole matter, showing Torrey to be wrong and leaving unshaken the essential parts of Mr. Foote's vindication of both Paine and Ingersoll. The drawing of Mr. Stead into the controversy is a substantial victory for Mr. Foote, for Stead is a lusty fighter, and if the partisans of Torrey attack him there will be ructions in the orthodox camp.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

"The Good Samaritan."

ON one of the very wet days of last fall—a dreary, gloomy afternoon in late November—I was waiting in a coupé at the door of a friend's house in Thirty-ninth-street, and I fell to watching a poor devil of a man who had sat down in a church door opposite.

I thought he was the result of some corner gimill until he lifted his miserable head and showed a lean, anxious, but perfectly sober face, and I made up my mind that I would not leave the spot without an effort to help an evidently suffering human being.

It was approaching dinner time, and a world of returning citizens hurried past the homeless man. Perhaps he thought the story of his need was written on his haggard face, for he kept it upturned in speechless misery to the callous passers-by.

The side door of the church opened, and three sleek, well-fed gentlemen, one of them in clerical-cut garments, came forth.

"Thank the Lord!" said I to myself; "here's help at last. They will never fail to see that poor sinner by the gate."

But they raised their umbrellas, they exchanged parting words at his very knees, and went their several ways as indifferent to the water-soaked wretch who leaned against their door-post as they would be to a bottle of cod-liver oil in a drug-shop window.

Perhaps ten minutes went by; fifty more prosperous gentlemen gave the poor man a careless look, when, piling down the street, I saw a big man with a boy's face and a very small umbrella. Robert Ingersoll, by the big unlighted torch of liberty!

I made a mental bet in a second that this man, this Choeryble brothers rolled into one, would never bestow indifference on my miserable claimant. And he didn't. On he lumbered, into one puddle and out of another, revolving some pleasant circumstance in his mind, for almost a smile played over his broad, jolly face. He plodded straight by my man, his head bent. Was it possible he didn't see him, or, seeing him, would display the same Christian indifference I had been watching for twenty minutes?

No, bless him! He halted in the pleasantest puddle on the block; he turned an inquiring look on the lowly wayfarer; he held the small umbrella carefully over his humble brother that the streaming tips might not add a drop to his streaming misery. I watched him question the sinner by the tabernacle, and as the answers were given from the pitiful face, a sympathetic interest shone on my good Samaritan's. He stretched forth his hand and helped the man to his feet; he steadied him for a moment, for the drenched wretch was ill, and finally Mr. Ingersoll, who had been heading eastward, reversed his engines, took the poor man by the arm, and went off to the west, piloting, sustaining, comforting, and, I have no doubt, providing for a woe it had struck no other man to relieve during all the afternoon.

I've seen Robert Ingersoll in very swell company. I've seen him in more dress-coat than would run a Delmonico ball—guests and waiters. I've seen him when he thought he looked well enough to have his picture taken. But I could see a nimbus round his trouser-legs and a halo round his shirt-collar as he paddled off down the street with the famished wanderer of the church-gate, and I know he was the finest-looking man in the United States that afternoon.

Just all that incident indicated I heard him say in Chickering Hall the other night. Through all the magnificent passages of his splendid appeal for the poor and down-trodden I could see the old picture framed by the coupé window, and I shall never cease to remember thankfully the time when he did what I wanted to do, and what I sat in the rain planning how to do.—*By Mary Fiske, in the New York "Mirror," Nov. 20, 1886.*

"Is Christianity Essential to Civilisation?"

APART from his theology or personal religiosity, Pope most certainly gave vent to a rational epigram when he uttered the words which have so often been quoted, but not appreciated with that sense of gravity to which they are entitled, that "the proper study of Mankind is Man." Whether he himself appreciated the sense of his own utterance in its deepest significance is immaterial to the question which we are about to discuss with regard to the real and true psychology of the issue that is now at stake between the Christians of Russia and the so-called infidels of Japan. For, putting to one side the more important question of race, color, and civilisation, there remains in reality a still deeper and more vital issue, the significance of which has as yet made no impression upon that portion of emotional humanity which has viewed the contest from a variety of divergent standpoints. Yet, considered from the widest and deepest of aspects—*i.e.*, from the personal and possessive standard of mentality—a veritable gold mine of comparative speculation, culminating in solid and actual experience, unfolds itself to the profound, or even thoughtful, thinker.

To those who have followed the history of events during the past decade or two, from the original occupation of Manchuria by Russia down to the present moment, including the short and decisive conflict that took place between Japan and China, one fact is very evident, and that is, that under cover of an altruistic but sham pretext for the development of civilisation, Russia has all along concealed her real and selfish motive of aggrandizement. This as a preliminary, as we now know, was nothing more or less than the permanent occupation of Manchuria, with Port Arthur as an open water sea base, preparatory to the subsequent conquest of Japan.

Beyond utilising this fact as a sound and substantial foundation upon which it is essential to institute an analysis, it is not our intention to go any further or deeper into the political aspect of the question. But let us examine facts as they have been evolved in the natural order of events, and passed into the bygone records of history. It has been very palpable to the observant onlooker who has been a silent but rational spectator of this realistic drama, and the titanic tragedy which has resulted therefrom, that the Czar of all the Russias and his counsellors had but one true motive in protracting negotiations, and this was in order to gain sufficient time to enable them to effect the real object that they had in view.

How they have failed, and the reason of their failure, is palpable enough to any reasonable intelligence; but it is not with these causes and their effects that we are at present concerned. The objective upon which our minds is just now focussed is a much more serious matter; for it concerns the solution of a problem that, from all accepted notions, is at first sight so absolutely incomprehensible as to be practically insoluble. Yet an examination of it from an open and unprejudiced basis shows us that this is not so; but the mentality of the examiner must soar above the narrow and sordid range of Christian dogma, and be ready to receive the impression of facts as they exist. He must, in fact, be a broad and reasonable Humanitarian, and not a bigot of any special sect or denomination.

For more than a year now the armies and navies of the Czar and the Mikado have been contesting for supremacy, and the fact remains that, although those of the latter have not yet attained to this, they have at least been victorious at all points. What is more, they have demonstrated to the world at large, not merely their superiority over the Russians as fighters both on sea and land, but in their conduct of diplomatic amenities, as well as in every single aspect of their national conduct, they have excelled in all the higher arts and refinements of civilisation.

Putting aside just for a moment history with its record of precedents, and religion, this experience is,

to say the least of it, unique, and without precedent, and in its naked reality is food for philosophical reflection and speculation—to say nothing of its extreme wonderment—upsetting, as it has done, all existing theories, with regard to the dominating influence of Christianity as a civilising factor. For while Japan, less than fifty years ago, was looked on as sunk in the barbarism and ignorance of Shintoism, and Buddhism, Russia, the holy, has lived for centuries past under the shadow and protection of the Cross, and her mission has been presumably the spread of Christianity, which has always been considered as equivalent with—another word, in fact, for—civilisation. Into the validity, or otherwise, of these issues, we will not enter, but admitting for sake of argument, that they are valid and substantial, the question which at once arises in the mind of the inquirer is, how comes it then, that the trained armies of Christian and civilising Russia have been so hopelessly outmatched and beaten by the hordes of a race that is not only barbaric, but yellow?

To enter into all the side issues which, from a Christian standpoint, are bound to emanate from a basis so momentous as this, is outside the present scope, but dealing as we are, with the objective alone, *i.e.*, with facts and experiences, one fact is prominent as well as pre-eminent, and this is, that the force of Christianity have succumbed to the force of idolatry or, as we prefer to call, Embolism of Shintoism, and to the materialism of the Buddhistic creed.

That the Japanese are fighting for their country and, in fact, for their very existence, *i.e.*, for a cause which from every aspect is justifiable and meritorious, is a factor of obvious importance, especially when it is contrasted with the fact that the Russian soldiers are merely fighting in obedience to orders, which they have been unable to evade. A contrast that is all the more accentuated by a comparison between the existing conditions of the two countries, one all unrest and ripening for revolution, the other inspired by that sublime and elevating spirit of patriotism which, if necessary, would make all its citizens die as one man in defence of their personal freedom and rights. Further, it is only too plainly evident that the Japanese have not failed to utilise, intelligently, and to the utmost advantage, all the scientific machinery of war, that has as yet been devised by humanity for the destruction of its own kind.

What, however, is still more significant to the on-looker is the very palpable fact that in no sense whatever have they made the slightest use of that militant and powerful auxiliary, the Christian religion, which has always been looked upon by Theologians as a dominant power for good that has been conferred on them in the invincible form of a Spiritual Asset by the Maker and Ruler of the Universe. On the contrary, it is no secret that, as regards religion, the Japanese have declined to accept Christianity, but have remained true to the original faith of Shinto, and to the tenets of that humane doctrine which centuries ago had been lived and practised by the high-minded Buddha. Assuming for a moment that there is in existence such a Supreme Being as the Christian God, who made the world and all things that dwell thereon, how comes it that he has permitted the Russians, whom presumably, along with the remaining portion of Christendom, he has regenerated by means of the atonement of his own son, to be defeated and overthrown by a race who are still living outside the pale of his all-embracing and benevolent Fatherhood, and within the dark shadows of appalling infidelity?

More than this, how is it that he, a God of Peace and of Love, has not merely allowed his children to go to war, but if they are to be believed, has himself led them into battle, only to be defeated, however, by a people whose gods are but the spirits of their own ancestors?

From a Christian point of view, the matter as it now rests is, of course, more than serious: it is unanswerable; yet, viewed from the rational aspect of the mere humanitarian, how ridiculous is this vulgar

contention on the part of a Deity who is said to be all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good. Nay more, when we mere human animals reflect calmly upon the horrors of war with its awful waste of life, how brutal and terrible does it all seem? How much more so then, on the face proportion in fact must it seem to the God who, according to Christian doctrine, has the will and the power to put a stop to such needless sacrifice, yet who not only permits but encourages it? Whatever Christian apologists may say, and in spite of any excuses that they may invent, they cannot get away from this fact. Nor can they deny—that is, if they have the grace to own the truth—that the Japanese, from the high-souled Mikado, down to the loyal peasant, have as mere human factors, been imbued with a finer, and a higher sense of religion, therefore a greater intelligence and energy than the Christianised, but ignorant masses of Russian soldiers, who have been led like sheep to the slaughter at the mere beck of of a puppet who believes in the divinity of his descent—a belief which at once explains the horrid brutality of the God who rules over the destinies of great, but grovelling Russia.

To continue this analysis, and to ask further questions regarding a matter that is so glaringly apparent, is futile—sheer waste of valuable time in fact. To those whose minds are evenly balanced, and to whom the naked truth is of more value than the grandiose sentiment and tinsel of self-deception, the whole thing is as clear as daylight—a mere mental mirage—a great and garish illusion of the material senses. But to those who follow the Profession of Theology—for theology except among savages and barbarians is profession, and not practice—symbols and rag dolls are still essential. Because in the scale of natural evolution, they are but infants, for whom the serious realities of life, or, rather the life of serious realities, has no existence, easily satisfied as they are with the toys and shadows of beguiling emotion.

The vital issue of the moment, then, resolves itself into this question, Is Christianity an essential factor as regards the development of civilisation? And the answer which comes to this, from the hearts of over forty millions of a really moral and intelligent people, is decidedly in the negative. Equally so, to the unbiassed ego, who sees thus the falsity and error of dogma, it is quite clear that Morality, or the higher aspect of true Natural Religion, is no more the outcome of any creed or sect, than is man himself. For as he be the crown of all natural evolution, is from nature, so all that belongs to him in the direction of the mental or abstract is of nature, and returns to her on dissolution to be re-utilised, if not re-vitalised, in consonance merely with the never far being process of demand and supply—a process which does not admit of waste.

One fact, then, is certain, and there is no evading it any true or objective sense. Whatever Christianity may have done in the past, the victory of Japan over Russia has proved incontestably that it is no longer a necessary element in the present day of increasing intellectual development. Indeed, the fact has passed into an experience, that a civilisation of comparatively recent growth, not merely without Christianity, but with the assistance of an Ancestral or Natural Religion, has triumphed utterly and entirely over a civilisation which has been nourished and fattened on the prayers and sacraments of a priest-ridden and parasitic Church. What is more, it is quite evident to those who can look ahead, that in this rich and vital experience, the cause of Reason and Rationalism—that is, of Truth—has received a moral triumph and an onward impetus that will accomplish more as regards its universal development than all the discoveries of science put together. For a rational Japan will, in the near future, become a distinctly prominent factor in the further development of the higher civilisation.

ARTHUR G. LEONARD.

Can the Gospel History be Trusted?—I.

NOW that the series of popular lectures delivered at Manchester on the question "Is Christianity true?" has been given to the world in permanent book form, we are in a better position to see and appreciate the latest attempts made in defence of the Christian scriptures by some of the most distinguished present-day scholars and preachers. Upon looking through the three volumes published, I find that the most important of these reprinted lectures—and, in fact, the only one which covers the whole debateable ground—is that by the Rev. W. F. Adeney, entitled "Can the Gospel history be trusted?" Of course, if the Gospel accounts of Jesus can be shown to be historical, the case for Christianity is gained, and wicked Atheists and Agnostics have nothing more to do than to hide their diminished heads. In view, therefore, of the importance of this particular lecture, I propose, with the Editor's permission, to examine Dr. Adeney's arguments for the historicity of the narratives recorded in the Gospels.

"Christianity comes to us as an historical religion," commences the reverend gentleman, "a religion which springs from history, which is rooted in events, which is based on facts; so that if the history were myth, and what we take to be facts were dreams, then the religion would only be a house without foundation, a castle in the air." With the latter statement I completely concur. There are, no doubt, historical events and facts (could we get at them) which would fully explain the origin of the legends and sayings found in the Gospels; but these are not the so-called events and facts narrated in those "histories."

There are various ways, we are next told, for proving the historical origin of the Christian faith, and the one the lecturer has elected to follow (as probably the most effective) is that of tracing back the Gospels to the apostolic age—a task, I may say in passing, which no Christian advocate has ever succeeded in performing. "In order to be sure," says our apologist, "that any history is trustworthy, we want to know two things about it: we want to know whether the writers were well informed, and we want to know whether they were honest." Just so; but the reverend gentleman does not say who, in his opinion, were the authors of the Gospels. It would appear, however, from various statements in the lecture that he holds the traditional view—that two of the writers were apostles, and the other two companions of apostles.

Coming now to the evidence which proves that the Gospel writers, whoever they may have been, were "well informed" as to the truth of the events they record, we are told that these events constitute "an old, old story, which comes to us down the ages, across so many centuries, nearly two thousand years," and this being the case, how, it is asked, are we to bridge such a very long period? Well, in the first place, there are ancient manuscripts of this old, old story. "Paleography has pronounced the Alexandrian MS. to have been written in the fifth century of the Christian era. At Rome and at St. Petersburg there are found what are called the Vatican and the Sinaitic MSS., which this same science has determined to be of the fourth century. Here, then, we have these actual documents before us: at one stride we have crossed fifteen hundred years; we are back in the reign of Constantine the Great, and we have simply to know how the Gospel story came down to that period." This reasoning is, of course, perfectly correct: there remains now but to trace the Gospels back another two hundred and fifty years, and the demonstration is complete—a task to Dr. Adeney very simple indeed.

The first stepping-stone in this backward journey is "the brilliant, scholarly thinker and author," Origen, who "not only comments on the Gospels, but discusses textual criticism; comparing MSS., as Westcott and Hort have done later. Here, then, he

not only has the books, but has them come down to him from an earlier period, in various MSS." This, again, is correct, and leaves less than two hundred years.

The next stepping-stone is the Christian Father, Tertullian, "writing in Latin, using a Latin version of the Gospels, testing that by the Greek, and disputing the translation in some points—facts plainly proving not only that the Gospels existed, but that they had been turned into Latin before his time." To this I can only reply, "True, true, O king!"

The next stone in this retrograde journey is Irenæus, "who about the year 180 was made pastor of the Church of Lyons, but had lived in his early days in Asia Minor. Writing to one of his college friends, Irenæus reminds him of those old days, and how they both used to sit at the feet of a venerable teacher named Polycarp.....and well does he recollect, and his friend should recollect, how Polycarp told them that he knew John, the disciple of the Lord, and what tales he used to tell about John. Irenæus, Polycarp, John! Here is a close linking of personal connection. Irenæus ought to know, therefore, what he is talking about, if he has anything to say concerning the Gospels."

As regards the last statement, it may, I think, be conceded that *if* Irenæus had been a disciple of Polycarp, and Polycarp a hearer of the apostle John, the connection was very close indeed, and that Irenæus *ought* to have known something respecting the origin and writers of the Gospels; but, as a simple matter of fact, that eminent Christian father knew nothing whatever about either. This is clearly evident from his own words. He says:—

"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the church. After their decease Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord..... did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (*Against Heresies*, iii., i., 1).

This was written in the year 185 A.D., and is the first mention of the four Gospels by name.

All four Gospels had, of course, been then in existence for a considerable time, say a quarter of a century, or longer; but Christian apologists who contend for the apostolic authorship of those books make the period two or three decades over a century. But here it will be necessary to examine what Irenæus has said respecting the Gospels. There was, we know, a primitive Gospel in use among the Jewish Christians; but this was not the canonical Matthew, but the "Gospel according to the Hebrews." The canonical First Gospel is generally considered an original document, not a translation, and has only been known in the Greek. Again, Peter and Paul were not colleagues in the ministry, but bitter opponents; it may therefore safely be said that they never went about preaching together, either in Rome or elsewhere: this is fully proved by the Pauline epistles. Furthermore, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the Gospel ascribed to Mark was *not* compiled from the preaching of Peter, nor the Gospel attributed to Luke made up from the preaching of Paul. We are asked to believe that Peter went about recounting to the crowds that collected to hear him all the stories, scraps of anecdotes, and sayings now contained in the Second Gospel; that Paul travelled about relating all the matter now found in the Third Gospel; that Mark and Luke, the companions of these two apostles, having heard the same stories, anecdotes, and sayings told and retold times without number came to know them by heart, so that upon the death of their beloved teachers they reproduced all they had heard in the form of Gospels. This is the story that Irenæus tells.

Now, it is scarcely necessary to say that Paul knew nothing of the sayings and doings recorded of Jesus in the Third Gospel. That so-called apostle

never beheld Jesus or heard him speak, neither had he worked in company with any of the other apostles—the supposed hearers of Jesus. If we wish for a sample of Paul's preaching, we have but to turn to the Pauline epistles. Where in those letters are all the scrappy stories and sayings found in the Gospels? They are conspicuous by their absence, save in one instance (1 Cor. xi. 23-26)—an obvious interpolation from Luke's Gospel—and for the knowledge of this one reputed event Paul is made to explain that he "received it of the Lord" by revelation. The Apostle of the Gentiles could have no knowledge of the circumstances recorded in the Third Gospel, and Luke, its compiler, as good as says in his Preface that he did not live in apostolic times, the events he relates having been handed down to his day.

But we can go a step farther. Mark and Luke, in writing down what they remembered of Peter's and Paul's preaching, manage to record nearly all the disconnected events and circumstances common to the two Gospels in precisely the same order, and in many cases in almost the same words. The following circumstances, for instance, are recorded in the Second and Third Gospels in the order here given:—

"The preaching of John the Baptist in fulfilment of prophecy—Christ's shoe latchet and his baptism of the Holy Ghost—Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan—Temp-tation of Jesus—John imprisoned by Herod on account of Herodias—Jesus commences preaching in Galilee—Jesus casts out a demon in a synagogue—Jesus heals Simon's wife's mother, and in the evening heals all who come to him—Jesus departs next morning into a desert place; followed by people; his discourse to them; preaches in the synagogues of Galilee—Jesus heals a leper—Jesus heals a man sick of the palsy—Jesus calls Levi to be an apostle—feast in Levi's house; discourse on righteous and sinners, on fasting, on repairing garments and bottling wine—disciples pluck ears of corn on the sabbath—Jesus heals a man with a withered hand—Jesus goes up a mountain, and chooses twelve apostles—the names of the twelve apostles, etc., etc.

If we add to the foregoing list of unconnected events about three times as many more, we shall then be in a position to judge whether any two teachers—one of whom had never witnessed one of them—could go about relating the whole lot from beginning to end in precisely the same order.

Next, I will take a short example of the verbal agreement between Mark and Luke.

<p>Mark xi. 1-3. "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him."</p>	<p>Luke xix. 29-31. "And it came to pass, when he drew nigh unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, Go your way into the village over against you; in the which as ye enter ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any one ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say, The Lord hath need of him."</p>
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If we turn now to Matthew's version of the same incident (xxi. 1-3) we shall find it recorded in nearly the same words as Mark and Luke. And if we further compare a score of other passages (e.g., Matt. viii. 2-4, Mark i. 40-42, Luke v. 12-16; Matt. ix. 2-8, Mark ii. 3-12, Luke v. 17-26; Matt. ix. 9-13, Mark ii. 13-17, Luke v. 27-32; Matt. ix. 14-17, Mark ii. 18-22, Luke v. 33-39; Matt. xxii. 23-28, Mark xii. 18-23, Luke xx. 27-33, etc., etc.), we shall find examples in plenty of the same verbal agreement. The conclusion to be drawn is, of course, obvious. We have not three independent accounts of the events related; we have but one. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all three drew from copies of the same documents, and three drew from copies of the same documents, and the order recorded in the copy. As editors, they took the liberty of adding or omitting a word here and there, and making other slight alterations, with

the view of improving the diction of the more primitive accounts: hence their compilations were known as the Gospel "according to" the compiler. It further seems probable that Mark's Gospel was compiled first, and that Matthew and Luke made use of this Gospel as their groundwork, adding fresh matter from other sources; but, however this may be, it is easy to see that Irenæus knew nothing whatever of the origin or writers of the four Gospels. And this point being settled, we have next to examine Dr. Adeney's alleged "close relationship" between Irenæus, Polycarp, and the apostle John.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

COULDN'T FINISH THE QUOTATION.

Mayor Anderson of Jackson, Tenn., who has been mentioned favorably as West Tennessee's candidate for governor to succeed Governor John I. Cox, and to whose able administration Jackson owes much of its recent development, possesses a political record so clean and straight that he can well afford to crack a joke at the expense of politics, which he has a habit of doing every now and then, greatly to the delight of his hearers.

Last week a few merry and influential gentlemen assembled in the mayor's office. One of them was a prominent lawyer, another a Supreme Court judge, and a third an able politician.

The lawyer, while telling of the rise and fall of a certain public man, used the expression, "the wages of sin."

"I have heard that phrase all my life," said the politician, "and I've yet to know just what are the wages of sin. Do you know, judge?"

"I give it up," answered the judge, "unless you want a technical definition."

"Tell us, Mr. Mayor," pleaded the politician, turning to Mayor Anderson, "what are the wages of sin?"

"Humph," answered the mayor, "the wages of sin? Oh, they depend on what kind of office the sinner is elected to."

—*Memphis Commercial Appeal.*

BROTHER DICKEY'S PHILOSOPHY.

Even de preachers take a vacation, en leaves de sinners ter settle de problem of hot weather here and hereafter.

A thermometer hung up in de meetin' house whar ever' body kin see gives de saints a mighty oncomfortable feelin' in dis hot weather.

Don't worry too much 'bout de world. W'en you come ter think 'bout it, de world don't waste two minutes worryin' 'bout you.

People go ter de wild woods ter have a picnic; but my observations is, lots er dem is wild enough right whar dey live at.

It's de fashion ter saddle all our sins on Satan; but half de time Satan is fast asleep—till we wake him up.

We all would 'a' been richer ef we'd only been wiser; but maybe we'd been baldheaded, wid no appetite.—*Atlanta Constitution.*

THE LIMIT.

A Scotch minister instructed his clerk, who sat among the congregation during service, to give a low whistle if anything in his sermon appeared to be exaggerated. On hearing the minister say, "In those days there were snakes fifty feet long," the clerk gave a subdued whistle.

"I should have said thirty feet," added the minister.

Another whistle from the clerk.

"On consulting Thompson's *Concordance*, said the minister, in confusion, "I see the length is twenty feet."

Still another whistle; whereon the preacher leaned over and said in a stage whisper: "Ye can whistle as much as ye like, MacPherson, but I'll no take anither foot off for anybody!"—*Harper's Weekly.*

PRAYER ANSWERED.

Young Precocity: Pa, the Lord answered my prayer to-day.

Paterfamilias: How was that?

Young Precocity: The teacher told me I must stay in after school to-night. I prayed that I'd forget to stay in and that she'd forget to have me stay in; and it was so; we both forgot it.—*Ex.*

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.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, Guy Aldred.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "Miracles and Natural Law."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies; Brockwell Park, 3.15, J. Hampden Davis, "The New Religion"; 6, F. A. Davies.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, R. Rosetti, "The Russian Gods."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Coffee House Bull Ring, Thursday, 24, at 8, A. Barker, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Jokes of Jehovah"; 3, Islington-square (if wet, in Hall). Monday, 8, St. Domingo Pit. Wednesday, 8, Edgehill Church.

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. hold meetings every Thursday at the Workmans' Institute, where all Freethinkers will be welcome.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S.: Market-square, Tuesday, Aug. 22, at 7.45, H. Percy Ward, "Christianity Doomed by Science."

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