

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Sensitiveness to the comic laugh is a step in civilisation.—GEORGE MEREDITH.

INFIDELITY AND IMMORALITY.—II.

An Open Letter
TO
Mr. W. T. Stead.

DEAR MR. STEAD,

I am sorry that the exigencies of space obliged me to break off my Open Letter to you in the middle. I now resume it at the point where I left off. I was dealing with the obligation you were under to explain the high morality both of heathen countries to-day and of pagan countries in the past.

Noble men lived in the world before Christianity was born—as noble as any that have lived since. Some of the noblest rulers in the Roman Empire lived before Christianity was a thing of any importance. What Christian ruler would you put beside Antoninus Pius or Marcus Aurelius? We seem to have lost the art of breeding such characters.

There is not an ethical idea in the Gospels which was not well-known before they were written. No one has been able to point to a single moral truth that Christianity revealed. All that Christianity did was to revive and exalt that "supernatural sanction for morality" which had gradually died away under the influence of a more highly developed civilisation and the teaching of a more humanistic succession of Pagan philosophers.

Since the first part of this letter was written and printed a welcome Peace has been proclaimed between Russia and Japan. And to what is it owing? Clearly to the amazing magnanimity of Heathen Japan. Holy Russia was prepared to reopen the war, slay or maim myriads of fresh victims to the modern Moloch, and drench the soil of North-East Asia with another deluge of blood, rather than pay a farthing of indemnity to the victor in this awful struggle. What other defeated nations have had to do she declared to be in her case an impossible humiliation. On this point the Czar was firm. But the wiser and more humane Mikado waived his claim out of deference to the loftier principles of civilisation. In view of this sublime spectacle, let me ask you in all seriousness how it is possible to maintain that Christianity is in any way essential to morality.

Now let me ask you another question. You have nobly protested against the policy of defamation pursued by Christian teachers like Dr. Torrey and Dr. Dixon. I honor you for it, but I fear you do not realise that this policy is nearly as old, and almost as universal, as Christianity itself. Slandering heretics has been a recognised duty of the clerical

profession. Libelling infidels has generally been regarded as a most pious occupation. Dr. Torrey and Dr. Dixon are only conspicuous representatives of a vast army of calumniators. Neither of them has invented anything. They have but repeated malicious falsehoods which did duty long before they adopted them. Those about Thomas Paine are nearly a hundred years old. They were started before the breath was out of his body, and in a few years were blown around the English-speaking world. Those about Ingersoll were started as soon as he became a famous Freethought orator. And his traducers were, all of them, either Christian clergymen or persons doing active duty in connexion with Christian churches and missions. I beg you to *note* that fact. It throws a flood of light on the whole affair. In my opinion, these reverend slanderers are not entirely animated by a spirit of disinterested bigotry; they have business reasons for vilifying "infidels"; their object is to keep Christians from listening to them, and this is subserved by representing them as moral lepers, breathing a deadly contagion on all within the reach of their voices.

I repeat that this game is an old one; and naturally, too, for its utility is obvious to the meanest intelligence. If you take the trouble to wade through the history of early Christian controversies, you will find that the "heretics"—that is, the minorities who were crushed out by anathemas first, and by more effective persecutions afterwards—were always represented by the orthodox party—that is, by the majority—as infamous wretches, foul with every vice, and black with every crime. "Heretics," as Gieseler says, "were universally hated as men wholly corrupt and lost." No doubt you will recollect a supreme instance. Arius was defeated in the long and bitter struggle with Athanasius, and his very name became a synonym for moral infamy, although he was at least as good a man, personally, as his great opponent.

Jump across the chasm of many centuries, and listen to Carlyle's grim comment on the story of Mohammed's keeping a tame pigeon to pick peas out of his ear, and pretending that the bird was whispering divine messages. Grotius, a most grave and reverend author of Christian Evidences, published the story as though it were infallibly true. Pocock travelled from England to ask him for his authority, and Grotius admitted that he had none. But that is nothing to what *had* been said about "the Arab thief," as John Wesley called him. Just look at the fourth chapter of *God's Arrow Against Atheism and Irreligion* by the Rev. Henry Smith, who flourished at the end of the sixteenth century, who was called the English Chrysostom, and whose Life was written by the famous Thomas Fuller. That chapter is crammed with lies about Mohammed; lies so extravagant as to be positively amusing—at least at this time of day. One accusation belongs to the lowest gutter of vilification. "I must utter

it," Smith said. But you and I cannot follow him. The charge is unprintable to-day in any paper meant for general reading. And what evidence did Smith give in support of it? "Bonfinius writeth it"—that is all he said. But he knew it was quite enough for his readers.

Smith was a decent sort of man in a general way. His sermons show that he was something of a moralist. Probably he was veracious in the ordinary affairs of life. But when it came to writing about "the false prophet" he stuck at nothing. No weapon was too dirty, no lie was too monstrous. The end justified the means. Christians had to be persuaded that every prophet but Christ was a wicked impostor, and the great thing was to do the business thoroughly.

Well now, the question I want to ask you is this: Did you ever hear of Freethinkers acting in such a manner towards their intellectual opponents? Was it ever recorded that a leading Freethinker, having to reply to a leading Christian, sought everywhere for evidence to blacken his character? I venture to say that it never occurred to a Freethinker to do anything of the kind. And I also venture to say that the Freethought party would be utterly ashamed of any representative of theirs who stooped to such abominable tactics.

If you answer the previous question in the negative, as I believe you must, I have to ask you another. Why is it that Christians have made quite a fine art of calumny, while Freethinkers have always looked upon it with loathing and disdain? Is this a proof of the superiority of Christianity to "Infidelity"? Is this a support of the theory that the "supernatural sanction" is the ultimate guarantee of human morality?

I will now deal with the pretty horticultural analogy, borrowed apparently from Mr. Kegan Paul, with which you introduce the second part of your argument. Mr. Kegan Paul, I believe, had been almost everything by turns, and finally died in the arms of what Carlyle called "the Great Lying Church" of Rome. It might be concluded, therefore, that he was an excellent all-round authority. But I do not think he was. The man who is everything knows the inner secret of nothing. His illustration of the swift-blossoming rosebud is simply another form of the old argument that when "infidels" are moral it is because they came of Christian stock and were bred in a Christian environment. But this does not include cases like that of John Stuart Mill, who was the son of a sceptical father, and was brought up without any religion at all. Nor is it calculated to make any sort of impression on the mind of a Freethinker, or even on that of an indifferent spectator; for a little reflection serves to show it to be a specimen of that very common fallacy which consists in begging the question. When the Christian tells the Freethinker that he is a good man because he follows the Christian tradition, he might see, if he looked an inch beyond his nose, that the Freethinker could just as easily tell him that he was a good man because he followed the Human tradition. The Freethinker's position is that all religions—all the argosies of faith—have floated upon the broad ocean of Humanity; and that every precious thing that any of them contains is of purely natural origin, and necessarily also of purely human value.

You will pardon me for saying that the mule illustration is only the rosebud illustration carried into another department of biology. You will also

pardon me for saying that metaphors are admirable aids to eloquence, but are not acceptable as substitutes for logical ratiocination. You are definite when you declare that "the Freethinker seldom has, and his children still more rarely have, the propagandist fervor" which you perceive in the Christian Church. And where you are definite you can be answered.

I will take your two statements—for there are two statements—separately. Your first statement is that the Freethinker seldom has propagandist fervor. Now suppose this were true. What would it prove? Do you mean to assert that the average Christian has a large stock of propagandist fervor? If you do, I contravene the assertion. He appears to me to have very little of that article. Take away the stimulus constantly applied to him by the vast army of professional exhorters, and how much spontaneous zeal of proselytism does he display? Why, the apathy of the average Christian is a standing theme of clerical lamentation. It is admitted that the Laodiceans are in an overwhelming majority. Is the case any worse among Freethinkers? That is the question you should deal with. I deny that it is worse among them. In proportion to their number they boast as many fervid propagandists as the Christians. And this "as many" is really more. For nearly all the by-motives that encourage a man to work for Christianity discourage him from working for Freethought. Active association with Christianity pays; active association with Freethought too often spells ruin.

Christians seem to me to argue with Freethinkers on the principle of "heads we win and tails you lose." They call Freethinkers "blatant fanatics" when they are active, and "selfish wretches" when they are quiescent. You charge them with a want of "propagandist fervor." Burke charged them with wanting to upset the world. Where you see blue he saw red. But perhaps you are both wrong—and also both right; for Freethinkers do want to upset the world, in a certain sense, and at the same time they recognise that their primary appeal is to reason, and that it is useless for them to compete with orthodoxy in cheap sensation or wild emotion.

Your second statement concerns the children of Freethinkers. You assert that they have "the propagandist fervor" still more rarely than their parents.

Throw your mind back to the early days of your own religion. Do you imagine that parents accepted Christianity, that their children all necessarily became Christians, and that Christian families ran on in regular hereditary succession? I do not imagine anything of the kind. I have no doubt that families were divided, that Christianity often sprang up and died down again, that its progress was very irregular, and that it only advanced on the whole. And the same is true of Freethought. It also advances on the whole; not through the agency of special families, but through an impersonal influence over the whole community.

No doubt Christianity became hereditary when it was once thoroughly established. That is quite intelligible. The hereditary principle is assisted in such a case by a hundred other influences; amongst which are education, authority, and custom—the three most powerful forces in human society.

Freethought at present is naturally sporadic. Why should you expect it to be otherwise? The Freethinker, or at least the open Freethinker, is an exceptional person. He must have some originality of mind, some independence of spirit, and some positive

courage. Is it reasonable to expect such qualities to be hereditary? Genius is not hereditary—to take an extreme illustration. Nothing in the Shelley family could suggest the advent of the author of *Prometheus Unbound*; nothing in the Shelley family since is reminiscent of that astonishing phenomenon. Heredity is far wider than individual parentage. A man is the child of all his forefathers. And that wide heredity is always pulling individuals back to the norm of the race. Biological science, therefore, is dead against the supposition that Freethinkers' children ought to be Freethinkers. Even if they have a tendency that way, the whole power of society is constantly working upon them, and drawing them back towards the common way of the world.

I must now conclude. Perhaps I have been too long already. But you know, as well as I do, that an answer must often be longer than a question. I have replied to your arguments as I could within my limits of time and space. And I wish to conclude with a note of gratitude. Thanking you for your noble defence of truth and justice,

I am,

Yours most sincerely,

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Sex.

THAT the average Christian knows little or nothing of the inner meaning of his religion is, to all students of religions, little more than a commonplace. The old language is still employed, the old doctrines still taught, but their real meaning has departed, never to return until religions have taken their place as normal products of the primitive imagination, to be studied as a branch of a developed anthropology. Not one Christian in a thousand has the slightest consciousness of the origin and real significance of such symbols as the cross, or of such doctrines as the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the divine sinner-bearer, or of even such customs as the Christian sabbath. Interpretations of all these are given, of course, by Christian ministers and speakers, but they are of a late date, and far removed from their primitive and proper significance. Christians do not understand their religion and never will until they have ceased to believe in it.

If the above holds good of ordinary religions, symbols and beliefs, it holds with much greater force of such a subject as the influence of sex on religion, a subject that requires very careful historical and physiological investigation. And, unfortunately, those who are best qualified to express opinions on the subject are usually very chary of doing so. Anthropologists, historians and physiologists are alike very diffident in the matter, and while it is not difficult to gather hints from their writings, and to collect much important evidence therefrom, it is but very seldom that they are bold enough to brave public opinion and speak out fully what so many of them know to be the truth. And thus, while those who could speak with all the weight of recognised authorities, shrink from doing so, the task necessarily devolves upon such as are able to set public opinion—which is usually a synonym for public prejudice—at defiance.

The case of Pigott, the head of the Spaxton Agapemonites, may well serve as an illustration of the above, as well as an introduction to a brief study of the influence of sex on religion. And it is as well to clear the ground somewhat by saying at once that I do not for a moment believe that the Spaxton community, or any other similar body, was ever constituted by a body of more or less lecherous men and women who went in for a systematic course of debauchery under the disguise of a religious assembly.

Relations between the sexes may exist in such communities that would offend accepted social canons of morality; sexual instincts may be detected in operation under religious forms, and individuals may be found among them whose conduct is altogether bad. But when this has been said, all has been said. For the rest, the only sane view is to take them as, in the main, a body of earnest individuals, misguided, deluded, semi-insane probably, but who are as much in earnest over their particular religious delusion as are any of the "respectable" religious bodies, and perhaps more so.

When one looks broadly at the case of Pigott, with his divine son, it is impossible to believe that many of those who have commented on the case in the public press can have failed to draw certain conclusions therefrom that are anything but flattering to Christianity. That they have not spoken is only an illustration of what has been said concerning the general hesitancy in braving public opinion. But the whole case, if people will but see it, presents a curious analogy with the legend of the birth of Jesus—with one important difference. The attribute of divinity is claimed for both Jesus and Pigott—indeed, the latter says he *is* Jesus. And intrinsically, one statement is just as reasonable as the other. Glory Prece is claimed to be "divine," just as the youngster whose birth is placed at Bethlehem over nineteen centuries ago is said to have been divine. And the evidence in favor of the one is precisely as strong as the evidence in favor of the other. Nay, it is even more circumstantial on behalf of little Glory than on behalf of the infant Jesus. In the one case both mother and father attest it. In the other, the reputed father only dreamed about it, and the mother does not seem to have been aware of the fact. Why intelligent men and women should sneer at the one incident and swear by the truth of the other, is explainable on only one circumstance. This is the difference of time and place. The divine birth of Jesus is dated some couple of thousands of years ago, it is located among a people intensely superstitious, the least cultured of the then civilised world and with whom the miraculous and the supernatural were every day occurrences. The other takes place in our own day, among a people to whom the supernatural—save in the shape of legends and traditions—is quite foreign, and it is denounced as a humbug and an imposture! The sole difference in the two cases is that of time, of different stages of culture.

An equally important lesson is this. Conscious or unconscious impostor, Pigott is believed by large numbers of people to be a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. Over two hundred people travelled down to Spaxton to adore the new-born child as an incarnation of the Divinity. Their journey was at least an evidence of sincere belief. This takes place in the year of grace, and culture, 1905. One has only to transport this type of mind back nineteen centuries, among an uneducated instead of an educated people, to realise that we are witnessing a re-birth of substantially the conditions under which Christianity itself came into the world. It is an object-lesson in the birth of a myth, and an indication of the conditions under which it gains acceptance. Pigott and his followers represent a type of mind that was once fairly common, but which is now comparatively rare. It is a simple case of atavism, and, like all reversions, not without its instructiveness.

The Pigott incident is, however, still more interesting as suggesting an inquiry into the general relations of sex to religious beliefs. And in this connection it may be noted that Pigott is only one of a long line of religious visionaries whose extravagance has been more or less connected with sexual matters. Right through the history of Christianity these outbreaks have been constantly occurring; and, curiously enough, in recent years they have been more numerous in Protestant than in Catholic countries. Germany, America, and England are to the front in providing us with these spiritual "free lovers"; while, to go a little further back, their numbers and

influence was perhaps greatest during the period of the Protestant Reformation. Those who care to consult Mr. Hepworth Dixon's curious work, *Spiritual Wives*, will find much information concerning the modern spiritual "free lovers," although he is far from solving the question of why these religio-sexual outbreaks should form such a regularly recurring feature of Christian history.

The truth, so far as concerns Christianity, would seem to lie in the fact that from the outset of its career until very recent times, Christianity has, at best, only tolerated the sexual instinct as an irremovable and, therefore, permissible evil; while at worst it has denounced it as a positively evil adjunct to human nature. And in so doing there has been the customary evil results. A perfectly healthy and moral function of the human organism has been branded as evil and unclean, efforts have been made to suppress an irrepressible instinct; and it has, as a result, expressed itself in an unhealthy instead of a healthy manner. This, in a sentence, is one aspect of the case. But another, and an equally important one, is that a great deal of what has been taken for, and has passed into history as, manifestations of religious feeling, is positively nothing more than the manifestations of the sexual instincts under the conditions indicated above. Most medical men must be aware of this last fact in the course of their practice, although, for obvious reasons, but few of them make it public.

We will take each of these points in the order named. To begin with, there is the fact that not only is the doctrine of a virgin birth based upon the assumption that the act of parentage is unclean, but there is the further fact that the whole of Christianity is saturated with the same conception and teaching. The central figure in the New Testament is a celibate. The cry of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, after the resurrection is, "Woman, touch me not," again expressing the belief that the touch of a woman renders one unclean, a belief put into practical shape by the church at a later date, forbidding a woman to touch the Eucharist with her naked hands. The teaching that the gratification of the sexual impulse is essentially evil is seen in St. Paul's recognition of marriage as the only way of avoiding a still greater evil, and in the passage in Revelations, where the 144,000 who wait on the "Lamb" are described as not "defiled with women, but were virgins." The early Christian writers exhaust themselves in denouncing woman and belittling marriage. One of the greatest—Jerome—declaring that marriage is "at the best a vice, all that we can do is to purify it." In a later period married people were asked to refrain from cohabitation three days before the communion and forty days after Easter. Marriages were also forbidden during Lent, and even to-day, the spirit of this edict still obtains among many religiously scrupulous people. And Moshem remarks that "in the third century there was an almost general persuasion that they who took wives were of all others, most subject to malignant demons."

There is only one interpretation of these and numerous other similar cases that might be cited, and this is the one given above. And as the result of sexual relations being looked upon in this light, a large portion of Christian history is filled with the records of the abnormal expression of a perverted instinct. Origen's example of self-mutilation, based on Matthew xix. 12, was followed by a whole sect, the Valesians, who not content with mutilating themselves, treated all who fell into their hands in a similar manner. The numerous canons forbidding this practice is evidence of how common it was. And these physical mutilations were, moreover, indications of the moral and mental mutilations produced by the Christian warfare against nature. A careful reader of the lives of the Saints will not fail to observe how many of their visions, and imaginings were due to this cause. The commonest feature with these "saints" is their irregular sexual life before conversion, and their relapses afterwards. And when the relapse is not in action, it is in

thought. The monotony of the stories of saints who were tempted by demons in the form of beautiful naked women, and of nuns who were tempted by demons in the shape of handsome men, is only atoned for by the instruction they offer to the informed reader. The prayers of monks, too, are as invariably directed to the Virgin as the prayers of nuns are to Jesus. The fervent prayers of both, brimming over with expressions of love, often expressed in the language of that erotic love song the Song of Solomon, and the further fact that these are most frequent in books of devotion written while people are young and physically strong, are all proofs that a very large part of Christian devotional feeling is nothing more than perverted sexual instincts expressing themselves under the form of religion.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Another Divine Service.

ON Sunday evening, August 27, I had the opportunity of attending the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the scene of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's famous ministry. The preacher on this occasion was the Rev. A. C. Dixon, D.D., whose name is very familiar to the readers of this journal in connection with Dr. Torrey's dastardly attack on the renowned Freethinker, the late Colonel Ingersoll, and whose exceptionally scurrilous letter to Mr. Stead is published in the current number of the *Review of Reviews*. I was anxious to hear this "second-hand libeller" of the illustrious champion of Freethought; and I heard exactly what I expected to hear.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle is a large and comfortable building, affording seating accommodation to some four thousand people. Dr. Dixon attracted a fairly crowded congregation. He is a good-looking, almost handsome man of middle age, with a fine voice and an impressive delivery. He held the people spell-bound for fifty minutes. He bombarded us with two impassioned addresses, the first being a sermonette based on Luke xvi. 19-31, which, he assured us, would form a fitting background for the coming sermon. The subject was Hell. Dr. Dixon gives no quarters to the gospel of the Larger Hope. He is a firm believer in the old-fashioned, orthodox "place of torment," which is destined to grow worse and worse to all eternity. Into this burning hell shall go all who reject Christ. Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll are being tormented in that consuming flame at this moment, for they refused to accept salvation at the hands of the crucified Redeemer; and their suffering is bound to become more and more severe throughout the endless ages. Dr. Dixon did not mention them by name; but he told us that *all* unbelievers constitute the "carrion" or "refuse" of the Universe, whose only proper destination is the flame that cannot be quenched. He spoke with the authority of one who *knows*. Then he proceeded to vindicate hell-fire on ethical grounds. "*Torment*," he vehemently exclaimed, "*torment is NOT torture*." When I heard that I was astounded, and asked myself, What on earth, or in hell, is torment if not torture? If Dr. Dixon does not know, he ought to know, that the English word, *torment*, comes from the Latin *tormentum*, which was the name of an engine for hurling missiles, an instrument of *torture*. Had he, as an American, consulted Webster's Dictionary, he would have been prevented from making such a stupid blunder. If we believe the Bible, which to Dr. Dixon, is the infallible Word of God, we must regard hell as the "place of torment," the abode of punitive suffering. Who inflicts the punishment? God. Who is the tormentor? God. Who keeps the fire ever going? God. And who is God? Our infinitely loving Heavenly Father. The thought is indescribably horrifying; and yet Dr. Dixon defended such a hell on ethical grounds.

Dr. Dixon is an excellent evangelical preacher of the strictly orthodox school. He has the courage of his convictions—in the pulpit. The subject of his sermon was the Crucifixion. As He hung upon the Cross Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Dr. Dixon enlarged eloquently upon that saying, and deduced from it the doctrine that it is our duty, as Christian disciples, to think well of people, to search for their good points and ignore their bad points, to forgive them readily when they sin against us, whether they repent and ask our pardon or not. While he was speaking in that strain I could not help thinking of his bitter, malicious, spiteful letter in the *Review of Reviews*, which Mr. Stead so justly condemns, nor could I prevent my heart from asking, "Dr. Dixon, have you practised your own teaching in your conduct towards Colonel Ingersoll? When you determined to read his works and investigate his record was it not in order that you might denounce both him and his opinions, and so prejudice your young men against him? Even if he had been guilty of all you insinuate against him, would it not have been your duty, as a Christian minister, to think kindly of him, to pray for him, and to do your utmost to bring about his repentance and salvation? But Colonel Ingersoll was totally innocent of the vile action you laid to his charge, only it served your purpose to believe what Mr. Comstock told you, and to dish out to your young men unproven charges against your brother man for whom Christ died. Can you honestly defend your behavior in the presence of the loving Savior whom you so earnestly commend to others?"

I am not sitting in judgment on Dr. Dixon's moral character. I believe that he always acts like a perfect gentleman in all his dealings with his fellow-Christians. I even admit that he may be living up to his doctrine of forgiveness in his relations with believers. I merely point out that the sermon I heard was the severest possible condemnation of his own letter in the *Review of Reviews*, unless, of course, he is convinced that Freethinkers are not included among the objects of God's forgiving love in Christ, and, consequently, are not entitled to the ordinary civilities and courtesies of civilised life.

Dr. Dixon's sermon bristled with telling points. It was a series of titbits which the congregation keenly relished. Another cry from the Cross was "I thirst," in which Jesus evinced his care for the body, and from which the preacher inferred the doctrine that Christianity is a cure for the maladies of the body as well as for those of the soul. What precisely was meant by this doctrine was not made clear. In illustration of the point a curious anecdote was related of a man who in response to the physician's oft-repeated question, "How are you now?" kept saying, "Better, thank you sir," "Better still," "Still better," and "Almost well, sir," and then died. I utterly failed to perceive how that anecdote illustrated the power of Christianity to heal the body. Another cry from the Cross was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" According to the preacher, when Jesus uttered that cry, He was enduring the pangs of the damned in hell. Lost souls are exiles from God. On Calvary Jesus experienced all the horrors of banishment from his Father. Yes, verily, He went into hell in our stead, that we might escape it.

Christ's sufferings on the Cross were innumerable and inconceivably severe; but the soul of his sufferings was the suffering of his soul—this heart-breaking sense of banishment from God which He endured in our stead. And yet Jesus was so Divinely great that while thus enduring He was able to think about and provide for his mother. "Woman," He said, "behold thy son," pointing to John. "Then said He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his home." Now, in those exceedingly simple words of Jesus, Dr. Dixon saw the ennoblement and sanctification of womanhood, wifehood, motherhood, and home. He shouted out, "Young man, young woman, believe me, all in life that is really worth cherishing comes from Calvary.

Where Christ is not, woman is a slave, the child is at a discount, home is a mockery, and life a curse." This statement was hugely enjoyed by his hearers, as was evident from their smiling faces and approving nods. It was manna to their hungry souls to be told that they were the only really good and happy people in the world. Dr. Dixon has a few friends whose religion contains nothing but ethics. They repudiate the Cross and all that it involves. Well, they are outwardly very good people, honest in their work, reliable in business, loving in their homes, and sexually pure; but he had discovered that they have no inward peace, no ebullient joy, no rich, deep, radiant life, because these are blessings which come alone from the Cross. I admit that in making such absurd assertions Dr. Dixon was loyal to the Bible and orthodox theology; but he must have been utterly blind to the facts of history. Home is by no means a Christian institution. Woman occupied a high and honorable position in ancient Rome, and children were held in high esteem and well looked after long before Christ was born. These are facts freely admitted by the best Christian scholars.

In the last portion of his discourse Dr. Dixon favored us with his philosophy of the Cross. According to him, Jesus was God manifested in the flesh. His sufferings were the punishment due to men for their sins, which He voluntarily endured on their behalf. Here Dr. Dixon told a story about a father one of whose sons was a notorious liar. No punishment inflicted upon the boy himself was of any avail. The father was broken-hearted. He scarcely knew what to do. But one day he conceived a new plan. He resolved to take the punishment of every future lie upon himself, and to compel the boy to administer it. With the most painful reluctance the boy delivered blow after blow upon his innocent father. Ere long, however, the boy broke down and sobbingly said, "O father, I promise you, I will never tell another lie as long as I live"; "and he never has told another lie," added the preacher, "though it is now more than twenty years since that incident occurred." So, likewise, mankind being incorrigibly wicked and enslaved by sin, God, their loving Heavenly Father, resolved to endure the punishment of their sins himself, in order to redeem them from under their dominion, and restore them to his own image. The famous Joseph Cook, the Boston Monday Lecturer, promulgated a similar theory of the atonement, and made it very popular for a while. But who can believe such a theory? Here was God as Son making atonement to himself as Father for the sins of his children, or offering himself a sacrifice of infinite merit to himself in order that He might be able to forgive his children and bestow upon them the gift of eternal life. If God existed, it would be deepest blasphemy to think him capable of such farcical behavior. Surely, a deity would not present the Universe with such a ludicrous spectacle as this theory contemplates.

A critical examination of Dr. Dixon's sermon as a whole compels one to say that it was a tissue of assumptions not one of which could be justified at the bar of reason. The root-idea of the Gospel of Christ involves a denial of the moral law. The theories of the atonement are well nigh innumerable; but they all outrage our sense of justice. It would be an awful wrong to punish the innocent for the guilty and then pronounce the guilty innocent, as would be done if Justification by Faith were a true doctrine. Dr. Dixon used the word "ethical" several times in the course of his address; but can he say, with his eyes open, that it would be ethically right to assure a man who has spent his whole life in injuring his fellow-beings, or in dispoiling society of its most precious treasures—a man who is

"From scalp to sole one slough and crust of Sin,"

—would it be morally right, I ask, to assure such a man, on his dying bed, that if he believes that Christ died for his justification he will undoubtedly enter Paradise the moment he dies, and be for ever happy, just as he would have done and been had he never

done wrong! Our moral sense revolts against such a thought. The Gospel is, therefore, a monstrously anti-ethical scheme. Dr. Dixon said he would infinitely prefer to be miserable every hour of his life on earth and be happy for ever in heaven, than to be happy in time and damned in eternity. But the true man would infinitely prefer to be damned morally than saved immorally, whether here or hereafter. Hence the true man is slowly learning to reject all supernatural assumptions, and to build his house upon the rock of natural truth and knowledge, confident that whatever happens no harm can befall either him or his house.

J. T. LLOYD.

Charles Lamb.

1775-1834.

"Alas! poor Yorick—a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy."—SHAKESPEARE.

IN everything on which Charles Lamb wrote there is apparent the subtle personality of the man. He squeezes out, as it were, the vital essence of his subject and exhibits all the vivid human intimations that might pass otherwise unnoticed. He illuminates by the magic of his personality the work of very varied minds. He is in immediate contact with what is real, especially in its caressing littleness, that littleness in which there is much of the woeful heart of things. Much that he writes awakens a sense of personal affection in the reader. He possesses a peculiar intimacy of understanding. Writing of youth, of death, of familiar faces, of little homely things, he keeps marvellously close to life. It was, we feel, just so with us in childhood, at school, in this sad or glad experience. This marvellous power, accompaniment of the humanist temperament of getting at the heart of things, makes him keenly alive to the joys and sorrows of life. Few have ever given so much of themselves to their work. But the man is greater than his work.

What would it not be worth to have one hour of his company? In his gay humor or in his more serious vein it were all one. Suppose we could have dined with him that day when the dish was the sucking pig that Farmer Bruton sent him, and heard the good wishes he wafted to the kind giver:

"May your granaries be full, and your rats empty, and your chickens plump, and your envious neighbours lean, and your labourers busy, and you as idle and as happy as the day is long."

Or suppose we had been present when Coleridge asked him, "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" and he replied in his stuttering way, "I n'ever heard you d-oo anything else." Or what if we had taken a hand at whist when Bweney was his partner and he called out uproariously, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have! Or, better still, had been with him that Saturday night of which he tells us, when he brought home the folio Beaumont and Fletcher that he had coveted for weeks, while he saved the price of it; and he could not think of going to bed until he had assured himself of its perfectness, or till his sister had fastened in its few loose leaves with paste, and he would insist on reading his favorite passages. Or, best of all, had we been among those to whom his door was open on the famous Wednesday evenings in the Inner Temple Lane. Wordsworth was one of the number when he was in town, and Coleridge and Haydon and Hazlitt and Barry Cornwall and Talfourd. Many a sage criticism on men and things, on art and literature, was lit up by jests, and puns, and quips, and repartees. It must have been a rich memory, an abiding delight, to have been with Lamb at times like these. Carlyle was no ordinary man, but he was probably the last man to understand Lamb. His austerity, his want of humor, his dogmatism, shut him off from sympathetic comprehension. Nor was Lamb likely to take any pains to conciliate him. When

they met the atmosphere was electric. On one occasion, while they waited for their host, Carlyle occupied himself, standing at the window, in watching the curving flight of some pigeons. Lamb, hurt, perhaps at his silence, went up to him, and tapping him on his elbow, inquired, "Mr. C. Carlyle, are you a p-p-poulterer." Another time as they were together in the hall preparing to leave a party after the sage had monopolised the conversation, Lamb handed Carlyle his hugh wide-awake hat with the remark, "Is this your t-t-turban?" This was too much for Carlyle. Accordingly we find the philosopher writing in his journal: "Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane. A more pitiful, rickety, gasping, staggering, stammering tomfool I do not know." There is more felicitous writing like this, but with it all Carlyle was as wrong with regard to Lamb as he was wrong about Heine and Voltaire. Lamb's talk was not always as foolish as it sounded, and curiously, before he is done damning him, Carlyle quotes two of his sayings, which, under a jest convey shrewd observations on English history. Lamb said, "There are just two things I regret in England's history; first that Guy Fawkes's plot did not take effect—there would have been so glorious an explosion; second, that the Royalists did not hang Milton—then we might have laughed at them."

It was to the inner circle of his friends that the real Lamb was known. And what a good nature it was with all its uncouth exterior. There was no lack of genius. His insight, his sympathy, his humor, shine in his conversation no less than in his writings. The modest recluse exerted a greater influence on English literature than is commonly recognised. He did much to restore interest in the old writers, to revise the study of Shakespeare, and to set poetry free from the bands which held her captive. But his qualities of heart were even greater than his qualities of mind. He was ready both with sympathy and help, generous and unselfish. Like Dumas he had pensioners on his bounty, among whom were an old schoolmistress of his own, and a cripple whose only claim on him was that he was recommended by his friend Southey. Barry Cornwall tells a characteristic story of him. He was in Lamb's company one day in low spirits, which Lamb thought due to want of money. Turning to him suddenly Lamb said, "My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things—I have now in my desk a h-h-hundred pounds—that I don't know what to do with, take it?"

The chief feature in Lamb's character was his fidelity. It is the unobtrusive heroism with which he discharged the duties and bore the burdens of his life that win for him still admiration and affection. One knows not whether to dwell more on the sadness of his lot or on the patience and courage which sustained him under it. His great trial is soon told. There was a taint of insanity in his family, which he himself did not wholly escape. As a young man he had to be placed for a short period under restraint. His recovery was final. He never again suffered any lapse of reason, though the hereditary tendency accounts for his irritableness and eccentricity. But the disease appeared in his sister Mary. In a fit of frenzy the poor woman killed her mother. A few weeks under restraint served to restore her to her right mind, but insanity recurred at intervals ever afterwards. Loyally to the end did Charles discharge his duties of guardian.

Very beautiful was the relationship that grew up between them. She was not without genius. She shared with him all his interests and friendships, and cared for him with tender assiduity. To his sister he gave his life. She was his constant companion. When the attacks of insanity came he provided a retreat for her in a private asylum. There was usually warning of their coming, and a friend of Lamb's has related how on one occasion he met the brother and sister, at such a time, walking hand-in-hand across the fields to the asylum, both in tears.

When Charles died at the age of sixty, Mary, though ten years his senior, survived him. But the affliction which had cut such "sad, large pieces" out of her life, now that her brother was dead, recurred with increasing frequency, and at length overwhelmed her completely. She lingered on in mental darkness till she died at the advanced age of eighty-two. To the heart whose sympathies go out to human goodness, Charles Lamb will ever be dear, because of the quiet heroism of his life.

If Charles Lamb waged an unequal war against Fate, he was at least a happy soldier. In that "little farm" of his own mind where "a silence so profound can be enjoyed," he possessed a serenity of mind, a capacity of heroism above his fellows. When his turn came, he yielded up his broken sword to Fate the Conqueror with a brave and a humble heart.

MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops

Dr. A. C. Dixon has not accepted Mr. Stead's challenge in the August *Review of Reviews*. The reverend gentleman stated that he had received a certain letter from Colonel Ingersoll admitting that he represented the publishers of obscene literature. Mr. Stead challenged him to produce it or a certified copy of it. Dr. Dixon does not produce it. He does not even say that he can produce it. He knows a trick worth two of that. What he does is to arrange for an "Interview" in a low-class Christian journal in order to throw fresh mud on Ingersoll's reputation.

We will devote a little space to this precious interview. First of all, we wish to point out that Dr. Dixon adopts Dr. Torrey's device in order to hide his lack of evidence. When a call was made upon Dr. Torrey to substantiate his charges against Ingersoll, he replied that he had obtained all the "facts" from America, but he would not publish them as he did not wish to do Ingersoll an injury. He did not mind injuring Ingersoll by means of a filthy accusation; what he did mind was injuring him by producing the evidence. Which is a contemptible trick that could hardly impose upon the intelligence of an open-eyed child. Well now, Dr. Dixon is up to the very same dodge. "Ingersoll is dead now," he says, "and I do not feel like bringing up things against him." That is how this pious hypocrite talks when he is asked for his proofs. All of a sudden, like Dr. Torrey before him, he develops a wonderful tenderness for Ingersoll's reputation.

Dr. Dixon does not feel like bringing up things against Ingersoll. But the following words had only just left this hypocrite's mouth:—

"You know Ingersoll was a most foul and obscene man. After his marriage he was not an adulterer, but before his marriage when in his native town of Peoria he was a drunken, debauched, licentious wretch. I have seen the jails where he was confined. I have investigated his whole life, and wrote out a history of him, but decided not to have it published."

This is the man who does not feel like bringing up things against Ingersoll!

Asked whether he has the manuscript of that pious biography of Ingersoll, Dr. Dixon replies: "No, it is scattered and destroyed." All that can be got out of him is his own bare unsupported word. He does indeed refer to the "public records of the evidence" in his law suit with Ingersoll. But no "evidence" was ever given. The case did not go as far as that. There were written pleadings, of a preliminary character, and we dealt with them in two articles in the *Freethinker* in the month of June. Not a single allegation in support of his libel on Ingersoll was made by Dr. Dixon in those pleadings, with the exception of the one that Ingersoll had signed a petition for a modification of the Comstock Laws. That petition, he says, is still preserved. It is. And we have quoted it. Dr. Dixon never quotes it. He prefers to misrepresent it. Mr. Stead has quoted it also in the August *Review of Reviews*; and he adds that he would gladly have put his name after Ingersoll's on that petition. So far as that petition is concerned, therefore, Ingersoll and Mr. Stead are equally "obscene." But the bold Dr. Dixon knows better than to apply that epithet to the living Englishman. He prefers to apply it to the dead American.

Dr. Dixon admits that 50,000 people signed that petition against the Comstock Laws. We believe the number was

70,000—but 50,000 will do. Does any man in his senses really believe that 50,000 people, in any civilized country, signed a petition in favor of circulating positive, unmistakable obscenity? Are there 50,000 such citizens in the United States? The thing is simply incredible. Any man with a grain of intelligence must see that the 50,000 citizens who signed that petition (and Ingersoll was only one of them) must have had a serious object. What their object was is stated in their petition. They desired to prevent the Comstock laws from being used against proper freedom of speech. Dr. Dixon says they were not so used; but the petitioners said they were; and the point in dispute is not settled by Dr. Dixon's calling them "obscene." That is nothing but controversial ruffianism.

Now for the "drunken, licentious, debauched wretch" accusation. Suppose, in the first place, it were true that Ingersoll led a wild life in his early youth, before his marriage, and before he became a Freethought orator. It is not true, but *suppose* it. What has it to do with what Dr. Dixon calls "Ingersollism"? Do not hundreds of revivalists boast—yes, actually *boast*—that they were the vilest of sinners before their "conversion"? And if their conversion to Christianity acts as a sort of Statute of Limitations, why should not Ingersoll's conversion to Freethought serve the same purpose? For our own part, we declare—and we extend it to all denominations—that a young man's "wild oats" cannot be pleaded against a subsequent life of serious usefulness, according to his lights and opportunities. To say that it can is to try to make moral improvement impossible. Nay, we go farther. We call such an attempt infamous. A man once knew of a woman's frailty in her ignorant youth. When she was an honored mother of a grown-up family that man told the world of her buried blunder—and she committed suicide. That man was a murderer.

Ingersoll did *not* lead a wild youth. Dr. Dixon says he has seen the jails where Ingersoll was confined. He reminds us of the man who assured his hearers that a ghost story was true, for there (pointing to it) was the very house in which it happened. Dr. Dixon may have seen the jails. Where is the proof that Ingersoll was ever confined in them? Court records are kept. What was the date of the conviction? And what was the offence? Dr. Dixon is bound to answer these questions. Otherwise he stands before the world as a wilful, malignant liar.

John Warner, mayor of Peoria in 1881, a few years after Ingersoll left the town, stated in writing that he had known Ingersoll for twenty-five years, and that no man in Peoria was better respected. A handsome eulogy of Ingersoll closed with the following words:

"The religious views of the Colonel I care nothing about; his politics I dislike. But the man himself I admire, honor, and esteem; and such I believe to be the sentiments of nine-tenths of the people of his old home, Peoria. Our great regret is that he has left us."

The Peoria *Transcript*, on Ingersoll's leaving Peoria for Washington, in 1877, said:—

"As a citizen and neighbor Colonel Ingersoll had won the hearts of everyone, and whatever may have been said about either his politics or his religion, or rather, if you will, his irreligion, he had not a single enemy among us."

When news came of the death of Ingersoll, in 1899, Peoria conspicuously did honor to his memory. A vast public meeting was held; Christians and Freethinkers alike expressed their love and admiration; and the press united in paying honor to his memory. Dr. Dixon would have us believe that all those Peoria tributes were paid to "a drunken, licentious, debauched wretch." He forgets that the age of miracles is past.

And now a word in conclusion. Who are Ingersoll's accusers? Who are those that ask the world to believe him guilty of the vilest actions? They are all clergymen. They hate the sceptic they cannot answer. They want to destroy his character because they cannot refute his arguments. They are professional malignants. They are looking after business when they defame the leaders of Freethought. And the world is beginning to understand them.

The *Daily News* has never winced at Dr. Torrey's dirty libels on great Freethinkers. It betrayed no emotion when he declared that infidelity and immorality were Siamese twins. It took not the slightest notice of Mr. Stead's noble article in the *Review of Reviews*. But it is stirred to the quick by some uncomplimentary remarks by a Church parson on Nonconformists. It appears that the vicar of Witton-le-Wear, in Durham, preached a sermon from an elegant text in Revelations: "Without are dogs"; and in the course of it he said:—

"Dogs, wild animals, such are the Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Baptists, infidels, atheists, and the Lord only knows how many more."

Had the reverend gentleman confined his Christian charity to the infidels and atheists, the *Daily News* would not have been disquieted; but as he extends it to Nonconformists, our contemporary says he is guilty of "an unparalleled abuse of the preacher's privilege." *Unparalleled!* Only fancy! It is getting near the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

More parsons are angry with the female division of the hatless brigade. The Rev. E. Tritton, of All Saints' Church, Margaret-street, London, W., calls a woman who dares to enter God's house without a hat on "a shameless creature." This proves that the reverend gentleman is excited. It proves nothing else. May we venture to suggest that God's view of the matter should be obtained? The parsons speak with great assurance, but their Deity may be of a different opinion. Perhaps he likes to see ladies about in his house, whether they wear hats or not. Yes, the question is What does *he* think? We pause for a reply.

William Mullins, an elderly man, whose address is the Bethnal-green Workhouse, has a dispute of some sort with the Board of Trade. He appeared the other day before Mr. Fenwick, at Bow-street, for a summons against that body; and, not being able to obtain it, he told the magistrate that the dispute would be settled by Divine arbitration within forty days—to the satisfaction of himself and all Christendom. We fear the poor gentleman is mistaken. He seems to have mixed God Almighty up with President Roosevelt.

According to the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, Buddhism is making rapid progress in Germany. "Consciously or unconsciously," a leading paper says, "Buddhism is knocking at the door of Europe, and it has as good a claim to be considered a world religion as Christianity." Men were never so prepared, it says, to accept the leading doctrines of Buddhism, which are love and toleration. It is admitted by all the best authorities that Buddhism never persecuted man, woman, or child, and never shed a drop of blood. Christianity has shed rivers.

A correspondent sends us a copy of a letter he sent to the *Daily Chronicle*, which was refused insertion. It was probably too able and pointed for the *Chronicle's* taste. Our contemporary has to bolster up Christianity, whether believing it or not, and therefore keeps a wary eye on its correspondence in order to see that the popular faith is not seriously damaged. Everyone "in the know" is perfectly well aware how correspondence on religious topics is selected and doctored by our glorious "free press."

When we wrote those warm paragraphs about the pious Czar of Holy Russia last week we did not fancy that Peace was so near. We do not feel inclined, however, to recall a single word of our criticism of that crowned hypocrite. It is perfectly clear that Peace is owing to the sublime magnanimity of Japan.

Rev. George Martin is in trouble again. His efforts at salvation in Southwark do not seem to be properly appreciated. The local Stipendiary has had to fine him £5, with £3 3s. costs, for keeping an unlicensed common lodging-house. The beds were alleged to be unclean and the premises unsanitary. Altogether too great a breach between cleanliness and godliness.

Evan Roberts has been breaking out in a new place. He has been telling an inquiring friend how he holds out against "the strain" of his work, which it appears is "mental" as well as "physical." When he feels done up he lies on his back in bed and prays to God for strength. Then a "mysterious power" enters into him. The sensation is like water being showered on his head. It vivifies him in every part, and he "jumps out of bed in full physical vigor, as supple and nimble of limb as a youth going to play." This is very interesting. But what we want to know is this. Does Evan Roberts take a cup of tea with that prayer? If he does, we understand.

We don't quite see, for our part, where the "mental" strain of Evan Roberts's work comes in. Such utterances of his as we have seen occasionally do not display any severe mental exertion. Neither can the "physical" exertion be tremendous when he often says nothing at all and leaves the work entirely to others. We should say that he conserves his strength pretty carefully, and is not likely to die of over-work. He is far more likely to die, by and by, of want of employment.

Revised Hymns.—No. 3.

ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS.

ONWARD, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the portly vicar
Going on before.
Ho, the parish master,
Leads against the foe,
Forward to the pantry,
See his banners go!

Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms wax and wane,
But cold beef and mutton
Steadfast shall remain.
And if jellies tremble,
At the shout of praise,
Take your "stout," my brothers,
High your platters raise!

Like a mighty army,
Moves the eager crew;
Ye are only doing
What the hungry do.
What foundations quiver
At the shout we raise?
All that's in the larder,
We will gladly praise.

Onward then, ye people,
Join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
In the feasting song;
"Glory, laud and honor,
To the Vicar be,
Who, when he has lunched us,
Keeps us all to tea!"

GERALD GREY.

THE UNREADABLE RIDDLE.

Man is but a microscopic being relatively to astronomical space, and he lives on a puny planet circling round a star of inferior rank. Does it not, then, seem as futile to imagine that he can discover the origin and tendency of the universe as to expect a housefly to instruct us as to the theory of the motions of the planets? And yet, so long as he shall last, he will pursue his search, and will no doubt discover many wonderful things which are still hidden. We may, indeed, be amazed at all that man has been able to find out, but the immeasurable magnitude of the undiscovered will throughout all time remain to humble his pride. Our children's children will still be gazing and marvelling at the starry heavens, but the riddle will never be read.—PROFESSOR DARWIN'S *Address to the British Association at Johannesburg.*

A REAL "FAITH."

The faith that life on earth is being shaped
To glorious ends, that order, justice, love
Mean man's completeness, mean effect as sure
As roundness in the dew drops—that great faith
Is but the rushing and expanding stream
Of thought, of feeling, fed by all the past.
Our finest hope is finest memory,
As they who love in age think youth is blest
Because it has a life to fill with love.
Full souls are double mirrors making still
An endless vista of fair things before
Reflecting things behind; so faith is strong
Only when we are strong, shrinks when we shrink
It comes when music stirs us and the chords
Moving as some grand climax shake our souls
With influx new that makes new energies.
It comes in swellings of the heart and tears
That rise at noble and at gentle deeds—
At labors of the master artist's hand
Which trembling, touches to a finer end,
Trembling, before an image seen within.
It comes in moments of heroic love,
In jealous joy, in poy not made for us—
In conscious triumph of the good within
Making us worship goodness that rebukes.
Even our failures are a prophesy,
Even our yearnings and our bitter tears
After that fair and true we cannot grasp;
As patriots who seem to die in vain,
Make liberty more sacred by their pangs.

—George Eliot.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 17, Stanley Hall; 24, Stratford Town Hall.
 October 1, Queen's Hall; 8, Queen's Hall; 15, Glasgow; 22, Birmingham; 29, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
 November 5, Manchester; 12, Liverpool.
 December 31, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—September 10, m., Kingsland, a., Victoria Park; 17, Liverpool; 24, Stanley Hall, North London.
 October 1, Stratford Town Hall; 8, Glasgow; 15, Queen's Hall; 22, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

A. BUTTON.—Glad to know of your "admiration" for our defence of Paine and Ingersoll against Dr. Torrey and Dr. Dixon. Thanks for your good wishes.

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.

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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.

Peace is one of the greatest interests of mankind, and the end of the war between Russia and Japan, one of the bloodiest in history, is welcomed by the whole civilised world. Without overlooking the part played by President Roosevelt in bringing about this settlement, we are bound to admit that the greatest credit is due to the astonishing magnanimity of Japan. She has been as humane in the hour of victory as she was brave in the hour of battle. Her praises are being sung everywhere. Christians are lauding the Heathen. It is a noble spectacle; but it means the end of Christianity as a divine revelation and the "guarantee of the world's morality."

North London Freethinkers will remember that the new course of Sunday Freethought lectures at Stanley Hall, near the "Boston," begins this evening (Sept. 10), when Mr. John Lloyd occupies the platform. We hope the "saints" will make a strong rally, and bring along their friends, and crowd the place. We hope they will also come prepared for a generous contribution to the collection.

Subscriptions towards the expenses of the N. S. S. delegation to the Paris Congress are still required. Those who are represented at this great gathering should bear the fact in mind. Mr. Foote will be back from Paris before the date of this week's *Freethinker*, and the balance of the £50 requisite ought really to be sent in by that time. Mr. Foote's letters will not be forwarded to him at Paris. He will open them all on his return.

This week's *Freethinker* is short of the usual ninth-page matter, owing to the Editor's unavoidable absence from London. But we believe it is a very interesting number, for all that, and we hope the readers will think so too.

The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract idea, is the effect of a highly civilised and artificial state of society.—*Hazlitt*.

Our Gallic Comrades.

IN these days when much is heard of the *entente cordiale*, and when there is a pronounced tendency towards a closer relationship between the people of France and the people of Great Britain, anything which helps us to a better understanding of our neighbors on the farther side of the English Channel is more than welcome. France has been described by a clever modern writer—Dr. Saleeby—as at once the most highly civilized and the most irreligious nation on the face of the earth, and by one of the most reputable of our morning dailies as alike the glory and the despair of the human race. Some of those who accept Dr. Saleeby's characterisation as being accurate might be disposed to enquire whether France is highly civilized because she is irreligious or is irreligious because she is highly civilized. This, however, we need not here discuss. But with regard to the editorial declaration above referred to, we venture to assert that the sun of France's glory has not set. Nor, although France has more than once disappointed those of us who look upon her as the standard-bearer of human liberty, it is in no mood of despair we contemplate the future of a nation which so keenly pursues science, art, and literature, and worships so ardently at the shrine of intellectual freedom. A nation distinguished as France is by mental activity is not on the down grade, despite the foolish jeremiads of superficial observers who imagine a nation is decadent because it declines to increase its population at the old reckless and improvident rate.

We are indebted to a friend for introducing to our notice a little book which we have no hesitation in recommending to our readers if they have not already seen it. Although an unpretentious volume it will be of service to anyone desirous of obtaining an insight into the real character of the French working classes. Its author is not one who has spent merely a fleeting holiday in France and afterwards thought himself competent to sit in judgment on French manners and customs. He has lived and worked for years with the artisan class in France, and having the advantage of speaking both French and English with equal fluency is well qualified to interpret for us the ideas and motives underlying that external conduct of the French workman which is all the average globe-trotter notices. The book is published in cheap form by the Twentieth Century Press, and is entitled *The Working Classes in France*.

Secularists will probably turn with most interest to the author's references to the religious views of the French artisans. We all know that the French workmen are bitterly anti-clerical, but our author holds that their antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church is due more to political reasons than to anything else. The ordinary intelligent workman does not trouble to discuss religion, and has but little knowledge of the case for or against the dogmas of the Church. These latter have ceased to be live issues for him, but he is profoundly conscious of the maleficent influence the Church as an institution has exercised in France, and the lesson which Gambetta sought to inculcate—that clericalism is the enemy—has been well (if not completely) grasped.

We say not completely because it seems to us that the French Freethinker is not sufficiently *uncompromising* in his hostility to the Church. Mr. Steele's book bears us out in this. We have this curious state of affairs in France that with all their hatred of clericalism and their resentment of the political machinations of the Church, the mass of the French people have not yet fully realised that Roman Catholicism must be fought all along the line and not merely on the political front. The French workers are still foolishly tolerant of priestly interference in the social sphere and in their family life, with the result that the women are too susceptible to priestly suasion, and the children—instead of starting from the stage of Freethought which their fathers have reached—are too frequently allowed to go through

the old deplorable process of imbibing certain religious beliefs which have to be subsequently—and often painfully—discarded.

Recently we adverted in these columns to the fact that Freethinkers sometimes lack the courage of their opinions when important events in their lives arise. Our remarks were prompted solely by knowledge of what occurs in our midst at home. Mr. Steele confirms us in our suspicion that a similar state of matters prevails elsewhere, at any rate so far as France is concerned. He gives figures which prove that French Freethinkers are over-complaisant in their attitude to religious observances. In the workshop with which he was connected there were about 200 workmen. At the outside, he tells us, not more than thirty were professing Catholics. During two years—in which he kept accurate record—there occurred some thirty funerals of either employees or relatives of workmen. In almost every case, he says, the persons concerned professed anti-Catholic sentiments. Yet all except three were buried in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church! During this period also several marriages took place, "some of them of men, or sons of men, prominently known as anti-Clericals. They were all solemnized at Church." On another page the author states that nine out of ten marriages in France are so celebrated. If this statement may be taken as accurate, even poor Kirk-ridden Scotland compares not unfavorably, in respect of civil marriage, with Freethinking France.

It is true "many of the young men look upon the religious ceremony as somewhat of a joke; others go through it under protest and only as a concession to the mothers"; but, as a matter of fact, "only a few, even among the professed Freethinkers," consistently refuse the services of the priest on the occasion of their marriage. We need hardly say this is very much to be regretted. We do not wish to be severe on our weak-kneed brethren. "Put yourself in his place" is an admirable maxim, and we should not sweepingly condemn others for doing that which we might ourselves do in like circumstances. The pressure, both internal and external, that operates upon the Freethinker who desires to wed with one still in the ranks of the orthodox can be understood and allowed for. But consideration of the facts put before us by Mr. Steele (and noticeable elsewhere) suggests that what is wanted amongst Freethinkers everywhere is moral courage and mental backbone. The best way in which we can demonstrate the sincerity of our opinions is by living up to them, and though this may not be practicable for all of us, everyone who fearlessly asserts his convictions makes it easier for others to cease acting the hypocrite. We have a strong feeling of esteem for the young workman whose modest history is glanced at in Mr. Steele's narrative. Maurice was "diffident and sensitive as a girl under ordinary circumstances, but as firm as a rock in all matters of principle," and he withstood, even to the breaking off of his marriage, the persuasion brought to bear on him to have the union effected in church. It is just possible the parents of Maurice's intended bride might some day realise that a man of his sturdy honesty was worth having as a son-in-law.

Further illustration of the dangerous nonchalance with which the French Freethinker treats religious observance is given in the little book we are noticing. The author says:

"In a school in Grenelle, where I knew the school-master, I found one year that out of thirty-two children of age for this ceremony, only three did not wear the white brassard (arm-sash), which is the outward emblem of *Communion*, and yet almost all the boys' fathers were avowed Freethinkers."

We are also furnished from Mr. Steele's own experience with a striking example of the methods whereby the Church of Rome seeks to maintain her hold over the people. We quote part of the passage in the hope that it may meet the eye of some of those who imagine that only the Protestant sects engage in proselytism.

"When my own child was born in Paris, informed probably by some officious neighbor, two of these ladies in black [nuns] visited my wife, and asked her if she would allow the child to be baptised into the Roman Catholic Church. They understood that monsieur was going to become a French *citoyen*, and began by pointing out the advantages that would accrue from the course suggested by them. Then they tried to impress my wife with the grandeur of the ceremony. Finding these arguments of no avail, they then tried open bribery; offers of money, of position, failed also. Their next tack was to work on her fears with pictures of hell and terrors of purgatory. Their failure was even more pronounced, as my wife then threw off her unwillingness to offend by attacking their opinions, and supplemented her objections by producing copies of Renan and Darwin from my bookcase. They then showed their true colors, and, having previously found out my place of employment, threatened to use their powers against me there, and close the doors of further work against me in France, and after a violent diatribe against Darwin as an *espece de fou* and a corrupter of morals they stalked indignantly away."

We congratulate Mr. Steele on the possession of a loyal and intelligent wife. The children of such a couple should turn out staunch Freethinkers.

Mr. Steele's book is also of value as a corrective of a view widely popular in religious circles in this country. To the average church adherent or chapel-goer France—and especially Paris—is a veritable hotbed of vice and immorality. It is satisfactory to find the author of *The Working Classes in France* vindicating afresh the character of a people so frequently vilified by the British pharisee. It is undoubtedly the case that too much regard is paid by French critics to the mere gutter life of Paris on the one hand, and, on the other, to the social froth raised by the whirl of fast society in the French capital. That the heart of the French nation is sound we do not doubt. The middle-class Briton talks about the French having no home-life, which is not true. And while it may seem that too much of the business element enters into the arrangements for matrimonial union, it cannot be denied that the general results stamp it a well-conducted business. Husband and wife do not make such great demands on each other as is the custom with us, but much is subordinated to the welfare of the children, and the average workman's wife in Paris seldom becomes the hopeless, worn domestic drudge so often seen in our own midst. Married women of the industrial class seem to find more time for the rational enjoyment of life. To thousands of such the low birth-rate in France is not looked upon as an evil, whatever may be said by clerical croakers who have themselves evaded the responsibilities of parentage. It is the women who know what a high birth-rate means.

The immorality of Paris has always been grossly exaggerated in comparison with other large cities. It is forgotten that this very exaggerated character for vice has made Paris the Mecca of the wealthy idle and vicious of all nations. Were they dependent on the native population, the most notorious establishments in the French metropolis might close their doors. In spite of the *maison de tolerance*, we believe there is much less of that abomination purely mercenary social intercourse than there is in many other large cities where more regard is paid to the appearance of virtue.

We have not space to refer to the many points of interest brought forward by Mr. Steele. We notice one little slip which ought to be rectified in any future edition. The author seems to confound the Roman Catholic child's *Confirmation* with the *First Communion*. These are not one and the same, but two distinct sacraments, although both are sometimes administered to the children on the same day. The present writer was *confirmed* (as it is called) a considerable time before receiving *First Communion*, while on the other hand many Catholics are not confirmed until late in life.

G. SCOTT.

"Virtue impossible but for fear of hell"—a lofty creed for your English youth—and a holy one!—*Ruskin*.

Can the Gospel History be Trusted?—IV.

(Concluded from page 572.)

As will, no doubt, be remembered, the self-imposed task of the Rev. W. F. Adeney was to trace the existence of the Gospels back to the days of the apostles in the first century. So far, he has only traced them to the time of Irenæus (A.D. 185) where he might have started; for no one denies that they were known and in circulation at that date, and for some two or three decades earlier. However, he has one more backward step to take—this time a very long one—and then his task is completed.

The last stepping-stone cited by Dr. Adeney is Papias, an ancient bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote a book entitled *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord*, in which work the author describes how he made it a practice to question any elderly Christians who came his way as to sayings they had heard ascribed to apostles. "In particular," says our reverend apologist, "he declares that he used to ask what John 'says'—in the present tense—implying that when he made these inquiries John was living. So close, then, are we to the apostolic age."

Before proceeding farther it should be stated that all our information respecting Papias is derived from some extracts from his book, with comments upon it, made by Irenæus and Eusebius. The date of the composition of this work, from a Christian evidence point of view, is of the highest importance; but we have nothing by which to fix it, save that of Papias's death. As regards the latter event, the Paschal Chronicle (a historical work compiled A.D. 630 from pre-existing documents) states that Papias suffered martyrdom at Pergamum A.D. 165. If this be correct, Papias's book was probably written between A.D. 140 and 150, though Dr. Lightfoot assumes this period to have been a decade earlier (A.D. 130-140).

Now, Dr. Adeney places Papias in the first century, and makes him a contemporary of the apostle John. It is true that Irenæus does the same, and states that Papias was "the hearer of John"; but this is only another example of Irenæus's mendacity. Eusebius who had read both Papias's book and Irenæus's statement says: "But Papias himself in the preface to his Exposition by no means asserts that he was a hearer and an eye-witness of the holy apostles," and then he gives the following extract from Papias's preface (Ecc. Hist. III. 39):—

"For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spake much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, anyone who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings—what Andrew or Peter said, or what *was said* by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples; and what Aristion and the presbyter John [the disciples of the Lord] say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice."

The words "disciples of the Lord," which I have placed within brackets, can be seen at once to be a gloss, due probably to the ignorance or carelessness of some early copyist. It is perfectly clear that Papias makes a distinction between the apostles and "Aristion and the presbyter John." Had he intended to designate the latter as "disciples of the Lord" he would have placed them with the apostles. He desired to know what the apostles (including the disciple John) *had said*, and what Aristion and the presbyter John *say*, or had said recently; the last two personages belonged to his own time, and had no more claim to the title "disciples of the Lord" than Papias himself. These words were added before the time of Eusebius, for that historian cannot understand them. He says:—

"Papias, who is now mentioned by us, affirms that he received the sayings of the apostles from those who had accompanied them, and he moreover asserts that he

heard in person Aristion and the presbyter John. Accordingly he mentions them frequently by name, and in his writings gives their traditions. . . . He moreover hands down, in his own writing, other narratives of the Lord's sayings given by the previously mentioned Aristion, and traditions received from the presbyter John."

What, now, are we to say of the statement made by Principal Adeney—that the apostle John was living in the time of Papias? The word "apostle," it is true, is not actually employed; but every one can see that it is clearly implied. What otherwise is the meaning of his concluding remark—"So close, then, are we to the apostolic age"? It is, of course, quite possible that in the early days of Papias there might be living some "elders" who in their youth had heard some of the longest-lived of the apostles—or who professed to have done so. But this is quite a different matter. In any case, the Rev. Adeney's statement is, to say the least, calculated to mislead all who have not looked the subject up themselves.

We learn, furthermore, from the testimony of Papias that the great majority of Christians in his days took pleasure in listening to stories and legends of Jesus—probably the fabulous accounts in some of the apocryphal Gospels—which even the simple bishop of Hierapolis could not swallow. These must have been very gross indeed; for Papias had a very large stock of credulity, and believed the most outrageous nonsense (See Irenæus V. xxxiii. 3 and 4). A search for "truth" in the early part of the second century must have been a quest attended with almost insuperable difficulties. Papias's method was unique. He noted down the sayings attributed to Christ or the apostles which any elderly Christian he met professed to have heard, and piously believed them all.

To conclude the evidence derived from Papias, whom Dr. Adeney places in apostolic times, that lecturer says that in a fragment preserved of his writing "Papias tells us that the evangelist Mark was 'the companion and interpreter of Peter.' There you get right back to our Second Gospel, the fundamental Gospel, upon which Matthew and Luke were constructed." After the latter admission—that the First and Third Gospels are not independent "histories," but were "constructed" from the shorter Gospel of Mark—it is somewhat surprising to hear the reverend apologist declare: "I scarcely know how any history can be better authenticated as far as our believing that the writers were in touch with the times."

The statement that Mark was "the companion and interpreter of Peter," and wrote his Gospel from Peter's preaching, we had already heard from Irenæus. We now know that the latter writer did not invent it; he had simply taken his information from Papias's book. But Papias had no more knowledge of the matter than Irenæus: the one had read the statement in an ancient book; the other had been told such was the case by the presbyter John. The words of Papias, as quoted by Eusebius, are as follows:—

"And the presbyter also said this: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor accompanied him. . . . Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements."

Here it should be noticed that no claim is made with regard to inspiration on behalf of Mark. That evangelist merely committed to writing "whatever he remembered" of Peter's preaching; he was careful to omit nothing he had heard, and he did not fabricate any portions of his narrative. We may be quite certain of these facts, because an unknown presbyter of the second century told Papias so. And, truly, "I scarcely know how any history can be better authenticated"—unless, indeed, we could get hold of someone who knew something of the matter first

hand. For we have no evidence that the ancient bishop of Hierapolis ever had a copy of Mark's Gospel in his hands, or that anyone belonging to his church was so fortunate as to possess one. He had only been told of the existence of such a Gospel, and this compilation—the first of the four—was probably not written until A.D. 135-140.

Before dismissing Papias it may be well to notice all the evidence relating to the New Testament writings derived from that ancient bishop's book, which is omitted by Dr. Adeney. After quoting the presbyter John's statement respecting Mark, Eusebius says:—

"But with regard to Matthew Papias has made the following statement: 'Matthew put together the Sayings in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.' The same person uses testimonies from the First Epistle of John and from the Epistle of Peter in like manner. And he also gives another story of a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is to be found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews."

We thus learn that Papias had heard of a Gospel written by Mark; that he had quoted several passages from the First Epistle of John and the First Epistle of Peter, proving the existence of those two letters; that he was acquainted with, or had heard of, a collection of oracular sayings compiled by Matthew, which proves the existence of a Hebrew version of the Sermon on the Mount, but no recognised translation; and that he had copied a story from the Hebrew Gospel which was afterwards incorporated in the Fourth Gospel (John viii. 1-11; see Note in R.V.). There is no evidence to show that Papias had seen any of our present Gospels, and no evidence of the existence of any Gospels in his days save that "according to" Mark and "according to" the Hebrews.

Returning, now, to the Rev. Adeney, that apologist, believing he had successfully completed his task of tracing the Gospels to the apostolic age, says:—

"Granted that we have got back to the times, and to men in touch with the events, and therefore well-informed, were they honest? Now, we have the picture of Jesus in these Gospels. If no such person as Jesus ever lived, how was that picture painted? If the model was not before the artists, how did the artists conceive the picture? They must have invented it; but they would not have wilfully invented it. The days of the old crude criticism that said the Gospels were forged by priests are gone."

It would take too long to reply to these ridiculous questions. I will, therefore, merely say here that there is no real picture of Jesus in the Gospels—only a number of scrappy anecdotes pieced together. As to artists and models, perhaps Principal Adeney will be so good as to say where Milton got the models for the characters and speeches in his *Paradise Lost*—a work full of far finer pictures than can be found in the Gospels. When, again, Dr. Adeney says that the Gospel stories could not have been wilfully invented, I would remind him that the authors of all the silly fabrications in the apocryphal Gospels were Christians, and probably as pious and respectable as the mendacious Irenæus. Upon one point only can I admit that he is correct: no rationalistic critic asserts that the Gospels "were forged by priests"—though they are fabulous histories all the same.

ABRACADABRA.

"Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy."

To find anything correct in the history and teaching of the Bible, is almost a hopeless task. Bible history of the origin and institution of the sabbath is no exception in this matter. It would be difficult to find a narrative with more errors and mis-statements in it than are found in the teaching of the Bible about the sabbath. What the teaching is we must go to the Bible to see. Here it is: "Remember the

sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus xx. 8-11).

That is one account. But it would be folly to expect a statement in one part of the Bible, without another statement, in another part, to contradict it. Thus we read in Deut. v. 13, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God command thee to keep the sabbath day." Here the sabbath was instituted to commemorate the escape from Egypt. Not a word here about six days creation and the rest on the seventh. And there is still another key to explain the institution of the sabbath. According to Ezekiel, the sabbath was given to be a sign between God and the Jews, to distinguish them from other nations. At least, that is the only meaning I can make out from the words in Ezekiel xx. 12-20. Here we have three different statements about the origin of the sabbath. It is clearly manifest that the three cannot be right. If one of them is right, two must be wrong, and if two must be wrong, the probability is that the three are equally wrong. A little inquiry, I think, will show that the three statements are false in all their most important particulars.

In the light of modern science, the first statement has no foundation whatever. Evolution has dissolved the delusion of the six days' creation and the seventh day rest. There has been no creation in the biblical sense. Even theologians have given up the creation myth. There is no intelligent educated Christian that would attempt to defend the Bible account of the creation. Geology, astronomy, anthropology, and other sciences, have shattered the story to atoms, and it never can be again restored to a believable form. It is not true that the sabbath was instituted because God worked six days to create the world, and rested, like a tired workman, on the seventh.

The second statement that the sabbath was instituted to commemorate the escape of the Jews from Egypt, seems to be a rather whimsical story. There is some doubt as to whether the Jews ever were, as a nation, in Egypt. If they never were there they could not escape from there, even by a miracle. And even if they were there for centuries and escaped from there by miracles, it is difficult to see anything in the incident to suggest a week of six working days, and a rest on the seventh. But though we cannot see any natural connection between the escape from Egypt and the sabbath, we can see plain enough that it is in direct contradiction to the first statement, and both are made by God, "who is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent" (Num. xxiii. 19). That is what the Bible says, but if God did not lie in one or both of the statements, somebody evidently lied in his name.

Is the third statement made by the Lord, as recorded by Ezekiel, that the Sabbath was given to the Jews as a sign to distinguish them from other nations, more correct than the other two? This statement implies that the Sabbath was peculiar to the Jews, as otherwise it could not be a sign to distinguish them from other nations. Was the Sabbath peculiar to the Jews? Was it first originated and instituted by the Jews? To these questions an emphatic No must be given. It is very remarkable that in Genesis, which probably is the oldest part of the Old Testament, there is no mention of the Sabbath, and no allusion to the seventh day except in the first chapter, which is a later production added to the older book. In the accounts given of Adam, Cain, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Lot, Noah,

Esau, Joseph, and others, there is not a word about a Sabbath or an allusion to the seventh day. It is therefore certain that the ancestors of the Jews had no Sabbath. If they had one it would have been an important part of their history.

The Jews did not invent the Sabbath. It was borrowed direct or indirect from the Babylonians. The word "Sabbath" is not Hebrew, but Babylonian or Akkadian, meaning rest. Discoveries made in Babylon have placed these facts beyond dispute or doubt. Thus the three statements as to the origin of the Sabbath are shown to be false. The Sabbath is not a divine institution, but a Pagan one, in its origin, instituted to honor the sun-god. And yet, in the face of the easily-found facts, Christians continue to teach that the Sabbath is a divine institution, and do all they can to make the seventh day a period of gloomy deadness to all they can.

The Pagan origin of the Sabbath is shown by the names of the days of the week. They are all astronomical, and sacred to heathen gods, the two principal being the sun and the moon; their names being still retained in Sunday and Monday, or Moon-day. The other five days bear the names of the five planets: Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. When the Sabbath was first instituted the moon was the chief god and the sun the second; hence the division of the month into four weeks of seven days each, and this very probably explains the supposed sacredness of the number seven. The Akkadians built a tower seven storeys high, each being a separate temple dedicated to different gods. The seventh was the temple of the moon, the sixth that of the sun, and the other five were for the five planets already named. It was near this huge tower that Babylon was afterwards built, and it is very probable that the Akkadian tower was the origin of the Tower of Babel myth. Clearly the claim of the Jews and Christians that the Sabbath is a divine institution has not a leg to stand on.

Even assuming for the sake of argument that the Jewish Sabbath was of divine origin, the Christian Sabbath or Sunday has no claim whatever for divine authority. The Biblical Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day; the Christian Sabbath is Sunday, or the first day. There is no Biblical authority, old or new, for changing the day. There is no evidence that Jesus or his apostles observed any Sabbath, and there are passages in the Gospels and the Epistles indicating that Christ and the early Christians discouraged the observance of any day as more sacred than others. There is, in fact, much evidence to show that the Christians observed no particular day as a Sabbath prior to the edict of Constantine. It was Constantine that instituted the Christian Sabbath, and not God; and the day he appointed to be the Sabbath for Christians was the Pagan weekly holiday and the festival of the sun-gods, under many different names, over all the Pagan world. In spite of many efforts to change the name, Sunday still remains a weekly evidence of its Pagan origin.

Had Christians succeeded in substituting Lord's Day for Sunday, it would have availed them nothing, as that is also Pagan as well as Sunday. "Lord" was an attribute of Bacchus, who was a sun-god. He was worshiped under the name of Lord, and his sacred day was Sunday—the Lord's Day. Part of his feast was a supper (Lord's Supper), from which, there is not much doubt, the Christian Lord's Supper is derived. Nearly the whole of the Christian religion, Catholic and Protestant, is nothing but Paganism under a new name. Even the cross of Christianity is derived from Paganism. Thousands of years before Christ was born the cross was used as a symbol of different heathen gods in Egypt, India, and other countries. The word "Amen," so popular and sacred with Christians, and that especially in Wales, is the name of an Egyptian god; and when Christians are shouting their "Amen!" in their worship they are repeating the cries uttered by the Egyptian Pagans when calling upon their god thousands of years before the Christian era began.

Sabbatarianism was condemned by the Fathers of the Church, and also by the Reformers. Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Tyndale, Paley, Whateley, Milton, and many others repudiated the observance of the Sabbath. And they were right. There is not a particle of evidence, divine or apostolic, for the observance of either the first or the seventh day as a holy Sabbath. There is no authority, verbal or written, for keeping holy the Sabbath Day; on the contrary, all the evidence tends to show that Jesus and his disciples, and all the early Christians, did not keep the Sabbath as a holy day.

Sabbatarianism is nothing but a priestly institution, barren of good except to the craft. The opening of museums, art galleries, theatres, concerts, and so on is opposed, with a view to fill the priestly shops. If the people were not densely ignorant in religious matters they would see through the whole of the priestly phantasmagoria, and turn their backs upon them with disgust. The people are so gullible because they are so ignorant. Ignorance is the mother of gullibility. The priests and their allies have kept the people in ignorance in order to exploit their services. And popular enlightenment will never come from the altar and the pulpit. Self-interest stands in the way. The Churches and their so-called religious teachings are nothing better than thick curtains to prevent the light of scientific knowledge reaching the saints.

In Pagan times Sunday was the people's holiday, a day of rest and recreation. That is what it ought to be again, and will be in the near future. There is nothing more holy in Sunday than in Monday or Saturday, or any other day. And secular music is quite as sacred as sacred music. Secular lectures are as holy as any sermon, and viewing pictures in an art gallery or nature among trees and flowers have as much holiness as anything seen and heard in churches and chapels. To attribute more sacredness to religious rites and exercises than to nature and natural things is an insult to God, if there is one, and a libel on his handiwork. There is nothing more holy than good conduct, social activity, and useful service in the interest of humanity.

R. J. DERFEL.

FRIENDSHIP.

A ruddy drop of manly blood
The surging sea outweighs;
The world uncertain comes and goes,
The lover rooted stays.

I fancied he was fled,
And, after many a year,
Glowed unexhausted kindness
Like daily sunrise there.

My careful heart was free again,—
O friend, my bosom said,
Through thee alone the sky is arched,
Through thee the rose is red.

All things through thee take nobler form
And look beyond the earth,
The mill-round of our fate appears
A sun-path in thy worth.

Me, too, thy nobleness has taught
To master my despair;
The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair.

—Emerson.

In the Entire, the Good, the Beautiful resolve to live—
Would'st fashion for thyself a seemly life?
Then fret not over what is past and gone;
And spite of all thou may'st have lost behind.
Yet act as if thy life were just begun.

—Goethe.

Ministers say that they teach charity. This is natural. They live on alms. All beggars teach that others should give.—*Ingersoll.*

We acquire the virtues by doing the acts. We become builders by building.—*Aristotle.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

STANLEY HALL (Junction-road, N.): 7.30, John T. Lloyd, "Do We Need a Religion?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Fables."

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, a Lecture.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, J. Hampden Davis; 3.15, E. B. Rose.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "Design and Providence."

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring), Thursday, September 14, 8. debate, "That Spiritualism is a Superstition and a Fallacy," Mr. A. Barber and Mr. H. Lennard.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Religion Damned by Science"; 7, "Voltaire, the Great French Freethinker." (Mr. Ward will preface his evening lecture with an account of his visit to the International Freethought Congress at Paris). Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society, J. Arnold Sharpley, "What is Wrong? A Newspaper Hunt for Society's Panacea."

RHONDDA TOWN HALL, PORTH (Committee Room): 6.30, Jas. B. Grent, "How I Became an Infidel Through Christian Teachings."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market Place): 7.30. Lecture arrangements, etc.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S.: (Market-square), Sept. 17: 11, H. Percy Ward, "Spiritualism Exposed"; 3, "The Christian Creed—Irrational and Immoral"; 7, "Why I Left the Wesleyan Pulpit."

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