

THE Freethinker

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The brain of man is Jove's eagle and his lightning on earth—the title to majesty henceforth.—GEORGE MEREDITH.

The Yellow Peril.

SOME time ago I was lecturing in the largest city in Scotland on the Russo-Japanese war and its various issues. After my lecture questions were invited, as usual, and a grave-looking Scotchman got up and seriously asked whether I did not think there was something, after all, in the Yellow Peril. I replied that I had never been to Japan, but I had read a good deal about it; on the other hand, I had some personal acquaintance with Caledonia stern and wild; and he might take my word for it that the Japanese would never leave their own land in order to conquer and settle down in Glasgow. Whereat the audience laughed, although the joke was against them; and a smile even rippled over the face of the questioner.

Mr. George Meredith, in his striking Introduction to the remarkable volume of lectures by Professor Okakura on *The Japanese Spirit*, remarks that the Yellow Peril is merely a symptom of the uneasy conscience of the Western Powers. Christian nations have acted so badly in the East that they fear that the victorious Japanese may imitate the European example. But in this Mr. Meredith thinks, and we humbly think after him, that the Christian nations are mistaken. Japan has shown herself sagacious in peace as well as in war, and as humane in victory as she was brave in battle.

These facts have been widely admitted by Christian leaders in this country. Several weeks ago, for instance, we quoted an admission by Prebendary Moss that Christians could not help feeling ashamed when they compared the fruits of their own civilisation with the fruits of the civilisation of Japan. Bishop Welldon confessed that the Japanese, without Christianity, had risen to a height which Christian nations had not attained to with it; and he quite solemnly asked, although the question was ineffably facetious, what wonderful things the Japanese might do with Christianity if they had done such wonderful things without it. And now we have a quite astonishing article on this subject in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, which is probably the most important religious publication in Great Britain.

The editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, who does not sign his name, is the author of this extremely important article. The question dealt with, "Is the Moral Supremacy of Christendom in Danger?" is answered in the affirmative. The ground taken is that the real Yellow Peril is an ethical peril. What Christendom has to fear is not the arms but the character of the Japanese. The worst danger to Christianity is the perception that better men and women can be produced outside it than within it; and if this perception becomes common, and grows into a conviction, nothing can keep Christianity from swiftly perishing. On this point the writer expresses himself in the following vigorous fashion:—

"Reason and Authority, Christian metaphysics and Christian evidence, dogma and apology, Catholic and

Protestant, Churchman and Dissenter—of what consequence would these distinctions be in face of the advent of another religion that produced better men? The defence and the propagation of Christianity would alike come to a dead stop. The Church could no longer chant her favorite text about the gates of hell, for she would be stricken utterly dumb. The Dean of Canterbury would forget his appeal to the first six centuries; Harnack would find his occupation gone; a mightier force would put M. Loisy to silence; Dr. Beet would be left unmolested; foreign missions would collapse; Messrs. Torrey and Alexander would have to close; no one would trouble about the lost end of St. Mark; works of Newman and of Matthew Arnold would alike become obsolete; busy pens would stop writing, and even the cheap edition of Haeckel would cease to sell."

This writer argues, and there is undoubtedly much in his contention, that it is not the theoretic truth or falsity of the Christian religion which occupies general attention. "The hold of Christianity upon the peoples of the Western world is rooted," he says, "in the conviction that *this is the religion which produces the best men.*" All the Churches claim a judgment for their faith from "the final court of ethical appeal." "Implicit," he declares, "in the fact of our being Christians at all, is the conviction that there is no other religion which produces higher character or better men." This conviction has long been taken as a thing for granted, like the rising and setting of the sun; since the Crusades, and the fall of the Moorish civilisation in Spain, Christianity has not had to measure itself against any other religion; its superiority has during all those centuries been assumed as unquestionable; but now a challenge comes from outside, and it is emphasised by the roaring of cannon—which is a language that the sleepest or most bigoted Christian can understand.

Pursuing this argument, the writer pays the Japanese some splendid compliments. He says that the Christian ideal of moral excellence is certainly striking, but "no less certain, no less striking, is the failure of the West to justify that ideal, both in national and private life." On the other hand, the Japanese make their advent in the world's history as "a people possessed of a disciplined will in combination with the highest order of intelligence." Great in pursuing her end, as well as in conceiving it, Japan has "poured her energies into her ideals"; she "rises up in possession of all that we mean by character; and it is in the strength of character rather than in the strength of arms that she now challenges the world." In her hour of trial she has shown "a degree of calmness, moderation, self-restraint, and dignity which are strange to the working moral standards of Europe, and beyond what we have been accustomed to expect." She has set a new example to the civilised world. She has thus given "a new point to the arrows of the sceptic" and "a new poison for his barbs." Which means, we take it, that the sceptic is able to answer Christian boasts by simply pointing to Japan.

The *Hibbert Journal* editor has written an article which is calculated to cause dismay in Christian circles. Little is said about it, but the facts remain, and the real Yellow Peril steadily threatens Christendom. We have been saying this ourselves for two years, and we are glad to see that our view is spreading.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Noteworthy Life.

My Life. A Record of Events and Opinions. By A. R. Wallace. Two vols.; 25s. net. Chapman & Hall.

MR. WALLACE'S expressed fear that his Autobiography will be open to the charge of diffuseness and egotism is far from justified. Although extending over two large volumes, it is hard to see that much could have been omitted with profit to the reader. Even the reprints of portions of articles on various subjects of topical interest have an independent value of their own, besides bringing their author's varied interests and capacity for work more clearly before the public. And one can safely say that egotism is the last charge one would think of bringing against the work. There *are* autobiographies that are open to such a charge, where the author parades every name of note that he has so much as exchanged a postcard with, and writes as though the universe revolved around him from the time he began to take an interest in public matters; but Mr. Wallace does not belong to this class. There is a restraint about his writing and a modesty in the expression of his share of the work done that is alike creditable to the writer and pleasant to the reader.

To the bulk of the world the claim of Alfred Russel Wallace to fame will rest upon his being co-discoverer with Charles Darwin of Natural Selection. But, great as this work was, it represented only one aspect of Mr. Wallace's many sided activity. His interest in such questions as Land Nationalisation, Anti-Vaccination, Spiritualism, etc., was almost as keen; and in the advocacy of these causes there seems to have been a complete absence of any fear of either public opinion or of offending influential friends. This, too, deserves to be set to the writer's credit, in view of some of the biographies and autobiographies of recent years. A man who will publicly write himself down as an Agnostic, an Anti-Vaccinator, a Land Nationaliser, and a Spiritualist—thus challenging the opposition of all kinds of vested interests—must possess a strength of character that an intelligent public should appreciate, whether it agrees with those particular views or not.

It is a curious coincidence that both Darwin and Wallace *found* their vocation. The former was intended for the Church, and took up with natural history, much against his parent's wishes; and the latter found his work by what looks like the merest accident or accidents. A chance remark from a friend inspired him with the desire to know something of botany; a shilling booklet gave him his first scientific introduction to the science; and an introduction to Bates, the naturalist, led him from botany to zoology. Four years after taking up with zoology he appears, from letters printed, to have been speculating as to the Origin of Species, and, unlike Huxley, to have warmly espoused the teachings of Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, and at a time when that book was as much abused as was Darwin's *Origin* at a later period.

Subsequent work and observation in South America and the Malay Archipelago led, as the world knows, to the conception of the principle of Natural Selection, contemporaneously with Charles Darwin. And, for the first time, so far as I am aware, Mr. Wallace makes public the fact that in his case, as in Darwin's, it was Malthus's work on Population that suggested the key that was to unlock the biologic problem. Nothing could be more admirable than the relations that existed between these two men. Both yielded full and ungrudging admiration of the other's work. Of the *Origin* Wallace wrote to a friend:—

"I have read it through five or six times, each time with increasing admiration. It will live as long as the *Principia* of Newton.....The most intricate effects of the law of gravitation, the mutual disturbances of all the bodies of the solar system, are simplicity itself compared with the intricate relations and complicated struggles which have determined what form of life shall exist and in what proportions. Mr. Darwin has given

the world a *new science*, and his name should, in my opinion, stand above that of every philosopher of ancient or modern times."

Darwin's expressions concerning Wallace were equally flattering. After writing Wallace concerning the coloring of caterpillars, he observes: "Bates was quite right; you are the man to apply to in a difficulty. I never heard anything more ingenious than your suggestion, and I hope you may be able to prove it true." "I must ease myself," he writes on another occasion, by writing a few words to say how much I and all in this house admire your article in *Nature*. You are certainly an unparalleled master in lucidly stating a case and in arguing. Nothing ever was better done than your argument about the term Origin of Species." One feels that Darwin's own summary of the relations between the two—"I hope it is a satisfaction to you to reflect—and few things in my life have been more satisfactory to me—that we have never felt any jealousy towards each other, though in some sense rivals. I believe I can say this of myself with truth, and I am absolutely sure that it is true of you"—represents nothing but the truth.

It is not from the lack of interest in such subjects that I pass over the record of Mr. Wallace's wanderings and adventures at home and abroad. Reviews of the work in other quarters are likely to pay full attention to this portion of the work, and are equally likely to ignore those portions of special interest to Freethinkers. Of his opinions on religion Mr. Wallace makes no concealment whatever. They are not obtrusively paraded, nor are they, on the other hand, concealed. His father and mother were both "old-fashioned religious people belonging to the Church of England," the former having "such a reliance on Providence as almost to amount to fatalism"; but still there are indications in his son's mention of him that his mind was something above the average type. Wallace's own scepticism dates from his earliest youth, and it is interesting to note that his first steps were taken in the old John-street "Hall of Science," where his evenings were "most frequently spent." Here, he says, "I received my first knowledge of the arguments of sceptics, and read among other books Paine's *Age of Reason*." It was here, as the result of lectures and reading, he became convinced "that the orthodox religions of the day were degrading and hideous, and that the only true and wholly beneficial religion was that which inculcated the service of humanity, and whose only dogma was the brotherhood of man. Thus was laid the foundation of my religious scepticism."

Much more admirable, in a way, than even his own frank confession of disbelief in religion, in the way in which, without hesitation, he publicly challenged the religious views of others, and invited other prominent scientific men to protest against the influence on social life of current religion. Much has been made by the religious world of Darwin's sending a contribution to a missionary society. Wallace who lived longer and more intimately than Darwin within the sphere of missionary work, thought but little of their work and criticised their methods in a published article. And on a Dr. Kay taking up the cudgels, and repeating the usual nonsense about savage nations civilised by Christianity, he pertinently asked:—

"What savage nations have been raised out of their degradation by Christianity? The Abyssinians are a good case to show that Christianity *alone* does nothing. The circumstances have not been favorable to the growth of civilisation in Abyssinia, and therefore, though they have had Christianity as long as we have (or longer) they are scarcely equal morally to many Pagan and certainly inferior to some Mohammedan nations."

Christianity, he goes on to point out, is essentially an appeal to the lower motives, and on this ground he asserts that while he believed, "I was really inferior morally as a Christian than I am now as.....an infidel."

Mr. Wallace also publishes an interesting and important letter to Sir Charles Lyall, urging him to deal in the "Antiquity of Man" with a subject of, as Wallace says, "of immense importance." The

MS. of the work, submitted for reading by Lyall, contained a passage on the value of freedom of thought as essential to scientific progress. Wallace wished this to be amplified and emphasised, and said in a letter to the author:—

"The points that may be more fully treated seem to me to be—1st, to show.....that there *was* such practical freedom of thought in Greek schools and Academies; 2nd, to put forward strongly the fact that, ever since the establishment of Christianity, the education of Europe has been wholly in the hands of men bound down by penalties to fixed dogmas, that philosophy and science have been taught largely under the same influences, and that, even at the present day and among the most civilised nations, it causes the greater part of the intellectual strength of the world to be wasted in endeavoring to reconcile old dogmas with modern thought, while no step in advance can be made without the fiercest opposition by those whose vested interests are bound up in those dogmas. 3rd, I should like to see it (though, perhaps, you are not prepared to do it).....pointing out that it is a disgrace to civilisation and a crime to posterity, that the great mass of the instructors of our youth should still be those who are fettered by creeds and dogmas which they are under a penalty to teach..... It is the duty of the State to disqualify as teachers, in all schools and colleges under its control, those whose interests are in any way bound up with the promulgation of fixed creeds or dogmas of whatever nation."

Sir Charles Lyall was not prepared to make such a statement, and for reasons best known to himself, even deleted from the published work the passage referred to by Wallace. The fact is to be regretted, and Wallace's general policy of speaking out on all manner of heretical subjects is the more admirable by comparison. Perhaps the worst effect of organised bigotry is that it so often robs broader minds of the courage of expressing their full thoughts. Such people do not say anything they actually disbelieve, but they leave unsaid a deal they do believe.

In his notices of well-known people whose acquaintance he formed, Mr. Wallace adds an anecdote characteristic of Herbert Spencer—the latter explaining to him that he purposely selected a boarding house filled with unintellectual people because he suffered from insomnia, and he lost no sleep through listening to interesting conversations. These unnamed boarders never knew how much they were contributing to the conclusion of the Synthetic Philosophy. There is also a well merited tribute paid to Elisée Reclus, the great French geographer and Atheist, whom he describes as a "true and noble lover of humanity," and a story of a private lecture delivered by Richard Le Gallienne, to a small tourist party in Switzerland, of which Dr. Lunn, Rev. H. R. Haweis, and Hugh Price Hughes were members. Mr. Le Gallienne surprised the party by declaring that nearly all the poets of his acquaintance were more or less pronounced Agnostics.

Very much more *might* be quoted from Mr. Wallace's record of his life. It is an eminently interesting record of a hard-working, *honest* career, told with a modesty that gives to an autobiography a charm that nothing else can. Calculated caution in expressing certain ideas, with the endeavor to placate people in high life, might easily have made Mr. Wallace's life easier than it has been, but at the end of a long life he has at least the satisfaction of feeling that he has all along placed that which he considered the highest, first. And if *that* does not bring contentment to one's declining years, contentment must indeed be a mirage—always—sought, never attained.

C. COHEN.

The New Testament in the Twentieth Century.

THE chief object of the publications entitled *Essays for the Times*, is to restate Christianity in terms of modern knowledge. They are intended to serve as a protest against the dogmas of the Orthodox Church. No. 9 is by Mr. P. Mordaunt Barnard, B.D., and deals

with "The Interpretation of the New Testament in Modern Life and Thought." Mr. Barnard is an exceedingly advanced theologian, and, as such, finds serious fault with many Christian teachers for still adhering to the "formularies that have served past generations." He maintains that "there undoubtedly exists a wide-spread feeling of dissatisfaction" with such formularies. He is of opinion that, on the whole, the modern laity is more wide-awake than the clergy. He says:—

"It is a fact that much current teaching is positively shocking to the moral sense of people who have learned to think for themselves; they find themselves asked to believe things against which their moral nature revolts. It is true that a great deal of this sort of teaching has now been placed as it were in the back ground, but we cannot help feeling that it is there in the back ground, and that it has not really been given up."

We all know how terribly true such an indictment is, and how courageous it is on the part of a theologian to make it. Mr. Barnard does not shrink from giving examples:

"Such a subject, for instance, is the doctrine of the eternal damnation of the heathen; it is seldom openly preached, and yet there is a feeling that it does lie hidden in the back ground of orthodox Christianity. Again, there is a great want of proportion in the treatment of sin and sinful acts; thoughtful people will not believe that what they know to be matters of merely trivial importance, or in which they are not in any full sense free agents, are really deserving of the wrath of a just God—they cannot believe that God is extreme to mark errors and mistakes in regard to which they themselves would not fail to note extenuating circumstances if they were judging a fellow-creature. Above all, people will not admit guilt in matters in which they feel that they themselves as individuals are not morally responsible: the great example of this is, of course, the doctrine of original or birth sin; it is against the moral conscience of the present day to believe that children are born into the world deserving of the wrath of their Creator, because in some mysterious way the sin of their parents is passed on to them."

It is needless to say that Mr. Barnard does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible; and yet he regards it as an inspired book. The question is, how can a *book* be inspired if its *words* are not? Is not a book made up of words? Have you ever seen a book composed of any other material? Therefore, if a book is inspired the inspiration has no other possible channel of manifestation than the words employed. It is simply absurd to claim that the Bible is inspired and then to admit that its inspiration is not *verbal*. Mr. Barnard has given up "the theory that the Spirit of God wrote the books of the New Testament by exercising irresistible compulsion on the human authors," and asserts that "these books fall properly within the sphere of action of our apprehension and our reason." That is to say that the books of the New Testament are purely human documents and should be treated as such. In what sense, then, can inspiration be claimed for them? The essayist's *faith* leads him into the slough of illogicality. Concerning the statement just quoted, he observes:—

"This somewhat bold statement must, of course, be limited to the books themselves, and not applied to the central message which they contain; that central message given by Jesus Christ concerning the Nature and Attributes of God appeals to that faculty in man which is beyond and above reason, and to which the name *faith* is rightly applied—it appeals to that inner consciousness of man in virtue of which he is able to recognise and to receive the self-revelation of the Deity. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels; the message is preserved in books written by men, which can be, and ought to be, treated as such."

Who can possibly form a correct judgment of the central message of a book except through the book itself? We cannot separate a book from its contents: it is the contents that make the book. And yet Mr. Barnard assures us that the central message of the New Testament is a special revelation from God, while the New Testament as a book is a human production, and should be treated as such. Ortho-

doxy is at least intelligible, but this is a doctrine no one can understand. Then one absurdity naturally leads to another. The essayist tells us that "doubts and difficulties in regard to these books are due to insufficiency of evidence, or to inability on our part to use our faculties to full advantage." Consequently, "when certainty cannot be reached, then suspense of judgment is the only proper attitude of the mind, because the problems are such as could be solved if the evidence were sufficient, and if our faculties were properly trained and employed." A stranger, more inconsistent theory of inspiration was never propounded.

Let us see how this theory works. Mr. Barnard admits that "it is altogether inconsistent with a true idea of faith to imagine that it is properly exercised in accepting statements which appear to the reason to be self-contradictory." "There may be," he adds, "indeed we may well admit that there are, cases in which faith over-rides evidence; *but faith is out of place in judging of evidence*" (the italics are mine). Bearing this observation in mind, "let us take the central fact of the resurrection of Christ." Mr. Barnard contends that "independent of all evidence as to details, it is clear that all the writers whose books are contained in the New Testament, were absolutely convinced of the resurrection, for they believed that Christ was living and working in them: this, then, was a matter of faith, resting on spiritual consciousness, as well as a matter of evidence." Then he adds, "It would still remain a matter of faith, even supposing every shred of evidence for the rising again of Christ from the tomb to be lost or discredited, to those who are conscious in the same way that Christ is living and working in them." Of course it would; *but the most fervent faith is yet evidentially valueless*. It proves nothing beyond its own existence. Is not Mr. Barnard aware that there are many Christian ministers who no longer believe in the literal or bodily resurrection of Christ, and yet are quite as conscious that Christ is living and working within them as those who do? Is he not also aware that the people who were absolutely convinced of the personal existence of the Devil, believed that he lived and worked within them as the supreme enemy of their souls? It is the evidence for the resurrection that is of vital importance; and the evidence for it contained in the New Testament satisfies only those who are already believers in it, and according to the essayist himself, "faith is out of place in judging of evidence."

Mr. Barnard advocates "the vital necessity at the present time for frank and earnest study of the New Testament." He wants all the people to engage in it and to make it the chief study of their lives. He has no confidence in professional theologians, nor in denominational leaders, for the simple reason that they see and interpret the New Testament differently from what he does. He forgets that the Orthodox Church derived its doctrines from the Bible. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, were all earnest students of the New Testament, and I do not think that Mr. Barnard and his friends are more likely to be right in their interpretation of it than the former were. The New Testament must be a most strange book indeed if men are only now beginning to understand its message. It has been in existence some eighteen hundred years, but has remained a sealed volume until now. And what is it that the people of the twentieth century are called upon to do? To adapt, or interpret the teaching of Christ according to the new conditions of education and of thought that have arisen. "A continuance of the present insincere deference to authority, which to a great extent is a mere make-believe, can only lead to widespread unreality of the worst type in all religious matters." Each one must now study and interpret the New Testament for himself. The result, of course, will be that the interpretations will be as numerous as the interpreters.

Nothing is more indisputable than that Christian Supernaturalism has failed to bring about the *ethical* salvation of mankind. Mr. Barnard states that "the great movement in support of hospitals is the most important contribution of this generation to the constructive criticism of the New Testament." I utterly fail to see the relevancy of that statement. Our hospitals bear witness to the dismal failure of the Christian religion, not to its divinity and regenerative efficiency. Hospitals are needed because religion has not succeeded in accomplishing its own work, and because, until recently, it did succeed in checking the spread of natural knowledge; and they owe their origin to the evolution of philanthropy. The great movement in hospital building took place only in the eighteenth century. Are we to infer from that that Christianity had been asleep for seventeen hundred years, but that all of a sudden it awoke and began to build hospitals? Mr. Barnard observes that "those who say that they have no religion except that of being charitable to their fellow-creatures in word and deed are but following in the steps of the Son of Man," and "that the highest ideas of morality to which we can attain are never found to be contrary to his teaching, and always serve to throw fresh light on it." In reply, I contend that the same observation would be equally true if applied to Confucianism, Buddhism, or the ancient religion of Egypt. Ethically, the teaching of all the great religions is the same. But Mr. Barnard is wrong in saying that all humane and moral people are followers of Christ. According to Christ's own words only those who believe in and confess him as Lord can be his disciples. To be a Christian means much more than to be a good man, and sometimes, alas, much less. A Christian is distinctively a *believer*. "And who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 5). A great doctrine of the New Testament is Justification by Faith, and that was the great doctrine of the Protestant Reformation also. Jesus said: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John xiv. 1). The first thing Jesus insisted upon was faith in himself, and the second, perfect obedience. All Christians are believers; but all believers are not highly moral, nor are all highly moral people believers. There is no getting out of this.

The tendency of the twentieth century is to renounce supernaturalism and to put reliance solely upon natural forces. There are many true and beautiful passages in the New Testament, but the bulk of the volume has ceased to appeal to the modern mind. Most of those who think for themselves are known as Agnostics or Secularists. And it is highly probable that a careful perusal of Mr. Barnard's essay will lead many to break, not only with orthodoxy, but with all forms of supernatural religion, and to derive their one rule of conduct from the study of human nature.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Hundred Best Books.—I.

"What I desire is the sum of all desires, and what I seek to know is the sum of all different kinds of knowledge."—AMIEL, *Journal Intime*.

WE have seen several lists compiled of the hundred best books, of which Sir John Lubbock's (now Lord Avebury) is the best known, and I cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that some of the best books have been excluded for the Freethought contained in them. Take Sir John Lubbock's list; out of a hundred books selected only three or four can be termed freethought; they are Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Emerson's *Essays*, Hume's *Essays*, and Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.

Of these works, Gibbon's is by far the most damaging to the popular faith, but the fact is that Gibbon cannot be excluded from any list of the best books

without a scandal; that "splendid bridge from the old world to the new" as grim old Carlyle called it, still remains in style and accuracy, the finest historical work produced by this country. As the historian Cotter Morison justly remarked "the extent of his learning is as wonderful as its accuracy," and "it may well be questioned whether there is another instance of such high literary form and finish, coupled with such vast erudition." To which may be added the testimony of the great historian Freeman, who declared that "Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."^{*}

Hume's *Essays* certainly contain a powerful solvent of religion in the essay on Miracles and the *Natural History of Religion*, but in the editions prepared to meet the demand caused by Sir John's list, I find these two essays are not included. As for the other three, their Freethought is not obtrusive and the average believer would scarcely notice it.

Nor does Science fare any better in the list than Freethought; this is the more surprising when we consider that Sir John Lubbock is a scientist of repute, his *Prehistoric Times* and *Origin of Civilisation* being a valuable contribution to the elucidation of the origin of Religion and Civilisation. One would have thought that here was an admirable opportunity to introduce a few scientific works to the notice of the general public; and although we could not expect him to advance a work of his own as one of the hundred best books, still he might have included Dr. Tylor's magnificent work *Primitive Culture*, or Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* and Buckle's *History of Civilisation*. At any rate they would have been a vast improvement upon Bishop Butler's, out of date, *Analogy of Religion*, Keble's *Christian Year* or the *Pickwick Papers*.

But it may be urged, Sir John's object was not to teach science but to point out those books which in his opinion contained the perfection of style, the highest point of literary excellence, apart altogether from the truth or utility of the works themselves. But what man, not mentally deficient, would think of recommending Wake's *Apostolical Fathers*, Sale's *Koran*, the *Analects of Confucius*, or the *Romayana* as the highest perfection of literary style?

Again, it is difficult to believe that a man who has shown so clearly the purely natural origin of religion, can fodder himself upon *The Christian Year*, the *Analogy of Religion*, Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying* and *The Imitation of Christ*. As a critic remarked "Sir John's list was hopelessly irritating for any one who had an interest in good literature and (wanted?) guidance thereon." And he adds "No one could quarrel with Sir John Lubbock if he had named these as his hundred own favorites among the books of the world, although no one would have believed that he really did find joy in such a selection. We should all in our hearts have suspected affectation. Still, it might have been his hundred, it could not possibly have been any one else's hundred. For this list included books that would bore some by their profundity, irritate others by their triviality, and madden many by their prolixity."[†]

It is true that the list does contain one scientific work viz., Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Now Charles Darwin was undoubtedly the greatest man produced by the nineteenth century, and the *Origin of Species* created the greatest revolution in thought the world has known, but I should no more think of recommending the *Origin of Species* to the ordinary man in the street than I should think of recommending Newton's *Principia* or La Place's *Celestial Mechanics*. The work was written for scientists, and as Professor Tyndall points out in his famous Belfast address, "The book was by no means an easy one," there were even "some really eminent scientific men.....who entirely mistook Mr. Darwin's views. In fact the work needed an expounder, and it found one in Mr. Huxley."

The truth is that Charles Darwin knew that his theory was new and revolutionary, that it would encounter strenuous opposition, therefore he compiled this immense—and to one who has had no previous acquaintance with the subject—somewhat bewildering array of facts, which indeed was necessary and accomplished his purpose thoroughly.

But to place this book into the hands of a man as one of the hundred best books, is to ignore scores of books which would give a clearer and more concise view of the subject with a far less expenditure of time; we give three as an example, viz., the admirable little book *Charles Darwin* by Grant Allen, published by Longman's at half-a-crown, Huxley's *Lay Sermons* and Dennis Hird's *Easy Essay in Evolution*. The only reason I can see for Sir John's selection is that the work does not point out how the new theory conflicts with the Bible and the old theology, as Darwin did not wish to rouse the *odium theologicum*, although his reticence did not save him from the clerical fury, as we have had occasion to point out.

We repeat that the *Origin of Species* is not a book to place in the hands of a novice, although he will find much valuable information in the work after he has gained a clear view of the subject from more popular works. The publication of the work at sixpence by a society supposed to have the interest of rationalism at heart, is merely a catch-penny policy when there are so many trenchant works waiting a cheap edition. The same policy dictated the publication of a sixpenny edition of Renan's *Life of Jesus*, which at this time of day can only be regarded as reactionary.

The late Lord Acton also compiled a list of the hundred best books—to be strictly accurate his list amounts to ninety-eight. It is compiled for any English youth who has had a public school or university education, and it is devoted to knowledge pure and simple. It is also intended, in the words of Lord Acton, "to steel him against the charm of literary beauty and talent." The list appeared in the *Pall Mall Magazine* for last July, with an introduction by Mr. Clement Shorter.

Of the ninety-eight books in the list—we may suppose that Lord Acton having surveyed the world of books, could not find two more worthy of making up the hundred—only seventeen are in English. Thirty-five are in German, an equal number in French and the remainder in Latin or Italian. However, the English works may be taken as a good sample of the whole. Four are purely theological, as follows: St. Augustine's *Letters*, Cardinal Newman's *Theory of Development*, Mozley's *University Sermons*, and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*.

Eight deal with Laws and Politics. Only one scientific work is given and that is again Darwin's *Origin of Species*, probably selected for the same reason. It is evident that Lord Acton considered that religion and politics were the only things worth cultivating. It is strange too that if Lord Acton wished to steel the mind "against the charm of literary beauty and talent" he should recommend such masters of style as Newman, Burke, Hooker and Coleridge.

John Morley who has not the slightest sympathy with Cardinal Newman's Church, declares that Newman is "one of the most winning writers of English that ever existed"^{*} and we do not think he has overstated the case. Burke, Coleridge and Hooker are also in the first rank. "Sometimes" says Mr. Clement Shorter "Lord Acton names a theologian who is absolutely out of date, at others a philosopher who is in the same case. But on the whole it is a fascinating list as an index to what a well-trained mind thought the noblest mental equipment for life's work." For our part we should not apply the word "fascinating" to any list of books almost wholly devoted to Theology, Politics and Law.

Mr. Clement Shorter himself contributes a list of the best hundred books. It is sub-divided into four parts of twenty-five each, Poetry, Fiction, History

* J. C. Morison. *Gibbon* pp. 134-146.

† Clement Shorter, *Pall Mall Magazine*, July 1905.

* *Studies in Literature* 1891, p. 211.

and Biography. On the whole it is a far better selection than any we have seen. Its weakest point appears to us to be the section devoted to fiction. For our part we should prefer Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* or *The Return of the Native* to Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. We should be inclined to say of Mr. Hardy what Freeman said of Gibbon, "Whatever else is read, Hardy must be read too." We should prefer Stevenson, Wells, or Anstey to Richardson or Peacock.

Mr. Shorter claims that there is no book in his list to "bore" anyone. I can only say, speaking personally, that Richardson's *Clarissa* bored me more than any novel I ever read. In foreign writers we should prefer Maupassant to Dumas, and Flaubert or Daudet to Boccaccio. We are pleased to see, however, the incomparable *Candide* of Voltaire included in the selection. In history, also, we are pleased to find Buckle's magnificent *History of Civilisation*, Taine's *Ancien Régime*, and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In poetry we find Shelley, Byron, Burns, Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*, and Goethe's *Faust*. The piety that can remain unaltered under the staggering blows aimed by the above-named works will require to be of a robust order. This is very encouraging; but we cannot avoid the suspicion that the exigencies of the endeavor "to go one better" is responsible for the admission of the hated unbelievers into the fold. The list has one point in common with the others we have seen—namely, the total exclusion of all scientific works; a strange omission truly if the compilers had any real intention of imparting knowledge.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops.

The massacre of the Jews in Russia, deliberately devised by the rulers who were losing their power and shrank from nothing to retain it, is simply stupefying in its monstrous wickedness. The dregs of the orthodox population were invited to kill and torture the Jews. They were provided with weapons for the purpose, and the decent citizens were kept at a distance, in order that the bestial mob might do its evil work unmolested. And the result was unspeakably horrible. Even the *Daily News*, in a leading article, was obliged to say that "the massacres constitute one of the most awful episodes in history." The same number of our contemporary contained a letter from Mr. Israel Zangwill, which refers to the massacres as "the slaughter of old and young, the torture of women and children, on a scale unparalleled even in the Middle Ages." Every device of cruelty was resorted to. Men were killed by inches, and often set fire to at the finish; women were outraged and disembowelled; children were cut to pieces, torn limb from limb, or had their brains dashed out against the floors and walls. Two hundred of the victims buried at Odessa could not be identified, because their heads had been beaten with hammers and rendered absolutely unrecognisable. And the people who did this bloody and ghastly work—such as no tiger or shark ever dreamed of—were all Christians! No doubt we shall be told that they were *not* Christians. But this is only one of the desperate stratagems of controversy. These people belong to the Christian camp, and it was as Christians that they were beckoned forth to torment and murder the Jews. And the keenest sarcasm of the situation is that the Christians owe everything to the Jews. Had there been no Jews there would have been no Christians. Jesus Christ was a Jew, all his Apostles were Jews, Paul was a Jew, *all* the first Christians were Jews. We might almost say that God the Father and God the Son were both Jews. Only the Holy Ghost came of an alien lineage.

Mr. Karl Blind asks a very pertinent question. How is it that the Czar, who is still an "autocrat" boasting of his "inflexible will" has never issued a proclamation against the more than bestial outrages on the Jews? If Nicholas II. has "the coolest head in all Russia," as Mr. Stead says, Mr. Blind suggests that "he has the coldest heart." The truth is that the Czar comes of a very bad stock—and he is a Christian.

The "Powers" have got out their warships to frighten poor old Abdul Hamid. Their object is to secure good

government in Macedonia. The whole lot of them do not send so much as a squib to frighten the Czar on account of the worse than Turkish outrages on the Jews in Russia. What hypocrites these Christian Powers are! They bully the weak in the name of morality. They never open their mouths to the strong.

The silliest thing said about the Jewish massacres in Russia came from the lips of the Bishop of Manchester. Speaking at Burnley, Dr. Knox asked his hearers to pray that God would arise and stretch forth his mighty arm, and put a stop to the fiendish and abominable work. A little reflection might have satisfied the Bishop that if God had any arm-stretching to do, he might as well have done it beforehand and prevented the massacres from occurring at all. There would have been some sense in that, and some humanity too. What the God that Dr. Knox talks about will do now is hardly worth consideration.

The Russian Jew is taxed six times as heavily as orthodox citizens. He has to pay a "candle tax" in order to light his two candles on the eve of the Sabbath; a "cap tax" to allow him to cover during prayers; a "meat tax" to allow him to eat meat ceremonially killed; and scores of other special taxes on his rents, his work-rooms, and his profits. He is bled slowly always, and rapidly when the massacres come round.

Mr. John Morley struck a certain keynote in his recent eulogy on the late Mr. Gladstone, and most of the newspapers played up to it. All praised Mr. Gladstone's passion for righteousness and his capacity for moral indignation. Well now, at the risk of being thought ungenerous, we feel bound to say that Mr. Gladstone's moral indignation generally ran along the line of his religious prejudices. We all remember how he stumped the country on the subject of the "Bulgarian Atrocities." But the Bulgarians were Christians, and their slaughterers were Mohammedans. It was this difference of faith that gave much of the thunder and lightning to Mr. Gladstone's eloquence. He spent very little of his eloquence on atrocities that occurred elsewhere and under other conditions. His good friend, Holy Russia, for instance, has always deliberately played with the sufferings of the poor Armenians—who, by the way, are also Christians. When there was something to gain Russia made a noise about the butchery of the Armenians; when there was nothing to gain she let them be butchered without a protest, and even threw difficulties in the way of an effective protest by other Powers. Students of Eastern affairs, who were not led astray by religious sympathy or antipathy, were perfectly well aware that the Christian Russian was, if anything, a worse beast than the Mohammedan Turk, and late events have demonstrated this fact before the eyes of the whole civilised world.

A *Daily Mail* correspondent says that he has had a talk with Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who, after Standard Oil Rockefeller, is reputed to be the richest man on earth. Mr. Carnegie, who is said to be an Agnostic, stated in this conversation that, in his opinion, university training leads clergymen to the higher criticism, and "the moment they begin that they are no good for religion. As soon as they begin to tear the Bible to pieces, good-bye religion." Really now! Did the great Andrew say that? If he did say it, what a merry Andrew he is becoming! We have seen his name lately as a subscriber to church organs, but we did not think it would lead up to this.

Mr. Carnegie, however, if he does not tear the Bible to pieces himself, views parts of it with something more than suspicion. "Some of the fellows of the Old Testament," he said, "were 'rum 'uns,' and I would not like to have a son or a daughter of mine read about them." What do the Higher Critics say worse than this?

A contractor called Mend, the newspapers say, has put up a monument to Satan at Detroit. It is about fourteen feet high and represents the devil crouching in a pulpit—whether as the preacher or as afraid of the preacher is not stated. The inscription on the monument is said to run as follows: "Man is not created, but developed. God did not make man, but man has made gods." And we suppose that Satan is one of them. Mr. Mend seems to be a Freethinker. No wonder the people of Detroit are reported as "greatly indignant."

We are getting rather tired of recording the cases of clergymen sent to prison for unmentionable offences. Three bad cases have occurred during the past week in the southern part of England. The clerical profession is falling into very bad odor.

Another man of God in trouble. Vyvan Henry Moyle, described as a clergyman, address refused, being charged before Mr. Rose, at the Tower-bridge Court, on a warrant, with conspiring to defraud, was granted bail, if he could obtain it, in two surieties of £2,000 each.

The Bishop of London has been blowing his own trumpet again. He has been telling the world how he spent "a sacred hour" with a lady who dreaded an operation, and who "walked to the operating table without a quiver" when he had done with her. She became a Christian woman who could look death and trial in the face. This is what the Bishop says, and he appears to think that some mighty effort of faith is necessary to screw people up to the point of undergoing an operation, whereas thousands of people undergo operations every year without interviewing a Bishop. Some of them, of course, are Freethinkers.

Bishop Ingram wound up by saying that "Christian ministers ought to ask for and demand a right to have their place in the sick room allotted to them by doctors." We suppose this is on the principle which already prevails in high-class dentistry. The dentist operates on your jaws, but an expert is retained to administer the gas.

Three hundred pounds of diseased and tuberculous meat was seized at an establishment in Finsbury, where it was going to be turned into sausages. The Sanitary Inspector applied at Worship-street Police-court for an order to condemn and destroy the stuff. In the course of his application he referred to the place of seizure as "a sausage manufactory." Mr. Cluer objected to the name of the premises being hidden, and the sausage manufactory turned out to be Lipton's. We congratulate Mr. Cluer on his rectitude and impartiality. Neither the friends of God nor the friends of the King escape justice in his court. We should like to see more Freethinkers on the bench.

Two men of God met in the refreshment room of Lincoln Railway Station. Two of a trade seldom agree, and this was a case in point. One called the other a bully; the other called him a lightning-struck lyre, and threatened, if he came there again, to fling him through the door. Finally the Rev. J. Hunt ran foul of a railway police-sergeant, and the result was his being fined fifteen shillings and costs by the "beak." We wonder if there are barmaids at that Railway Station.

In the course of his address to the Bench the Rev. J. Hunt quoted Shakespeare. "Shakespeare," he said, "tells us that 'conscience makes cowards of us all,' but it was not the case with me." It is to be hoped that the reverend gentleman studies his Bible more carefully than he studies his Shakespeare. The word "conscience" in that soliloquy of Hamlet's does not mean what the word invariably means in English now. It means "consciousness" or *thinking*.

Oliver Goldsmith, by the way, failed to perceive this, and the failure was responsible for his ridiculous criticism on this passage. A bad conscience, he said, might make us cowards, but why should a good one? Goldsmith, as Johnson said, was a great man, but in this instance he was guilty of double-barreled folly. For it is not the goodness or the badness of a man's conscience that could make him afraid or keep him cheerful, but the nature of the moral facts on which it happened to be dwelling.

President Roosevelt sent a message to the great meeting held in London to mark the close of the centenary celebrations of the British and Foreign Bible Society. It was thus summarised in the *Daily Chronicle* :—

"Practically all the Presidents of the United States had shown very definite religious interests. He hoped that the gathering would stimulate world-wide interest in the translation and circulation of the Bible. All who had the good of mankind at heart would feel for the effort the sincerest sympathy and goodwill."

This is Mr. Roosevelt all over. Note the coolness with which he assumes to speak for "all" who have the good of mankind at heart. Evidently it never crosses his mind that there may be people who differ from him and yet are as good as he is. When he assumes to speak in this way of "all" the Presidents of the United States he is simply impudent. It is well-known that Abraham Lincoln was a sceptic. So was Thomas Jefferson. We believe there were others. But these two play havoc with Mr. Roosevelt's "all."

Inspiring messages reached the Bible Society's meeting from King Edward, Emperor William, the King of Sweden,

the Queen of Holland, and the King of Denmark. All of them Protestants; not a single Catholic monarch sent a word of encouragement. We suggest that the Bible Society might have lengthened its list of royal sympathisers by securing messages from the Queen of Timbuctoo and the King of the Cannibal Islands. The latter might have made tender enquiries about the next batch of missionaries.

"For Conscience. Dr. Clifford's Terms of Settlement." Such was the enticing headline that met our eyes the other morning in the *Daily News*. Under it we found the following sentences :—

"Addressing a large and enthusiastic meeting of Passive Resisters at Battersea Town Hall, Dr. Clifford said they must tell the next Liberal Government plainly what they wanted. They wanted a settlement of this matter that should be final; they did not want the controversy revived every five, ten, or twenty years. It must be a settlement based on absolute equality in all matters of citizenship; no favor to anybody, no exceptional treatment for anybody, or any church, or any class, but absolute justice all round for Papist and for Protestant, for the Agnostic and for any other 'nostic.' The State had nothing to do with theology at all. Parliament did not consist of theologians: he would have been there long ago if it had."

We have heard all this before. Dr. Clifford goes on for ever with his "damnable iteration." And there is not a grain of honesty in the whole of it. On this subject he is hopelessly depraved. His language looks all right on the face of it, but when you look into it you find that it is designed to conceal his meaning. Nobody could judge from the above extract that Dr. Clifford wants Bible religion taught in the nation's schools. That has to be dragged out of him bit by bit.

Bishop Gore has been discussing the prevalence of scepticism before the Birmingham Diocesan Conference. We quote the following summary report of his speech from a morning paper :—

"Bishop Gore said that the serious element in the situation was the fact that the vast majority of literary, scientific, and what they would call educated men, adopted a non-committal attitude with regard to the Christian faith.

That was the position of the vast majority of people who were put in first classes at the universities.

A great many clergymen and orthodox persons had no adequate sense of how vast a number of intelligent laymen were totally unsettled in their religious convictions.

He had no misgivings as to the result if they could be got to study the evidence for themselves, but they would not pay the intellectual price of thorough investigation.

He warned the clergy against the damage which might be done by shallow sermons on the foundations of their faith.

It was important that the clergy should not insult the intelligence of those to whom they preached by presenting the subject in a manner which indicated that they had not given due study to its preparation."

Dr. Gore's warnings do credit to his sagacity. But will they have much effect upon the clergy? We think not. The ordinary man of God is not equal to the strain that Dr. Gore would put upon him. He goes into the Church for a living, and will get through his work as easily as he can. The really valuable part of Dr. Gore's speech is the frank admission of the spread of scepticism among educated people.

Lady Florence Dixie is dead, and some people, whom we need not mention, will miss the leaves from her cheque-book. She was a woman of some mark, and her instincts appear to have been sound. She hated cruelty and loved freedom. But she had a too maternal fondness for the writings of her salad days, which, having money, she was able to get published. Copies were sent to us from time to time, with astonishing Introductions by this, that, or the other publicist. We glanced at them—and the rest was silence. Literary criticism in the *Freethinker* has always been honest. Not being able to say anything in praise of Lady Dixie's books that were sent to us, we preferred to say nothing at all.

Obituary notices of Lady Florence Dixie appeared in most of the newspapers. All of them that we saw forgot to mention her Agnosticism. One of them had the temerity to state that her brother, the late Marquis of Queensberry, was an Atheist—although we believe he called himself an Agnostic. But then the Marquis had been dead for some years—which makes all the difference.

Bishop Thornton told a Blackburn meeting that he was convinced that the Bible did not prohibit marriage with a deceased wife's sister. What person of common sense cares whether it does or not?

Rev. J. Blackburn Brown is writing some articles on "Criticising the Bible" in the *Darwen Gazette*. In the first

he complains that "a leading free-thinking periodical of the day," meaning the *Freethinker*, sneered and jeered at him instead of answering his arguments. The reverend gentleman forgets that arguments must exist before they can be answered. We have not been able to find a single argument in his new contribution. Perhaps he will bring one in before he finishes.

Mr. John Hodge, the Gorton Parliamentary Labor candidate, has a perfect right to address a gathering of Sunday-school workers, but he should address them as Mr. John Hodge and not as a representative of Labor. This particularly applies to his pious hope that pulpit and pew will work together to realise "the glorious Gospel." "Blessed be ye poor" is a text of the glorious Gospel which we defy Mr. Hodge to trot out at a Trade Union Congress; and there are many other texts just as agreeable to the Labor movement.

Sir George Williams, of the Young Men's Christian Association, who was such a prominent figure for so many years at Exeter Hall, has been buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. Nelson and Wellington may wonder who the devil the fellow is, and wish to be shifted out of the place when access to it becomes so easy.

Old books constantly stream away from England to America. The latest lot to go is Spurgeon's collection of Puritan divinity—about the driest and dustiest stuff in the world. We don't envy the Yankees their bargain. May they never go through the purgatory of reading what they have bought.

Japan has been visited by a destructive typhoon. In Oshima and the neighboring islands over 2,000 buildings were wrecked. "He doth all things well."

Death and the Jester.

THE damned death city is far away,
Before me the cold of the break of day;
A morning ramble o'er hills of green,
Hedges and ditches and ponds between.
I follow a chattering vagabond stream
Smiling in sympathy—half in a dream;
By the sleepy farm where the fowls are waking,
The dew from meadow and orchard is shaking.
The wind is awake and the leaves of the shade
Like coins of gold to the light are swayed.
Sweet rays of life from some dying world
In agony fall to the flowers, unfurled
'Mid the scent of the yew trees and parson's bay.
By the churchyard bottom—the schoolhouse way—
Sad flowers adrop from their sleep of night
Neath the damp of death and the stars' frail light.
But my chattering guide takes a deeper run
Where dead moss odors lift to the sun.
The woods grow thicker, till—sudden, between,
As my footsteps crackle—the limpid sheen
Of the hassock pool where the dabchicks hide!
I balance my rod o'er the sedges wide.
From over the wave, through the hazel trees,
The clink of a bell is afloat with the breeze.
Some old bell wether awakes in the sun.
I nod to my float—let my fancies run.
There's an old-time jester—eyes a-twinkle;
Just the jolliest phantom—all smiles a-wrinkle,
Sings as he sits by my side on the bank:

"Ho! I swing and I swank like a crusty crank,
For my cap and my bells are the church's steeple.
I chime for the rich and toll for the people;
And the tombstones beneath are my teeth—are my teeth,
Where the numbskulls lie in their painted sleeth.
Deep in their shells the sluggards lie—
Not likely to budge till they're able to fly.
Of phosphor of fang-pang their death-worm shines.
Fine weather for graves—grave weather for fines!
Ho! I fine them for truth and I fine them for lying;
They bribe me at birth, but I damn them for dying.

Down under this mouldy old milestone to Heaven
Lies a virtuous father—father of seven;
Seven sorts of creed, in a mixed selection,
Ticketted up for the resurrection
Like a tin of sardines in their family gravy.
Sardines by the label—what! pilchards—Lord save ye,
Cat'lics and Baptists in great expectation!
Spontaneous damnation—hydraulic salvation!
Absolution before or forgiveness after,
Just about equally subject for laughter.

They mizzled on earth to any faith's loss.
A stodgy set wobbling round the cross! [crank
Ho! They shrink as they shrank. 'Twas a snaky old
Rots under that slab by the graveyard bank.
If the worms like good grammar they'll scarcely rejoice
At his 'Bill of Fare'—may pick—there's no choice:—
'He Departed this Life—Fell on Sleep—In the Lord'—
And three wives—married to death—the fraud!
Like a bird selecting the straws loved best
To lie on some day in his future nest!
On the surface this ethical, truly religious
Man of faith—and cunning prodigious—
Was a really Christian, greasy, agnostic
Sort of a grocery business acroscopic.
He never felt safe—when Freethought's antiseptic
Might turn all his customers suddenly sceptic.
Ho! you never could tell on which side of Hell
He'd sit by for warmth when winter-time fell,
Or which gate of Heaven he entered and slammed
When your Christian last summer was partially damned.
But my fool's cap like an extinguisher came,
And I jangled the bells as I smocked his flame.
My smile was over a church yard wide.
Now the motley stains of my oriels glide.
I yawn—how I yawn; and my breath—my breath
Bears the humor of death—'tis the humor of death.
Ho! I sink." But the face of the jester has gone.
There sits by my side, as sure as you're born,
An old bell-wether, taking his choice
Of my baitworms and lunch. Ah! that's Tom's voice:
"Huloo, yoong Goerge! Hud'n'y spoort?
That's a mooerty room sooerter rooerch you've cooert."

GEORGE ELLIS WOODWARD.

Did Balaam's Ass Speak?

DID Jonah spend a three-day's holiday in the belly of a whale? Did Jesus see all the kingdoms of the world from a pinnacle of a temple? Did Samson carry the gates of Gaza, and kill a thousand Philistines with one ass's jaw-bone? These, and a multitude of other miraculous problems which are suggested by the Biblical story were answered with an emphatic "No!" by the Rev. Dr. Lyle, of the Central Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont., on Sunday, Oct. 1. The preacher had chosen for his text the story of Balaam's talking ass.

Dr. Lyle said it was absurd to think that God literally spoke through the mouth of a quadruped, like a pilot speaking through a megaphone. Of course, looked at from a common-sense point of view, the story is unbelievable; but what has common sense to do with religious belief? And if Dr. Lyle dismisses this absurd old myth on account of its folly, what becomes of all the other miracles recorded in the Bible? What becomes of the Bible itself? And Christianity?

Dr. Lyle appears to have enough 'cuteness to be a preacher, and if he has, he surely must know that the same reasoning that disposes of one miracle will dispose of all the rest—inspiration itself included.

Charles Wesley was comparatively rational when he asserted that witchcraft was essential to Christianity; for witchcraft is prominent in both Old and New Testaments, from the story of the Witch of Endor to the story of the Gadarene Swine, and if the Bible is essential to Christianity, so is witchcraft.

Why, too, should Dr. Lyle think it unbelievable that God should have spoken through the mouth of one four-legged ass, when, if his own religion be accepted, he has spoken through the mouths of many two-legged asses? For was not Christianity hidden from the wise and sent to the foolish?

If we are to dismiss a story as unhistorical because it is absurd, or contrary to experience, then every miracle and every religion founded upon so-called divine revelation must be abandoned, for there is nothing in the world more absurd and irrational than the stories connected with all theologies. The story of Balaam's ass is no more absurd than the stories connected with all theologies.

Why, too, should we not believe that God spoke through the mouth of a useful, honest, industrious, and presumably clean beast like Balaam's ass, when, as most pious Christians believe, he finds it convenient to speak through the mouths of such lying and libellous ranters as Torrey and Jones, or even through the mouth of a somewhat asinine apologist like Dr. Lyle himself.

Christians now-a-days are making altogether too much fuss over a few petty details of miracles. There is no more inherent absurdity in the story of a speaking ass than there is in the stories of speaking gods or speaking devils or divine revelations.—*Secular Thought (Toronto)*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 19, Stanley Hall, near the "Boston," Junction-road, London, N.; at 7.30, "The Beautiful Land Above."

November 26, Stanley Hall.
December 3, South Shields; 31, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—November 19, Coventry; 26, Manchester. December 3, Birmingham; 17, Forest Gate.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 19, Glasgow; 26, Neath, South Wales. December 3, Forest Gate; 10, Coventry.

L. STANLEY.—Thanks for your amusing letter. Glad to know you so much like reading the *Freethinker*.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

J. C.—Thanks for your letter and good wishes. Pleased to hear that the *Freethinker* has played a large part in your mental emancipation.

J. W. E. BENNETT.—Yes, we saw Father Furniss's little book on Hell many years ago. It called forth a good deal of comment in those days. Such horrible books are specially designed to frighten and pervert children.

F. C. TUCKER.—Tuesday morning is too late for letters for the *Freethinker*. We think you take too low a view of the intelligence of the better sort of working men.

T. LOUIS.—Photographs of the group of N. S. S. representatives in front of the Voltaire statue were ordered at Paris, but they have not arrived. We will consider your suggestion.

ALEX HALL.—We are writing on the Leopardi volume for next week's *Freethinker*. Perhaps we may gratify your desire, later on, with something about Victor Hugo.

F. J. VOISEY.—No need to worry about next year, at any rate. The N. S. S., we imagine, is not likely to be represented at an International Freethought Congress in South America.

R. CHAPMAN.—All right.

ANONYMOUS correspondents are once more warned that their communications cannot be noticed.

R. G. LYE.—We wish the Coventry effort all success.

JUNIOR.—We don't care to let the matter take a personal turn. Thanks, however, for your trouble.

W. H. ROBERTSON.—Glad to see your excellent letter in the *Formby Times*. We wish Freethinkers would more frequently make use of their local press in this way.

LIVERPOOL.—Sunday-schools were not originally intended to be religious institutions. They were started to give a little ordinary education to young people who could get none during the week. When they became a success the Churches captured them—as they have captured the Temperance movement which they opposed in the beginning.

E. J. P.—Very glad to hear that your conversion from Christianity to Secularism has lifted you to a higher ethical plane and given you an intenser feeling of human brotherhood. Of course we are pleased to know that you have found our own writings helpful. The *Freethinker* could be sent to you as suggested, if you sent prompt notice of your monthly change of address.

JOHN GRANGE.—Gratified to have your appreciation of our open letter to Mr. Stead. You know what you are talking about.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON.—Printed matter *re* Leicester Secular Society to hand, and shall be looked through carefully in time for next week's *Freethinker*.

JOSEPH BEVINS.—Thanks, but no more will be required.

A. G. WHITE.—Yes, we are keeping pretty well, and hope to meet you so likewise when we come to Shields.

A. HURCUM.—It is pleasant to have all your good wishes.

R. GIBBON.—Shall be happy to see you as suggested, but please make an appointment by letter beforehand.

J. A. D.—Probably in our next.

J. CLAYTON.—Thanks, always glad to hear from you.

E. EASTHAM (Wigan).—Mr. Foote is writing you.

E. REDWOOD.—Thanks for all your trouble in the matter. Mr. Foote hopes to be able to lecture at Plymouth before long.

ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—B. 1s.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had a great reception at Liverpool on Sunday. The afternoon audience was the largest he has ever had in the Alexandra Hall, and the place was packed to suffocation in the evening, not only the seats but every inch of standing room being occupied, and many people having to be turned away at the doors. Both meetings were very responsive, even enthusiastic; indeed, they were live meetings from beginning to end, and the lectures were very freely applauded. Once more it was pleasant to see so many ladies and young men present. The chair was taken in the afternoon by the veteran Mr. Ross, the Branch president, and in the evening by Mr. Hammond. Mr. Ross could not get in to hear the evening lecture, and had to pass the time in a committee room downstairs. Curiously enough, the same accident befel the president of the Glasgow Branch, Mr. James McGlashan, a month previously. Both these good Freethinkers took the accident good-humoredly, being glad to think that the chair they might have occupied was perhaps occupied by someone more in need of "conversion."

The shocking weather threw a damp upon the opening of the new course of Freethought lectures at Stanley Hall. Mr. Cohen had an audience as large as could be expected in the unfortunate circumstances. Mr. Foote takes the second and third lectures of this course, and we hope he will see a full house facing him as he steps upon the platform this evening (Nov. 19).

Mr. Livingstone Anderson draws our attention to the fact that the Junction-road station of the Midland line from St. Pancras to Southend is nearly opposite Stanley Hall. It would be possible to travel up from any station between Southend and Junction-road, and to return by the last train after the lecture, but not to stop for any discussion. The last train leaves Junction-road for Southend at 8.35.

Mr. H. Percy Ward's lectures at Coventry on Sunday were much appreciated by fairly good audiences. Mr. Cohen lectures at Coventry to-day (Nov. 19), and "wind and weather permitting" should have excellent meetings.

Dr. Torrey has gone on to Oxford, we understand, and is to appear at a mammoth farewell gathering at Liverpool at the end of this month, before embarking for America. The Liverpool friends ask us for a big supply of our Torrey pamphlets to distribute at that meeting, but we fear that we shall be unable to oblige them. We outran the constable over the Plymouth supply, and we do not see our way to incur fresh expense. We should be happy to send down another 10,000 to Liverpool if the wherewithal were supplied us.

We have sent down a parcel of our Torrey pamphlets—the one on *Dr. Torrey and the Infidels*—for distribution outside the Torrey-Alexander mission there. A few local saints are interesting themselves in this work, and it is very much to their credit considering the difficulties in the way of anything like Freethought activity in such a place. Some of the students at Ruskin Hall were going to take part in the distribution of these pamphlets, but the order has gone forth from headquarters that the students are not to have anything to do with the matter. This bigoted action is unworthy of a so-called democratic working-men's college. The students are allowed to go to Protectionist and other political meetings, and to distribute leaflets there, but they must not help to show up a professional liar and slanderer of great dead Freethinkers. And the head of Ruskin Hall is Mr. Dennis Hird, who, we believe, calls himself a Rationalist!

We seem to be threatened with a lot of correspondence on the topic of Mr. Ryan's letter in last week's *Freethinker*. We must therefore state that we cannot find room for a long controversy on the subject of Mr. Blatchford as a philosopher or as a journalist—and only a few are really able to see where he goes right, and where he goes wrong, on the question of Determinism. The letters we insert this week must be the

last. For our own part, we say now what we have said all along, namely, that Mr. Blatchford's attack on Christianity in a widely-read general paper like the *Clarion* has done a great deal of good. More than this it is not necessary for us to say at present, but we may announce our intention of dealing with his book on Determinism when it is published.

In response to a private circular Mr. Foote has received the following subscriptions towards the deficit on the Paris Congress Fund, which he undertook to raise, and for which he was, in a certain sense, personally responsible:—F. Bonte £5, Alice M. Baker 10s., A Friend £5, J. W. Lawrence 10s., John Sumner jr. 5s., Jas. McGlashan £1 1s., W. Stevens 5s., Joseph Bevins 10s., Hugh Hotson £2, A. G. White 10s., A. Hurcum 7s. 6d., R. Gibbon 12s., Frank Smith £2 2s., J. J. W. 10s., M. Christopher 10s., G. Brady £1 1s., J. C. 10s., Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Neate 10s., John Grange £1 1s., S. Pulman £2, W. C. Middleton 10s.

At the last meeting of the London Trades Council (Chairman, H. Quelch; Treasurer, W. C. Steadman, L.C.C.; Secretary, James Macdonald), the following resolution was passed:—

"That this Council entirely dissociates itself from the effort now being made to bring about an alliance between the Free Church and Labor movements. It further expresses its disgust at the methods by which the promoters of such an alliance are seeking to attain their end, and refuses to believe that secret conferences between leaders of political nonconformity and carefully-selected representatives of Labor can be a step towards the social and political emancipation of the workers."

We publish this with great pleasure.

The *Western Daily Mercury* has, with unusual impartiality, inserted letters from all sides on the Torrey-Alexander mission. It even printed in full Mr. H. Tucker's able and incisive open letter to Dr. Hingston, Dr. Torrey's host at Plymouth, asking whether he had read Mr. Foote's pamphlets and Mr. Stead's article, and what he thought of them; and whether it was not high time that Dr. Torrey, instead of raving about "lying pamphlets," took the trouble to vindicate his own reputation, seeing that the reputations of Paine and Ingersoll were completely vindicated. Such a letter as Mr. Tucker's, in a paper like the *Western Daily Mercury*, must be an eye-opener to thousands of Christians.

Sir Oliver Lodge's new book entitled *Life and Matter*, which is to be published by Messrs. Williams & Norgate, is announced by himself as being "specially intended to act as an antidote to the speculative and destructive portions of Professor Haeckel's interesting and widely-read work." We shall be glad to see this new volume, and to introduce it to our readers' attention. Anything is better than the contemptible old conspiracy of silence. We don't think that Sir Oliver Lodge will "smash" Haeckel, but we do think that he ought to try, and we are pleased to see that he thinks so too.

LIBERTY.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
 Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
 The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
 And the ice-rocks are shaken round winter's throne,
 When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.
 From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
 Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around;
 Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
 An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
 Is bellowing underground.
 But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
 And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
 Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
 Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
 To thine is a fen-fire damp.
 From billow and mountain and exhalation
 The sunlight is darted through vapor and blast;
 From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
 From city to hamlet, thy dawning is cast,—
 And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
 In the van of the morning light.

—Shelley.

There have anciently been men so excellent managers of their time, that they have tried, even in death itself, to relish, and taste it, and who have bent their utmost faculties of mind to discover what this passage is: but none of them came back to tell us the news.—*Montaigne*.

Christ and His Resurrection.

AN unbelieving friend sends me for perusal and comment a pamphlet by G. W. B. Marsh, B.A. (Lond.), F.R. Hist. Soc.; the title being, "The Resurrection of Christ. Is It A Fact?" From the writer's advertised attainments we might expect something better than the general run of pulpit and Sunday-school literature; but, alas! there is not a line in this pamphlet worth reading. Mr. Marsh sermonises and rants from beginning to end. I do not complain, for nothing rational can be said in favor of Christ's resurrection—or of any other miracle. Tales of miracles are told, not to enlighten and convince, but to stir emotion; and this writer is duly stirred by the yarns with which he deals. He talks at random and employs words without due attention to their natural sense. Again and again he speaks of "proof" and of "proofs" of the resurrection as familiarly and confidently as a Ranter preacher of fifty years ago would have done. He appears to realise no more difficulty in swallowing the resurrection yarns than a child does in accepting as true the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. If he is not bouncing, he can never have doubted his creed, can never have suspected that all resurrection yarns are susceptible of other than literal interpretations, and he has never for a moment dreamt that he, like so many millions besides, has been grossly imposed upon. Mr. Marsh's faith appears to have suffered nothing from the inspiration of the modern spirit, and to be to-day as vigorous and elastic as it could have been when his mother taught him his prayers. He still lives in the "dim religious light"—rather, the dense blackness called the light of salvation, a light that is denser darkness than the fabled Moses inflicted upon Egypt.

Here is Mr. Marsh's opening sentence: "When a Christian is asked why he believes in the blessed Trinity, he will tell you that he does so by divine faith, not because he can understand or explain it, but because God, who is infallible truth, has revealed this doctrine." He here employs the catchwords, the very slang, of the churches, words that never had a definable meaning; and he gives no fewer than eight initial capital letters in that short sentence. He clearly writes to edify, not to instruct; to give vent to his own emotions, not to impart knowledge. He confesses that "blessed Trinity" signifies nothing in particular; and as for "God"—what does it mean? During forty to fifty years I have studied that word without discovering any rational sense in it; nor can I find anyone else able to gather from it anything better than I myself can find. God, Devil, witch, etc., meant terror, vague, indescribable terror, to our ancestors. To us they are mere church racket or imbecile babbling. God, of course, never revealed anything; and if Mr. Marsh had studied the subject, he would have learnt that mankind has always been so full of religion and so deeply immersed in it, that for God to have revealed more would have been as "useless and ridiculous an excess" as to give more water to ocean fishes. Nay, if God revealed or taught the doctrine of the Trinity he must have been a worse maniac than any in human asylums. According to quacks and their dupes, religion and dogma are all superhuman, "divine," revelation, though impartial students know that every fibre of it is illusion or imposture.

The Christian, says this gentleman, "knows this great miracle [of the resurrection] to be fact, in the same way that he knows all other events of history, on human, credible, reliable evidence. His belief is rational, scientific," etc. He had called faith "divine" before; here he puts it on a level with belief in the facts of science; and he alleges that the absolute credulity which gulps down the impossible is the same as that by which we receive the real discoveries of science! It is as scientific to believe that a dead man gets up and walks and eats and drinks as to believe that Alexander was a king

or Columbus a successful navigator! A man's ignorance or his fanaticism must be superabundant if he can honestly suppose that there is any real resemblance between religious faith and that state of mind in or by which a scientific man receives the ascertained facts of science. The scientist regards as true facts which experiment and discovery forbid him to call in question. He is neither bribed nor terrorised into accepting them; he hopes to gain no endless reward by believing the facts, nor does he dread endless damnation should he reject them. He acts as a free and rational being whose guide in life is reason. The pious man is a self-confessed culprit, a slave to his God, a victim of false hopes and false terrors, a slave ready to believe whatever his master commands, to doubt what he denies; a poor fool who actually prays for ability to believe what he feels to be incredible and impossible, and who has been so far bamboozled as to hope to be saved by a faith which reason utterly condemns, and who dreads endless damnation should his common sense get the better of his credulity. The early Christian leaders, feeling that they had nothing by which to appeal to human judgment, nay, that their dogmas and pretences were utterly incredible, made faith the highest duty, and common sense and honest doubt the most damnable of crimes; and if the clergy of to-day do not cry and yell as their predecessors did, "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned!" it is because they are ashamed of their savage gospel and find it impolitic to preach its naked horrors. No two mental states can be more unlike than the faith of a Christian and the faith of a scientist.

Mr. Marsh is guilty of gross impudence, for he says the Christian must be *charitable* to those who differ from him! Do people then who follow reason require charity from those who are absolutely bankrupt of reason? The pretence of charity here implies that we are wrong and criminally wrong, that our reason is damning and our honesty a weight to sink us to the depth of bottomless hell, that if we would but tear out our eyes and plunge into darkness we might be saved, and that to follow the best light we have or can find is to ensure the deepest possible damnation! Can holy insolence or pious sniffing advance any further? I suppose the best we can do is to give such people our warmest pity in return for their "charity" and leave them to the darkness and the degrading slavery they seem so fully to enjoy. Though I certainly much prefer the old-fashioned Christ-like hate and malice in believers to their oily-tongued proclamations of charity. Let me meet the Christian in undress, in his blind, savage, fanatic fury towards all who cannot swallow his horrid creed. At such I can heartily smile. But a Christian in the disguise of a gentleman, full of courtesy, and overflowing with pretended charity, I hate as Pecksniff himself.

Mr. Marsh sees it necessary to prove that Christ was really dead as a preliminary to proving his resurrection. His first witness to the death is—Tacitus! his next one or more unknown Jews! Tacitus has been made to say that Christ was executed by P. Pilate; and the Talmud says one Jesus was crucified "on the eve of the Pasch"; and Mr. Marsh says: "Thus Pagan and Jewish testimony unite in proving the death of Christ upon Calvary." They do not mention Calvary, but no matter, Mr. Marsh wants Calvary as the scene of the crucifixion, and so he adds it to their "testimony."

Tacitus wrote, roughly speaking, about a hundred years after Christ's alleged death, the Talmud dates from hundreds of years later. Neither the one nor the other refers to any authority, yet this defender of the faith produces them as witnesses of or to the actual death of his fetish. A real witness to the death would be of immense value to the Christians; but having none, they push forward one or two bogus witnesses and entreat the coroner's jury to accept of them in lieu of better. Not quite content with Tacitus and the Talmud, he next alleges the silly yarn in the fourth gospel about the unknown soldier

piercing the side of the dead Christ and letting out water and blood. Who wrote that gospel no one can say. An eye-witness would have given his name and some means of identification. The story was evidently written to prove some dogma or to justify some church practice which reason could not commend.

Here I may remark that the Romans of nineteen centuries ago knew nothing of Christ; and the references to him in Suetonius and Tacitus may well be Christian interpolations, though I cannot begrudge the Christians any benefit or gratification they may derive from them. By the way, Mr. Marsh innocently utilises the correspondence between Pliny, governor of Bithynia, and the emperor Trajan, as manifest a forgery as ever appeared in literature. As for the Jews, they never knew anything of Christ until Christian barbarity and brutality enlightened them. And let me add, if Jerusalem, instead of being destroyed by Titus, had continued to be an important city carrying on trade with other portions of the empire, the forgers and manufacturers of the Gospel Christ would never have laid the plot of their story in that city. Of course, I am assuming, and with good reason, that our present New Testament and the matured form of Christianity are subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Nor is that all. If the Gospel Christ had been historical, he must have made a profound impression upon the Jews; and many who knew him must have been alive when their city was destroyed. How was it that no Jew, no Roman, wrote a word of what any captive reported of Jesus of Nazareth? Why, many superstitious Jews must have been fully persuaded that their city had been destroyed for their sin in crucifying the Christ. But no sound or echo of any such sentiment or superstition has reached us, because Jesus never was in Jerusalem or anywhere else.

Pardon this digression. I must attend to the resurrection. Mr. Marsh, having done his best to kill Christ, next proceeds to revive him. "The very first proof that we offer for consideration," he says, "is the very origin of the Christian Church." He does not, of course, define "Church," but he places its origin later than the resurrection. Thus he excludes Christ himself from his own Church and writes him down no Christian at all. In truth, all that is essentially Christian existed long before the Christian era, and the Church no more sprang out of any resurrection than did the National Secular Society or the Royal Institution. Most of what this gentleman says on the resurrection is mere clap-trap.

He lays the chief burden of proof upon that mythical personage Saul Paul. Let us examine this witness, assuming for the nonce the genuineness of the forged Epistles which circulate in his name. In the Acts there are three contradictory accounts of the "conversion" of this gentleman, namely, in chapters ix., xxii., and xxvi. We are asked to believe that the Jewish high priest exercised as much authority in the foreign city of Damascus as in Jerusalem, nay, more. In Jerusalem he could not arrest and slay without permission of Pilate; but he could send a familiar of his inquisition to Damascus, arrest heretics there, and bring them bound to Jerusalem, the implication being that he might imprison or kill them! Christians of all grades swallow that stuff without a moment's examination. It is in the Bible; what more can be required to warrant their faith?

En route to Damascus the ghost of Christ meets the furious Saul and hurls him blinded to the ground. Yes, Saul is enlightened by being felled and blinded. Red tape sends him to a disciple named Ananias to be further instructed; and Saul *at once* began to preach Christ. In the second yarn Saul sees a great light, and Ananias becomes a devout Jew, not a disciple. Saul returns to Jerusalem and has a convenient trance in the temple. In the third yarn the light Saul saw was brighter than the sun! and Ananias and the trance are dispensed with. Saul preaches in Damascus, in Jerusalem, and all through Judæa; but in Galatians i. he declares he did not go

to Jerusalem until three years later, but went into Arabia.

How rational beings can place any dependence in a visionary, a man subject to fits, who once went to Utopia, whether in the body or out he never knew, and who required an agent of Satan to pummel him because he was so full of revelation, is more than I can understand. Besides, Saul-Paul never saw Christ, and could not have recognised him if they had met. Nobody pretends that he saw him crucified, dead and buried, or that he witnessed his resurrection. In the first Corinthians xv. he tells what he knew of the resurrection. He had evidently been questioned and felt tightly cornered; and, having no honest reply to offer, he wriggles, raises a dust, resorts to clap-trap and lies roundly to hide his confusion. He tells his readers that he had previously informed them that Jesus died and rose again "according to the scriptures." What scriptures? The Gospels are held to be of later date than the Epistles. What scriptures then told Paul of Christ's death and resurrection? This has never been explained.

He proceeds to say that the risen Christ was seen by one Cephas; then by "the twelve." But as Judas was gone there were but eleven disciples. Later on he was seen by 500 at once, most of whom were still living. If those 500 ever existed, why did nobody ever mention them till that late period? Why is no name given? Why did *they* not travel to preach instead of this interloper, Saul Paul? Who were they? Not friends of Christ, for he had no friend at all when he most needed one. Why did this lying writer not name one or two of those witnesses, so that his readers might appeal to them? Nay, why did one or two of them not go to Corinth to speak for themselves?

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the author of this epistle was as deliberate a liar as ever lived—nothing remarkable in a Bible writer. Besides, he never supposed Christ's resurrection to be a literal one. He was fool enough to suppose sown grain to die before it could grow! "So also is the resurrection of the dead." Christ, the corn-god, is sown, dies, and rises annually. Lest the reader should reflect, Paul launches out in rhapsody by way of peroration and escapes from his corner in a sort of London fog of his own creating.

Of course, Mr. Marsh is quite sure Paul's character was perfect; but truth says that no character in the New Testament is at all reliable or above suspicion. Besides, not one who really knew Christ ever wrote a word about him. No contemporary ever said, I knew Christ; I associated with him; I saw him work a miracle; I witnessed his death and his resurrection—no one wrote that or anything at all equivalent. I can only conclude that Christ and his apostles are a group of myths, whose origin and end no one ever knew. As a historical person Christ is as impossible as Apollo, Adonis, Hercules, or Thor. Christ is as really born every Christmas, crucified and raised every Easter now as he ever was. He is an annual God whose self and whose drama began in prehistoric times, whose continuance and power are due to nothing but custom, the ignorance of the crowd and the roguery of the clergy. It is Mammon who finances and runs Christ; and his most prominent servants and agents are the most eager votaries of £ s. d.

JOS. SYMES.

Liberator Farm, Cheltenham, Victoria,
Australia, Sept. 20, '05.

NON-UNION HOURS.

"Why did that walking delegate resign his church membership?"

"He lost faith in his creator."

"How was that?"

"Well, he heard the preacher say that the Lord made the world in six days. And he asked if they were eight hour days and the preacher said no, he didn't think so. So he got mad and left."

Correspondence.

MR. BLATCHFORD'S METHODS OF CONTROVERSY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I think Mr. Frederick Ryan is quite justified in his plain-speaking about Mr. Blatchford's methods of controversy. Indeed I was myself thinking of making a similar protest in your paper before I saw Mr. Ryan's letter. It is, of course, painful to have to find fault with one who is so sincere and well-meaning as is the editor of the *Clarion*; but it is better that the truth should be spoken of him by a friend rather than an enemy. I hope and believe he is superior to the folly of looking upon every one who dares to criticise his methods as an enemy. Freethinkers have no use in their ranks for anyone who is intolerant or impatient of criticism, or who refuses out of vanity or wilfulness to learn from those with more experience, if not with more wisdom, than himself. Mr. Blatchford belongs to that sanguine class of persons who are for carrying everything with a rush, and who believe that the world can be converted to Socialism, or that an ancient religion can be destroyed "while you wait," to use an expressive colloquialism. He has not yet learned that human life is a very complex organism, and that there is no magical process by means of which it can be transformed into something entirely different at a moment's notice. The reformer, whether political or religious, must be content to labor rather for the future than the present; his work is far more likely to bear fruit after his death than during his lifetime. Few of them can hope to live so long as Mr. Holyoake, so as to have the pleasure of seeing their work bear fruit while they are yet alive. But this need not discourage them. If those poor pagans, the Japanese, ask nothing better than to die for their country, ought not the reformer to be satisfied with the thought that he has at least chosen the better part, and done his best to further the cause of enlightenment? As nothing can be baser than to be a servant of the cause of despotism or obscurantism, so nothing can be nobler than to be a servant of truth and liberty.

Mr. Blatchford's great mistake, it seems to me, is to have rested his case so exclusively as he has done upon the theory of Determinism. This is a very difficult question, and I think with Mr. Ryan that Mr. Blatchford has certainly not sounded all its depths. Nor, perhaps, has any man. I agree with Mr. Ryan that "uncaused volitions are simply unthinkable," but I am not so sure as he is that this is the end of the matter. There are not one, but thousands of causes in operation to influence mankind, and I am not so sure that a man has not some limited power of choice amongst these causes or motives. Of course I know it will be said that the fact that a man is influenced by one cause rather than another proves that that cause or motive is the strongest; but is not this what the logicians call "reasoning in a circle"? The motive prevails because it is the strongest, and it is the strongest because it prevails! This may be all right, but I can't help thinking there must be a fallacy lurking in the reasoning somewhere. But I speak as one of the unlearned in this matter. I am nevertheless a Determinist myself; but the mischief about the theory is that it is opposed to all the ordinary opinions of uneducated mankind. No one believes himself to be other than a free agent until he has been through a severer course of thinking than most men are capable of. Therefore it is unwise to rest the main argument against Christianity on such a foundation. It is only one of the weapons in the Freethinker's armory, and should rather be employed to reinforce other arms than be made itself the chief instrument of attack. It is quite possible to be at once a Free-Willist (a queer word perhaps, but let it pass) and a Freethinker; or at least I see no reason why not. If a shrewd disputant should succeed in demolishing Mr. Blatchford's Determinist arguments (and this, it may be, is not an impossible supposition) many people would at once conclude that his attack upon Christianity had failed, and so their creed would take on a new lease of life with them.

Much more might be said on the subject, but I will restrict myself to a very few more words. There are, as Hamlet says to Horatio, more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Mr. Blatchford's, or anyone's, philosophy; and this should teach the editor of the *Clarion*, talented as he is, to be a little less certain than he usually is that he has grasped the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Let him also remember that constant repetition of any statement or argument does not make it any truer or more convincing. And let him not think that it is possible to treat a serious and weighty philosophical problem so as to bring it within the comprehension of the followers of "General" Booth, or the admirers of Miss Corelli or Mr. Hall Caine.

B. D.

"A DANIEL COME TO JUDGMENT."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have not been a volunteer writer for Freethought for years, and I do not wield a keen pen in the service of a good head; but perhaps you will allow me to say a word or two in answer to Mr. Ryan's "plain word" in your issue of the 12th. In my humble judgment Mr. Ryan's superior attitude does not tend to raise the number of converts, whatever it may do with the "standard of Freethought argument." Indeed, if it is permissible, I would venture to say that Mr. Ryan, in undertaking to teach Mr. Blatchford his business, is "undertaking something beyond his powers." Frankly, Mr. Ryan does not appear to understand either Mr. Blatchford's position or his work. The *Clarion* is not a "Freethought journal," and it does not exist exclusively for the same class of readers as the *Freethinker* does. The *Clarion* appears to strive to cater for the general reader rather than for a particular class—as far as an avowed Socialist paper can. Moreover, it is a fact that by far the greater number of working men (the class to which the *Clarion* particularly appeals) have not the mental training necessary to read anything of greater philosophic depth than the daily newspapers. This being so, it is no easy matter to put forward philosophic doctrines of the depth of that of Determinism in such a plain manner that they will appeal to this class of reader. To answer the arguments of Sir Oliver Lodge (if arguments they can be called) in the way Mr. Ryan answers them would be, in the *Clarion*, to repeat in effect what Mr. Blatchford has said before. Therefore it is clearly necessary to thoroughly expound this doctrine (Determinism) first and afterwards reply to these somewhat premature critics. This is apparently what Mr. Blatchford intends to do. Meanwhile, however, it is necessary both to acknowledge the existence of the criticism and to reassure the prospective converts. Mr. Blatchford does both, not by means of arguments the full significance of which his readers would not understand, and which would therefore be, at best, mere cryptic utterances to them, but by defying his critics, and thus reassuring his readers and at the same time amusing them (despite his *weak* humor). In conclusion I would say that it is "one of the most unpleasant tasks possible to criticise our friends," and that for those who do not understand their friends' position there are more profitable employments.

J. CANNON.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As an admirer of Robert Blatchford, I should like to take exception to Mr. Frederick Ryan's strictures on that writer's method of handling subjects of a rationalist nature. In my opinion, with all due respect to Mr. Ryan and the excellent work he does for the cause of Freethought, Robert Blatchford, in taking up the cudgels in the interests of Rationalism, is doing the cause of progress an inestimable service, and as for his methods tending to lower the standard of Freethought propaganda, how any student of his writings could make such an assertion passes my comprehension. It is not necessary always to wear a solemn face when discussing even the deeper problems of life, and you yourself, Sir, have frequently been charged with flippancy and light and airy treatment of solemn subjects.

Personally, as an Atheist of the deepest dye, I am grateful to see a man with the following of Blatchford, taking up such subjects as are dear to every Freethinker and dealing with them in a manner which makes the meaning and import of the Secularist position clear and unmistakable.

Had Mr. Ryan given one or two facts, one or two extracts from Blatchford's writings to bear out his contention as to his unfitness for his task, his letter would have been more to the point and could have been received with greater consideration at the hands of "Nunquam's" followers.

HAROLD ELLIOT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I wish to protest against Mr. Ryan's references in the *Freethinker* to Mr. Blatchford's method of conducting his campaign against Christianity, on the ground that they are quite unnecessary. Despite the weakness Mr. Ryan professes to have discovered, Mr. Blatchford has made a great and lasting impression of the uselessness of Christianity, on the public mind, and since Christian apologists are offering all kinds of explanations for the growth of Freethought, when the right one is that Christianity is *not true*, it is consoling to feel Mr. Blatchford, in his own way, keeping that fact steadily before his readers.

A. S. VICKERS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of Executive meeting held on November 9 at the Society's offices. The President in the chair. There were also present, Messrs. J. Barry, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, T. Gorniot, W. Leat, Dr. R. T. Nichols, C. Quinton, V. Roger, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, S. Samuels, J. W. Marshall.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted. The President gave an explanation *re* the postponement of the October meeting. An application for permission to form a branch of the Society at Nelson, Lancs., was granted. New members were received for the Wigan, Coventry, Hetton-le-Hole and Porth branches.

The Secretary received instructions to arrange for the Annual Dinner in January next, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

KEY TO THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE N. S. S. DELEGATES ATTENDING THE PARIS CONGRESS

It will be seen that the first row is composed of the honorary lady delegates seated, commencing from the right and going left. No. 1, Mrs. Fincken; 2, Mrs. Davies; 3, Mrs. Roger; 4, Mrs. Cohen; 5, Mrs. Foote; 6, Mrs. Hardaker; 7, Mrs. Gott and daughter; 8, Mrs. Handley; 9, Mrs. Peasgood.

In the second row, commencing again from the right, No. 1, W. H. Kay; 2, A. J. Fincken; 3, W. H. Hardaker; 4, Victor Roger; 5, Chapman Cohen; 6, G. W. Foote (President); 7, E. M. Vance; 8, J. T. Lloyd; 9, Mrs. Hunt; 10, H. Hunt; 11, H. Quickley; 12, J. W. Gott; 13, C. H. Handley; 14, G. B. H. McCluskey; 15, J. Peasgood; 16, R. Johnson. The last row has four figures only, they are:—1, M. Müller; 2, F. A. Davies; 3, V. Hibbert; 4, A. Bowers. The figure at the extreme back on the right hand side is M. Streimer; on the left, M. Streimer, Junior.

GRUESOME CLERICAL TEACHING.

Aix-la-Chapelle is noted as being the head-quarters of a particularly pious constituency, and incidentally it is known as the place that furnishes the large cities of Western Germany with the greatest number of procurers and "fast women." In the St. Joseph school district of Aix-la-Chapelle a ten-year-old schoolboy recently handed in the following as his composition:—

"A Social Democrat sat in a tavern and said: 'How glad I am that my wife does not go to church any more!' When the besotted man went home later, there lay his wife and children in the room with their throats cut. On the table was a letter which said: 'So far we could stand it, when he only drank up all his wages and let us go hungry, but now that he has forced us to give up our faith, we can endure life no longer, and go to our death.'"

It is quite needless to say that this remarkable composition was inspired by the priest who gave "religious instruction" in the school. In this pleasing fashion they inoculate the minds of innocent children. It seems to be beginning political agitation early enough, with a vengeance.—*Der Freidenker* (Milwaukee).

A SOCKDOLAGER.

Once when there was a vacancy in the Massachusetts bishopric, Dr. Phillips Brooks was the most likely candidate. The dean of the theological school in Cambridge, Dr. Lawrence, during the course of a walk with Dr. Eliot, of Harvard, began a discussion of the situation.

"Don't you think Brooks will be elected?" asked he.

"Well, no," said Dr. Eliot; "a second or a third rate man would do just as well. We need Brooks right here in Boston."

Phillips Brooks was elected, and a short time thereafter, Dr. Eliot and Dr. Lawrence were again talking of the matter.

"Aren't you glad Brooks was elected?" said the dean.

"Yes, I suppose so," replied the absent-minded Eliot, "if he wanted it; but to tell the truth, Lawrence, you were my man."

Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not; others more in number make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe.—*Montaigne*.

The aim of life is life itself.—*Goethe*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

STANLEY HALL (near the "Boston," Junction-road, N.): 7.30. G. W. Foote, "The Beautiful Land Above."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): Freethought Parliament, 3, Arthur Jones, "Standpoint of the Christian Faith in Hebrew Literature."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. Gregory, "The Worship of the Virgin."

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Rushcroft-road, Brixton): Open-air meeting every Wednesday evening at 8.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, J. I. Aston, "Charity."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Club Assembly Hall, Union-street): C. Cohen, 3, "The Shadow of the Gods"; 7, "The Non-Religion of the Future."

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Harold Elliot, "Jesus: An Atheist's Appreciation."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): John Lloyd, 12 noon, "Do We Need a Religion?" 6.30, "If a Man Die shall he Live Again?"

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, Nov. 20, at 8, J. P. Gilmour, "Plants and Plant Life."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Joseph McCabe, "The Evolution of Man." With Lantern Illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, C. R. Niven, M.B., C.M., "The Direction of Man's Evolution." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, George Mason, "Soldiers Three: Cobbett, Bradlaugh, and Blatchford."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Nov. 23, at 8, N. Grattan Doyle, "Our Trade and the Empire."

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, G. Dolling, "Is the Story of Jesus Christ a Myth?"

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

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Old Court Hall, King-street): H. Percy Ward, 11, "Can Man Sin Against God? or Has Man a Free-will?" 3, "How Christianity has Cursed Humanity"; 7.30, "Immortality and Infidelity."

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