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Wisdom is to be found only in truth.—GOETHE.

Freethinkers and the Political Crisis.

BEING president of the National Secular Society, as well as editor of the *Freethinker*, I think it my duty to address a few special words to Secularists all over the country in view of the present political crisis, which must be followed so soon by a general election.

I am not speaking in my official capacity, however, but personally. No one is committed to anything I say in this article except myself. Yet I hope I speak with more than a mere personal sense of responsibility.

Neither am I going to tread in the slush of party politics, nor even to deal with politics at all as politics. My readers may start with a feeling of perfect security in that direction.

Let me preface what I have to say, substantially, with a remark or two on the new Liberal ministry. It includes two well-known Freethinkers—Mr. John Morley and Mr. John Burns. Mr. Morley has been in a Liberal ministry before. Mr. Burns takes office for the first time. He is a breezy personality, and has behind him a record of hard public work, notably on the London County Council. There may be other Freethinkers in the new Liberal ministry for all I know. I should hardly imagine that some of them are overburdened with religion. But where I have no public knowledge I have no right to make a public statement.

Now I do not wish the Freethought party to indulge in any extravagant expectations because the Cabinet includes two Freethinkers. I said last week, in answer to a correspondent, that there were several Freethinkers in the House of Commons, but I never knew one of them to do anything for Freethought. Of course I make an exception in the case of Charles Bradlaugh, who carried an Oaths Bill and tried to carry a Bill repealing the Blasphemy Laws; but he was a man quite outside common categories.

Suppose we take the question of Secular Education. Mr. Morley is in favor of it, but what has he done to promote it? Has he done any more than Mr. Balfour, or Lord Rosebery, or Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who are all as much in favor of it as he is? They all declare that Secular Education is the ideally wise and just policy. This they say to satisfy their consciences or their intellects, whichever it is; but having said it, they go on promoting another policy which satisfies their interests. Mr. Balfour stands by his friends of the Church party. Mr. Morley stands by the Dissenters. He finds that he must work with the political Nonconformists. This seems to be the condition of success in the Liberal party; for in the main the

Conservative party is the Church party, and the Liberal party is the Chapel party. This is as well understood by Mr. Burns as it is by Mr. Morley. Theoretically he is in favor of Secular Education; practically he is in favor of what will suit the Nonconformists. He threw in his lot with the Bible-reading party, who facetiously called themselves "Progressives," and worked hand in hand with Dr. Clifford and the other Free Church leaders. And he has had his reward.

I am not complaining of Mr. Morley or Mr. Burns. I am only stating the facts. I understand that politics are politics. One of George Meredith's characters—an election agent, if I recollect aright, who knows what he is talking about—says that "politics, Sir, is like climbing the greasy pole; mutton or no mutton, there's grease for certain." And a good deal of the grease consists in the facile recognition that standing up for your principles is too apt to be the height of impracticality.

The Freethought party, as such, has not to concern itself with the political success or failure of public men who happen to be Freethinkers, merely because they *are* Freethinkers. What the Freethought party has to do is to look after its own interests. It may be perfectly sure that no one else will look after them.

Why should not Freethinkers use their votes to obtain justice for themselves? If a Liberal candidate, say, or any other candidate comes along, and appeals to me as a man and a voter to listen to him, and support him if possible on the polling day, why should I not plainly tell him that the first thing I want to know is whether he is prepared to grant me the common rights of citizenship between elections? Why should I vote for any man who denies me elementary fair play? If I am fit to vote I am fit to enjoy the same rights as other voters. But at present this is not the case. The Blasphemy Laws still exist as a stick to beat Freethinkers with. When the stick is not used it is hanging up visibly behind the door. And the fact that it is there, and may be used when a convenient opportunity presents itself, puts Freethinkers at a great disadvantage.

I need not, at this moment, dilate upon the extent and complexity of this disadvantage. Enough that it is very serious. And we want it removed. But it never will be removed by an effort of Christian goodwill. Rights are never conceded; they are always enforced. Every concession is an enforcement in disguise. "Who would be free," the poet says, "themselves must strike the blow." Very well then, let Freethinkers clearly inform all parties—and particularly the Chapel party, *alias* the Liberal party—that their votes can be had at the price of common justice. And the first instalment of the price is the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. No tinkering, but total abolition. That is what we demand.

G. W. FOOTE.

"The Virgin Birth and the Divinity of Christ."

THIS is a subject on which nothing new can be said. Yet it is a subject which the Church considers of supreme importance. According to the Bishops of London and Birmingham all Christians are bound to believe in the Virgin Birth as well as in the divinity of their Lord; and their lordships are quite right. It is impossible to perceive how genuine disciples can help believing in both. If Christ is a Divine Being, as the Church has always taught, it would be utterly absurd to think of him as coming into the world by an ordinary human birth, or, in fact, by any birth at all. Of course, there are many professing Christians who do not accept the Virgin Birth, and there are some who reject even the physical Resurrection; but their position is essentially inconsistent. The rejection of such doctrines implies the rejection of the orthodox doctrine of Inspiration. There are others, however, who believe in the Virgin Birth without attaching any vital importance to the belief. In No. 11 of the *Essays for the Times*, Principal Walter F. Adeney, M.A., D.D., argues that the Virgin Birth has been unduly insisted upon as a proof of the divinity of Christ. "The testimony to the divinity of Christ," he says, "is immeasurably greater than the evidence for the Virgin Birth."

We will take the evidence for the Virgin Birth first. Dr. Adeney makes this wonderful admission:—

"Joseph's dream, the Annunciation by Gabriel, the heavenly host that appeared to the shepherds, the star of the magi, the acknowledgment of the infant Jesus as Christ by Simeon and Anna in the Temple, although subsequently nobody seems to have known of his nature and destiny till He had been carrying on his ministry for some time—all these elements of the infancy narratives, and others which might be added, render the whole subject one out of the line of common history. Accordingly, if we were to read such things concerning St. Francis, or George Fox, or John Wesley, we should not have the slightest hesitation in treating them as legends sprung from the fancy of pious followers. But the whole case rests upon the fact that they do not concern one who can be classed even with these most extraordinary saints of the Church without a shock of irreverence."

Thus instead of the Virgin Birth proving the Divinity we find the latter proving the former. Dr. Adeney treats both as a believer. It is highly interesting to notice the way in which he meets the arguments against the Virgin Birth. He admits that there are "perplexing differences between the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke;" but such differences only "make it evident that there could have been no collusion between the writers." He admits that the two genealogies do not agree; but "it must be allowed that each of these evangelists gave his genealogy as what he understood to be the one correct genealogy." He admits that Matthew did not know that Joseph and Mary came from Nazareth as Luke tells us. What Dr. Adeney makes emphatic is the statement that we possess two independent accounts of the Virgin Birth. This he repeats again and again. "Of course," he naively observes, "this does not settle the question of historicity." The distinguishing characteristic of Principal Adeney's treatment of the Virgin Birth is simplicity. We have two independent witnesses to the stupendous miracle, Ignatius and Justin Martyr accepted the story without demur, and the Apostle's Creed speaks of Jesus as "born of the Virgin Mary." Practically such is Dr. Adeney's reply to the arguments of unbelievers.

The idea of a Virgin Birth did not originate in the Jewish world. Indeed, it is totally foreign to the Jewish mind. This is admitted by all scholars. And yet Dr. Adeney asserts that the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke are extremely Jewish. This amazing assertion is not supported by a single scrap of evidence. All the facts flatly contradict it. There are no virgin births recorded in the Old Testament.

Dr. Adeney's attempt to break the force of this argument is ludicrous in the extreme:—

"Virginity was honored among the Essenes; with Philo it is exalted quite in the way of the later asceticism; and in the Apocalypse it is also regarded as a note of saintliness (Rev. xiv, 4). St. Paul preferred it to marriage (1 Cor. vii, 1 and 7).

But what in all the world has that to do with the point at issue? Honoring virginity is a totally different thing from believing in virgin births. St. Paul's virgins were not supposed to bear sons.

Dr. Adeney admits that the evidence for the Virgin Birth is exceedingly weak, but claims that the belief in the divinity of Christ rests on an incomparably firmer foundation. Let us see how this claim is fulfilled. Our attention is called to three things, namely, the self-revelation of Christ, the impression He made on those who knew him best, and the witness of the centuries.

We find the self-revelation of Christ in his teaching? The chief point emphasised is that He dared to contradict "the sacred Torah—the most venerated portion of the Hebrew scripture." But is not Dr. Adeney aware that the sacred Torah contradicts itself again and again, and that the Prophets denounced much of what the Torah contains? Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos, were bitter opponents of the rapidly developing Priesthood. Did Jesus say anything more scathing than is to be found in Jeremiah viii, 8? Jesus was by no means the first prophet who ventured to denounce the contents of the Pentateuch. But what did Jesus say of real value that had not been said innumerable times before? Did He invent or reveal one new virtue? Granting that all the sayings attributed to him in the Gospels came from his lips, what originality can be claimed for them? Surely his moral teaching does not prove his divinity. Certainly his estimate of himself is valueless as an argument for his super-human character.

Dr. Adeney writes with the inevitable bias of a fervent believer and his references to opponents are highly unfair. Here is one such reference: "The extravagant position which is assumed by Schmiedel is its own refutation." Would it not be equally relevant to observe that "the extravagant position which is assumed by Dr. Adeney is its own refutation?" Professor Schmiedel maintains that the bulk of the teaching ascribed to Jesus should be assigned to the imagination of adoring disciples. That contention is fully as reasonable as the belief that the disciples, who were ignorant fishermen, were able to reproduce their Master's teaching, most of which they admittedly did not understand. But, in any case, the teaching of Jesus does not justify the belief in his divinity.

What impression did Jesus make on those who knew him best? As a matter of fact, we cannot tell who knew him best. To quote from John and Peter and Paul is useless, because all are aware that the object of the writings attributed to those men was to establish the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. The authorship of the fourth Gospel is a disputed point, and the authorship of many of the Epistles is under hot controversy. There are scholars who characterise the story of the twelve apostles as a myth. We are in a nebulous region as long as we remain within the covers of the New Testament; and for centuries afterwards nothing is known with certainty. What the New Testament presents to us is an evolving Christology, and we can infer even from its own pages that there were several schools of Christology at war with each other from the very beginning. The Ebionites, primitive Jewish Christians, did not believe in the divinity of Christ. The divinity of Christ is a dogma, not an established fact; a theory, not a verified truth. The fourth Gospel is in no sense biographical, but deeply metaphysical, while in the Epistles of Paul we are face to face with early attempts to elaborate a Christian philosophy. *In all these documents Christ is in the process of being made.* It is not the impression Christ made upon the writers that they give us, but rather

the impression the writers made on Christ. What a vast contrast there is between the Christ of Mark's Gospel and the Christ of the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Philosophies and myths and legends multiplied rapidly, and the heated antagonisms between the different orders of them, rent the churches assunder. The body of Christ never enjoyed perfect peace.

What about the witness of the centuries to this doctrine? The orthodox Church has always held it; but it has had to fight fiercely for it against strong and determined enemies, and it is fighting for it still. It has generally been the faith of the majority of Christians in all the ages; but this is no proof of its truth. The question is, what has the divinity of Christ done for the world? What has the God-man accomplished for mankind? This is Dr. Adeney's answer:—

"This doctrine of the Incarnation as the basis of Redemption is the distinguishing feature of Christianity. Pagan religions may have their incarnations in India, their theophanies in Greece. But they all alike leave men to make their way through life by toil, sacrifice, devotion—efforts of their own. Christianity is the supreme religion of redemption. Its keynote is the evangel of deliverance from God. Here we have its vital truth. God does not leave us to struggle unaided towards him, out of the mire, through the darkness, up the height. He comes down to bring us deliverance."

That is an exceedingly beautiful picture, and the only thing against it is that it is wholly false. Dr. Adeney treats his readers here to nothing better than empty rhetoric. When did God come down to redeem the world? When did Christ fulfil his functions as King of humanity? During the Dark Ages? Is He on the throne to-day? If He is, where does He reign? Is He the ruler of Russia just now? Does He hold London? Merely to ask such questions is to answer them. And yet Dr. Adeney asserts that "the testimony of the ages to the fruitfulness of this evangel shows that the theory works in practice," and that "the Gospel which needs this theory to account for it proves itself to be genuine by effecting what it promises." Christianity has *not* effected what it promised. We are told that Christ can solve all problems; and yet the world is groaning at this moment under the crushing weight of unsolved problems. Moral problems, social problems, political problems, economical problems, national and international problems, how they are cropping up at every turn, and all awaiting their solutions.

The only conclusion to which one can come is that Dr. Adeney has not succeeded, in the essay under consideration, in commending the doctrine of the divinity of Christ to unbelievers. Not one of his arguments is in the least convincing. And if Christ was not a deity tabernacling in flesh, the Virgin Birth drops out, of its own accord, and takes its place among the innumerable similar legends with which Pagan mythologies teem.

J. T. LLOYD.

God, Man, and the Moral Law.

THE attempts to transform the universe into a moral universe—to show, that is, that its workings, properly understood, harmonise with man's sense of right and wrong—are endless. And all of them spring fundamentally from the necessities of a hypothesis, not from the needs of human nature. It is Theism that calls for the moralising of the universe, for the simple reason that so long as it is regarded as the expression of Deity the character of Deity must be read in the light of that expression. Eliminate the belief in Deity, and the question is of no practical value whatever. Take morality as it is, and for what it is, and the question of whether the nature that lies outside human nature is "moral" or not loses all its interest. Human nature remains with morality as one of its functions, and all-important within its

legitimate sphere. Retain the belief in Deity, and we are at once chained to the never-ending task of welding into one harmonious whole a conception of a Deity who shall answer to all the calls of our highest conceivable morality, and a universe at large wherein moral laws have no status whatever.

How to reconcile the ways of God to man. That is the problem of the modern preacher. It is no longer how to reconcile the ways of man to God; that aspect of the question is now, to all practical intent, dead. And it is one of the questions with which the City Temple oracle, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, is fond of dealing. And by emphasising a few fairly obvious truths, and by not observing, or ignoring, other important aspects of the subject, there is no doubt that his sermons are taken by many as weighty contributions to the literature of the question. And with a community that can take Sir Oliver Lodge as a profound thinker on philosophic questions, this last fact need cause no considerable surprise.

Last week, in calling attention to Mr. Fielding Hall's interesting book on the Burmese, I pointed out how these people, under the influence of Buddhism, had reached the perfectly healthy conclusion that in morals the principle of cause and effect held full sway. A man who did wrong suffered, and a man who did right reaped the inevitable consequences of his actions. This teaching is not peculiar to Buddhism; it can be found in many of the old Greek and Latin writers, and is beautifully expressed in the great poem of the Freethinking poet Lucretius. Among Christians it is a tolerably modern conception. The Christian doctrine of the atonement, of forgiveness of sins, death-bed repentance, etc., could not tolerate so healthy a conception of things; and so to the average Christian its enunciation comes as something very new. His general conception appears to be that, just as a thief is not locked up if a policeman doesn't see him, so, if a man does wrong, and there is no God to register his faults, he, too, escapes scott free. Hence the cry that Atheism cannot, in the absence of the belief in God, sustain a healthy morality.

Now this principle of causation in morals, simple as it is, constitutes Mr. Campbell's justification of the ways of God to man. He points out that each man's sins rise against him. The drunkard pays for his gratification in loathsomeness of flesh, the *roué* destroys himself in feeding his passions, etc., etc. No one, least of all the present writer, will dispute this. But there is another aspect of the matter which is, so far as the Theist is concerned, all-important. For what Mr. Campbell does not notice is that this very principle of "retribution," or causation, while operative in morals, is quite non-moral in character. It is true that the drunkard and the voluptuary each reap the consequences of their actions, and that nothing can avert those consequences. But it is also true that these consequences do not end with their originators. Once set moving, and the sequence is as oblivious to ethical considerations as the spread of an epidemic or the rolling of a stone down a mountain side. Children are born fated to disease because of parental misconduct. Mr. Campbell would say that the parents are thus punished in their sorrow at their children's suffering. Some do suffer; some, on the other hand, do not. But even though all suffered to the fullest possible extent, the case would remain essentially unaltered. The children have done no wrong, and are yet reaping the punishment of wrong. Human love and human conscience rebels against such procedure. We do our utmost to see that the child shall *not* suffer for the parent's fault; yet God's law of retribution, as Mr. Campbell calls it, works on oblivious to whether the one who suffers is the wrongdoer or not. The moral law that Mr. Campbell praises is, as a matter of fact, only moral incidentally. It may work itself out so that the human conscience approves its action; but it just as frequently works itself out in a manner that calls for condemnation.

And some qualification is necessary even in the case of individuals. In a large number of cases the consequences of evil conduct are only appreciated when it is too late to avert them. It is very well as a retort to say that man learns what is right by suffering, but it is no real answer to what may be, and is, said. To be *morally* justifiable the agent committing the fault should be punished to a degree proportionate to his consciousness of the wrong done. Human law does certainly work along these lines, for even though, theoretically, every citizen is assumed to know the laws of the country in which he is living, yet in punishing for an infraction of the laws, some attention is paid to whether the fault was or was not committed in ignorance. And we quite eliminate from punishment children and lunatics. But the "moral law" is blind to all such *moral* distinctions. The consequences of an action committed by a child or a lunatic or an ignorant person, are exactly what they would be if he or she were in full possession of mature faculties and with a full consciousness of what was being done. Infractions of the so called moral law—drunkenness, sensuality, etc.,—are in fact only a wider application of the principle of physical causation, and exclude all the higher ethical principles as these are manifested among cultured human beings.

Yet again, Mr. Campbell's apology ignores two other extremely important facts. The first is that man is a gregarious animal, and what he does or does not affects the whole of the society to which he belongs. Here is a man who by grinding down his workpeople, or exacting excessive rents, or by some form of commercial trickery amasses a huge fortune. One day he repents him of his conduct, spends some of his money on "pious" works, and recognises how he has paid for his wrongdoing by the demoralisation of his own conscience. See how impossible it is to escape the moral law of retribution, cries Mr. Campbell—and that is all. But is it all? Consider that this man's conduct has meant the herding of families into single rooms, meant living upon insufficient food, breathing bad air, in all probability the contraction of the drinking habit that Mr. Campbell condemns—and it is so easy to condemn, besides giving one an air of virtuous superiority—and is a general deterioration of character. What then? Is it not plain that the "moral law" is punishing these people for faults they were *driven* to commit, as surely as though direct personal violence had been brought to bear upon them. Once more the "moral law" acts in a very immoral manner.

And the other point ignored is this:—Nature not only punishes us for our faults, but it is not averse to punishing us for our virtues. A man of a sensitive sympathetic nature hears that some one—a friend or a neighbor—is in trouble. He hurries off, perhaps through a heavy storm of snow or rain, to see what assistance he can give. The result is a cold, an illness, perhaps consumption, and death. Had he been of a coarse, brutal disposition, he would have stayed at home, avoided the illness, and lived on. Morally he deserves a reward, actually he gets—a funeral. Nature seizes the most admirable traits in his character as an occasion for inflicting punishment and torture.

There is no need to multiply cases under either of these heads. They are so numerous that any reader of average intelligence will be able to supply them for himself. And they will demonstrate that the attempt to justify God to man by means of the "moral law" is as futile as any other method. Outside human or animal nature morality has no existence. And human morality, in its higher efforts, is an attempt to circumvent or reverse "God's law" as expressed through non-human nature. Pulpit blindness may not see this. Pulpit self interest will not admit this. But it remains a fact nevertheless.

C. COHEN.

A Philosopher of the Sanctuary.

WE hope the Rev. Dr. Aveling of the Roman Catholic diocese of Westminster will not be offended if we style him a philosopher of the Sanctuary. A series of contributions from his pen is at present appearing in the Roman Catholic press under the general title "Philosophers of the smoking-room." Dr. Aveling is a philosopher of the sanctuary, and all will agree it is much easier to philosophise within the peaceful shelter of the sanctuary than out in the whirlpool of life. But it is just the lack of contact with the actualities of life that detracts from the real worth of the moralisings and conclusions of the closet theologian and the clerical philosopher. Acquaintance with the busy world and its multifarious interests is a powerful corrective of mysticism in thought. The mental atmosphere is fresher away from the cathedral aisles and outside the pulpit and the presbytery-house. The neighborhood of the tabernacle is soporific with incense fumes and is conducive to intellectual Rip Van Winkleism. This partly by the way.

Dr. Aveling is a Canadian acquisition that the Catholic Church in this country is making a great deal of. Although we have never heard him speak we are told he is remarkably eloquent, and we can believe it. Certainly such of his writings as we have seen indicate the possession of no little rhetorical power, which should be used with much effect if his tongue is only as fluent as his pen, and if his thoughts flow as freely in speech as they do on paper. Which, of course, does not always follow. However, Dr. Aveling wields a facile pen in the interests of the Church and supernaturalism, and, in addition, what he writes is well worth reading.

The "Philosophers of the smoking-room" are a number of individuals who have been thrown together as passengers on board an ocean liner, and have dropped into that easy and frank conversational intimacy, which often results when several people find themselves perforce in each other's company for a considerable period with nothing to do but while away the time. The party Dr. Aveling introduces us to is composed of a doctor, a poet, a priest and a parson, with one or two of their female relatives. Much of their time is spent discussing more or less debatable questions, and, as may be imagined, the points of view taken by the quartette of male disputants are widely dissimilar. It must be admitted that Dr. Aveling handles the dialogues very skilfully and does not unduly seek to make the priest overbearingly victorious in these wordy encounters; though the doctor—who represents scientific agnosticism in the smoking-room—is scarcely a very doughty antagonist.

So far, Dr. Aveling—or rather his quartette of puppets—has been discussing the ethics of suicide, the ethics of fishing, and the problem of the soul. The doctor has distinctly the best of the argument on the question of suicide, as well he may. The considerations submitted by the priest as weighing against suicide may be divided into two categories. One set is based upon our supposed responsibility towards God, and may be summarily dismissed. Our responsibility to God has yet to be proved. The second category embraces considerations that are purely human and may therefore be discussed with knowledge, and with some prospect of reaching a definite conclusion. The priest repeats the old taunt that the suicide is a coward at best. The suicide is not always a coward, although men occasionally choose death rather than face dishonor or continue the battle of existence against overpowering odds. There is no moral obligation of self-preservation at all costs. Otherwise the soldier who volunteers to lead a forlorn hope, and the Christian martyrs themselves, come under the heading of suicide. The question of the culpability of the suicide must be decided with a full grasp of all the facts of each individual case. There is justifiable suicide, just as there is legitimate homicide. And so far is suicide from being an invariable result of

cowardice, that it is frequently an indication of the highest courage and unselfishness. Where the brain is not unhinged, it requires the courage of a man to take one's fate in one's own hand, and at one stroke, to fulfil and conquer destiny.

"Suicide," says Dr. Aveling, "is condemned by every law, human and divine." Of divine laws we know nothing. Of human laws we need only say that those who make laws can unmake or amend them. Neither divine nor human laws can prevent suicide; although an amendment of the human laws might do much to remove the occasion of self-destruction. For a long period all that our earthly law has done has been to punish the unfortunate who failed to thoroughly effect his own extinction! Even in this respect the law is inclining more and more towards lenity.

It would be difficult to better—in popular form—Ingersoll's analysis of the ethics of suicide. Compare his powerful and convincing contributions to the *New York World* with the feeble, flippant, and mainly irrelevant reply of Monsignor Ducey. Ingersoll conclusively demonstrates the legitimate and even commendable nature of self-destruction in certain circumstances. Mark—in certain circumstances. No Freethinker need be concerned to claim any more for the *felo-de-se* than his justification under certain conditions. We do not preach suicide as an end necessarily—and always—good in itself. Nor is the world likely to listen to us if we did. On the question of cowardice, Ingersoll well points out that men who fear death to such a degree that they will bear all the pains that nerves can feel rather than die cannot afford to call the suicide a coward. "If men had the courage, they would not linger in prisons, in almshouses, in hospitals; they would not bear the pangs of incurable disease, the stains of dishonor; they would not live in filth and want, in poverty and hunger; neither would they wear the chain of slavery. All this can be accounted for only by the fear of death or of something after."

And Ingersoll marshals an array of cases in which a man may justifiably take his own life—justifiably, that is, from the point of view of humanity and reason, and without regard to supernatural considerations, which are not in court. And if it be urged that the instances brought forward by Ingersoll are extreme and isolated cases, we repeat we are not concerned to recommend wholesale suicide on the smallest provocation. It is not suggested that a man or woman should take poison because of a troublesome tooth, or because his or her income does not reach ten thousand a year. But we do protest against the notion that suicide can *never* be justified in the modern world. For the ancient world we may refer Dr. Aveling to the historic case of Samson, whose suicidal end mightily agitated the older school of theologians. Indeed, we do not know if the Holy Ghost has yet informed the Church whether Samson is in heaven or in hell for destroying himself as he did. But when we consider the number of years it often takes the Church to find out if a certain individual it is proposed to canonize is really among the blessed, we need not despair of the eternal fate of Samson being ultimately revealed. The wireless telegraphy in operation between the Holy Ghost and the Pope is rather slower than Marconi's system, but his Holiness *does* get a message occasionally.

The discussion of the ethics of fishing by Dr. Aveling's little party of philosophers naturally broadens out into a discussion of the rights of animals in general, and of the relation of man to his animal brethren of less reasoning power. There is nothing like a full examination of the case, but on the whole, we find ourselves in fairly close agreement with the priest's summing-up on the matter. We except his averment that what is called sport is theoretically legitimate, and that man has a perfect right to indulge in it. Mere sport that involves cruelty can never be legitimate, and that cruelty and torture are involved in hunting, shooting, and even fishing, is a proposition not easily to be disputed. It is true we have seen it suggested that the fox enjoys being hunted, but we

are not aware that the fox's opinion has ever been taken on the matter. Hunting is a survival of barbarism without the savage's strong excuse of necessity. And the argument (not, however, advanced by Dr. Aveling) that foxes are vermin and merit extermination, is singularly inept when we remember that the fox would be extinct in many districts were special measures not taken to preserve it for purposes of hunting. Besides, a much surer and more Christian method of destroying vermin can be found than chasing them over the country with a rabble of men, dogs, and horses.

Dr. Aveling ought to perceive there is a wide difference between the more or less necessary taking of an animal's life—either for food or as a means of ridding humanity of a nuisance—and the giving of suffering to that animal in the process of killing it. The latter is not at all a necessary consequence of the former. Nor does it follow that because we disapprove of the unnecessary infliction of suffering upon animals we are logically bound to become vegetarians. Nothing but the callousness and brutality—or ignorance and indifference—of human beings hinders the provision and preparation of animals for food consumption with the inappreciable minimum of pain. It may be, as some insinuate, that even a cabbage feels when it is torn up by the roots, or a knife is plunged to its heart; but let us stick to what we know. There is no doubt about the animal's capacity for suffering; the susceptibility of the vegetable to pain is at present problematical. Are we not justified in deducing from the teachings of Evolution that the capacity for *expressing* suffering naturally and inevitably follows increasing sentience? The major portion of the animal kingdom has developed that capacity. As yet there is no clear proof of its existence in the vegetable kingdom, though some observers profess to see slight indications of it in an extremely nascent form.

We have a few words to say anent Dr. Aveling's conception of the typical advanced woman. As might be anticipated, she is a monstrosity—a pure figment of the prejudiced male and clerical imagination. She reminds us of the stock caricatures to be seen in the comic papers of a few decades back. Little as it may have dawned upon Dr. Aveling, all freethinking women are not sharp-voiced, hard-visaged, unlovely and unlovable specimens of femininity. Many of them are as good and fair to look upon as any Christian of them all. Perhaps we ought not expect a priest to be conversant with feminine appearance and characteristics. The good priest shuts his eyes (metaphorically) when he looks at a woman—perhaps. But that there should be no love lost between the priest and the advanced woman need not be matter for surprise. The advancement of woman means the decay of priestly authority. When woman in the mass thinks, speaks, and acts for herself, the principal occupation of Dr. Aveling and his *confreves* will have vanished. It is an economic as well as a moral necessity that compels the Catholic Church to resent the emancipation of woman. It is not without a rough sense of the fitness of things that a woman figures so conspicuously in Roman Catholic worship. Well may the Catholic Church adore a woman. It is to women she owes the maintenance of her position.

We have not left ourselves space to deal with the discussion on the "Soul Divine." The priest obscures the subject in a cloud of words. But it is strange to find anyone with the reputation of Dr. Aveling subscribing to the doctrine that a belief is true in proportion to the number of individuals who entertain it. On that basis there must have been a time when there was little truth in Christianity. Probably Dr. Aveling would object to his attitude being expressed in our terms as above, yet what other meaning can be attached to the following passage?

"There are few truths to which the whole human race holds so tenaciously as this [The immortality of the soul]. Take that for your starting point and explain it away if you can."

We are grieved the one atheistic member of the party is so vastly impressed by this not altogether

novel argument. It does not say very much for his powers of discernment. The genesis of this widespread belief can be traced to the reluctance of the human mind to accept annihilation of consciousness. It is paralleled on a lower plane by the tenacity with which the mere animal clings to life and resists death. This Dr. Aveling is quite shrewd enough to see, but he will not admit its force. After the discussion the agnostic physician is left with a "dumb feeling of longing" stirring in his heart. We trust Dr. Aveling does not purpose committing the inartistic error of converting him before the end of the voyage.

G. SCOTT.

Guns Boom for Thomas Paine.—II.

(Concluded from page 797.)

DR. FOOTE: Before the next speaker on the program is introduced, Mr. Edward Hagaman Hall of the Sons of the American Revolution has a few words to say:

MR. HALL'S ADDRESS.

It is only about thirty seconds ago that I received this very kind invitation to address you, so I am not oratorically prepared, but I am glad to stand up for one minute so that you can see this continental uniform I am wearing; not that I am a soldier or fighting man, but I am willing to fight for my country if need be. I believe people should see the style of uniform that Washington wore and in which Thomas Paine saw the soldiers at Fort Lee and other places.

About a week ago I was up at Tappan in Rockland country, where Major Andre was executed and buried, and while I stood there a lady came out of a house and, greeting me, inquired, "May I ask you, sir, if you are an officer in the British army?" I informed her I am not, and concluded that the people need to be educated not only as to the aspects of the revolutionary war, but as to the uniforms common in those days as well.

I hope the time will come when it will not be necessary for us to maintain an array of fighting men. We are heretoday to celebrate the career of a man who fought not with the sword, but with the pen. God speed the day when we will dispense with armies and navies and live by the principles laid down by Thomas Paine.

DR. FOOTE: We will now listen to music by the band. I wish to mention that Mr. George T. Davis of New Rochelle has kindly favored us with the loan of these chairs. Also that Mr. R. Stern of 269 Main-street has taken a photograph of this assemblage and will sell copies of the picture at a moderate price.

The next speaker will be Mr. Thaddeus B. Wakeman of the Manhattan Liberal Club, and his subject "Why Patriots Honor Paine."

MR. WAKEMAN'S ADDRESS.

You have already heard the outline of the story of Paine's life, and if you would know the history of your country, read the life of Thomas Paine. My subject is the work of Paine. All patriots are learning to love and delight in honoring Paine. The reason is this: He was the originator of the great principles for human progress that arose during the revolution, both in America and Europe. We should like to honor him for what he wrote and said and did to secure the welfare and independence of our country, and of the immense benefit of our modern life to the whole world.

The work of Paine, to cut down my address, is to be carried in mind by you [speaking to the throngs of children], by five victories that he won or is winning now; three of them are already won, and two of them remain on the battlefield of time. These points are:

(1) He was the first to suggest and did much to achieve American independence. (2) The next thing he suggested and did much to achieve was a democratic republic. (3) The next thing he suggested and which has been achieved is the federal union of the United States, and the adoption of the federal Constitution. (4) And now what remains on the battlefield of time is this: He was the first to make, as it were, a reality of the religion of humanity, the brotherhood of mankind. (5) This will be the outgrowth of the principle of the brotherhood of mankind, and is to be the republic of mankind and of the world, making war and conquest hereafter absolutely impossible.

The American constitution, the religion of humanity, the brotherhood of man—those are the three things that bind us together into one people, and the republic of mankind will make us one with all the world. "The world is my country," said Paine, and that made all people of the world his brothers. Remember those five things and you have the

substance of the history of mankind for the last one hundred years, and those points were given us by Thomas Paine more than by any other man whatsoever.

When independence was first suggested, why was it not taken up by the American colonies? It was because they had no government to put in the place of the government of George III. Wipe out the king, they said, and you will bring chaos. Independence was possible because he took the ground that the American people could stand with God as their only king, and that they could make their own democratic republic, which would be that of the people, for the people and by the people. That was what made independence possible, and in 1776 that idea spread through our country like wildfire. After *Common Sense* was read throughout the country, Washington himself said it is sound in its reasoning, and thereafter Washington owed his work for independence to this writing of Thomas Paine directly, and he regarded Paine as his political father. Paine was the creator of this government by the fact that he put into the hearts of the people the idea of the democratic republic and the spirit of independence; and one thing more, and that was the union of the states and of the people in one great continental government.

On the 18th of October, 1775, Paine published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* what he called "A Serious Thought"; in that he argued for independence and continental legislation. That was the first intimation of our glorious union; continental legislation was the thing! He argued that we must become a united people and a nation. He said that was to be accomplished by throwing off what prevented any such union—the allegiance to the British king and any other government on earth. So far, those three things— independence, the republic, and the federal union— have been won. This country is to-day, through recent events, teaching all the rest of the world a great lesson in progress and peace; and that lesson is made possible by the fact that those three battles inaugurated by Paine have been practically won.

There are two more victories, as I said, yet to be won. In those we are extremely interested, not only because of our own welfare, but for the welfare of all the rest of the world. I mean our realization of future brotherhood through the Religion of Humanity. Mr. Schroeder has already told you that one of the grandest things ever done was when Thomas Paine refused to vote for the death of the king, but said destroy monarchy. That was beautiful and tragic.

Then, there is a passage in No. 7 of the *Crisis* in which for the first time the British king and all of his supporters were cited before the religion of humanity as monsters and not human beings. Think of this man Paine taking such a stand and proclaiming the British king and all of his ministers as monsters before the world! That sentiment was taken up in France and it was the inspiration of the great philosopher Auguste Comte. Those words have blessed every religion. Milton says the religion of Socrates has flowed down and watered the roots of all religions. Now, my friends, the religion of humanity has done the same thing. Who started that religion of humanity? Who indicted kings before it? Nobody but Thomas Paine! Nobody else had the knowledge and nobody else had the courage to do it.

When the question of independence came up, Paine shouldered his musket, but Washington said, "Paine, your pen is worth more than your musket," and Paine became what can be called the adviser of the soldiers, and his writings were read by their camp fires, as Mr. Schroeder has told you, throughout the army.

I suppose my time is up, and I want to again remind you to remember the five points about which I have been speaking. The genius and quality of Paine rose to the very highest point, and to honor him, as we are doing to-day should be considered by us as the greatest act of our lives.

DR. FOOTE: Our next speaker will be the Mayor of New Rochelle, the Hon. Henry S. Clark. We turn over to the city, I say to Mr. Clark as representative of the city of New Rochelle, all interest we have in the Paine Monument and the Bronze Bust. We have nursed the project of its erection, and have guarded it; it is yours to protect from now on and for you to say to all vandals, Come and see, but hands off. The Mayor will now address you.

MAYOR CLARK'S ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to act in behalf of my associates of the Common Council and the People of the City of New Rochelle, as spokesman on this occasion for the acceptance of this historical memorial by the City. This memorial should serve and will remain an object lesson inculcating not only patriotism, but the fundamental idea which appeared only in Paine's writings— political equality for all men. He ranks with Samuel Adams as a patriot, who taught to the British subjects that they have rights as citizens greater than those conferred upon

them by the British crown. Paine brought about an awakening that impressed upon the people those two great ideas—political equality and the power by popular suffrage to carry on a government by which all men were equal under the law. And the lesson which he taught then is a lesson which should not be forgotten now. May this memorial ever serve to keep fresh in the minds of this oncoming generation the patriotism and the love of liberty of Thomas Paine and of the men of his times (applause).

And now, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, in behalf of my associates of the Common Council, the representatives of the people of New Rochelle, we accept this splendid memorial and pledge ourselves to ever protect and preserve it, trusting it will ever be an inspiration to self-sacrificing citizenship.

This was the last speech. The addresses had been interspersed with music by the Fort Slocum Band, which is a band with a reputation for making good music. The children had sung "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," and had the last number but one on the program, which was the "Star Spangled Banner." Hats were off now, and before they could be got on again, one of the cannon over in the field spoke its word for Paine and the hills were reverberating. It was a salute of thirteen guns, one for each of the original States.

Before departing the visitors swarmed about the monument reading the inscriptions and inspecting the banners with which it was adorned. On the staff of one of the banners hung a wreath with green ribbons depending, and on these were the words, "France reconnaissance," the recognition of France, brought to the spot by Mrs. M. Lefort of Newark. Out-of-town people were served with refreshments by the Women's Auxiliary, G. A. R., Miss Mary Hayes, president; her associates being Mrs. Stephen Romeyn, Mrs. Edward Osterhout, Mrs. Norman L. Underhill, Mrs. William Lockwood, and Miss Jennie Dodge. A line of trolley cars which looked like a "block" on Broadway received the home-going guests and took them to the railroad station a mile and a half away past the houses that had hung out flags and bunting in honor of the event. It had been a great day for New Rochelle and a great day for Paineites—a day of proceedings that would have been impossible a generation ago.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Acid Drops.

"Merlin" of the *Referee* (Mr. D. Christie Murray) has obviously mistaken his vocation. Instead of being a writer of fiction and a journalist he ought to have occupied a pulpit. He is a born preacher, and he would have been immensely popular, as all such gentlemen are when they are suspected of being somewhat heretical in private, and yet are known to be placing all their rhetorical faculty (such as it is) at the service of the popular faith. For a long while "Merlin" has been backing up religion in the *Referee*. We cannot say that he ever utters anything new, but he dresses up the old commonplaces of religious apologetics in a way to please the average British philistine after his Sunday dinner. Last week he set forth what he called "The Case for Religion." The sum and substance of his case was that the doctrines of heaven and hell are very useful in keeping people morally straight. Whether they keep "Merlin" so, is a question, we suppose, which we ought not to discuss. We are perfectly free, however, to reaffirm our conviction that the doctrine of hell frightens the wrong people, and that the doctrine of heaven has no effect at all except on the people who believe in hell, and want to escape it. Nobody wants to go to heaven except as the alternative to hell. It is simply the "other place," and is welcome as the most uninviting garret is welcome when you are escaping from a house on fire. All you ask for just then is to keep uncooked.

"No belief," the *Referee* preacher says, "can have any importance at all except in relation to conduct." Well, it all depends on what he means. In a certain sense it may be true; in another sense it is not true. But we will waive this, and assume that his statement is absolutely accurate. Even then we venture to remind him that a belief must be either true or false; that if it is false, and is innocently held to be true, it can hardly be as beneficial as if it were really true; and that if it be held as true, when it is known to be false, it must be in every way harmful. In the long run it is only the truth that is helpful and elevating. Goethe put his Trinity in the right order—the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. The True must come first, the Good rests upon it, and the Beautiful is the crown of both; or, to change the

metaphor, it may be said that the union of the True and the Good produces the Beautiful.

Following up his faulty argument "Merlin" proceeds to play to the orthodox gallery. He declares that a good religionist must be a good man, whereas a good Agnostic may be a bad man. That is the substance of a long-winded paragraph. And it is really too childish for a Sunday-school. It is a trick only worthy of the poorest controversial entertainment. If you show Mr. Murray an immoral Christian—say a man of God who corrupts boys or girls—he says: "Oh, the man is not a Christian, for all Christians are good men." If you show him an immoral Agnostic he exclaims: "Oh, yes this man is an Agnostic, for any Agnostic may be a bad man." He relieves Christianity of all its "bad lots," he makes Agnosticism keep all its "bad lots," and on this arbitrary proceeding he bases his infallible argument for the superiority of Christianity over Agnosticism.

If you ask Mr. Murray why a Christian cannot be a bad man, he can only reply that Christianity does not tell him to be one. Neither does Agnosticism tell an Agnostic to be a bad man. What is sauce for the Christian goose is sauce for the Agnostic gander.

One sentence in "Merlin's" article is admirable. "The believer in a God," he says, "starts his problem in a very simple way." Yes, his way is simple—very simple.

The Bishop of Liverpool, in one of his addresses during his recent visitation tour, confessed that: "While the English nation still remains Christian, there are not wanting ominous signs that definite Christian belief and practice have but an imperfect hold upon the masses of the people." This must indeed be an ominous sign to a man with several thousands a year at stake.

The Bishop's advice to his clergy just hits the nail on the head. He says that they must follow the lead of Christ. We agree with him. Christ sailed away bodily to heaven, and if all the Christian clergy would do ditto it would be a great relief to the world.

Canon Hicks, preaching at Manchester, took an opposite view to that expressed by the Bishop of Liverpool. He said that "there is no country in the world the soul of which is more religious or more Christian than England of to-day." No doubt, in this case, the wish was father to the thought. Canon Hicks should go over to Liverpool and have a talk with the Bishop; unless the ill-feeling between Liverpool and Manchester extends even to religious circles.

Canon Hicks seems altogether a most inaccurate speaker. He said, for instance, that the progress of democracy in France had been marred by the sway of militarism and by the conflict of the State with religion. Now this is rank nonsense. The State in France has no conflict with religion. It treats religion as a private matter, and declines to meddle with it in any way whatsoever—except to repel its aggressions upon the State. The new law for the separation of Church and State gives all religious bodies freedom to propagate and maintain themselves. What more do they want?

Another of Canon Hicks's statements is just as true as the foregoing. He said that it was to be noted with thankfulness that in England "the most extreme reformers, political and social, are not at war with religion." If he means by this that they are all friends of religion he is saying what is well-known to be untrue. Many of them are enemies of religion. Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Hyndman, and Mr. Blatchford are notorious "infidels."

It is stated that Princess Victoria of Battenberg will change her religion in view of her becoming Queen of Spain. When she marries Alphonso her old Protestant religion will be turned out at the back door, and her new Catholic religion admitted over the front-door mat. This ought to show the "masses" what the "classes" really think of religion. Some religion is necessary to fool the people with, and the one is chosen which best serves their special interests.

Why on earth did the Rev. Canon Kempthorne, rector of Liverpool, let the cat out of the bag so flagrantly? Speaking on missionary work in South Africa he said that the Kaffirs must, yes *must*, have Christian education; for if they did not "we should find that our English rule was seriously threatened by a race of educated Kaffirs largely outnumber-

ing our white people." There you have the real secret of most missionary enterprise. Its object is "English rule" over Christianised and bamboozled natives.

Rev. J. P. Lewis, of Conway, earnestly hopes that "Wales will be spared the curse of secular education." No doubt. In the same way, ice-cream vendors dread a cold snap, and baked potato-men a heat wave.

Evan Roberts used to be very reticent. He is now very loquacious. At one of his recent revival meetings at Pwllheli, after he had been speaking for twenty-five minutes, the gas went out. This should have been regarded as a plain hint from Providence. But things are only "providential" when they suit your hand in the game; so the light was restored, and Evan Roberts went on again.

A revival meeting at Capel Newydd, near Llanelli, has been the scene of a curious disturbance. An evangelist called for volunteers for prayer, and when no one responded rebuked his audience for their hardness. Thereupon the pastor of a Methodist chapel began to pray, but a local revivalist declared that the devil was in him, and called aloud for the removal of the evil spirit. Amid exorcist prayers, which came from all parts of the chapel, the pastor protested, called his hearers hypocrites and pharisees, and told them that if the devil had been in him there would have been a very different scene. Eventually the evangelists were told that if they did not leave the chapel the gas would be turned out. They left, but continued the meeting in the courtyard until the police persuaded them to leave.—*Bolton Evening News*.

Mr. Dillon's latest plea for Home Rule in Ireland was based upon grounds which will not commend themselves to Free-thinkers. He called upon Irishmen to "strike down the infamous system of government" in their country, because of the "setting up of a scientific university in Dublin, at the cost of a quarter of a million, with the apparent approval of the people of the country, which would be the most godless and most anti-national institution in the whole education system of Ireland." Mr. Dillon would have no education unless the priests ruled it; and Home Rule of that sort would be Rome Rule with a vengeance.

Mr. Keir Hardie has his good points, but he is sometimes extravagantly sanguine. He is reported as saying that the Labor party would have forty-five members in the new parliament, and that if they worked with the Irish party they would be able to control any government, and be able to force labor and social questions to the front. He even believes that the Irish party will help to promote Socialism. But this only shows his misunderstanding of the Irish party. The Catholic Church is the ruling power in Ireland, and it will take care that the Irish members are neither Socialist nor revolutionary.

A Liberal paper says that King Edward has set up "a new landmark in our Constitutional history" by ordering that the Prime Minister shall take precedence after the Archbishop of York. What a lot to be thankful for! On great State occasions Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, or his successor, will be able to follow the "back parts" (see Exodus xxxiii, 23) of the northern Archbishop.

One old fellow who went out of office with Mr. Balfour is Lord Halsbury. He has been Lord Chancellor for seventeen years. During that time he has received £170,000 in salary. He is now entitled to a retiring pension of £5,000 a year. On that income, together with the interest on his savings, he may be trusted to keep out of heaven as long as possible. Lord Halsbury is a very pious gentleman, but, like the general run of such persons, he prefers this world to the next.

In addition to his own pickings from the nation's purse, Lord Halsbury has had a tremendous mass of patronage, and has liberally provided for his relatives—perhaps on the Pauline principle that he who does not provide for his own family is worse than an infidel. His official designation was the Lord High Chancellor, but he was nicknamed the Lord High Jobber.

Lord Halsbury used to be Sir Hardinge Giffard in the old days when he did all the dirty legal work of the Tory party. For years he was active in the law courts in the baiting of Bradlaugh, and he was soundly beaten by that great fighter in the end; and, curious to relate, through the last throw of the dice in the appeal to the House of Lords. Sir Hardinge

Giffard was also the leading counsel against the editor of the *Freethinker* in the famous prosecution for "blasphemy."

The *Daily Mirror* devoted a leading article to the argument that the fall of the roof of Charing-Cross Station was "Not an Act of God." Legally speaking, it was very likely not. Theologically speaking, it certainly was. Everything that happens must be the act of an Almighty, Omniscient being.

The daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience gravely announces that Sir Oliver Lodge's reply to Haeckel will be followed by the Rev. Frank Ballard's, which is entitled *Haeckel's Monism False*. Haeckel is done for now. He might have survived Lodge's attack—but who can survive Ballard's?

This is the age of Leagues. Amongst them is the Bible League. Apparently the Bible wants it. Times have changed since Bishop Watson presented his *Apology for the Bible to George III.*, and the old monarch said "I did not know the Bible needed an apology." That was a smart saying—for George III. But nobody would gain any credit for it now. The situation has become too serious.

Well, the Bible League has been holding meetings in Nottingham, and blowing blasts against the Higher Criticism—which does not fall down as easily as the walls of Jericho did. The League exists to "uphold the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible record." The talking serpent, the talking jackass, the rock-salt lady, and the submarine whale-liner, and all the rest of it. We admire the courage of the Bible League. And we are obliged to laugh at its silliness.

What do the Salvation Army and the Church Army pay the men they employ in making firewood? The editor of the "Life and Labor" column in the *Daily News* says that he cannot obtain an answer to this question. But this is the all-important question. "What the wood is sold for," the writer says, "or what the motives are which inspire the work, matter not a brass farthing. What matters is: What is paid for the work?" Precisely. That is what we have said all along.

When the great "Social Scheme" of General Booth was started, many years ago, we criticised it thoroughly and severely in a pamphlet entitled *Salvation Syrup*—which is still in print, if anybody cares to read it. We pointed out, amongst other things, that General Booth's project was sheer charlatany, from an economical point of view. By setting up in trade, with capital supplied to him by the benevolent, he could only bring himself into competition with those already carrying on such business, and would either have to undersell them or "sweat" his workers. The only way out of this difficulty was to increase the demand for the article produced, but this seemed quite impossible. This part of our criticism, like all the rest, was laughed at; for the sentimental always do laugh at the scientific—unless they drown them in an ocean of crocodile tears. But now, after the lapse of all those years, we are being justified. Criticism exactly like ours is being written in the "Life and Labor" column of the *Daily News*. Take the following paragraph on the Salvation and Church Armies as firewood producers:—

"Firewood must be had, and, therefore, must be made. The Armies do not increase the demand for firewood. They simply supply part of the ordinary demand. Therefore, they take employment away from one set of men and give it, under unlawful conditions, to another."

Our readers will see that this is on all fours with our own criticism. We were only wrong, therefore, in being in advance of the time when we wrote. Which is a way Freethinkers have.

Sarah Bernhardt expressed her opinion that the Canadians had their virtues, but had little art or literature, and were too ready to be trampled under the feet of priests. By way of denying this—and proving it—two or three hundred young men pelted her and the ladies of her company with rotten eggs. They even assaulted two of the ladies with sticks and stones, and severely wounded them about the head. Three cheers for religion in Canada!

A Vienna correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, after referring to the enormous number of fugitives from Russia passing through Austria, wrote as follows: "According to the fugitives the clergy in north-west Russia are engaged in organising 'Black Hundreds.'" It is well-known that these Black Hundreds are hooligan bands devoted to pillage and murder, in the name of God and the Czar. Of course the clergy know what is at stake. The fear their own powers and privileges will follow the fate of the Autocracy, and, as usual, they scruple at nothing to prevent that.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 17, Stanley Hall, Junction-road, London, N.; at 7.30, "Christmas Superstitions."

December 31, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—December 17, Forest Gate.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Dec. 17, Manchester.

ANTI-TORREY FUND.—L. Devereux 2s. 6d.

E. OLDHAM.—We cannot open the *Freethinker* again to the long (and useful) list of books recommended in Mr. Mann's article, in order to give the publisher's name and price of each. We are too busy to reply to Dr. Margoliouth's article in the *Contemporary* on the Resurrection; but, of course, Mr. Cohen or Mr. Lloyd is at liberty to deal with it if he pleases. You say it "needs reply." Then it must be superior to anything we ever read on the orthodox side of the question. Thanks for the other reference. The correct title of Foxe's famous book is "Acts and Monuments"—with a lot more following this headline, which we have not room to reproduce.

H. A. GABRIELSON.—Mr. Symes is at the other side of the world, thousands of miles away, and we cannot ask him to answer your question. The words "for his pleasure" were not given by him as a quotation, but as expressing his own view of several well-known texts in the Gospels.

C. D. THOMSON.—Will try to find room in our next.

F. GUAINAZZI.—Shall be pleased to meet you again at the annual dinner.

J. W. E. BENNETT.—We have neither civilities nor incivilities to exchange with the paper you send us marked.

A. A.—We read both your letter and the one enclosed with pleasure.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

JOHN MACK.—Any decent Life of Luther should give you the main facts—say, Michelet's, founded on the *Table Talk*, which is published in Bolin's Library.

L. B. GALLAGHER.—Sorry cannot deal with it this week.

W. P. KENNEDY.—We really cannot undertake to suggest questions to be put to all the men of God throughout the country who promise to answer them. Put the one you refer to some straight questions yourself. Your own common sense will prompt you.

W. B.—Gipsy Smith seems a pleasant person in a certain line of business. Intellectually he is not worth our powder and shot.

ONLOOKER.—We are inexpressibly grieved at the Liverpool trouble, which cannot now be ignored. We tried our best to act as peacemaker between the contending parties, but we failed. We expect to have to say something on the matter next week, and we shall aim at doing so without widening the breach. Of course it is all very sad coming so soon after the N. S. S. Conference and the grand meeting in the Picton Hall.

W. A. HEWETT.—We will look through the American publication you kindly send us. Glad to hear of the "pleasure" with which you read the *Freethinker*.

HORACE W. PARSONS.—Thanks for your letter. Mr. Augustine Birrell, the new President of the Board of Education, is, as you say, in favor of Secular Education. He is so theoretically. Practically he sides with the Nonconformists.

A. G. LYE.—Pleased to hear that Councillor Poole, who took the chair at Mr. Lloyd's evening lecture in Coventry, mentioned the *Freethinker*, and said that, although he did not agree with all the articles, he had never found a number without some interesting and instructive matter.

J. BROUGH.—Cuttings are always welcome. We hoped to complete the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* before this, but our leisure for literary work—outside our editorial, platform, and official duties—grows scantier rather than fuller.

O. T. DAVIES.—There is nothing new in the idea. Winwood Reade propounded it at the end of the *Martyrdom of Man*. It has recently been propounded by Pasteur's successor at Paris. But nothing comes of it. And we must confess that we are not as anxious about the average man living a thousand years as you appear to be. But thanks for your kind letter, all the same.

SOME correspondence stands over till next week, in consequence of upset to the editorial work by the London fog, which has been A1—of its kind.

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

London was visited by the fog of the year on Sunday. Mr. Foote had great difficulty in reaching Stanley Hall, and of course the audience was a very moderate one in such circumstances, although it was larger than might have been expected. Those who dared the weather must have been determined to hear the lecture, and we hope they were rewarded for their pains. Mr. Foote occupies the Stanley Hall platform again this evening (Dec. 17), when the weather may be more propitious. His lecture will be on the seasonable subject of "Christmas Superstitions."

Metropolitan "saints" will please note that the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 9. The tickets are four shillings each. This price is inclusive. There will be a good dinner, a little good speaking (we hope), and some good vocal and instrumental music. We wish we could also promise that there will be good weather. The chair will be taken by Mr. Foote, who will be supported by Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and other well-known Freethinkers.

Mr. Lloyd was at Coventry on Sunday and had the best meetings that have yet assembled during the present winter's course of lectures there. Both lectures were frequently applauded, and we hear that the local friends are "delighted."

Mr. Lloyd lectures in the Secular Hall, Manchester, to-day (Dec. 17), and should have good meetings.

Birmingham saints may find the following clue useful. We are privately informed that the Deputy Chief Constable is at the root of their trouble in regard to the Town Hall meetings, and perhaps some other matters. It would be well to have this matter sifted.

The *Journal de Charlevoi* often prints a long extract from leading articles in the *Freethinker*—translated, of course, into French. The last number to hand draws freely from one of Mr. Lloyd's recent articles.

The *Schoolmaster* is printing letters on the question, "Is there a Way Out of the Religious Difficulty?" in elementary education. One excellent letter is from the pen of Mr. Rawdon Roberts, Higher Grade School, Darwen. He says that everybody knows there is only one solution—Secular Education. This is admitted by "the Trades Unions and all the Progressive forces in the country," and "why does the National Union of Teachers lag behind?" Mr. Roberts boldly denies that every parent has the right to decide what religious teaching shall be given to his children. He asserts that no one has the right to teach as facts things which are doubtful. "What better way," he asks, "of making a bigot could be devised than that of teaching a child the myths with which the Bible teems?" Finally, he says that Bible teaching, if such there must be, is the work of parsons: teachers should cry "Away with it!"

The *Reformers' Year-Book* for 1906, edited by Joseph Edwards and F. W. Pethick Lawrence, is remarkably cheap at one shilling. It contains a mass of information for all sorts of reformers, including a directory of men and women in the front of the various advanced movements. In the "Books of the Year" list we note Mr. Foote's four Torrey pamphlets. This shows a wise and honorable impartiality. For many reasons we hope this publication will have a large sale.

Father Gapon is back in St. Petersburg. He has been turned out of the Church, but he is still trusted by the workmen, and his influence is being used in favor of possible

reforms and against wild-cat schemes. It is a mistake to suppose that Father Gapon is a Christian in the common meaning of the word. His autobiography shows that he was heretical before he entered the Church, and that he only remained a priest because his garb gave him an easier access to the working classes, whom he desired to help in this world.

There are two notable articles for Freethinkers in the December number of the *Independent Review*. The first is by H. B. Marriott-Watson on "The Unknown God." It opens with some rather foolish observations on the humility of Agnostics and the dogmatism of Atheists. This sort of talk is becoming too common. We suppose it is meant to conciliate orthodoxy in some way. But in the long run it will not succeed, for the man in the street is bound to find out that the difference between Agnosticism and Atheism is purely phantasmal. Mr. Watson even goes to the length of saying that men were never Atheistic "save for one empty and unimaginative period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." Does he mean the period that produced the Atheistic Shelley? If he does, we beg to remind him that Shelley was not exactly "empty," and that he was perhaps the most "imaginative" of English poets since Shakespeare and Milton.

Mr. Watson's exordium, however, gives but a poor idea of the article, which is written on what most people would regard as "Atheistic" lines. For although he prefers to call the Great First Cause "God" he proceeds to put it outside the scope of our sympathies. After denying Free Will and asserting Determinism, he emphasises human suffering, and declares that the only thing "which prevents the depopulation of the world to-morrow is Hope."

"God designs for his own purposes to keep the race in existence, and in a certain indefinite line of progress or advance. It is hopeless to guess at what this will culminate in; it is the incidents and tragedies by the way that arrest us, and concern us for the most part. We are kept going, so to speak, as a race of superior creatures, but with no knowledge of our destiny. We are driven before the Shepherd, as it were a flock of sheep, curious or incurious, as it may be, as to our goal, whether it be the azure fields of Heaven or the slaughter-house. And the amount of sheer suffering which has taken place from first to last, in this progress somewhither, is incalculable. Looking back through untold thousands of years, and upon untold millions of people, the imagination reels at the thought of the sum total of that suffering. To brood upon it too nearly spells madness; but one may recognise that the agony of life is at least as great as the agony of death, and, from a consideration of both, marvel at the immensity of the sacrifice entailed upon the human race by the mysterious purpose of God."

Now to all real intents and purposes this is irreligious. One of the Atheists of the "unimaginative" period, the poet James Thomson, actually expressed the fact of human suffering with far more power than Mr. Watson commands. But he did not burn his pinch of incense on the altar of "the mysterious purpose of God;" on the contrary, he made the great speaker in the cathedral, in the *City of Dreadful Night*, throw out the following solace for the wild unrest of his fate-smitten, miserable congregation:—

"And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
Good tidings of great joy for you, for all:
There is no God; no Fiend with names divine
Made us and tortures us; if we must pine,
It is to satiate no being's gall."

Mr. Watson would really lead us up to the philosophy of "Curse God and die." Thomson, the Atheist, was more merciful. He took away the worst sting of a thoughtful man's suffering.

The other notable article in the *Independent Review* is a prose rhapsody on "Euthanasia" by Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson. It is finely written from the point of view that death breaks the shell of the body and frees the soul. But he should not have added a tag of his own prose to the splendid quotation at the end from *Adonais*. Nor, we venture to say, should he treat the noble imagery of Shelley's poem as a series of logical propositions. They are not, and were not intended to be, anything of the kind. On the whole, we prefer Mr. Dickinson when he is fighting other people's superstitions. He is less effective when he is advocating his own.

There was a slight and pardonable blunder in Mr. Cohen's article last week. While handsomely praising that beautiful book *The Soul of a People* he remarked that the author's own opinions on religion were not made known. This was a mistake, and we wrote a brief paragraph correcting it, as there was no time left, after our return from the North, to get it corrected in the article itself. As luck would have it, however, the paragraph was squeezed out in the make-up of

the "Sugar Plums" page. We therefore invited Mr. Cohen to make the correction himself; but he, rather too modestly perhaps, preferred to leave it in our own hands. Well now, this is not the place for a disquisition; so we shall merely say that *The Hearts of Men*, a later book by the author aforesaid, and just as beautiful in its way, sets forth his views on religion. His last sentence is this: "Religion is the music of the infinite echoed from the hearts of men." But so far as the Churches and Creeds are concerned he is a very considerable heretic. What is uppermost in him is ever really human.

A Christmas Carol.

(NEW STYLE.)

THE midnight moon was clear,
The stars shone bright,
When he whom they revere
Was born that night.
The "Virgin's son" was he,
A Roman soldier's too;*
Hail, mirth and jollity
The season through!

"Saint Joseph too was by,
To tend the child,"
Not his to ask the why,
So all-beguiled.
Were shepherds there, amazed?
Did sages bring
To that poor manger, dazed,
Their offering?

Say, did the angels keep
Melodious praise?
Or did they silent, sleep,
Nor carols raise?
A mother o'er her babe
In gladness bent,
To see his infant face
She was content.

Yet since that night of fate,
Millions bow down
To worship him as God,
Yield him the crown.
And though but only man
Of doubtful birth,
His are, the legend ran,
All heaven and earth.

And if he lived and died,
Nor rose again,
Mankind, unhelpt, has sighed
In bitter pain.
No angels sing above
The path men tread,
But woe and want, not love,
Descend instead.

So while we sing anew
This Christmas hymn,
Be ours the distant view,
The prospect dim,
When Love shall rule the earth,
The ages when
Shall come from any Birth
Goodwill to men! GERALD GREY.

Life in itself is neither good nor evil, it is the scene of good or evil, as you make it; and, if you have lived a day, you have seen all; one day is equal and like to all other days; there is no other light, no other shade, this very sun, this moon, these very stars, this very order and revolution of things, is the same your ancestors enjoyed, and that shall also entertain your posterity.—*Montaigne*.

Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us—the place where in the end
We find our happiness or not at all.

—Wordsworth.

* Vide Celsus.

The Book of the Acts.—III.

ITS ALLEGED AUTHENTICITY AND CREDIBILITY.

(Continued from p. 795.)

THE next point to which Dr. Hervey draws our attention is Luke's marvellous accuracy in naming the Roman governors of various places mentioned in the Acts. To properly appreciate this species of evidence it must be borne in mind that the vast Roman Empire in Europe, Asia, and Africa was divided into provinces, and that these provinces were of two kinds, namely, those which were in the gift of the Senate (consular) governed by a Pro-consul, and those in the gift of the Emperor (prætorian) under the rule of a military governor, variously styled Pro-prætor, Legate, or Governor. It sometimes happened, however, that the Emperor exchanged provinces with the Senate, and what before had been a Consular province became a Prætorian, and *vice versa*.

In the case of Cyprus, we learn from Dio Cassius that in the distribution of the provinces by Augustus Cæsar, that island and Galatia fell to the lot of the Emperor, and consequently became a Prætorian province. Yet Luke, in Acts xiii., says that Sergius Paulus, the governor, was Proconsul or Deputy. When this came to be noticed "the adverse critics were delighted to catch Luke making a mistake, and the friendly critics were at their wits' ends to find excuses and explanations for him. Curiously enough, they had all overlooked the passage in the same historian in which he tells us that later in his reign Augustus gave back Cyprus and Galatia to the Senate, and took to himself Dalmatia in exchange. So St. Luke was right after all." Moreover, there have been found in Cyprus Roman coins which "crown the testimony to St. Luke's accuracy." One of these, of the reign of Claudius Cæsar, bears the inscription "Of the Cyprians, *Cominius Proculus*, Pro-consul"; and another "of about the same date, actually has the name *Paulus*, Pro-consul, doubtless our very Sergius Paulus." Furthermore, the elder Pliny in his Natural History (about A.D. 70) prefixes to each "book" or chapter a list of the authors whom he had consulted on the subject treated of. In two of these lists appears the name Sergius Paulus, and in the sections to which these lists are attached mention is several times made of the island of Cyprus. Thus is Luke fully vindicated as a historian.

Let us look at this matter a little closer. Claudius reigned from A.D. 41 to 54. Is it contended by Biblical critics that the book of the Acts was written during this period? Certainly not. The earliest date at which the composition of this work is placed is somewhere between A.D. 63 and 80. Luke must therefore have waited a quarter of a century, or more, before writing the account, and, according to the Acts, the compiler of the book was not with Paul at the time. From what source, then, did Luke get his information? It must further be borne in mind that we have no evidence that the author Sergius Paulus named by Pliny was a proconsul.

Again, apart from the account in the Acts, we have no evidence that Paul visited Cyprus in the reign of Claudius, or that he ever visited that island at all. In the epistles ascribed to him he never once refers to anything connected with the story—the island, the proconsul, or the magician whom he is represented as smiting with blindness. The last-named event, in fact, indicates the fictitious character of the narrative.

But Dr. Hervey has another fact to add: "Cyprus appears to have twice changed hands subsequently. Under the Emperor Adrian, *i.e.*, about the year A.D. 120, when our critical friends place the composition of the Acts, it was an Emperor's province, governed by a Pro-prætor; and again, a few reigns later, it reverted to the Senate, and was governed by a Pro-consul again." Just so; but our very confident Bishop should give us the exact dates of all

the changes up to about A.D. 160. The year 120 is much too early for the compilation of the Acts. As a matter of history Renan states that "Sagaris, bishop of Laodicea, on the Lycus" suffered martyrdom "under the proconsulate of L. Sergius Paulus about the year 165." Here we have a Roman proconsul of Asia Minor of the same name as the proconsul mentioned in Acts xiii. 7—which is certainly very remarkable. And it is also remarkable that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts are dedicated to a "Most excellent Theophilus," and that in the year 168 the Christian bishop of Antioch, who was a convert from Paganism, was named Theophilus; while according to tradition Luke, the compiler of these two books, was a native of Antioch. Are these circumstances merely coincidences? Did Luke, a presbyter of the church of Antioch, write these books for this distinguished convert soon after his conversion, so that (as stated in Luke i. 4) Theophilus "might know the certainty concerning the things which he had been taught by word of mouth"? This question can only be determined by another, namely: Was Marcion's Gospel (A.D. 140) a curtailment of Luke's Gospel? or was Luke's Gospel formed by additions to Marcion's Gospel? It is admitted that one of these alternatives was actually the case; but, as might be expected, all orthodox scholars have decided in favor of the former.

A second instance adduced by Dr. Hervey of the marvellous accuracy of Luke is the mention of Gallio as "proconsul of Achaia" (Acts xviii. 12). In the reign of Augustus Achaia was governed by Pro-consuls; under Tiberius it was ruled by Pro-prætors; in the fourth year of Claudius (A.D. 44) it again became Proconsular. "This was only eight or nine years before St. Paul went to Corinth;" consequently Luke writing some time between A.D. 63 and 80 would know all about it. But how do we know that the account in the Acts is correct? Well, Pliny in his Natural History, speaking of the benefit derived from a sea-voyage, says, "As I remember was the case with Annæus Gallio after his consulate"; and Seneca says of his brother Gallio, "when he was beginning to have a fever in Achaia." Here, again, Luke's accuracy as a historian—or as a reader of history—is vindicated.

The next matter which Bishop Hervey advances as evidence of authenticity is the "graphic account" in Acts xix. of the uproar at Ephesus. In this account, he says, "we have attested the existence of the famous image of the goddess which fell down from Jupiter, the fanatical devotion of her worshipers, the magnificence of her shrine, the widespread worship of her divinity, and the theatre as a place of public meeting. And as we read we seem to hear the tumultuous cry of ten thousand voices, ringing through the air, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' Now, this description is in the strictest agreement with all the notices of the Diana of Ephesus contained in ancient historians, or found in inscriptions." Moreover, it is found that the "silver shrines" mentioned in the Acts were "small models in silver of the famous temple, with the image inside. They were used as a kind of phylactery or charm, carried about by travellers to ensure their safety, or set up in houses." In this graphic description Luke was from beginning to end perfectly correct, and not only so, but correct in "the distinctive names of Ephesian magistrates in the account." There were, it seems, three different kinds of officers—the Pro-consuls, the Town-Clerk, and the Asiarchs—and Luke has named all three. In the temple of Diana there was also a Neocoros or "temple keeper," and here again Luke is correct; in fact "the agreement is singularly complete."

Another instance adduced of the marvellous accuracy of the writer of the Acts is the fact that he calls the magistrates of Thessalonica (xvii. 8) the "Rulers of the city"—in the Greek "Politarchs." This name, says Dr. Hervey, "is found in no Greek writer," yet from ancient inscriptions unearthed at Salonica it is proved to be correct. Similarly, in the case of Philippi, a Roman colony, mention is made

of Prætors and Lictors (Acts xvi. 35 and 38), which names are the proper designation of the magistrates and sergeants of that city at that time. "Now when we recollect that all these minute agreements are not the result of deep research on the part of the writer, but are involved in the simple recital of what was done day by day, we see at once that nothing can account for such agreement but the fact that the writer was an eye-witness of what he relates, and had before him, without any need for investigation, the facts and condition of things, which we can now recover only by extensive learning, and the evidence of ancient coins, and the discovery of long buried inscriptions." Who will be so bold as to deny the authenticity and credibility of the Acts after this?

Dr. Hervey's position appears to be almost impregnable. "Nothing can account for such agreement but the fact that the writer was an eye-witness of what he relates." This is the question now to be faced. Well, in the first place, is it a fact that the writer was an eye-witness of the matters referred to? Let us see. It is admitted by all critics that in those portions of the Acts in which the writer, speaking of Paul and his company, employs the words "we" and "us," the writer was himself present; also, that in the other portions of the book in which he speaks of Paul and his party as "they" and "them," he was not present. Now, it so happens that all the matters adduced by Bishop Hervey are found in the last-named parts of the Acts. Hence, the writer was *not* "an eye-witness of what he relates," and consequently had to get his information from some other source.

In the next place, there would be no more need for any "deep research on the part of the writer" in the second century than in the first. The worship of Diana was still carried on; Philippi had not ceased to be a Roman colony, the magistrates at Thessalonica were still known by the same titles, so were also the Proconsul, Town-clerk, and Asiarchs of Ephesus. The great Temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world, and would be known to every second century Greek writer. The compiler of the Acts was a Gentile, and probably had been a worshiper of the Pagan gods before his conversion. In any case he would know all about heathen temples, officers, and shrines, and had doubtless sometimes witnessed an uproar similar to that described at Ephesus. He would have no need to search for ancient coins or inscriptions, or anything else. If uncertain as to whether any particular province was governed by a proconsul or pro-prætor, he had but to inquire of some well-informed person to get the information needed. Furthermore, the compiler of the Acts had at his command several earlier Christian documents, now lost, which professed to give the acts and travels of Peter and Paul. These, beyond all doubt, he revised and utilised in drawing up his veracious history—"The Acts of the Apostles." If further evidence be needed, we have it in the Preface to the Third Gospel. Luke was a compiler, not an original writer, and he lived in post-apostolic times.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

The House of God.—II.

(Concluded from page 790.)

ANY objective truths found in the religions of the world are contained in their human and secular side, and all the supernatural myths are derived from savageism and barbarism. In the light of science and reason, I think we may justly say that all our ideas of the supernatural are myths first born of the savage mind. In their origin the notions were very low and rude. The savage observed the storm, the lightning and thunder, the flood, the earthquake, the volcano, and was terrified, thinking they were pro-

duced by big monsters like himself, but immensely greater. He dreamed about them and saw the monsters in his dreams, and the Devil-myths were born. In the course of time the beneficent powers of nature were observed, and attributed to some powerful and friendly beings, and the myths of gods and angels was conceived. After that it was felt necessary to have representations of the devils and the gods, and a place for them to dwell in, where sacrifices and offerings could be made to them. At first they were located in trees, animals, reptiles, rivers, fountains, and stones. Later, images of them were made, and temples were built to place them in, in charge of priests, where their devotees could worship them; and every temple became a house of God or gods.

Every tree, river, fountain, animal, or reptile that was worshiped was really a house or dwelling-place of a god or a mighty ghost. It was not the reptile that was worshiped, but a god that was supposed to be dwelling in the reptile. Believers may sneer at a savage worshiping an ape, but I cannot see that worshiping an idea developed from the barbarian devotion is very much superior or more reasonable.

That the idea of a house of God originated as before described can be proved from the Bible, without going for evidence elsewhere. Jacob at one time was a sleeper-out. Had he lived in England in the twentieth century he would have been run in by the police and imprisoned for it. That by the way. Thus we read: "And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows, and he lay down in that place to sleep." No wonder Jacob dreamed, with his head on stone pillows! In his dream he saw a ladder which reached from the earth to heaven. Angels ascended and descended on the ladder, and the Lord stood above it and made a long speech to Jacob. Jacob swallowed the dream as Gospel truth. Mark the sequel: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place: this is none other but the HOUSE OF GOD, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 10-17). Here we see that the place—the open country—where there was neither hut, altar, or temple was a house of God because God was there. More significant still are the following: "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it..... And this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be *God's house*" (Gen. xxviii. 18-22). Here we have an example of the genesis and evolution. First the open country a house of God, because the Lord was there; then the stone pillar a house for God to dwell in. Later a box, called an ark, was made, in which God was carried from place to place. After that came the tabernacle, and then the temple. The fetish, idol, altar, holy well, sacred animal, river, or tree of savages and barbarians, and all the temples of the Pagans of the world, are as truly and exactly in the same sense houses of God as the churches and chapels of Christians. The pillar of a savage is as sacred as any cathedral, and the god in it is as real and great; and that is to say there is no god in any of them—they are all myths, the Christian God as well as the fetish of the savage. The real houses of the gods are the brains and imaginations of their duped devotees.

If Christians were better acquainted with the Bible, and more loyal to its teaching, they would cease to make themselves ridiculous by calling their churches and chapels houses of God. Hear what Solomon, who is said to be the wisest of men, said: "But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? Who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?" (2 Chron. ii. 6). Listen, again, to what a greater being than Solomon says: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is

my throne and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house that ye build for me? and where is the place of my rest? For all things have mine hand made, and those things have been, saith the Lord" (Isaiah lvi. 1, 2). The inspired Stephen, quoting and paraphrasing Isaiah, said: "Howbeit, the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet. Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool: What house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" (Acts vii. 48-50). Paul, again, preaching at Athens, declared thus: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men's hand, as though he need anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii.).

In the face of these quotations from the Bible, is it not a slur on the Word of God to call buildings of stone, bricks, and wood, made with men's hands like any other buildings, houses of God, as if an infinite Being could be confined to a place? And is it not inexcusable arrogance on the part of Christians of all sects to look upon and treat the altars and temples of other religions as houses of demons and synagogues of Satan? Christian churches have no more sacredness than Pagan temples. Pagan priests and monks are quite as holy as Christian priests. The truth is that churches and temples have no more sacredness than other buildings, and all the priests and monks of the world are no more holy than other men—and often enough they are less holy. All the religions of the world are nothing but priestly pretensions, cursing the world with superstitious delusions. There is no greater curse on earth than priestcraft, and there will be no salvation for humanity until it is utterly destroyed.

R. J. DERFEL.

Correspondence.

A "TORREYITE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Under the heading "Sunday Morning's in London," "R. M. S." in the *Daily News* of Monday, December 4 last, describes a visit he paid to the Upper George-street Presbyterian Church, Marylebone, W., of which the Rev. George Hanson, M.A., D.D., is the pastor. The following is from his description of the impression made on him by Dr. Hanson:—

"The first impression is made by the voice; a deep, rich voice, not various in cadence, nor opulent in modulation, but full of feeling; now throbbing like the string of a 'cello, now pulsating like a cathedral bell.....As the service proceeded the impression, which developed into permanence, was that of the genuine goodness of the preacher. I have rarely sat under a man who so impressed me with a sense of noble piety. It was impossible to listen to him and not feel that here was an uncommon type, a man whose spiritual circuit was complete, whose conception of the responsibility of his office was humbling in its height, who cherished a holy of holies in his breast. A man of culture, but of more than culture; of wisdom, the wisdom not of the midnight oil, but of the midnight vigil.....it has rarely been my good fortune to hear a preacher who thought so little of himself and so much of his purpose, who so convincingly and so silently, no less than audibly, proclaimed that for him to live 'was Christ.'"

Taking it for granted that this is a correct delineation of the preacher's style and character, the question arises what is the meaning of "living for Christ," and how does it affect a man's relations with his fellows? This is best answered by recording a little anecdote of the manner in which Dr. Hanson has slandered Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and when brought to book, failed to substantiate his charges. The facts of the case to which I refer are as follows: In June and July this year, Dr. Hanson spoke for the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park, and in the course of his lectures he declared that he had evidence in his possession to prove that Mr. Lloyd had been deprived of his office in the Presbyterian ministry on account of his having been found guilty of grave moral offences. His statements subsequently formed the theme of several discourses delivered respectively by Messrs.

Baily, Greene, and Bryant, from the Christian Evidence platform and under the auspices of that society. These men always referred us to the Pastor of the George-street Presbyterian Church for authoritative details. I accordingly addressed, during last August, two letters to Dr. Hanson, and after a delay of nearly a fortnight, received the post-card enclosed, which I transcribe for the benefit of your readers:—

"If you write to The Clerk, Johannesburg Presbytery, Johannesburg, S. Africa, you will get an official and authentic statement. (Signed) G. HANSON.

(Castlerock, 21.8.'05.)"

I accordingly wrote to Johannesburg immediately, but up to the present I have received no reply. Nor do I expect to receive one. I ask your readers, however, to note the cowardly mental gymnastics of this reverend dealer in pious slander when asked to substantiate his charges. And this is the man who impressed the *Daily News* representative with "a sense of noble piety." Possibly the *Daily News* "spiritual circuit" like that of Dr. Hanson's "is complete," which accounts for his appreciation of this "comrade-in-abuse" of Dr. Torrey. At least, one would think he was a fit subject for Evan Roberts' Welsh hysteria.

GUY A. ALDRED.

[We have seen the official document by which Mr. Lloyd was deposed from the Presbyterian Church in South Africa. It contained no reflection of any kind upon his personal character. He was simply charged with preaching Atheism. Whenever he renounced his heresy he could apply for reinstatement.—EDITOR.]

Obituary.

CUTTINGS sent us from the *Lyttelton Times* (New Zealand) report the death of Mr. William Pratt, who had been for many years one of our readers and a vice-president of the National Secular Society. Mr. Pratt was born in 1823, and was one of the earliest settlers in New Zealand. He made a competency in business and took a distinguished part in the public life of his locality. He was twice returned as a member of the Christchurch City Council, and was chairman of the Board of Directors of the original Christchurch Tramways Company. He declined invitations to contest the Mayoralty, political honors having no attraction for him. He was twice married and left five sons and three daughters. Mr. Pratt was a liberal subscriber to Freethought efforts, both in the land of his residence and in the land of his birth. A memorial address on the deceased was delivered by Mr. W. W. Collins in the Choral Hall.

It is with melancholy regret that I have to record the recent death of one more sterling member of the N. S. S., Mr. Hugh Hoptson. A well-read and informed man, he was ever a firm, kindly, but fearless upholder of the principles of our glorious Freethought; and his treatment of his fellow-men who were placed in positions under him was such that he won the highest respect one man can obtain from another. His geniality and good-nature were infectious, and he was generous in financial matters to a fault. In fact, "He was a man." To have looked at his well-built figure and jolly appearance one would naturally think of him living to a very ripe old age; but, alas it was not to be, and his good wife has lost a true husband, the children a loving father, and this Branch and the N. S. S. generally a splendid supporter and true Secularist.—W. H. SPIVEY (Huddersfield).

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear or Triton blow his wreathed horn.

—Wordsworth

What we *like* determines what we *are*, and is the sign of what we are; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character.—John Ruskin.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

STANLEY HALL (near the "Boston," Junction-road, N.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christmas Superstitions."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, "The Rev. A. B. Sharpe's Defence of the Freedom of the Will" will be read by L. B. Gallagher.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, C. Cohen. A. Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Herbert Thompson, "An Hour in My Garden: Its Friends and Foes." Illustrated with limelight views. Music from 6.30.

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, J. Shufflebotham, "A Christmas Day Sermon Dedicated to the Lord Bishop of Manchester."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): W. H. Thresh, 12 noon, "A Search for a Soul"; 6.30, "Secular Salvation: My Own Story."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, Dec. 18, at 8, J. Blair Smith, "Francis Adams."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Allen Upward, "The Catholic Conspiracy."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): W. C. Schweizer, 3, "The Unemployed Problem"; 7, "Marcus Aurelius and Jesus Christ: A Contrast." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "In Praise of Optimism"; 6.30, "Perils of the Christian Faith." Tea at 5.

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmans' Institute, Lesser Hall): Thursday, Dec. 23, at 7.30, Very Important Business Meeting.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Dec. 21, at 8, M. Weatherburn, "Rationalism in Politics."

POROTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, S. Holman, "Is God More than a Guess?"

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

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The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others, have also spoken of it in very high terms.

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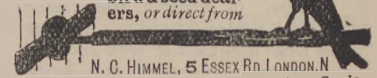
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