

THE Freethinker

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I do confess to an intolerance of baseness, but I am very tolerant of the most adverse opinions on all subjects whatsoever.—LANDOR.

Kate Greenaway.

ONE of the season's choice illustrated books is a Biography of Kate Greenaway, written by M. H. Spielmann and G. S. Layard, and published by Adam and Charles Black. It is beautifully printed and the numerous illustrations are triumphs of colored reproduction. Perhaps the biographical narrative is too long through the multiplication of unimportant details, but we can quite conceive that even this will be of interest to many readers, and we are loth to press any adverse criticism of this delightful volume.

Kate Greenaway does not require our eulogy at this time of day. Her art has taken its definite place. She is known all over the world as the child's artist. Destined never to be a mother herself, the love of children was the very breath of her being. It is said that the boys and girls in her drawings were finer and daintier than they are met with in the world. But the touch of idealism was not a falsehood. She worshiped and reproduced the beauty of things. There is ugliness also in nature, but she was not born to depict it. She was at least true to nature in being true to her own genius. Nothing in her work was forced—she did everything *con amore*; she had a sure eye for the most characteristic charm of children, and she was able to transfuse her pictures with it, and pass it round for the delight of all civilised people.

We are not astonished to find that Kate Greenaway was something of a Freethinker. Her biographers wind up the story of her last days with some rather cheap talk about "the pilgrim spirit of Hope and Faith at the very threshold of the Valley of Death"—which is a fine confusion of metaphor; but they are obliged to admit, in the body of the book, that she "held no very definite or orthodox religious opinions." True, they seek to minimise this by declaring that "she had a strong religious instinct," but this only makes her scepticism all the more striking.

It was to her dear young friend, Miss Violet Dickinson, and to her great and revered friend, Mr. John Ruskin, that Kate Greenaway unbosomed herself in regard to her religious opinions; and we make the following extracts from her letters to these friends, without specifying which of them she was writing to on each occasion.

Naturally it was first of all on the side of the heart that Kate Greenaway revolted against the orthodox conceptions.

"It's such a beautiful world, especially in the spring.

It's a pity it's so sad also. I often reproach the plan of

it. It seems as if some less painful and repulsive end could have been found for its poor helpless inhabitants—considering the wonderfulness of it all. Well, it isn't the least use troubling."

She almost appears to have shared Omar Khayyam's wish to shatter the universe to bits and remould it nearer to the heart's desire. The idea of the indignity which men and women so often suffer at the hands of nature in sweeping them off the stage of this world seems to have haunted her.

"I think death is the one thing I can't reconcile with a God. After such a wonderful life, it seems such a miserable ending—to go out of life with pain. Why need it be?"

What she really thought about God would be well worth knowing. She expresses herself suggestively, but far from clearly, in the following passage:—

"I can't tell why it is people are always trying to convert me. They seem to look upon me as always such a ready subject, and really there is not a more fixed belief than I possess—I have thought the same way ever since I have had the power to think at all. How is it possible that I should change? I know I shall not. If there is a God who made all the wonderful things in this world, surely He would require some worship of those also, but I can't help thinking of a power so much greater than all that altogether—a power that the best in us reaches to only."

Ruskin himself grew less and less assured of a future life as he approached what has been called "the leap in the dark." He could see no evidence of it in the natural course of things, and as he did not accept the inspiration of the Bible in the common meaning of the word, he could only look upon the Hereafter as the "Great Perhaps." Much the same might be said of Kate Greenaway. Look at this:—

"You think, I know, that people are well off when they leave this world, but then there's the uncertain other—or nothing—it is a mystery I wish we had known more about."

Here is another passage on similar lines:—

"It is a strange world this. How queer it all is, isn't it? living at all—and our motives and things matter, and liking beautiful things, and all the while really not knowing anything about the Vital Part of it—the Before and After."

The tender little lady could even quiz the folk who expect a place for themselves in heaven, and on such very slender grounds:—

"It feels to me so strange beyond anything I can think, to be able to believe in *any* of the known religions. Yet how beautiful if you but could. Fancy feeling yourself saved—as they say, set apart to have a great reward. For what? Those poor little bits of sacrifice—while many and many an unregenerate one is making such big ones—but isn't to go to heaven."

Writing to her young friend she is quizzical in a still more drastic fashion:—

"Don't you wish you knew if you had got an eternal soul or not? People believe half things in such a funny way."

Yes, people *do* believe half things in such a funny way. They drop hell, for instance, and cling to heaven; not perceiving that these are two halves of one and the same conception, and perfectly meaningless out of relation to each other.

The popular faith, derived from the Bible, Kate Greenaway must have abandoned at a very early age.

"Did you ever believe at all in religion, I mean did you ever believe it as the Bible gives it? I never did—it's so queer."

Really this is the whole criticism of Bible religion in a nutshell—"It's so queer." Queer from a scientific point of view, queer from a common sense point of view, queer from a moral point of view. And the dear little lady who dropped that delicious "queer" over the composite mess would not waste her time in the company of its hiring advocates:—

"I never can, never shall see it is more religious to sit in a hot church trying to listen to a commonplace sermon than looking at a beautiful sky, or the waves coming in, and feeling that longing to be good and exultation in the beauty of things."

Probably the scepticism of Kate Greenaway will be forgotten. The public has such a convenient memory for such things. People will go on talking of her as a sweet Christian soul who loved to draw charming children for the illustrated literature of Christmas-time. Christianity and Christ will get the credit of her—as usual. Nevertheless we shall receive the thanks of Freethinkers for drawing attention to the sceptical side of her character. They will be glad to know that such a delightful artist was not one of the branded sheep in the penfolds of faith. They will be pleased to learn that she thought for herself, that she was free from the fetters of superstition, that her head and heart alike rejected the base puerilities of the Creed of Christendom.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Unemployed.

ACCORDING to the Bishop of Barking a large number of the people who are out of work, are not only unemployed, but unemployable. It is only fair to the Bishop to say that others have expressed the same opinion, and it may well be that there is some truth in the statement. But this, if true does not lessen the evil; on the contrary it aggravates it, or rather it presents us with another evil of a much more serious character. It would be serious enough if all the people parading the streets were genuine cases of men willing and eager to work but unable to find employment. But the evil becomes much more serious if we have not only to deal with this class, but also with others who have no desire to be employed, who will not work, except in the most casual manner, and who prefer tramping the streets under the most unpleasant conditions, to perform comparatively comfortable labor.

Personally I see no valid reason for questioning the substantial accuracy of the bishop's statement. Whether he exaggerates the percentage of unemployable or not is another matter, and one that is not, I think very material. But it would indeed be strange if the social conditions that produced loafers at one end of the social scale did not also produce them at the other, and were it not as easy to find in the crowded tenements of the East-End people as ready to live upon the charity of others, as are their fellow loafers in the more roomy residences of the West-End. The curious thing is that this statement should be made as though its acceptance ought to bring a certain ease of mind; whereas to those who adequately realise all that is involved in the evil of trade depression is a mere nothing in comparison therewith.

For, see what the problem really is. On the one side there is the army of genuine unemployed, a fluid and yet constant number, and on the other a fairly large, and it is to be feared a growing class to whom poverty is a normal state, charity a quite

pleasant thing, and who lack a proper sense of personal independence, duty, and dignity. We are developing, or we have developed, an unemployable class—unemployable either because they will not work, or because with the will to work they are displaced by others of a more desirable type. And this, I repeat, is the more serious aspect of the problem. Depression in trade may disappear; lack of employment within certain areas due to a transference of capital from one part to another may adjust itself in time; but how are we to deal with the existence of a class that *ought not to exist* in a properly organised society?

On the face of it such a class points to long persistence in wrong methods, long worshiping of false ideals, and a want of effective social organisation. A full discussion of all the causes of want of employment, or of the gradual weakening of character, or of all the possible remedies for both these evils does not come within the scope of the specific policy of the *Freethinker*. And although it would be folly to charge the Christian religion with all the responsibility for these evils, common sense and common justice cannot but count it as a powerful factor in their production and perpetuation. For it may be noted that every one of the remedies put forward in the name of Christianity tend to perpetuate the evil rather than to remove it. There is first of all the stock appeal to charity—one of the laziest and the most ineffective of nostrums for social ill. It is the laziest because it is the easiest of all things to give. Sympathetic people give readily, and even unsympathetic persons may be forced to see that it is *safest* to give at times and betimes. And it is ineffective because religious charities are themselves powerful factors in the deterioration of character. Dissenters have long pointed out that in certain areas the charities associated with the established church operate in the direction of forcing people to be hypocritical by professing attachment to the church, and to be generally subservient to those who have the administration of the funds. But what is true of the charities connected with the established church must be equally true of the charities connected with the chapel. In each case there is the inducement to play the hypocrite, to sell oneself for the sake of the doles. Nor does it need much discernment to see that one of the fundamental motives for religious charities is proselytism. They are the inducements held out to the poorer classes to swallow religion. Church and Chapel compete with their charities as with their teachings; and poverty of purse, as well as paucity of intellect, is a fruitful condition of religious membership. Church and Chapel thus become powerful factors in the development of a class pauperised both in mind and body.

The religious schemes of emigration operate in the same manner. Under proper conditions emigration is one of the normal outlets for the wilder and more adventurous spirits. But under present conditions emigration acts by selecting and exporting the people who could do most real good at home. Men with a strong sense of duty to their families, men who chafe at and resent accepting charity, men who are rightfully discontented with existing conditions, are packed abroad. But these are the very people whom we need most at home, the people who would count for most in any effort to improve things. The country is drained of its better types, and we are left with the lazy, the dependent, the pauperised, whom we would gladly part with if only some other country would be foolish enough to take them. For years this steady draining has been at work, and if to-day we are face to face with a class of unemployables we have not far to look for one of the causes. Of course, certain people contribute largely to schemes which remove from the country people who might co-operate in attempting to bring about something like a fundamental alteration in the social conditions. And of course such a man as "General" Booth is hailed as a savior by these people. But after all, the Russian Government has spent far more in deporting its troublesome subjects to Siberia

than ever we are likely to spend on schemes of emigration. Only the Russian Government did it openly in the name of the Czar. We do it under a cloak, in the name of charity and religion.

Charity, emigration, religious labor sheds, and religious labor colonies, where men are put to work for wages such as they would not dream of working for elsewhere, these are the remedies advocated by religious leaders for an evil that is always with us and is steadily growing more acute. From hardly one of them do we ever hear a hint of some of the real causes of distress, or some sensible remedy. How many of our religious leaders ever hint at the divorce of the people from the land as being one powerful cause of distress? or of the evil of overcrowding caused by the ground landlords of London—who are thus one of the direct causes of deterioration of physique and character? Or of the evil of the steady accumulation of capital in comparatively fewer hands? To agitate on these lines would offend their best patrons; and so they prefer the old lines, which pleases the powerful, humbugs the weak, and retains the clergy in their historic function of safeguarding all the sinister vested interests of national life.

There are many other aspects of the matter that might be touched on; I will only deal with one. At present "General" Booth is high in public favor. Ever since the King shook hands with him our independent public functionaries—religious and otherwise—have been busy saluting him as a great social regenerator. At any rate the Salvation Army is a large, and to that extent, powerful organisation. And it must number among so many a proportion of sincere, earnest men and women who have every desire to do good. But of what value is this huge organisation so far as bringing about any drastic scheme of reform is concerned? Has it ever agitated for any single social or political reform of a lasting beneficial character? It picks up a drunkard here and there, and there are a score to fill up the place vacated. It saves a "fallen" woman, but their number is as great as ever. And meanwhile all the earnest and honest and independent characters enlisted by the Army are really diverted from doing lasting useful work in other directions.

And this gives the keynote of the whole religious position. It diverts attention from real issues by raising false ones. It perpetuates the evils that exist by turning the eyes of the people in other directions. It guards vested interests by deporting the class of people who would assist in their destruction. It pauperises the people by their charities, and demoralises them by their teaching. Without any conception of social organisation its leaders exert a powerful influence in social and political affairs. It is with good reason that the people are taught religion, and with good reason that our great capitalists and landowners pay the churches for that purpose. That many of the clergy are unconscious of their true function in the social organism may be true enough, but this does not alter their character nor destroy their responsibility. Social evils do not come to a head in a day or generation. And it would be indeed strange if a religion such as Christianity and a priesthood such as the Christian priesthood were quite free from blame for the social evils we now have to face.

C. COHEN.

Original Sin.

A FEW weeks ago I criticised one of the *Essays for the Times*, entitled "The Fall Story," by the Rev. F. R. Tennant, B.D., B.Sc. That essay was No. 5 in the series, and now No. 12 is before me, which is by the same author and entitled "Original Sin." Of course, the two subjects are closely related, and one's attitude to the former will determine one's conception of the latter. It will be remembered that Mr. Tennant regards the Fall-Story as a legend;

but, in that case, what becomes of Original Sin? Mr. Tennant says truly:—

"The main basis, in Christian theology, for the doctrine of Original Sin has been the Fall-Story of Genesis. It has been usual to regard the doctrine as contained in the Fall-Story and as having been derived from it, St. Paul marking the intermediate position between the narrative of Genesis on the one hand and the ecclesiastical dogma of Original Sin on the other."

Mr. Tennant's object, in the present essay, is to criticise that "view of the doctrine of Original Sin, and also the contents of the doctrine itself." Let us see how a minister of the Gospel accomplishes so difficult a task. He begins by calling attention to the fact that "the Fall-Story itself contains no doctrine of Original Sin." Then he observes that "the doctrine of Original Sin is not an Old Testament doctrine." Its germ, according to him, is to be found in the Apocrypha. In Ecclesiasticus xxv. 24 we read: "From a woman was the beginning of sin; and because of her we all die." According to the Talmud Eve was polluted by the serpent, and her pollution was transmitted to all her descendants. The Jews, however, were delivered from this pollution at the giving of the Law on Sinai. The consequences of the Fall may have been of the physical kind, but they fell on mankind collectively. In 2 Esdras considerable progress in the development of the doctrine is noticed. The writer of that interesting book teaches "the universality and inherency of sinfulness, the permanent infirmity of the race." Adam's sin is ours. In another book we are all represented as being the victims of "inherited infirmity originally produced by the Fall."

Coming to St. Paul's teaching, contained in Romans v. 12-21, everybody can see that it connects Adam's sin and the sinfulness of the race. Now, Mr. Tennant very rightly maintains that Paul derived his doctrines from the Jewish schools in which he had been brought up; but it is equally true that in Romans v. 12-21 the apostle looks upon Adam as the Head of a fallen and sinful humanity. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned"—*sinned in Adam their Head*. The apostle's object is to elaborate a parallel between Adam and Christ. As through Adam's sin death entered into the world, so through Christ's atoning death and glorious resurrection the gift of life was made to a dead world. Paul employs the term *death* in a twofold sense, the death of the body and the death of the spirit. Had Adam not sinned there would have been no death in the world, and there would have been no need of Christ: the latter came to repair the damage, to remove the curse, caused by the former. Mr. Tennant is at great pains to prove that none of the theories of Original Sin subsequently formulated by the Church is to be found in Romans v. 12-21; but I venture to assert that the germ of every one of them is here. Paul believed in the solidarity of the race in Adam, and that it was a solidarity of sinfulness and lostness. Whatever Adam may have been before he fell, Paul teaches us that after the fall he was a natural man, of the earth, earthy. It is very significant, in this connection, that Adam became a parent after he had sinned, a fact which accounts for the universal sinfulness of his descendants. Now, as Adam was a natural man, of the earth, earthy, and the parent of such men, so is Christ a spiritual man, or the man from heaven, and the maker of such men. Christ is the Head of a new, restored, and redeemed humanity. It is true that the apostle does not inform us *how* we became sinful through Adam, as the later theories of the Church undertake to do; but it is undeniable that he holds the view that the universal sinfulness of humanity is due to Adam's fall. And, necessarily, the doctrine of Original Sin, as thus taught, involves the other doctrine of Original Perfection and Righteousness.

With fully two-thirds of Mr. Tennant's essay I find myself in complete agreement. The objections to the doctrine of Original Sin are forcibly and con-

clusively stated. The theories of Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine are clearly shown to be false. Mr. Tennant is an earnest student of Science and a thorough-going evolutionist. He does not believe in an inherited moral sense. Each man begins his life as a non-moral agent. Here is an utterance worthy of the genuine evolutionist:—

"We are natural before we are moral beings; our impulses are in full sway before our conscience begins to dawn. The child's impatience, temper, cruelty, greed, and wilfulness are not proofs of 'Original Sin.' They are essential to its human nature. Our moral sense, moreover, is made, and not born. It is the child's environment alone which lifts it from little above the level of the brute to the dignity of manhood. Social inheritance, not physical heredity, ministers to each human individual the higher characteristics of the human species. At first the young child is the creature of inborn tendencies; then it forms habits under the stimulus of feelings of pleasure and pain and the direction of its growing will. The only sanction it knows is that of success. What are often called the 'faults' of early childhood are organic necessities. These are not in any sense sinful; we cannot say of them that they 'ought not to be.' They are non-moral, things to which the terms good and bad are not applicable."

All this is excellent, and might have been written by a Freethinker. Equally fine is the following:—

"That in which we all have physical solidarity is not ready-made sin, or a sinful condition, but simply the natural propensities necessary to us in virtue of our animal descent; and these are non-moral or neutral. This is the first great error of the doctrine of Original Sin. The nature which we inherit is not corrupted, it is simply unmoralised. Again, man never possessed the original harmony of his whole being such as the doctrine of an unfallen state requires; this is the second great error of the doctrine of Original Sin."

This wholesale rejection of the orthodox doctrine of Original Sin is highly significant. The diffusion of scientific knowledge respecting the origin and nature of man has compelled liberal theologians to renounce several doctrines which the Church has always cherished as fundamental and indispensable. But to disown dogmas founded on the Bible is equivalent to giving up the doctrines of Revelation and Inspiration. If the parallel between Adam and Christ developed by Paul is not based upon facts, it follows that the apostle was the victim of a complete delusion when he asserted that he had received his conception of Christ and his work by a revelation from heaven. If Science is right Paul was wrong; and if Paul was mistaken, he was either self-deceived or the conscious deceiver of others. He wrote and spoke, with a few specified exceptions, in the name of the Lord, whom he regarded as all-wise and all-knowing; but if his views about Adam are false, who can tell that his estimate of Christ is correct?

Mr. Tennant characterises the supposition that the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin are essential to the Christian Faith as "quite erroneous and gratuitous." But, in that case, the Christian Faith is not what the Church in all ages has understood it to be. It must have been constructed by fallible men, in times of scientific ignorance, and, of necessity, it requires to be restated and reconstructed periodically, in proportion to the light which Science throws on any of the subjects embraced by it. To say that "in such criticism and reconstruction the essential contents of the Christian Faith have in no wise been involved" is to suggest that "the essential contents of the Christian Faith" are marvellously accommodating objects, in that they invariably are whatever any theologian may wish them to be. To Professor Orr the Fall and Original Sin are among them, and surely Professor Orr is as competent to judge as Mr. Tennant and has the theological advantage of being perfectly loyal to the Bible. Dr. Edersheim was a theologian of standing, and yet Mr. Tennant himself quotes from his great work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, in which he speaks of "the doctrine of hereditary guilt and sin, through the fall of Adam, and of the consequent entire and helpless corruption of our nature," as

"the starting-point of Christian theology" and as "the basis of the need of a Redeemer." It is only by throwing the Bible and the Church overboard that anyone can regard the doctrine of Original Sin as non-essential to the Christian system. Mr. Tennant tells us that St. Paul states it only twice and then "quite incidentally." Surely Romans v. 12-21 and 1 Cor. xv. 22 are the very opposite of incidental passages, each being the link in a long chain of reasoning. The falsity of the doctrine does not affect its place in the Christian Faith; but to remove it as false is to imperil the whole fabric. It is true that the apostle Paul mentions it only twice, but it is also true that all his Epistles are steeped in it. Apart from Christ all mankind are hopelessly lost, being mortally gripped by sin. In Paul's system, man "is indwelt by a Sin-power," and is at the mercy of the "flesh of sin" and "passions of sins," and can be saved only through the intervention of the risen and ascended Lord.

Mr. Tennant acts wisely, as a scientist, in rejecting the dogma of Original Sin, but as a theologian, he has committed a fatal mistake. He has weakened the whole case for Christianity as a revealed religion. He has destroyed the very element that gave it logical consistency. Stripped of the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin the Bible would be the most ridiculous book ever written, while on the supposition that these doctrines are true it is clothed with transcendent splendor and glory. To do away with Adam is to rob Christ of his crown. If man is by nature a gradually rising being he does not need to be restored, reinstated, redeemed. If evil is only good in the making, to be delivered from it would be a calamity. To be consistent, therefore, Mr. Tennant must relinquish all the other Christian doctrines. What is the value of a house once its foundation is undermined? A theological system has precisely the same value when its basis has been dug out.

Christianity is being abolished, bit by bit. There is less of it to-day than there ever was before. It is being gradually set aside by its own friends and champions. Several great doctrines have been completely discredited and abandoned through the instrumentality of what is termed Progressive Orthodoxy, and all the other doctrines are being restated and reconstructed. The miraculous has already departed, the supernatural is going, and the Pulpit is being transformed into an Ethical Platform. Of course, there are many orthodox teachers still in the field, but even they are being unconsciously leavened with the progressive spirit. In other words, the House of Faith is being pulled down by the very people who dwell in it.

J. T. LLOYD.

A World Sunday.

THE Jewish and Christian Sabbaths will never do for a World Sunday. It would be a misfortune to establish either where there are no regular Sundays, or where it is kept as a holiday and a day of rest much in the old Pagan way. That it would be well to have one day out of seven as a universal Sunday I think is beyond dispute. It would matter nothing which of the days should be observed, for they are all the same, and all equal in sanctity.

That the Jewish Sabbath, kept as commanded in the Bible, is not suitable for all the world must be apparent to all who are able to think. On the Sabbath no work whatever was to be done. No fire was to be kindled; no burden was to be carried; no journey longer than about a mile could be taken. The penalty for disobedience was death. A man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day was ordered by the Lord to be stoned to death without the camp. A Sabbath like that would be an unbearable burden anywhere. Even the Jews did not adhere strictly to the command in the Bible. And Christians, with all their sanctimonious fastidiousness, whilst paying attention to priestly observances, disregard the Biblical instruction as to the day and how to keep it.

I think it may be safely said that, of all Sabbaths known, the Jewish, as taught in the Bible, is by far the worst. To make such a Sabbath universal would be an universal curse. It is founded on a delusion, and all its claims are myths. It claims that the seventh day is more sacred than the other six, which is an absurdity. All days, weeks, months, and years are equally sacred. It is claimed that the Jewish God first instituted the Sabbath among the Jews, which is not true. The account given of the origin of the Sabbath will not bear the slightest investigation. There are in the Bible three different accounts of the beginning of the Sabbath. According to one it was made because the Lord rested on the seventh day after his six days' creation work. In the second it was made because the Lord by a mighty hand saved the Jews from the bondage of Egypt. In the third it was made to be a sign to distinguish the Jews from other nations. The last implies that other nations had no Sabbaths, otherwise the Sabbath could not distinguish the Jews from them. All the three are false. There never was a creation in the Biblical sense. It is doubtful if the Jews, as a nation, were ever in Egypt. If they were never there, they could not be delivered from there. The God of the Jews did not institute the Sabbath. It was not originated among the Jews, and it was not peculiar to them. All these assertions are capable of absolute proof.

The very names of all the days of the week prove their Pagan and astronomical origin. Sunday was dedicated to the Sun and Monday to the Moon, and both retain their name. The other days were sacred to the five planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Saturn, which were for thousands of years worshiped as gods. It is almost certain that Sunday originated among some pastoral people—probably the Akkadians. Hence the division of the month into four weeks of seven days each, corresponding to the phases of the moon. The moon was more important to a pastoral people than the sun, as its light enabled them to watch their flocks during the night. For that reason the moon was the chief god of pastoral people, and the sun was the second. As the people became more civilised, and began to till the ground and build towns, the sun became the chief god and the moon the second.

The Akkadians built a tower seven stories high, each being a separate temple to a god. The top was the temple of the moon, the sixth that of the sun; the others were for the five planets already named. It was near this that Babylon was built afterwards; and the Babylonians, it is almost certain, borrowed their religion and science from the Akkadians. And the Jews borrowed the Creation story, the Deluge, the Sabbath, the tower of Babel, their priestly religion, and other things from the Babylonians during their seventy years of captivity. Thus it is quite evident that the Jewish Sabbath is a Pagan institution, and not a divine one.

The Christian Sabbath is but a little, if any, better than the Jewish one. Some say it is worse. Whether that be true or not, it may be asserted that there cannot be a worse Sabbath than the Jewish and Christian. The Christian has less evidence for itself than the Jewish. The Jew has the Bible at his back, but the Christian has neither Bible or anything else to buttress his Sunday. There is not a particle of authority in the Bible for keeping the first day as a Sabbath. Jesus and his apostles did not keep either the seventh or the first day as a Sabbath. Early Christians kept no particular day as a Sabbath. It is nothing but a priestly institution, and it is priestcraft that keeps it going. The observance of Sunday differs among different Christians. The puritanical, observed by Presbyterians and certain sects of Nonconformists. In many churches Sunday is nothing less than a sentence of hard labor on the members: prayer-meeting at seven, school nine to ten, sermon and service ten to twelve, and often a meeting after; school and meetings in the afternoon; prayer-meeting before service and sermon in the evening, and often meetings after. You must not

laugh and be merry; you must not travel to get fresh air and see the country; you must not sing anything but sacred music; you must not read anything but sacred books and the Bible, and you must not talk about anything but religion. And this sort of thing is called keeping the Sabbath day holy. I would call it by some other name; but I refrain.

A Sunday of that sort can never win the world; it would be a world of misfortune if it could. Sabbatarianism is irrational and hurtful. It is nothing less than a sentence of social gloom wherever it prevails. It makes an artificial distinction between days where there is none. Its spirit creates divisions and quarrels between the citizens. It turns innocence into sin, and makes real sins into sham virtues. Under the sway of Sabbatarianism real cheerful happiness is impossible.

Pagan Sunday was a holiday for rest and recreation. After attending at the temples, the people enjoyed themselves in their own way, as they do now in Catholic countries. Sunday should be a day of liberty for people to spend as they like. If some choose to be gloomy and miserable in their chapels and churches, let them be so. But when they try to force others to be like themselves, they should be told sternly to mind their own business. All Sunday laws should be abolished, and the day made as free as any other. Let all do as they like, so long as they do nothing to hurt others. Open the museums, art galleries, libraries, parks, theatres, and so on, and let the people patronise them as they like. If that were done, I venture to assert that the charging theatres would beat the free churches and chapels; and the priests know it, and oppose their opening.

Secular, free, holiday Sunday—free from the damning thralldom of priests and monks—is what the world wants. The teacher, surely, will do away with the priest in the near future. When education is given to the young till they are eighteen or twenty years old, in the better social times coming, there will be no need for priestly Sunday-schools and nonsensical sermons. In the interest of truth and progress, society will be compelled to disestablish and disendow priests and monks, and make the temples, cathedrals, churches, and chapels places of recreation and enjoyment for the people.

When the world shall be governed for the people by the people, and all the wealth under their control, free entertainments and amusements of all kinds will be provided. All Sunday laws and restrictions will be abolished. The people being intelligent and well-educated in secular and moral matters, they will spend the day rationally and decently in their own way.

R. J. DERFEL.

"Psychical Research" in Newcastle.

"With my phenomena
I laid the Atheist sprawling on his back."

—R. BROWNING, *Sludge the Medium*.

SOME weeks ago, in Newcastle, whilst a Spiritualistic medium was engaged in raising spirits from the vasty deep for the usual monetary consideration, the "spirit form" was seized by one of the sitters, the result being, as was anticipated, that the medium himself was discovered in masquerade. The local papers fully reported this exposure, and it would no doubt be assumed in most quarters that the professional career of this medium had been abruptly terminated. The incident, however, proved to be but the first scene of a somewhat protracted performance—a performance not without one or two dramatic touches, but on the whole bearing the unmistakable characteristics of farce.

A superficial reading of Spiritualistic history is enough to convince any ordinary person of the impossibility of demonstrating fraudulent practices on the part of "mediums" to the faithful. This fact can perhaps be fully accounted for by two very obvious factors—one, the wish to believe; and the other, the strong disinclination on the part of the ordinary man to confess that he has been imposed upon. If one recognises the play of these motives it becomes easier to understand why this exposure, instead of rousing the

indignation of the local Spiritualists, appeared to them to be only a fitting case for "investigation."

The medium's explanation, which they seem to have accepted, was that when the "spirit form" was seized, the spirit being unable to return to the medium, the medium had perforce to rejoin the spirit, and so was bundled neck and crop out of the cabinet, by delicate spiritual laws, for that purpose. This was not, of course, observed by the sitters, for by another spiritual law "the transit of the medium would not be visible." This defence hardly seems to have a convincing ring about it, but it is the time-honored defence, and has been used by every "materialising" medium when the occasion arose—and the occasion always did arise. This ingenious explanation, we are told, was revealed many years ago by the spirits themselves. One can grant that mortals are rare who would have the audacity to put forward such a piece of fatuity.

However, at the point where, to most folks, investigation should have ended, investigation, for the Spiritualists, commenced. Press paragraphs intimated that a Committee of influential and representative gentlemen had been appointed to apply to this medium divers and sundry tests. In the public interest I made an effort to get on this Committee—an effort which was successful; but I was soon made aware of certain facts which were, to put it mildly, objectionable. I will enumerate them:—

1. With one or two exceptions, the "Committee" wished to remain anonymous.
2. How this Committee had been appointed was a matter on which no information could be obtained.
3. All vital details as to tests and their application had been already arranged by a sub-committee.
4. This sub-committee was practically self-appointed.
5. That the "large and representative Committee" had attended no business meetings, and that each member's share in the investigation was simply to attend two out of the six sésances, for which privilege they had to pay in order to help to raise the medium's fees.

Investigators working on such dubious lines as these might testify to extraordinary marvels without in the slightest way affecting public opinion—unless, indeed, it were to excite derision. But a further step was taken by the prime movers in this affair which more than ever placed the proceedings under suspicion. The gentleman who seized the medium was expelled from the Committee at the request of the medium.

Ostensibly for the latter reason, I withdrew from this Committee; but, apart from that, the extreme danger of allying oneself with arrangements so utterly irregular had already been forced home to me. As a notice had appeared in the press stating that I, Secretary of the local "Rationalist" Society, was one of the Committee, I took the opportunity of publicly explaining my reasons for withdrawing, and at the same time made a definite offer to the Spiritualist bodies. This was to the effect that I was willing at any time to appoint twelve persons to work with twelve persons appointed by them as a Joint Committee for the investigation of anyone they cared to put forward professing to produce "spirit forms."

The public criticism that the so-called Committee had been subjected to was not without its effect, for in one of the notices that appeared of the first sésance, the pressman stated that he was there to see that the tests were properly administered, a remark which evidenced an *a priori* scepticism. For all that, the test conditions, as printed, were *not* complied with. "A good light" appears to have been interpreted on one occasion as meaning no light at all, and both the searching and tying operations seem to have been very incompletely attended to. In fact, it is quite clear that this medium was a very inexperienced one, as conditions similar to those actually applied have been insufficient on previous occasions to prevent proved impostors from demonstrating successfully.

No spirit-forms, however, appeared outside the cabinet, although the persons present were asked to believe that spirits were *inside* the same. The phenomena during the first four sittings, in the language of the *North Mail*, would not have convinced a child. A hand appeared through the aperture of the curtains and at other times a head. The head, in the opinion of the press, was the head of the medium, but it was under the distinct impression that it belonged to Wilson Barrett. Press comments which at first were gentle, became mercilessly severe and it was not surprising to find that at the end of the fourth evening the sittings were summarily concluded. This step appears to have been taken on the sole responsibility of one man, Mr. W. H. Robinson, a well-known local Spiritualist. "The large and influential Committee" at this time appears to have been non-existent.

It is instructive to note that although the sésances were received with wide-spread derision, the letter which appeared in the *Evening Chronicle* cancelling the remaining sittings never even hinted at the medium being an impostor. In fact the impression given to readers was just the reverse. The

manifestations were far from "perfect," it was said, a remark which implies that at least something was seen of an unexplainable nature; the sésances had taken a good deal out of the medium, forsooth; and the letter ended with the remark that the medium was not debarred from conducting private sittings in the locality. A final report, another "one hoss" production, bore the same characteristics. Witnesses of these sésances, who were willing to allow themselves to be called "Investigators" began now to see how much power they really had. In the minds of some of them a man who was a deliberate impostor had been to all intents and purposes exonerated; he was quite free to perform elsewhere; and what was really the cream of the joke, each of them had contributed to pay the medium a fee of over Five Pounds as a reward for his ineffectiveness.

In this unsatisfactory manner the affair would have ended had it not been for an altogether unexpected incident. After the third sitting, and the damaging press comments, the medium, probably impressed with the necessity of having some credit items, entered in the ledgers of public opinion, got published in the *Evening Chronicle* a "spirit-photograph" which showed the medium seated with a feminine "spirit" in the background. The photograph was accompanied by the declaration of a local photographer that the same was taken in the ordinary way of business; the sitter was a perfect stranger to him, and his own surprise on developing the plate was unbounded. "Spirit-photographs" are, of course, old dodges, but this one appeared well attested. Some energetic person even got it better attested by making the photographer swear an affidavit to the above effect before a Commissioner for Oaths. But awkward details began to be noticed. Observers saw that the photo was obviously grouped for *two* figures, and it transpired that so far from the medium being a perfect stranger to the photographer, he had lodged at the photographer's house during his Newcastle performances. The accounts of the medium and the photographer as to the circumstances under which the same was taken were also totally conflicting. Eventually, the whole miserable business came to light. The photographer instructed his Solicitors to write to the press expressing his regret at having sworn a false affidavit and explaining firstly, that he had faked the photograph, and secondly, that a desire to have such a photograph had been expressed by the medium. No more damning evidence could have been obtained, and by this single *faux pas* the medium was exposed as widely and as clearly as his worst enemy could have desired. Not that the exposure is demonstrated to the elect. That is an unreachable consummation. Threedays after, Mr. G. C. Chambers of Middlesboro', (I nearly omitted the gentleman's name) was bringing forth a bevy of spirit forms to convince the most captious at a private sésance at Gosforth. The *Evening Chronicle* also, obligingly inserted a letter from Mr. Chambers to the effect that he is done with public sittings, but will be glad to give demonstrations before "spirit-minded" people. Exposures are just incidents in a medium's life and one does not find it difficult to imagine that each exposure, by reason of the advertisement it gives, actually increases his professional takings.

T. H. ELSTOB.

Acid Drops.

It is astonishing how some people hate Charles Bradlaugh. He has been in his grave nearly fifteen years, but their ill-feeling is as lively as ever. Mr. A. E. Fletcher, for instance, in last week's *Clarion*, couldn't write a brief notice of a new book without devoting nearly a half of it to a nonsensical statement about the author's having torn Bradlaugh to pieces. Nobody ever tore Bradlaugh to pieces. Certainly the author in question did not. The facts are in print and can be referred to if necessary. More than this we do not wish to say. We much prefer to let that old matter lie buried in oblivion. To do the author in question justice, it is not his fault that the subject is revived. The blame rests entirely on Mr. Fletcher, who appears to hate Atheists with a mortal hatred, and is even ready to do a literary clog-dance over their graves.

What is the reason of Mr. Fletcher's hatred of Atheists like Bradlaugh? It is very simple. He is himself not orthodox, but he cherishes a sentimental sort of Christianity in his heart. He knows it is only a sentimentality, and therefore a weakness; and he detests men like Bradlaugh simply because they are strong.

In the "Churches" column of the *Daily News* recently there were some paragraphs headed "From Park to Pulpit." The subject of these was the Rev. A. J. Waldron, who has done a lot of outdoor work for the Christian Evidence

Society and other orthodox bodies, and has now obtained his reward by being made the Vicar of Brixton. Mr. Waldron is described as "an ideal controversialist." Perhaps he is—from the Christian point of view. Freethinkers are pretty well agreed that he is a master of vulgar personalities. Amongst the Christian Evidence speakers with any pretence to education this reverend gentleman easily bore the bell as a controversial hooligan. His "infallible good temper," which the *Daily News* refers to, is purely imaginary. We are half tempted to think that Mr. Waldron supplied our contemporary with his own description.

The following statement respecting Mr. Waldron is, to say the least of it, curious:—"In early life he met with an undaunted face Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, Chas. Watts, Mr. Cohen, G. W. Foote, and others." We do not deny Mr. Waldron's "face," but when and where did he meet Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant? Of course our memory may be at fault, but we do not recollect these encounters, and we should like a little more precise information.

One observation in our contemporary's eulogy of Mr. Waldron is positively rich. "He proves," it is said, "by sheer force of reason that men who think the matter out by common sense methods are induced to become Christians." How many persons has Mr. Waldron ever induced to become Christians who were not Christians already, at least by training and profession? How many unbelievers has he brought into the Christian fold? Can he produce one who will bear the light of investigation? If this can be done, well and good; if not, our contemporary's observation is merely the *blague* of religious journalism.

At the recent Belfast assizes a little girl witness was questioned by Mr. Justice Johnson as to her competency to realise the nature of an oath. Being asked where naughty children went she pointed downward. That was enough. She believed in hell, anyway; and people who believe in hell always tell the truth. Look at Dr. Torrey.

A learned counsel once objected to the evidence of a little girl. He asked her if she knew what became of people who told lies. She replied that she didn't. On that ground he contended that she ought not to be accepted as a witness. The old judge on the bench, who was wiser than some who sit there, said: "Well, the child doesn't know where people who tell lies go to when they die. Do you?" The learned counsel could only parry that thrust by replying that he was not in the witness-box.

The Pope bewails the "suffering and persecution imposed upon the Church." This is how the poor man regards the determination of the French people to let the Church support itself. The indignation is that of a well-fed pauper told to earn his own living.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued a special prayer for the general elections. This reminds us of a certain remark of Ingersoll's. "People," he said, "ask God to do impossibilities. The other day I heard the chaplain asking God to give Congress wisdom."

The *Daily News*, and some of its correspondents, praised the "fine phrasing" of the Archbishops' prayer. This shows their ignorance. Nearly all of it is borrowed from the Prayer Book.

Our crusade against the libellous liar, the Rev. Dr. Torrey, is producing its effect. We see by the newspapers that four leading clergymen of the American Congregational Church have issued a formal warning to their brother clergymen against Messrs. Torrey and Alexander. They say that their observation of the spirit, method, and result of the evangelists' work in England leads them to recommend churches to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of the mission before giving it a place in the evangelistic effort.

John Patrick Murphy, arrested on the verdict of a coroner's jury finding him guilty of the wilful murder of his sister, Mrs. Annie Sarah Masters, and her baby, is reported to have written a letter to his brother, a bandsman, saying: "Thank God, she has gone to a better land, where there is no trouble. Her last words were 'We shall meet in heaven.'" Evidently not an Atheist, again.

Rev. Thomas Harvey, of Exeter, eighty-five years of age, couldn't wait for the Lord's convenience in regard to his

"latter end." He jumped into the river and anticipated "Providence."

Another rich man gone to Hades. Rev. John Vaughan Payne, of Gloucester, died worth £14,827. He is now a fried soul.

The Sultan is developing into a first-class humorist. After being compelled by the "Christian Powers" to carry out their behests with respect to "good government" in Macedonia, he ventures to draw their attention to the terrible state of things which obtains in Russia, where the Mohammedan population, including women and children, are being ruthlessly slaughtered. He knows they won't do anything to remedy *this* wrong, but he feels he is entitled to his little joke.

Here is an illustration of the part played by religious superstition in the consecration of agencies of bloodshed. It is taken from a *Daily News* special correspondent's account of the Czar's review of his troops near the palace where he lives a retired life in fear of his subjects:—

"Between the long line of men and the palace was a brilliant group of ecclesiastics, in robes of blue and orange and cloth of gold, the priests with their high violet head-dress, and the Bishop with a mitre of scintillating gold.

The Czar approached them after he had inspected the troops and stood alone, apart, bare-headed, before the Czar of Czars, as a Russian phrase has it, while a deacon chanted prayers and the choir sang the exquisite music of the Russian Church. He crossed himself from time to time and bowed low; the soldiers followed his example, and their reverence and grave manner was peculiarly striking.

A great golden book was held before the Bishop, who chanted a passage from the Gospels, and turning north, south, east, and west, cut the air with a glittering cross in benediction. Then he passed, the Czar at his side, along the lines, sprinkling officers and men with holy water."

Fancy the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ founding a religion which, after nearly two thousand years, was to lead up to this brutal tomfoolery!

There is an organisation in England for converting the Jews. There is an organisation in Russia for murdering the Jews. We suggest that the first organisation should try to convert the second—and both of them let the Jews alone.

One of the banners of the Poplar unemployed, carried in the procession to the West-end last week, contained the following:—

"Church Army.

Cheap labor exploiters.

Notice.

This show is run for big profits Funds supplied

by the Gold Bugs, Park-lane, W.

Bill Carlile.

Wanted: Willing slaves to work for little wages and love of God.

Salvation Army.

Our motto is Blood and Gold."

Evidently these two precious "Armies" are being found out at last, and the criticism we have passed upon them all along is now being justified.

We are glad to see the editor of the "Life and Labor" column in the *Daily News* returning to this subject. He plainly states again—what we have said from the beginning—that these "benevolent institutions" should stop this particular form of "benevolence." And this is what he thinks should follow:—

"They would circularise their customers, saying that, in view of very proper representations made to them, they had decided not to interfere further in the firewood section of the labor market. Their customers would then send their orders in the ordinary way to private firewood makers, for bundles of wood they must have in any case. Those firewood makers might be sweaters, but at least they could not pay for wood-chopping in 'truck.' At least the men would be paid better than they are now. Therefore, employment would gain and no lose through the cessation of this particular form of benevolence.

If I have not put the case correctly, I invite the Church Army and Salvation Army to state plainly to our readers, through this column, exactly what they pay for firewood making, in doses, meals, and money, and how the total value of such payment compares with the regular wages paid in the trade."

The last point is one that the "Armies" decline to clear up. To state the actual facts would show that they are "sweating." This indeed has been proved in some police-courts. Men have been brought before the magistrate for refusing to work at certain "colonies" and it has transpired in evidence that all the *money* paid over to them was sixpence a week.

The Postal Laws in the United States, against which Colonel Ingersoll and others protested thirty years ago, have been vigorously denounced by Mr. W. T. Stead, in the *Review of Reviews*, as a disgrace to a civilised nation. The countrymen of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln actually let their Post Office officials decide what printed matter shall be carried in the mails, and there is practically no appeal against their decision. And owing to the immense distances in America, and other peculiarities, the bulk of printed matter has to go through the Post Office, instead of through trade distributing agencies as in this country. Could anything be more absurd or more contemptible? Was it worth while fighting for American Independence in order to lead up to a result like this?

Following the same line of policy in another direction, the New York police—the agents of Tammany misrule and plunder—have recently stopped the public performance of one of Mr. Bernard Shaw's plays. Nothing was alleged against the decency of his language. The objection raised was to the effect that he was filling people with false opinions. Fancy! A policeman—and a Tammany policeman, of all policemen—taking the people's opinions in charge! The American press may say what it will in defence of this sort of thing. People at a distance can only laugh, shrug their shoulders, and ask whether the "Bird of Freedom" is too sick and hoarse to scream again.

And now for another illustration. The death of Mr. Edward Atkinson, the American economist and underwriter, recalls the fact that, in the early stages of the Philippine business, he wrote several pamphlets in support of Aguinaldo, and the American Post Office refused to carry his writings. The letter carriers, in short, decided what they would and what they would not deliver. And the majority of Americans think that this is all right. It is only the minority who suffer. But it is only the minority who require freedom. The majority have it whenever they like to use it. And if it is not extended to the minority, it is simply the extension of privilege over a vast multitude, and not the equal liberty of all—which is the only *real* liberty.

A burglar who has just been sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment for breaking into a house and grievously assaulting some of the occupants who objected to the free pursuit of his profession, made a curious observation when he was arrested. "This wouldn't have happened," he said, "if they had been in bed at that time of night as Christians ought to be." Perhaps he was thinking, in a muddled way, of something he had heard at Sunday-school about "resist not evil," and other texts of the same character.

Mr. Lloyd-George may be pious himself. Anyhow he is obliged to humor the piety of his countrymen. A Welsh National Convention was to have been held at Carnarvon on December 28. But it was found that Evan Roberts would be "reviving" there on that date, and it was decided to put the Convention off for a week. "On no account," Mr. Lloyd-George telegraphed, "would I interfere with Evan Roberts' mission, which I consider much more important than any political convention." This must be highly satisfactory to Welshmen. And perhaps we shall see Mr. Lloyd-George doing a pulpit turn during week-ends.

Anglican Bishops in Australia censure the Conservative campaign against Socialism. In its proper sense, they say, it is "not a political program, but a movement representing a particular attitude towards social well-being." "In its proper sense," they add, "we believe it to be in no way hostile to, but consonant with, the altruism which is taught by our Lord as an element of the Christian character." This is stuff and nonsense, of course; for the Socialism of the New Testament is giving to everyone that asketh, and selling all you have and giving the proceeds to the poor. But it shows that the Bishops want to run with the hare and the hounds too.

Rev. W. J. Dawson, late of Highbury, and formerly editor of the *Young Man*, has been doing good business as a sort of revivalist in America. He has been doing so well, in fact, that he has decided to settle down there. He has bought the "Skinner estate" at Taunton, in Massachusetts. According to a pious announcement in a friendly English newspaper, this estate consists of "seven acres, with good buildings and beautiful trees." This is how the reverend gentleman takes up his cross and follows Christ.

Prophet Baxter, who owns and runs the silliest paper in England, the *Christian Herald* (which has—of course—a

large number of readers), is still getting a fine living as a pious tipster. For more than forty years he has been foretelling what is commonly called "the end of the world." But the dates he fixed up were all wrong. When they were reached the world went on just as usual. Nothing happened. Baxter was not even found out. He simply said he had made a mistake in the figures, and his dupes said "That's all right" and paid up as cheerfully as ever. Prophet Baxter, however, is getting "fly" in his old age. Having been proved to be wrong a dozen times, he has made up his mind to run no more risks in that direction. The latest edition of his "Coming Prophetic Events" has put the "great bu'st up" at a date when he will hardly be alive to see people laughing over his chronology again. The date now is "in 1929 or 1931." So the wily old prophet is safe at last. When he shuffles off this mortal coil he ought to be stuffed and exhibited in the British Museum, as a typical product of modern Christianity. And a suitable quotation to go under him would be Carlyle's: "England contains forty millions—mostly fools."

The Hucknall Council has been wasting time in discussing whether betting news should be blacked out of the newspapers in the Free Library. Considering that newspapers can now be bought for a halfpenny, it is difficult to see why betting men should take the trouble to go to a public library in order to learn "the odds." The blackers-out carried their motion, however, and their Russian practice is to keep the young men of Hucknall (some of them over sixty) in the ways of religion and morality. What childish things, to be sure, are done in the name of religion and morality—especially religion.

Mr. Henry Labouchere's retirement from political life is not likely to cause a convulsion. In common justice, however, it should be said that he stood loyally by his colleague in the representation of Northampton during the whole of the long "Bradlaugh struggle." For this Freethinkers will always remember him kindly.

Master of My Fate.

OUT of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstances
I have not winced or cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Comes but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

—WM. ERNEST HENLEY.

Fewer sons of ministers follow in their fathers' footsteps than do the sons of other men, according to a quotation that has found wide publicity in the daily papers. It is said that "ninety per cent of our farmers have farmers for fathers; forty-two per cent of the bankers, forty-one per cent of the lawyers, and thirty per cent of the physicians continue the work their fathers began, but only eight per cent of the ministers spring from clerical stock." Mr. Pentecost will note that minister's sons are exceptions to the controlling influences of heredity and environment. Specific examples that might be named are Frederic Nietzsche, Thomas Hobbes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Grant Allen, Herbert Spencer, and Robert G. Ingersoll.—*Truth Seeker* (New York).

A man may say with some color of truth, that there is an Abecedarian ignorance that precedes knowledge, and a Doctoral ignorance that comes after it.—*Montaigne*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

December 31, Leicester.

January 21, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

SOCIALIST AND SPIRITUALIST.—Thanks for your postcard. See "Sugar Plums."

AN OLD READER.—We note your hope that "Abracadabra's" articles on the Gospels and Acts will be reprinted in a permanent form. You say they would sell well. That is the critical point. We have no doubt as to their value. We have not come across the Oxford publication you allude to. What is the exact title?

ROBERT IRVING.—(1) Haeckel did not originate the theory of Jesus's parentage which was referred to in Gerald Grey's "Christmas Carol." Neither did any critic on whom Haeckel depends originate it. It was referred to by Celsus in the second century. See the article on "Origen and Celsus" in Froude's *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, which is a fairly accessible book. Celsus made an orthodox Jew, whom he represented as addressing Jesus, say: "Your mother was a poor woman who earned her bread by spinning. Her husband divorced her for adultery.....It was given out that you were born of a virgin. Your real father was a soldier, named Panther." (2) The question as to what became of the body of Jesus, which your "shrewd" Scotch friend puts, is not worthy of his shrewdness. There is not the slightest proof, outside the Gospel story itself, that either the Jewish Sanhedrin or the Roman Governor ever troubled their heads about it. Why should they? Suppose the "Abode of Love" Messiah got into trouble, and was executed, and his body was disposed of in the usual way; and suppose his followers gave out that he had risen from the dead; is it likely that the English government would seriously investigate such a ridiculous story? Well, the Messiah called Jesus was of no more importance in the eyes of the "authorities" than Mr. Smyth-Piggot is in the eyes of the "authorities" now. Really your "shrewd" Scotch friend ought to see this. (3) Glad to hear the *Freethinker* is welcome to you every Thursday morning.

F. G. HOWAT.—There was nothing supernatural about the case of James Lee, of Babbicombe, the "man who could not be hung." The gallows had not been properly tested and it would not work; and the man was respited, not because there was any doubt about his guilt, but because it would have been cruel to put him through such an ordeal twice. You might ask your friend, since he thinks the Lord saved that man's neck—leaving him in prison though—why the Lord does not save some of his own "chosen people," the Jews, who are being horribly massacred in Russia. Thanks for your pleasant letter and good wishes.

H. P. HUNTER.—Charles Bradlaugh was not a Deist. He was a monistic Atheist. His paper, the *National Reformer*, right up to the day of his death, bore the announcement on the top of the front page, under the title, that its policy was "Atheist." Pleased to have your congratulations on what you call "the masterly way" in which we administered the *coup de grace* to Dixon the Libeller. He and Torrey are a pair. They ought to go round together. "The biggest libellers on earth" would be a drawing headline on their bills.

A. J. WHITE.—Prophet Baxter is an old jokist. You are quite mistaken in thinking him a lunatic. There's too much method in his madness. See "Acid Drops."

W. EVANS.—We had already noted Mr. Lloyd-George's wonderful tribute to Evan Roberts. Thanks all the same. Glad to hear from you as a "many years" reader, who still finds the *Freethinker* of "great service."

H. THOMAS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

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

A. H. THOMAS.—*Bon Sens* was translated into English a hundred years ago.

ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—H. R. C. (previously overlooked) 1s.

W. T. ALFREY.—Your action in the matter is highly commendable.

A. G. LYE.—Pleased to hear you have sold three dozen of our *Salvation Syrup* pamphlet in Coventry lately, and that you "know they have done good." More might be put in circulation during General Booth's approaching visit.

T. DOOLEY.—The N. S. S. is not a political body. Its bond is a Freethought bond. It has members who are Socialists and members who are not Socialists. How then can it tell them all to vote for Socialist candidates? The N. S. S. is concerned, for instance, with Secular Education, and its members can support a candidate who stands by that, whatever political party he belongs to.

F. S. EDWARDS.—Thanks. See paragraph.

GEORGE JACOB.—Mr. Bernard Shaw has often called himself an Atheist. Mr. Hyndman and Mr. Blatchford would hardly disavow the designation. Mr. John Morley and Mr. John Burns may not call themselves Atheists, but we believe they have as much God as we have.

W. H. H.—You reply to what Mr. Cohen never said. He did not assert that no Buddhists ever quarreled, but that Buddhism never persecuted. Persecution is a deliberate injury done

simply on the ground of difference of opinion. If a Catholic and a Protestant fight in the street, that is not persecution, but brawling. Persecution always involves power and privilege on one side, and weakness and the suffering of injustice on the other.

JOSEPHUS.—See "Acid Drops." The Christian Era was never thought of for hundreds of years after the supposed time of Christ, and was not legal and common in Europe for hundreds of years after that. With regard to E. Kay Robinson, you may think he is worth refuting, but we do not. It is only in the name of religion that comfortable gentlemen try to explain pain away. The fact of pain, in human beings and in other animals, is a thing that "the man in the street" is as good a judge of as any religious controversialist in the world, or even any biologist.

M.—Your letter should do good. Get our *Bible Romances* and consult the chapter on "A Virgin Mother."

E. M. DERFEL.—See obituary notice. Your father was evidently a man of rare courage.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers will recollect that their Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday, January 9. There is sure to be a good repast at that establishment. Mr. Foote, who presides, will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and other well-known Freethinkers, so there ought to be some good speeches. There will also be some good vocal and instrumental music. The price of the ticket for all the program—dinner and entertainment—is only four shillings. We hope to see a large gathering.

Mr. Foote closed the Stanley Hall course of lectures on Sunday evening, and his discourse was very warmly applauded. Further courses of lectures will be arranged for in the new year. Meanwhile Freethinkers who are prepared to help in forming an N. S. S. Branch in the neighborhood are invited to send their names and addresses to Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. We should like to see a liberal response to this appeal.

The Glasgow Branch holds its Annual Children's Party today (Dec. 24). Ample provision has been made for the refreshment and entertainment of the hundreds of youngsters who will assemble in the Secular Hall, and every child will receive a Christmas present as a souvenir of the occasion. The function is timed to begin at 5 o'clock. Bedlam and happiness will reign for several hours.

The fresh propaganda initiated by the Glasgow Branch in Paisley has resulted in the revival of the local N. S. S. Branch. All the Branch really wants there, we believe, is the use of a good hall for its meetings.

The Welsh N. S. S. Branches have arranged to foregather at Cardiff on December 23. They are to have a dinner at 7 o'clock at Maskell's Café, St. Mary-street, and some good Welsh singing afterwards, interspersed, we presume, with "a few remarks" from various speakers. Mr. Hurcum, the Cardiff Branch president, is to occupy the chair; and the "saints" of Porth, Mountain Ash, etc., mean to get as near him as they can. The tickets are 2s. each, and obtainable from Mr. W. Docton, 34 Llanmeas-street, Grangetown, Cardiff. Mr. Foote has been asked to send a message to be read at the dinner and will try to do so. Of course all Freethinkers will be welcome at this gathering.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, the translator of Haeckel, lectures for the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch next Sunday (Dec. 31) at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. His subjects are "The Personality of Professor Haeckel" and "The Evolution of Christmas." There ought to be good meetings. In the new year the Branch's meetings will be held in the Milton Hall, Daulby-street, close by the old home.

Mr. J. W. de Caux's excellent letter in the *Yarmouth Independent*, on the same lines as our last week's front article, prompts us to remind Freethinkers of the perfectly legitimate use they might make of the local press, in their various districts, by contributing letters on Secular Education and the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, in view of the approaching general election.

We are informed that the Rev. A. C. White, of Emmanuel Church, Milton-street, Southchurch-road, Southend-on-Sea, is announced to deliver a course of five Wednesday evening lectures (beginning on December 20) in reply to Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. Also that questions and discussion will be allowed after each lecture. Perhaps some of our readers in that district will drop in and hear what the reverend gentleman has to say; and if the spirit moves them they may help to make the meetings lively by making "a few remarks." The lectures are to begin at 8 o'clock. All seats are free.

Algernon Charles Swinburne is to be the recipient of the Nobel Literary Prize this year. He is our greatest living poet. He is also an Atheist, and has never concealed the fact. His splendid lyric published last year, entitled "The Altar of Righteousness," is as frankly Atheistic as anything in *Songs Before Sunrise* published thirty odd years ago. Even the *Daily News* is obliged to admit that "in his political poems he was a rebel hating all kings and priests." Of course the words "political" and "was" are pads to break the impact of the statement on Christian minds.

Ever so many years ago, in the days of his strong early manhood, when his health was as flawless as a perfect diamond, the present writer, having to lecture at Edinburgh, climbed up Arthur's Seat, the difficult way, one Sunday morning before breakfast, in company with his dear friend Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, who was then living in the Northern capital. They had the summit of the great hill to themselves, and there was not another human being in sight. Throwing himself down on the ground, Wheeler cried: "Recite Swinburne's 'Song in a Time of Order,' for me, George." The present writer stood up, with that noble prospect all around him, and rolled out the fiery words with the utmost gusto. One verse, keen as a sharpened sword, and trenchant as Roland's battle-axe, may be repeated now:—

"We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king,
And the lie at the lips of the priest."

That passionate and splendid revolutionary song appeared in Swinburne's first volume of *Poems and Ballads*. Every word is a monosyllable. Each line cuts like a lash. The poet's style has often been very different since, but never has he swerved from his old hatred of lies and tyrannies.

The insurgent aggressive Atheism of *Songs before Sunrise* was the key-note of Swinburne's genius. Listen to this verse about "the wise word of the secret earth"—

"With all her tongues of life and death,
With all her bloom and blood and breath
From all years dead and all things done,
In the ear of man the mother saith,
'There is no God, O son,
If thou be none.'"

In the "Hymn of Man," in the "Lines Before a Crucifix," and in other poems, this gospel is repeated. God is the phantom of faith. "Man is the master of things."

And this also should be said. No poet, not even Shelley, ever sounded a more rapturous note of self-sacrifice than Swinburne did in the magnificent "Mater Triumphalis." Listen to this, those who have heads to understand and hearts to feel:—

"I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;
But thou from dawn to sunset shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring;
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing."

Where are the young poets now filled with this divine rapture? The noble breed seems perished. Why even John Keats, who is thought to have had nothing of the martyr in him (which is a great mistake; one of the many mistakes about him), could write thus to his friend Bailey: "I am never alone without rejoicing that there is such a thing as death—without placing my ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose." "I would jump down Ætna for any great public good," he had written a little earlier to Reynolds. And we may be sure he meant it. It was the voice of the young eagle. Oh for a young eagle, again to sail high above the chirping linnets!

The Liverpool Trouble.

TWELVE months ago the Liverpool Branch of the National Secular Society bade fair to rival the success of the Glasgow Branch. The N. S. S. Annual Conference was held there on Whit-Sunday, and hundreds of people had to be turned away at the evening public meeting in the great Picton Hall. This gave a strong fillip to the Secular movement in the city. All the Branch members had to do was to go on working and keep out of quarrels. Unfortunately they forgot the second half of this sound policy. And the result is a miserable split, which has gone so far that it cannot be ignored.

Ill-feeling had been prevalent in the Branch for many months, and at length it culminated in a members' meeting at which the expulsion of somebody was to be proposed. Hearing of this, and being satisfied that the matter on which the discussion would turn was but one incident in a long unpleasant chapter, I wrote asking all the parties to the quarrel to wait until my visit to Liverpool, which was only a week later, when I would see them together and try to act as a peacemaker. I wrote a long and careful letter to Mr. H. Percy Ward especially, begging him to do nothing until I came. I wrote in the same way to the two principal members who were acting with him. But my request was not complied with. The members' meeting was held in spite of it. Mr. Ward and his associates moved the expulsion of a certain member, and they were badly defeated.

That unhappy meeting drew blood in the quarrel and made it ten times worse. When I arrived at Liverpool I was interviewed by both parties at my hotel. I told them plainly that, in my opinion, there had been faults of temper and tactics on both sides. Mr. Ward and his associates (I mention no other names at present) spoke of seceding and forming another Branch, but I warned them of the difficulty and danger of such a course. I begged both sides to be patient until I could think the matter over and see daylight through it.

Since then Mr. Ward and his associates, without communicating with me until they had done it, have formed a City of Liverpool Secular Society, and he has been lecturing for it instead of for the Branch. It also happens (but I do not want to deal with this now) that the Branch has to turn out of the Alexandra Hall and the new Society is to enter into it.

Before that can take place I venture to hold out the olive branch again. I am tired of writing so many letters; therefore I publicly ask all parties to the quarrel to place the whole matter in my hands, as President, or into the hands of the General Executive.

Arbitration is preferable to war. Bitter feelings and hard words should not render peace impossible. The one great interest is the good of the cause. Everything else is but dust in the balance.

What is it to be? The time is short—the sands are running low.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Book of the Acts.—IV.

ITS ALLEGED AUTHENTICITY AND CREDIBILITY.

(Continued from p. 812.)

WE come now to the question of the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles. The principal "evidence" upon which Dr. Hervey, in common with all other Christian advocates, relies for ascribing the composition of the book to Luke, a supposed companion of Paul, is simply the mention of Luke's name in the following passage:—

Col. iv. 12-14.—"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Jesus Christ, saluteth you.....Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you."

Philemon 23-24.—"Epaphras my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers."

It is argued from the narrative portions of the Acts in which the writer employs the terms "we" and "us," (1) that the writer (who is assumed to be the author of the whole book) came with Paul to Rome, and stayed with him there for two years; (2) that the epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon were written by Paul during these two years, when a prisoner in the imperial city; (3) that Luke was a beloved fellow worker of Paul, and was with that apostle at this time; (4) that the circumstances here mentioned prove that the author of the Acts must have been the Luke named in the foregoing passages. Why Luke is selected in preference to any other of Paul's reputed co-workers—Epaphras, for instance—is not stated. Our clerical apologist adduces no evidence to prove that the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon were written by the Apostle of the Gentiles; or that the salutations at the end of these letters (in which alone Luke's name appears) are not later additions; or that the Luke named in these greetings ever actually travelled with Paul on any of his missionary journeys, like, say, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, or Silvanus. If we turn to the following passages we shall find the names of some of the real companions of Paul, and what is of more consequence, we shall find them recorded in books which are admitted by the majority of critics to be authentic, or at least to be more likely to be genuine than those in which Luke's name occurs: 1 Cor. iv. 17; ix. 5; xvi. 10-11; 2 Cor. i. 19; ii. 13; vii. 6, 13, 14; viii. 23; Gal. ii. 1, 3, 9, etc. It may also be noted that Luke's name is found in 2 Timothy (iv. 11)—an epistle which many scholars consider a forgery. Renan says of the Epistle to the Colossians, to which is annexed the letter to Philemon: "The language of the epistle is far removed from that of the undoubted epistles. The vocabulary is a little different; the style is more emphatic and more round, and less abrupt and natural. At points it is.....similar to the style of the false Epistles to Timothy and Titus. The ideas are scarcely those which one would expect to meet with in Paul."

As regards the ascription of the Acts to a companion of Paul, it should be noticed that it was the invariable practice of early Christian teachers, from the time of Irenæus downwards, to attribute the authorship of every Christian writing to apostles or companions of apostles. During the first half of the second century there came into circulation in Christian circles, copies of the following documents: an epistle of Barnabas, an epistle of Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Later on, the authorship of all three was ascribed to apostolic men, namely—the first to Barnabas, the fellow laborer of Paul, the second to the Clement named in Phil. iv. 3, and the third to the Hermas mentioned in Rom. xvi. 14. The same was, of course, the case with regard to the compilers of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Matthew was said to be an apostle, Mark a companion of Peter (1 Peter v. 13), Luke the person named in Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy, and John another apostle. We now know from the Muratorian Canon that Hermas was the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome (about A.D. 140), and we learn from the

Shepherd that Clement was a contemporary of Hermas. So, also, with respect to the evangelists, all the evidence we possess tends to prove that they were merely second century editors who re-arranged and revised pre-existing materials.

Returning to our reverend apologist, we are told that one portion of the Book of the Acts "on the face of which, *by an eye-witness*, is written in such large, strong, unmistakable characters" that beyond all question the writer "was in the ship with the Apostle, and tells us, not what he learnt from others, but what he saw with his own eyes, and experienced in his own person." This portion of the Acts is the account of Paul's voyage to Rome, and it certainly is a narrative written by some one accustomed to travel by water in various parts of the Mediterranean. It is probably the record of a disastrous voyage made by the captain of a trading vessel, in which record a later Christian writer has interpolated legendary matter respecting Paul. Furthermore, when in this narrative the compiler makes use of the terms "we" and "us," he does not mean himself and Paul, or himself and Paul's party—as would be the case were a companion of that apostle the writer—but refers to himself and some colleagues who were quite distinct from Paul and his co-workers. This will be demonstrated later on.

We come now to a new class of evidence which, we are told, clearly proves that "Luke, the beloved physician," named in Col. iv. 14, was unquestionably the author of the Acts. "If the writer of the Acts was a physician," argues Dr. Hervey, "we should expect to find some traces of it in his writing..... Are there any signs in the Acts of the Apostles that the writer was a physician? Well, there are in the Acts alone 233 words which are distinctly medical terms, not all of them of course exclusively so, but all of them words specially used by medical writers, and most of them words which occur nowhere else in the New Testament but in St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The number of such words in St. Luke's Gospel is 252, in all 485."

From the foregoing statement it would seem that the compiler of the Acts was certainly a physician, though not necessarily the one mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians. It would also appear to be a matter of equal certainty that in the Third Gospel and the Acts there are—without some of us knowing or even suspecting the fact—nearly five hundred words which are "distinctly medical terms." Who will deny, after this, that the two books mentioned were written by "Luke the beloved physician"? Still, having undertaken to examine the evidence for, as well as against, the authenticity of the Acts, I must continue my task undeterred.

The first glimpse of light through the thick cloud of dust raised by Dr. Hervey appears visible when we come to consider the very large number of "distinctly medical terms" in Luke's compilations. Can any rational person really believe that two hundred and fifty medical terms are to be found in the Third Gospel, and nearly as many in the Book of the Acts? Such a statement appears on the face of it a colossal apologetic fiction. And, most wonderful to relate, Dr. Hervey's dust-laden cloud appears to disperse altogether when we begin to look closely into it. Our great Christian advocate has adduced a number of selected examples of these alleged "medical terms," and by so doing has somewhat reassured the Rational critic; for when we come to examine the so-called medical language, Dr. Hervey's case looks much less formidable. The words italicised in the following passages are stated to be, in the Greek, "distinctly medical terms":—

- Acts i. 3.—"shewed himself alive.....by many *proofs*."
 i. 4.—"he charged them.....*to wait* for the promise of the Father."
 " i. 18.—"and falling *headlong*, he burst asunder."
 " ii. 13.—"they are filled with *new wine*."
 " iii. 21.—"until the times of *restoration* of all things."
 " iv. 17.—"that it *may spread* no farther among the people."

- Acts viii. 1.—“and they all *were scattered* throughout the regions,” etc.
 ,, x. 11.—“a great *sheet*, knit at the four *corners*, and let down upon the earth.”
 ,, xix. 29.—“the city was filled with *confusion*.”
 ,, xxiii. 33.—“and *delivered* the letter to the governor.”

After reading this luminous sample of “distinctly medical terms” which had been “habitually employed by such writers as Hippocrates, Aretæus, Galen, and Dioscorides”—and all selected by Dr. Hervey himself as the best examples of the 233 words representing the medical language in the Acts—most readers will agree that their employment by the compiler of that book proves that that writer had a better knowledge of Greek, and a more copious vocabulary at his command, than either Matthew or Mark. That such use proves anything more I completely fail to see. The contention of Christian advocates in this matter appears to be that all ordinary Greek words found in the works of ancient Greek medical writers are “distinctly medical terms.”

In concluding his “medical” evidence Bishop Hervey says: “I think, then, that I may now say, without any unseemly confidence, that we have not only proved the authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles and the marvellous accuracy of the writer by every test that could be applied to him, but that we have also placed it beyond all reasonable doubt that the writer was St. Luke, the physician, and companion of St. Paul, as all antiquity unanimously affirms.” Prodigious! But our worthy Bishop might have added that “all antiquity” commenced with Irenæus (A.D. 185)—that is to say, more than a century after the time when the Third Gospel and the Acts are alleged to have been written.

This completes the evidence for the authenticity and credibility of the Acts of the Apostles, and, I may add, nothing in any way supporting the traditional view has been omitted. There remains now to see what may legitimately be said on the other side—*against* the genuineness and historicity of the book. This will form the subject of the remaining papers.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

The Dead Ass.

PRAY list to my lay of old Cathay,
 For it carries a moral of gold.
 I sing but the words of a worn-out tale;
 But the proverb goes on a silken sail:
 “There’s a donkey, stone dead, at the fountain
 head
 Of religions both new and old.”

O a bozu sat so sleek and fat
 By the side of the temple gate.
 He shook the box as he took the tin,
 And smiled on the faithful hastening in
 To the holy shrine, where a saint divine,
 Lay under his stone of state.

Whose wondrous power was a healing shower
 More potent than bolus or pill,
 And even old rags that had touched that stone
 Removed all pain from muscle and bone,
 Or so deceived, that mob believed
 And filled up the bozu’s till.

Ah! ’Twas saki and wine for the old divine;
 Yet his curate grew terribly thin,
 As he travelled around on his patient ass
 To the outlying faithful. It happened, alas!
 That bad times came and weary and lame,
 His language was colored with sin.

Till he groaned in his prayers intermixed
 with his swears
 “I can stand the life no longer.”
 He betook his bones to the bozu’s side,
 “I’ve tried to keep up, I have,” he cried,
 “How is it indeed I’m running to seed
 While you grow fatter and stronger.”

Said the bozu, “My son, when the day is done
 I betake me to the shrine.
 Ah great is the wisdom of age my son,
 New life and vigor course and run
 As I touch the bones ’neath those sacred stones,
 I’m sustained by the power divine.”

So the novice slunk to the saints grey bunk
 And, inserting his hand and arm,
 From under the stone pulled a brown old bone,
 With a cork one end that gave a groan
 As he drew it out and, lip to the spout,
 Drank deep of a spirit balm.

And thus he drained full off, sustained,
 Till one sad summer’s eve,
 He encountered the good old bozu there;
 Who flourished that relic brown in air.
 “Business is queer” he hicked with a leer,
 “And one of us must leave.”

“Though it grieves my heart we shall have to part,
 There’s not enough trade for the pair;
 So take your donkey and my last kiss
 To some country where commerce is better than this.
 Take my blessing and fly to some far off sky,
 And leave me to fasting and prayer.”

O that novice wept, as the old adept
 Bade him adieu with his blessing;
 Then he wandered away with his asinine friend,
 In search of a country where Allah might send
 Good luck to his priest and the faithful beast,
 And where ladies are good and caressing.

At length he did stand in a milk-honey land,
 “Allah be praised” he cried;
 But e’en as he spoke his poor skeleton moke
 Stumbled, and “said his last prayer” with a croak;
 And the priest in despair just flung himself there
 And wept a damp prayer where it died.

When out of the hills a concoctor of pills—
 Some madman beloved of the gods—
 Started laughing and dancing,
 And chaffing and prancing.
 “Come out of that trance. Why, half your chance,
 I’d be rich in a week with no odds.”

Only fancy a priest praying over a beast
 When the price is so low for coals,
 Why don’t you bury the ass now he’s dead
 And make him a holy saint instead;
 When the tale gets about folks will gladly shell out
 For the good of the corpse and their souls.

So he planted him there not a moment to spare,
 When there passed a carpenter callow,
 Whom he threatened full fell with the tortures of Hell,
 And cajoled with the promise of Heaven as well;
 To build him a fence at the sole expense
 Of the Holy One under the fallow.

That carpenter worked, nor rested, nor shirked,
 Till the grave was fenced in like fun,
 And then went home and died with a martyr’s sweet
 pride
 In his holy work on an empty inside.
 But each passer-by heaved his purse with a sigh
 For the bozu who prayed in the sun.

To the curate’s great glory (and to shorten my story),
 A temple arose o’er the grave;
 He grew fat and sleek in the fulness of time,
 Yet off’ he bethought of the faith sublime
 Of his master far off.— He’d smile and he’d cough,
 And I fancy he’d whistle a stave.

His memory would burn and he longed to return
 To his master’s land of yore,
 “He was an old hypocrite, yes,” thought he,
 “But such simple fraud was as nothing to me,
 ‘Great’ saith the sage ‘is the wisdom of age,’
 But this time ’tis youth that will score.”

So a gorgeous array from the temple one day,
 With our youthful bozu at the head,
 Made a pilgrimage far to the old bozu,
 With presents and things and much to do;
 Gaily they passed and arrived at last,
 In a glorious concourse led.

While the old man stood dazed at the door, amazed,
 Yet with welcome his face was ashine;
 And, formality over, they went inside,
 The youthful one ran out a red wine hide,
 Each opened to t’other his heart like a brother,
 Such a confidence maker is wine.

"Times still bad" suggested the lad,
 "Worse than ever," the elder sighed;
 "Then turn it up and come with me,
 The place where I flourish has room for thee.
 Ha, ha! why faint on your genuine saint?
 While I feast on my donkey which died!"

O! That old man's glee was a sight to see,
 "Great is the wisdom of youth," gasped he;
 "And the folly of age is beyond compare,
 But here I stay for the time to be."
 Then he smiled with the aid of his yellow teeth
 As he pointed down to the stone beneath,
 "Yes! The folly of age is beyond compare,
 But—your donkey's mother lies buried there!"

G. E. W.

Correspondence.

WHAT IS A RELIGION?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In Mr. C. Cohen's very instructive article on "Buddhism in Burma" (*Freethinker*, Dec. 10, 1905) there is one point which seems to stimulate criticism, albeit of the Freethought variety.

To call Buddhism a "religion," he says, is to "distort the meaning of the word 'religion'"—"Buddhism is not a religion at all. It has no personal God and no individual immortality, and no supernaturalism, and without these there is no 'religion.'"

Now, I venture to think that Mr. Cohen has not here done full critical justice to the case. To define "religion" as essentially consisting in supernaturalism is to confuse it with "theology," and to unsafely follow the Christian Infidel in his accepted but unscientific use of the word.

If we search anthropology for the natural genesis of religion, there rises before us a picture of primitive man, fearful for his welfare among the destructive and overwhelming forces of external nature's activity. The flood, the lightning, the drought, the beast of prey, and the earthquake all aroused the apprehension of his self-preservative instinct. It was fear and its causes which subconsciously led him to understand nature in the only way possible for him—i.e., in terms of himself by animistic personification; and here it is agreed was the primal germ of religion and theology.

The peculiar point of importance in all this is that mankind's deities were evolved as *purely secondary phenomena* in the process—were historically developed, indeed, as an expression of humanity's subjective answer or response to its own *perfectly primary desire* for self-preservation (or natural safety—salvation). That is to say, this desire was the efficient developing *cause* of the self-made "supernatural" answer. The deities were the *effects*. We may find confirmation of this in the fact that early man prayed and offered sacrifices in order to induce his deities to remove the evils and "terrible" powers which threatened his natural safety and denied him health, victory, food, etc.

In short, salvation (the natural self-preservative ideal) was the main factor in producing theologies and founding religions; the ultimate basis of the whole growth. Salvation was the aim and end; theology but the means.

It is obvious, of course, that as knowledge increased, the form in which men instinctively sought to satisfy their ultimate need necessarily changed; but all through the Protean process the ultimate support of this varying form remained inevitably the same. It was the self-preservative instinct naturally seeking salvation, or safety from evil. The only *permanent* reality in all religions, accordingly, was and is, this perpetual salvation ideal.

Religion, then, we must define as the self-preservative instinct seeking eternal or temporal satisfaction in special relation to cosmology. This definition enables us to assign theology its proper subservient place in religion. But for the salvation need it would never have grown up; it was but the means to the end (an imaginary means withal).

Consequently we are bound to set aside the unscientific definition of religion given by supernaturalists, in their sublime ecstasy of error and illogic.

If now we turn again to Buddhism the case becomes clear. The founder (or founders) of that religion has evolved so far beyond theological metaphysics that he (or they) expressed the cosmological answer to the salvation desire in a highly abstract way. It is the fact that Buddhism appealed, and still appeals, to this persistent desire that constitutes it a religion, and which differentiates it from being a pure and simple philosophy at the same time.

Mr. Cohen, indeed, states this essential fact very clearly when he says that the Burman's "Buddhism is.....a belief that all *salvation* depends upon," etc., etc.

If Mr. Cohen had said that Buddhism was neither a theology nor a *supernatural* religion, this specific case would have presented no difficulties; but as the implied definition stands it offers some; and, if I mistake not, Buddhism will always stand as a special case, refusing to submit to any definition where religion is named by its secondary and unstable phase instead of its primary, ultimate, and perpetual reality.

I would suggest to Mr. Cohen that this revision of definition involves a strengthening of the Freethought case; for if the central idea of religion is salvation, what becomes of the commonplace Christian sophistry that all religions imply a supernatural and personal Deity? We can always point to self-preservation as the efficient cause of theologies, one and all; and so destroy the possibility of explaining them supernaturally. For nothing can have two explanations.

On the other hand, Freethought will offer Science—its cosmogony and methods—as the only means and way of natural salvation or social progress, as the only ideals of inspiration to the betterment of mankind; and will thus take its supreme status in evolution as the true, because scientific, religion (as here defined), Herald of the Dawn and Savior of Mankind. And the history of science justifies this claim.

CHAS. D. THOMSON.

To Christ.

If Truth could stamp her seal upon thy face,
 Oh Christ! so that all men might clearly trace
 Thy picture, even where the crusted rime
 Of ages thickly spreads the halls of time:
 If all those words by men ascrib'd to thee,
 Could give some certain sound, some sense, to be
 No longer misconstru'd by those who pray
 And persecute; if none but those who say
 That they believe, could live that saintly life:
 If none but those who find their pathway rife
 With doubt could overtaken be in sin:
 If truly noble hearts could stoop to win
 A craven's way to safety through that flood
 Of tears, and groans, and sighs, and sweat, and blood:
 If none but saints in martyr fires could stand,
 Or cease to evade the touch of death's cold hand:
 Then, surely then, Oh Christ! no sceptic speaks,
 But blindly credulous, no longer seeks
 For thee. Alas the hope!—too vain to last—
 The future righted does not right the past.

W. J.

DISCOVERED!

The prophet Jonah went forth from the whale,
 And he spread himself out as he pitched his tale,
 And then waited to see the world turn pale.
 But their laughter arose like a wintry gale.
 "Oh!" they warbled, "you fairly turn the scale
 For fishing fibs and yarns that are stale.
 Of the cake you are the rightful owner.
 Of the hump you are the champion donor.
 Your conscience isn't worth a *kroner*.
 You lyre! you fraud! you bare-faced boner!"
 Then a wail went forth from the prophet Jonah.

G. E. W.

What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor, is derived from the purely human, not the religious, part of our education.—*J. S. Mill*.

Obituary.

We have to record the death of Mr. R. J. Derfel, whose name is fairly familiar to our readers. Mr. Derfel was eighty-one years of age. His death occurred at Manchester on Saturday, December 16, after long suffering patiently borne. He died as he had lived, a true Freethinker. We are indebted to his son, Mr. Edward M. Derfel, for this information. A few months ago the deceased wrote to us hoping that we would print his articles as frequently as possible, as he could only serve the cause in one way, and had much to write if he could only get through it before the end came. This was a brave and admirable attitude.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament.

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

COUNTRY.

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Home Service.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): 5, Annual Children's Party.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, Dec. 25, at 8, Open Discussion.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, C. R. Niven, M.B., C.M., "The Menace of Insanity to the Race"; 7, H. Buxton, "The Meaning of Freethought."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): No lecture until January 7, 1906. New Year's Day, Annual Soiree; tea 5.30, dancing 7.30. Tickets 1s. each.

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, O. Simmons, "Religion and Science."

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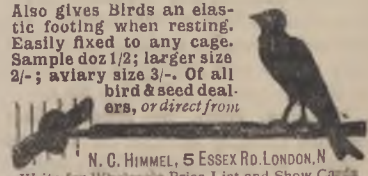
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