

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

When I seriously believe a thing, I say so in a few words, leaving the reader to determine what my belief is worth. But I do not choose to temper down every expression of personal opinion into courteous generalities, and so lose space, and time, and intelligibility at once. We are utterly oppressed in these days by our courtesies, and considerations, and compliances, and proprieties. Forgive me them, this once, or rather let us all forgive them to each other, and learn to speak plainly first, and, if it may be, gracefully afterwards; and not only to speak, but to stand by what we have spoken.—RUSKIN.

The Atheist Shoemaker.

INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE already explained that the task of retelling this old story has been forced upon me. There is an ancient proverb to the effect that one should speak no ill of the dead, but if this were universally acted upon there would be no such thing as history, and Nero would be as good a character as Marcus Aurelius. Certainly one should take no *delight* in speaking ill of the dead, and one should let them lie in peace in their graves, as far as that is possible. But when they are public personages even in death; when what they have said and done is still audible and visible; when the living claim to speak on their behalf, and utter what is bound to stir up controversy, unless other living persons submit without protest to dishonorable imputations; it becomes necessary that the truth should be heard in the interest of justice. When the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes died I let his old "Atheist Shoemaker" story rest. I had exposed its falsehoods, the book had been withdrawn from circulation, and I was perfectly satisfied. But his daughter has chosen to revive the controversy in her Life of her father, and has also chosen to depict me as her father's persecutor and libeller. I am thus challenged to defend myself—and the party to which I belong. And when Mr. George Jacob Holyoake died I said not a word about the dubious part he played in assisting Mr. Hughes. I was willing to let it sink in oblivion. But the newspapers—and particularly the *Daily News*—have made that impossible. They have totally misrepresented the case, and I am compelled to make a fresh statement of the facts, for the sake of a new generation of readers who are entitled to be saved from a very gross deception.

I.

The "Atheist Shoemaker" is more than sixteen years old. In the month of August, 1889, it ran through the *Methodist Times*, and was soon afterwards published in book form at the price of eighteenpence. The sub-title of this story was: "A Page in the History of the West London Mission." And its author was the conductor of that Mission—the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes.

Mr. Hughes called it a *true* story, he said that there was "no reason for concealment." But he practised just enough concealment to evade responsibility. He gave fictitious names to all the persons in the story except himself. By this means he avoided flat contradiction and absolute exposure.

Those who asked him for the *real* name of his converted Atheist Shoemaker were reminded that "some of those who must appear on the scene shrink from publicity." And under cover of that excuse he believed himself to be safe. People might think the coin a bad one, but it could not be nailed down to the counter. In this, however, he was mistaken. His excessive love of romantic details proved his undoing. He drew such a definite portrait of his converted Atheist that it became easy for leading Freethinkers to deny in the most positive terms the actual existence of such a personage.

John Herbert—that was the converted Atheist's fictitious name—died in the spring of 1889 at the age of twenty-eight. He was by trade a shoemaker. He had "delicate, intellectual features, and deep, inquisitive, penetrating eyes." He was "a well-known London Atheist." He was a person of great natural eloquence. He used to deliver Atheist lectures on Clerkenwell Green, in Victoria Park, and apparently at the Hall of Science, and his voice was drowned by "continuous cheering." Many preferred him even to Bradlaugh.

London Freethinkers must have known of this clever, eloquent, and popular lecturer if he existed. The features were too precise to be mistaken. I was then President of the London Secular Federation. I knew every Freethought lecturer in the metropolis, and I knew that "John Herbert" was not one of them. The portrait was entirely imaginary. And I told Mr. Hughes so, first in the *Freethinker*, and subsequently in a widely circulated pamphlet. Mr. Hughes's story was in five chapters. I therefore called my pamphlet *A Lie in Five Chapters?* But in quoting its title Mr. Hughes and his friends always forgot the note of interrogation at the end.

The epilogue to my pamphlet ran as follows:—

"Mr. Hughes was furnished with marked copies of the *Freethinker* in which this exposure was first printed. In face of a direct challenge by myself, as editor of that journal and President of the London Secular Federation, he pursues a cowardly policy of silence. Once more I defy him to prove his story. I will pass over the details of incident and conversation, and challenge him again on the main point. Let him establish the substantial truth of his narrative. Let him prove the existence of an Atheist who lectured on Clerkenwell-green, in Victoria-park, and at the Hall of Science; who was converted by Mr. Hughes or his Wesleyan Sisters; who was a shoemaker, about thirty years of age; and who died last spring. Here is a clear challenge. An honest man would accept it. Should Mr. Hughes decline it, I shall do more than say his story *looks* a lie. I shall say it *is* a lie. And I am sure every honest reader will endorse the brand."

Two years elapsed and Mr. Hughes was still silent. "It is time, therefore," I said in the postscript to a new edition of my pamphlet, "to fling aside all reserve, and I unhesitatingly call Mr. Hughes's story *a lie* from beginning to end."

II.

I was not the only one who tried to draw Mr. Hughes. The great Spurgeon, who was a straightforward man, advised him to give the names and addresses of his characters. Robert Forder, secretary of the National Secular Society, asked for the converted Atheist's real name, and received an evasive reply. Charles Bradlaugh, the leader of English Freethought, asked for proper particulars. No one

could dispute *his* right to ask. But he received no answer. He returned to the subject more than once. Miss Dorothea Price Hughes, in the Life of her father, is good enough to say (p. 295) that "Mr. Bradlaugh, in his paper, the *National Reformer*, published a courteous note asking for the name of the shoemaker," while I "transgressed the rules of courtesy altogether." Even if this were true, the fact remains that Mr. Hughes no more satisfied Bradlaugh's courteous curiosity than he satisfied my ill-mannered inquisitiveness. But was there, after all, such a vast difference between Bradlaugh's challenge and mine? Bradlaugh invited him "in common decency" to speak plainly. Bradlaugh told him that "many of the incidents in his volume were clearly untrue." Bradlaugh spoke of his story as a "falsehood," and added, "I challenge the main allegations in his story." Bradlaugh penned this final note in the *National Reformer* of March 2, 1900:—

"The story contains some statements which I know to be untrue, and contains other statements which I believe to be untrue. I leave to Mr. Hughes the responsibility of having published these as parts of what he describes as 'a true story.' Mr. Hughes, although he made his story more saleable by its references to me, denies my right to inquire into the matter. Mr. Hughes holds very curious notions of what a religious man may do against an infidel."

Miss Hughes simply imitates her father's hypocrisy. Her reference to Bradlaugh's "courteous note" of inquiry hides the real facts of the case from her readers. Bradlaugh did more than inquire; he challenged and denounced. But it would never do to tell Methodists that. Miss Hughes, like her father, wanted to make out that I was not a fit person to be answered. I actually "doubted her father's veracity." Well, so did Bradlaugh. I called her father's story "a lie"—and Bradlaugh called it "untrue" and a "falsehood." Really, the only difference between us was that my language was a little more Biblical than Bradlaugh's. We both meant the same thing.

III.

Miss Hughes says that I "pursued" her father "for full five years, intent on picking a quarrel with him." This is her filial way of stating that my pamphlet followed Mr. Hughes all over the country. This is all that the *Daily News* means by saying that he was "persecuted." Freethinkers gave him no peace. Wherever he went they circulated copies of my pamphlet at his meetings. He was "persecuted" as we "persecuted" Dr. Torrey. No less, and no more.

When the *Daily News* says that Freethinkers "distributed broadcast" pamphlets "containing the vilest aspersions on Mr. Hughes," it is simply writing history on religious principles. The only "aspersion" on Mr. Hughes was that his story was not a true one. The adjective "vilest" is introduced in order to obscure the issue with a dust of prejudice. Were I to speak with perfect candor, I should say that its object was to suggest a lie without telling one; which is a well-known device of that extraordinary virtue called "Christian charity."

IV.

At the end of the five years, during which I "pursued" Mr. Hughes—which is creditable to my tenacity—his daughter says that he "thought it best to call in Mr. Holyoake, whom he knew to be a gentleman, and one devoted to fair play."

This is the way in which Christians are bound to talk when they want to make use of a Freethinker against his own party.

It might have occurred to Miss Hughes that Mr. Holyoake was called in either as a judge or as an arbitrator. And it might have occurred to her that the appointment of a person to act in either of those capacities did not belong to her father, who represented one side in the dispute, and was, indeed, the party under accusation.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Dissenters and the Elections.

WHATEVER the besetting complaint of the English Nonconformists may be, it is certainly not modesty. If one were to be guided by their speakers and writers, honesty of purpose, devotion to principle—in a word, the integrity of the nation—rests with the Nonconformists. Even when some of the more liberal admit that straightforwardness may be found with others, there is generally the insinuation that this is so because of the unfelt influence of Dissenters; so that the position is not materially affected. The *Christian World* writes glibly of the "great ethical movement" which has placed one hundred and seventy-two members of Free Churches in Parliament, and the Rev. Silvester Horne—a very bad case of *cranium giganticum*, popularly known as "swelled head"—calls the new assembly a "Free Church Parliament," and bombastically refers to the "Free Church peasants and yeomen in whom the hope of England lies." After this who shall deny that modesty and humility are Christian virtues, and that Free Churchmen are the truest Christians?

The sung self-righteousness of the *Christian World's* comment is a true index of the Nonconformist mind. Other people would be content to call a victory at the polls the conquest of certain opinions, or the triumph of an idea; the Dissenter must have it as a moral victory. For his test of morality is simple. When the electorate agrees with him it is an ethical awakening; when it does not it is an indication of ethical degeneration. It is very simple, very childish, even very puerile; but it is quite in keeping with the Nonconformist character. To the Nonconformist differences are seldom intellectual, but nearly always moral. *His* opinions are the outcome of his superior moral character, and the opinions of his opponents the inevitable reflex of characters not yet developed to the dazzling degree of excellence attained by Dissenting preachers. It is a pity that the "great ethical awakening" failed to induce the editor of the *Christian World* to tell the truth about Dr. Torrey—although he was perfectly aware of the facts, and that it leads Mr. Horne to speak of a body of 172 in a gathering of 670 as constituting a "Free Church Parliament," and giving them a "preponderance in the political counsels of the nation"; but there are spots on the sun, and the superiority of Nonconformist morality obviously admits of further improvement.

But clearly we have one thing for which to thank the Education Act of 1902. Had this Act never been passed the moral strength of the nation would have been divided, as it has been in previous elections, and Nonconformists would have continued to share with Episcopalians the taxes *morally* levied on Non-Christians for the support of Christianity. But when these taxes are no longer equally divided between the two Christian bodies, then the Dissenting Pecksniff rounds on the Episcopal Uriah Heep, and demands in the name of outraged Nonconformist morality a return to the state of things under which he receives a fair share of the public plunder. Nothing else could have brought about the concentration of this gigantic moral force. The war did not effect this—the larger portion of the dissenters clamored for the conflict. The rights—or wrongs—of labor also failed. Nothing but an attack on sectarian interests could bring about this "moral awakening" and send followers of the meek and lowly Jesus careering through the country on motor cars, adding their quota to the highly imaginative literature of an electioneering campaign.

But to be quite serious, is it certain that the elections represent a Nonconformist victory? That the Nonconformist vote, being solid for once in a while, helped to bring about the result may be admitted. But it was not nearly so important as Dissenting speakers would now have us believe. And one may question if they believe it themselves. For it is significant that Nonconformist leaders, once the election campaign began, gave chief place to

Chinese labor and relegated education to the back-ground. They knew well enough that had the Education Act been the sole point at issue there would have been every chance of their being beaten, although with characteristic dishonesty they are now speaking as though it was the moral sincerity of their party that decided the issue. And from the other side the evidence is also in the same direction. In all the reasons given by Unionist candidates for their defeat very few instanced the Education Act, while the majority never mentioned it at all. Liberals in Manchester, to take only one instance, plainly won on Free Trade, Chinese Labor, and the Labor and Trades Union vote.

Mr. Horne calls the election a Free Church triumph for the reason that the electorate knew they could trust Free Churchmen to act honestly, and that they would not "try to plunder the public purse to subsidise Nonconformist institutions." One would be interested to learn if the new Labor party really feel this way towards Dissenters. If Mr. Horne were a person likely to be influenced by facts, and made this inquiry, he would discover that the Labor party trusts Nonconformists just about as much as they do Churchmen. If he really thinks the working classes have this confiding faith in the integrity of Dissenters, the following from the December *Amalgamated Engineers' Monthly Journal*—which practically re-echoed the opinion of the London Trades Council—may undeceive him:—

"Assuming that Dissent is strong enough to enforce its demands, it requires no gift of prophecy to foresee the first three years of such a government given up to an incessant wrangle.....and the relegation to an indefinite period of the labor programme.....If we are to have a theological alliance, what about our old friends of the Christian Social Union? Have men like Canon Scott Holland, Father Adderley, the Dean of Ely, Cartmel Robinson, Percy Dearmer, the Bishop of Hereford, Mr. Stewart Headlam and a host of others no claim on us? Years before Dissent moved hand or foot to help us, these men were our public defenders, and lent their education and social standing to a movement that had few friends.....Do not let it go unobserved that the average Dissenting parson is a mere puppet in the hands of his wealthy deacons of the employing class, and these have ever been the foes of Labor reform.....Municipalisation of the drink traffic, secular education, a national Sunday, absorption of mining rents and royalties, nationalising of railways, these are not likely to be the watchwords of the Temperance or Nonconformist parties.....Let us beware of new friends who never recognised us as such until we demonstrated our ability to stand alone."

This should give food for reflection to Mr. Horne; but we have no doubt that this highly moral gentleman—who recently charged the established clergy with supporting the South African war, and ignored the support given it by the Dissenting clergy—will continue to preach that labor looks to Dissent as its only real friend. The ethical wave breaks very easily.

Mr. Horne's statement about the war is, however, on all fours with his protest against plunder. Neither he nor his fellow-dissenters object to public plunder in the shape of a remission of taxes, which is virtually an endowment of Nonconformist institutions. Dr. Clifford even resists any attempt to make his meeting-place bear its proportion of the rates. Nor do they object to taxing all Non-Christians for the teaching of Christianity in the schools. They take all they can get, and assume an air of moral superiority for not taking anything that is out of their reach. Evidently the ethical wave carries on its crest a considerable quantity of refuse.

The really significant feature of the election is the return of fifty Labor members to the House of Commons. And it is amusing to note the anxiety of both the Episcopalian Codlin and the Dissenting Short to secure their favor. That the new party will be on its guard against both is devoutly to be wished, and there seems at present little chance of its being cajoled by either Church or Chapel. It may in the course of party warfare use either one or the other, but in its present temper it will trust neither. The history of labor, organised and unorganised, should

be enough to prove that neither Church nor Chapel will fight for long against the vested interests of a nation. Some men—whose humanity gets the better of their creed—belonging to both parties, may lend a hand occasionally, but in the main and in the mass Church and Chapel will pull in the wrong direction. One has yet to learn that in the darkest days under the factory system, Nonconformist employers were any better than Episcopalians, or that Chapel goes found the profits from female labor in mines less acceptable than Church attendants. And in all that concerns the higher life of the working classes, the Dissenter is by far the greatest enemy. He is the greatest obstacle to a system of secular, and efficient, national education, and he is the deadliest enemy to a really rational Sunday that might count for much in the elevation of character. Nor ought it to be forgotten that the development of the worst features of modern industrialism were coincident with the rise of the modern Dissenting sects. It need not be argued that the latter were related to the former in terms of cause and effect. It is enough that the two were coincident to prove that Dissent had no restraining influence, while as a mere matter of fact the labor magnates were—until recent years—more often Dissenters than supporters of the Established Church.

Here in England, the issue is somewhat confused owing to the existence of an Established Church throwing Dissenters on the democracy for support. But this is a mere political accident. In America, where there is no Established Church, Methodists, Baptists, etc., are as undemocratic as Episcopalians, or more so. One need only mention the Standard Oil Trust, with Rockefeller at its head, to prove this. Here the Dissenter makes a virtue of necessity, and with his customary dissimulation poses as the friend of the working man—when the existence of a labor problem was only discovered by either Church or Chapel, when education and the vote made the working man dangerous. For the sake of progress one hopes that the manœuvre will be treated with the contempt it deserves. The working class that look to either Church or Chapel for salvation, proves itself blind to the significance of history, and is preparing the way for its own demoralisation.

C. COHEN.

The Art of Defending God.

CHRISTIANS are always puzzled and perplexed by what they believe to be the strange and inscrutable providences of God. How often they appeal to their clergymen for some helpful light upon them. Indeed, the main business of the Pulpit is to explain and justify the Supreme Being. As soon as a man is admitted to Holy Orders he becomes an official expounder and defender of all the ways of Heaven. A minister stands between God and the people delivering special messages from the one party to the other. He intercedes with men for God, and with God for men. He tells God what the needs of the people are, or what they would like him to do for them, and he tells the people what God does, or is anxious to do, on their behalf.

Perhaps the most mysterious fact to believers is God's persistent *silence*. It must be remembered that the mediation of the Pulpit is resorted to only on special occasions. On Sundays the people address their Heavenly Father through their ministers; but on week-days all communication with the upper spheres is direct. The teaching is that by the blood of Jesus all have "boldness to enter into the holy place" and hold immediate and soul-satisfying communion with God. But is the communion ever real, or does the Divine Being verily take part in the prayers of the saints? That they frequently *imagine* their petitions are heard and answered is undeniable; but what proof is there that their imagination is founded on fact? They speak to God in strong, passionate terms; but does God ever speak back to them? When they cry to him out of the depth of

some sore trouble does He make any answer? The sad confession of many is that there is "no voice, nor any that answers." It would be easy to supply a long list of instances of the "seemingly sinister silence" of the God of love. There are thousands of good men and true among us to-day whose lives are darkened and soured by the fact that their most earnest appeals for deliverance or guidance in times of trial have not been answered; and they feelingly ask, "What is the meaning of this strange and continuous silence of our Father? We love him passionately and trust him implicitly; and yet He leaves us to ourselves in our affliction." Here the clergyman steps in and says: "Yes, friends, God's silence in the day of trouble is a deep mystery; but, after all, even the silence of our Father is a revelation of his love. He would speak, and remove the sorrow, were it for your good; but He knows that you need the discipline of the cloud, and so He permits its continuance in order thereby to prepare you for the coming sunshine of his favor." The fact is, however, that there is no evidence that God has ever spoken. Men have often undertaken to speak in his name, but never with his authority.

Equally puzzling to faith is the perpetual *inactivity* of the Divine Being. Not only He fails to act when speech would comfort, and cheer, and guide, He also fails to act when action would prove of highest benefit. In his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for February 1, the Rev. R. J. Campbell gives a case in point. An inquirer with the signature "Still Waiting," wrote:—

"For twelve years I have prayed God to take my afflicted boy home to himself. I have wrestled in prayer, with strong crying and tears, but no answer has ever come. Now I begin to think I may have been wrong. I have been dictating terms to God. What ought I to do? I am often depressed and sad about this question."

Here God was asked to perform a beneficent act, continuously asked for twelve years; and He has not done it yet. Now, Mr. Campbell informs this inquirer why God has not taken the suffering child home:—

"I think perhaps God has been teaching you something all these years which you are coming to learn at last. He is teaching you that your poor afflicted child is his child much more than yours, and He will keep him safe from all real harm. He has given you this weak one to love and cherish; and perhaps the real ministry has all the time been more for your sake than his. It has been the means of calling forth the best from you; it has made you think love-thoughts; compelled you to look above your own self-interest; taught you the meaning of self-sacrifice; intertwined your life with that of your suffering child, which is just the way to make you noble and Christlike. Your child has been doing all this for you, which is the same thing as to say God has been doing it through him. That is why He did not hasten to answer your prayer about taking the sufferer home, but He is glad you are capable of caring enough for your child to want to pray such a prayer."

What a lame apology for God's inactivity. One can scarcely help smiling when reading it. The idea that God sent this suffering child in order to teach the parents useful lessons is simply preposterous. This child is a sufferer according to a natural law which somebody violated in the past, or as the result of some accident before or after birth. The sight of the suffering may have called forth the best and noblest qualities in those who have had to minister to it; but to affirm that the suffering was designed to serve that end would be utterly irrational. And yet that is what Mr. Campbell contends in the above passage. If that doctrine is true there ought to be an afflicted boy in every home. Why does God neglect to provide for the moral education of so many families? Why does He give thoroughly healthy children to so many people who are not one whit superior to the parents of the unfortunate child under discussion? "Your child has been doing all this for you," said Mr. Campbell to "Still Waiting," "which is the same thing as to say God has been doing it through him." Is not that rather rough on the child? We are told that God could do his work without instruments;

and surely this is a case in which He ought to have done so. To bless the parents at the expense of cursing an innocent little child is a doubtful providence, to say the least.

Mr. Campbell tells "Still Waiting" that perhaps the best way of praying now would be to say "Thy will be done"; but can it be the will of a just and loving God that an innocent child should suffer for the benefit of his parents? Is it reasonable to suppose that such a Being would deliberately send a diseased babe into the world for such a purpose? Mr. Campbell continues: "Realise that the will of God for you and for your child means something gracious and beautiful, and some day you will see it in its fulness. Perhaps He will raise your child to life and strength." Terrible is the irony of those words. Surely there can be nothing gracious and beautiful in a child having to go through life a miserable sufferer in consequence of no fault of his own. No wonder "Still Waiting" is "often depressed and sad about this question." It is depressing and saddening enough to contemplate all the suffering and sorrow in the world while simply regarding it as the product of blind, unintelligent natural forces; but to contemplate it in the belief that it is the work of a good and loving Father would drive one mad. The existing state of things would be an infinite disgrace to a Holy Will. Faber says:—

"Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;"

but that is sheer nonsense. No blessing can change the quality of things. You may bless poison as much as you like, but it will still kill you if you take it. No God could convert ill into good; and there is no such thing as "unblest good." The following lines are equally absurd:—

"And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be his sweet will."

Moral distinctions are not the creation of a will at all, human or divine. Good and evil represent opposite effects on life. Nothing is good or evil in itself, but alone in its relation to other things. Moral distinctions are all practically based upon experience. Suffering is not a good, although we may be able to turn it to good account. Disease is not a good, although its unfortunate victims may often accomplish much *in spite* of it. But no will, however powerful, can alter the quality of things.

Now the conclusion to which we inevitably come is, either that there is no God at all, or, if there is, that He is not all-good and all-loving. The task of defending an all-good and all-loving Being against the charges which Nature hurls at his head is impossible of accomplishment. And yet no task is more frequently undertaken by the theologians. They tell us that God is the author and giver of all things, that all that is manifests his glory, and that He makes all things to work together for good to all who love him. They tell us that He does according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Hearing that, we ask for an explanation of the slums, of standing armies, and wars, and murders, and earthquakes, and volcanoes, and no satisfactory explanation is forthcoming. The problem of evil is insoluble on the assumption that there is a good and loving God on the throne of the Universe. Sir Oliver Lodge feels the force of this fact and admits that if there is a God He cannot be both all-powerful and all-good. Very few of the divines, however, will make such an admission, while from the pulpit there never comes the vaguest hint of it.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christian Charity.

THE intensely pathetic circumstances surrounding the death of Miss Edith Allonby, the young Lancashire school-mistress whose sad suicide some months ago attracted such attention, must be still comparatively fresh in the public memory, and therefore the following protest in connection with the publication

of *The Fulfilment*—the work for which the authoress sacrificed her life—may not be without interest. For the benefit of those to whom the story is unfamiliar, or who but imperfectly recall it, it may be stated that Miss Allonby, who was only twenty-nine at the time of her death, some years ago wrote a book entitled *The Fulfilment*, which only saw the light of day last December, soon after her tragic end. The work was written in 1901, but owing, apparently, to the unorthodox views on religious matters therein expressed, Miss Allonby was unable at the time to find a publisher willing to take the risk of bringing it out. On June 17, 1905, however, she submitted it to a firm who consented to publish it, subject to certain revisions and emendations being made. Shortly afterwards, her relatives and friends received a terrible shock in learning that Miss Allonby had poisoned herself.

The Fulfilment is a most remarkable book. The authoress believed it was a direct revelation to her from God, and there is no doubt that she was possessed with a passionate and absorbing longing to give to the world what she considered to be a Divine message. She knew, however, that the work would give offence to the religionists, and therefore decided to sacrifice her life so that it might be published in a complete form and in order that no charge of irreverence or self-seeking could possibly be brought against her, and that not even the most bigoted could doubt her sincerity. Her attitude on this point will be gathered from the following words, contained in the last letter she wrote to her publishers:—

"I feel it all so much I cannot talk about it. For all I write about I love and fear. God knows I have not been familiar; I have only loved simply both God and man. But there is only one way of showing it, and that by dying simply. When I am once out of the way the big stumbling-block has been removed. People can no longer think I have written with a fanciful irreverence when I have had before me, all the time, nothing but death; for I believe, looking back, it was there with the very first page. And so (for when this reaches you I shall be dead—only to this world) I leave it as my dying request, that you publish, exactly as I have sent it to you, *The Fulfilment*. You must ask the gentleman to return it, and tell him my decision. And at the same time I do not wish you or him, or anyone, to think that his criticism has anything to do with my death. For I do not wish you or anyone to view me as a common suicide—overcome by this or that, or bowed down by the thought of failure or disappointment. I have simply died to make room for a great truth. And I have died humbly trusting in God. And so you cannot deny me that which I decide. To you it must become an impersonal affair. You must publish it because it is a dying command, and publish it word for word as I have left it."

It would have been thought that this dying request was of too sacred a character to be refused. But those acquainted with the bigotry of certain people professing to be Christians will hardly be surprised to learn that it was not respected. After much anxious thought, we are told in the introduction to *The Fulfilment*, it was decided to submit the work to "a well-known and prominent London minister, of broad views and large sympathies." His opinion was that the book should not be published at all, or, if published, that all the emendations suggested by the publishers should be carried out.

This latter course was adopted, the book was given to the world in a mutilated state—in one case a whole chapter is deleted—and the gifted and lovable young authoress laid down her life in a vain attempt to break through the barriers of religious prejudice and cant. The sacrifice would have been a profoundly pathetic one if it had succeeded; failure, however, adds unutterably to the pathos of the case, at the same time evoking the contempt which every fair-minded man will feel for the intolerance responsible for such failure. It may be fairly asked if the "well-known and prominent London minister of broad views and large sympathies," would have displayed the same courage and devotion in the propagation of his principles as were exhibited by

Miss Allonby. The comparison, I venture to think, will not result in favor of the reverend gentleman.

However, if Miss Allonby has failed in one sense she has succeeded in another—in drawing attention to the hypocrisy, intolerance, and shall I say, vindictiveness, of one who claims to be a follower of Christ but who had neither the common honesty nor courage to allow an opponent to utter views contrary to his own, even when those views were practically uttered from beyond the grave. Imagine the clamorous chorus of condemnation that would have gone up from the religionists if a Freethinker had behaved in a similar way with regard to a Christian; the violent abuse and the bitter invective that would have been levelled at his head! If this is a specimen of a parson of broad views one may be pardoned for feeling a little curiosity as to the attitude that would have been adopted by a narrow-minded one.

It was not contended for a moment that there was anything immoral in *The Fulfilment*. The sole objection to the omitted passages was that they "might give offence to earnest Christian people." The best answer to this humbug is contained in a letter written by Miss Allonby on August 13, 1905, in which she says:—

"Of course, I am a bit frightened of the world, but, believe me, I am a great deal more frightened of God. Real fear. That is what makes me write common sense about Heaven instead of twaddle, and as for people being so sensitive about Jesus Christ—they don't feel all that much or the world would be a vastly different place."

Miss Allonby had already made a reputation as an authoress of remarkable ability; two previous novels of hers—*Jewel Sowers* and *Marigold*—having attracted considerable attention. It has been hinted that her mind was slightly deranged. To this suggestion a sufficient rejoinder may be found in Dryden's couplet:—

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

If fearless conviction, honesty of heart, and sincerity of aim do indeed constitute derangement, it would be a good thing if all Christians were deranged in the same way.

The concluding sentence of the introduction to *The Fulfilment* will also form a fitting conclusion to this article:—

"When she took charge of the Lancaster school it had a none too enviable reputation either as regards behavior or education. By sheer strength of will, by the power of loving kindness, she made a wonderful change in two years. The children worshiped her, became well-behaved, obedient and attentive to their lessons. The school again earned its grants and gained good reports. One of the Inspectors in a report said that her influence had brought the school 'from Darkness into Light.'"

A. GREGORY.

Mr. Mann's Rationalism.

MR. MANN will no doubt excuse a very busy man for replying in a brief letter rather than by a large and dignified article. I select the main points in his communication.

1. He says that to accuse him of both timidity and intolerance is an unusual combination. Not at all; timidity of thought very frequently results in intolerant action. I think Mr. Mann is too timid to acknowledge, or even search for, the good qualities of Christianity. Like some other Freethinkers, he appears to think that conceding points to orthodoxy argues want of confidence in one's own heresy. And the same sentiment leads him into intolerance. To set down the history of an important religion like Catholicism as a mere record of "fifteen centuries of blood and fire" seems to me a libel on whole nations.

2. As to the saints. I have read the lives of all the leading saints, and I utterly deny that they are correctly portrayed by the assertion that "morbid

details constituted the normal actions of their lives." When I say this, I am thinking of such historic figures as Saints Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Xavier, Francis of Assisi, Vincent de Paul, Loyola, Dominic, Becket, Elizabeth, and others of that type. I am quite aware that the Catholic calendar includes simpletons, madmen, and neurotics, but I look at the broad outlines of Christian sainthood, not at the paltry exceptions. A very just conception may be gained by reading Baring Gould's *Lives of the Saints*.

3. The relation between the Church and culture. Mr. Mann is right in charging the Christian church with a narrow contempt for classical learning. But here again he pushes his thesis too far. He implies that the Arabian philosophers rescued Europe from the peril of ignorance. I gladly give honor to the Mohammedans and their science. But science alone does not make liberal culture. The master-poet of Christianity was Dante, who was the equal of Homer and Shakespeare; and Dante studied in Catholic universities in Paris, Bologna and Padua. It would be absurd to class him as a product of Mohammedan scholarship.

4. When Mr. Mann describes "Church and State" as "two robbers," I get a little bewildered, and must confess I hardly know how to continue the discussion. I believe that both Church and State have, in the main, been beneficent institutions; though, to be sure, I (as a member of the Labor party) want to see the State drastically modified, and (as an Atheist) I want to see the Church completely humanised.

All this fervid affirmation of mine, however, is only intended as academic fury, and is consistent with entire amiability towards Mr. Mann. I have never met your correspondent, but if ever we share a plate of bread and cheese between us, I am sure we shall get along very happily in spite of our differences about the blessed saints!

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Birrell didn't keep quiet over the Education question long—for he is an inveterate talker. He had another innings at a house dinner at the Bristol Liberal Club. He said that the Education Bill was to be the Bill of the Session. And he hoped for a happy settlement. "He would only breathe," he is reported to have said, "the prayer that the Christianity they were all anxious to impart to the children of the working classes, would not entirely disappear from the debates of the House of Commons." Which simply proves that Mr. Birrell forgets that he should be a statesman, and only remembers that he is a Christian. The expression he used, indeed, is quite impudent. Who are the "all" who are anxious to teach Christianity to the children of the working classes? Are there not many non-Christians amongst the electors? Are there not non-Christians in the House of Commons? What about old members like Mr. John Morley, and new members like Mr. J. M. Robertson? What, even, about the sixteen Jews in the House of Commons? And the cream of the joke is that Mr. Birrell himself, in his lucid intervals of straightforward honesty—which are naturally not too frequent now that he is in office—professes his personal preference for the principle of Secular Education, as the only one which harmonises wisdom and justice.

In a leading article on Mr. Birrell's speech at Bristol the *Daily News* had something really exquisite. "Mr. Birrell," it said, appeals for a tolerant—that is to say a Christian—spirit in the House of Commons." This identification of Christianity with toleration is peculiarly rich. Its audacity is almost sublime. For the religion thus complimented has shed more blood than any other religion on earth. Not only has it hated all open dissent, it has carried on endless internecine persecution—one Christian Church detesting and fighting another Christian Church with the bitterest hostility. Even in England to-day Christianity keeps up laws against Freethinkers, and positively refuses to abolish them. Moreover, Christianity is the one religion in the world that brands all other religions as false and blasphemous idolatries. Why, the *Daily News* itself, has as much toleration for "infidels," and as much honor in dealing with them, as a shark has for a shipwrecked sailor.

The *British Weekly* has sense enough to see that the Liberal Government will never be able to satisfy the more fanatical Nonconformists in the matter of Education. It therefore suggests that Mr. Birrell, when he has finished drafting his Education Bill, and before producing it, should "invite the leaders of the Church of England and of the Free Churches to a conference"—by which means "a reconciling and stable settlement" might be arrived at. How beautiful! With what calmness the two great religious parties are advised to pool their resources, and form a *Trust* to the exclusion and ruin of all competitors! A more barefaced policy was never propounded. If the Liberal Government consents to it, it will earn the contempt of every man of principle in the country.

All the Labor members, as far as they accept the resolution of the Trade Union Congress, are pledged to Secular Education. There are thirty-one of them who were supported by the Parliamentary Committee. They are numerous enough to make it pretty warm for a Liberal Government which takes its policy from the heads of Churches. And we hope they will do so. Most of them must be well aware that it is really the religious squabble, and nothing else, which stands in the way of a great democratic reform of our Educational system. Those who bow to the Church leaders betray the interests of the children.

Dr. Clifford has taken another turn at the old wheel. In another long letter to the *Daily Chronicle* (brevity was never the soul of his wit) he rebukes Dr. Macnamara for proposing the "teaching of the elemental truths of Christianity as revealed in the Bible." That must not be done by the State. The Bible should be kept in the schools, but should only be used to teach "ethical lessons" from—and who can object to ethical lessons? Thus the reverend Passive Resister improves the straightforward, if mistaken, politician, and seeks to achieve the very same object by a subterfuge. Dr. Clifford knows as well as we do that if the Bible is used in the schools at all it cannot help being used as a book of religion. That is what it professes to be, that is what the great majority of the managers and teachers believe it to be, and that is what Dr. Clifford and all the rest of the Black Army want it to be.

There is another thing that Dr. Clifford wants. He wants to see the *ad hoc* system revived. In other words, he wants the old School Boards brought back—at least in the towns. He advances various reasons, but his *real* reason is kept back. If the School Boards are restored every School Board election will, as before, be simply a religious fight between Church and Dissent. And Dr. Clifford believes that Dissent would win. The one object of this hypocritical "Cromwell" of the Passive Resistance movement is to secure Nonconformist control of elementary schools in all the great centres of population. This is the key that interprets his actions. This is the purpose that underlies his controversial wobbling. This is the bed-rock beneath his welter of words.

Dr. Guinness Rogers, the Nestor of Nonconformity, still stands by its old original principle. "Among the faithless, faithful only he." In his latest utterance he declares that the State can have "no right and no competence to interfere in the province of religious life at all"—not even in the State schools. And he adds that he has "not met with any attempt to prove that such interference has been attended with any religious benefit to the children." "It is quietly assumed," he continues, "that religion ought to be honored by being thus included in the curriculum of the day school. But the home, the Sunday-school, the church, are (each in its own turn and its own measure) far more potent instruments." Dr. Rogers is absolutely in favor of Secular Education being given by State teachers in State schools to the State's children.

The article on Dr. Rogers's view in the *Daily News* was a delightful exercise in wobbling. Our pious contemporary has no principle in the matter; or rather it believes that any principle will do if it only brings grist to the Nonconformist mill. Mr. Cocoa Cadbury's organ, therefore, tries to reconcile the view of Dr. Rogers with the view of Dr. Clifford, in order to bring about a workable understanding between Nonconformist leaders. In its own beautiful language there are "many solutions of the religious difficulty." Exactly so. There are many ways of going wrong. There is only one way of going right. And there is only one right solution of the religious difficulty—which is Secular Education in the State schools, leaving religion, which is a private and personal matter, to private and personal agencies.

The Bishop of Liverpool does not dread the new Liberal government. He says that many of its members are

religious gentlemen, and would be the last to wound the consciences of Churchmen. Even the Labor party gets some soft words from this right reverend father in God. He admits that power has passed from the middle classes to the masses, but the masses are not "hostile to Christianity"—they are only "indifferent." The good old man doesn't see that indifference will be just as bad as hostility in the long run. What does it matter whether a ship is thrown high up on the rocks by a storm or left stranded by a never-returning tide? She is done for either way.

Free Church organs boast that there are 176 of their men in the new House of Commons. It is announced that they are all going to attend a prayer meeting on Friday, March 2. No, no, not a prayer meeting; that was a slip of the pen; we should have said a public dinner at the Hotel Cecil—which will probably be much more to their liking. The unsuccessful Free Church candidates will also be invited to the feast, and Mr. Birrell, Mr. Bryce, and Mr. Lloyd George will join in the oratory. All they want now is Jesus Christ in the chair.

The Gentle Jesusites had a beanfeast at the Church of St. Roch, Paris, when the police went there to take an inventory under the new law separating Church and State. The faithful crowded the building and all its approaches, and went for the poor police in first-rate Christian style. We take the following items from the special report in the *Daily Chronicle*. A well-dressed woman rushed from her seat, went up to M. Nalbert, the inspector, saying "Judas, I salute you," and spat in his face. Many elegantly dressed ladies smashed dainty umbrellas over the heads and shoulders of the luckless "coppers." A whole brigade of Christian amazons, backed up by men wielding chairs, charged the little band of policemen and hurled them down the steps. "Men hit them, while women in silk attire clawed their faces or dragged them forward by the hair." When they reached the street "their uniforms were in shreds and they were bleeding from many wounds." These are the people who are always preaching respect for law and order. They are like hell-cats when they cannot have their own way.

There were still worse scenes when the police went to the Church of St. Clothilde on the south side of the Seine. A regular pitched battle took place, some fifty of the police being injured, and more of the Gentle Jesusites. The latter wielded sticks and sword canes, if they were males, and umbrellas, if they were females. The fire engines had to be brought out to play upon the "law and order" crowd. Finally a detachment of sappers with crowbars and axes had to be brought upon the scene. They stormed the gate and broke in the front door, and a number of the holy garrison were carried off to prison. News of the affray being carried to the Chamber of Deputies, and causing a sensation, M. Rouvier, the Prime Minister, assured the Chamber that the law would be considerably but firmly carried out in spite of all obstacles.

There was another pitched battle the next day at the Church of St. Pierre du Gros Caillou. Between two and three thousand of the faithful had assembled to resist the agents of the law. They threw stones, bricks, and other missiles at the besiegers. Some of them flourished revolvers, others cut the policemen's hands with knives. Once more the firemen had to play upon them through the windows until the church was an ankle deep with water. Finally the soldiers had to be set to work again to capture the church and clear out its holy defenders. A great many arrests were made, and several warriors of the cross will get a taste of imprisonment. A Catholic duke is already doing three months. Of course these disorders were organised—with the connivance of the clergy.

People ought to be glad to die in a church. One would think that they would be sure of heaven then. But somehow or other it always strikes them differently. A false alarm of "Fire!" in a Vienna church caused a general stampede. The adults rushed for the doors quite regardless of the children whom they ruthlessly trampled under foot. One little girl, who was killed, had her hair almost completely torn away from the scalp. Fifty other children were badly injured, some of them having their legs or arms broken. Locks of hair, clinging to children's caps, were picked up all over the place. What a disgusting scene! Would an audience of Atheists have acted so badly? Could they possibly have acted worse?

While the general elections were occupying our attention in England the bloody work of repression was going on in Russia. The reports recently to hand are enough to make

the coldest blood boil. In Moscow alone hundreds of men and women have been shot in cold blood without any form of trial. The autocracy is going to stick at nothing to regain its power. And the holy Czar sits like a malignant spider at the centre of the villainous web. What a pity it is that God does not call this pious scoundrel home. The English law does not permit us to hope that someone would send him there.

The following fact will show the part that religion plays in the awful Russian drama. The Governor-General of Moscow has opened a subscription for the erection of a church for the first Don regiment, in recognition of its services in the suppression of the Moscow revolt. A new house of God is to be built in honor of the Cossack butchers of men, women, and children. Good! It is well that the people should understand what religion really means.

A hundred times we have said that the existence—the much-needed existence—of a National Society for the Protection of Children from Cruelty in England, is in itself a sufficient reason for recalling English missionaries from every part of the "heathen" world. It is our own "savages" that require conversion. Most of the "heathen," including Kaffirs and negroes, would be astonished to hear that such a Society was necessary in such a swagger Christian country as England. They would hardly believe it. They would think you were "having" them. This is not a prejudiced view on our part. It is the sober truth. And we are glad to see that Mr. Rider Haggard has been saying pretty much the same thing, at least as far as the facts are concerned, at a meeting of the local Branch of the N.S.P.C.C. at Lowestoft. The following is an extract from his speech as reported in the *London Daily Chronicle* :—

"In his youth he had seen a good deal of savage life, and studied closely those savages with whom he had come in contact. It was a sad reflection for him to be forced to the conclusion, as he was, that in some way the contemned and despised savage was superior to the civilised English person. He never heard among savages of such cases as were daily presented to the readers of the reports of the N.S.P.C.C.

He never heard of the maltreatment or starving, or beating of children, so far as he was acquainted with the facts, among the primitive classes of mankind. He feared they must say that the truth was that in some way civilisation appeared to be a failure in that respect."

There you are, good Christians! Just think of it. Savages don't ill-treat their children. Christians do. The awful cruelties inflicted on children in Christian England would make the average savage shudder to his very marrow. What is the use of Christianity, then? Will somebody kindly tell us?

We have often said that some Japanese missionaries are wanted in Great Britain, and we may live to see them arrive. Our own missionaries go to Japan and preach "Christ," but the Japanese missionaries over here would preach efficiency and civilisation. A beginning in this direction is already made. The Japanese government is being urged to make representations to its Ally with regard to the state of its Army. Great Britain's comic-opera army—the creation of the classes—is the laughing-stock of the world. It costs more than any other army in the world, and is worth ever so much less. We hope the Japanese will get us to take the red army in hand effectually. After that we might deal with the Black Army.

A Welsh boy was singing a hymn in a mine, when a "fall" took place and buried him. Was it an act of Providence? He couldn't have been treated worse if he had been singing a comic song.

The Bishop of London is a most incontinent man. We mean with respect to his tongue. He never knows where to begin, and he never knows where to leave off. He is now carrying on a purity crusade—which is one of the very worst enterprises he could engage in. The only effectual way of promoting purity is being pure oneself; and the man who is that doesn't talk about it—any more than a pure-minded wife keeps telling people that she is true to her husband. But the Bishop of London thinks otherwise. He is a garrulous person—a chatterer. His tongue flies first, and his brain after it, without always overtaking it. We can imagine the more sensible Churchmen shuddering when they see his name in the newspaper reports. They must feel that he is giving them away. Some of them, indeed, must be wishing that he was never allowed more than five minutes in the pulpit—which is the time the King allowed him to preach at the Coronation.

In the course of his purity crusade the Bishop of London addressed "a mass meeting of men" at the Northampton

Institute, Clerkenwell, and a report of the proceedings appeared in the *Morning Leader*. He is said to have spoken "the naked truth." Well, he might easily do that, after reading the Bible carefully; for there is a tremendous quantity of "naked truth" in Holy Writ, and some of it very decidedly in need of a sterner cover than fig leaves. One of Dr. Ingram's naked truths was addressed to unmarried men. In order to dissuade them from fornication he gave them the following chapter from his own private biography:—

"I was 48 years old last Friday, and I'm not ashamed of it. I've never been married. I have lived a hard life all the time, and yet to-day I can play every game which I played when I was 20, as hard as I could play it 28 years ago. And I am able to work from morning to night without stopping. And I've only been ill once in my life, and then only for a week. Therefore it sorely tries my patience when I hear it contended that you can't be healthy and you can't be strong unless you trample some poor woman under foot."

Now it is very odd, to say the least of it, for a man to get up and talk like this in public. According to Christian tradition, which is accepted by Protestants like Jeremy Taylor, as well as by all Catholics, Jesus Christ died a virgin; and the Bishop of London publishes the fact that he is in the same condition himself. The information is very interesting, of course, to all who are fond of personal gossip. But everything depends in this case on one man's word—and nobody is in a position to say what it is worth. That, however, is not precisely our point. What we want to say is this: that the Bishop's argument seems to show that it is a mistake to get married at all. If he has been ill but once in his life, and then only for a week, it is difficult to see how he could have been much healthier, and easy to see that he might, in other circumstances, have been a good deal worse. On the whole, therefore, it seems to us that Bishop Ingram had better mind what he is saying. And perhaps what he is doing. For he may go setting up a celibate brotherhood—if he hasn't started one already; and end by becoming a monk in the Catholic Church.

The virginal Bishop strikes us as being particularly foolish in his final observation. He might have asked himself how it happens, in Christian England, that an unmarried man can gratify his lust by "trampling some poor woman under-foot?" This would be impossible amongst the Zulus. Why is it possible amongst the English—after all these centuries of Christianity? Why, to begin with, do men want to trample women underfoot? What is their Christianity worth if it leaves them with that evil disposition? And why do women allow themselves to be trampled underfoot? Surely they do not submit to it voluntarily. What is the reason, then? Does it not lie in the unwise and unjust dependence in which women are placed by Christian societies? The precariousness of their livelihood renders them victims of the lecher's lust as well as the sweater's greed. That is the problem which has to be tackled. Talk like Bishop Ingram's has been going on for nearly two thousand years. And what has been the good of it? One little bit of sensible social reform is worth all the sermons ever preached.

The *Southport Guardian* printed some romantic things about the late George Jacob Holyoake. The first is that he fell into "the toils of Queen Anne's Blasphemy Laws" in 1842. What on earth are Queen Anne's Blasphemy Laws? We never heard of them before. The second is that before he had served his six months' imprisonment a Bill was "passed through the House of Commons wholly repealing the obnoxious law." This is another piece of imaginary history. It is pure unadulterated fiction. "Later on in life," it is said, "he suffered three weeks' imprisonment for refusing to take an oath." This is more fiction.

The next story is not quite so harmless. "Shortly before his death," we are told, "Mr. Bradlaugh sent for Mr. Holyoake and made private amends to him for an act of injustice which Mr. Holyoake had suffered at his hands. But the public acknowledgment which was no less his due was never made." We do not believe a word of this story. It bears all the marks of an invention. What it alleges of Bradlaugh is so unlike him. What it alleges of Holyoake is so unlike him too. Bradlaugh was not the man to act in that private way; and Holyoake was not the man to keep it private. Anyhow, we believe that the incident must have been known to Mrs. Bonner (Bradlaugh's daughter) if it ever occurred. We appeal to her, therefore, to say whether her father did send for Mr. Holyoake "shortly before his death." If her answer is in the negative, as we feel sure it will be, the *Southport Guardian* should in honor give the name of the friend who wrote those Reminiscences of George Jacob Holyoake. That he is an enemy of Bradlaugh the article itself bears ample witness.

Having to go north we left Miss Vance to send the *Southport Guardian*, on our behalf, to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, with a letter asking her for a few words of repudiation. Mrs. Bonner wrote in reply: "No, a thousand times NO: my father never sent for Mr. Holyoake. Whatever amends were due were from Mr. Holyoake to him, not from him to Mr. Holyoake." Mrs. Bonner adds some words of very natural indignation, but what we have quoted is sufficient for our present object. Bradlaugh did not send for Holyoake. That is the point. The whole story is a lie.

We have seen a lithographed circular, signed by the Rev. Dr. Warre, late Head Master of Eton, begging money for the "poor clergy." He states how many of the dear men of God have small incomes, but he says nothing about those who have large ones. It does not occur to him that if a Bishop has several thousands a year, and a curate only a pound a week, a little levelling down is the obvious remedy. Why bother laymen when there is so much money within the fold?

Dr. Warre says that there are 7,000 curates with incomes of only £130 a year. Well, there are millions of working men and women with less. Those who preach "Blessed be ye poor" should not be the first to complain of £2 10s. a week.

Casually picking up a paper a few days ago, and looking at the list under the heading of "Recent Wills," we noticed three out of the fourteen as having some relation to our criticism of Dr. Warre's financial appeal for the poor clergy. Three men of God had left a good deal of money behind them, not being able to take it with them, or being afraid that it would soon melt where they were going. The least of this glorious trinity was the Rev. John Bayley Davies, rector of Waters Upton, Salop, who left £5,161. The next in size was the Rev. Joseph Hurst Lupton, D.D., of Kensington, London, who left £14,328. The biggest was the Rev. Dr. Charles John Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester, who left £73,562. Evidently there are good pickings in the Church yet, and the lean parsons might clearly be fattened by sweating down the bloated ones a bit.

We regret that a leading article in *Reynolds'* gave fresh currency to the statement that the late Mr. Holyoake wrote to Mr. John Burns: "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace," and that our contemporary does not correct the misstatement although it has been asked to do so. What Mr. Holyoake really wrote to Mr. Burns was this: "Permit one whom age has shorn of nimbleness to bring tardily his tribute of congratulation. Was he not one of the first to see that thou hadst a star—now in the ascendant—shining with Cabinet radiance over the land? Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for his eyes have seen Industrial Salvation."

When the Queen's father died the newspapers told us that she bore her bereavement with great fortitude. Considering that she herself is a grandmother of sixty, and that her father was nearly ninety, a statement of this kind was positively sickening. If royal personages need "fortitude" to bear such a trouble, how do they manage to face the graver incidents of life? The truth is that the newspapers too often do their best to soften the moral fibre of the community by presenting a moral philosophy so perverted as to be absolutely ridiculous. And this is very largely the result of Christianity, with its fantastic conceptions and sloppy sentimentalism.

Mr. Frederick Robertson, of Leeds, a woollen manufacturer, aged fifty, committed suicide under the influence of religious mania. He had been a local preacher, and was exceedingly fond of studying the bible. Not an Atheist, anyhow, as Talmage and Torrey would lead you to expect.

Madame Eugenie has been prosecuted for palmistry by the Dublin police. Why don't they prosecute the priests who take money for hurrying dead people's "souls" through "purgatory?"

There does not appear to be any celestial fire-brigade; otherwise "Providence" would not have allowed Christ Church, Mayfair, to be burnt down like a common public-house. The London fire brigade managed to save the Mayfair Hotel, just opposite. The church was beyond salvation.

Nebuchadnezzar tried a vegetable diet when Heaven bade him "go to grass," and it didn't agree with him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Applications for March and April must be made early.)

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 11, Liverpool. March 4, Glasgow.
- RIDGWAY FUND.—Scottish Freethinker (per Miss Vance) £1 1s. J. Partridge (183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham) also acknowledges: J. Brodie 1s., J. Lee 1s., T. Wright 1s.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, acknowledges: C. J. Metrose 5s.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—We meant a one-volume edition of the *complete* Byron (prose), which has only recently been published in several volumes by Murray. We are familiar with the editions you refer to.
- JIM BROUGH.—Yes, we shall do it thoroughly.
- A. WEBBER.—Dirty tactics, yes; but truth has a way of edging itself in, after all.
- J. BATES.—We should be glad to see some Freethought propaganda done in Nottingham, and to take part in it.
- W. J. C.—Thanks for your letter. Of course we shall mention the fact, in our articles, that our exposure killed the "Atheist Shoemaker" story, in spite of Mr. Holyoake's "vindication," because the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes took the book out of the market afterwards, so that it could not be obtained for love or money.
- B. L.—Pleased to hear from you, and to know that you "read the *Freethinker* every week and enjoy it very much." In a certain sense, one lady reader is worth two of the other sex. They make good propagandists, and their influence is powerful "behind the scenes."
- J. MACKINTOSH.—Glad to hear that of all the weekly papers you buy and read you like the *Freethinker* the best. Mr. Annan Bryce's return at Inverness is preferable, from our point of view, to the return of his opponent. Mr. Bryce's answer *re* Secular Education was quite satisfactory. His answer *re* the Blasphemy Laws was not exactly ideal, but it looked (so to speak) in the right direction.
- T. D. C. EVANS.—Thanks for your appreciative and encouraging letter. You may rely upon our going "on" anyway. And ours is a battle in which we cannot lose; for all the truth we have spread abroad, and all the good we have done, *remains*, whatever happens to us personally. For the rest, see paragraphs.
- J. BLACKHALL.—The *Christian Age* half column on the late George Jacob Holyoake, which you send us, is taken verbatim from the *Daily News*. The bigots can't even refrain from stealing from each other.
- F. D. (Birmingham) writes:—"Many thanks for the *Freethinker* which I have received for six weeks. I like it very much, and have ordered it from my newsagent." This should encourage our friends to send us more addresses of persons who might become subscribers after a similar experience.
- H. F.—The Bradlaugh story may be true enough, but the Ingersoll one looks apocryphal. Thanks for your trouble.
- T. WILLIAMS.—Glad to hear that Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., spoke in favor of Secular Education and gave both our Blasphemy Law questions an emphatic "Yes"—also that the same may be said of Mr. D. A. Thomas, M.P.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for your welcome cuttings.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Pleased to have your letter. Convey our compliments to the ninety-six-years-old veteran at Leamington.
- SCOTTISH FREETHINKER, sending a guinea, hopes the Ridgway Fund will be made more substantial.
- 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*.
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—holds rather more people than the Alexandra Hall, and was just large enough for the evening audience. Mr. Foote was in good form, and his lectures were applauded both liberally and enthusiastically. To-day (Feb. 11) the Liverpool Branch platform will be occupied by Mr. John Lloyd, and we hope to hear of his having good meetings and the heartiest reception. Mr. Lloyd will be followed by the late Charles Bradlaugh's daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner.

Mr. Foote will not be doing any platform work for a week or two. He has to devote all his time for a while to his literary work and correspondence, which are both in arrear.

Mr. Eden Phillpotts, the novelist—and a fine one too—had a sonnet on "Holyoake" in Tuesday's *Tribune*. The poem was a rapturous panegyric, and opened by apostrophising its subject as "Thou glorious Titan." Exception may be taken, however, to the following lines:—

"Never again shall clang the iron door
Thy bleeding hands thrust open and held fast."

Mr. Phillpotts has evidently been misled into believing that George Jacob Holyoake was the last sufferer from the Law under which he was imprisoned in 1842. As a matter of fact, the iron door that clanged on Holyoake then clanged on Thomas Paterson in 1843 and again in 1844; on Matilda Roalfe in 1844; on Thomas Pooley in 1867; on G. W. Foote, W. J. Ramsey, and H. A. Kemp in 1883; and on Robert Ferguson in 1885. Even poets should try to be accurate, and Mr. Phillpotts ought to be obliged to us for correcting his chronology.

We were pleased to read the following letter, which will interest our readers:—

"THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'TRIBUNE.'

SIR,—Your interesting references to the work of Mr. Holyoake prompt me to remind you that the Blasphemy Laws under which he suffered are still on the Statute Book. The mere fact that they are only enforced now and again make them an extremely dangerous weapon, which will only be used when the victim is thoroughly unpopular. Will you not use your great influence to get them abolished altogether? It would at once be a fitting tribute to Mr. Holyoake's memory, an act of genuine Liberalism, and a real help to the spread of the Christian religion, which is only hindered by its opponents not being allowed full play.

I am, your truly,

STEWART D. HEADLAM."

Rev. Stewart D. Headlam has always been a consistent opponent of the Blasphemy Laws. He spoke at some of the great protest meetings held during our own imprisonment under the Blasphemy Laws in 1883. Whether he is right, however, in supposing that "the spread of the Christian religion" will be promoted by the concession of fair play to Freethought, time alone will show. Our own impression is to the contrary. And we rather doubt the wisdom of pressing such a point. For if "the spread of the Christian religion" is to be a determining factor, a great many Christians will use Mr. Headlam's principle to justify a very different policy.

Mr. John Burns, M.P., President of the Local Government Board (but, after all, there is only one John Burns) is well-known to be a Freethinker. He has been a considerable reader and book-collector, and, according to the *Book Monthly*, his library runs to about 5,000 volumes, the principal number being works on social and industrial questions, although other branches of literature are well represented. Amongst the poems, he has a special fondness for Robert Burns (who was also a Freethinker) his favorite lines from the Scottish bard being the famous quatrain:—

"To make a happy, fireside clime
For weans and wife;
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life."

Shelley is one of John Burns's pets. He also admires Walt Whitman. Of course he reads Shakespeare; even Mr. Bernard Shaw can't help doing that. But he holds that Shakespeare's attitude towards the common people is "that of a scoffer, not an interpreter"—which he finds rather sad when he thinks of Shakespeare's "unmatched intellect." Well, we hope John Burns will cheer up. Shakespeare is not as bad as he fancies. The great poet depicted all sorts of kings, all sorts of nobles, all sorts of priests and warriors, and all sorts of common people. If he ridiculed Jack Cade, as he had a right to, he made old Adam, the serving man, perhaps the noblest character in *As You Like It*. Of course Shakespeare was not acquainted with the modern industrial movement, and Trade Unions, and general suffrage, and even Socialism. He had a great deal to learn, if he could only have lived long enough to learn it. But there was one

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had fine meetings at Liverpool on Sunday. The Branch's new meeting-place—Milton Hall, in Daulby-street

thing he did know, and that was *human nature*—which is probably a more important thing, after all, than politicians and social reformers seem to recognise.

Mr. Robert Donald gives a character-sketch of John Burns in the *Nineteenth Century*. It is very interesting, and we commend it to our readers attention. But one point in John Burns's career is omitted—his visits to the Hall of Science, his sitting for some time at the feet of Charles Bradlaugh, and his early connection with the National Secular Society. We suppose that John Burns's biographers don't think it "respectable" to mention such things now.

Mr. J. de Caux, in a letter to the *Eastern Daily Press*, plays very neatly with a writer signing himself "Churchwarden" who had been referring to "the object which all true Christians should unite in attaining," namely, "simple religious instruction" in the public schools. Mr. de Caux begged him to explain what "simple religious instruction means," but the gentleman does not seem inclined to answer. Mr. de Caux also asked him to explain what "true" means before "Christians." Are there any "false" Christians? And what is the difference between Christians and "true" Christians? These are very disconcerting questions, and we understand why "Churchwarden" does not answer them.

We see by the *Yarmouth Mercury* that our friend Mr. J. W. de Caux, sitting as Chairman on the full Bench dealing with music-license applications, raised the point of law on which we obtained a decision some time ago before Mr. Justice Warrington. He pointed out that the magistrates had no power whatever to grant licenses on Sundays, and that all persons who carried on entertainments on Sunday (with a charge for admission) were liable to heavy penalties. The Clerk observed that there was an Act of some twenty years ago modifying the old law of George III. Mr. de Caux replied that it did not modify the law at all; it merely reaffirmed the right of the Crown to remit penalties in criminal cases, which no one disputed. "So far as I am concerned," the Chairman concluded, "I say that we are not in a position to grant the licenses asked for, and I point out the consequences to those persons who may carry on entertainments on Sundays."

We are glad to see Mr. de Caux raising this point. Hitherto the laws passed in the interest of bigotry have been applied with great partiality. Christians have been allowed to break the law with impunity, and Freethinkers have suffered every time. Even the Blasphemy Laws—which it is pretended are only meant to put down "indecent" discussion—are never enforced against Christians. The victims are always Freethinkers. Christians may be as "indecent" as they please in religious controversy. They made the law, and they administer it, so they feel pretty safe themselves. But they may yet be made to smile on the other side of their faces; and Mr. de Caux's action is a good step in that direction.

The new Liberal ministry (British) includes two well-known Freethinkers, Mr. John Morley and Mr. John Burns. Editor Foote of the London *Freethinker* does not expect from them any material assistance for secular education or the abolition of the blasphemy laws, as they work with the Nonconformists. Mr. Foote notes that the members of Parliament who are not overburdened with religion declare themselves for secular education to satisfy their intellects, and go on promoting another policy which satisfies their interests. America is not unacquainted with that variety of politicians.—*New York "Truthseeker."*

HAPPINESS AND MORALITY.

There is a restless endeavor in the mind of man after happiness. This appetite is wrought into the original frame of our nature, and exerts itself in all parts of the creation that are endued with any degree of thought or sense. But as the human mind is dignified by a more comprehensive faculty than can be found in the inferior animals, it is natural for man not only to have an eye each to his own happiness, but also to endeavor to promote that of others in the same rank of being; and in proportion to the generosity that is ingredient in the temper of the soul, the object of its benevolence is of a larger or narrower extent. There is hardly a spirit on earth so mean and contracted as to centre all regards on its own interests, exclusive of the rest of mankind. Even the selfish man hath some share of love which he bestows on his family and his friends. A nobler mind hath at heart the common interest of the society or country of which he makes a part. And there is still a more diffusive spirit,

whose being or intentions reach the whole mass of mankind, and are continued beyond the present age to a succession of future generations. The advantage arising to him who hath a tincture of this generosity in his soul is, that he is affected with a sublimer joy than can be comprehended by one who is destitute of that noble relish. The happiness of the rest of mankind hath a natural connection with that of a reasonable mind. And in proportion as the actions of each individual contribute to this end, he must be thought to deserve well or ill, both of the world and of himself.—*Bishop Berkeley, "The Guardian," No. 83.*

ULTIMATE MYSTERY.

Nothing wraps a man in such a mist of errors as his own curiosity in searching things beyond him. How happily do they live that know nothing but what is necessary! Our knowledge doth but show us our ignorance. Our most studious scrutiny is but a discovery of what we cannot know. We see the effect, but cannot guess at the cause. Learning is like a river, whose head, being far in the land, is, at first rising, little and easily viewed; but still, as you go, it gapeth with a wider bank: not without pleasure, and delightful windings, while it is on both sides set with trees and the beauties of various flowers: but still the further you follow it, the deeper and the broader it is, till at last it enwaves itself in the unfathomed ocean. There you see more water, but no shore, no end of that liquid, fluid vastness. In many things we may sound Nature in the shallows of her revelations; we may trace her to her second causes, but beyond them we meet with nothing but the puzzle of the soul, and the dazzle of the mind's dim eyes. While we speak of things that are, that we may dissect and have power and means to find the causes, there is some pleasure, some certainty; but when we come to metaphysics, to long-buried antiquity, and unto unrevealed divinity, we are in a sea which is deeper than the short reach of the line of man. Much may be gained by studious inquisition, but more will ever rest which man cannot discover. I wonder at those that will assume a knowledge of all; they are unwisely ashamed of an ignorance which is not disgraceful; it is no shame for man not to know that which is not in his possibility. We fill the world with cruel brawls in the obstinate defence of that whereof we might with more honor confess ourselves to be ignorant.—*Owen Felltham's "Resolves," pp. 66-67.*

RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object recognised as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree, and in as high a sense, as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of their others.—*John S. Mill.*

It is a most terrible, continual, and revolting blasphemy that men (using all possible means of deception and hypnotisation) assure children and simple-minded folk that if bits of bread are cut up in a particular manner while certain words are pronounced over them, and if they are put into wine [the Greek Church sacrament], God will enter into those bits of bread, and any living person named by the priest when he takes out one of those sops will be healthy, and any dead person named by the priest when he takes out one of these sops will be better off in the other world on that account; and that into the man who eats such a sop—God himself will enter.—*Tolstoy.*

Some ideas there are that lie beyond the reach of any catastrophe. He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities, of every day life. And therefore, come happiness or sorrow, the happiest man will be he within whom the greatest idea shall burn the most ardently.—*Maeterlinck.*

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

Moderation in the carrying out of what is good and right is raro. What we commonly see is either pedantic delay or reckless hurry.—*Goethe.*

Optimists who undertake to soothe the soul by extracting its ills, resemble those charlatans who advertise "painless dentistry." But the wary are not deceived.

—*W. R. Paterson, "Benjamin Swift."*

The Book of the Acts.—X.

ITS UNAUTHENTIC AND UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER.

(Concluded from p. 76.)

8. ONLY one more matter narrated in the book of the Acts calls for special notice. This is the ascription of the power to work miracles to the two great teachers Peter and Paul. As regards the first of these, Peter is represented as healing a lame man (Acts iii.), of curing a man suffering from palsy (Acts ix.), and of raising a young woman from the dead (Acts ix.). It is further related of this thaumaturgus that the people of Jerusalem "carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least *his shadow* might overshadow some one of them," and that "there also came together a multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: *and they were healed every one*" (Acts v. 15-16). According to this story, the streets of Jerusalem were turned into an immense hospital, with Peter marching up and down the different wards healing the patients right and left, either by the word of command or his shadow. And the evidence upon which we are asked to believe these miraculous cures is the same as that for every other narrative in the book: Luke, who was not present, and who did not live in apostolic times, has recorded them.

Next, as might be expected, similar wonderful cures are related of Paul. That apostle, if we believe the narratives in the Acts, smote a sorcerer with blindness (Acts xiii.), healed a cripple (Acts xiv.), expelled an evil spirit from a damsel (Acts xvi.), cured many other sick persons (Acts xix.), restored a dead man to life (Acts xx.), and healed many others of various diseases (Acts xxviii.). It is also related of this apostle that "unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out" (Acts xix. 12). The evidence for these miracles is the same as for those alleged to have been wrought by Peter: Luke, the second century editor, has recorded them. It is scarcely necessary to say that we have not the testimony of a single person who claimed to have been healed by either of these great miracle-workers, nor even that of anyone who professed to have witnessed one of these wonderful cures. Luke, no doubt, found them recorded in the documents he has revised and pieced together, and probably invented very little beyond composing the speeches which he has placed in the mouths of Peter, Stephen, Gamaliel, and Paul, and inserting a few historical names to give his compilation the semblance of history. Who was the original inventor of the legends it is now impossible to say.

We will next see what Paul has to say on the power to work miracles in his day. Writing to the Gentile church at Corinth that apostle says:—

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.....For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of [evil] spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 4-10).

From this statement it would appear that only one of these "gifts" was given to any one individual. It is further to be noticed that the possessor of the power to speak with "tongues" did not possess the power to interpret those tongues. This is clearly shown in the following passages:—

"For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries..... Wherefore let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret" (1 Cor. xiv. 2, 13).

We thus arrive at the fact, already noticed, that the speaking in a tongue was simply the utterance of

unintelligible gibberish when in a state of religious excitement. And this was the one "miraculous" gift possessed by Paul, who says:—

"I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all: howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding.....than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. xiv. 18-19).

We have seen, in Acts ii., that Luke has represented the apostles as speaking with tongues to people "from every nation under heaven," and that "every man heard them speaking in his own language"—a big bouncing lie as the foundation of the story, with a speech composed by Luke himself, and placed in the mouth of Peter, built upon it. This we may take as a sample of how New Testament history was written.

As regards the miraculous "gifts" mentioned by Paul, the truth appears to be that the Christian church claimed that certain members of the sect possessed one or other of those gifts. Stories were told, from one to another, of the marvellous cures wrought by apostles and others, but no one had ever witnessed the wonders related. As an example, Irenæus says of the Christians of his day (A.D. 185):—

"For some do certainly and truly drive out evil spirits.Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and have remained among us for many years" (Against Heresies, ii., xxxii., 4).

This statement, like that made by Paul, was of course based only upon hearsay evidence. It was simply believed that some among the brethren possessed the miraculous powers named. Only some three or four years before Irenæus composed his work on Heresies, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, writing to his friend Autolyceus, said (i., 13-14):—

"Then, as to your denying that the dead are raised—for you say, 'Show me even one who has been raised from the dead, that seeing, I may believe'—first, what great thing is it, if you believe, when you have seen the thing done?.....God, indeed, exhibits to you many proofs that you may believe him. For consider the dying of seasons and days and nights, how these all die and rise again. And what? Is there not a resurrection going on of seeds and fruits?"

The writer of this letter was contemporary with Irenæus, but though, like the last-named bishop, he boasted of men being raised from the dead by Christian miracle-workers in his day, he had not the smallest idea where one of these resurgent beings might be found, and so was unable to effect the conversion of a dear friend. The same was the case in the time of Paul: miracles of healing were everywhere spoken of, but no one had ever witnessed such miracles himself.

Returning to the Pauline Epistles, we find in one of them (2 Tim. iv. 20) Paul is represented as saying: "Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick." It goes, of course without saying that if the great Apostle of the Gentiles possessed the so-called gift of healing, he would not have left a sick colleague behind him unhealed. It may, however, be here objected that some critical scholars—Renan, for instance—deny the authenticity of the Second Epistle to Timothy. Well, if the epistle be a forgery, the evidence is at least conclusive to orthodox Christians who believe the whole Bible from cover to cover. It is also certain that the Christian forger knew nothing of the miracle-working Paul described in the book of the Acts.

Coming now to an epistle which is generally admitted to be authentic, even by Renan—that to the Philippians—we find the Apostle of the Gentiles saying of a fellow laborer named Epaphroditus (ii. 26-27):—

"He longed to see you all, and was sore troubled because ye had heard that he was sick: for indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow."

It is clear from this passage that Paul feared his co-worker was about to die, an event which would have

added to his many sorrows. Had he possessed the power to heal diseases, the illness of his friend would not have given him a moment's uneasiness. Happily, Epaphroditus recovered without his aid, and so he was spared the grief he would have experienced at losing him.

Sufficient has now, I think, been said of the character of the narratives in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul possessed no miraculous powers whatever. As already shown, the picture drawn of that apostle in this veracious history is from beginning to end fictitious. So likewise is that of the miracle-working Peter. The matters described in the Acts are purely mythical. Every event therein narrated that can be tested by genuine history is proved to be fabulous. And the only evidence that can be adduced for the historicity of the work is that it was compiled by Luke, a second century writer.

ABRACADABRA.

Ingersoll's First Lecture.—III.

(Continued from p. 61.)

ONE instance is related where a man was attacked by what appeared to be a wolf. He defended himself and succeeded in cutting off one of the wolf's paws, whereupon the wolf ran and the man picked up the paw and putting it in his pocket went home. When he took the paw out of his pocket it had changed to a human hand, and his wife sat in the house with one of her hands gone and the stump of her arm bleeding. He denounced his wife as a witch, she confessed the crime and was burned at the stake. People were burned for causing frosts in the summer, for destroying crops with hail, for causing cows to become dry, and even for souring beer. The life of no one was secure, malicious enemies had only to charge one with witchcraft, prove a few odd sayings and queer actions to secure the death of their victim. And this belief in witchcraft was so intense that to express a doubt upon the subject was to be suspected and probably executed. Believing that animals were also taken possession of by evil spirits and also believing that if they killed an animal containing one of the evil spirits that they caused the death of the spirit, they absolutely tried animals, convicted and executed them. At Basle, in 1474, a rooster was tried, charged with having laid an egg, and as rooster eggs were used only in making witch ointment it was a serious charge, and everyone of course admitted that the devil must have been the cause, as roosters could not very well lay eggs without some help. And the egg having been produced in court, the rooster was duly convicted and he together with his miraculous egg were publicly and with all due solemnity burned in the public square. So a hog and six pigs were tried for having killed, and partially eaten a child, the hog was convicted and executed, but the pigs were acquitted on the ground of their extreme youth. As late as 1740 a cow was absolutely tried on a charge of being possessed of the devil. Our forefathers used to rid themselves of rats, leeches, locusts and vermin by pronouncing what they called a public exorcism.

On some occasions animals were received as witnesses in judicial proceedings.

The law was in some of the countries of Europe, that if a man's house was broken into between sunset and sunrise and the owner killed the intruder, it should be considered justifiable homicide.

But it was also considered that it was just possible that a man living alone might entice another to his house in the night-time, kill him and then pretend that his victim was a robber. In order to prevent this, it was enacted that when a person was killed by a man living alone and under such circumstances, the solitary householder should not be held innocent unless he produced in court some animal, a dog or a cat, that had been an inmate of the house and had witnessed the death of the person killed. The prisoner was then compelled in the presence of such animal to make a solemn declaration of his innocence, and if the animal failed to contradict him, he was declared guiltless,—the law taking it for granted that the Deity would cause a miraculous manifestation by a dumb animal, rather than allow a murderer to escape. It was the law in England that any one convicted of a crime, could appeal to what was called *corned* or morsel of execration. This was a piece of cheese or bread of about an ounce in weight, which was first consecrated with a form of exorcism desiring that the Almighty, if the man were guilty, would cause convulsions and paleness, and that it might stick in his throat, but that it might if the man were innocent, turn to health and nourishment. Godwin, the Earl of Kent, during the reign of Edward the Confessor, appealed to the *corned*, which sticking in his throat, pro-

duced death. There were also trials by water and by fire. Persons were made to handle red hot iron, and if it burned them their guilt was established; so their hands and feet were tied, and they were thrown into the water, and if they sank they were pronounced guilty and allowed to drown. I give these instances to show you what has happened, and what always will happen, in countries where ignorance prevails, and people abandon the great standard of reason. And also to show to you that scarcely any man, however great, can free himself of the superstitions of his time. Kepler, one of the greatest men of the world, and an astronomer second to none, although he plucked from the stars the secrets of the universe, was an astrologer and thought he could predict the career of any man by finding what star was in the ascendant at his birth. This infinitely foolish stuff was religiously believed by him, merely because he had been raised in an atmosphere of boundless credulity. Tycho Brahe, another astronomer who has been, and is called the prince of astronomers—not only believed in astrology, but actually kept an idiot in his service, whose disconnected and meaningless words he carefully wrote down and then put them together in such a manner as to make prophecies, and then he patiently and confidently awaited their fulfillment.

Luther believed that he had actually seen the Devil not only, but that he had had discussions with him upon points of theology. On one occasion getting excited, he threw an inkstand at his majesty's head, and the ink stain is still to be seen on the wall where the stand was broken. The Devil I believe, was untouched, he probably having an inkling of Luther's intention, made a successful dodge.

In the time of Charles the Fifth, Emperor of Germany, Stœffler, a noted mathematician and astronomer, a man of great learning, made an astronomical calculation according to the great science of astrology and ascertained that the world was to be visited by another deluge. This prediction was absolutely believed by the leading men of the empire not only, but of all Europe. The commissioner general of the army of Charles the Fifth recommended that a survey be made of the country by competent men in order to find out the highest land. But as it was uncertain how high the water would rise this idea was abandoned.

Thousands of people left their homes in low lands, by the rivers and near the sea and sought the more elevated ground. Immense suffering was produced. People in some instances abandoned the aged, the sick and the infirm to the tender mercies of the expected flood, so anxious were they to reach some place of security.

At Toulouse, in France, the people actually built an ark and stocked it with provisions, and it was not till long after the day upon which the flood was to have come, had passed, that the people recovered from their fright and returned to their homes. About the same time it was currently reported and believed that a child had been born in Silesia with a golden tooth. The people were again filled with wonder and consternation. They were satisfied that some great evil was coming upon mankind. At last it was solved by some chapter in Daniel wherein is predicted somebody with a golden head. Such stories would never have gained credence only for the reason that the supernatural was expected. Anything in the ordinary course of nature was not worth telling. The human mind was in chains; it had been deformed by slavery. Reason was a trembling coward, and every production of the mind was deformed, every idea was a monster. Almost every law was unjust. Their religion was nothing more or less than monsters worshiping an imaginary monster. Science could not, properly speaking, exist. Their histories were the grossest and most palpable falsehoods, and they filled all Europe with the most shocking absurdities. The histories were all written by the monks and bishops, all of whom were intensely superstitious, and equally dishonest. Everything they did was a pious fraud. They wrote as if they had been eye-witnesses of every occurrence that they related. They entertained, and consequently expressed, no doubt as to any particular, and in case of any difficulty they always had a few miracles ready just suited for the occasion, and the people never for an instant doubted the absolute truth of every statement that they made. They wrote the history of every country of any importance. They related all the past and present, and predicted nearly all the future, with an ignorant impudence actually sublime. They traced the order of St. Michael in France back to the Archangel himself, and alleged that he was the founder of a chivalric order in heaven itself. They also said that the Tartars originally came from hell, and that they were called Tartars because Tartarus was one of the names of perdition. They declared that Scotland was so called after Scotia, a daughter of Pharaoh, who landed in Ireland and afterward invaded Scotland and took it by force of arms. This statement was made in a letter addressed to the Pope in the 14th century and was alluded to as a well-known fact. The letter was written by some of the highest dignitaries of the church and by direction of the king himself. Matthew, of Paris, an eminent historian

of the 13th century, gave the world the following piece of valuable information: "It is well known that Mohammed originally was a Cardinal and became a heretic because he failed in his design of being elected Pope."

The same gentleman informs us that Mohammed having drunk to excess fell drunk by the roadside, and in that condition was killed by pigs. And this is the reason, says he, that his followers abhor pork even unto this day. Another historian of about the same period, tells us that one of the popes cut off his hand because it had been kissed by an improper person, and that the hand was still in the Lateran at Rome, where it had been miraculously preserved from corruption for over five hundred years. After that occurrence, says he, the Pope's toe was substituted, which accounts for this practice. He also has the goodness to inform his readers that Nero was in the habit of vomiting frogs. Some of the croakers of the present day against progress would, I think, be the better of such a vomit. The history of Charlemagne was written by Turpin the Archbishop of Rheims, and received the formal approbation of the Pope. In this it is asserted that the walls of a city fell down in answer to prayer; that Charlemagne was opposed by a giant called Fenacate who was a descendant of the ancient Goliath; that forty men were sent to attack this giant, and that he took them under his arms and quietly carried them away. At last Orlando engaged him singly; not meeting with the success that he anticipated, he changed his tactics and commenced a theological discussion; warming with his subject he pressed forward and suddenly stabbed his opponent, inflicting a mortal wound. After the death of the giant, Charlemagne easily conquered the whole country and divided it among his sons.

The history of the Britons, written by the Archdeacons of Monmouth and Oxford, was immensely popular. According to their account, Brutus, a Roman, conquered England, built London, called the country Britain after himself. During his time it rained blood for three days. At another time a monster came from the sea, and after having devoured a great many common people, finally swallowed the king himself. They say that King Arthur was not born like ordinary mortals, but was formed by a magical contrivance made by a wizard. That he was particularly lucky in killing giants, that he killed one in France who used to eat several people every day, and that this giant was clothed with garments made entirely of the beards of kings that he had killed and eaten. To cap the climax, one of the authors of this book was promoted for having written an authentic history of his country. Another writer of the 15th century says that after Ignatius was dead they found impressed upon his heart the Greek word Theos. In all historical compositions there was an incredible want of common honesty. The great historian Eusebius ingeniously remarks that in his history he omitted whatever tended to discredit the church and magnified whatever conducted to her glory. The same glorious principle was adhered to by most, if not all, of the writers of those days. They wrote and the people believed that the tracks of Pharaoh's chariot wheels, were still impressed upon the sands of the Red Sea and could not be obliterated either by the winds or waves.

The next subject to which I call your attention is the wonderful progress in the mechanical arts. Animals use the weapons nature has furnished, and those only—the beak, the claw, the tusk, the teeth. The barbarian uses a club, a stone. As man advances he makes tools with which to fashion his weapons; he discovers the best material to be used in their construction. The next thing was to find some power to assist him—that is to say, the weight of falling water, or the force of the wind. He then creates a force, so to speak, by changing water to steam, and with that he impels machines that can do almost everything but think. You will observe that the ingenuity of man is first exercised in the construction of weapons. There were splendid Damascus blades when ploughing was done with a crooked stick. There were complete suits of armor on backs that had never felt a shirt. The world was full of inventions to destroy life before there were any to prolong it or make it endurable. Murder was always a science—medicine is not one yet. Scalping was known and practised long before Barret discovered the Hair Regenerator. The destroyers have always been honored. The useful have always been despised. In ancient times agriculture was known only to slaves. The low, the ignorant, the contemptible, cultivated the soil. To work was to be nobody. Mechanics were only one degree above the farmer. In short, labor was disgraceful. Idleness was the badge of gentle blood. The fields being poorly cultivated produced but little at the best. Only a few kinds of crops were raised. The result was frequent famine and constant suffering. One country could not be supplied from another as now; the roads were always horrible, and besides all this, every country was at war with nearly every other. This state of things lasted until a few years ago.

(To be continued.)

THE SWEET BY-AND-BYE!

The right faith of man is not intended to give him repose, but to enable him to do his work. It is not that he should look away from the place he lives in now, and cheer himself with thoughts of the place he is to live in next, but that he should look stoutly into the world, in faith that if he does his work thoroughly here, some good to others or himself, with which however he is not at present concerned, will come of it hereafter. And this kind of brave, but not very hopeful or cheerful faith, I perceive to be always rewarded by clear practical success and splendid intellectual power; while the faith which dwells on the future fades away into rosy mist and emptiness of musical air.—*John Ruskin.*

No religion has ever preached things so evidently incompatible with reason and with contemporary knowledge, or so immoral, as the doctrines preached by Church-Christianity. Not to speak of all the absurdities of the Old Testament, such as the creation of light before the sun, the creation of the world six thousand years ago, the housing of all the animals in the Ark; or of the many immoral horrors, such as injunctions to massacre children and whole populations at God's command; not to speak even of the absurd Sacrament of which Voltaire used to say, that though there have been and are many absurd religious doctrines, there never before was one in which the chief act of religion consisted in eating one's own God—not to dwell on all that, what can be more absurd than that the Mother of God was both a mother and a virgin; that the sky opened and a voice spoke from up there; that Christ flew into the sky and sits somewhere up there at the right hand of his father; or that God is both One and Three, not three Gods like Brahma, Vishna, and Shiva, but One and yet Three? And what can be more immoral than the terrible doctrine that an angry and revengeful God punishes all men for Adam's sin, and sent his son on earth to save them, knowing beforehand that men would kill him and would therefore be damned; and that salvation from sin consists in being baptised, or in believing that all these things really happened, and that the son of God was killed by men that men might be saved, and that God will punish with eternal torments those who do not believe this?—*Tolstoy.*

HIS NIGGARDLINESS.

"I sho'ly hates, bruddren and sistahs, to publicly stigmatise any membuh ob dis congregation by name," grimly remarked good old Parson Woolimon, during a recent sermon, fixing a basilisk glare on a certain miserly and unproductive person before him. "Time after time, when de contribution box hab circumambulated around, de brudder under specification ain't flung in nary cent, but dess sot and sot and soaked up de sermint, and neber said 'boo!' about payin' his predestined pro ratty. Dar comes a time, muh friends, when procrastination done ceases to be virtuous, and I is now gwine to ax dat disliberal and reluctant pusson why'n't he reorganize his 'sponsibilities and retaliate wid a 'casional nickel or a little so'thin' dat-a-way. Don't yo' know, Brudder Slewfoot—I's gwino to predicate to him—don't yo' know dat yo' am due and elected to lend to de Lawd? Don't yo'—?"

"I knows all dat, and mo', too," doggedly replied the economical Mr. Slewfoot. "I knows dat, all right enough, and I stands ready and willin' to lend to de Lawd. When de Lawd comes atter de money I's er-gwine to fork it ober; but I sho' proclaims in a high, clear voice dat I ain't gwine to hand it out to nobody else!"—*Watson's Magazine.*

HOW GOD PUNISHED JACOB.

Diocesan Examination. Girls' School, Standard II. Class being questioned by Inspector on the lives of Jacob and Esau. "Now you all know that God punishes sin?" "Yes, sir." "Who can tell me how He punished Jacob?" One hand up. "Well?" "Please sir, He made him marry the wrong wife first."

The train drew up at a railway station of a small provincial town, and the Bishop, who was to preach that evening in the parish church alighted. "Hi, my man," he called to the porter, "hurry up and fetch my luggage." But that functionary declined to over-exert himself, even for a Bishop. "Do you know," exclaimed his lordship irately, "that I'm the Bishop of —?" The porter's reply was disconcerting. "Oh, are yer guvner?" he remarked. "Then I reckon you've got a nice, sawft job. You stick to it."—*Tribune.*

"Whatever God has made is perfect," said a preacher to his hearers. "What do you think of me?" said a hunchback, rising and exhibiting his own deformity. "Why, that you are as perfect a hunchback as I ever saw."

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, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Adventures of Mr. Samson."

COUNTRY.

ADROSSAN: Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 8, Joseph McCabe, "From Microbe to Man." With lantern illustrations.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward, 11 (in the Bull Ring), "The Christian Creed: Irrational and Immoral"; 3, "Which Came First—the Hen or the Egg?" 7, "The Virgin Mother and Ghost Father of Jesus."

BRIDGE-OF-WEIR (Freeland Hall): Thursday, Feb. 15, at 8, Joseph McCabe, "From Microbe to Man." With lantern illustrations.

CARDIFF BRANCH N. S. S. (Maskell's Café, St. Mary-street): Monday, Dec. 11, at 8, E. J. Shea, a Paper; 9, Debate, Messrs. Willmore and Davies, "The Higher Criticism."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Madame Ethel Roberts, Recital.

FALKIRK BRANCH N. S. S.: Monday, Feb. 12, at 8, Joseph McCabe, "From Microbe to Man." With lantern illustrations.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): Mr. Joseph McCabe, 12 (noon), "The personality of Professor Haeckel"; 6.30, "Our Prehistoric Ancestors, I, The Primeval Savage," with Lime-light Illustrations.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 7, "At Home"; Monday, Feb. 12, Mr. John Paul, "The Single Tax on Land Values."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): John T. Lloyd, 3, "Should Freethinkers be Miserable?" 7, "The Latest Peril of the Christian Faith."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. Harvey Simpson, "Cremation."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Feb. 15, at 8, R. Chapman, "Hereditry and Education."

PAISLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): Tuesday, Feb. 13, at 8, Joseph McCabe, "From Microbe to Man." With lantern illustrations.

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, Jas. B. Grant, "Individualism and Socialism."

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