

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVI.—No 13

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 1906

PRICE TWOPENCE

There is neither virtue, utility, nor courage, in attacking prostrate opinions; nor generosity in disturbing the tranquil contented ignorance, which reposes in silence upon exploded dogmas. It is living, thriving, mischievous error which calls for refutation; it is corrupt, profitable, and intriguing misrepresentation which should be fearlessly attacked.—SIR T. C. MORGAN.

Randolph Churchill and Charles Bradlaugh.

I.

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S father once described the late Mr. Gladstone as an old man in a hurry. It was not a flattering description. Some would say it was not even civil. A good many people regarded the man who uttered it as "a bounder." And certainly there was a large strain of that element in his composition. His self-assertion was in excess of his natural capacity. Whether a trace of this defect appears in his son is a question on which there may be a difference of opinion. It is the fashion at present to praise Mr. Winston Churchill. His cleverness must be admitted. His heroism has not yet been demonstrated. Granting that his motives are perfectly honorable, it cannot be denied that he left the losing party for the winning one; and, whatever else this may imply, it certainly does not involve the possession of supernatural courage.

Mr. Churchill's two volumes of biography of his father received very laudatory press notices, and the public was duly informed that he had netted thousands of pounds by the undertaking. We are not called upon to regret that Lord Randolph Churchill's reputation has been of such pecuniary advantage to his son; but we may be allowed to express a doubt as to whether a public man's Life should be written by his offspring. A child can hardly criticise his parent before the world without partiality, and if he does so the spectacle is not very edifying. The Gladstone family are to be congratulated on entrusting the biography of the great Liberal statesman to the independent and competent hands of Mr. John Morley.

We have looked through the two big and monstrously expensive volumes entitled *Lord Randolph Churchill*. We do not pretend to have read them carefully and minutely. There are portraits of "Randy," as he was familiarly called, in this work; and we do not understand how anyone could look at them and say "Here is a great man." The face is not that of a great man. It is not even an attractive face. Neither are the written contents of the book attractive, except to those who take an interest in the barren game of party politics. The whole story too much resembles the scuffling of kites and crows. Lofty ideals, generous motives, patient efforts for the general welfare, are only conspicuous by their absence. This book was the sensation of a season, but we believe it will soon have had its day.

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Why then are we troubling about this book at all? Do we merely want to say unpleasant things about Lord Randolph Churchill or his talented son? Nothing of the kind. We have a much better object. There is matter in this book to point a moral if not to adorn a tale. Quite unintentionally, no doubt, Mr. Churchill makes a startling revelation of his father's character in relation to the great "Bradlaugh struggle"; and we are decidedly of opinion that this revelation should be disembarassed of alien matter and duly emphasised; so that Freethinkers, at least, may see once more, and see vividly, how many motives besides sheer bigotry are usually mixed up in the persecution of "infidels."

II.

The Bradlaugh struggle could not be avoided in the Life of Lord Randolph Churchill. By playing the part he did in it the quarrelsome young nobleman first brought himself into serious prominence. With a quick eye for immediate personal advantage, although he was without sound political sagacity, Lord Churchill saw his chance of riding into popularity on a wave of religious fanaticism. Charles Bradlaugh, hated as a militant Atheist by the bigots, and dreaded as a Radical agitator by the privileged classes, knocked for admission at the door of the House of Commons. In his hands he held his legal right of entry; it was the returning officer's certificate that he had been duly elected to represent Northampton. There was a wide and intense desire to keep him out, if the thing could be done; and this passionate hatred of a great man, too much in advance of his time for his own comfort, and even for his being understood, was seized upon and exploited by Lord Randolph Churchill, at the head of a small band of ambitious young politicians, who were soon afterwards known as the Fourth Party. Mr. Churchill asserts, or rather he suggests, that his father was perfectly sincere in opposing Bradlaugh. We always held the contrary opinion, and we believe we can justify it from Mr. Churchill's own pages. It may be correct to say of Lord Randolph Churchill that "there was in his character a strong element of religious feeling." But this is a personal matter which we do not care to discuss, and in which we take very little interest. We shall not concern ourselves with subjective feelings, but with objective facts; and we shall infer Lord Randolph Churchill's motives in the same way as a jury infers those of the prisoner in the dock. Nor is that all. We shall be able to quote the noble lord in his own condemnation. And we beg to thank Mr. Churchill, in advance, for enabling us to do this. He will know what we mean when we come to the evidence.

III.

It is curious how Bradlaugh acts as a touchstone. One can only conclude that self-reproach for his own unfortunate attitude in the Bradlaugh struggle prompted Mr. Morley's undercurrent of sneering at

that great protagonist in the *Life of Gladstone*. Mr. Morley went out of his way, in a footnote, to mention that Bradlaugh was vain of his legal ability. Even if this were true—which it is not—it might have occurred to Mr. Morley that we are all entitled to our foibles when they do not hurt others, and that Bradlaugh had good reason for patting himself on the back, if he felt that way inclined, seeing that he had won so many legal battles, and had finally fought single-handed against all the legal ability the Tories and bigots could procure for love or money, and, after years of dreadful contention, had plucked victory at last from the very jaws of despair. He was done for, he was ruined, his case was utterly hopeless, his enemies were rejoicing over his defeat; but they had not calculated on the spring of his splendid energies in the midst of appalling dangers. There was a supreme effort, the deadly swirl of his sword wrought frightful havoc amongst his foes, and presently he stood panting but triumphant.

Mr. Churchill is not exactly a John Morley, but it is possible for him to share one of Mr. Morley's faults. He also, recollecting that his father was beaten, and beaten ignominiously at the finish, by the bold and bad Iconoclast, feels that he must sneer at Bradlaugh and damn him with faint praise.

Some of our readers, particularly the older ones, whose minds go back to the Bradlaugh struggle, will be amused at the way in which Mr. Churchill approaches it. After a hasty reference to Bradlaugh's early trials and efforts he proceeds as follows:—

"These harsh and varied experiences had influenced his mind against many established institutions, human and divine. As a bold and effective platform speaker, or under the pseudonym of 'Iconoclast,' he was accustomed to set forth what occurred to him against Christianity, the Bible and the House of Brunswick, to the severe displeasure of the more prosperous or more contented classes in the nation. In the year 1877 he intruded upon still more dangerous ground and made himself responsible for the republication of a pamphlet about over-population, its evils and its remedies and other Malthusian topics, which, being among the most tremendous of natural problems, have long been judged unfit for public discussion. The pamphlet is said to have attained a sale of 180,000 copies, and the publisher was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, from which he only escaped by the timely discovery of some legal flaw. Mr. Bradlaugh's struggles against authority, penury and obloquy were now to be transferred to a more brightly-lighted stage."

The loose irresponsibility and the affable condescension of the writer are really delicious. It is not for nothing that Mr. Churchill is his father's son. He has no realisation of the fact that he is dealing with a great man. Probably it never could occur to him that Bradlaugh was a greater man than Mr. Winston Churchill.

IV.

Mr. Churchill shows his animus and his inaccuracy in his account of how the Bradlaugh struggle began. He tries to throw the blame of it all upon Bradlaugh. Of course his object is to cover up the fault of his father and his father's friends. But this policy will not succeed. It was the Fourth Party that started the game of baiting the Atheist. The official leaders of the Conservative party were dragged into it by the mutineers. Sir Stafford Northcote, the Conservative leader in the House of Commons, was personally in favor of passing an Affirmation Bill; and it is well-known that Beaconsfield called Bradlaugh's opposers "fools" and said they would live to find out their mistake.

Mr. Churchill tries to throw the blame on Bradlaugh in this way:—

"If Mr. Bradlaugh had been content to take the oath ostentatiously among a crowd of members at the beginning of the session, it is almost certain that no question would have been raised. He chose instead in the most public manner to cast down a challenge."

Mr. Churchill adds that the challenge was "eagerly accepted"—by his father and his father's friends. In other words, Bradlaugh played to the gallery, and invited chastisement.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

The Bishop of London's Mission.

CONSIDERING that religion is indestructible, the efforts required to keep it alive are, to say the least of it, surprising. Considering also what a powerful moral guide it is, the ease with which some Christians go astray, and the difficulty of getting the rest to come within reasonable distance of their professions, provides likewise cause for astonishment. It has been the same right through the history of Christianity. Revival after revival, special evangelist after special evangelist, mission has followed mission, and always with the same result—ultimate failure. The astonishing thing about these missions is that those who are responsible for them never seem to learn much from their failure. They go on repeating the same old stories, using the same tactics, meeting with the same reward, and showing at the end the same old stupidity. Or perhaps it is that while *some* do learn a little wisdom from these failures, there are always enough of Carlyle's "mostlies" to fill the place vacated by their retirement from the field.

The very basis on which most religious missions rest is fallacious. The idea that human nature can be changed in the twinkling of an eye—that a man can go in a drunkard or a thief at one door, and come out a sober or a honest man at another, like a Chicago porker entering one end of a machine alive and kicking, and leaving the other as a variety of commodities ready for the market—is wholly and incurably absurd. That religious leaders should work along these lines is proof of their worthlessness as social guides; and that many of our political and social leaders should encourage such missions is also proof that with preachers as with parliamentarians the people very largely get the kind they deserve. But to those who have but the barest appreciation of the scientific aspect of the problem it is evident that by these missions the more effective aspect of human nature is never touched. Indeed it is often weakened by an orgie of crude emotionalism, leaving the convert, socially, in much the same condition as a drunkard just recovering from a prolonged debauch.

Presumably, as Messrs. Torrey and Alexander did not succeed in bringing all London to the feet of Jesus, the Bishop of London is at present seeing what can be done with a mission of his own in North London. This district is peculiarly well provided with churches, and it is either a proof of what has been said above or a small compliment to the crowd of resident preachers that the mission should have been decided on. On the same significant line was the Bishop's sermon on "Indifference." Only think of it! Patent indifference to Christianity in spite of the elaborate machinery of the Churches, and in spite of its beauties and benefits being, so we are told, so very obvious. Really the fact of widespread indifference to Christianity is in itself *prima facie* evidence that the Bishop's religion is not what he would have us believe it is. If people are indifferent to religion it is not because there is any lack of religious preaching or advertising. After all, the beauties of Christianity cannot be very obvious nor its benefits very striking if people continue indifferent in spite of the inducements for them to be otherwise.

The Bishop is sad when he thinks of the "gradual secularisation of Sunday—how the fathers who used to bring their boys to church now spend whole Sundays with them, playing golf." Or when he thinks of "the sceptical articles in the magazines which are read in the clubs by men who have not sufficient knowledge to see the shallowness of them, and which work untold mischief among thousands." And when he thinks of these things he can only look up and trust in the Lord—which shows he realises that things are in a bad way, for people never trust to the Lord while there is a fair promise of help from other quarters. Well, it is only right and proper that the Bishop—being a Bishop—should be sad at these things; but to be quite serious (which

is rather difficult where Mr. Ingram is concerned), what is there for *other* people to be sad over a father playing golf on Sunday with his boys instead of dragging them off to church? I do not think that a parent could well spend Sunday in a better manner than in some outdoor exercise with his sons. Of course, the Bishop would prefer them to be at church; but that is mere professionalism. The boat-maker might substitute rowing for golf, or the publisher reading for either; but trade interests can be pushed *too* far. Or if it be a question of developing habits, then I would venture to observe that the bad habits picked up in church are far more numerous than those that can be contracted on a golfing course.

Then there are the sceptical articles. Far be it from me to deny that some of them may be shallow. But will anyone claim that, taking them one with another, they are shallower than articles on religion? Week by week it is a part of my self-imposed duty to read through a fearful and wonderful compilation called the *Christian World Pulpit*. It is a journal devoted entirely to sermons. Sixteen pages every week! And as these sermons are published they are, presumably, of the best. Yet week by week I marvel at the unending stream of cheap rhetoric and mental garbage. Now, I have correctives at hand in the shape of healthier literature, of which I take a dose before and after, thus getting it down in a species of sandwich. But I often wonder what must be the effect on the minds of those who read this journal through seriously week after week! And the *Christian World Pulpit* is only one of a huge class. Could anyone after the merest glance through this mass of brain-softening literature honestly speak of the *shallowness* of sceptical literature? Surely no one—but a clergyman.

Among the causes of indifference the Bishop places thoughtlessness first. This may be true enough but it applies to many other things beside religion, and it says little for the effect of Christian culture that thoughtlessness should be so strong a characteristic of the average man or woman. Next to this comes the customary stupid disquisition on "honest doubt," as though doubts could be picked up and thrown on one side at will. The Bishop, who seldom handles a stupid topic without adding some specially stupid comment of his own, adds that doubt is another cause of indifference. And by doubt, as is shown by what follows, he means definite disbelief in Christianity. But the Freethinker does not "doubt" the truth of Christianity he has a positive conviction on the subject. The man who doubts partly believes; and the Freethinkers conviction that Christianity is false is as definite as any Christian's belief that it is true. Nor is the Freethinker indifferent to Christianity. His belief as to its falsity and injurious effect on the world's life is ample proof of this.

Bishop Ingram has a strange liking for the word "shallow." It is the princes of science, he says, "like Professor Stokes" who are Christians. "It is your shallow man—your second-hand man of science—that is the one who time after time you find to be sceptic." It is always more or less unprofitable to bandy names, but would anyone save the Bishop of London class Darwin, or Huxley, or Haeckel, or Reclus, or scores of others that might be named as shallow second-hand scientists? The great thing is, however, that the name of one scientist opposed to Christianity is worth a score of names in its favor, for the simple reason that the scepticism of the one has been brought about as the result of his knowledge, the belief of the twenty has been held in spite of their scientific acquirements. And a further fact of great significance is that almost invariably the Christian scientist appeals for support to a branch of knowledge in which he is not an authority. The biologist appeals to physics, the physicist appeals to biology, where they could speak with authority they are usually silent.

At the conclusion of one of his addresses the Bishop of London dealt with a number of questions he had received, by post and otherwise. One questioner asked, "Why does God keep the Devil in existence?"

To this the reply was that God would not crush the free-will of the Devil any more than that of man—which was really no reply at all. Besides it is rather rough on others that out of respect for the Devil's free-will, God should permit him to commit all sorts of mischief among men and women. Another complained that in his experience "when you want help you don't get it." The Bishop replied that we must not look for signs, although we have signs. The sacraments—the water in baptism, the laying on of hands in confirmation, the bread and wine in communion, were all signs of God's love to the world. What on earth is the connection between the question and the answer is really more than I can tell. Perhaps I am lacking in the "spiritual faculty."

One question dealt with the healing of the sick. There is no doubt as to the teaching of either the New Testament or the Prayer Book on this point, which is that disease may be cured by prayer and the laying on of hands. Mr. Ingram did not "feel justified" in saying more than that "we priests have not realised enough that we should definitely pray for the sick and lay our hands on them to help that recovery." All that one can say is that if the Bishop was a family man and trusted to either prayers or the laying on of hands to cure his children of sickness, he would have every chance of finding himself charged as a common criminal, and his fellow clergymen would say "serve him right." One questioner could not realise that God was a real person. The Bishop referred him to the Incarnation. "It ought not to be difficult after the Incarnation to realise that God was a real person." Why, certainly, the man who can believe in the Incarnation *ought* to be able to believe anything. Another questioner asked what was the meaning of "foolishness of preaching." The Bishop referred him to 1 Cor. i, 21. I would respectfully suggest a volume or two of the Bishop's sermons as being calculated to throw a flood of light on such an expression.

And so the Bishop goes on his way "Missionising" North London. All the regular Church goes muster in force and, as Charles the Second remarked of a popular preacher and his public in his day, as his foolishness suits their foolishness, each has a very enjoyable time. The Bishop sees a full church and fancies he is making headway, and the congregation listens to a live Bishop and, for the time, feels that nothing else matters. But meanwhile the world goes on its old course. The Freethinker continues in his disbelief, the believer grows less certain of his faith, the world's forces gather in strength to the downfall of superstition. The Bishop may show his energy and condensation in visiting cab-drivers, actors, and journalists. But it will really need something more than he seems able to supply to overturn the reasoned disbelief of intelligent men and women and once more set Christianity on its feet.

C. COHEN.

Credulity.

WHAT is credulity? Wherein does it differ from belief or faith? If we accept the authority of the Dictionary, we must say that credulity means "readiness of belief," or "a disposition to believe on slight evidence." A credulous person is described as one "easily imposed upon," or as one "apt to believe on slight evidence." In other words, a man is pronounced credulous when he believes *more* than his neighbors do. For example, an orthodox theologian, who believes in "the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, the forensic view of the Atonement, and such like, and calls them matters of faith," is accused of credulity by a liberal divine. "This is not faith," the latter cries, "but credulity." But what is faith as distinguished from credulity? Must not a man *believe* certain alleged facts before it can be said that he possesses or exercises faith? If faith signifies trust in God or Christ for salvation, does not such trust involve certain

beliefs about God and Christ? But who is to determine whether such beliefs are true or not? Myriads of people are convinced that they are not true; and have not these as good a right to charge the liberal divine with credulity as the liberal divine has to bring a similar accusation against his orthodox brother? Credulity is only a matter of *degrees*. You cannot trust in God without believing that He exists; and the belief in his existence is bound to carry with it some definite belief as to his nature and attributes. The Atheist is without God, and, therefore, without the ability to trust in him, and, consequently, without the pale of salvation.

Let us pause here. An Atheist is a person without belief in God, and, therefore, without "a *practical, evangelical, or saving faith*." Now, concerning such a faith two things are alleged even by the liberal divine, namely, that in its absence the highest and noblest type of character is unattainable, and that it is the gift of God. Observe the plight of the poor Atheist. The best life is out of his reach. Do what he may he can never become a perfect man, completely furnished for all the duties of life. He lacks the fundamental, all-essential requisite, *faith*. But have pity upon him, because the fault is not his, but God's. He has not faith because God has neglected to give it to him. It is to this that the teaching even of the most progressive theologians inevitably leads.

But some Atheists, or Agnostics, are exceptionally good people. They cherish a sublime ideal, and are helpers of their kind. A popular preacher said the other day: "I look upon faith as a God-given conviction of the reality of the highest we are made capable of seeing. Such faith involves self-committal to the service of the ideal; the man who is possessed by it is not necessarily better than other men, but by virtue of his larger vision he is appointed to be their helper." This kind of reasoning is akin to the worst species of quibbling. It is admitted that the late Professor Sidgwick was eminently great and good, that he "was a helper of his kind," and yet that he was "permitted to die an unbeliever." What has our popular preacher to say to this? Listen: "Professor Sidgwick was not, therefore, altogether an unbeliever. He was faithful to such vision as he possessed, and was a helper of his kind." Here is credulity with a vengeance; and not simple credulity either, but positive impertinence as well. Professor Sidgwick had *no* vision of God, and *no* assurance of a Hereafter, and no Christian has a right to assert that he had. The possession of the highest form of goodness is not a proof of the possession of any supernatural vision. But if the man who is possessed by what is called *saving faith* "is not necessarily better than other men," what is the use of characterising faith as *saving*? If men can become all they ought to be, or are capable of becoming, without it, is not the possession of it, to say the least, a superfluity?

Is it any wonder that such a case as that of Professor Sidgwick causes intelligent people to seriously inquire whether or not the Christian Faith is well founded, or of any vital importance? If men can both be and do good, on the largest scale, without having a religion, is not the suggestion permissible that religion is not the indispensable thing which so many people take it to be? In other words, are not Secularists abundantly justified in characterising all faith in the supernatural as undiluted credulity?

Let us not be afraid to follow the argument to its only legitimate conclusion. We have seen what concessions the liberal divine is prepared to make to anxious inquirers. He is willing to admit that avowed unbelievers may possess and exhibit the noblest type of character, although he is careful to add that when they do so they must be believers without knowing it, which is absurd. But in making such an admission he brands himself as a credulous person. It must be remembered, however, that he never makes that admission except under pressure from the logic of undeniable facts. Under ordinary circumstances, and when dealing with a different class of inquirers,

he seems to forget that he ever made it. When asked, "Why do you believe that it is impossible to fulfil life's purpose apart from Christ," he employs a language totally irreconcilable with such an admission. He takes for granted that, in such a question, it is assumed "that, according to Christian belief, no man can realise the purpose for which he exists and attain to his true destiny apart from Christ." Then he adds: "To this view I should give an unhesitating assent." Here we have a contradiction in terms of the most glaring type. If men can both be and do good, on the largest scale, without any religion whatever, is it not the very quintessence of absurdity to say that "no man can realise the purpose for which he exists and attain to his true destiny apart from Christ?" Can it be shown that men exist for any other purpose than that of being and doing good on the largest possible scale? If not, what becomes of this vain Christian boast? To say that "we have all been born into a civilisation which has been profoundly influenced by Christian ethical ideals" proves nothing, because it is capable of the most perfect demonstration that "Christian ethical ideals" have never been "indissolubly associated with the person of the founder of Christianity." The "ethical ideals" attributed to Christ have always existed and do still exist apart from Christ. They are to be found in Judaism and Mohammedanism quite apart from Christ, while in Buddhism we find, even according to Christian thinkers, ethical ideals which are superior, in some respects, to the Christian. The editor of the *Hibbert Journal* goes the length of saying that "a union between the forces of Christianity and Buddhism," would be a decided advantage to the world. No, Christianity is by no means the only ethical religion in the world, and he who claims that it is must be pronounced hopelessly credulous.

But there is more to follow. We are confidently assured "that all moral and spiritual progress is a manifestation of the Christhood of the race." "The Christhood of the race" is a brand new phrase, and I challenge anybody to tell me just exactly what it means. No such thing exists except in the fancy of specially credulous people. That it is a wholly meaningless phrase is evident from the following extraordinary passage:—

"The race is a solidarity; to perceive this and live for it is to fulfil life's purpose. There is no such thing as individual excellence. A noble life cannot be lived in isolation. The higher a man rises in the spiritual scale the greater becomes his power to pour himself forth for humanity; this is goodness, and there is no other kind of goodness. In its ultimate analysis goodness is self-givingness, love. This is what the life of our Lord made clear to the world. By following it we live forth Christ, which is what God wants us to do."

Most of that extract might have been spoken from a Secular platform by Mr. G. W. Foote or Mr. John M. Robertson. The solidarity of the race is a scientific truth recognised on all hands. It required no supernatural Being to tell us that "a noble life cannot be lived in isolation," or that a good man's aim is to "pour himself forth for humanity." That "in its ultimate analysis, goodness is self-givingness—love" is not a revelation from above, but a lesson learned through experience by humanity itself. It is a truth common to all the great religions, and it is ardently taught by myriads of people who have no religion at all.

The exhortation to trust God and accept Christ as Savior is said to be fundamentally different from the request to believe a series of propositions. We cannot trust God as we trust our relations and friends, because the existence of God is, at best, but a hypothesis. Our relations and friends are known to us as persons eminently trustworthy; but God, if he exists, is unknown except to the imagination. The exhortation to trust him presupposes the acceptance of certain theological dogmas, not one of which is susceptible of verification. "To begin with," observes Professor McTaggart, "it assumes that the dogma of the existence of a personal God has been already established. For the appeal to

trust God as we trust men loses all force if God is not a person. If the ultimate reality of the universe was an aggregate of atoms, or a chaos of sensations, or a substance devoid of will, intellect, and purpose, it would be futile to trust it." That is to say, it is impossible to trust in God without believing that He is a person, and that as a person He is infinite, all-powerful, all-good. In other words, before we can trust God as we trust men we must swallow a whole body of divinity; but this we cannot do unless we are prepared to believe, not only on slight evidence, but on no evidence at all. Under such conditions, it is utterly immaterial whether we believe *more*, with the orthodox, or *less*, with the progressives, because in all our beliefs, whether many or few, we show ourselves to be amazingly credulous.

According to the New Testament, credulity is the sublimest virtue. When the story of the Resurrection began to be circulated by the bereaved disciples, it is reported that Thomas declined to believe it. He was a man who insisted upon the presentation of satisfactory evidence. In course of time, such evidence was laid before him, and at once, being superlatively convinced, he is said to have exclaimed "My Lord and my God." Then Jesus is reported to have addressed him thus: "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; *blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed*" (John xx. 19). That incident may never have happened, but it illustrates the proposition that the more credulous people are the better Christians they make. The more child-like their faith is the more precious it is said to be in the sight of God. How often one hears the petition: "Grant, O Lord, that our trust in thee may be perfectly simple and child-like," and the oftener it is repeated the simpler and more child-like grows the trust.

Now, like the liberal divine, we condemn credulity and, unlike the liberal divine, we regard all faith in the supernatural as pure credulity. Up to a point, we follow his example, and all the way through, we act on his guiding principle. We refuse to believe in the absence of evidence. As there is no evidence of the existence of God and the unseen world we live without both, and devote ourselves exclusively to the world that now is. Numerous and irresistible to us are the evidences that this world exists; and it is our sincere conviction that we can realise the purpose for which we exist (if our existence has a purpose) and attain to our true destiny (whatever that may be) apart from Christ much more effectively than we could in imaginary fellowship with him. This is the Atheistic position, pure and simple. Our life is based, not upon a denial of the supernatural, but upon an emphatic affirmation of the all sufficiency of the natural.

J. T. LLOYD.

Rationalism and the Jewish Problem.

ALL Freethinkers, as the staunchest advocates of Humanitarianism on the world's platform to-day, will recognise the fact that among the many objects lying within its wide scope of activity, that of the amelioration of the condition of the Jews might not be one of its unworthiest.

Prima facie, this statement may appear to the reader altogether irrelevant, and as lying entirely without the immediate object of Freethought has nobly set itself to accomplish. But on closer examination he will find that it is not entirely groundless.

An intimate acquaintance with the inner life of Jews of almost all classes has led me to the conviction that the Jewish problem, which, thanks to "Christian charity" in barbaric Russia, has recently received such prominence, is not a mere economical question to be settled once for all by statesmen or philanthropists, but has also another aspect—perhaps, sociologically, the more decisive of the two—which might well be designated the moral or religious, in the general sense of the term.

It is justly and scientifically claimed by Freethinkers that one of the greatest—if not *the* greatest—evils that has hitherto played and is still playing havoc with human society, is religion popularly understood, better called superstition. This evil, however, is not simple in character but dual, so to speak; it has an external and internal side, a kind of reciprocity of action and reaction, which though in themselves hostile to each other, nevertheless in virtue of the law, so pithily expressed by the ancient Greeks in the formula, like knows like, compare unitedly against the individual or nation that happens to be the prey in question.

In fact, two evils have been the net result of so-called religion in the past; (1) the actual persecution suffered by the minority at the hands of the majority, and (2) the confirmation of the spirit of superstition and bigotry in the minority by unconscious imitation of the example set by the majority.

One or two examples will illustrate my point. No sooner had the Jews found a safe harbor in the Netherlands, after having been burnt and roasted alive by Catholics in Spain and Portugal, than they themselves showed the same spirit of intolerance towards Spinoza and Uriel Daosta.

No sooner had the Protestant Reformers in England joined power under Elizabeth than they turned the same scourge of religious bigotry on those in whom they had a short time before condemned similar conduct.

As I said before, the grim idol of superstition, the Moloch of all ages, inflicts injury of two kinds upon its victim. It not only manifests itself in the form of "Holy" Inquisitions, enforced yellow patches as marks of social degradation, wholesale massacres, and legalised confiscations of property, but no less settles its fangs into the flesh of its victim by arousing in him a spirit of defiance and by dint of resistance on the part of the latter, only broadens and deepens the faith and strengthens the sense of conservatism it was originally intended to crush, or rather to discard its old form and assume a new one.

Now, it seems to me that this phenomenon, historically speaking, has greater application to the Jewish race than perhaps to any other. Jews are often reproached with being clannish, and as clannishness is the outcome of egotism of some form, such a quality is to be deprecated in a people. Admitting that this charge is, on the whole, a true one, let us see what is its cause. It is the result of the struggle of racial and religious self-identity as the natural reaction of Christian persecution. True, orthodox Hebrews are supposed to believe themselves the "chosen people" of the Old Testament deity; but had they been left unmolested by Christian hands such a conception would have soon lost all practical value, and they would have been able to take their place among the children of Mother Earth. The more Christians applied themselves to the "conversion" of the Jews, the more godly zeal they displayed in the task, the stronger became the spirit of reaction among the latter, and the louder their refusal to accept the detested creed of the Nazarenes. But their own creed, which at certain periods of Jewish history gave such promise of development in the right direction, became all the more confirmed. For was not their chastisement by the nations (Gentiles) in itself clear proof that they were the "chosen people?" And so we see that mediæval Christianity (and to a lesser extent Christendom of to-day), in giving vent to its religious fanaticism, infected, if I may say, its victim with its own disease; but whilst, thanks to the Deists of the eighteenth century and the Agnostic movement of modern times, Christianity has lost much of its tyrannical sway over the minds of its devotees, the light of modern Science as applied to the religious problem has had but little effect on the fate of the modern Jew. From this point of view one might well say, with the author of the *Children of the Ghetto*, both historically and psychologically, "The people of Christ is the Christ of peoples." And yet Christian apologists point to the "miraculous" sur-

vival of the Jews as one of the strongest proofs of the truth of their creed. To the Freethinker this alleged "proof" is not without a strain of humor, for the author of the "miracle" was (to a great extent) no other than the persecuting Christian himself. A strange paradox, this, but true withal! Anyone acquainted with Ghetto life will have observed that a large part of the misery, squalor, and ignorance of the Jews is due to the unparalleled tenacity with which they hold by the supernatural, and their consequently cherished contempt for the natural. The rampant superstition which gives a peculiar tone to Jewish life is, because of its almost daily collision with its like force in Christianity, doubly destructive. One of the most striking examples of this social evil is in connection with the fanatical observance of the Sabbath. Countless Jewish parents, wishing to send their sons or daughters to businesses owned or managed by non-Jews, have often been known rather to sacrifice their welfare than to allow them to work on Saturday. Of course, they would not object to having that day interchanged for Sunday; but then the Christian "conscience" would revolt at such a "sin." The Jewish dietary laws, grown to such "religious" magnitude by Rabbinical influence, by tending to separate the "chosen people" from all other rational beings, form another of the many sources of this type of social evil to the Jew.

And it is this evil that I indicated when at the beginning of my paper I said that the more important side of the Jewish problem was the religious or moral. Were this aspect of that grave social enigma solved, all else relating to it would follow of itself.

After all, the moral fibre of a people is the determining factor of its destiny. If you would know the dominating principle of Humanity, or any part of it, ask what are its ideas. And the success or the failure, the rise or the fall, the good or the evil, of any race depends upon the truth or the falsity of those ideas.

But what is our criterion? What is our standard of judgment? What is the true light?

In a word, Reason!—a principle so heroically maintained by that Dutch Jew (or Dutch Atheist, as Hume called him),—Spinoza, more than two and a half centuries ago. I conclude, therefore, with an appeal to Freethinkers not to concentrate their energies entirely upon enlightening the followers of Christ, but also to spare a little of their attention to the people of Christ.

From my experience of Secular lectures I must say that although the Freethought attacks made upon the Christo-Judaic creed have the same force as against its parent, the Judaic creed, the appeal is *not* directly made to the reason of Jews, but to that of Christians only. Probably this arises from the fact that Jews are in the minority, and their creed has lost all social influence. But many a Jewish young man and woman would feel grateful to have removed the shackles of Superstition and the fetters of Convention, which narrow their intellects and restrain their sympathies, so that they might enjoy a clearer vision of things, and a stronger love for their fellow-creatures.—*Fiat Lux.*

A JEWISH GRADUATE.

Acid Drops.

According to the *Morning Leader* (March 24) there was "a brilliant and witty debate" at the ladies' night of the Hardwicke Society on the motion that canvassing at elections ought to be abolished by law. One of the speakers was Mr. Foote, K.C. This gentleman took the opportunity of saying that "in the recent election he found many people in the constituency he unsuccessfully contested were under the impression that he was the celebrated atheist who bore the same name as himself, a belief which he found necessary to destroy in person." Mr. Foote, K.C., has our sympathy. It is too late for us to alter our name to oblige him, and no doubt it is too late for him to alter his. So we must put up with each other as well as we are able. And we are prepared

at any time to publish the fact that we are not Mr. Foote, K.C., and have no connection with him whatsoever. What more can we do to save him from the awful reproach of atheism?

The *Daily News* digs out an old bit of Shawese. Many years ago, we believe it was nearly twenty, Mr. George Bernard Shaw was lecturing at Nottingham, and was interviewed by the editor of the local *Express*. After some interesting biographical details Mr. Shaw said: "I am a bachelor, an Irishman, a vegetarian, an atheist, a teetotaler, a fanatic, a humorist, a fluent liar, a social democrat, a lecturer and debater, a lover of music, a fierce opponent of the present status of women, and an insister on the seriousness of art." Mr. Shaw has ceased to be a bachelor; he has also become a playwright; but the rest of the self-description stands, including the "atheist." Mr. Shaw's atheism is tolerated. Why? Because he is not a propagandist of atheism. If he attempted that rôle for five minutes he would find a difference.

A Freethinker in the South of Scotland recently received a letter beginning "Dear Kind Christian Friend" and ending with "Yours faithfully, H. Hovhannessian." This gentleman's object was to raise money over here for a Christian Institute at Antioch. On the back of his letter was a flattering introduction from the Lord Provost of Glasgow, recommending the appeal "to the generous consideration of all sympathisers." Appended to this was: "I concur in the above. Overtoun." Thus the Lord Provost of Glasgow and Lord Overtoun invite their fellow citizens to give money for a Christian Institute "for the Blind, and Orphans, and Retired Ministers" thousands of miles away. One would think there was no poverty and misery left in Glasgow. Lord Overtoun, in particular, seems to have a lot of pious sympathy for Christian converts in heathen lands. But what is Lord Overtoun's reputation amongst the workers who build up his wealth?

A printed circular accompanying Mr. Hovhannessian's letter says a few words about the Blind and the Orphans, who are to be taught "to read the Bible," and many words about the "retired and helpless Ministers," and it is probably the last who are the real objects of solicitude, and who will get the most advantage of the £5,000 asked for, apparently as a start.

There is also an appealing puff by "the undersigned," including the Rev. Dr. Clifford, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, and the Rev. Dr. R. F. Horton. These gentlemen point out that "Antioch is the city in which the followers of Christ were first called Christians," and they observe that the proposed Christian Institute "would be an object lesson in practical Christianity in a city, the inhabitants of which now need to realise that the religion of Christ is not a thing of the dead past, but a living present day reality." We are glad to hear that it is necessary to teach people this lesson. But as it is necessary "now"—that is to say, nearly two thousand years after Christ—one feels that Christianity is a very unfortunate religion. Its existence has to be demonstrated in the part of the world where it started. No "infidel" could say anything more effective against it than that.

After all the godly reformation in Scotland the influence of the Scarlet Lady of Babylon is once more apparent. Forres Parish Church is suffering from a spiritual earthquake. More than four hundred members have asked the Presbytery to put an end to the tomfoolery of Pastor Buchanan, who has stuck a Cross over the communion table, and set up two praying desks and a lectern, besides instituting music as he enters the church with the communion elements, the people being required to sing that "He was the King of Glory and the Lord of Hosts." A sad state of things! We know the answer now to the question "Stands Scotland where it did?" It doesn't. It is sliding down to perdition. On the one hand, "Ritualism" is gaining ground; on the other hand, people cease attending kirk and go in for wholesale Sabbath breaking. A terrible wail to this effect has just been emitted by the Presbytery of Ayr. It is admitted that the people are getting more sober, but, alas, there is a great decline in godliness. Let us pray!

The *Liverpool Express*, in a notice of the late Archdeacon Taylor, made the following statement:—

"So retentive a mind, stored as it was with an inexhaustible supply of material facts appertaining to every phase of theology, made Archdeacon Taylor pre-eminent as a controversialist, and gave him rank among the few whose power of repartee proved in public discussion too much for Bradlaugh. The meeting of these two giants of debate in the old Coliseum many years ago was a unique event in religious con-

trovery, the like of which we can scarcely hope to see again. Both men were in their prime—both gifted with eloquence far beyond the average, and well worthy each other as exponents of their different lines of thought. Archdeacon Taylor's arguments ultimately prevailed, and his success was hailed by the Christian Churches as a signal triumph on their behalf over the forces of Atheism. This incident, coupled with the one previously alluded to, gives evidence that both as a young man and an aged archdeacon, Dr. Taylor had the gift of eloquence and used it to good effect."

Bradlaugh may have debated with Archdeacon Taylor. All we can say is that we do not recollect the encounter. We have also looked through the index of Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Life of Charles Bradlaugh* without finding any reference to it. But this need not prevent us from saying that the *Express's* comment is very foolish. What is the meaning of the observation that the Christian champion's "arguments ultimately prevailed"? Did the Atheist champion admit that he was beaten, or were the "infidels" in the audience all converted? That the Christians claim a "signal triumph" goes without saying. They always do. They act as their own umpires. And of course they win every time.

At the funeral of Archdeacon Taylor his Bible, with open pages, was laid upon his coffin, and buried with his remains at Anfield Cemetery. We don't like this killing two birds with one stone. It isn't fair. The Bible will get a funeral "on its own" some day.

"Evolution and Religion" is the title of a sermon by Father Charles Coupe, S.J., reported in the *Catholic Times*. The reverend gentleman talks moonshine from beginning to end. He assumes that the universe was made. Then he uses capital letters, and argues that the Maker must be Mind. All that follows rests on that flimsy basis. Father Coupe begs the question at the outset. He pulls slides out of a telescope because he has first put them in. What he has to do is to prove that the universe was made. Let him begin on that job. When he has finished it we shall be glad to hear from him.

The *Westminster and Pimlico News* makes some remarks on the discussion at the City Council as to whether there should be an official attendance at divine service. "It is difficult for us," our contemporary says, "to understand why the Free Church Council should want the Mayor and Council to attend a service officially. Comprising as it does between 70 and 80 members, there must necessarily be adherents of various denominations, and at least one member has shown more courage than many of his colleagues by openly avowing himself an Atheist. In these up-to-date days, when men think for themselves, and accept or reject religion as they are individually disposed, it is preposterous to show bitterness of spirit because a number of one's colleagues on a local governing body do not wish to attend a service in pomp and ceremony. What advantage can be the outcome? The whole business is almost sickening."

Many persons in history have fancied that they had a commission from God to murder their fellow creatures. Some of them made a big figure in the world. They murdered formally and on a large scale; in short, they did it respectably. But this game is difficult to play now in countries where secular civilisation keeps the Godites in order. Every now and then, however, we read in the newspapers of a person who starts up with such a commission and falls into the hands of the police. Down in Cornwall recently, at St. Minver, near Bodmin, a farmer named Tummon told his relatives that the Almighty had ordered him to kill all of them. This was cheerful news, especially as he got hold of an axe to execute the divine command. He managed to fell his aunt with a terrific blow on the back of the head, but the brother and sister overpowered him after a desperate struggle, and the police took him off to the asylum, where persons with divine commissions are very carefully watched.

An indignant Primitive Methodist Minister, the Rev. Ernest S. Cole, writes to the *British Weekly* denouncing Church ladies who go about Southsea obtaining signatures to a Parents' Petition in favor of children being "taught as part of their school training the faith of the Church to which they belong." The Dissenting minister almost foams at the mouth over the colossal cheek of the Church parson who dares to send ladies out on such a quest. But is not this rather a gratuitous passion? Surely parsons and Church ladies have as much right to work for their view of religious education as Primitive Methodist and other Dissenting ministers have to work for theirs. Moreover, although Mr. Cole may be too dense to see it, the religious teaching which he approves in the public schools is just as much an outrage

as the religious teaching which a Church parson or Catholic priest approves. The outrage consists in teaching religion at all in schools paid for by citizens of various religions and of no religion at all. Whether it is of the Cole color or any other color is a mere detail.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, contributes to the *Daily Chronicle* a letter on what he calls the "Free Church Attitude" on the religious education question. He "enunciates the salient points" which seem to him "fair." They are five in number. *First*, he wants all the "non-provided schools"—that is, all the Catholic, Church, and Jewish schools—to be turned into "provided" schools, and to be subject to absolute public control—in many cases, of course, under the dominance of a majority of Nonconformists. *Second*, the only religious teaching arranged by the authorities during school hours "should be confined to purely undenominational Bible teaching"—which means that Evangelicalism, which is the reading of the Bible with the right of private interpretation, shall be the only religion officially recognised in the schools. Such is Mr. Meyer's demand; and a greater piece of impudence never came from the mouth of a bigot. *Third*, outside facilities should be allowed for "denominational" teaching on certain days in the week, say from nine to half-past nine, the school on those mornings opening at half-past nine. But in the case of the Catholics, for instance, Mr. Meyer must be positively past praying for if he fancies that this arrangement will be acceptable. *Fourth*, in the case of certain schools (not specified) the religious instruction might be given from nine to half-past nine every morning, and (if we understand Mr. Meyer) be totally denominational—which is practically setting up denominational schools, as far as the religious teaching is concerned. *Fifth*, the denominational teaching should be given at denominational cost, but teachers should be allowed to volunteer for such work. Of course the *Second* is the principal plank in Mr. Meyer's program. All the rest is soft-sawder for non-Dissenters.

A curious deputation waited on Mr. Birrell the other day. It was from the Central Council of the Mothers' Union, and included Mrs. Sumner (president), Countess Waldegrave, Lady Addington, and the Hon. Mrs. E. S. Talbot. These ladies claimed to speak as representing a society numbering over 250,000 members—all mothers, we suppose. But, even in that case, the quarter of a million mothers are but a fraction of the total number of mothers in England; and we should imagine that a vast proportion of them would hardly prefer to be represented by these aristocratic dames. The mothers of the common people, not having brothers, sons, or cousins in the Christian ministry, are probably less anxious than these ladies suppose about the object of their visit to the Minister of Education. What they submitted to him was the following:—

"That the religious instruction desired by parents must be given within school hours; that it is a moral necessity that all religious instruction should be given by those who can give it with genuine belief; that the adoption of an exclusively secular system of education is opposed to the religious feeling of the nation, and would imperil the standard of morality."

We judge that the Mothers' Union is run in the interest of the Church of England. There is an Anglican ring about its proposals. We quite agree with them that all religious instruction shall be given by those who believe it. But what right have parents to demand that religious instruction shall be given to their children in State schools and by State teachers? Why should not parents get such instruction for their children, at their own expense and responsibility, in Sunday-schools, churches, chapels, and other religious institutions? As to Secular Education imperiling the standard of morality, the less said about that the better. What is the morality which has grown up under the shadow of religious teaching in public educational establishments? Does it bear looking into? Could it be made worse by the substitution of ethics for theology? Will the "Mothers" explain?

The Buckingham Burial Board only allows quotations from the Bible or "a standard author" on tombstones. A bereaved family wanted to put the following on a slab:—

"God's finger touched her, and she slept."

But the Board declined to pass it without the author's name. This appears to us very ridiculous—for the value of a line is in itself, and not in its author's signature. We might also remark that the Board would soon be in a muddle if it wanted the author's name of passages from the Bible. And what is the use of a rule if you don't apply it all round?

"God's finger touched her, and she slept." This ought to advertised as the best cure for insomnia. There are lots

of restless people who would patronise that finger. Sandow's cure is much more troublesome. Just a touch and off you go. But perhaps you don't wake in the morning. Ay, there's the rub.

Surely good phrases were ever commendable. The Finchley District Council has a masterly phrase-maker on its Education Committee, which proposes that headmistresses in infants' schools shall be allowed to inflict "slight maternal chastisement" upon the children. This proposal being approved by the Board, the headmistresses will proceed to administer the "maternal chastisement." In plain popular language the infants will be beaten. That the headmistresses beat them in a "maternal" spirit (heaven save the mark!) will not enable them to bear the infliction with any the less suffering. A stroke from a cane causes a smart whether it is wielded by a mother or a stranger. We suggest, therefore, that the "maternal" should be dropped as a piece of hypocrisy. We also suggest that the good Christians who don't know how to train children without beating them should invite some missionaries over from Burma or Japan to show them the better way.

Three years ago the Works Committee of Hammersmith Borough Council decided that the *Clarion* and *Reynolds's* should not be supplied to the public reading-rooms. The Committee has now rescinded that resolution as far as the *Clarion* is concerned, and it is to be supplied to the reading-rooms together with *Justice*; but the resolution is still to stand against *Reynolds's*. No doubt the *Freethinker* would send the Committee into convulsions. We suggest that these ridiculous persons, who set themselves up (probably with the poorest qualifications) as press censors to the Borough of Hammersmith, should take a strong aperient and go to bed for a fortnight; leeches might also be applied to their poor swelled heads; and if at the end of the fortnight they were still of the same foolish mind, they should be regarded as incurable, and—superseded.

We were much amused by a *Daily News* comment on this matter. "For public libraries," it said, "to boycott the Press of a movement that has sent a strong Labor contingent to the House of Commons seems to us a gross abuse of a public responsibility." There you are! That is so like the dear *Daily News*! Its objection to the boycott is founded on no principle of toleration. The boycott is bad because the Labor party is now too strong for that sort of thing. Having a number of votes in the House of Commons—which count on a division—it is entitled to the usual rights of citizenship. In other words, power must be respected. Weakness, of course, may be trampled under foot. If you are not represented by "a strong contingent in the House of Commons" you must not expect justice or consideration—not even from the party of the Nonconformist Conscience.

When the *Daily News* takes to humor we may expect something out of the common. Every morning it prints a "To-day's story," and nearly all its catches are venerable "chestnuts." We recollect hearing some of them in our school days.

The good old game goes on in parliament, or that half of it called the House of Commons. The gladiators fight without wounds, and debate without affecting divisions. They also get hot and ill-tempered, and often very ill-mannered. During a certain speech some nights ago (we need not say whose it was) the House was very much like an excited election-meeting. Even the *Daily News* descriptive reporter, Mr. Massingham, felt obliged to say: "The House all through this speech was very noisy and vehement; indeed, it is too uncontrolled on both sides, too intolerant of opposing argument." Now the House of Commons is supposed—though the supposition is very far-fetched—to contain the pick of the brains and character of the nation; and if these gentlemen cannot sit and hear each other speak with decorum, it need not astonish us that free discussion of vitally important topics is one of the last things your average orthodox Englishman, Scotchman, or Irishman ever thinks of tolerating.

A newspaper notice of a pious book by a Mr. John Maynard mentions the fact that he was once opposed by a lady with an atheistical turn of mind. "As I glanced at her," the good Christian writes, "my soul recoiled at the sight, as both the beast and the demon were depicted in vivid colors on her countenance." The gentleman should devote his gifts to fiction—or offer his pen to the Torrey-Alexander mission.

The cheek of the Christians is consummate. Jesus Christ said that they were the salt of the earth, and there is no

part of his teaching which they more profoundly believe. They obtrude their religion everywhere. At political meetings they talk about "God and the People." At Socialist meetings they talk about the "Christianity of Christ." They have had a fair innings already in the present House of Commons, which comprises two hundred Chapelites, as well as Churchites, and Papists. And we see it reported in a Christian paper that a prayer-meeting is held every Tuesday at five o'clock in one of the committee-rooms of the House of Commons. It is attended by members of all Protestant denominations, and is often led by a Churchman—Sir John Kennaway, M.P., whom we remember as being one of the bitterest opponents of Charles Bradlaugh's right to take his seat as the member for Northampton. For our part, we say deliberately that committee rooms of the House of Commons ought not to be used for such a purpose. Members should transact their religious business out of doors. They are elected to the House on secular grounds, and sent there to do purely political work. To hold prayer-meetings within the precincts is an impudent abuse of the mere power of numbers.

That extraordinary person, the Bishop of London, seems bent on adding to the gaiety of nations. Having once undergone an operation, he ventures to say that at such a time your body is inert but your soul is active, and you "seem to be swept swiftly under the stars towards your God." When you are out of the body, he adds, if only for a few moments, you "realise what death will be." Fancy paying a man £10,000 a year to talk like that! The reverend gentleman's fancy was due to the anæsthetic, and would doubtless have been just the same if there had been no operation at all. But if the Bishop's soul *was* swept under the stars towards God, some people will think it was a pity to sweep it back again. A few moments more and it would have been "home."

Several scientific men correct the Bishop's nonsense in the *Daily Telegraph*. One of them says that, in his experience as a doctor, those who are "the most disturbed by the prospect of an early dissolution are what one would call religious people."

The Bishop of London has borrowed the Garrick Theatre for Good Friday evening, and there will be a mission service to bring souls to Christ "by permission of Mr. Arthur Bourchier." We hope Jesus Christ is duly grateful.

The April number of the *Woman at Home* contains a portrait and letterpress sketch of Baroness Desborough. It is stated that her friends admire her so much that they call her "The Supreme Being." A delicate compliment to the Almighty.

Greek bands—all Christians—continue to roam through Macedonia, robbing, murdering, and devastating. Indeed the country is becoming depopulated. And all the Christian Powers do is to put pressure on the Turk—who is out of the running.

A pious hooligan at Woolwich, the Rev. Stanley Parker, has been treating the borough to what he calls "An Exposure of Atheism." His intellectual and moral calibre may be judged by his statement that the *Freethinker* is an "obscene" journal, and that its editor deserved, not twelve months, but twelve years' imprisonment. He also heaped filth, of which he has a plentiful stock, on the memory of Ingersoll. Stanley Parker reminds us of a mangy dog baying the moon.

The late Mr. Eyton Williams, of Chester, left £20,000 for the North Wales University College at Bangor, on condition that every winner of the scholarship under his bequest must believe in the Deity and accept the tenets and principles of the Protestant Church. Up to the present the trustees have not claimed the legacy. Are they afraid that competitors for scholarships will fight shy of such conditions?

John D. Rockefeller, the pious Yankee millionaire, and perhaps the biggest financial brigand in the world, is reported to be moping. He is giving up church work. Which looks bad. It is like a battered old topor sickening at his beer—a pretty sure sign of the end.

"Providence" is giving Japan more tastes of its quality. The famine, owing to the rice crop failure, is being supplemented by earthquakes, through which hundreds of people have been killed or injured. We also read of serious landslides in Brazil. And look at the weather!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 1, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester: 3, "Mr. Birrell's Education Puzzle"; 6.30, "Science and the Soul."

April 8, Stratford Town Hall; 22 and 29, Queen's Hall.
May 6, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 1, Stratford Town Hall; 8, 22, and 29, Liverpool.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 1, South Shields; 2, Hetton Downs; 8, Porth; 15, Stratford Town Hall; 29, Manchester.

RIDGWAY FUND.—C. J. £1, H. M. Ridgway £1, H. Voigt 2s. 6d.; J. Partridge acknowledges: J. Robertson 2s., L. E. Mabbett 2s. 6d.

P. P. POOLE.—We do not understand what is meant by the late Cardinal Manning having given up all to follow Jesus. You should ask your Christian friend what it was that Manning gave up, and what he lost by exchanging it for what he afterwards received. We cannot answer your question unless it is made more precise. Glad to hear you look forward to the *Freethinker* every Thursday.

A. JAMESON.—The very cheap editions of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam are non-copyright reprints of the first edition, published in 1859. This text was greatly improved in the second, third, and fourth editions—the last being final. Macmillan's "Golden Treasury" edition, published at 2s. 6d., gives the full text of both the first and fourth editions, and the various readings in the second and third. You will find this perfectly trustworthy and informing. Fitzgerald's other writings were all included in the now rare three-volume edition issued under the care of Dr. W. Aldis Wright in 1889. Fitzgerald's letters are now published separately (and complete) by Macmillan in three volumes. There ought to be an edition of the letters in one volume before long, just as there ought to be a one volume edition of the complete Byron's letters. But publishers do not sufficiently consider the readers of good literature who have moderate means and moderate shelf-room.

E. C. CORNETT.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

J. WEST.—Probably only a coincidence.

A. FESLER.—See "Acid Drops." Pleased to read your letter.

J. G.—It bears out what we said. Thanks.

J. BROUGH.—Yes, the *Freethinker* goes by halfpenny post, if you don't put too heavy a wrapper on. Thanks for cuttings.

E. BROWN.—(1) When did we say there was such a text in the Bible. You probably allude to Romans iii, 7. (2) We answered the question about the Church of England and the State last week.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. EMSLEY.—Thanks for your trouble in the matter. But are you not a little too rough on the three poets you mention? Tennyson was a long while making any income by his work; his marriage had to be delayed for years because he could not earn enough to support a wife. Browning and Swinburne had independent means, but so had Shelley and Byron.

J. S. NORMAN.—Pleased you find the *Freethinker* a "weekly treat." Sorry we cannot add to our present labors by writing or arranging for letters in local newspapers, useful as such work would undoubtedly be. We are glad to see the correspondence in the *Bedford Circular*.

H. VOIGT.—The matter is noted.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Foote is none the worse for the Coventry work. Yes, the meetings were fine in such weather.

C. F. S.—Thanks for reference.

J. BRUCE.—Shall appear.

R. CHAPMAN.—Tuesday morning is late; fortunately a "Plum" was already in type.

J. FERRIS.—Every one of our readers should be a Freethought missionary in his degree, as you are.

E. FENTON.—Shall be pleased to see you at Manchester.

H. R. C.—Rev. A. J. Waldron denies having used the words you took down in shorthand from his sermon, but admits that "he may have used words capable of misrepresentation." Those who know Mr. Waldron well enough will understand. He did not expect to be heard by a Freethinking reporter. If the late Charles Watts's relatives continue to enjoy such a person's "tributes" to the deceased, the matter does not concern us any further. We have quashed the pious falsehood.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote pays Manchester his final visit for the present season to-day (April 1), lecturing afternoon and evening in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints. He will be happy to meet as many as possible of his South Lancashire friends.

It was bitter weather at Coventry on Sunday, snow fell several times, and quite a blizzard raged in the early evening; nevertheless Mr. Foote had the largest meetings he has yet had in the fine Public Baths Assembly Hall. He was in good form, and his lectures were enthusiastically applauded. Mr. A. G. Lye, who occupied the chair, and occupied it well, appealed for questions and discussion at each meeting. And there was plenty. In fact the meetings only broke up because everything must end some time. Some of the questions were pertinent—and some were impertinent. A few ill-bred Christians abused the opportunity offered them, but they were suitably corrected, and they did their own cause no good.

Eighteen "saints," including several ladies, came over to Coventry from Birmingham to help in the business side of the meetings. Mr. Partridge, in his quiet and industrious way, attended to the bookstall, and was so busy that Mr. Foote was unable to shake hands with him. Most of the Birmingham friends got off by the nine o'clock train, but some of the younger ones preferred to see the evening meeting right through and had to wait at Coventry till midnight. Of course they were hospitably entertained by Coventry friends in the interval. We may add that several young men came over from Warwick, that there was no train back, and that they had to walk the ten miles home—and in such weather! Mr. Foote thinks they paid him a very handsome compliment. He congratulates them on their zeal for the good old cause, and looks to them to be in the fighting ranks when he is no more.

This evening (April 1) sees the opening of the new course of Sunday evening lectures in the Stratford Town Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., with the co-operation of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch. Mr. Cohen is the lecturer. On the following Sunday the lecturer will be Mr. Foote, and on the third and last Sunday Mr. Lloyd. Large meetings are expected, as usual. The admission to all seats is free, and questions and discussion are invited.

Next Sunday (April 8) Mr. Cohen begins his course of lectures for the Liverpool Branch at the Milton Hall, Daulby-street. He will occupy the platform both afternoon and evening. April 15 will be dropped, being Easter Sunday; but Mr. Cohen will lecture for the Branch again on April 22 and 29. There will be "free admission" to all the six lectures. The local "saints" should therefore do their best to bring the "heathen" and the "unconverted" along, so that Mr. Cohen may get to work upon them. The hall really ought to be crowded every time, and we hope to hear that there has been some good discussion. Collections will be made, of course, towards the expenses of the meetings. This will be an opportunity for the lady members—who are better reapers than men in harvests of that kind.

The Liverpool Branch holds its annual meeting at Milton Hall on Easter Sunday. Only members whose subscriptions are paid up will be admitted. On Tuesday, April 3, the Branch holds another "social" from 8 to 12 p.m. Tickets 9d. each. Considering the great difficulties placed in the way of the Liverpool Branch, we venture to hope that its friends will give it increased financial as well as moral support. Help is being found from outside, but this ought not to damp local exertion.

Mr. John T. Lloyd lectures at South Shields to-day (April 1). As the meetings are to be held in the large Royal

Assembly Hall we hope the local "saints" will make every effort to secure a good attendance. On Monday evening Mr. Lloyd lectures at Hetton, a mining district where an active Branch of the N. S. S. has recently been formed.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday at Birmingham, and the noble Town Hall has been secured for the evening public meeting, which will be addressed by Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. John T. Lloyd, and other well-known speakers. Secularists all over the country should see what they can do towards making this gathering a glorious success. Individual members who can take a trip during the Whitsun holiday should go to Birmingham if only to see the big Town Hall meeting. Branches should all endeavor to be represented at the Conference.

A new Branch of the N. S. S. has been formed through the Stanley Hall meetings. It starts some twenty strong, and is going to begin open-air lecturing on Parliament Hill this afternoon (April 1) at 3.30. We wish it all success.

Our shop manager (Mr. W. A. Vaughan) will be pleased to receive fresh names of persons who might become regular subscribers to the *Freethinker* if it were only introduced to them. We are willing to send a copy of the *Freethinker*, gratuitously and post free, to every such address for six consecutive weeks. At the end of that time the recipient would know whether he wishes to read it regularly. We have gained many new subscribers in this way.

Mr. Franklin Thomasson, who finances the *Tribune*, and has been adopted as the Liberal candidate at Leicester, in succession to Mr. Henry Broadhurst, inherits his wealth, we believe, from the Thomas Thomasson [1808-1876] of Bolton, an interesting account of whom is given in the late Mr. G. J. Holyoake's *Bygones Worth Remembering*. Thomasson was a cotton spinner, who made plenty of money, and spent a great deal of it on public objects. He was brought up a Quaker, but he married a Churchwoman and attended the Bolton Parish Church. "In 1855," Mr. Holyoake says, "he heard the clergyman preach on the propriety of the Crimean War, which he thought so un-Christian that he never went to church again." He assisted by money, counsel, and personal exertions in securing the incorporation of Bolton; he was at the head of the poll in the first election, and he remained on the council for eighteen years. He was a municipal reformer and a Radical. He was in favor of Decimal Coinage, and against the abolition of the Income Tax, deeming direct taxation the best. He promoted the establishment of a library, museum, and mechanics' institute. Bolton would have given him any office in its power, but he would neither be Alderman, Mayor, nor Member of Parliament. He was the chief promoter of the Anti-Corn Law agitation, and the greatest subscriber to its funds. He gave Cobden thousands of pounds on one occasion to free him from pecuniary embarrassment and enable him to pursue his public labors without anxiety. On another occasion he pressed a still larger sum on Cobden's acceptance.

Mr. Holyoake says that Thomasson's "aid was never aimless, but given discerningly to reward or aid others who rendered public service." He often called at Mr. Holyoake's shop in Fleet-street, where the *Reasoner* and other Secularist publications were issued, and left £10, with the simple inscription "from T. T." Several years elapsed before it was known whose name the initials represented. He would entertain workmen's lecturers, whose views he did not always share, and "judging that their remuneration would be scant, he would add £5 on their departure to cover their expenses." Thinking once that Huxley needed rest, and might not be able to afford it, he offered to defray the cost of six months' travel abroad with his family. The offer could not be accepted, but on Thomasson's death a note was found amongst his papers, saying "Send Huxley £1,000"—"which his son, afterwards member for Bolton, did in his father's name." "He constantly sought opportunities of generosity," Mr. Holyoake says, "which could never be requited, nor even acknowledged, as he left no clue to the giver." Evidently the founder of the Thomasson family was a remarkable man; and, reading between the lines of Mr. Holyoake's narrative, we judge that he was far from orthodox in religion.

Nearly £40 has been subscribed to the Ridgway Fund. We asked for £50. Cannot this sum be made up at once for one of the finest veterans in the Freethought army, who is now eighty years of age, and should not be forgotten by his comrades now that he is past fighting? We want to wind this Fund up; so please let us have the other £10 at once.

The Morbid Eye of Mr. Chesterton.

Heretics: By Gilbert K. Chesterton. London: John Lane.

MORE than once, I think, in these columns I have endeavored to criticise the methods, not to say the "arguments," of Mr. Chesterton, if indeed criticism be the proper term to apply in such a case. My excuse for returning to the subject is this: the other day, being in a frivolous mood, I took up Mr. Chesterton's recently-published volume of essays, and as I think there is a sort of consistency, as Lord Halsbury would say, or rather the more or less definite indication of a certain temper, I am moved to explain, by such aid, Mr. Chesterton's misology. For Mr. Chesterton is the most vivacious pessimist of the day. He dislikes everything modern, everything scientific, everything rational or reasonable, and he sighs for old and moss-grown rituals and customs and habits of mind. Yet he expresses his likes and dislikes with such gusto that you would never guess he was an ascetic monk at heart.

The "Introductory Remarks" at the beginning of his book set the tone. Take this passage:—

"Good taste, the last and vilest of human superstitions, has succeeded in silencing us where all the rest have failed. Sixty years ago it was bad taste to be an avowed Atheist. Then came the Bradlaughites, the last religious men, the last men who cared about God; but they could not alter it. It is still bad taste to be an avowed Atheist. But their agony has achieved just this—that now it is equally bad taste to be an avowed Christian."

That is the sort of thing that Mr. Chesterton can pour out with a copiousness that is certainly remarkable. Nor is it necessary to grow indignant at the patent untruth contained in the last sentence of the quotation. Mr. Chesterton knows it to be an untruth. He is merely driven to it by the exigencies of phrase-making, that is all. And Mr. Chesterton's intelligence is always apparently at the mercy of the least tremor of his pen. Here are sentences taken almost at random from these "Introductory Remarks":—

"Nothing has lost so many opportunities as the opportunism of Lord Rosebery."

"When everything about a people is for the time growing weak and ineffective, it begins to talk about efficiency."

"There is nothing that fails like success."

And so on without end. At the basis of all this ingenious verbosity is the commonplace doctrine as to the importance of first principles. "I perceive that it is far more practical to begin at the beginning and discuss theories." The spectacle of Mr. Chesterton as a cure for our intellectual maladies, recommending serious and sober reflection, in a book which is a burlesque of serious and sober writing, does not somehow strike me as humorous. It is trivial without being exactly amusing. And the chief reason, I think, is that the whole affair is too affected and self-conscious. It is not as if Mr. Chesterton were a man bubbling over with *naïve* vivacity, suffering, as it were, from an indigestion of ideas, and carried away into paradox by sheer intellectual exuberance. Certainly he is a facile and fluent writer. But we seem to see the calculated thrills, the worked-up epigrams, the smack-of-the-lips over the verbal quips, whatever they may mean, or whether they mean anything at all.

In the first essay in the book, Mr. Chesterton professes to argue, or rather scintillate, to the effect that no modern has any conception of a noble ideal; that was the monopoly of the mediæval monks which Infinite Benevolence has denied to everyone since the thirteenth century. This is a specimen of the way he makes out this case, and the passage may have a special interest for readers of this journal:—

"I remember a pamphlet by that able and sincere Secularist, Mr. G. W. Foote, which contained a phrase sharply symbolising and dividing these two methods [that is, the mediæval and the modern methods, so called]. The pamphlet was called *Beer and Bible*,

those two very noble things, all the nobler for a conjunction which Mr. Foote, in his stern old Puritan way, seemed to think sardonic, but which I confess to thinking appropriate and charming. I have not the work by me, but I remember that Mr. Foote dismissed very contemptuously any attempts to deal with the problem of strong drink by religious offices or intercessions, and said that a picture of a drunkard's liver would be more efficacious in the matter of temperance than any prayer or praise. In that picturesque expression, it seems to me is perfectly embodied the incurable morbidity of modern ethics. In that temple the lights are low, the crowds kneel, the solemn anthems are uplifted. But that upon the altar to which all men kneel is no longer the perfect flesh, the body and substance of the perfect man; it is still flesh, but it is diseased. It is the drunkard's liver of the New Testament that is marred for us, which we take in remembrance of him."

Wherefore, let us go back to the dim religious light of a thirteenth century cathedral, partake of the "perfect flesh" in a rite which is an offence to normal, unsophisticated moral feeling, and come out and write a squib about it all! Thus will modern ethics be put to shame, and the joyous "mystic morality" of the middle ages be vindicated. But Mr. Chesterton makes a mistake. Mr. Foote, in his pamphlet, never dreamt of suggesting that the drunkard's liver should be eaten by the audience, either in reality or in symbol, metaphorically, mystically, or miraculously. That incredible nastiness seems to have been reserved for the ages of "romance." Modern ethics, we venture to predict, will scrupulously see that it is left there.

Certainly Mr. Chesterton is sweeping enough in his condemnations. Every modern of note or influence, whatever be his opinions or his character, is not only faulty, but fundamentally lacking in something necessary to the perfect life, with examples of which, it seems, the middle ages abounded. Ibsen, Zola, Rudyard Kipling, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Joseph McCabe, Mr. George Moore—they are all fatally flawed. It is not that there is a judicious survey of each type of character, pointing out the defects, the limitations, the strength of each. It is that *en masse* they are deficient in a quality that other men apparently, *en masse* possessed. They all, in short, lack the fine frenzy of the middle ages. The truth is, that Mr. Chesterton, with all his literary verve, looks on the modern world with a jaundiced eye. He sees only what he regards as its weak and ugly side. He cannot perceive the essential beauty and inspiration of that tremendous and multitudinous intellectual energy beside which the mummeries of the monks were vain and empty. The nineteenth century was far more interesting than the ninth; there is as much romance in the rise of John Burns to cabinet rank as in the career of Wolsey; whilst Bismarck was not less interesting a scoundrel than Pizarro. Mr. Chesterton is under the delusion of distance. The struggle between France and the Papacy is far more vital and more interesting in every way than between Athanasius and Arius in the fourth century, which in reality was a stupid and squalid affair. But as Athanasius lived fifteen hundred years ago, Mr. Chesterton would no doubt weave around him a halo of romance. Monks, May-poles, midnight masses, anchorites starving themselves on pillars, Crusaders marching to the Holy Wars and all such happenings, excite the intense interest of the romantically-inclined. The reason, of course, is simply snared by the imagination. There is no rational ground for supposing that these people or events at close quarters would have been any more interesting than the events now unfolding themselves under our eyes. If the world is a drab and tedious place now, it was no less drab and tedious then; if it was full of color and interest then, it is no less full of color and interest now. Neither Mr. Chesterton nor any other neo-medievalist that I know of ever condescends to explain why Omniscience should have brought romance and high endeavor and passionate desire, and all the rest, to a sudden stop somewhere about the year 1600.

The psychology of it all, I think, is fairly plain. The fallacies into which people fall through the temperamental desire to cling to a traditional religious belief are almost infinite in number and in kind. One such fallacy is that when people cease to regard the Bible as inspired, they will fall off in morality; another is, that when people give up a belief in a God they will be filled with terror and despair; another is, that art could only flourish in the ages of faith (meaning, of course, theological faith) and that in a scientific age it will tend to die away; another is, that only religious men can be courageous; and so on. Mr. Chesterton's variation seems to be that the "believing" ages were romantic, interesting times, and that the modern world is drab and dull and commonplace. Most of these theses vanish into thin air almost as soon as they are blown upon. There have been great artists, poets, and dramatists who were Atheists, and courageous men who displayed their courage in fighting the Church; there were noble men before Christianity and outside the range of its influence; Freethinkers are not melancholy people, nor is the modern world, on any general and considered view, less interesting than the ancient and mediæval world, whatever the individual preferences of particular people in the matter of historical study. The world and all that therein is, to the sane intelligence, is as good and as bad, as hopeful and as hopeless, as ever it was. Though to the hypochondriac who can see no hope or good in any modern thing or movement, may be commended Tennyson's advice:—

"It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
That old hysterical mock-disease should die!"

There is only one word which it is necessary to add. It must not be assumed that the point of view here dealt with—a morbid dislike of modernity and a wistful longing for mediævalism and ritual—is the permanent point of view of Mr. Chesterton, or indeed that he has any permanent point of view at all. All I am concerned with is the fact that it is one of his phases and as easy to criticise as another. For instance, in the first essay in this book "On the Negative Spirit," it is argued virtually that "the moderns" have no wholesome idea of goodness or completeness—

"A great silent collapse, an enormous unspoken disappointment has in our time fallen on our Northern civilisation. All previous ages have sweated and been crucified in an attempt to realise what is really the right life, what was really the good man. A definite part of the modern world has come beyond question to the conclusion that there is no answer to these questions."

That is in the first essay. In the last essay we read:—

"Now of all, or nearly all, the able modern writers whom I have briefly studied in this book this is especially and pleasingly true, that they do each of them have a constructive and affirmative view, and that they do take it seriously and ask us to take it seriously."

You can accept either *dictum*, or neither, and it does not much matter which. At the same time it would be a great mistake, as well as being very unfair, not to recognise that Mr. Chesterton says very wise and very clever things, though one can never be sure that such wisdom is not merely the accident of so much writing. Thus, in this volume, the papers on "Celts and Celtophiles" and "The Mildness of the Yellow Press," seem to me full of sound and sanative criticism in the main. Yet it is, at its best, somehow defective. The real reason why Mr. Chesterton fails to be classed with those "able modern writers" who are taken seriously is that he persistently refuses to pay that honor to himself.

FREDERICK RYAN.

What is called a new philosophy or a new religion, is generally not so much a creation of fresh ideas, but rather a direction given to ideas already current among contemporary thinkers.—Henry Thomas Buckle.

Wordsworth.—III.

THE ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY.

(Continued from page 187.)

I COME to the ode on intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood. The ode is a mixed piece of work, and, to see it fairly, one must separate the contents. But, first, let us look at that besetment of human nature which underlies the common idea of personal immortality. What is it? Expectancy. All life through, it is the same. Look at a child! What is it besets it like its own shadow? Conceit: everything to itself. With grown-ups there is a change in the expression of this quality. We grow a trifle reasonable as we grow older; we recognise that other folk have some right to possess the earth as well as we; are sometimes so gracious as to allow them to possess their own opinions. But we do not alter much at bottom. We reserve to ourselves a vast and splendid hereafter: not finding in the battle and duties of life, in helpful communion with our fellows, in nature, or in art, a counterpart to our expectancy. No!

"Bounty never yields so much, but it seems to do us wrong."

And man, still untutored, goes on gaping. But life is no richer (nor less rich) for his expectancy; and finally, there is the fact of death to face—

"Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where."

Long ago, in the question of personal immortality, mortals more modest asked: "How can it be expected that a man shall, on completion of his term of sixty or seventy years on earth, enter upon a second term of existence extending to eternity? He had no existence previous to this." Plato, in favor of the doctrine, answered: "Yes, man had a previous existence, but his self-consciousness has been interrupted." The other replied: "If the cord of consciousness has been severed, how is man to know that he had a previous existence?" Wordsworth here comes to the rescue of the doctrinaires. He asserts that we have not entirely forgotten our previous existence; that we bring with us into this life light from thence. In the joy of childhood he finds the radiance of that light. That joy, he goes on, in spite of the distractions of our earthly state, resurges in us; that light breaks again over our night-directed way.

What shall we say? The idea is rainbow-like in color; but is it sound? To attribute the joy of childhood to light from a pre-existent state is, of course, arbitrary. The joy of childhood is traceable to other and perfectly natural causes: to the unchecked animation of youth; to ever-new experience, sensation, and knowledge; to the absence of serious care. As to our not having entirely forgotten our previous existence, in the nature of the case, Wordsworth can speak only for himself. Personally, I have entirely forgotten my previous existence. Finally, that previous existence is utterly unestablished.

We should interpret the ode more liberally, Mr. Arthur Sidgwick says. Something like this: that, while maturity brings increased knowledge and quickened apprehension, the time of childhood is the time of delight and liberty and simple faith; that the reflecting mind can, at intervals, recreate that golden time. So far, so good. But Wordsworth went beyond this. We must take the ode as it stands; and the ode fails in so far as it purposes to establish belief in a future existence upon intimations of a previous existence. But if we put that aside, if we accept Mr. Sidgwick's interpretation, there are passages in the ode strong in their appeal. We look back on our childhood; our primary instincts and affections and ideas lying in "shadowy recollection"; and beyond all, beyond our common origin, lie the eternal and the unknown.

"Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

In the question of personal immortality, the ode leaves us where we were. We know nothing of it, and the evidence is all the other way. In view of generation following generation to "the sunless land," and no word from the departed; in view of the disintegration of the body after death, and the fact that we do not know of consciousness except in union with a living animal organism, does not the doctrine of personal immortality look to be unsupported? In view of nature's re-creation, generation still rising after generation, does not that doctrine look to be out of scale? Why expect nature,

"with her fulness vast
Of new creation evermore,"

to re-light our extinct fires?

"Then am I to die like a dog?" asks the mortal who has elected to think that he is immortal. Might not a dog, a well-bred, highly cultured dog, a dog that in moments of royal fondling had licked the face of a princess, might not such a dog, if he had a voice, ask: "And am I to die like a bug? or like a base religious libeller, such as Dixon or Torrey?"

A maiden-lady acquaintance of mine had a little Yorkshire terrier that would snarl and snap and whine and shed tears just like some of our immortal selves. My maiden-lady was a firm believer in her own personal immortality; and next to herself I think that her dog was dearest to her of living things. I said to her, "Don't you think, Miss X., that dogs have souls?" "I am not at all sure that they have not," was the solemn reply. What then of your question, "Am I to die like a dog?"

Wordsworth himself alternates between the belief in man's resurrection and the other outlook—"no to-morrow" after death. On the one hand, expressing "the larger hope," there is "The Primrose of the Rock"; a poem, there can be no question, of strong feeling and consummate workmanship. But alas! strong feeling may go into a vain hope. The simile running through the poem, although so beautiful, so true to the mood, is arbitrary as to parallel in fact and valueless as argument. On the other hand, there is the sonnet on the sinking star; not less powerful, and with a ring of conviction in it the more significant as we know it was against Wordsworth's theological grain. This is the sonnet:—

"I watch, and long have watched, with calm regret
Yon slowly-sinking star—immortal Sire
(So might he seem) of all the glittering quire!
Blue ether still surrounds him—yet—and yet;
But now the horizon's rocky parapet
Is reached, where, forfeiting his bright attire,
He burns—transmuted to a sullen fire,
That droops and dwindles—and the appointed debt
To the flying moments paid, is seen no more.
Angels and gods! we struggle with our fate,
While health, power, glory, pitifully decline,
Depressed and then extinguished: and our state
In this how different, lost star, from thine,
That no to-morrow shall our beams restore."

Yet, though for man there be "no to-morrow," something while the day yet is may go forth from his hands—

"To live, and act, and serve the future hour."

Take from man the idea of a future life, and you double the force and the sacredness of the present. Let him feel that he must fulfil all his obligations here, or leave a bankrupt account, and he will strive the harder in fulfilment. How many hug the idea that a future life will bring another chance.

H. BARBER.

(To be concluded.)

The tenderest word in our language is maternity. In this word is the divine mingling of ecstasy and agony—of love and self-sacrifice. The word is holy.—*Ingersoll.*

We Are Seven.

(ANOTHER VERSION.)

—A CHARMING girl
That bothers her dear head
With metaphysics—"Hush, Jane! hush!
Your lips are yet too red!"

I met a buxom village lass
(She was more than seven, she said);
Her eye twinkled with many a sly
Thought working in her head.

Her blushing cheek was like a rose,
And she had golden curls;
The more one look'd, the more she seem'd
The queen of pretty girls.

"Yourself and sister fair-cheeks, lass,
How many may you be?"
"How many would you think?" she said,
And archly smiled at me.

"Well, as you will, my charming belle!"
She, sweetening: "We are seven:
Five virgins wise, with lamps well trimm'd,
Waiting; and two in heaven."

"In heaven! Then where's your seven?" I
"You're juggling, girl alive! [laugh'd:
A child with no arithmetic
Knows, two from seven leaves five."

"Ah! but," said she, "our dear old Aunt
Reads Wordsworth; and she says
Those sister souls are risen, and walk
With us our village ways.

And Aunt is rich, and an old maid."
Said I: "That's well enough:
But surely, girl, you don't believe
Such Parson-says-so stuff!"

"Maud Aunt loved most," she said; "but Maud
Went like a fading rose;
And still, at times, you'll see the tear
Trickle down Auntie's nose.

Thou next to leave for angel joys,
—To flirt an angel fan,
And kiss the darling angel boys,
Was bouncing Mary Ann.

In Winter, when the ways were all
Unsure with snow and slide,
She slipp'd, and came a scalper down,
And (rest her soul!) she died.

Their graves are you; and sometimes, there,
(Girls have their moody day)
I muse: 'Two rival belles the loss,
Winging the golden way!'

And sometimes, when a tall hat comes
Here, and the night is fair,
And he is in the milky mood,
We go a-cooing there."

"Joy of your churchyard walks!" I said,
"And all your wishes thrive!
But—let old Wordsworth practice sums!—
Your number now is five."

She mumbled of "another world,"
And "meeting souls in heaven:"
She knew it was all moonshine; still,
The girls were in their dear aunt's will,
And she said, they were seven. "FESTE."

POWER OF EDUCATION.

An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest times; and he works accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is his state who stands outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain for ever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with a pick-axe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.—*Carlyle, "Essay on Burns."*

Correspondence.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S "ATHEISM."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Please note that you and Mr. Mackenzie have entirely failed to prove that the late Mr. G. J. Holyoake ever called himself an Atheist during the last fifteen years. Bare assertions, now the good man is dead, are useless. Mr. Mackenzie certainly ought to explain why he kept his extraordinary statement "bottled up" for four years, whilst Mr. Holyoake was living. After quoting in the *Freethinker* of the 4th inst. Mr. Holyoake's confession, Mr. Mackenzie says: "These are his own words. I made a note of them at the time." For what *extraordinary purpose* this "note" making? Unless the confession was to be a secret till after Mr. Holyoake's death. When Mr. Holyoake made the confession was it agreed that Mr. Mackenzie would not make it public until after Mr. Holyoake's demise? I wish Mr. Holyoake could have seen the *Freethinker* of the 4th inst. Why "I made a note of them at the time?" Was this to strengthen the reader's belief in his veracity? Where did the meeting take place? Was Mr. Holyoake "laughing heartily" whilst his confession was being put on paper? Any witness?

Within fifteen years I wrote Mr. Holyoake three letters, begging him to avoid the doubtful reticence and indecision of Messrs. Huxley and Ingersoll by juggling with the word "Agnostic." He never answered me. What do Mr. Holyoake's near friends and relatives say regarding his Atheism?

GEORGE JACOB.

THANK GOD!

Cassander was one of the greatest geniuses of his time, yet all his merit could not procure him a bare subsistence. Being by degrees driven into a hatred of all mankind from the little pity he found amongst them, he even ventured at last ungratefully to impute his calamities to providence. In his last agonies, when the priest entreated him to rely on the justice of heaven and ask mercy from him that made him; *if God*, replies he, *has shown me no justice here, what reason have I to expect any from him hereafter?* But being answered that a suspension of justice was no argument that should induce us to doubt of its reality; "let me entreat you," continued his confessor "by all that is dear to be reconciled to God, your father, your maker, and your friend." No, replied the exasperated wretch, *you know the manner in which he left me to live, and (pointing to the straw on which he was stretched) you see the manner in which he leaves me to die!*—*Oliver Goldsmith, "Citizen of the World."*

THE GREAT JUGGLER.

We've travelled times to this old common:

Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.

We've had a stirring life, old woman!

You and I, and the old grey horse.

Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,

Found us coming to their call:

Now they'll miss us at our stations:

There's a Juggler outjuggles all!

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!

Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.

Easy to think that grieving's folly,

When the hand's firm as driven stakes!

Ay! when we're strong, and braced, and manful,

Life's a sweet fiddle: but we're a batch

Born to become the Great Juggler's ban'ful:

Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

—*George Meredith, "Juggling Jerry."*

There are states of moral death no less amazing than physical resurrection; and a church which permits its clergy to preach what they have ceased to believe, and its people to trust what they refuse to obey, is perhaps more truly miraculous in impotence, than it would be miraculous in power, if it could move the fatal rocks of California to the pole, and plant the sycamore and the vine between the ridges of the sea.—*Ruskin.*

Obituary.

We have to record the death of Mr. Thomas Hearne Seymour, aged 83 years, at 29 Upper High-street, Thame. He had been ailing for some time and took to his bed nine days before his demise. He died, as he had always lived, a Freethinker. His end was entirely peaceful.

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: Lecturer, F. Gobert.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christ, Christianity, and the Labor Party."

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, James Rowney, "The Atonement."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Lennard, "The Life and the Creed."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson, 12 (noon), "The Rights and Wrongs of Labor"; 6.30, "Religion in the School."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchichall-street): 7, "At Home." Monday, April 2, at 8, George Hardie, "A Lost Civilisation."

HETTON (Miners' Hall): Monday, April 2, J. T. Lloyd, "What think ye of Christ?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): A. E. Killip, 3, "Christianity and Woman"; 7, "'Poor India!'—Bradlaugh's Last Words." Tuesday (8 to 12 p.m.), Social.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "Mr. Birrell's Education Puzzle"; 6.30, "Science and the Soul." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, April 5, at 8, H. Richardson, "Humor."

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, A. Silvester, a Lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Royal Assembly Hall, Ingham-street, Mile End-road): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Do We Need a Religion?" 7, "Secular Education."

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