

THE Freethinker

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*This is true liberty, when freeborn men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free ;
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise ;
Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace.*

—MILTON (from Euripides).

Randolph Churchill & Charles Bradlaugh.—II.

V.

MR. CHURCHILL'S special pleading is entirely against the facts. Bradlaugh threw down no challenge. There was nothing ostentatious in his action. He went to work with quiet simplicity. He had never refused to take the oath in courts of justice when it was necessary, but he had expressed a natural preference for affirmation, and had made it whenever possible. He believed that he had a legal right to affirm instead of swearing at the table of the House of Commons. With this belief he was bound as an honorable man to make the attempt. But he did not go to the House in a spirit of bravado. After privately consulting the Liberal law officers and the officials of the House he quietly handed the Clerk a written paper of three or four lines stating that he "begged respectfully to claim to be allowed to affirm as a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration, instead of taking an oath." He had already explained to the Clerk, Sir Thomas Erskine May, that he based his claim on the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and the Evidence Amendment Act, 1870. The Clerk formally communicated the matter to the Speaker, Sir Henry Brand. Up to this point there had been the utmost possible privacy. It was the Speaker who turned on the light of publicity. Instead of dealing with the matter himself, which he appears to have been too timid to do, he invited Bradlaugh to make a statement to the House with regard to his claim. Bradlaugh accepted the invitation. His speech was, as usual, both terse and straightforward. He said what he had to say, and he said no more. But his speech was afterwards so extravagantly misrepresented, and is still so much the subject of debate, that we may justly reproduce it *in extenso* :—

"Mr. Speaker,—I have only now to submit that the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, gives the right to affirm to every person for the time being permitted by law to make affirmation. I am such a person; and under the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and the Evidence Amendment Act, 1870, I have repeatedly for nine years past affirmed in the highest Courts of Jurisdiction in this realm. I am ready to make the declaration of allegiance."

Calm, prudent, weighty words from a strong great man. And the finding of "ostentation" in them is an invention rather than a discovery.

Mr. Churchill is utterly wrong in his account of Bradlaugh's action. There was no sort of "challenge," and no courting of publicity. The publicity, when it came, was the work of the Speaker of the House of Commons, who threw upon the House—that is to say, upon a mob of members—the determination of a point of legal and official procedure.

1,289

VI.

We may as well inform Mr. Churchill—or remind him, if he has read and forgotten—that there was no need of any "challenge" on Bradlaugh's part to excite the animosity of the bigots. His election at Northampton was a sufficient challenge in itself. He had fought the constituency three times before during thirteen years, and his success was hardly expected. When he won the seat (in April, 1880) by a handsome majority the bigots were incensed. The *Sheffield Telegraph* called him "the bellowing blasphemer of Northampton." Other papers wrote in the same coarse strain. Protests were raised in pulpits. Mr. Samuel Morley, the famous Nonconformist layman, who had sent a telegram to Northampton during the election, urging the necessity of union among all sections of the Liberal party in support of the adopted candidates, Labouchere and Bradlaugh, was fiercely attacked in consequence, and weakly apologised for what "was really the work of a moment." He declared his "intense repugnance" to the "opinions which are held by Mr. Bradlaugh on religious and social questions." This was greedily swallowed by hundreds of Christians (mainly Nonconformists) at Northampton, who had voted for Labouchere but not for Bradlaugh. It was also grateful to a multitude of Christians (mainly Nonconformists) all over the kingdom. Spurgeon alone, amongst Nonconformist leaders, seems to have acted like a man. He remembered the fundamental principle of Nonconformity that there should be no relations between Religion and the State, and he refused to join in the outcry against an Atheist being allowed to sit in the House of Commons.

This display of bigotry out-of-doors, encouraged the Fourth Party inside the House to oppose Bradlaugh's entrance. That they did so on really religious grounds is too absurd for discussion. One of them was Sir Henry Drummond Wolff—the Jewish gentleman who afterwards uttered that unspeakable *mot* about Bradlaugh; namely, that Bradlaugh had no God at all, whereas all the other members had some God or other. The second was Mr. Gorst, the third Mr. A. J. Balfour, and the fourth Lord Randolph Churchill. They were the Fourth Party, and there were four of them. They were all Tories; with one exception, they were young and ambitious, Lord Churchill being *very* young and *very* ambitious; and they saw, or rather *he* did, that by trading upon the religious bigotry of the House and the country they could use the "Bradlaugh question" to obstruct, worry, and possibly upset the new Liberal government.

This is practically admitted by Mr. Churchill. "The Fourth Party," he confesses, "grew out of the Bradlaugh incident." He also allows that by means of the Bradlaugh incident the Fourth Party, and subsequently the official Conservatives who were drawn in with them, injured the credit of the Gladstone Ministry in Parliament, and "not unsuccessfully" represented the Liberal party and its leaders to the country "as the champions of Bradlaugh and his abominated doctrines."

The object of these men was purely political. They traded on the religious passions of their fellowmen for party purposes. They were the last men who could be expected to entertain a special zeal for religious truth. Lord Randolph Churchill took up

the "Bradlaugh incident" for his own ends. And we will show presently that he dropped it for the same reason.

VII.

With regard to the political capital that could be made out of the "Bradlaugh incident" Mr. Churchill is of opinion that "to Wolff belonged the merit of discovery." This may be technically true, but the more violent spirit of Lord Churchill took practical possession. His speech in the first Bradlaugh debate was precisely suitable to the policy of the hour. "Henceforward, upon the Bradlaugh question," Mr. Churchill says, "he took his natural place as a leader, and before two years had passed he was credited by the public with having begun the whole controversy."

Mr. Churchill cleverly screens his father by making Sir Henry Wolff the original protagonist against Bradlaugh. Certainly it was Wolff's motion around which the first bitter debate moved, but it was Lord Churchill who made the most hot-headed, reckless, and insulting speech.

Having screened his father in this way, at least for the moment, Mr. Churchill eases his conscience by recognising the party policy which was being promoted:—

"Partisanship was not slow to perceive its opportunity. Sir Stafford Northcote and the whole Conservative party made haste to support Sir Henry Wolff. Opposition speakers sought to identify the Liberal party and Mr. Gladstone himself with the member for Northampton. He had been their candidate, he was now their comrade. The division, according to one gentleman, would be between those who were on the side of atheism, disloyalty and immorality and those who were not."

A meaner policy was never pursued. Mr. Gladstone's piety was never really doubted by his worst enemies. Whatever support he felt constrained to give Bradlaugh was certainly dictated by principle. The whole Bradlaugh discussion must have been intensely painful to one of his temperament, training and habits of thought. This was well-known; indeed, it was perfectly obvious. Yet the Tories in general, and Lord Randolph Churchill in particular, did not hesitate to represent Gladstone as Bradlaugh's patron, and almost as his confederate. They knew better. They were lying. And it was not for the glory of God. It was for their own selfish ends. Years afterwards when Bradlaugh was dead, and Gladstone himself was cold and still in his coffin, awaiting burial in Westminster Abbey, Lord Salisbury referred to him as the last great Christian statesman, and Mr. Balfour struck a similar note of eulogy in the House of Commons. Some of those who baited Bradlaugh and libelled Gladstone in 1880, and for six years onwards, dropped a crocodile tear over the panegyric.

VIII.

Mr. Churchill is not as accurate as he might have been in his sketch of the Bradlaugh struggle. He quite overlooks the very important fact that Bradlaugh took his seat, by consent of the House, before he took the oath under Mr. Speaker Peel in 1886. On the first of July, 1880, Mr. Gladstone moved as a standing order that members-elect be allowed, subject to any liability by statute, to affirm at their choice. After another stormy discussion this was carried by 303 votes to 249. Bradlaugh went up the next day, affirmed at the table, took his seat, voted in a division, and was immediately served with a writ—nominally by Henry Lewis Clarke, a nobody; really by Mr. Newdegate, a Tory M.P.—to recover a penalty of £500 for illegal voting. From July to the next March, nine months in all, Bradlaugh sat in the House of Commons unmolested, and did his duty there in a manner that extorted the admiration of all but the blindest of his opponents.

Outside the House, of course, Bradlaugh was anything but unmolested. He was engaged in ruinous litigation. He was denounced by Christian fanatics with shocking ferocity. A Bill to exclude Atheists from Parliament was introduced by Sir J. Eardley

Wilmot, and petitions in support of it were signed in Sunday schools all over the kingdom. Gross libels, chiefly in religious papers, poured forth against Bradlaugh week after week. Catholic and Protestant vied with each other in this Christian work. Even the Dissenters took their share in it. The President of the Wesleyan Conference, on behalf of the Conference Committee, presented a petition to Parliament against the Atheist; and the Conference secretary issued a circular calling upon all Wesleyan bodies to join in the persecution.

IX.

We will now return to Lord Randolph Churchill. His first speech on the Bradlaugh question is referred to by his biographer in a brief sketch of the debate. Mr. Churchill states that Mr. Bradlaugh's declaration that "an oath was to him an idle and meaningless ceremony was repeated over and over again." But this is a blunder—and a foolish one, too, at this time of day. Bradlaugh never made such a declaration. He carefully guarded himself against it. Mr. Churchill is more accurate in what he says of his father's speech:—

"Like others who had spoken, he quoted from the Bradlaugh writings. He stood at the corner seat of the third bench below the gangway, and when he had finished reading the extract beginning, 'I loathe these small German breast-bested wanderers,' he cast the *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* upon the floor and stamped upon it, to the surprise of the assembly."

It was histrionic and even childish. Bradlaugh was so big a man, both in body and mind, that Lord Churchill's action in stamping upon his book, in a position of privilege and safety, was a grotesque display of Dutch courage.

"Randy's" manners were such throughout the Bradlaugh debates that he seemed like a wretched little terrier snapping at a magnanimous mastiff. On the introduction of Mr. Gladstone's Affirmation Bill he delivered a vulgar harangue, and begged the Tories to "give no facilities for placing in that House brazen Atheism and rampant disloyalty." In a subsequent speech, while the echoes of Gladstone's noble eloquence were still sounding in the Chamber, the "Woodstock Bantam," as Lord Churchill was frequently called, could talk in this street-corner strain:—

"The personal supporters of the representative of Atheism were the residuum, and the rabble, and the scum of the population. The bulk of them were men to whom all restraint, religious, moral, or legal, was odious and intolerable."

Lord Churchill had the impudence to speak of Bradlaugh, in the House of Commons, as the representative of Atheism. He might as well have called Mr. Gladstone the representative of Anglicanism or Mr. Samuel Morley the representative of Dissent. Bradlaugh, as it happened, was fastidiously scrupulous on the point where he was malevolently misrepresented. He had refrained from lecturing on his religious and philosophical views at Northampton, where he aspired to be the political representative of all sections of the Liberal and Radical party. He carefully kept "M.P." off the posters announcing his non-political lectures in the country. Some of his friends thought this quixotic, but he had made up his mind and he never altered it. He would abstain from everything that might suggest a desire on his part to make his political position subserve ulterior objects. Yet this was the man whom Lord Churchill called "the representative of Atheism" before the Parliament of England.

X.

It is not our object to follow Lord Churchill through all the stages of his opposition to Bradlaugh. Our object is to show that he was playing a personal and political game. We shall bring this part of our investigation to a close by showing how Lord Churchill took the lead, and therefore the chief moral responsibility, in the later episodes of the Bradlaugh struggle in the House of Commons.

Bradlaugh went up to the House on February 21, 1882, and walked to the table and swore himself in on a copy of the New Testament. It was one of his great moves in the battle. His enemies thought they had him safely chained up outside the House, but he suddenly appeared amongst them in a most dramatic manner, and compelled them to deal with him again. "Lord Randolph," Mr. Churchill says, "was the first to recover from the surprise which this act of audacity created." He called Bradlaugh's act an outrage and a defiance of the House. He urged that the intruder should be treated "as if he were dead" and a new writ issued for Northampton. There was a long discussion, in which Mr. Churchill says "the temper of all parties was inflamed by Mr. Bradlaugh's repeated interruptions"—which is a miserable falsehood. Finally they expelled Bradlaugh from the House. This was exactly what he had asked them to do all along. He admitted their constitutional right to expel him; he denied their constitutional right to keep him out of his seat by a vote of exclusion. And of course he went back to Northampton, got elected again, and returned to the House which could not get rid of him. Every nerve had been strained to defeat him, and Samuel Morley, the Nonconformist lay leader, implored his religious friends in the borough to vote against Bradlaugh as "an act of allegiance to God." For which little effort in pious electioneering it is pleasant to remember that Samuel Morley afterwards lost his own seat at Bristol.

Lord Randolph Churchill thus took the lead in Bradlaugh's expulsion. He also took the lead in opposing Mr. Gladstone's Affirmation Bill. We have already given a sample of his speech on that occasion. Mr. Churchill prints more of it, apparently without recognising its mixture of folly and hooliganism. After the magnificent oration of Gladstone, perhaps the most magnificent he ever delivered, Lord Churchill's speech was an act of sacrilege. He was impertinent to the Prime Minister. He argued like a Sunday-school scholar. He knew that Atheists had sat in the House of Commons, yet he declared that "the admission of avowed Atheists" was "a fundamental change in the Constitution"—which was making Bradlaugh's real crime consist in the honest avowal of his convictions. Here are a few more gems from this wonderful speech:—

"We must think what would be the effect on the people of this State of a recognition of unlawful doctrines, and of giving place in the immediate governing body to a man who professes and who preaches that the Christian religion, on which our law has been founded, is false, its morality defective and its promises illusory. Shall we not be giving to those doctrines a tremendous impetus by altering the Constitution of this country, in order that they may be officially represented in our Councils and may influence our decisions?..... Surely the horrors of the French Revolution should give some idea of the effect on the masses of the State recognition of Atheism."

Thus the noble lord went maundering on, every step a blunder in statement or an absurdity in logic. Three falsities should have been obvious to the poorest intelligence amongst his most bigoted auditors; first, that the House of Commons was a place where various religious ideas were officially represented; second, that the House ever did or could make a scrutiny into, or take cognisance of, its members' religious opinions; third, that the recognition of the right to sit of a member who happened to be an Atheist was a public recognition of Atheism. This childish display, however, brought a letter of admiration from Dr. Creighton, afterwards Bishop of London; and Sir Henry James (now Lord James) called it "the best speech he has ever made." What then must have been the worst!

Gladstone's Bill was lost by a very narrow majority. Not because of Lord Randolph Churchill's speech, but because the Conservatives were joined by enough recreant Liberals to damn the measure. Had the Government made it a vital matter, to stand or fall by those recreant Liberals would probably have voted for it rather than face the expense and danger of a general election.

XI.

We are going to show, in the final section of this article, that Lord Churchill's opposition to Bradlaugh was a political comedy played as a melodrama. We shall show this by words out of Lord Churchill's own mouth. But in the present, penultimate, section we shall lead up to that exposure by demonstrating the hypocrisy of his lordship's associates.

In the middle of the Bradlaugh struggle Mr. John Morley entered parliament. He sat for Newcastle-on-Tyne, in succession to Mr. Ashton Dilke, who had created a deep impression by telling the House of his own unbelief in Christianity. Mr. Morley was a notorious unbeliever. He was as much an Atheist as Bradlaugh. He had spelt "God" with a small "g" through a whole book, as well as in editing the *Fortnightly Review*. Yet he went up to the table of the House of Commons and swore his allegiance. This "profanation of the oath" did not provoke a single murmur. Mr. Morley was welcomed, and the House continued its persecution of Bradlaugh:

Mr. Labouchere plainly called this a "monstrous hypocrisy," but no answer was made from the Tory benches, or from any other part of the House. Nor was that all. Mr. Labouchere, in one of those engaging moments of cynical candor, which was so refreshing in such an atmosphere of make-believe, repeated Bradlaugh's declaration that the words of the oath—that is to say, the "so help me God"—were to him meaningless. "I confess," he said, "that I do regard these words of the oath as an utterly unmeaning form. To me they are just the same superstitious incantation as the trash of any Mumbo-Jumbo among African savages." This was worse than anything Bradlaugh had said. Had the Tories been honest and sincere in their treatment of Bradlaugh they would have promptly demanded Mr. Labouchere's expulsion. There were indeed some cries of "Oh, oh" and "Order," but they were drowned in roars of laughter. The thing was simply a joke. "Labby" knew it, and they knew it, and presently everybody knew it.

XII.

A new parliament assembled on January 18, 1886. The new Speaker-elect was Mr. Peel. He was a resolute man, with an imposing presence and a commanding voice. It was known by the Tory leaders, who were then in office, that Mr. Peel held strong views on the Bradlaugh question, and that he was resolved to brook no interference with Bradlaugh's legal right to take the oath, under whatever risks might attach to him in a court of law. The appeal of the Tory leaders was in vain. Mr. Peel knew his duty and meant to do it. Before any members were sworn, he told the House that he had received two communications—one from Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and one from Mr. Raikes and Sir John Kennaway, appealing to him not to let Bradlaugh take the oath. "I have come clearly and without hesitation," he said, "to the conclusion that it would neither be my duty to prohibit the honorable gentleman from coming, nor to permit a motion to be made standing between him and his taking of the oath." The Chancellor of the Exchequer sought to interpose, but the Speaker called him to order. Bradlaugh was sworn, and the tragi-comedy ended.

What a joy it is to meet a man! Men are nothing, Napoleon said, a man is everything. Mr. Peel put his foot down, and the strong wise man, speaking from the chair of the first Commoner of England, terminated the six years' chaos created by his weak and unwise predecessor.

What was Lord Randolph Churchill doing? Why was the champion of Christianity silent? Why did he allow the "recognition of Atheism" without a protest? Why did he passively watch the door open to all the horrors of the French Revolution?

The truth is that "Randy" had made all the capital that could be made out of the Bradlaugh incident. It had served his turn, and it no longer excited his passionate interest. He had made a nice calculation of what he and his colleagues had to lose

or gain by letting Bradlaugh into the House of Commons quietly, and he had come to the conclusion that there would be a balance on the right side. He therefore left God to defend his own honor, Christianity and the Constitution to protect themselves, and national honor and morality to get on as they could without his assistance.

Mr. Churchill prints a private Memorandum which Lord Randolph Churchill drew up and sent to his Chief, Lord Salisbury, before the meeting of Parliament. It is an illuminating document. The question was how to keep in power. Should they conciliate the eighty Irish Nationalists, or the two hundred Whigs under Lord Hartington? Lord Churchill favored the latter course. Here are his words:—

SPEAKERSHIP.

"The Irish are hostile to Mr. Peel.

The Whigs equally strong in his favor. The Government can displace Mr. Peel with the help of the Irish. The Whigs will be bitterly alienated. On the other hand, the Government can support Mr. Peel and carry his election. The Irish will find their revenge in voting for Mr. Bradlaugh. The triumph of Mr. Bradlaugh would be a shaking blow to the Tory Government and party. The alienation of the Whigs by the defeat of Mr. Peel would certainly in the course of a few weeks or months destroy the Government.

Which course to choose?

Seeing that the Irish support can never be other than momentary, seeing that by no possibility can that support be clothed with any elements of stability, seeing that the alienation of the Whigs from the Government must lead to great evils, seeing that Whig support, if attained, is honorable, stable, and natural, in my own mind I pronounce for the re-election of Mr. Peel and for running the risk of the triumph for Mr. Bradlaugh."

We tender our best thanks to Mr. Churchill for publishing that Memorandum. It does honor to his father as a party tactician, it discredits him as a statesman, it damns him as a champion of religion.

The alternative was simple. If we re-elect Mr. Peel as Speaker the terrible Bradlaugh comes in; if we don't elect Mr. Peel as Speaker we go out. Put in that way, the choice was already decided. Lord Salisbury, who was a man of brains and much of a cynic, must have smiled as he read that Memorandum. Perhaps he recollected Hamlet's account of a politician—"one who would circumvent God." When his own interests were at stake Lord Randolph Churchill cared as little for God as he did for the man in the moon. And the upshot of our investigation is that the leaders of the crusade against Bradlaugh, from Lord Randolph Churchill downward or upward, were political adventurers who traded on the basest prejudices and passions of their fellow men. It is consoling, however, to know that they were both beaten and humiliated in the end. The record of their unconstitutional resolutions against Bradlaugh was erased from the Books of the House of Commons. Bradlaugh was dying in his bedroom when that was done. Lord Randolph Churchill was already a ruined politician and a broken man. Four years later he too was dead.

G. W. FOOTE.

Rome or Reason?

WILL Protestantism live? is the question asked by a religious contemporary—with, of course, the foregone conclusion that it will. The position taken up is that against Roman Catholicism, and without any appreciation of the fact that whether Protestantism or Roman Catholicism has the greater vitality is only part of the larger question whether Christianity in any form can live. Protestants are correct enough in pointing out that everything that makes for a larger knowledge or a more complete life makes, directly or indirectly, for the destruction of the Roman Catholic faith; and that even though the Church may rise superior to an individual enemy here or there, it is powerless against the steady growth of humanity as a whole. But what Pro-

testants fail to see is that exactly the same forces that work for the destruction of Roman Catholicism make also for the destruction of all other varieties of the Christian faith. Against Freethought, the common enemy of both, both are equally powerless. Whether Roman Catholicism is gaining ground or its religious rival is a purely domestic question. Relative to Freethought they are both losing; and nothing short of a reversal of the whole course of civilisation seems likely to promise them any real help.

All the efforts of the Churches during the last ten years have only served to accentuate this fact. The special missions conducted by some of the most powerful preachers, and advertised in the most lavish manner, have absolutely failed to affect outsiders. For a moment the churches and chapels are galvanised into something like life, only to sink back into their former condition. Not ten per cent. of the people attend church. In Scotland, the most Protestant country in Europe, the proportion of church-going people is not thirteen per cent. of the population. And every decade shows a further decrease. For the increase of members shown by various religious bodies is like much else connected with religion, misleading. Either one body grows at the expense of others, or no notice is taken of the growth of population. Thus, while from 1891 to 1901 the Methodist Churches, on their own showing, increased 6.4 per cent., the increase of population during the same period was 9.7 per cent.

And it may be safely assumed that if Protestantism kept to its old position its decline in Great Britain would be still more marked. Very largely the Churches keep afloat because they keep doctrine in the background and assume an interest in social affairs. Such an organisation as the Salvation Army does not exist in virtue of its religious teaching, but because of its quack remedies for social diseases—remedies that appeal with a peculiar force to a people mentally and physically pauperised by centuries of Christian teaching. More and more the Churches talk of the need of "social service," and those who are most dependent upon popular support are the most energetic in this direction. For a time, too, a political accident has thrown certain sections of the Christian world and a certain section of the Labor world into some sort of an alliance. But this does not affect the broad issue. The plain fact staring all in the face is that in the most civilised countries Christianity can only maintain itself as a series of organisations by practically ceasing to be Christian. It is forced to commit suicide to save itself from slaughter.

The general question is, then, quite unaffected by the specific one of whether Protestantism or Roman Catholicism is the better form of faith, or which one will live longest. From one point of view, moreover, it is a question that is of interest to Christians alone. But from another point of view the question has a wider application, and possesses an interest for outsiders. For we live in what is technically a Protestant country, and we have its praises constantly dinned in our ears. We learn, with considerable surprise, that all our progress is due to our Protestantism, and also that the backwardness of other countries is due to their retaining the Roman or Greek form of Christianity, and that the greatest evil that could befall the country would be the advance of Roman Catholicism. Some of this may have a certain element of truth in it, although not in the way the average Protestant imagines. It may be true that the Roman Catholic Church is intolerant, retrogressive, and that where it grows progress is checked. All this may be true; but is it certain that Protestantism is any better? The Protestant will, of course, say yes; the Freethinker is equally convinced that Protestantism, as such, is just as bad as Roman Catholicism, although various circumstances combine to prevent it always operating in the same manner. One may readily admit that so-called Protestant countries are on the whole more progressive than Catholic countries; but one might as well attribute British supremacy to plum pudding or

Italian art to macaroni as pick out Protestantism as the cause. The Catholic Church, it may be admitted, is bad; but would any of the Protestant Churches, given similar opportunities for evil, be any better?

The truth of the matter is that while Protestantism is in itself quite as intolerant as Roman Catholicism, and as regards the smaller bodies less enlightened the conditions that gave rise to Protestantism necessarily made for a greater measure of independence. The revolt from the older Church made other revolts easier. A thing once done can usually be repeated with greater ease. And once the separation was assured, even though Protestantism had not broken up into a multitude of warring sects, the mere fact of there being two religious bodies in existence served to, in a measure, civilise both. Moreover, the more one studies the Protestant reformation the clearer it becomes that the revolt was quite as much social and political as religious, and that the latter was often a mere cloak for the former. There was nothing religious about the revolt against the economic extortions of the Church, or the dissatisfaction with the dissoluteness of the priesthood, still less with the cupidity of princes and nobles whose mouths watered at sight of the riches of the Church, the wealth of which invited attack. But religion was a handy and a customary cloak; and thus it happened that intellectual, economic, and social revolt became entangled with a purely religious dispute.

But once Protestantism became an established fact the old spirit began to exert itself with as great bitterness as ever. The people had, in fact, merely a change of masters, an authority enforcing itself upon all on whom it could be forced with as great a tyranny as the older Church, but without the excuse of age and traditional authority. Those who left Roman Catholicism to follow Calvin, or Luther, or Knox, found only a change of masters. It is a sheer travesty of the facts to assert that Protestantism either aimed at or desired what we understand as the right of private judgment. What the Protestant leaders fought for was the right of separation from Rome; what they desired was the power to impress their own form of faith upon all who came within the circle of their influence. There is hardly an exception to the statement that the Protestant leaders clamored for the forcible suppression of antagonistic opinions, and that in doing so they were supported by the rank and file of Protestant opinion. Luther declared that all who denied the common principles of the Christian religion should be put to death or confined as lunatics. Calvin's rule at Geneva is so well known as synonymous with intolerance to need no more than mentioning. One need only point out that during the whole period of Calvinistic rule in Geneva, a period of nearly two hundred years, the physical and mathematical sciences were without a single distinguished representative. In Scotland, Knox declared the perfect justice of putting heretics to death. In France the Protestants invited the attack that afterwards came, by their intolerance towards their Catholic fellow citizens. In England the earliest action of the newly created Protestant Church was to devise laws for the suppression of hostile opinions. And this became more pronounced as the Protestantism became more intense.

Probably the period of English history when intolerance was most pronounced was that portion of the seventeenth century dominated by Puritanism. The Presbyterians even tried, in 1648, to induce the Parliament to pass a law decreeing death to all who taught anything contrary to the accepted doctrine of the Trinity, and that all who taught Popish, Arminian, Baptist, or Quaker doctrines should be imprisoned for life unless they could find sureties for their good behavior. It is true the Parliament declined to gratify this expression of Protestant liberality, but other measures were passed, and no small portion of the time of the seventeenth century Parliaments was spent in devising means for curtailing liberty of thought and speech. And when one remembers that this intolerance was a universal aspect of Protestant rule, that even in Puritan New

England a penalty of one hundred pounds was inflicted upon anyone causing a Quaker to enter the colony, the statement that Protestantism either desired or fought for freedom of thought, is as wild a travesty of the truth as is conceivable.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Free Will.

To the readers of this journal, Mr. H. W. Garrod, Fellow and Tutor of Merton College, Oxford, is by no means unknown. An Essay by him entitled: "Christian, Greek, or Goth?" which appeared in the *Habbert Journal* of April, 1905, and which was reviewed in these columns, attracted considerable attention, and occasioned not a little controversy. A kind friend has just sent me a volume by the same fresh and suggestive writer, entitled *The Religion of All Good Men*, which is really a collection of studies in Christian ethics. These essays are characterised by boldness, independence, and originality of thinking. Mr. Garrod is convinced that "a generation is growing up which is calling *ethical* Christianity into question, just as the two preceding generations called in question *historical* Christianity." It is his opinion that "never was the hold of Christianity upon the minds of the youth of this country weaker" than it is at present, and he is prepared to "affirm that the difficulty which young men to-day have in accepting Christianity is not intellectual but moral." And from the nature of his profession he is doubtless justified in adding, "I speak that which I know."

The last essay in this volume is on "Some Practical Aspects of the Problem of Free Will." It cannot be claimed that Mr. Garrod is at his best in this treatise. The subject is supremely difficult and only superficial thinkers can dismiss it in a sentence. From the beginning until now neither metaphysicians nor theologians have been able to see eye to eye upon it. Some have always argued that man is a free and responsible agent, while others have been equally certain that all his thoughts and actions are governed by an inexorable fate. These two conflicting views are found in the Bible almost side by side. God is spoken of as absolute, in whose hands man is nothing but a lump of clay to be moulded according to the Potter's will; and yet the clay is held accountable both for what it is and for what it comes to. In one passage, the Divine Will is described as sovereign, irresistible, and universally triumphant, but in another the human will is represented as successfully opposing and frustrating the purpose of heaven. Both views cannot be true, and yet each has been championed by some of the most powerful thinkers. The Greek tragedians were nearly all fatalists. What vivid pictures they give us of man's helplessness in his strife against fate, of his inability to escape his destiny, and of how his life is woven with "a shuttle of adamant." Sophocles tells us that when God means to destroy a man he makes evil seem good to him. In the Stoic philosophy, likewise, there was "no space for free agency." The Christian Church, however, has always been divided in its views on this subject. Some theologians have never failed to teach that man is free, that he has the power of choice, that he can either climb up to heaven, or slide down to hell, just as he prefers. Others, such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Jonathan Edwards, have maintained that the freedom of the will is an illusion, because in the nature of things the will is bound. Of course, Christian Determinism is wholly illogical. If man is not a free agent he cannot be a sinner; and if he is not a sinner it is unjust to punish him; and if he cannot justly be punished the scheme of salvation through Christ is an absurdity.

Mr. Garrod's treatment of the subject is both lucid and practical. He is a Determinist, and this is how he states the problem:—

"Are we responsible? why are we punished? I am drunken and violent; I have a wife of habits not dis-

similar. Sometimes one of us is in gaol, sometimes both, occasionally neither. We might as well be there permanently: nobody calls on us when we are at home, and our neighbors meet us in the street without bowing. My wife's father drank; my father drank, we had two grandfathers apiece, both of them prize-fighters. We took in violence and intoxication with our mothers milk. Are we responsible? Why are we punished?"

The laws of the land deal with people as if they were free agents; but, as Mr. Garrod observes, "the judicial system of Great Britain no more proves the freedom of the will than the ecclesiastical system known as the Church of England proves the existence of God." But on what principle can punishment be justified if there is no free agency? Mr. Garrod thinks that the Determinist, called upon to deliver judgment in the imaginary case of drunkenness and violence described above, will reply something after this fashion:—

"Whether you, A. B., fifty times and upwards convicted, with your attached wife, of drunken and violent behavior, are in fact responsible for that behavior I do not know. But I do know that the behavior has occurred, and that there is nobody else whom we can make responsible. You, very possibly, have had no real part in this rolling through the street, this lying in the gutter and kicking, this blasphemous and indecent language for which you are about once more to be committed to prison. You are, perhaps, the unwilling instrument of a naturally rolling, kicking, and blaspheming universe. If we could get at the real agents we would punish them. But everybody is agreed that, for the general security of life, property, and decency, somebody must be punished. Now, though you, A. B., are possibly not the truly punishable person, yet it must be admitted that, as the apparent (if not the real) agent less injustice will be done if you are punished than if we punish C. D. or E. F., who do not seem to be the agents.....Morally I acquit you, and indeed am sorry for you and still more so for your wife, whom I know in happier days as the ornament of a bright and charming society. But the magistrate in me over-rides the man and silences the Determinist."

Whatever may be thought of that answer, the fact remains that the majority of people are what they are and do what they do because they cannot help themselves. The good deserve no praise and the bad no blame. Seeing a criminal being led to the gallows a great and good man exclaimed: "There goes Joseph Templeton but for the grace of God." The grace of God represents the influence of heredity and environment, and the exclamation really means: "Had I been that man I would have acted as he has acted, and I would have come to a similar end." We all live from our nature and we do it from choice.

"But," someone will object, "I am conscious of possessing the power of choice. I feel that I can act thus or otherwise in any given case." Now, this so-called consciousness of freedom does not really exist. When you say you are conscious of your power to choose thus or otherwise you have not yet chosen, and are ignorant of what choice you will make. The moment you know how you are going to choose you have already chosen; and as a matter of fact you could not have made a different choice. A man says, "If I had only known how much more wisely I would have acted," or, "If I had but foreseen this result my decision would have been radically different." But such an utterance shows conclusively that the will is not free. What it amounts to is that if to-day's knowledge and experience had been available yesterday then yesterday's conduct would have been different. A moment's reflection reveals the absurdity of such a position. To-day's experience did not exist yesterday, and it is sheer nonsense to imagine that yesterday's choice could have been influenced by a non-existent factor. Mr. Garrod's observations respecting this point are entirely true. He takes the case of A. B., addicted to drink, and imagines him no longer a Determinist, but an ardent "Free Willer":—

"He stands with his bottle and his glass (or it may be only the bottle) he plants his feet, and he puffs his chest and asserts proudly his consciousness of Freedom to do which of two things he will. Now, it is clear that

so long as he is conscious of being able to do which he will he has not made up his mind to do either; as soon as he has made up his mind to do one or the other his consciousness of Freedom, of power to choose, is gone; he has chosen: if you say he can re-choose then you admit that he did not choose before, and until he has acted will never admit him to have chosen, and will reduce his action, when he does act, to an act preceded by no choice, thus making it purely irrational. A. B.'s consciousness of Freedom, therefore, consists in his not having made up his mind."

Surely that is as transparent as sunlight. And yet people are being continually assured that they are free agents, that they can take this or that course, follow this or that alternative just exactly as they like, that they can choose life or death, heaven or hell, and that the consequences of the choice will be on their own heads. But has a man ever been known to act otherwise than as he liked? A man may, and often does act, detrimentally to his best interests, he may so act as to ruin himself and others; but he cannot act against his strongest desire, or his most powerful motive. In other words, all our actions are determined by a law that cannot be broken, or by a necessity that knows no alteration. Jonathan Edwards was an evangelical clergyman of great distinction; but he was a greater philosopher. He speaks quite as emphatically as Mr. Garrod himself:—

"Thus, when a drunkard has his liquor before him, and he has to choose whether to drink it or no, the proper and immediate objects about which his present volition is conversant, and between which his choice now decides, are his own acts in drinking the liquor or letting it alone; and this will certainly be done according to what, in the present view of his mind, taken in the whole of it, is most agreeable to him. If he chooses or wills to drink it, and not to let it alone, then this action, as it stands in the view of his mind, with all that belongs to its appearance there, is more agreeable and pleasing than letting it alone."

The position laid down by Edwards, therefore, is "that the will is always determined by the strongest motive," or that a man's action is of necessity an expression of his nature or character as it is at the moment. This, then, is the only freedom we possess—freedom to follow that course which, under existing circumstances, is most agreeable to us. Is it not a fact that if you know a man's character you can predict how he will act on a given occasion? You say that if he were to act differently he would be untrue to himself as you know him. Your knowledge of him may be superficial or inaccurate, but in so far as you know him correctly you can foretell his future. Mr. Garrod is "loath to deny the reality" of Divine interventions, but he has no hesitation whatever in expressing "the general truth that particular circumstances and character inevitably produce certain results in action."

Now, if Necessity is the law under which we live and move and have our being, if we deny the Freedom of the Will, does it not follow that man is not a responsible agent, and that morality is made impossible? By no means. What really follows is that morality is not possible on any other terms. According to Mr. Garrod "society is the precondition of morality: and acclaim the freedom of the will, and you make society impossible." I am not able to agree with all Mr. Garrod says on this point; but it is certain that he has laid hold of a great truth, and that his unconventional expression of this truth is worthy of closest attention.

Our starting-point is that we cannot break the laws of Nature. They may break us, they do break many, but we are powerless to interfere with them and their operations. Wherein then does a man differ from a mollusc? In what sense are we moral agents?

(To be continued.) J. T. LLOYD.

Every reform, however necessary, will by weak minds be carried to an excess, that itself will need reforming.
—Coleridge.

Acid Drops.

Welsh miners have been entombed sometimes, and we have been told after their rescue that they sustained their spirits by singing hymns, and this has been trumpeted as a supreme proof of the consolatory and uplifting power of religion. But is it really anything of the kind? It appears that any excitement will do in such circumstances. What is wanted is something that will occupy the prisoners' minds, and keep them from dwelling on their unhappy position. The thirteen men rescued from the Courrières mine, after nearly three weeks' imprisonment, being Frenchmen were not hymn-singers. Nemy, their leader, kept up their spirits by getting them to sing comic songs and tell stories. "I would have danced for them too," he says, "if they could have seen me." Evidently the comic songs and the stories did as well as hymns and prayers. In the same way a pack of cards has stopped a bullet just as well as "mother's Bible."

Revivalism plays many pranks in Wales. Miss Catherine Morgan, headmistress of the girls' department in the Bridgend provided school, being absent from her duties without explanation, Mr. Pugh Davies, inspector of schools under the Education Committee, called at the house of a lady where she was staying and asked to see her, and was told that she had received a message from God to put herself aside and await his further commands. There was some plain speaking on the Committee about the school having been made a "rendezvous of religious fanatics."

One aspect of the Separation Law in France has not received sufficient attention. It shows a broad liberality on the part of the Disestablishers. All priests sixty years of age who have been in the receipt of State stipends for thirty years will receive a life-pension equal to three-quarters of their salary. Priests over forty-five years of age who have served the State for twenty years, will receive half their salary for life. Those not entitled to life-pensions are to receive the whole stipend during the first year, two-thirds for 1907, half for 1908, and one-third for 1909. Surely this is very generous consideration. Whenever did the religious parties show half as much "charity" to their opponents?

Rev. Dr. Clifford's chapel has got to pay rates on an assessment of £200 a year on the ground that it is not "exclusively" used for religious purposes. Many other places of worship ought to be treated in the same way. We do not see, even, why churches and chapels should be exempted from rates and taxes at all, when educational institutions (to say nothing of Secular meeting-places) have to pay.

Rev. W. F. Wilberforce, late vicar of Brodsworth, Doncaster, grandson of the famous (and pious) William Wilberforce, left estate valued at £11,873. Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Rev. Dr. James Ker, Reformed Presbyterian minister at Glasgow, left estate valued at £2,004. Hardly worth mention in itself, but £2,004 more than befitted an apostle of the poor carpenter of Nazareth.

Here is a regular whale in the ocean of clerical wealth. Rev. Sir Richard Fitzherbert, of Tissington Hall, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, formerly rector of Warsop, left estate in England (besides property in Jamaica and Barbadoes) valued at £580,546. This takes our breath away. We have none left for criticism. We can only gasp "Good God!"

That amorous man of God, the Rev. Joseph Jennings Smyth, rector of St. Donard's Church, Belfast, has been ordered to pay Miss May Robinson, of Dunmurry, £270 damages for breach of promise. The kissing reported in the case, and not at all confined to the damaged young lady, seems to have been of remarkable frequency and intensity. Pious people seem to be very good at that game.

Mr. Birrell must have suffered a good deal lately from "deputations." But they have not driven all the fun out of him. When he was interviewed by a Catholic deputation the other day, on the eternal Education question, he interrupted one of the speakers and remarked that after all he had suffered from the religious in existence they need not be afraid that he was going to discover a new one.

Mr. Lloyd-George recently reminded Nonconformists, in view of the religious Education question, that "fifty per-

cent. of the population is outside organised Christianity." Some leaders of Christianity dissent from the statement, but the Rev. R. J. Campbell says it is "a fairly accurate description of the facts." Yes, and the fifty per cent. is growing.

Rev. Professor Peake, speaking at a Manchester meeting of the Religious Tract Society, said that some people despised tracts, but experience showed them to be a most valuable means of extending the kingdom of God. "We, of course," he said, "acquire our theology in the form of solid books, but there are people whose intellectual digestion is so soft and weak that they can only take mental pap." Perhaps it wasn't discreet to say so. But the pappy Christians are very numerous.

Mr. Will Crooks tells a good story sometimes. But he should avoid chestnuts. Addressing a Woolwich audience lately he said that a little boy at Woolwich fetched the doctor, the other night, and remarked to him with tears in his eyes, "There's another mouth to fill in our house." The doctor said, "Little man, don't you know that when God sends mouths he sends bread to fill them?" "I know," replied the boy, "He sends all the mouths to our house, and all the bread to yours." That blasphemous story was bald-headed in Will Crooks's childhood.

The *Aberdeen Evening Gazette* prints some verses on "The Devil," which purport to have been "read by Rev. Mr. Thomson, East United Free Church, Brechin, and published by request." Unless our memory deceives us we saw those verses a good many years ago. The concluding line, "But simple people want to know who carries the business on," sounds quite familiar.

Father Read, a Roman Catholic priest at Reading, celebrated mass and then packed up his traps and disappeared. He wished to avoid the pain of parting. He has joined the Unitarians in London. We wish he had gone further—like Mr. Joseph McCabe.

A frightful thing occurred at Liverpool. An Austrian Jew, called Nathaniel Cohen, died in the Mill-road Infirmary, and was buried in the Christian cemetery. His fellow Jews believe he will never rest there—though they are probably mistaken, and they talk of applying to the Home Secretary for permission to exhume the corpse and plant it in the Jewish burial-ground. Let us hope it will not lead to a revolution.

A measure "taking Sunday baseball and theatres from under the restrictions of the Sunday law and giving city councils the power to regulate these amusements," known as the Adler bill, was "stamped to death" in the lower house of the Ohio legislature on February 15. "The right of the author to be heard on the measure was denied, an unusual procedure," and on a motion for its indefinite postponement made the moment it was called up, the measure was rejected by a vote of 89 to 8. They seem to have the Sunday mania bad in Ohio these days. Immediately following this action of the house a statement was issued on the authority of Governor Pattison, who has taken such a decided stand for the enforcement of the Sunday laws, declaring that "the defeat of the Adler bill by a vote of 89 to 8 in the house of representatives to-day, which measure sought to interfere with the American Sabbath and existing Sunday laws, may be considered an accurate reflection of public sentiment on the subject and an indorsement of the governor's attitude." The governor "insists that the Sunday laws shall be obeyed to the letter, and it is even rumored that he will call out the State militia if necessary to prevent Sunday baseball playing in the big cities this spring and summer." Evidently there are to be lively times in the Sunday enforcement line in Ohio. "Realising that Governor Pattison intends to enforce the law against Sunday baseball a move has been begun for the legalising of Sunday baseball under 'carefully guarded and restrained conditions.' A bill dealing with baseball alone and leaving the State law regulating Sunday amusements exactly as it stands will be introduced in the Senate."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A Mormon preacher in Carson City was killed in the pulpit in a very sensational manner. Rev. J. B. Lentz was preaching in a thunderstorm, and trying to make his voice heard above the noise of the elements. Suddenly the lightning struck the church and ran down the chandelier behind the reverend gentleman, who fell unconscious and half-paralysed amongst the occupants of the front pew, and died within an hour. Of course there was nothing supernatural in the occurrence, but there would have been (of course!) if the victim had been a Freethought lecturer.

The London *Star* is very chary of advertising Mr. Foote, the *Freethinker*, or the National Secular Society; but it was not above lifting some paragraphs from our last week's "Sugar Plums" into its own "Mainly About People." We refer to the paragraphs on the Thomasson family.

The cheek of the Christians! There is no end to it. We clip the following from the *Westminster Gazette* of Saturday, March 31:—

"An interesting ceremony took place on board the Japanese transport 'Iyo Maru' about an hour before she left the London Docks, when the Bible Society, by permission of the Japanese Legation and the officers commanding, distributed Scriptures to the Japanese officers and sailors. Six hundred cloth-bound Japanese Testaments, with a special inscription inside the cover, were taken on board for the sailors, while English Testaments were provided for the officers. The Lieutenant-Commander, who was courtesy itself, made admirable arrangements for the distribution, at which he himself was present, the officers assisting the Bible Society officials. The sailors, who were proceeding to Newcastle to take charge of the 'Kashima,' were mustered on deck and marched past in double file, and as each received a Testament he raised it to his forehead and bowed. The Lieutenant-Commander accepted an English Bible, and heartily thanked the society for their gift to himself and to the officers and men. The books intended for the crew of the 'Katori' have been despatched to Barrow."

The Japanese are a very polite people. Probably the sailors on the Japanese warship kept their thoughts about that Bible distribution to themselves. But what would an English captain say if it were proposed by a Japanese Society at Tokio to distribute copies of Buddhist sacred books amongst his crew? "No, no," he might say, "we give Bibles but we don't receive them." The English, in short, are the chosen people. They say so themselves—and that settles it.

Old Dowie has been deposed from the headship of Zion City. Even his wife and son have turned against him, so we presume that the white-haired prophet has become insupportable. He is alleged to have wasted the Zion money in swagger travelling and extravagant living. Probably the Zionites think they have got rid of their unprofitable prophet, but he may turn up again and raise Hades in the sacred city.

An American journalist said a smart thing about Old Dowie *apropos* of his claim to be Elijah II. The only difference between Elijah the First and Elijah the Second was that the former was fed by ravens and the latter by gulls.

The Bishop of London says he is struck with the way in which the American missionaries turn their hands to anything, while the Englishman seems unable to get his gloves off. We hope he doesn't mean what the Yankee did, who was asked by a Scotch visitor whether the Scotchmen in that part of America kept the holy Sabbath. "Oh yes," said the Yankee, "and anything else they can lay hands on."

The *Lancet* represents the old-fashioned side of the medical profession. That accounts for its remarkably foolish and ill-bred review of Haeckel's *Last Words on Evolution*. While admitting Haeckel's unchallengeable greatness as a biologist, our contemporary regrets that he is—well, that he is also a philosopher. It talks with the silliest air of superiority about his "temper"—which, by the way, is as unruffled as Darwin's was; and actually speaks of his polemic against "the cherished and revered beliefs of the churches" as "indecent." We don't want to be too severe, but it seems to us that the *Lancet* should get a bib and a bottle—for its second childhood.

According to the Chief Constable's annual report Liverpool is sadly troubled with sectarian conflicts. The good Catholics and the good Protestants do love each other so. Special provision for the preservation of the peace had to be made on 233 occasions last year, and on 53 occasions force had to be used to disperse crowds. Many claims for damages had to be paid under the Riot Act, and overtime allowances to the police cost £702 1s. 8d. The Chief Constable points to the fact that religious rows are far more vicious and bitter than those caused by purely political or social differences. Exactly so. The Bible itself says that the first quarrel in the world was a religious quarrel. It was between Cain and Abel, and it had the usual result.

Dr. Chevasse, Bishop of Liverpool, presided at a Missionary meeting in Liverpool, at which Sir W. Mackworth Young declared, amidst loud applause, that "throughout India the old faiths were drying up, while there was rising

to the surface an undercurrent of Christianity which would spread from shore to shore." When the mild Hindus realise this gentleman's expectations we suppose they will be us brotherly as the Christians of Liverpool.

England is a Christian country. England holds possession of India. England makes the poor Hindus pay nearly £5,000,000 a year as salt tax. Salt is a necessary of life. The high price of salt in India causes a lot of gratuitous disease and death. The high price is caused by the salt tax. And England is a Christian country. If you doubt it ask the missionaries.

We nearly vomited after reading a long letter by George Alfort Smith, who was sentenced to death for murdering his aged aunt at Glossop. Being reprieved, and having his sentence "reduced" to penal servitude for life, he broke forth into perfect raptures of piety. God was his friend, and he felt sure he was going to heaven eventually, and meet there the aunt he had murdered. It doesn't seem to have occurred to him that the old lady might prefer his room to his company.

Rev. D. J. Williams, pastor of the Memorial Congregational Church, Portmadoc, has been seriously injured by a gas explosion in his house. We suppose he went looking for the leakage with a light. If a Freethinker acted in that way people would laugh.

Our Spiritualist contemporary, the *Two Worlds*, joins in denouncing the well-known mediums who have lately been exposed as vulgar tricksters, but still clings to "materialisation" and the "dark circle." Honest mediums, apparently, are mediums who have not been found out. Is that what our contemporary means by the "untainted proofs" of spirit return?

Some of the "yarns" told at Spiritualist meetings are of a sort which remind us of the threefold classification of a certain species of mortals as "liars, fluent liars, and damned liars."

Bob Cleaves, second mate of the *Colne*, said to Gardiner, the only fireman saved from the wreck: "Look here, Hugh! You have got a wife and six little bairns that need you. Here's my belt. Make a jump for it, my lad." Cleaves lived at Goole, and the district sky-pilots have been talking, in their usual way, about this beautiful incident. But the plain truth is that Cleaves acted on a brave human impulse, and probably never thought he was doing anything extraordinary. What the men of God have to do, in the face of such facts, is to revise their damnable old doctrine of original sin.

La Raison reports from a Pesth journal the curious case of a new religion in that part of Christendom. The wife and daughter of a fruit-merchant went insane and had to be taken to the asylum. Many other husbands found their wives going "balmy" at the same time. The police looked into the matter and found a number of females were suffering from religious frenzy. They had been initiated into a new religion started by a workman. One of their practices was to strip themselves naked at their meeting-place and put their clothes into the furnace. The young girls called themselves brides of the Savior. Some of them were found to be in the way of increasing the population. The police do not believe in the divine paternity in these cases. They suspect the "prophet."

Another popular cure for insomnia. A certain publishing house is offering a *Pulpit Commentary*, in forty-nine big volumes, for five shillings down and the balance in easy instalments. The man who couldn't find a good sleep in those soporific pages must have heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!"—like Macbeth.

Public Opinion, New York, used to have a "Religious" section. This has been dropped. In its place we see a "Sociological" section. We take this as a striking sign of the times.

People have got so used to the fact that they don't notice it. But it is a fact all the same that the pious Czar of Holy Russia is still a prisoner in his own palace. In spite of all the grace of God within him, and the divinity that hedges him round, this Christian ruler dares not show his nose in any part of his kingdom save the small plot where he is carefully guarded by hirelings, and even these have to be frequently changed. Over in Heathen Japan the Mikado is quite safe, and is still surrounded by the reverence and affection of his people. The two pictures are an instructive contrast.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 8, Town Hall, Stratford: 7.30, "Priests and Bibles in the People's Schools."

April 22 and 29, Queen's Hall.

May 6, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 8, 22, and 29, Liverpool.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 8, Porth; 15, Stratford Town Hall; 29, Manchester.

RIDGWAY FUND.—George Payne £2, Fenton 2s. J. Partridge also acknowledges: J. Wilson 1s., E. Ward 1s.

J. W. O'LEARY.—The only distinction we can see is that the Milton passage is more prosaic than the Shakespeare passage. The fundamental meaning is the same in both. Luxury and want are contrasted in each; and the wealth consumed by the former, and lacked by the latter, is in both cases denominated by a word of the same root meaning, only Milton uses the comparatively weak adjective "superfluous" and Shakespeare the strong substantive "superflux." Chronologically, of course, Shakespeare's great passage came first, being written and printed while Milton was in his cradle. And we know that Milton read Shakespeare, at least in his younger days before he puritanically sneered at Charles I. for doing so, because we have his fine laudatory sonnet on the Master. For these reasons we called the passage in *Comus* an echo of the passage in *King Lear*.

H. V. STOREY, Shelley Bookshop, Gloucester-street, Oxford, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications. He will be glad to see any of the "saints" who like to call at his place. Some of his customers, and readers of this journal, are University men. He says that Freethought is gaining ground at Oxford.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for the cutting. We must repeat, however, that Mr. Keir Hardie came out of the bosom of a Secularist family. His father and mother were members of the Glasgow N. S. S. Branch to the day of their death, and a worthier couple never lived. People may call Mr. Keir Hardie a Congregationalist, but when has he called himself so? We wish for a reply.

H. THOMAS.—Cuttings welcome.

G. O. WARREN.—Much pleased to see your letter on "The Humbugarios" in the *Paigton Observer* and the *Western Daily Mercury*. We wish Freethinkers would do more in this line all over the country. Bernard Shaw's plays are published by Constable & Co., in two volumes at 6s. net each. Shall be writing you on the other part of your letter.

A. DWIGHT.—We know nothing about the matter.

H. EAGERS.—George Eliot had sympathy enough with "negative propagandism" in her young, brave, struggling days, when she translated Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. She became more "respectable" as she became better off; that is, when her novels brought her thousands of pounds. She was a woman of genius, but even geniuses sometimes have their little infirmities. There are critics who think that the blight of respectability crept over George Eliot's work in the course of time.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for useful cuttings.

J. BROUGH.—We cannot enlighten you on the point. Our information was obtained, as we stated, from the late G. J. Holyoake's *Bygones*. Thanks for cuttings. Pleased to hear you were so delighted with what you are good enough to call our "splendid lectures" at Manchester.

R. POOLE.—The pious tract about Voltaire is not issued by a person worth "going for." Thanks all the same; also for your good wishes.

E. PINDER kindly informs us, for the sake of Leicester friends, that the *Freethinker* can be obtained on Thursday evening at Foxon's, Church-gate, a hundred yards or so from the Clock Tower—also at Muntion's, Upper Conduit-street. Both are old established places.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Too late for this week; in our next.

ST. COB.—Never make statements without knowledge. We cannot help you. Charles Dickens was not an Atheist.

R. CHAPMAN.—Better luck next time.

BRUN-THE-PRIEST.—A very good letter and bound to do good. We don't recollect ever printing such a passage as Ruskin's.

JAMES NEATE.—Thanks for cuttings.

H. C. CLIFTON.—We knew no more than was printed in their paper. We have had no correspondence on the subject except with yourself. Rev. A. J. Waldron has shuffled miserably, as you say, but that is what they all do when they are tackled. No sensible person would doubt the accuracy of your report.

ALBATHIAN.—The story about Voltaire is sheer fiction. You can tell your Christian friend so. Thanks for your encouraging letter.

H. PORTER.—A very good letter. We hope you will get more inserted in the same newspaper. We shall have to make time for our arrears of literary work, including the portion you refer to.

J. T.—There has been talk about it, but we are not aware that the French government has done anything to "encourage the birth rate."

E. H. (Liverpool)—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

W. RUBY.—See paragraph. Thanks.

A. T. THURSTON.—We shall deal with the new Education Bill immediately it is introduced. We have also undertaken to write a new Manifesto for the National Secular Society on Secular Education, in view of the provisions of the Bill and the discussion it gives rise to.

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

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

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

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

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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.

We had the choice of breaking our conclusion of the article on "Lord Randolph Churchill and Charles Bradlaugh" into two parts or letting the whole appear in this week's *Freethinker*. We preferred the latter course as best for the subject and our readers. The article is a very long one, and this fact will partly explain why the "Acid Drops" department is not as well stocked as usual this week.

Mr. Foote takes the second of the Stratford Town Hall lectures this evening (April 8), his subject being one that ought to crowd the hall from the platform to the doors just now—"Priests and Bibles in the People's Schools." On this occasion Mr. Foote will be in no hurry to catch the last train home. He has arranged to sleep in London, and will thus be able, not only to give good measure in the lecture, but also to take any number of questions and any amount of discussion that may be forthcoming.

Mr. Foote's next lectures in London will be at the Queen's Hall on Sunday evenings, April 22 and 29. His subjects, which will be special ones, will be duly announced in next week's *Freethinker*. Arrangements are being made for some first-class music at these meetings. Friends who can circulate small printed announcements of the Queen's Hall lectures are requested to apply for same to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. A postcard application will do.

The opening audience at Stratford Town Hall last Sunday evening was a capital one. Mr. Cohen delivered a most excellent lecture and replied to a lot of questions afterwards.

Mr. Cohen lectures, afternoon and evening, for the Liverpool Branch to-day (April 8), and his subjects should attract good meetings. He will lecture for the Branch again on April 22 and 29. Admission to all three courses of lectures will be free. Local "saints" will please note this fact and tell their Christian friends.

After Mr. Schweizer's lecture on Easter Sunday evening, the Liverpool Branch will hold its annual meeting. A large attendance of members is hoped for, and all arrears of subscription should be paid beforehand.

Mr. Lloyd delivered two very able lectures at South Shields on Sunday, but his audiences were not as good as they should have been. Perhaps the fine weather had something to do with this, and perhaps the district is suffering a reaction after the excitement of the general elections. An excellent report of Mr. Lloyd's afternoon lecture on Secular Education appeared in the local *Daily News*.

The new North London N. S. S. Branch, formed in connection with the Stanley Hall lectures, held its first open-air meeting on Sunday afternoon at Parliament Hill. The committee ask the support of local "saints" at these meetings, which will be continued until the end of September.

The Lowestoft Branch of the Independent Labor Party will submit to the Annual Conference at Stockton-on-Tees that no amendment of the Education Act will be satisfactory unless it provides "for complete public control of all schools receiving State aid, and for the final settlement of the religious difficulty by the substitution of moral for religious instruction."

The *Newark Herald* prints a capital letter from "Fair-minded" in reference to a remark of Father Hardican's, who did not want to see a Christian people following in the footsteps of a non-Christian people like the Japanese, who adopted secular education in 1868. "Fair-minded" begs the Catholic priest to remember that "Heathen" Japan far excelled "Christian" Russia in courage, honor, patriotism, discipline, self-sacrifice, and humanity. This is a point that should always be pressed home.

We like to see Labor men running straight. Mr. Will Thorne, M.P., addressing a meeting of the West Ham Teachers' Association, expressed a hope that Mr. Birrell, the new Minister of Education, would "play the straight game, and go in for secular education."

The *Humane Review* (Bell) for April contains an excellent article by Mr. H. S. Salt on "The Ethics of Corporal Punishment." There is also a very interesting article by W. H. Shrubsole on "The Transformation of Young Criminals in Hungary"—a country which appears to be a good deal ahead of England in the matter of wise penology. We wish this admirable quarterly magazine all success. It is published at one shilling per number, and is sent post free for four shillings per year. Address—Ernest Bell, York House, Portugal-street, Lincoln's-inn, London, W.

Branches of the National Secular Society should be making preparations for being represented at the Annual Conference at Birmingham on Whit-Sunday. Individual members also have a right to attend if they choose, and we hope a good number of them will choose. They will enjoy being present at the big Town Hall meeting in the evening, and hearing Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, and other Freethought speakers. Motions for the Conference should be sent in to the Secretary, by May 10 at the latest.

LIFE IDEALS.

The superior man is catholic and no partizan.—*Confucius Analects*, book ii., c. xiv., p. 127, Dr. Legge's translation.

As the bee collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its color and scent, so let the sage dwell on earth.—*Buddha, Dhammapada*, verse 49, c. iii., Max Muller's translation.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.—*Paul, 1st Ep. to Thess.*, v. 21.

A man, I think nought human alien to me.—*Terence, "Self-Tormentor," act i., sc. 1.*

For not this man and that man, but all men make up mankind, and their united tasks the task of mankind.—*T. Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," book i., c. i.*

The earth is no sojourn of expiation. It is the home wherein we are to strive towards the realisation of that ideal of the true and just of which each man has in his own soul the germ.—*J. Mazzini, "On the Duties of Man," c. vii.*

ON DEATH.

I have often thought upon death, and I find it the least of all evils. All that which is past is as a dream; and he that hopes or depends upon time coming, dreams waking. So much of our life as we have discovered is already dead; and all those hours which we share, even from the breasts of our mothers, until we return to our grandmother the earth, are part of our dying days, whereof even this is one, and those that succeed are of the same nature, for we die daily; and as others have given place to us, so we must in the end give way to others. Physicians in the name of death include all sorrow, anguish, disease, calamity, or whatsoever can fall in the life of man, either grievous or unwelcome. But these things are familiar unto us, and we suffer them every hour; therefore we die daily, and I am older since I affirmed it. I know many wise men that fear to die; for the change is bitter, and flesh would refuse to prove it: besides the expectation brings terror, and that exceeds the evil. But I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death.—*Lord Bacon.*

On Heaven and Other Things.

THERE is a vast amount of religious fervor in the towns and villages of Great Britain; religious fervor, that is, of the variety which finds a vent in most unmusical singing at street corners, pours itself spasmodically through the tortuous windings of a brass instrument, or expends itself on the stretched and resounding epidermis of the big drum. It is surprising what a number of religious people contrive to combine their own pleasure with the annoyance of others, and yet nurse the delusion that they are "doing good" and serving God.

The other Sunday while endeavoring to compose our thoughts in holy Sabbath vein our devout reverie was disturbed by a band of enthusiasts who, *inter alia*, descanted in several keys on what it must be to be *there*. "There" we understood to mean heaven, and immediately our thoughts were wafted away on the bosom of the evangelical harmony until we became lost in contemplation of the ineffable bliss that awaits us hereafter—perhaps. The sublime joys of Paradise must truly be unspeakable if they are to be shared with many of the self-righteous orators and vocalists of the causeway, who so blatantly claim the friendship of Jesus and revel so exultantly in the consciousness that they are of the chosen few. We may be allowed to express the hope that if singing the praises of the Lamb forms one of the chief pastimes up above, Jesus may furnish some of his admirers and worshipers with better voices and truer musical ears than they now possess, else should we shiver with apprehension for the maintenance of social amenities in the region over Jordan. We may also prayerfully trust that whoever is responsible for the musical arrangements in the Better Land will see to it that those who aspire to play the trombone, or the euphonium, or the bombardon to the praise and glory of God for all eternity, not only have better instruments than they operate upon here but also be taught to manipulate them properly. We entreat the attention of the great Trumpeter-in-chief of the heavenly court, Gabriel (who is still waiting patiently to perform that solo of his) to this matter, in the interests of general amity and general sanity. Because, if, as we are led to believe, Eternity in heaven is to consist of one long drawn-out musical evening something will have to be done in the direction indicated if the dwellers in the New Jerusalem are to preserve their reason. It is just possible, of course, that no one who has any reason ever gets into heaven, so that the contingency of losing one's reason may never arise. Indeed it seems probable that the ability to dispense with reason is the leading qualification for admission in the first instance.

Descriptions of the joys of heaven have always either been delightfully vague or grossly materialistic, where they have not been painfully inane as in popular Christian theology. The Mohammedan paradise has at least the distinction of being comprehensible and appreciable by the average not-too-spiritual mortal. Mohammedanism promises hereafter a superabundance (without evil consequences) of all those pleasures which the experience of humanity has proved must be indulged in with strict moderation here. It is a seductive prospect and renders intelligible the comparative indifference with which the fervent believer in Islam faces death. On the other hand, when one regards the nebulous, uninviting conception of heaven put forward by Christianity one understands the general reluctance of Christians to relinquish the tangible, if fleeting, joys of earth.

The Christian heaven is a place which some people talk about, many people pray for, and everybody endeavors to refrain from entering until the last possible second. Even the best disposed Christians pray most earnestly for the retention of their dear ones in life, when the latter are ill, in spite of the professed belief that they would be much happier in heaven than here. Which is both very selfish and very illogical in them. But as St. Jerome (we think) very aptly remarked in the Christian interest, "It

has not pleased God to save mankind by logic," and doubtless Christians feel entitled to be as illogical and inconsistent as they choose in this and other religious matters. It is certainly always much easier to be illogical than logical.

Even when poor old Leo XIII. lay dying his faithful subjects did their utmost to postpone his entry into Paradise. They bombarded the throne of God with millions of petitions for the express purpose of preventing a worn-out nonagenarian from being called to his well-earned rest—not to speak of the harp and crown awaiting him in the Never-Never-Land. There were skilled physicians constantly at his bedside doing their best to prevent his soul from winging its flight to its maker. All that wealth and solicitous care could compass were brought into requisition to cheat the estimable Vicar of Christ out of a few hours of his eternity of bliss. Instead of permitting the old man to die in peace and enter into everlasting communion with that Holy Ghost whose unworthy mouthpiece he was for so long, they labored as assiduously to keep him in life as if they had feared he was booked for eternal perdition rather than for never-ending felicity.

Of course in this connection all Christians are consistently inconsistent. They may pretend to believe that the Lord is calling their loved ones home, but they take precious good care not to let them go if they can help it. And the sick ones themselves will swallow all sorts of nauseous doses and undergo painful operations of all kinds in order to keep out of Abraham's delectable bosom as long as they can. Not even the most devout of Christians is so eager to find himself in the arms of Jesus (what a miscellaneous armful he must have by this time!) as he professes to be. The general attitude of Christians towards Heaven is admirably reflected in the story of the nobleman and the Irish beggarwoman. In response to the appeal of the woman the nobleman had given her some money. With truly Irish effusiveness of gratitude she ejaculated, "God bless you, your honor! May the heavens be your bed this night!" To which the nobleman somewhat testily returned that while the sentiment was unimpeachable she need not have been quite so precise about the time.

The overwhelming majority of Christians are content to pursue their pilgrimage in this vale of tears without evincing more than an occasional verbal anxiety for immediate entry into the promised land. And we do not blame them. For, in the words of the popular hymn, what must it be to be there! Promiscuity in anything has scant attractions for us, and what a promiscuous and uninviting lot the inhabitants of the spiritual Jerusalem must be if all turn up there who claim to have found Jesus and to have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. We feel inclined to echo the sentiment of an erstwhile popular music-hall ditty, and declare that if some people whom we wot of are going heavenward we prefer "a very different place." Who would not prefer Hell with Bruno and Burns and Ingersoll and all the heretics of all time to heaven with Torrey and Evan Roberts, and all the other members of the black-coated brigade, together with their snivelling bands of penitents who have "got right with God." God is welcome to most of their company, and we can only bewail the sad condition of the Trinity doomed to submit to the eternal slobbering of brands plucked from the burning by the Salvation Army, and to endure the trying society of the ranters and canters of the various religious sects, who, of course, are all going "There." What a time God must be having in the midst of that heterogeneous crew the self-elected elect of all ages who have passed confidently (more or less) towards the bourne of death to the accompaniment of the angelic chorus, with the light of the beatific vision reflected in their dying eyes, and the welcoming voices of their departed loved ones sounding in their ears (*vide* any religious tract or goody-goody novel). Picture the intellectual plight of a God dwelling throughout a million æons amongst a crowd of worshipers whose ideal of music and poetry is enshrined in the "Glory Song" and kindred

drivel, or amongst those whose religion consists in grovelling before painted images and lighting candles at the feet thereof. It should be enough to reduce infinite wisdom to a condition of infinite imbecility. If all those get into Paradise who lay claim so boldly to the *entrée*, one's imagination quails at the prospect and a new and deeper meaning attaches to God's reputation for longanimity. Verily he is a long-suffering God. Though it is indeed meet he should endure their company, for is he not the author of their existence and responsible for what they are.

It is just possible that the inferior quality of the human material imported into the City of God during the Christian era has sadly deteriorated the Godhead. We throw this out as a suggestion to those Christians who are puzzled and discouraged by the seemingly unaccountable silence and inactivity of God in modern times, as compared with earlier epochs. The far-reaching effect of the influence of environment is now thoroughly well recognised by thoughtful people. There is no reason to suppose that God is independent of the laws of nature. According to well-meaning individuals, who seek to reconcile science with religion, the laws of nature are the laws of God. We may surely assume that an all-wise God will abide by the laws which he has in his wisdom devised for the universe, notwithstanding what has been said by peccant human beings about law-makers being law-breakers. Laws drawn up by Infinite Knowledge and Infinite Wisdom must necessarily be the best of all possible laws, and even God himself would find it impossible to make excuse or give a reason for transgressing them were it merely by a hairsbreadth. Consequently God, like the rest of us, must be susceptible to the deteriorating influence of a bad environment, such as has been brought to bear upon him in heaven during the last few centuries. We suggest to Christian Evidence lecturers that the decided falling-off of God's interest in this world, as indicated by his failure to intervene at critical moments according to his earlier custom, is satisfactorily accounted for in this way. God has succumbed to the deleterious effect of a Christian environment and is no longer capable of performing anything befitting his status as prime ruler of all creation. No wonder things are going to the dogs.

But whatever may be said in reprobation or ridicule of the illogical conduct of the Christian (as a Christian) on the brink of death, it is entirely to the credit of human nature when he thinks more of the living at such a moment than of his own problematical fate beyond the grave. And when the Christian grudges to surrender his beloved ones to Christ or to their Heavenly Father, he is but demonstrating that there is something stronger even than religious superstition and supernatural hopes or fears, namely, human love and sympathy. Which is indeed a pleasing circumstance, and one which inspires new trust in the possibilities of human nature.

The desire for heaven does not predominate in the breasts of any who are blest with the good things of life. Given health and strength, domestic felicity, and other material blessings, there is, as a rule, scant evidence of any overpowering wish to be safe in Our Father's Home. When Sir Godfrey Kneller lay dying at Whitton, Pope attempted to comfort him by suggesting that as he (Sir Godfrey) had been a very good man he would no doubt go to a better place. "Ah, my good friend," Kneller replied, "I wish God would let me stay at Whitton." He was quite satisfied with his lot here below. A decided improvement in the social condition of the poor and miserable would go far to eradicate the lingering belief they still entertain regarding the Christian superstition of heaven.

G. SCOTT.

DIVINES AND THE LAITY.

The Divine stands wrapt up in his cloud of mysteries, and the amused Laity must pay Tithes and Veneration to be kept in obscurity, grounding their hope of future knowledge on a competent stock of present ignorance—*George Farquhar, "Discourse upon Comedy," 1718.*

Wordsworth—IV.

SONNETS—ELEGIACS—LYRICS—SYMPATHY WITH
OLD AGE.

(Concluded from p. 204.)

THERE remain several branches of poetry in which Wordsworth has left us powerful and sustaining work. There is the sonnet. No poet (in our tongue, at any rate) practised the sonnet more than he (he made, in all, over five hundred attempts in this form of verse) and after rejecting what is lacking in vital interest—work recondite, or over fanciful, there remains what easily wins him place as our greatest sonnet-writer. Let any one take the sixty sonnets given by Matthew Arnold in his selection of Wordsworth, (this section to my mind is the most perfect in Arnold's excellent selection) and match them, if he can, from all the other sonnets in our language. Of course, even among the sonnets that Arnold has chosen, some are of a higher excellence than others. Take the one on Mary, Queen of Scots, landing at Workington. We have not much love for queens; but is there anything more beautiful in workmanship? anything of finer balance in historic appreciation? Aristotle says: "Tragedy purifies the heart by pity and fear." Does not this sonnet do that?

"Dear to the Loves, and to the Graces vowed,
The Queen drew back the wimple that she wore;
And to the throng, that on the Cumbrian shore
Her landing hailed, how touchingly she bowed!
And like a star (that, from a heavy cloud
Of pine-tree foliage poised in air, forth darts
When a soft summer gale at evening parts
The gloom that did its loveliness enshroud)
She smiled: but Time, the old Saturnian seer,
Sighed on the wing as her foot pressed the strand,
With step prelude to a long array
Of woes and degradations hand in hand—
Weeping captivity, and shuddering fear
Stilled by the ensanguined block of Fotheringay!"

Work of this quality is rare. In the total number of Wordsworth's sonnets, not more than a dozen, it seems to me, are of equal high quality.*

In elegiac verse, Wordsworth maintains a more level quality. Subjects of a solemn nature were to his genius; and in "Matthew," in the poem on the expected dissolution of Fox, and in some of the stanzas written the day after visiting the grave of Burns, one feels that poetry can go no higher. Here again, one allows for some infusion of theological sentiment. In the poem on the expected dissolution of Fox, if for "God" one translate "nature," or "the womb of nature," the poem is of universal acceptance.

Also in a poem of a class closely allied to the elegiac, Wordsworth has left us unsurpassable work: a class including "The Fountain"; "The Two April Mornings"; the Sequel to "Beggars"; "A Farewell"; "The Wishing Gate"; the stanzas dated "September, 1819," beginning: "Departing summer hath assumed."

As to Wordsworth's lyric work, there is great divergence of judgment. This has met with uncritical acceptance from Wordsworthians, with disvaluation as gross from others. We should discriminate. In the grand requisite of lyric verse—spontaneity of movement, answering spontaneity of thought and feeling, Wordsworth is sometimes wanting; as in his lines to a sky-lark. More often I find the matter insufficient to support a genuine

* On the Final Extinction of the Venetian Republic: "Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee"

"Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood"

Mutability: "From low to high doth dissolution climb"

To Lady Fitzgerald in her seventieth year: "Such age how beautiful!"

"It is a beauteous evening, calm and free"

"Where lies the land to which yon ship must go?"

"To Sleep: "A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by"

The Pine of Monte Mario at Rome: "I saw far off the dark top of a pine"

On looking back to Duddon: "I thought of thee, my partner and my guide"

Personal Talk: "I am not one who much or oft delight"

The sonnet on the sinking star (already quoted).

The sonnet to Wansfell.

movement of feeling. Among his lyrics that fail on this score, I class "The Solitary Reaper," "Stepping Westward," "Yarrow Visited," the latter sections of the poem to a Highland Girl. Even the stanzas on the Daffodils, so extolled by Wordsworthians, albeit far better than these, are by no means perfect. The self-reference in the opening is a trifle *outré*; "a crowd" and "a host" savor of pleonasm,—remind one unpleasantly of the exigencies of measure and rhyme; and in the relapse into the "counting-up-his-blessings" mood, in the last eight lines, (there is a similar relapse in the last section of the poem to a Highland Girl) the lyrical feeling evaporates. But at times in Wordsworth's lyric work the essential qualities are there; the genuine rush of feeling, ideas spontaneous to match, verse irresistible in movement. Among his best examples are: "Yarrow Unvisited," "Stray Pleasures," the lines to the nightingale, the ode to Lycoris.

No notice of Wordsworth would be adequate that did not take account of his sympathy with old age. Who other has put in expression a sympathy as profound? "Michael" has been mentioned. There is "The Childless Father." There are those wonderful three stanzas at the end of "Simon Lee." There is "The Leech-Gatherer." There is "The Old Cumberland Beggar." To these I add a poem which, for its sad irony, will find lodgment deep in the heart of many of us.

"There is a flower, the lesser celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun itself, 'tis out again!
When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green fields and the trees distressed,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a thing at rest.
But lately, one rough day, this flower I passed
And recognised it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.
I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
'It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.
'The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue.'
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was gray.
To be a Prodigal's Favorite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!"

I close with a sonnet written by Wordsworth when he was seventy-two, wherein we see what still brought cheer to the heart of the old man. The sonnet is the one addressed to Wansfell, the hill to the south-east looking from Rydall. It is, I think, the last thing from Wordsworth's hand rich with his individual genius. It is fit that it should have been so, for nature's appeal outlasts all; that appeal which, when experience spreads its grey over the bloom of youthful ideals, and religions pale as the knowledge of their genesis widens, is still fresh, still vital.

"Wansfell, this household has a favored lot,
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rays,
Or when along thy breast serenely float
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard!) thy praise
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought
Of glory lavished on our quiet days.
Bountiful Son of Earth! when we are gone
From every object dear to mortal sight,
As soon we shall be, may these words attest
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
Thy visionary majesties of light,
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest."

H. BARBER.

FUNCTIONLESS FACULTIES.

Any faculty we have that we keep without a function, first wails and then becomes withered, and sometimes diseased, and even malignantly diseased; and sometimes dies: and the whole body, individual and corporate, suffers from carrying about in it, to bed and board, to business and pleasure, to prayer and work, this workhouse or lazarus, or it may be churchyard, of effete, or vicious, or cadaverous organs.—J. J. Garth Wilkinson.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, March 29. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

There were also present: Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Leat, J. Marshall, J. Neate, V. Roger, S. Samuels, T. J. Thurston, F. Schindel, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the cash statement adopted.

The Secretary read the following letter from Mr. John M. Robertson, M.P., in reply to the resolution passed by the Executive at its last meeting:—

"I shall be very glad to introduce a Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws at the earliest opportunity; but that is precisely the difficulty. I drew no place in the Ballot, and without that I understand a private Bill has no chance whatever. If I find that anything can be done by way of moving a resolution or anything of the sort I will take such a step. Kindly communicate this to the Executive, with an assurance of my perfect readiness to act in the matter."

Unanimous gratification was expressed with this reply. The Secretary reported that the Social Democratic Federation and the London Trades Council had expressed their willingness to assist the N. S. S. in the event of the proposed demonstration in favor of Secular Education being arranged.

The circular to Branches in relation to the Annual Conference to be held at Birmingham on Whit Sunday was ordered to be sent out.

Permission was granted for the formation of a new Branch for North London (a result of the meetings at Stanley Hall) and also one at Paisley. New members were admitted for Wigan, Pontypridd, West Ham, and Nelson, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

REVENGE OF INJURIES.

The fairest action of our human life
Is scorning to revenge an injury;
For who forgives without a further strife,
His adversary's heart to him doth tie,
And 'tis a firmer conquest, truly said,
To win the heart, than overthrow the head.

If we a worthy enemy do find,
To yield to worth it must be nobly done;
But if of baser metal be his mind,
In base revenge there is no honor won.
Who would a worthy courage overthrow,
And who would wrestle with a worthless foe?

A noble heart doth teach a virtuous scorn;
To scorn to owe a duty overlong;
To scorn to be for benefits forborne;
To scorn to lie, to scorn to do a wrong;
To scorn to bear an injury in mind;
To scorn a free born heart slave-like to bind.

—*Lady E. Carew.*

BE TRUE.

To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.—*Carlyle.*

POETICAL LIFE.

This is what you shall do: love the earth and the sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and the crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence towards the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and mothers of families, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency, not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body.—*Walt Whitman.*

The Strange Disappearance of Jahveh.

At first he in a garden walked
And with his clay-made man conversed,
But soon his plaything cast aside—
His friendly feeling quite reversed.
Retiring to a lofty height
With haughty mien he there looks down;
And laughs at man's calamities
Like some fantastic impish clown.
And finally he disappears
Beyond the reach of human prayers,
Nor deigns to leave his new address,
In case his work should need repairs.

In vain doth Science search the heavens—
An empty echo doth resound,
For in the whole wide universe
His whereabouts cannot be found.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

NATURE'S STABILITY.

Now, if Nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were only for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother-elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disorder and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himself whom these things do now all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world.—*Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity,"* book i., chap. iii., sect. iii.

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT.

At present, natural theology has undertaken the impossible task of "finding out God" who can only be found in so far as He has been pleased to reveal Himself. The Deity thus elicited, or as Fichte rightly says "constructed," as a scientific abstraction answering to the concrete figure of the Vulcan of the Greeks—that is to say, a universal Smith. The course of the natural theologians is as follows: they see in the human body and the world the principles and applications of the arts in a surpassing degree; the skull displays the virtues of the arch, and the hand embodies wondrous pulleys and levers; whence they infer that God is acquainted with mechanics. And from all the other parts of man, the clay patronises the Potter in the same way, and the Deity which arises out of the whole is at best an infinite handicraftsman. *This is anthropomorphism,* or the distillation of God out of our own limits and thoughts, our own space and time. The Paleys, Broughams, and the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises, seemed to have been satisfied with this vulgarly of heathenism.—*Garth Wilkinson.*

Whenever good men do some noble thing the clergy give their God the credit, and when evil things are done they hold the men who did the evil responsible, and forget to blame their God.—*Ingersoll.*

Obituary.

It is with much regret that I record the death of Mr. Henry Smith. Frequenters of the Hall of Science in the 80's will remember him as secretary of the Central London Branch of the N. S. S. Always a worker, he was ever to the front when strenuous effort was needed to further Free-thought. I attended the funeral on Saturday last, and delivered a short address at the graveside. A goodly number of friends were present, to most of whom a Secular Burial Service was a novelty. I am pleased to say that it made a favorable impression on them.—*W. J. RAMSEY.*

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, T. Nicholls, "God and His Book."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Priests and Bibles in the People's Schools."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward, 12 (noon), "Was Man Made in the Image of God, or in the Image of the Ape?" 6.30, "The Virgin-Mother and Ghost-Father of Jesus."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 7, "At Home." Monday, 8, Rev. James Forrest, "The Ethics of Modern Progress."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): C. Cohen, 3, "A Search for the Soul"; 7, "Christ, Christianity, and the Labor Question."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Betterment; or, Taxation of the Unearned Increment."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, April 12, at 8, Councillor J. W. Johnston, "The Economics of Labor."

PORTh BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, "Do We Need a Religion?" 6.30, "The Birth and Resurrection of Jesus Christ."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Financial Meeting. Important.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (69 Joicey-terrace, Oxhill): 3.30, R. Bell, "Joseph Chamberlain."

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