

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Wisdom doth live with children round her knees :
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business.*

—WORDSWORTH.

Shakespeare's Day.

MANY of my readers are probably looking forward to an article from my pen on the new Education Bill. I shall certainly deal with it in the *Freethinker*, but I would rather not do so in a hurry, and I am keeping the subject for my first Queen's Hall lecture. Moreover I want to write on something else this week—something which would be a little out of date next week. I refer to Shakespeare's Day. The twenty-third of April is the death-day, and also apparently the birthday, of the greatest genius that ever illuminated and adorned the world. And this loftiest of the sons of men was also the mightiest apostle of reason; for it was he who consummated the drama by bringing human life under the absolute sway of moral causation. "Shakespeare was," as Mr. Swinburne says, "in the genuine sense—that is, in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term—a freethinker." Our great living poet justly calls attention to the magnificent soliloquy which always eliminated from the stage version of *Hamlet*. In that wonderful piece of writing there is a passage which Mr. Swinburne had chiefly in mind in calling Shakespeare a Freethinker. At a time when reason was trodden under foot by Catholic and Protestant alike the Master uttered his plea on its behalf :

"Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fast in us unus'd."

The "he" in this passage is nothing. It is conventional. The reality of the passage is a challenge to the suppressors of what lifts man above the beast. Let it also be noted in passing that the same epithet of "godlike" is applied to reason in Hamlet's immortal panegyric on man:—"in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god." And let it further be noted that the panegyric ends by calling man "the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals." It was universally believed in that age that man was a fallen angel. Shakespeare in one swift but all-inclusive phrase placed man in his proper position; the position which Darwin fortified and rendered impregnable.

Shakespeare is the incommensurable man. Browning once remarked with what ease Shakespeare took the throne of poetry while "the rest of us" toiled up the steps. There is no one like him. One poet has this quality, and another has that, but Shakespeare has all qualities, and all in the highest degree. That is the crowning marvel of his marvellous genius.

Nature brought all her gifts to his cradle. She was in a mood of reckless generosity. "Shakespeare," as Emerson said, "is as much out of the category of eminent authors, as he is out of the crowd. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence; but not into Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors." Let me quote again from the same admirable critic. "He is wise," Emerson says, "without emphasis or assertion; he is strong as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort, and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other."

"The first page I read of Shakespeare," said Goethe, "made me his for life; and when I had read through a single play I was as one who had been born blind upon whom sight had suddenly been bestowed by a miraculous touch." Flaubert, in his correspondence, is always fine in his references to Shakespeare. That immense genius, he once said, overwhelms me. Victor Hugo, in that splendid rhapsody which is entitled *Concerning Shakespeare*, by way of introducing his son's translation of the plays into French, exhausted language in celebrating the poet whose incontestible greatness he recognised. Here is one passage among many:—

"Inordinate force, exquisite charm, epic ferocity, pity, creative faculty, gaiety (that lofty gaiety unintelligible to narrow understandings), sarcasm (the cutting lash for the wicked), sidereal grandeur, microscopic tenuity, a universe of poetry, with its zenith and its nadir, the vast whole, the profound detail,—nothing is wanting in this mind. One feels, on approaching the work of this man, a vast wind blowing off the shores of a world. The irradiation of genius on every side,—such is Shakespeare."

"Virility always, inspiration everywhere," said Hugo—with a characteristic but almost unquotable reference to stallions and jack-mules. In my own humble way I noticed Shakespeare's "inspiration" when I addressed an Open Letter on Inspiration to the Rev. R. F. Horton many years ago. I told him that it was highly improbable that the Bible would hold its real or supposed place at the top of our literature. Poets, thinkers, and moralists, I told him, as lofty as any of antiquity, had been amongst us, who only required age to mellow their golden reputations:—

"One of them, the mightiest in the roll of fame, the magisterial genius of this planet, lived, died, and was buried in our own England. Upon his brow sits the shadow of thought beyond the scope of the bards of Israel; his eye has depth within depth, until the beholder is lost in its profundity; every passion trembles on his mobile lips; and in the corners of his mouth there lurk the subtle sprites of wit and humor—a wit as nimble as the lightning, a humor as sweet and impartial as the sunshine. His very language is divine, speaking every note from the whisper of love to the tempest of wrath, from the mother's lullaby to the hero's challenge, from the soft flutings of sylvan peace to

the thunder-roll of battle and death. Let the poets and prophets of Israel approach. The mighty palace of his genius shall find them all an appropriate apartment, leaving a host of chambers to spare, in some of which the decorations are too lovely for their stern regard."

The Bible in English is used in the Christian Churches, but the English Bible exists in the writings of William Shakespeare. We might even call it the Bible of Humanity, if it be true, as Emerson said, that Shakespeare is "the poet of the human race."

¶ One of the finest tributes to Shakespeare since the days of Lamb and Coleridge and Landor is Matthew Arnold's sonnet:—

"Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honor'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."

Perhaps the noble image of "the loftiest hill" was suggested by Goldsmith's beautiful lines, but it must be admitted that Arnold endowed it with fresh power and significance in this masterly application to Shakespeare.

There is a delightful and original image in the first of George Meredith's two sonnets on the spirit of Shakespeare:—

"The greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsoured
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflowered
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh
We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture!"

The rest of the sonnet may be omitted in order to leave that striking picture fresh in the reader's mind. Of course he must suppose the sunlight to be falling on those ten thousand backs. How true then the simile is of Shakespeare's kind, rich, wholesome laugh. Nothing sour or bitter in it, but altogether worthy of the great humorist who was also a great philosopher; worthy of him who dropped out of his infinite treasury of reflection such sweet truths as "conscience is born of love" and "beauty lives with kindness."

Freethinkers, to whom Shakespeare specially belongs, if we regard him in any other way than as belonging to all humanity, will rejoice that the Master is revered in all countries, that the world's best writers have celebrated his genius, that he is becoming more and more an object of profound and careful study, that hundreds of the ablest men in every land join in the work out of pure love, that whole libraries are gathering about his mighty name, and that interest in him increases as interest in the Christian Bible diminishes.

Women above all should reverence Shakespeare. He is the best friend they ever had. He elevates them as much as the Bible degrades them. It was Shelley who thought the highest tribute he could pay to a good and beautiful friend was to liken her to "one of Shakespeare's women." The expression has become common since. The greatest of poets drew so many lovely pictures of women that we may be sure of his own lofty graciousness. His lovely women were pure but human; not saints, not spouses of Christ, but fit mates for his best men. The loved and honored wife and mother was Shakespeare's ideal. And it may be that he learnt much of it from the woman with the beautiful name who was his mother. Fancy that child on that woman's knees!

G. W. FOOTE.

The Spider and the Fly.

ELEVEN writers, six of whom are clergymen belonging to various denominations, without counting Mr. Bramwell Booth, who may be called a clergyman of a sort, have combined to write a book on *Christianity and the Working Classes*. And the remaining four are, it is almost needless to say, Christians in point of religion. This, if not as it should be, is at least as usual. For it is characteristic of these manufactured symposiums that they are nearly always composed of "safe" writers. Instead of the writers being of various opinions, and so producing between them a real and helpful discussion, they are all in agreement on the fundamental and vital issue, with the result that the product is something in the nature of an elaborate piece of bluff. Christianity is never called into question, because all the writers believe in it. To make the discussion really helpful one of the contributors, at least, should have been one—a working man preferably—who did not believe in any form of Christianity and who could thus voice sentiments that none of the other writers are able or willing to place before their readers. This, however, might be a dangerous game. It is far safer to confine one's selection to Christian circles, and then whatever else may be called into question, Christianity itself is secure from attack.

Yet certain facts are far too glaring for even professed Christians to ignore. And one of these facts is that the working classes, as a whole, take small stock in the Christian churches and chapels. Dr. Clifford, it is true, holds that the dissenting churches are the Labor Churches of England, but this may only be a laborious attempt of his to be humorous. Mr. Haw, the editor of the volume referred to, says on the other hand, "that the great mass (of working men) remain either antagonistic to modern religious teaching or indifferent to it." And Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., says that "after the most careful observation," he is "forced to the conclusion that the vast majority of our wage earners are at present outside the various branches of the Christian church." Nor is this opinion challenged by any of the other writers, although most of them give more or less fanciful and more or less comfortable explanations of the phenomenon. Mr. Henderson also remarks that some churches "are little better than religious hothouses for the preservation of the interests of middle-class society"; while Mr. Silas K. Hocking, a gentleman who enlivens the tedium of writing sentimental and flabby religious novels, by preaching equally flabby sermons, gives the more sweeping statement that "the church, whether Free or Established, is becoming more and more the sacred preserve of the well-to-do."

The fact is obvious to obtrusiveness. The explanations, with one exception, are inadequate to the point of absurdity. There is, in the first place, the favorite theory that what the working classes are dissatisfied with is not Christianity but the churches. The humor of the explanation lies in the fact that it is put forward by clergymen. One ought to admire the self-sacrifice that prompts these gentlemen to come forward and say "It is not our religion but ^{us} with which people are dissatisfied"; only as they represent the churches and continue in the same old way, one feels inclined to doubt the genuineness of the theory. Others of the writers give many assurances that the working classes are really not irreligious, but only disgusted with the practice of Christians. And the proofs offered of this are really funny. Mr. Hocking says that "Infidelity, as understood a generation ago, scarcely exists to-day." It is, of course, difficult to say just what Mr. Hocking understands by the infidelity of a generation ago; but when one looks at the collective output of Anti-Christian literature, at the even larger mass which simply puts Christianity quite at one side, at the general tone of a large proportion of the people one meets, it would seem as if Mr. Hocking was simply trying to keep his hand in practice as a writer of fiction for Nonconformist consumption.

Mr. George Lansbury thinks it would not be true to say that the mass of English people "are irreligious and cared nothing at all for each other," and proves it by saying that "some who are loudest in their condemnation of the churches, have been amongst the foremost in doing work for others and helping those up who are down." The assertion is only equalled in character by the evidence. When a man has reached the point of identifying irreligion with absence of care for one's fellow creature, and takes it that the fact of people helping to do good work is proof that they still believe in Christianity, he may be safely given up as hopeless—except for pulpit purposes. Mr. Lansbury, however, is only a layman. The Rev. Ensor Walters is a Wesleyan clergyman, and he is not going to allow the layman to carry off the palm for this kind of foolery. He writes, "as one intimately acquainted with the working class life," that the workers are not hostile to Christianity, and asks those who believe they are to note how the poor treat their children, and their attitude towards the sick and dying. Moreover, they will not hear harsh words concerning Jesus, or "the vaporings of blasphemous Atheism." So that the only way that one could prove to Mr. Walters that any working people are anti-Christian would be to exhibit them knocking their children about, neglecting their sick, and dancing fandangos on the body of the dead. I do not know if Mr. Lansbury and Mr. Walters are acquainted, but if not, they strike one as being peculiarly fitted to worship together in the same church. We all have our complementary portion if we can only discover it; perhaps providence produced this book in order to bring these two gentlemen together.

But the palm for these explanations ought to be given to Dr. Horton. His observation leads him to the conclusion that the great cause that keeps people from Christianity is drink. He does not refer to regular drunkards, but to the "many millions of our people [who] deaden their spiritual nature by drink." It is not, he says, that people want sermons on social subjects, but simply that they drink alcoholic liquors. So the remedy is simple. Stop people drinking and they will all attend church. He has discovered also that "if you find working people abstainers from drink you almost invariably find them religious." If Dr. Horton only understood what he was talking about, he would know that a very large proportion of avowed Freethinkers are total abstainers. The fact that the teetotal movement commenced with Freethinkers might also provide anyone but this gentleman with food for reflection. When one bears in mind the utterances of Dr. Horton, his absurdities have at least one feature to commend them. They are quite kaleidoscopic in their variety.

Really the only writer in the book who deals with the subject in an at all satisfactory manner is Canon Barnett, of Toynbee Hall. He points out that "faith" is not a characteristic of the working man, and further that the real reason why working men are not attached to Christianity "belongs to the time." He says:—

"Thoughts no longer fit easily into old forms..... Thoughts, for instance, stirred by the waves of scientific discoveries, rise and fall in workmen's minds—they get little expression; but the workmen can no longer read their Bibles, say their prayers, or confess their beliefs as simply as their fathers did..... Men are not in revolt against the Churches either because they are ignorant of doctrines and ritual, or because they are naughty. They may be ignorant, but when the ignorance is removed and they are shown what doctrines mean..... they do not feel that they speak the thoughts of their hearts..... It is not their naughtiness that keeps them out of the Churches; their withdrawal may indeed be an effort to be true, a refusal to join in a service which might increase their reputation at the expense of their honesty."

Canon Barnett, I repeat, really does touch the subject, the other writers are only ventilating prejudices or advertising their incapacity for dealing with the matter. The working classes are alienated from

the Churches simply because they feel that their teaching is quite out of touch with the spirit of the age. Christian doctrines do not appeal to them for exactly the same reason that they do not appeal to other classes in the community—because they are unsupported by evidence, contradicted by science, and unjustified by experience. But the other classes are not preached at as are the working men. Why? For the reason that the Christian Churches are the great safeguards of vested interests, because their function is to keep the people in order, to occupy their minds with religion, and so keep them off other topics. The Christian Churches must try to attach to them the working men, for the reason that if this is not done their paymasters will see no longer a reason for continuing their subsidies.

The real reasons for the alienation of the people from Christianity is not hard to discover. It is, as Canon Barnett implies, primarily because Christian teachings are not in line with modern thought. It is also because the best of them are seeing that the Churches have always played the part of a break on the car of progress, and that development has been most rapid when the power of organised religion has been weakest. Moreover, people are no longer content to take the clergy as leaders whom they are to follow with quiet obedience. They see that as a body these men know no more of life than they do themselves—often not so much—and are much less straightforward in their dealings with it. They see that the best and most helpful of our lessons have come to us from non-religious sources. They do not want the clergy as leaders; it is the clergy who want them as followers. The spider was far more anxious for the fly to come into the parlor than the fly was to be entertained. Luckily the working class fly is beginning to realise the kind of entertainment provided for him in the parlor he is so pressingly invited to visit.

C. COHEN.

The Outlook.

LENT is again a thing of the past. Another anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has come and gone. To thousands of Christians Lent means nothing, while both the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ either have lost or are rapidly losing their primitive and mediæval significance. To comparatively few modern divines is any definite doctrine of the Atonement acceptable; and there is an ever-growing number of clergymen who are no longer able to subscribe the following Article in the Church of England Creed:—

"Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until He return to judge all men at the last day."

Church and Chapel attendance also is steadily decreasing almost everywhere. Each successive Revival is followed by a more powerful reaction. This is a fact mournfully acknowledged by many religious leaders. The spirit of the age is decidedly non-Christian, whether it be anti-religious or not. It is the prevalence of this spirit that renders the controversy between the various Churches over the question of education so terribly acute. Each sect is fighting for its very life, and knows it.

Now, the correct inference to be drawn from this signal falling off in the interest taken in religion is that religion itself is dying out. An unsettling process is perceptible on all hands. People are beginning to think for themselves, and in proportion as they do this the hold of Christianity upon them weakens. They cease to be able to believe on the testimony of others, and as an inevitable result ninety-nine out of every hundred of them cease to believe at all. Quite recently, gentlemen presided, with ability and wisdom, at two Freethought lectures, who a few years ago were zealous and popular

Christian workers. For years they had occupied a prominent position in the Sunday-school as well as in the Church, and the work they did was highly appreciated. But no sooner did they begin to think, instead of blindly believing, than it dawned upon them that their faith in the supernatural was doomed. And now they stood up before many hundreds of their fellow townsmen and courageously avowed themselves Secularists. One is continually meeting with such cases up and down the country. The number of recent converts to Freethought is much larger than most people imagine.

Thus the outlook for Secularism is more encouraging now than it ever was before. Not the least element of this encouragement is the fact that the converts just referred to have a passion for morality. Many of those who have lost their faith in Christianity through indifference have also sunk in the ethical scale. It had always been impressed upon their minds that they were to do everything for God's sake. They were to turn from evil because it was hateful in God's sight, and they were to do good because God loved it. That is to say, the sanction of the moral code, for them, lay in the supernatural world; and naturally when they drifted into practical Atheism they degenerated morally. But in reality such people are not *thinkers* at all. It is true they have no religion; but it is also true that *they have nothing else*. They are not converts to Freethought: they are merely lapsed Christians. At the back of their minds there still lurks faith in God and Christ, and when sickness, death, or a revival comes their way, that faith may suddenly leap to the forefront again, in which event they will be claimed as converts from Infidelity. Genuine Secularists have *convictions* to which they are loyal at whatever cost; and genuine converts to Secularism are men and women who have conscientiously, laboriously, and often painfully *thought* themselves out of all supernatural beliefs and into firm confidence in the all-sufficiency of natural knowledge.

In the case of such converts loss is gain. They have lost the supernatural sanction of the moral law and found a surer sanction in the realm of the natural. Their morality used to have its roots in the soil of a hypothetical heaven, but now it is vitally rooted in the rich, fertile soil of a real earth. What they used to do for God's sake they now do for humanity's sake. They used to discharge disagreeable duties in the hope of reaping a glorious reward hereafter, but to-day their one aim is so to live as to add to the sum-total of happiness in this world. By becoming Secularists they have enriched, not impoverished, their lives, and fortified, not weakened, their character. They parted with the future in order to possess the present, and renounced heaven that they might inherit the earth.

This is a point on which we cannot put too much emphasis. It is amazing how many people there are who labor under the delusion that the highest morality is impossible apart from religion, and who employ this alleged fact as their chief argument against Secularism. We maintain, on the contrary, that the highest morality is impossible *with* religion. The effect of supernatural hopes and fears upon the life that now is cannot but be deleterious. The man who says that if he is not to live for ever it is not worth his while to live at all has his feet on the lowest rung in the ladder of character. At bottom he is a contemptible egotist, and is ignorant of the very alphabet of the true life. If life is not worth living here and now it is not worth living at all. But, in any case, he who performs good deeds on earth for the sake of an everlasting reward in heaven is not an exemplification of the noblest type of manhood. To pursue a certain course of conduct in order to please and win the favor of a third and absent party is to degrade the art of living.

The message of the Christian preacher is that "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." To do evil is to rob God of his glory, while to do good is to fill his heart with unspeakable joy. The object of life is to win acceptance in the sight

of heaven. A military officer once said that his only ambition was to deserve the gratitude of his queen. So, likewise, a Christian's ambition is to be acceptable in the sight of his Redeemer, and to hear the Judge say to him at last, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Now, God is invisible and non-existent except to faith, and faith is a most unreliable quantity. One day it is strong and virile and all-conquering; another day it is weak and ineffectual; and sometimes it seems to be dead. The point, however, is that faith in God has utterly failed to regenerate the world, and that trust in Christ has not redeemed Christendom. It is acknowledged by candid Christians that Christianity has been a practical failure, and there is nothing to show that it is likely to be any more successful in the future than it has been in the past. Well, face to face with this acknowledged failure of the Christian religion, Secularists have no hesitation in asserting the infinite superiority of their message, which is that man's chief end is so to order his life day by day that it shall make for happiness, or, in other words, that the object of life is enjoyment. Now, good morals are those habits, or customs, or manners of social life which, according to the testimony of experience, are the most calculated to produce happiness everywhere.

The Church used to teach that it is sinful to seek for happiness here below. Young people, in particular, were solemnly warned against allowing themselves to be too happy on earth. "You must not strike your roots into the soil of time," they were told; "you must be on your guard against becoming too attached to this world, or the desire for heaven in you will die. Make God and death and eternity the supreme objects of your thoughts and interest." That teaching is fundamentally false and has done incalculable harm to millions. It is contrary to nature at every point. Secularism, desiring always to be true to nature, teaches that life, from beginning to end, should yield nothing but happiness, and that as long as it does yield the opposite, there is something seriously wrong with its morality. Hence, our first and foremost duty is to study the laws of health and all other conditions of happiness, in the conviction "that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action."

Secularism, as thus understood, deserves to prosper; and it is eminently gratifying to learn that already its future is assured. It is working, leaven-like, in the meal of society, and we are confident it will continue to work until it has transmuted the whole lump. Our Secular Societies have abundantly justified their existence; but their real work is only at its beginning. Although superstition is dying and the Churches are declining, although unbelievers are multiplying with wonderful rapidity throughout the length and breadth of the land, we are bound to admit that vast multitudes of people are still held in bondage by the fiction that God and morality are inseparable. They are not very sure whether God exists or not, but they are quite sure that the belief in him does promote the nobler virtues, and that in its absence the race would revert to type. It is this false notion that prevents thousands from adopting Secularism. The moment they become convinced that the interests of morality can be safeguarded without religion, that same moment they will forswear religion and array themselves under the banner of Freethought.

J. T. LLOYD.

Colonel Ingersoll's Death.

THERE are so many Christian preachers in the country who think the truth of God will more abound through their lying that stories of the recantation of his Infidelity and conversion to Christianity of the late Robert G. Ingersoll are being published with a frequency which shows the zeal of the pious ones of the earth. The Ingersoll family have had such stories

sent to them by the dozen, with a request for the facts, and the *Truthseeker* has answered in the paper and by letter some score or two within the past few weeks. To set the matter at rest, and to have the facts in shape for use by Colonel Ingersoll's friends and by future historians, the family have prepared the following sworn statement:—

State of New York,)
County of New York,) s. s.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

THE TRUE STORY OF HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH.

On November 16, 1896, while on a lecture trip, at Janesville, Wis., Colonel Ingersoll had a cerebral hemorrhage. He continued to lecture for a few days, but at the solicitation of his family went to Chicago and consulted Dr. Frank Billings, who advised him to return home and rest for two months, which he did. He then, January 24, 1897, resumed lecturing, which he continued up to the time of his death. It was at this time, early in 1897, that he developed angina pectoris, from which he suffered greatly and which was the cause of his death. Since his death we have learned that he knew exactly his condition. In other words, his physicians had told him that he was likely to die at any moment, but acceding to his earnest entreaties they did not tell his family. In spite of the fact that death was ever beside him he was always very cheerful, and when asked as to his health invariably replied, "All right." During the night of July 20, 1899, he had an attack of acute indigestion and slept very little; but he came to breakfast the next morning, and afterwards sat on the piazza, as he was wont to do, reading and talking with the family. At about ten-thirty he said he would lie down and rest a little, and would then come down and play pool with his son-in-law. Mrs. Ingersoll accompanied him to their bedroom and remained with him while he slept. At about 11.45 he arose and sat in his chair to put on his shoes. Miss Sue Sharkey came into the room, followed by Mrs. Sue M. Farrell. Mrs. Ingersoll said, "Do not dress, Papa, until after luncheon; I will eat up stairs with you." He replied, "Oh, no; I do not want to trouble you." Mrs. Farrell then said, "How absurd, after the hundreds of times you have eaten up stairs with her." He looked up laughingly at Mrs. Farrell, as she turned to leave the room, and then Mrs. Ingersoll said, "Why, Papa, your tongue is coated; I must give you some medicine." He looked up at her with a smile, and as he did so closed his eyes and passed away without a struggle, a pang, or even a sigh. No one else was present. It is said that he recanted. This is a cruel and malicious falsehood, without the slightest foundation in fact. His convictions on the subject of religion remained absolutely unchanged. He died as he lived, an Agnostic.

EVA A. INGERSOLL.
SUE SHARKEY.
SUE M. FARRELL.

Severally affirmed to before me this 17th day of March, 1906.

JOHN H. HAZELTON, Notary Public.
New York County, No. 59.

Several copies of this document have been executed and placed in safe keeping for the use of future historians, and to use in refuting the lies which have been and will be told as to Colonel Ingersoll's death. The pulpit has not only made Colonel Ingersoll recant, but one priest told his parishioners that the Colonel sent for a Roman Catholic priest. The foregoing statement has been made in the interest of the truth. The Sue Sharkey, whose name is affixed to the affidavit, was a servant in the family, and is a Roman Catholic in religion.

Whenever one of our readers sees in his local newspaper a repetition of the idle tale that Colonel Ingersoll recanted, we hope he or she will copy this and embody it in a letter to that newspaper, and tell the editor that if he is an honest man he will print it; if he refuses to print it, tell him he is just a little less honest than a horsethief, and stop taking his paper.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

How the Gospel Christ was Manufactured.

SERIOUS objection may be raised against the word manufactured as I am here employing it, and yet it is not so objectionable as at first it may appear to be. It *might* be argued that, at least, the Christ born, cradled, etc., in Bethlehem, the Christ carried about by the Devil, the Christ whose garment shone like the sun, who floated on the water, who was crucified, entombed, and raised again, was a mere marionette, or more or less like a Romish bambino, or just the sort of thing the Papists yearly bury and raise again at Easter. Such a Christ is, of course, literally manufactured. But such is not the line of argument I am at present adopting; and yet manufactured is the best word for my purpose that I can find. Hand-made is the most literal synonym of manufactured, but, to be sure, its secondary senses include mental actions; and it may very well express the process by which a man, a myth, or a dummy is gradually worked up into a savior and a god. That the Christ of the gospels was very slowly elaborated from rude beginnings and uncertainties of shape and character into his final form or forms is, I think, beyond dispute. I call the process by which he became the completed Christ a manufacture. If the reader prefers some other word, I have no quarrel with him on that account.

The more unconventional our language and style can be made the better will it be calculated to break the spell of priestly conjurers and awaken their victims to the "truth as it is in Jesus," that sober unpoetical truth respecting the Christian fetish which is slowly but surely annihilating all objects of worship.

The gospels were never written to inform or to awaken thought or inquiry. And the way in which they are publicly read is equally opposed to any such design. The audience of the holy quack are not required to understand—that would render a church impossible. They are assembled to be drowsed and paralysed, to be droned into mental and moral sleep. The gospels were from the first constructed and intended to produce that effect; and they are wonderfully adapted to the end in view. The people listening to them are edified, that is, hypnotised and made to feel so nice that they would dread nothing so much as to have their reverie dissipated and be thrown into a state of excitement, doubt, and questioning. That is the *summum bonum* of Christianity; and so long as the Sunday actors can produce and reproduce that edification their Sabbath theatricals will bring them cash and "honor" both.

Confessedly the early Christian movement was not a perfectly new one. Like all other productions of time it had antecedents. Behind it all was the Judaism of the Old Testament and that far wider Judaism of post-biblical times. So much our foes are ready to grant. But we insist upon much more; we aver that all the elements of Christianity were in the world and well known long before a Christian church or body existed; every ingredient thrown into the crucible when distinctive Christianity was cast had been well known for long periods at that date. It is now far too late for the Christians to deny that many of those ingredients were not Jewish, though doubtless Jews of 2,000 years ago were in possession of them all, having gained them partly by direct inheritance from their fathers, partly by selection from Gentile cults and philosophies.

Coming to the gospels themselves and reading them as we would documents confessedly human, we find in them the clear proofs that the Christ, instead of being a historical personage, was a manufactured article. This is abundantly shown in the Matthew Gospel, which will supply nearly all we shall at present require. The writer does not proceed to give the biography of the Christ nor does he deem it necessary to quote any authority for his statements, or even to refer to any. How does he know that Jesus was born of a virgin? The sole evidence he offers is, not any testimony of the only party who

could possibly know, but a text from the Old Testament! "Now," says he, "all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel," etc. (Matt. i. 22-3).

Here the murder is out completely at the very outset. The birth of Jesus, his begetting by a ghost (all the Australian Blacks are so begotten, by the way), the Lord's appearance to Joseph in a dream, etc.—all this *was done*—pray, note it—not historically, but ritually, ceremonially, officially, dramatically, according to prescription, an ancient, venerable and well-known prescription, a stage direction or managerial order and arrangement. The writer doesn't dream that he is relating anything very remarkable or hard of belief; not at all. The thing had been done over and over again a thousand times. He never dreams of citing witnesses to prove the events he names, does not call Joseph, Mary, Holy Ghost, or Lord to attest the truth of what he alleges. He merely quotes the ancient prescription aforesaid, and declares that that was literally followed in the case; he quotes the stage direction and simply declares that the players executed it, that the show was conducted according to order and custom. Our ancient and authoritative playwright and stage manager had said that a virgin should become a mother; and here in our theatrical mystical performance a young woman and a baby have played their part to the very letter.

The writer could not have intended this to be taken as literal history or biography, for all that was done was done for a special end, to fulfil or carry out that ancient stage direction. History and biography cannot go upon such lines; they follow no prescription, take no prescribed course; their facts are never done to fulfil, to falsify or to confirm, ancient predictions. But the things related in this gospel were done deliberately by the stage-manager and his troupe, by the parson, the priest, the hierophant, or whatever you may please to call him—done of set purpose to fulfil instructions. The manager assigned to each actor his part of the play; and the storyteller says everything was performed to order. And that exhausts the incident, besides turning a powerful search-light upon the structure and the animus of this gospel. A historian, frank and honest enough to be of any worth, would have named himself, would have narrated his facts, giving some account of the actors in the events, and have stated whether he wrote as an eye-witness or on the authority of some other. But there was no need of all this when describing a religious farce or pantomime, a performance repeated *ad infinitum*. In such a case testimony, witnesses, would be superfluous. If stage directions and theatrical propriety have been observed, nothing further can be required.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

The Temptation; OR, THE DEIL'S AWA' WI' TH' SAVIOR.

TUNE:—"The Deil's Awa' wi' th' Exciseman."

The Deil cam' up from somewhere doon—

The Deil, the Dad o' Lies, man—

And kidnapped Christ, Jehovah's loon,

And whisk'd him thro' the skies, man.

The Deil's awa', the Deil's awa',

The Deil's awa', wi's prize, man:

An oxter-fu' o' concrete Jah

In ten-stone carnal guise, man.

The Deil set Christ upon a spire,

With nought to rest his thighs, man,

And said: "Jump doon! since God's your sire,

Unless you're tellin' lies, man."

The Deil's awa', the Deil's awa',

The Deil's awa' wi' th' Savior;

And neither seem'd surprised awa'

At such absurd behavior.

But Jesus showed 'twas not his wish

His life to jeopardise, man;

So Satan took him with a swish

Once more across the skies, man.

The Deil's awa', the Deil's awa',

Annoyed at God's replies, man—

For Christ-the-son is God-the-pa,

Unless the parson lies, man.

Upon a mountain-top they dropped,

And saw, without surprise, man,

Our planet flattened, squared, and stopped,

And much reduced in size, man.

The Deil's awa', the Deil's awa',

As straight's the corbie flies, man,

Wi' Christ who made his own mamma,

As proved by parsons' lies, man.

Said Nick: "The earth, which *now* you see

Complete, with *naked* eyes, man,

I'll give you if you'll worship me;

You can't disdain the prize, man."

The Deil's awa', the Deil's awa',

To tempt and bribe his God, man,

With what was God's, not his awa—

The joke was deev'lish odd, man;

"I'm tird o' this," said Christ, "so go!

I'll journey back mysel', man;

The earth's not yours to give me, so,

Shut up! and go to hell, man!"

The Deil's awa', to hell awa',

Nor more skylarking tries, man,

But cooks for God, and laughs ha! ha!

As honest souls he fries, man.

The priestly rogues and godly fools

Who teach the Bible-lies, man,

To helpless children in the schools,

All thoughtful folk despise, man.

The Deil's awa', and God's awa',

And with them, tears and sighs, man;

Now Truth and Joy will shine on a',

If priests give up their lies, man.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

"Godless Schools."

This headline appears above an article written by Harold Spender, in the *Daily Chronicle*. The sub-heading reads, "Religious Teaching under the Council System," and following this is a verse of a hymn:—"There's a Friend for little children, above the bright blue sky." I have read this article because many years of my life were devoted to teaching in public schools, and, moreover, my interest in subjects religious is very keen.

Now, it is all very well for gentlemen to pay *casual* visits to schools, and then print *their* ideas, but I submit that he who acts in this way is for the most part wrong. Under such disadvantage, he cannot gauge correctly. He does not know the *facts*. The statements are erroneous, and the public misinformed.

"People will wage war," says Mr. Spender, "during the next few weeks," not because children sing that "Sweet Story of Old," but because more definite denominational Christianity is needed. Yes, the people will wage war, and for *Secular* education.

It is the quintessence of meanness for the clergy to take advantage of helpless children; and this same clerical system breeds gross hypocrisy among adults—the teachers.

But to return to the "Godless School" article. Here is a pretty piece of pious humbug. "With their little eyes shut and their little hands closed, the little voices repeat:—"Give us this day our daily bread." Did Mr. Spender think of the little breakfastless stomachs?

When such nonsense is forced upon children and teachers alike, I say advisedly, that pious humbug and gross hypocrisy are bred. Mr. Spender writes this nonsense and yet asks "The House of Commons to deal tenderly with these little souls." Yes, that's from whence cometh their help, and not from "the bright blue sky."

The Head Master says his school has changed from the roughest because of the "softening influences of hymns and prayers." I should like to see that gentleman's school-punishment book—if it has been properly kept.

I am no advocate of the stick, but I do deny that hymns and prayers make bad boys good. The best masters I have known are those who abhor religion—in private.

Mr. Spender goes to a class-room where the boys are saying "the noble verses of that great 62nd Psalm":—"In God

is my health, etc." But trained nurses have to be kept for sick scholars, and to visit the schools for inspecting the lousy! Let anyone visit our public schools for the physically defective, and the mentally deficient, and then reflect.

It is Science that gives health, not Psalms.

Finally, Mr. Spender tells us, that he hears a master rapidly questioning a class upon Adam and Eve, Noah, etc., and then remarks: "this is the simplest and therefore the best." Whether the simplest is the best is beside the question. The point is, is it true? Does Mr. Harold Spender believe these stories of Adam and Eve and Noah to be true? Are the masters teaching truths? If not, they are deceiving the public and their children, and this is what I maintain.

A TEACHER.

Acid Drops.

Naples is famous in the annals of superstition and imposture for the annual liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. During the recent volcanic eruption the pious crowd surged into the cathedral where the saint's statue stands, took possession of it, and carried it round the city. The procession, numbering some 50,000, chanted litanies all the way. At a certain point it happened that the sun broke through the clouds, and the people exclaimed "A miracle! a miracle!" Of course it had no effect upon the eruption, which had already diminished in intensity; but it will probably give St. Januarius an extended lease of life, and add largely to the profits of the charlatans who "run" him.

Amongst the terrible scenes caused by the Mount Vesuvius eruption the following will show how "Providence" answers the prayers of the faithful. The special correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* telegraphed:—

"The ghastliest of all sights met one's eyes at San Giuseppe, where on Sunday morning the roof of the parish church crashed in during the Mass. Of 219 worshippers only the priest escaped injury, the rest being bruised or buried beneath nine feet of rubbish. This morning the one hundred and fifth corpse was brought out and propped against the wall on the right side of the piazza facing the church. What a scene it was! Nearly all the dead were women and children, rigidly bent as if in an attitude of prayer. One old woman's body was discovered kneeling in the confessional box. The corpses were in an advanced state of putrefaction."

Similar scenes were reported by other newspaper correspondents. Many victims were killed while kneeling in the act of prayer. One woman was found clinging to a crucifix. This would form a companion picture to the pious one, so often seen in English shop windows, of a pretty young woman, in a kind of nightdress, clinging to a big cross fixed upon a rock surrounded by raging seas.

"A procession," said the *Daily News* correspondent at Naples, "is just passing under my window from the poorest quarters. It is composed of bareheaded men, women and children, bearing an image of the Virgin and Child, chanting as they go, and carrying lighted candles. Passers-by lift their hats, cross themselves, and pray for mercy. The crowd is covered with ashes. Hair, clothes, shoes, and images are a uniform grey, which gives dignity to the scene. The poor people have only their religion to turn to." As though anything could give "dignity" to such a scene. Contrast with it the attitude of Professor Matteucci and his colleagues in the Vesuvian Observatory. Telegraphing while enveloped in dense showers of sand, the brave man of science said: "I shall remain here as long as possible—as long as I have food."

Good Friday did not pass without its joke in Berlin. Magic-lantern views of the Oberammergau Passion play having been exhibited in the Philharmonic Hall to large audiences, the organisers wanted to give the usual exhibition on Good Friday, and applied to the police authorities for permission to do so. The chief of police, however, refused the request. "Such exhibitions," he said, "must be regarded as gaieties, which are absolutely forbidden on Good Friday." Of course the "gaieties" were scenes in the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The mad Welsh Christians are still going strong. At Cross Hands, in the Llanelly district, a revival prayer meeting began at seven in the evening and ended at eleven the following morning. Great excitement prevailed throughout the pious orgie. Men and women tore their hair and throw themselves on the ground. This is the sort of thing that has the blessing of Mr. Lloyd-George.

Mrs. Jones, a young woman in the Llanelly district, has been visited by hundreds of people, who regard the

"trances" into which she falls as the ancient Pagans used to regard the writhings of their female oracles. The Welsh superstitionists regard Mrs. Jones as endowed with supernatural powers and able to cure all manner of diseases. They also declare that she will raise the dead as a sign for unbelievers—so we suppose the *Freethinker* staff will be converted and apply for jobs at the *Christian Herald* office. It might be better for Wales, however, if this miraculous lady, instead of bringing dead lunatics out of their graves, were to plant a few living ones in the nearest cemetery.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, a leading Free Churchman, writing in the *Quiver* (which does not specially represent the Quakers), calls upon all Christian philanthropists to adopt certain principles. One is, "Never to send money in answer to a begging letter." Yet this man calls himself a Christian. What did his Lord and Master say?—"Give to every one that asketh." Meyer—who, from his name, is very likely of a German Jew family turned Christian and English—winds up by advising philanthropists to concentrate on "coal tickets." He might have added wood and matches.

Godly Glasgow, like the rest of godly Scotland, closes all licensed premises on Sunday. Godly Glasgow has gone even a step further. It has closed them all on holidays. Of course the godly Councillors have plenty to drink at home. But the godly common people have to quench their thirst as they can. So on Monday they invaded Paisley, where they kept the barmen and the police actively employed.

The release of Jabez Balfour from prison has provided the newspapers with what they evidently regard as very interesting copy. One of the Liberal dailies regretted that Jabez and his fellow thieves had made use of religion to promote their nefarious designs. This is a mild way of putting it. The long firm, of which Jabez was the leading spirit, enlisted the services throughout the country of a large number of Nonconformist men of God either as agents or as advertisers. And as Jabez was a Bible name, and Jabez himself was quite an ostentatious Christian, the game worked splendidly—until the day of reckoning came.

Professor J. Estlin Carpenter has an article in the new number of the *Hibbert Journal* on "How Japanese Buddhism Appeals to a Christian Theist." It is a very interesting article, in its way, but its peculiar interest to our readers consists in what it says on the last page. There is a quotation from Kaempfer, written a hundred and seventy years ago, to the effect that—"In the practice of virtue, in purity of life and outward devotion, they far outdo the Christians." The moral superiority of the Japanese is, therefore, not a new fact, caused by what they have learnt from Christian Europe.

Professor Carpenter rather smiles at the "army of missionaries who endeavor to convert Japan to Christian orthodoxy." He remarks that neither Japanese nor Christian orthodoxy is likely to survive. "The Buddhism of the future," he says, "will not be the Buddhism of the past. The boys and girls in the elementary schools, who are said to write essays on the doctrines of Darwin and Spencer, will cease to worship the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, or to seek help from the all-merciful Kwannon. Little by little, as scientific culture spreads, the popular Buddhism and the popular Christianity will no longer satisfy. What will take their place? New syntheses of knowledge and experience will be demanded. The moral ideas of the two great religions will approach still nearer, and in the midst of the spiritual anarchy which sometimes threatens to paralyse the energies of the West, fresh insight and patience may be won by contact with the reverence of the Far East." In other words, we are more likely to learn of Japan than she is to learn of us.

The Bishop of Carlisle's article in the *Hibbert Journal* on "Mr. Birrell's Choice" refers to the secularism of the *Clarion* in no flattering terms. Dr. Diggle says that Mr. Blatchford's paper contains "poor stuff indeed for the feeding of immortal souls." "I have no hesitation," he adds, "in affirming that on that day on which fratricidal strife amongst Christians ceases, on that day *Clarionism* will perish." Very likely. And when the sky falls we shall catch larks without shooting them.

Dr. Diggle advances a most curious proof of the statement that the people of this country strongly desire religious teaching for their children. "Very much less than one per cent. of the children in our elementary schools," he says, "has ever been withdrawn by their parents from the religious lesson." But this only means that parents shrink from exposing their children to odium, insult, and ill-usage. The

recognition of this fact, indeed, was one of the good points in Mr. Birrell's speech on introducing his Education Bill. And in order that the Conscience Clause may be rescued from these disadvantages Mr. Birrell provides that the school-register shall be marked *after*, instead of *before*, the religious lesson. Children will no longer be withdrawn and made a mark of. They will simply attend at 9.15, when the religious lesson is over, and join in the secular work of the school.

Perhaps the most noticeable article in the *Hibbert Journal* from the *Freethinker* point of view is a Dialogue on the Resurrection by T. W. Rolleston. Under cover of the Dialogue the writer advances his own theory of "the empty tomb." His idea is that the Roman soldiers did guard the tomb of Jesus, and that the Christian explanation of their presence is fanciful. "The real explanation, I submit," he says, "is something quite different. The Jews had nothing to do with them. The soldiers were charged by their own authorities to open the tomb and remove the body for the very same object as that for which Lord Kitchener lately destroyed the Mahdi's remains in the Sudan—that they might not become a centre of veneration, and thus start a new cult, having as its object a man whom the law had executed as a malefactor. How very probable a course was this for Pilate to take, and how strongly does the mention of the Roman soldiery at the tomb, with the story, so remarkably lacking in coherence and verisimilitude, which was invented to account for them, confirm this view."

There is one very odd thing in the *Hibbert Journal*. Amongst the Reviews is a lengthy one of Sir Oliver Lodge's *Life and Matter*, which is mainly a criticism of Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*. The reviewer is an Irish bishop. Of course he blesses Lodge and damns Haeckel. What else could be expected? The idea of appointing a Bishop to act as judge between a Christian and an Atheist is so farcical that this review must be regarded as belonging to the facetious department of our usually serious contemporary.

The *Methodist Times* lets the cat out of the bag. It practically admits that the new Education Bill is a Nonconformist Bill, and that the Nonconformists will have to carry it. "On many points," the Wesleyan organ says, "it must be fought by the formidable phalanx of Irish members; on all by the regular Opposition; on some questions by the Labor members, or many of them; it is the Nonconformist members who must, at all costs, help to pull it through." Exactly. We know where we are now.

The Labor Party is sternly rebuked by the *Methodist Times* for its attitude towards the new Education Bill. "There will be an amendment," it says, "moved by a section of the Labor Party in favor of total secularism, but it cannot be carried, and it will do the Labor Party no good." Won't it? The Labor Party won't take the *Methodist Times'* word for that—or anything else.

The Free Church Council met in a great hurry to bless the new Education Bill, which they probably knew a great deal about beforehand. Mr. Birrell introduced the Bill on Monday, and they held their meeting on Tuesday, before a printed copy was available to the public. There was a nice little crowd of them, including Dr. Clifford, Rev. R. J. Campbell, Rev. C. F. Aked, Rev. C. Silvester Horne, and Rev. F. B. Meyer; and they carried the following resolution unanimously:—

"The Executive Committee of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, heartily welcomes the new Education Bill of the Government as a sincere attempt to establish a national and just system of State education, and as going far towards carrying out the will of the people as expressed at the General Election, in that it—

- (1) Brings all schools maintained from public funds under public control and management.
- (2) Abolishes theological and ecclesiastical tests in the teaching profession.
- (3) Secures one type of elementary school so far as controlling authority and financial support are concerned.
- (4) Relieves the ratepayer of any responsibility for the cost of sectarian teaching.

The committee therefore pledges its loyal and strenuous support to the Government in carrying the main principles of the measure into law."

What the Council really meant, under all this formal language, was that it was delighted to see the Government trying to abolish Church schools. The reference to the abolition of tests is simply humbug. While religious teaching goes on in schools the teachers will actually be subject to religious tests. Everybody knows that. As for "sectarian teaching" it is henceforth to be Nonconformist sectarian teaching—for that is what Bible teaching comes to.

Mr. H. W. Massingham, who does the "Pictures in Parliament" for the *Daily News*, says that "Secular education is the only settlement capable of a logical defence." Is he in favor of it, then? Oh dear no! His party detests logic. They feel it would undo them. So they illustrate Hobbes's saying that when reason is against a man, a man will be against reason.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, being interviewed by a *Daily News* man, rather affected the oracle on the Education Bill, and it is difficult to see what his position really is. But of course he said some smart things by the way. Here is one of them:—

"Then there is to be religious teaching, but no denominational teaching. I wait, panting, to learn this strange religion, which is not denominational. It is not to be Christian, not Mohametan, not Shintoist, not Positivist, not Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Greek, Glassite, Jewish, nor indeed anything that can be named. It is 'undenominational.' Never since Shylock's bond secured to him a pound of flesh without any blood in it has the world received such a remarkable legal fiction. There is no such thing as undenominational religion."

We have said the same thing until we are almost sick of saying it.

Here is another good bit from the Bernard Shaw interview:—

"Probably it will turn out that as what is now called religious teaching consists largely of telling children a mixed assortment of black and white lies about the Bible, and as an effective majority can be got to agree about the black lies whilst they quarrel furiously about the white ones, the black lies will be told as 'undenominational' and the white lies banned as denominational."

This should delight Dr. Clifford.

Archdeacon Sinclair expresses the fear "that extreme men on both sides will become so embittered that the Government may cut the knot, and so have nothing but Secular Education." The Archdeacon's fear is our hope.

We drew attention last week to the statement by "Claudius Clear" (Dr. Robertson Nicoll) in the *British Weekly* that "infidel lectures" were no longer delivered in England. We have now to notice another true statement by the same oracle. "The English people," he says, "are firmly set on having religious education in schools, and by religious education they mean Biblical education. Even the Agnostics are of this mind." This is an absurd falsehood and Dr. Nicoll should be ashamed to print it.

The *Christian Commonwealth* blessed the new Education Bill. Naturally. Then it delivered itself in the following inspired manner:—

"The national teaching of the nation must be Catholic teaching—i.e., the universal Christian teaching common to all the orthodox Christian communities. The Ten Commandments are common; the Lord's Prayer is common; the whole Bible is common."

This is evidently what the Nonconformists are driving at. The religion of the State (in schools) is to be the greatest common measure of Christianity in all the denominations. Non-Christians don't count; even Jews are kicked aside; and the "common" fact is ignored that the Catholics have one Bible and the Protestants another.

The *Christian World*, the *British Weekly*, and other Nonconformist weeklies published good opinions of the new Education Bill by "Christian leaders," but these "Christian leaders" were all Nonconformists. Of course the Bill suits them. Columns of testimonials are not needed to prove it.

Mr. T. P. Sykes, the new president of the National Union of Teachers, appears to have the customary official respect for the rights of other people—including all those who are taxed and rated to provide the official salaries. Addressing the annual conference of that body at Scarborough, this gentleman blessed the new Education Bill, and declared that the teachers wanted to give religious instruction in the schools, and that the parents wanted them to give it. What the people really demanded (and when Mr. Sykes says so the matter is settled) was "a simple course of teaching in the fundamentals of the Christian faith." This was good enough, in its way, but he was not satisfied with advocating his own views. He proposed to stop other people from advocating theirs. "He would make it," the *Tribune* report says, "a penal offence for anyone to go from door to door of town or village with petitions for signatures on such a matter." This amazing remark was actually greeted with loud cheers. Which shows that very odd notions of liberty prevail in the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 22, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: 7.30, "Simple Bible Teaching: Mr. Birrell's Recipe for Children."

April 29, Queen's Hall.
May 6, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

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

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 29, Manchester.

J. GOLDBERG.—(1) We do not remember that the late Charles Watts ever held a public debate with the Rev. George Wise. Even if he did, you may be quite sure that he never said in such a debate "that he must admit on purely intellectual grounds that there may be a First Cause." The reverend gentleman who made the statement, in addressing the Dunedin Progressive Society, New Zealand, must either have an inventive imagination himself or be the victim of someone else who possesses it. (2) We share your wish that more Freethought propaganda could be done in East London; but in many ways it seems a very difficult locality to work.

M. A. CURRY.—Thanks for your kind offer, though we cannot avail ourselves of it at the Queen's Hall meeting, there being no room on the program for anything beyond the music and the lecture, and any discussion that may arise after it. We are glad to hear that most medical men are, like yourself, in favor of Secular Education; and we wish they would say so publicly.

N. D.—We do not know the writer either, but the letter is a good one.

T. H. S.—The most useful cuttings are those containing facts on which we can write something for "Acid Drops."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

H. JOHNSTON.—Please frame future lecture notices on the model of our weekly list.

J. S. L.—Glad to hear from you as one who derives profit and pleasure from reading this journal. With regard to a passage you quote from a book we have not seen, it is a common-place of Christian advocacy that there can be no morality without religion. This is the last ditch of routed theologians, and it is perfectly untenable.

A. GRIMSHAW.—See paragraph.

HANDS UP.—Will be sent as requested. Thanks.

J. K. MAAGAARD.—Afraid we can hardly find room for it at present.

A. H. JONES.—Much obliged for the extract, which is certainly interesting, although the matter is not yet settled scientifically.

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

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

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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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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's two lectures at Queen's Hall may be the last he will deliver for some time in London. There will be a full half-hour's good music by excellent artists before each lecture. Mr. Foote's subject this evening (April 22) will be a thorough review of Mr. Birrell's new Education Bill, with special reference to the "Simple Bible Teaching" which is the Liberal Government's policy in the State schools. This lecture should attract Freethinkers from all parts of London, and a good many Christians may like to hear the Secular view responsibly represented.

Mr. Lloyd delivered a fine and much applauded lecture in winding up the course of Sunday evening lectures at Stratford Town Hall. The audience was a little affected by the

holidays and the glorious weather, but it was a very good one in the circumstances, especially as the lecture bills had been interfered with in front of the hall. We hope the Branch is not going to let that interference pass without an adequate protest.

Mr. Cohen lectures again for the Liverpool Branch to-day (April 22) and again on the following Sunday. Liverpool "saints" will please note that there is *free admission* to all seats at all the four meetings. It should enable them to bring more of their orthodox friends along to Milton Hall. No doubt the "saints" will also recollect that good collections are highly necessary.

The annual meeting of the Liverpool Branch was held on Sunday evening. Mr. W. C. Schweizer was re-elected president, Messrs. W. H. Holmes and G. Roleffs vice-presidents, Dr. Niven treasurer, Mr. W. P. Pearson secretary, and Mr. F. Munro assistant secretary.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place at Birmingham on Whit-Sunday. Motions for the Agenda must be in the hands of the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, by May 13 at the latest. Branches are represented at Conferences by delegates, but individual members of the Society, in any part of the country, are free to attend and take part in the proceedings; indeed, it is hoped that a large number of them will do so this year, if only as an encouragement to the Birmingham "saints" who have been for some years fighting a very brave battle against desperato odds.

Mr. Philip Snowden, addressing the Conference of the Independent Labor Party at Stockton-on-Tees, said that the great fight of the new session of parliament would be over the Education Bill. "That Bill," he said, "pleases nobody but the Nonconformists. In their joy at being offered a chance of having Nonconformity established as the State religion in the schools, the Nonconformists have forgotten all the results of their councils and conferences, and are embracing a measure which will inflict a conscientious outrage on the majority of the people of this country, and will increase tenfold the bitterness of sectarian conflict in every locality in the land. To this Bill the Labor Party, if it is true to its principles, will have to give unqualified opposition."

Mr. F. J. Gould speaks out very strongly and clearly on the new Education Bill in the *Leicester Pioneer*. Here is the opening paragraph of his drastic criticism:—

"Perhaps one ought to speak of Mr. Birrell's Education Bill. But let us have no cant. The truth is that, in any genuine sense of the word 'education,' this measure is not an Education Bill at all. It is a politician's device to silence the yelping and whining of the sectarian pack. A bone is flung to the Nonconformist (a very big and succulent bone); a scrap is pitched at the head of the Anglican Church; and a respectable morsel is allotted to the Catholic in the corner. Dr. John Clifford and the passive resisters appear satisfied. The Catholics are suspicious. The Archbishop of Canterbury moans, 'The situation is grave.' Yes, it is grave. But why? Because the vast mass of the working-folk of this country, stand by, more or less dumb and passive, wondering what the lawyers and clergymen are quarreling about, and hoping that the wise House of Commons are planning an education that will bring hope, capacity, and bread to their children."

Mr. Gould winds up by appealing to the Labor party, of which the *Pioneer* is an organ, to give a whole-hearted support to the policy of Secular Education.

The *Labor Leader* says that "the new Education Bill is undoubtedly a big step forward"—which is a very doubtful statement. Our contemporary is right and straight, however, on the most important point. "It debars ecclesiastical interference," Mr. Hardie's organ says, "but does not eliminate religious instruction from the schools. The retention of religious education in the form proposed in the Bill will, as Mr. Masterman and Mr. Macdonald pointed out, satisfy none but the Nonconformists. The Bill is therefore in this respect a sectarian measure."

Justice, the Social Democratic organ, expresses itself boldly and plainly. "The Education Bill," it says, "cannot be said to be acceptable, either by virtue of its principles or by reason of its compromising clauses. The measure is nothing more or less than a surrender to the canting hypocrisy that admits of lying history books and false lessons in patriotism finding a place in our public schools to-day."

The new Liberal paper, the *Tribune*, admits that public control and the abolition of religious tests logically involve

Secular Education. "Facilities might, indeed," it says, "be given for the provision of religious education by the different religious bodies in the common school outside school hours, but no form of religious teaching would be supported by the State. Such a system would be logical, consistent, and in harmony with the modern way of regarding the relation of the State and religion." The *Tribune* apparently regrets that this is impossible as "a practical measure." Yes, and it always *will* be impossible while its friends *say* it is impossible. The case would soon alter if they had a little more courage.

We are delighted to see that the Church of England and the Catholic Church have both practically declared war against the new Education Bill. The more the Churches quarrel over religious education—which is really all that the new Bill turns upon—the more inevitable does Secular Education become. It reminds us of an old saying. The more certain people fall out the more certain other people come by their own.

According to the House of Commons reporter to the *Tribune*, the general estimate of the number of members who would vote for Secular Education if it were left an open question "varies between 100 and 150." This is not victory, but it may mean victory if the Government finds agreement amongst the Christian sects to be impossible; and, at any rate, it is a great advance on the figures in any previous parliament.

The Warrington N. S. S. Branch has arranged a debate between Mr. H. Percy Ward and Mr. J. W. Rushton, who is apparently a Mormon. It takes place at the Cairo-street Schools next Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7.30. Jesus Christ will be discussed the first evening and Joseph Smith the second evening. Councillor Stott and the Rev. J. F. Matthews are to act as chairmen.

The late George Jacob Holyoake left net personality which has been sworn at £2,206 3s. 7d. We fancy he must have been very frugal to save so much. Probably the main cost of his living was borne by the comfortable annuity which was purchased for him, and which he enjoyed for so many more years than were expected.

Mr. Holyoake had a portrait of himself painted in oils by his brother William. This he bequeathes to the Birmingham Art Gallery. It will be remembered that Mr. Holyoake was born at Birmingham. He leaves his portrait of Thomas Carlyle to the Trustees of the National Gallery.

We regret to have to call attention to the fact that at the end of the long career of the "Father of Secularism" the Birmingham authorities refuse to grant the use of a public school-room to the only Secular Society in the city. What is the moral? Why that freedom can never be regarded as a certain conquest, but must be fought for again and again.

John Keen, a railway carman, residing in Great College-street, Camden Town, London, died from natural causes, though his body was the subject of an inquest. According to the newspapers, his brain weighed seventy-eight ounces—twenty-nine ounces above the average. Yet he was only a carman! His spare brains might have been sent round to some of the religious newspaper offices with great advantage.

"Rev." T. W. Ridley, Mrs. Ridley, and other conductors of the Social Evangelical Mission of England at Belfast have been arrested on grave charges of fraud. We say no more at present, as the case is *sub judice*.

A number of imprisoned Greeks and Bulgarians, all Christians, bribed their warders at Salonica to let them get hold of some knives; then they attacked each other, with the result that three Bulgarians were killed, and four Bulgarians and six Greeks wounded. The "infidel" Turk smiled at the way in which these good Christians loved one another.

William Woods Smyth, lecturing at that museum of antiquities, the Victoria Institute, challenged the Higher Critics to point out a single error in the first chapter of Genesis, and declared that "of all the crimes of which man could be guilty, introducing uncertainty as to the perfect genuineness of the Bible was the most terrible." This gentleman will find a lot of "terrible" criminals in the Christian Churches without troubling the "infidels" for even one.

The Gods of Greece.

"For thee, Arimane,
Adonis, Astarte;
For thee lived the marbles,
The pictures, the parchments,
When the fair Venus
Anaidomene
Blessed the Ionian
Heavens serene."

—CARDUCCI, *Hymn to Satan*.

"But when the Grecians have spent all their arrows it will remain an incontestible fact that an enthusiastic admiration of the *Illiad* of Homer is but a bad preparation for relishing the beauties of the New Testament."—REV. ROBERT HALL, *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 446.

"Compare Athens with Jerusalem. From Athens come the beauty and intellectual grace of the world. Compare the mythology of Greece with the mythology of Judea. One covering the earth with beauty and the other filling heaven with hatred and injustice."—INGERSOLL, *The Dying Creed*.

WHAT a marvellous race were the ancient Greeks! What was the secret of Greek civilisation? How came it to pass that the inhabitants of so small and insignificant a country carried to the summit of perfection every human art—the masterpieces of poetry, history, philosophy, oratory, mathematics, architecture, sculpture, and painting? So that it has been said, "Before Greece, everything in human literature and art was a rude and imperfect attempt; since Greece, everything has been a rude and imperfect imitation." Then, having reached the highest possible point of perfection, their culture began to decay, as if struck with some insidious disease, until it utterly perished, leaving behind those imperishable monuments of art the admiration and despair of succeeding ages.

The Greeks were too near the primitive ages of mankind to be able to dispense with religion entirely; in fact they had not advanced sufficiently to give a scientific explanation of the natural phenomena by which they were surrounded; they did not know of the evolution of stars and planets as expounded by Kant and La Place, or of the origin of species and of man as discovered by Darwin, or of the evolution of religion according to Tylor and Herbert Spencer. There were a few Atheists in ancient Greece, but they did not so much rely upon scientific evidence for their rejection of the gods as upon that very old and very cogent argument, the existence in the world of evil, injustice, pain, and sorrow.

But although the Greeks did not conduct the gods to the scientific frontiers as undesirable aliens, they humanised them; they deprived them of their terrors; they washed the blood from their hands, drew their fangs, and made them presentable in human society. Instead of "getting right with God," as the Yankee revivalist advised, they made their gods "get right with man." "They made their gods to suit themselves, and regarded them rather as companions than as objects of reverence. The gods lived close to them, on Olympus." Says Freeman Clarke:—

"According to the Jewish religion, man was made in the image of God; but according to the Greek religion the gods were made in the image of men. Heraclitus says, 'Men are mortal gods, and the gods immortal men.' The Greek fancied the gods to be close to him on the summit of the mountain which he saw among the clouds, often mingling in disguise with mankind; a race of stronger and brighter Greeks, but not very much wiser or better. All their own tendencies they beheld reflected in their deities. They projected themselves upon the heavens, and saw with pleasure a race of divine Greeks in the skies above, corresponding with the Greeks below. A delicious religion; without austerity, asceticism, or terror; a religion filled with forms of beauty and nobleness, kindred to their own; with gods who were capricious indeed, but never stern, and seldom jealous or cruel."†

There are three sources from which the Greeks derived their notions of the gods: the poets (Homer

* Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*.
† *Ten Great Religions*, p. 203.

and Hesoid), the artists, and the philosophers. The poets endowed the gods with all the human passions; and as men were sometimes immoral, so the gods were sometimes immoral; but in the hands of the sculptors the gods became purely moral beings. They transformed the unchaste Ashtoreth of the Phœnicians into the lovely Aphrodite, the "foam-born," goddess of immortal beauty. In like manner Adoni Tammuz became the beautiful Adonis. They idealised the gods and goddesses. Freeman Clarke says: "On the brow of Jupiter sits a majestic calm; he is no angry wielder of the thunderbolts, but the gracious and powerful ruler of the three worlds." Of the Belvidere Apollo he says: "He who visits this statue by night in the Vatican Palace at Rome, seeing by torchlight, has, perhaps, the most wonderful impression left on his imagination which art can give." With Apollo is associated his sister Diana, "the Artimis, or untouched one, chaste as moonlight, a wild girl, pure, free, noble; the ideal of youthful womanhood.....No Greek could look at such a statue and not learn to reverence the purity and nobleness of womanhood."*

Pallas-Athene—her name Pallas means "virgin"—was the goddess of all the liberal arts and sciences; her statue in ivory and gold, the work of Phidias, stood in the Parthenon at Athens, "perhaps the most perfect building ever raised by man," and "another colossal statue of the great goddess stood on the summit of the Acropolis, and her polished brazen helmet and shield, flashing in the sun, could be seen far out at sea by vessels approaching Athens."†

Such were the chaste and beautiful ideals of the Greek sculptors. What a contrast to the emaciated and bleeding figure of Christ on the cross, or the half-starved saint, or the semi-savage hermit.‡ Yet Christians glory in the exchange. Listen to the words of the late Archdeacon Farrar:—

"The world's seductive ideals and intoxicating joys, the world's enchanting mythologies and dissolute religions—young Dionysus,

'As he burst upon the East
A jocund and a welcome conqueror,
And Aphrodite, sweet as from the sea
She rose, and floated in her pearly shell
A laughing girl'—

all fled before the cross of wood! Yes, my brethren, because that cross was held by the bleeding hands of the world's true King, who perfected the strength of his followers in weakness; and, having been lifted up, drew all men unto him."§

Not all men, happily, O priest. Some men—and among them men of the highest genius—have looked at the matter in a very different light. Our great poet Swinburne, for instance, compares the coming of the new God to the old in his fine "Hymn to Proserpine":—

"For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves and rejected;
but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot
on the sea."

And he prophesies, through the mouth of a Pagan worshiper:—

"Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and
hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down
to thee dead."

* *Ten Great Religions*, pp. 287, 289, 290.

† *Ibid.*, p. 290.

‡ Professor Elie Metchnikoff, in his able work, *The Nature of Man* (p. 14), says: "The intimate connection between the depreciation of human nature due to Christian doctrine and the inferiority of the art of the Middle Ages cannot be denied." He cites Taine (*Philosophie de l'Art*), who writes of the art of the Middle Ages as follows: "If one considers the stained-glass windows or the images in the cathedrals, or the rude paintings, it appears as if the human race had become degenerate and its blood had been impoverished; pale saints, distorted martyrs, virgins with flat chests, feet too long and bony hands, hermits withered and unsubstantial, Christs that look like crushed and bleeding earthworms, processions of figures that are wan, and stiffened, and sad, upon whom are stamped all the deformities of misery and all the shrinking timidity of the oppressed." As Metchnikoff points out, "The art of the Middle Ages fell lower and lower until the Renaissance, with its return to the Greek ideal, brought new vigor."

§ *The Witness of History to Christ*, p. 107.

The prophecy is well on towards being fulfilled. Genuine belief in Christianity, with its miracles and its asceticism, is now confined to the classes among which it arose, the ignorant and uncultivated.

Shelley's terrific indictment, in his Ode to Liberty, is well known to Freethinkers, but will lose nothing by repetition:—

"for thou did'st groan, not weep,
When from its sea of death to kill and burn,
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
And made thy world an undistinguishable heap."

Another poet who was *not* drawn towards the cross was the Italian poet Carducci, author of the famous "Hymn to Satan," in which he speaks of primitive Christianity as the "barbarous Nazarene fury." In another poem, referring to the founder of that faith, he says:—

"Crucified martyr! Man thou crucifiest.
The very air thou darkenest with thy gloom."

Sir Richard Burton, the famous traveller, explorer, and linguist—he is said to have known forty languages, and could speak Arabic like a native—laments, in his poem "The Kasidah," the conquest of the old mythology by Christianity:—

"And when at length, 'Great Pan is dead,' uprose the loud and
dolorous cry.
A glamor wither'd on the ground, a splendor faded in the
sky.

Yea, Pan was dead; the Nazarene came and seized his seat
beneath the sun,
The votary of the Riddle-god, whose one is three and three is
one.

Whose saddening creed of herited sin split o'er the world its
cold grey spell;
In every vista showed a grave, and 'neath the grave the glare
of Hell;

Till all Life's poesy sinks to prose; romance to dull reality
fades;
Earth's flush of gladness pales in gloom and God again to man
degrades."

Heine, in his poem "The Gods of Greece," confesses that, although he never loved the ancient Gods, yet holy compassion and shuddering sympathy stream through his heart when he sees their desolate condition. He goes on to declare—

"And when I reflect how dastardly, how windy
Are the gods who vanquished,
The new-reigning melancholy Gods,
The malignants in sheep's clothing of humility,
Oh, then I am seized with a sombre rage,
And would tear down the new Temples,
And fight for you, ye older Gods,
For you and your good ambrosial sway;
And at your high altars
The re-erected, smoking with sacrifice,
I could even myself kneel and pray,
And supplicating arms uplift."

That which Heine expressed merely as a poetic aspiration, was really carried into practice by Thomas Taylor, "the Platonist," who actually revived the worship of the Gods of Greece. Mr. Augustus Hare relates, in *The Story of My Life*: "There was a Dr. Taylor who used to worship the heathen gods—Mars and Mercury and the rest. One day, in the presence of my father and of one of the professors, he took his little silver images of the gods out of his pockets and began to pray to them and burn incense. The professor, intensely shocked, tried to interfere; but my father started up, 'How can you be so foolish? Do be quiet; don't you see you are interrupting the comedy?' The same Dr. Taylor was afterwards arrested for sacrificing a bullock to Neptune in a back parlor in London."†

The professor was "intensely shocked"—almost as much shocked, I suppose, as though Taylor had declared himself an Atheist. For our part, if we wished to select a religion for worship—which we have not the faintest intention of doing—we would sooner by far prefer the beautiful creations of the Greeks—which, after all, were the ideal of the per-

* James Thomson's translation.

† Mr. J. M. Wheeler says, in his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*: "He is said to have been so thorough a Pagan that he sacrificed a bull to Zeus."

fection of humanity—than the cruel Jehovah or the anæmic Christ.

Wordsworth never rose to a greater height of inspiration than in his poem "The World is too much with us," when he passionately declared—

"I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,—
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

But, as Colonel Ingersoll expressed it in his magnificent unrhymed poetry, "The harp of Orpheus is still; the drained cup of Bacchus has been thrown aside; Venus lies dead in stone, and her white bosom heaves no more with love. The streams still murmur, but no Naiads bathe; the trees still wave, but in the forest aisles no Dryads dance. The gods have flown from high Olympus. Not even the beautiful women can lure them back, and even Danaë lies unnoticed, naked to the stars." But the world remains; the worship paid to these unreal phantoms—whether of Jupiter or Christ—will be replaced by service to mankind. Although Venus is dead, there are other hearts which will respond to the magic wand of love. The streams still murmur. The sun still rises, flushing the virgin sky with delicate rose pink or transparent opal, and sets in all the splendor of imperial purple. The eternal stars still shine from where they sweep in their orbits in illimitable space. There is beauty in the pansy and rapture in a yellow rose. When mankind has emancipated itself from the spectres it has evolved in its own image it will turn to the realities of life, and not be put off with promises of bliss hereafter in exchange for renouncing the joys of this life.

W. MANN.

Ingersoll's Lecture on Superstition.—I.

I.

WHAT IS SUPERSTITION ?

To believe in spite of evidence or without evidence.

To account for one mystery by another.

To believe that the world is governed by chance or caprice.

To disregard the true relation between cause and effect.

To put thought, intention and design back of nature.

To believe that mind created and controls matter.

To believe in force apart from substance, or in substance apart from force.

To believe in miracles, spells and charms, in dreams and prophecies.

To believe in the supernatural.

The foundation of superstition is ignorance, the superstructure is faith and the dome is a vain hope. Superstition is the child of ignorance and the mother of misery.

In nearly every brain is found some cloud of superstition.

A woman drops a cloth with which she is washing dishes, and she exclaims: "That means company."

Most people will admit that there is no possible connection between dropping the cloth and the coming of visitors. The falling cloth could not have put the visit desire in the minds of people not present, and how could the cloth produce the desire to visit the particular person who dropped it? There is no possible connection between the dropping of the cloth and the anticipated effects.

A man catches a glimpse of the new moon over his left shoulder, and he says: "This is bad luck."

To see the moon over the right or left shoulder, or not to see it, could not by any possibility affect the moon, neither could it change the effect or influence of the moon on any earthly thing. Certainly the left-shoulder glance could in no way affect the nature of things. All the facts in nature would remain the same as though the glance had been over the right shoulder. We see no connection between the left-shoulder glance and any possible evil effects upon the one who saw the moon in this way.

A girl counts the leaves of a flower, and she says: "One, he comes; two, he carries; three, he courts; four, he marries; five, he goes away."

Of course the flower did not grow, and the number of its leaves was not determined with reference to the courtship or marriage of this girl, neither could there have been any intelligence that guided her hand when she selected that particular flower. So, counting the seeds in an apple cannot

in any way determine whether the future of an individual is to be happy or miserable.

Thousands of persons believe in lucky and unlucky days, numbers, signs and jewels.

Many people regard Friday as an unlucky day—as a bad day to commence a journey, to marry, to make any investment. The only reason given is that Friday is an unlucky day.

Starting across the sea on Friday could have no possible effect upon the winds, or waves, or tides, any more than starting on any other day, and the only possible reason for thinking Friday unlucky is the assertion that it is so.

So it is thought by many that it is dangerous for thirteen people to dine together. Now, if thirteen is a dangerous number, twenty-six ought to be twice as dangerous, and fifty-two four times as terrible.

It is said that one of the thirteen will die in a year. Now, there is no possible relation between the number and the digestion of each, between the number and the individual diseases. If fourteen dine together there is greater probability, if we take into account only the number, of a death within the year, than there would be if only thirteen were at the table.

Overturning the salt is very unlucky, but spilling the vinegar makes no difference.

Why salt should be revengeful and vinegar forgiving has never been told.

If the first person who enters a theatre is cross-eyed, the audience will be small and the "run" a failure.

How the peculiarity of the eyes of the first one who enters changes the intention of a community, or how the intentions of a community cause the cross-eyed man to go early, has never been satisfactorily explained. Between this so-called cause and the so-called effect there is, so far as we can see, no possible relation.

To wear an opal is bad luck, but rubies bring health. How these stones affect the future, how they destroy causes and defeat effects, no one pretends to know.

So, there are thousands of lucky and unlucky things, warnings, omens and prophecies, but all sensible, sane and reasoning human beings know that every one is an absurd and idiotic superstition.

Let us take another step:

For many centuries it was believed that eclipses of the sun and moon were prophetic of pestilence or famine, and that comets foretold the death of kings, or the destruction of nations, the coming of war or plague. All strange appearances in the heavens—the Northern Lights, circles about the moon, sun dogs, falling stars—filled our intelligent ancestors with terror. They fell upon their knees—did their best with sacrifice and prayer to avoid the threatened disaster. Their faces were ashen with fear as they closed their eyes and cried to the heavens for help. The clergy, who were as familiar with God then as the orthodox preachers are now, knew exactly the meaning of eclipses and sun dogs and Northern Lights; knew that God's patience was nearly exhausted; that he was then whetting the sword of his wrath, and that the people could save themselves only by obeying the priests, by counting their beads and doubling their subscriptions.

Earthquakes and cyclones filled the coffers of the church. In the midst of disasters the miser, with trembling hands, opened his purse. In the gloom of eclipses thieves and robbers divided their booty with God, and poor, honest, ignorant girls, remembering that they had forgotten to say a prayer, gave their little earnings to soften the heart of God.

Now we know that all these signs and wonders in the heavens have nothing to do with the fate of kings, nations or individuals; that they had no more reference to human beings than to colonies of ants, hives of bees or the eggs of insects. We now know that the signs and eclipses, the comets, and the falling stars, would have been just the same if not a human being had been upon the earth. We know now that eclipses come at certain times and that their coming can be exactly foretold.

A little while ago the belief was general that there were certain healing virtues in inanimate things, in the bones of holy men and women, in the rags that had been torn from the foul clothing of still fouler saints, in hairs from martyrs, in bits of wood and rusty nails from the true cross, in the teeth and finger nails of pious men, and in a thousand other things.

The diseased were cured by kissing a box in which was kept some bone, or rag, or bit of wood, some holy hairs, provided the kiss was preceded or followed by a gift—a something for the church.

In some mysterious way the virtue in the bone, or rag, or piece of wood, crept or flowed from the box, took possession of the sick who had the necessary faith, and in the name of God drove out the devils who were the real disease.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

SAMUEL MORLEY AND BRISTOL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read, with much interest, your articles in the *Freethinker* in review of that portion of Mr. Winston Churchill's life of his father, which touches the Bradlaugh incidents in Parliament or elsewhere. In correcting the author you have made one slip yourself, which I may be permitted to point out. It is in reference to Samuel Morley as M.P. for Bristol. Morley was not "rejected" by Bristol on account of his share in the Bradlaugh controversy, or on any other. His retirement from the representation of the city was purely voluntary and on account of ill-health, and took place on the splitting up of the city parliamentary district from one into four divisions, in, I believe, the year 1885.

W. R. B.

[Our correspondent's view of Samuel Morley's retirement from Bristol as purely voluntary is technically correct but substantially inaccurate. Very strong Radical pressure was brought to bear upon him, and his retirement was hastened by it.—EDITOR.]

HEROES.

There is the Open Secret Society of the heroes. Their mystery has been published in books, in songs, in world-famous deeds of life and death, to all men of all nations and languages; yet only the heroic brotherhood really comprehend it, and are fully possessed by its inspiration. Other men may have transient glimpses of its meaning, and may thrill with its divine enthusiasm in rare moments; but soon the great door shuts, and they are cowering again in the darkness and the cold; nor can they even truly remember these rare moments in other hours and days, though they remember well enough the words of the chant, or the details of the action with which the inspiration happened to be connected. But one of the brotherhood understands and feels always. The mystery which he understands so thoroughly and feels so triumphantly is simply this: That in the whole range of the universe from highest heaven to deepest hell, there is no thing or circumstance, creature or being, dreadful to a man; that out of himself there is nothing which a man need fear; that no nature can be born into a realm unconquerable by that nature; and moreover, that the most dazzling lightning of ecstasy leaps from the blackest storm of danger. But neither he who writes, nor he who reads is any nearer to the heart of the mystery through this interpretation; if he is of the brotherhood his pulse beat in unison with the throbs of this heart before; if he is not of the brotherhood his pulse will never beat in unison with these throbs—save at intervals and for moments similar to those in which the hands of a clock that does not go agree with the hands of another which is keeping true time.—*James Thomson* ("B. V.")

THIS-WORLD-ISM.

Seeing that the Power, whatever it be, that created the world (which, I think, certainly cannot have created itself) has, for the present, while using us as its instruments, reserved to itself the privilege of knowing why it has made us and whither it is leading us—seeing that this Power (in spite of all intentions attributed to it, in spite of all the demands made upon it) appears even more and more determined to guard its own secret—I believe, if I may say all I think, that mankind is beginning to cease to try to penetrate that eternal mystery. Mankind went to religions, which proved nothing, for they differed among themselves; it went to philosophies, which revealed no more, for they contradicted one another; and it will now try to find its way out of the difficulty by itself, trusting to its own instinct and its own simple good sense; and since mankind finds itself here on earth without knowing why or how, it is going to try to be as happy as it can with just those means the earth supplies.—*Alexander Dumas* (*Fils*).

Without philosophers, without some few virtuous men who seem to be of a different nature from the rest of mankind, the worship of a wicked divinity would surely be established over every part of the earth.—*Goldsmith*.

'Tis education forms the common mind;
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

—Pope.

FAMILY LIKENESS AND DIFFERENCE.

Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and repulsion; and ties us by our heart strings to the beings that jar us at every movement. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering the thoughts we despise; we see eyes—ah! so like our mother's—averted from us in cold alienation; and our last darling child startles us with the air and the gestures of the sister we parted from in bitterness long years ago. The father to whom we owe our best heritage—the mechanical instinct, the keen sensibility to harmony, the unconscious skill of the modelling hand—galls us, and puts us to shame by his daily errors; the long-lost mother, whose face we begin to see in the glass as our own wrinkles come, once fretted our young souls with her anxious humors and irrational persistence.—*George Eliot*, "Adam Bede."

GOT THE HABIT.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Oldecastle, "that Dr. Goodman lays rather too much stress on the idea that we should divorce ourselves from anthropomorphism. It may be all right to preach what he does in a general way, but the anthropomorphic sentiment is still very dear to a great many people."

"I know it," said her hostess as she toyed with the diamond-studded paper cutter. "There's a woman live right on this street that goes to the drug store and gets it on the quiet nearly every day."—*Chicago Record Herald*.

AND IT WAS SO.

"I'm afraid I'll disagree with you," remarked Jonah as the whale swallowed him.

"Perhaps," replied the whale; "but it won't be a circumstance to the way the theologians will disagree when they come to discuss this incident."—*Philadelphia Press*.

GEORGIA PHILOSOPHY.

"I take the weather as Providence sends it," says a Georgia philosopher. "If I whirled in and prayed for rain there'd come a dry spell, certain; and if I prayed for dry there'd be rain enough to drown us—so there you have it! Best way to do is to lay low and take all that comes your way, uncomplaining."—*Atlanta Constitution*.

TWO EXCELLENT "BULLS."

An Irish clergyman is credited with having concluded a powerful oration in this fashion: "My brethren, let not this world rob you of a peace which it can neither give nor take away." Which is coupled with the remark of a fellow country colleague who in reasoning with a woman who had lost her faith in Christianity told her: "Well you will go to hell, you know; and I shall be very sorry, indeed, to see you there!"

TIME FOR SACRAMENT.

A professor in chemistry one day asked a student: "Suppose you were summoned to the side of a patient who had accidentally swallowed a heavy dose of oxalic acid, what would you administer?"

The student who, studying for the ministry, took chemistry because it was obligatory in the course, replied: "I would administer the sacrament."

MAN'S INHUMANITY.

Husband: "This house is as cold as a barn, all the doors are swinging open, the children yelling, no signs of supper, no —"

Wife: "Why, my dear, how unreasonable you are! You are absolutely brutal. The idea of talking that way, after I've worked like a slave the whole afternoon trying to finish this 'Heaven Bless Our Home' motto for the front hall."

A clerk employed by the Mutual Reserve Life Insurance Company pleaded guilty the other day to forgery in the sum of \$104. Judge O'Sullivan, in General Sessions, suspended sentence because the young man's father is an Episcopal minister, who would otherwise feel bad, and the judge did not want the innocent to suffer. It was a merciful thing to do, but the excuse was not valid, for ministers suffer no more than other men when their sons go wrong.—*Truth-seeker* (N. Y.).

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.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, London, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Simple Bible Teaching: Mr. Birrell's Recipe for Children."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, H. E. Dodson, "Christianity a Failure."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Wicked Voltaire."

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Why I Reject Christianity."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, Andrew Allison, "Did Charles Bradlaugh Die a Christian?" A Reply to Robert Bradlaugh.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): 12 (noon), Discussion Class, Mr. Clark; 6.30, G. Scott, "The Folly of Religion."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): C. Cohen, 3, "Looking for God"; 7, "The Other Side of Christianity."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, April 26, at 8, Councillor F. Drummond, "The Inevitableness of Socialism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting: Finance and Conference.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S.: The Annual Meeting will be held at 23 Meldon-terrace, New Kyo. Business: Election of Officers. Address by Hall Nicholson; subject, "Life and Death." Commence at 3.30.

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