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The superiority of a learned man over a mere worshiper is like that of the full moon over all the stars.

—MOHAMMED.

Religion and Morality Again.

WE have written on this subject before, and we dare say we shall write on it again, for it is of vast and constant importance.

Some thoughts upon it have been suggested by two marked items in a copy of the *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser* sent us by a local friend, who has been a reader of the *Freethinker* for many years. Both items belong to the "Local News" department, and would not have reached our readers' attention in the ordinary course of things. Yet there is a moral in them, which we dare say our correspondent wishes us to dig out.

The first item relates to the services conducted by the Rev. Dr. Mountain—a preacher who must have a great intellect if it is as lofty as his name. It is announced that this reverend gentleman preaches twice on Sunday, and gives Bible readings on Thursday evening. "He will also," it is added, "be pleased to answer written questions on Bible difficulties." Evidently he wants time to think them over and give them careful answers; but whether such carefulness is born of honesty is a problem we cannot settle.

The second item is as follows: "The Rev. James Brook, M.A., Vicar of Southborough, has left £221,658." Now this involves more "Bible difficulties" than the Rev. Dr. Mountain could answer in a lifetime, even if the Lord enabled him to beat the longevity of Methusaleh.

Dr. Mountain should explain, first of all, whether Jesus Christ really meant what he said when he exclaimed "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich." If he did not really mean what he said why did he waste his own and the world's time in saying it? What object had he in deceiving mankind? Was he combining the harmlessness of the serpent with the wisdom of the dove? Or was he playing a long game with the human species? Moreover, if he did not mean exactly what he said, the Rev. Dr. Mountain should tell us what he did mean, and how the information is authenticated.

In the second place, Dr. Mountain should explain—if Jesus Christ did mean what he said—how all the wealthy Christians have misunderstood him. Men who spend their lives in amassing colossal fortunes go to church on Sunday and listen to such texts as "Take no thought for the morrow" and "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," and on Monday morning their foreheads are clouded with financial anxieties, and they spend all the rest of the week in acquiring all the treasure they possibly can. This is a "difficulty" in the way of sensible and serious inquirers, and the Tunbridge Wells dealer in Bible difficulties should try to remove it.

In the third place, Dr. Mountain should explain how the clergy, of all men, can live in open defiance of the plain teaching of their Lord and Master. This is a bigger difficulty than the other one: We frequently refer to the cases of clergymen who leave considerable, and sometimes immense, sums of money. Here is one who leaves

£221,658—which is probably £221,658 more than Jesus Christ had in his pockets when he was arrested for blasphemy. Such a sum, invested in gilt-edged securities, at three per cent., would yield an income of £6,649 14s. 9d. a year. Or, if the principal alone were spent, without incurring the divine penalties pronounced in the Bible against usury—which does not mean lending money at extortionate interest, but lending money at interest at all—it would last more than forty years at the rate of £5,000 per annum. And £5,000 per annum means £96 8s. per week, and £13 14s. 8d. per day. How on earth could a clergyman—not merely a disciple but an apostle of Jesus Christ—get and keep and leave at death such a fortune as this? He was perfectly aware of all those texts warning Christians against making money, and cursing the rich and blessing the poor. But they never disturbed him in the least—at any rate, they never induced him to part with his wealth. He clung to it until the last, and was torn away from it by the hand of Death—otherwise he would be clinging to it still. And this reverend gentleman, who preached one thing and practised quite another, was almost a neighbor of the Rev. Dr. Mountain, who need not trouble himself about any more written questions on Bible difficulties, but just deal with *this one* to the satisfaction of honest and intelligent people.

We also venture to suggest that Dr. Mountain (or perhaps Dr. Clifford) should tell us why the Bible is placed in the public schools as a guide in faith and conduct (to use Mr. Birrell's language) when it does not guide the faith and conduct of the clergy themselves. Dr. Clifford himself is not a millionaire, but his salary would have made Judas Iscariot's mouth water; and the £500 annuity which is being made up for him would have seemed wealth beyond the dreams of avarice to all the other apostles. Certainly it is difficult to see how a man believes in "Blessed be ye poor" while he allows his friends to raise the thousands necessary to provide him—and his wife in case of his predeceasing her—with such a handsome annuity. Not that we complain of a man's receiving £500 a year if he is worth it. We only say that it is not easily reconcilable with the teachings of Jesus Christ. And we would add that the morals of the children in our public schools ought not to be at the mercy of men who have one thing on their lips and another in their hearts.

Morality is not safe in the custody of religion. It needs to be rescued. Mr. Booker T. Washington, the negro leader in America, has just been saying that the blacks who commit crimes that lead to lynching are usually without homes and regular occupation. Nor are they educated. He asserts that not one graduate of the schools for negroes in Atlanta has been arrested for crime during the past twelve months. Does not this show that education is doing for the negro what religion has never accomplished? Thomas Hood truly said that:—

"Evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as by want of heart."

When men are lacking in heart religion cannot supply the deficiency, but education does promote thought; and how few would ever commit a crime if they could realise the consequences of their actions.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Christian Fallacy.

"A perfect society can only be built on the foundation of a perfect individual morality.....Grant, if you will, that at this stage—taking all the tests of social strength together—there exists in the Far East a more efficient society than any in Christendom, yet it does not admit of serious question that Christendom possesses what the Far East, in spite of all its splendid heritage of brooding wisdom and social discipline does not possess, a perfect individual morality expressed recognisably in an historic person. You may never hope to derive individual morality from social, you will assuredly, sooner or later, gather social morality from individual."

PROFESSOR HUXLEY called the clergy the Bourbons of the intellectual world. They learn nothing and they forget nothing—they lose none of their old folly; they acquire none, in any serviceable sense, of the best modern thought. The sentence quoted at the head of this article (taken from a recent sermon by Canon Hensley Henson) is a good illustration of the soundness of Huxley's diagnosis. Partly, of course, the statement is necessitated by the social deficiencies of Christianity. For the New Testament scarcely considers man as a social or political unit, but almost wholly as an independent thing. Its appeals, its warnings, its bribes are all addressed to the individual; and its emphasis upon this has not unnaturally resulted in the sublimated selfishness and profound egotism of the Christian character. The recognition, too, of Japan as a society more efficient than any in Christendom might also be taken as a proof that the clergy are not so much like the Bourbons as Huxley thought. But while there is here a recognition of a fact too palpable to be ignored, there is no sign of its being appreciated. For a proper appreciation of the rise of Japan would have led Canon Henson to realise that no greater blow has been struck, of late years, at Christianity than this. For Japan, as a whole, is absolutely uninfluenced by Christianity. It is even destitute of all a Christian understands by "religion." Its ancient ancestor worship has become little more than a worship of humanity, while its higher intellectual life is in the main Agnostic. That Japan should under these conditions display a moral and social life at least as high, and probably superior to, that of any Christian nation is a decisive disproof of Christian claims as to the civilising power of Christianity.

In this, as well as in other directions, Canon Henson is only disclosing the customary Christian obtuseness to facts. To ignore the significance of the rise of Japan might be excused; but what is one to make of the constant claim of the superiority of Christian morality, in spite of the equally constant fact that throughout the whole of its history Christians have never displayed any superiority in conduct over non-Christians? And this may be shown, not on the evidence of enemies, but upon the testimony of Christians themselves. The fact is unquestionable; nor can it be entirely attributed to lack of moral teaching. The Churches have preached the virtues from the pulpit in season and out of season, and they have been heard with the approval always paid to such exordiums. It is when the aggregate lives of Christians are taken into consideration that one discovers how ineffective such teaching has been; and its ineffectiveness is entirely due to the fallacies embodied in Canon Henson's statement. His utterance, it may be noted, is in thorough accord with Christian tradition and Christian philosophy, and is the more noteworthy on that account.

The first fallacy is that morality is wholly a matter of conscious instruction and conscious effort. It is only upon this basis that morality can be made to depend upon a direct appeal to the individual. But it needs little thought to see that there are whole tracts of moral conduct not dependent upon conscious reflection at all. Family feelings, for instance, are so far non-reasoning that the chief function of reflection is to regulate and often curb their expression. Even in cases where the family instinct is weak, and people are brought up to the proper standard of behavior by other means, the statement

holds true, since here it is usually a fear of public disapproval or the desire to stand well with one's friends that operates. And these, in turn, are feelings that have been developed and are sustained very largely by unconscious or indirect methods. In the case of other aspects of conduct, not so plainly due to the operation of non-reasoning instincts, the conscious method of inculcation is far from being as powerful as many people imagine. The inmates of modern prisons are regularly treated in sermons to exhortations pointing out the duty of each to be kind and honest; yet I do not think it has ever been claimed that these teachings are productive of any great reformation in conduct. Nearly all children have impressed upon them the duty of being honest, truthful, and kind; yet they not unfrequently turn out dishonest, untruthful, and cruel. It may be said that the reason for this is that other circumstances—acquaintances and general surroundings—override the influence of their early instruction. This is true enough; but as these other circumstances do not consciously teach them to be dishonest or untruthful, this is only another way of proving that unconscious influences are more powerful in determining conduct than others. As bad qualities are determined, so also are good ones. Conduct is in the main, and in its permanent form, the expression of habit; and habit is created not so much by the direct influence of conscious instruction as by the indirect influence of those innumerable forces that operate in human society.

Here, then, is the first cause of Christian failure. Its aim has been to exhort rather than to develop; seeking to improve by instruction it ignored the important fact that conduct is the expression of character, and character in turn the product of all that heredity and contemporary circumstances—education, companions, social position, even the food we eat and the air we breathe—make it.

The second fallacy is contained in the closing sentence of Canon Henson's statement. This statement is so palpably untrue that one might reverse the terms and say that "You may never hope to derive social morality from individual; you will assuredly, sooner or later, gather individual morality from social." It is beside the mark to say if all individuals were good, society would be good. How are all individuals to be good in a society not favorable to the expression of goodness? Canon Henson may point to isolated Christians who have been of lofty moral stature. But so might one point to the same characters in pre-Christian times; and their existence in the one case would prove as much, or as little, as their existence in the other. Of human nature in the average one may safely assert that its condition will be a faithful reflex of the general society in which it exists. All history proves this; and reflection only serves to show that no other result than this is probable or even possible.

If social morality is to be derived only from individual morality, from what is the latter derived? Presumably, Canon Henson would reply, from other individuals. But this is only another way of saying from Society; for the action and reaction of individuals one upon the other constitutes Society. And just as a chemical combination gives us in the product something not contained in any of the constituents; so the combination of human beings called Society gives us something not contained in any of its individual members, considered as individuals merely. In fact, Society is the one thing that gives morality meaning and value. Divorce man from Society and morality is more than impossible—it is unthinkable. Society—social intercourse—creates morality and individualises man; his morality is a concrete expression of these forces, and he only properly recognises himself in the feelings that bind him to the rest of his fellows. Place a man upon a desert island and his morality disappears, or lingers only as a memory. Hate, love, fear, honesty, justice, kindness, cruelty, lose all significance under such conditions. Bring him into relation with his fellows and these qualities are revived and active. They

are in their birthplace once more, and active in the only possible scene of their activity.

If individual morality is not derived from social morality, why is it that varying social stages present us with moral codes differing in proportion? Not only is there a difference in different societies, but within the same society there is developed a class morality for various grades. The keen man of business, who in private life may generously help a fellow being in adversity, will be found often enough plunging another into ruin by vigorously pressing an advantage to its full legal length. It is the rule of the game. An aristocrat who will without discomposure pile up debts for the food he eats and the clothes he wears, will feel disgraced should he not discharge a "debt of honor" contracted on the turf or at the gaming table. Members of every social class will have their different ethics, the reason for which must be constantly sought in the social groups to which they belong. To Canon Henson, the phrase "Man is a social animal" is a mere phrase and nothing more. To clearer thinkers it is a profound truth pregnant with possibilities. They see that from the moment man is born, naked and defenceless, into Society to the time when he bids adieu to existence, the whole development of his nature is dependent upon the social influences that are brought to bear upon him. The process of enlightenment far from weakening the power of these influences, gives them rather increased strength. He reacts upon Society only because Society has first acted upon him; his very enlightenment causing him to wear with proud respect the social fetters that are felt as a badge of slavery by the less developed.

One must, however, in conclusion, do Canon Henson the justice of saying that his teaching, obviously wrong as it is, is yet thoroughly Christian. For the Christian gospel and traditional Christianity has not, and never has had, any notion of the real nature of morality and moral forces. It mistook for these a number of moral precepts, of which the world has always had enough and to spare, but which have only influenced such as were well able to do without them. Still less has Christianity possessed any conception of the organic nature of Society, or given to the world a social gospel. Its teachings have been addressed to the individual, and to the individual not always at his best, but often at his worst. With Christianity the individual is all, Society and the race are as nothing. Yet it is the latter that is permanent, the former that is evanescent. The individual is valuable only as he subserves the interest of the race, while individual happiness is only assured in proportion as this larger end is realised.

C. COHEN.

"What We Owe to the Bible."

SUCH is the title of a remarkable sermon by the well-known theological scholar, the Rev. James Orr, M.A., D.D., Professor of Apologetics and Theology in the United Free Church, College, Glasgow, which appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth* for August 30. I have called it a remarkable sermon; and I might safely go the length of describing it as a masterpiece — of its kind. It is an extravagant, fanatical, blind eulogy of the Bible. Professor Orr neither weighs nor measures his words, but pours them out in vast profusion; and they are all superlatives. According to him, there is no book in the whole world worthy of a moment's comparison with the Bible. He says that we need not depreciate the Sacred Books of other religions; and yet he quotes with evident approval the following extravaganza from the lips of the late Sir Monier Williams:—

"There can be no greater mistake than to force these non-Christian bibles into conformity with some scientific theory of development, and then to point to the Christian's Holy Bible as the crowning product of religious evolution. So far from this, these non-Christian bibles are all developments in the wrong direction; they all begin with some flashes of true light, and end in utter

darkness. Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side by itself all alone, and with a wide gap between."

Professor Orr deals in generalities, and never comes down to concrete examples. What does he make of the numerous contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, immoralities, indecencies, and obscenities with which the Bible abounds? Is he ignorant of the anger, injustice, immorality, and cruelty for which it makes Jehovah responsible? For example, how does he explain such passages as Exodus iv. 24; xiv. 15; Gen. ix. 20-25; Judges iii. 15-30; iv. 17-24; v. 24-30; xi. 29-31; Lev. xx. 6; Deut. xiii. 6-10; Num. xxxi. 1-18; Deut. ii. 30, 34? Can Professor Orr refer to those passages—there are hundreds of others quite as bad—and characterise them as "authentic oracles of God"? Are they even specimens of noble literature?

Dr. Orr is equally extravagant when he speaks of the Bible as history. Take the following:—

"There is nothing that, properly speaking, can be called history in these other sacred books of the world. They are, for the most part, as every student of them knows, jumbles of heterogeneous material, loosely placed together, without order, continuity, or unity of any kind."

That may be quite true; but is there anything in the Bible "that, properly speaking, can be called history"? Professor George Adam Smith, of the same United Free Church College as Dr. Orr, does not regard the Old Testament history as at all reliable. Almost everywhere this critic finds hopeless contradictions, conflicting versions of the same event, and various most palpable mistakes. He accuses the compiler of the two Chronicles with holding a brief for the priesthood, and with falsifying facts in its interests. Canon Cheyne is a more destructive critic than even Dr. Smith. Professor Schmeidel goes further still and vigorously assails the historicity of the "Holy Gospels." Professor C. von Weizsäcker, "an authority of the very first rank," tears the Book of the Acts to pieces. And all these critics, be it remembered, are friends of the Bible; and yet even they are forced to maintain that its history must be taken with a good many grains of salt.

In praising the Bible nothing is easier than to exclaim, "There is nothing like this, nothing even approaching this, in any other collection of sacred books known to the world." One has heard similar exclamations a million times; but they neither prove anything nor convince any thoughtful person. Are there any facts which verify this "exceptional character" attributed to the Bible? Here is Dr. Orr's golden opportunity. "Let me now endeavor," he says, "to show how the Bible verifies its exceptional character and claims by its wonderful history and influence, and by the benefits it confers." But here again he contents himself with dogmatic assertions. "The Bible, as a book," he contends, "has an unexampled place in human history." Well, supposing that it has, what does that prove? Granting that "the manuscripts of whole or parts of the New Testament already known to exist number between 3,000 and 4,000," and granting that in the matter of translation "the Bible has a record which casts every other utterly into the shade," of what value are such alleged facts? Does the circulation of a book determine its real worth? At the present time, Miss Marie Corelli is the most widely read of all British authors. The people peruse her books with the utmost avidity. Does this show that Miss Corelli occupies so high a niche in the temple of literary merit that such novelists as George Meredith and Thomas Hardy are not worthy of comparison with her? No one is fool enough to make such a silly inference. It is quite possible that Corelli's amazing popularity is to be accounted for by the fact that her merit is not of the highest order. Dr. Orr is simply overwhelmed by the fact that "the reports of the three great Bible Societies—the British and Foreign, the American, and the National Bible Society of Scotland—show for the past year the enormous total

of over nine millions of issues of the Scriptures in European and Heathen lands." But if the Bible is so incomparably superior to all other books, why is it necessary to have three such rich and powerful Societies to circulate it? Is it not high time that it should go everywhere on its own merits? As a matter of fact, these Societies employ huge numbers of paid agents who devote their whole time and energy to promoting the popularity of the Bible. There are many other officials whose main business it is to issue appeals for funds whereby to spread the Holy Scriptures. Why, such Societies, working by such methods, could distribute almost any book they pleased to take up quite as extensively as they are now distributing the Bible.

After all, it is not the popularity of the Bible, but its lack of popularity, that is astonishing. According to Professor Orr, it is the only book in the world in which are to be found the "authentic oracles of God." This volume enshrines a message of supreme and vital importance to the whole human race. This message comes direct from the Heavenly Father to all his children everywhere, for all of whom he cares and yearns with equal solicitude; and the assurance given is that those who do not receive the message in this life shall go into everlasting damnation in the next. Well, it is claimed that parts of the book that contains the message have been in existence some three or four thousand years, and the complete volume has been in circulation for nigh two thousand years. Well, in this year of grace, 1906, how many are there of our fellow-beings who have never yet received this Book of God, who have never yet heard the word of salvation through Christ, and who are still liable to eternal banishment from God? According to the most favorable computation, 1,000,000,000. Even at this late day, barely one-third of the world's population have ever heard of the only book which is said to contain an authentic account of the way of salvation. Dr. Orr is amazed at the unexampled success of the Bible; and I am equally astonished at its stupendous failure, if it is such a book as he takes it to be.

It is worth while pressing this point to the utmost. Professor Orr does not seem to have discerned the significance of it. He says:—

"The chief advantage of the possession of the Bible is not told when we speak of its literary or moral or humanising effects, is not told till we think of that message of the love of God, and that light of eternal hope which streams from the Bible into a world that, without it, despite all speculations and all reason and brilliance of civilisation, would be hopelessly dark, as regards the future."

In that passage—quite unconsciously, no doubt, there is implied the most serious indictment against the character of God that one can imagine. Here is a book from which streams that light without which the world is "hopelessly dark, as regards the future"; and yet upon two-thirds of the human family this saving light has never once shone. What unspeakable cruelty, what rank injustice, what unfathomable partiality on God's part!! Who can possibly believe in a God capable of such infinitely atrocious conduct? Who can bow down and worship him? Dr. Orr waxes exceedingly eloquent, saying:—

"It is this Gospel which at this hour is flooding with hope and courage myriads of hearts that otherwise would be in deepest despondency. In India, in China, in Africa, in the New Hebrides, in every land to which it comes, is rising like a great rosy dawn, the day-spring from on high, fraught with hope and healing for the woes of men. In this great work of the recovery of men to God, the regeneration of the world, how absolutely indispensable is the Bible."

What a charming picture! But it is a false picture, even so zealous an advocate of missions as Dr. Horton being our witness. In the mission-field, according to him, scarcely any headway is being made; and we can well believe him.

Well, then, *what do we owe to the Bible?* Dr. Orr asserts that we owe all the fruits of civilisation to it. Philanthropy, for example, is, according to him, a Biblical product. Then why did philanthropy

appear at so late a day, and why is it still so imperfectly developed? The emancipation of the slaves is also represented as a Christian act; but why had we to wait for it for so many centuries? Why did not Christianity bring it about as soon as it became the dominant religion in the Roman Empire? "Our prison reforms, our charity and rescue institutions, our temperance movements, our peace movements," are said to be streams whose sources are to be found in some "high-mountain levels of the Bible's teaching"; but where were these streams in primitive, middle, and early modern Christian ages? They only began to flow less than two hundred, some of them less than one hundred, years ago. Why, a little study of history would show that all reform movements owe their origin to the very gradual evolution of civilisation, to the slow unfolding of the humaner and more social feelings and instincts of humanity. But is even the present condition of European nations a thing of which we can be proud? Is it creditable to the much-vaunted transforming power of Christianity? Is it not rather a discredit to it?

But, even granting that all the good qualities in our present civilisation have been derived from the influence of the Bible, what about the enormous harvest of evils reaped in all ages through the same influence? Under the influence of the Bible the most atrocious and barbarous deeds, the most cruel and libidinous customs have been sanctioned, and the most sanguinary wars, rebellions, and persecutions occasioned. The devotees of the Bible have often been the partisans of tyranny and oppression, and deadly foes to progress, science, and art. It is to the Bible we owe the disgraceful, humiliating educational controversy which is now raging with such unbridled fury and disastrous results in England and Wales. The Bible has divided families, torn asunder societies, and sown the seed of discord, rancor, and sedition among nations. This is frankly admitted by many Christian scholars, such as Professor C. P. Tiele, in his excellent article on "Religions" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Everybody knows that the crimes committed in the name of Christianity are innumerable.

As a religious document, the Bible is of the greatest value. No one who desires to pursue the comparative study of religions can afford to ignore it. It contains many literary gems, some excellent moral maxims, not a few beautiful proverbs and lovely parables; but as an authority, or standard, on any subject, its day is over; and, as a rule of conduct, it has never had a day. Not all the enthusiasm and cleverness of Dr. Orr, and of the few others who think with him, can restore the Bible to the place it once occupied. Its glory has departed.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Fruits of the Spirit.

THE fruits of the Spirit are: strife, bigotry, intolerance, envy, joylessness, narrow-mindedness, and intellectual bondage. No one can scan the religious world without finding these fruits in sufficient evidence. The great objection of Robert Owen that religion has always been a source of strife among mankind is supported not only by the history of the past, but also by the experience of the present. The numberless sects in Christendom to-day are a veritable fulfilment of the prophecy of Christ, "I am not come to give peace, but division." One touch of nature makes the whole world kin; but a touch of religion, instead of uniting men in the bonds of human sympathy, has everywhere tended to set them at variance. It estranges even those who are bound by the close ties of consanguinity. It divides "the father against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law

against the mother-in-law." The doctrine of the solidarity of the human race—the realisation of human brotherhood—has no greater foe than the divisions which it creates and fosters. As P. G. Hammerton, in one of his books, points out, it is one of the great barriers to free human intercourse, which is essential to the highest development of the individual, and to a healthy moral progress. The object of religion is to fix our affections on "things above," and according as it fulfils this object, so does it narrow the sympathies of the human heart. The blighting effects of religion when it becomes a dominant factor in people's lives was brought forcibly home to the writer by the following experience.

As a youth, some twenty years ago, I stayed a week or two with some relatives in Scotland—an uncle and aunt. They were ordinary working people, and, though members of the Kirk, they were not burdened with any religious sentiment. Their religion, like that of most church-goers, was closely related to the carefully-kept Sabbath clothes. It was "a thing apart"; and active or aggressive religion they regarded with suspicion, if not with hostile feelings. They lived on the outskirts of a small manufacturing town, which still retained many of the rural features of the village from which it had evolved. Their *environment* entered very largely into their daily life and thoughts, and the social life of the district possessed a very human interest for them. All that affected their neighbors, for weal or for woe, found a ready response in their sympathies. My uncle, good soul, loved his pipe, his glass, and his joke, and his every action spoke my kindly welcome. The word "hospitality," in its very widest meaning, only faintly conveys the kindness of their treatment. My aunt's generous heart was always devising ways and means for my comfort and enjoyment; and the unrestrained signs of her kindly affection when I parted from them left a tender impression upon me which the lapse of many years did not efface. The remembrance of that visit was one of the "pleasant memories" which contribute no small share to the joys of life.

Some twenty years later I again paid my friends a visit. But, alas! it was to realise with sadness that some cankerworm had entered into their lives and destroyed its former beauty. All the old *sweetness* of the past was gone; and that spontaneity which gives true kindness its value, and which had been such a delightful feature of their every action on my former visit, was no longer in evidence. They were kind, as before—let me not do them an injustice by even the suggestion of a thought to the contrary—but their attentions were accompanied by an indescribable note of fearsome "other-worldliness" that almost made them oppressive. They seemed to be under some burden that was preventing the free play of mind and heart. The soul within them was shrunk; and the external world and its doings now possessed but little interest for them. Their sympathies had become narrowed, and their chief concern was their own "spiritual" condition. My uncle went to his daily labor with the thought of death looming large on his mental horizon; and instead of the old cheery "patter" with which my aunt was wont to keep me interested and amused, her mind was continually dwelling on such airy nothings as "redemption," "justification," and "sanctification." These—meaningless words—were the tares which had grown up and well-nigh choked the wheat of their kindly nature. They had become "religious"; and I realised as never before the miserable blighting tendency of active religious belief. They had been quickened into "newness of life" (!) by the efforts of an earnest Plymouth Brother, but it was a life devoid of all those human qualities which are the crown and glory of our nature.

Another experience befell me on this visit which it may be of interest to relate as indicating the variety of the "fruits" which the religious spirit brings forth. This experience was an interview with the reverend gentleman who acted as the spiritual guide to my friends. His church was situated at a

village some mile and a half distant, and the circumstances of our meeting were as follows.

In the town of which I speak there were three Presbyterian churches of different sects. These, for the time, had sunk their petty differences, and collectively had engaged the Rev. John M'Neil to conduct a series of services of the "rousing" type. This Rev. John M'Neil is the gentleman to whom it is said Lord Overton pays a princely salary for teaching people to be content in that station of life whereunto they have been called. He had been preaching on the Sunday for these churches, and the gospel-shop of our friend must have suffered somewhat by this counter-attraction.

One evening during the week my aunt and I were walking towards this village when we met him. With all due deference I was introduced to the "meenister." A peculiarity of this gentleman was his "rolling eyes"; it seemed as if they were being moved by different thoughts than those that were being uttered by his mouth. I remembered those eyes of twenty years ago; while his mouth from the pulpit was slandering the civilisations of Greece and Rome, they were wandering over the whole of the congregation, saying tentatively, "See what a gran' eloquent meenister y' hae." With a somewhat haughty mien, taking but scant notice of my presence, and apparently paying little heed to the remarks of my relative, he abruptly exclaimed, "Wus y' hearing John M'Neil on Sunday night?" It has seldom been my lot to hear as much expressed in such few words as the reverend gentleman was able to compass into that "John M'Neil." We have all read long, windy discourses that contained little or no *thought*; but this "John M'Neil" spoke volumes of—professional jealousy. My relative assured him that she was *not* hearing the rival preacher, and was proceeding to give him the reason why she had not been to his own church; but with the shameless careless inattention—an inattention which to me showed a strange want of courtesy—he continued: "They tell me he was talkin' about soapsuds and things of that kind in the pu'pit, and gaurin' them lau'ch." "Gaurin' them lau'ch" was a heinous offence in the eyes of our serious friend. "When we want amusement," he said, "we go to the theatre, and no' to the house of God." And, if Mr. John M'Neil had been present, and heard the vituperative language that fell from the lips of this "brother in Christ," I am afraid I would have had to form a ring and stand by to see fair play. "Amusement" and the "theatre" seemed so indissolubly linked together in the mind of my ministerial friend that any notion of his affording a comic entertainment would probably have been incomprehensible to him. Certainly I had no need just then to go to the theatre for *amusement*; the reverend gentleman was a host in himself. It is unlikely he had ever heard of the *Freethinker*, or was acquainted with that reverential (!) attitude of mind which sees twaddle in sermons and the humorous side of everything.

The tenacity with which many persons still cling to religion, notwithstanding the unlovely nature of its "fruits," is difficult to understand from the standpoint of evidence and facts; considered as a psychological problem, however, it leads us back to the primal instinct of *fear*—the fear of leaving a hiding-place; the fear of the *unknown*. The work that lies before the *Freethinker* is the destruction of slavish fear; the advocacy of the truth that man's highest interests are best served by intellectual honesty and freedom, and that religion is inimical to his well-being.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Only one hundred and ten thousand pious pilgrims visited Mount Ararat in a body this year. The urbane and gentlemanly proprietors of the Ark Tavern complain that their receipts have hardly been sufficient to pay for the late improvements in this snug retreat. These gentlemen continue to keep on hand their usual assortment of choice wines, liquors, and cigars.—Opposite the Noah House, Shem Street, between Ham and Japhet.—*Dod Grile*.

Acid Drops.

President Roosevelt—the gentleman who called Thomas Paine a dirty little Atheist, though Paine wrote against Atheism and was some inches taller than “Teddy”—evidently feels himself (with God’s help) equal to anything. He is now tackling the reform of English spelling, and has given orders for three hundred words to be spelt in a certain manner. Most of the American papers laugh at him in this enterprise. But he is supported by Andrew Carnegie, who is, of course, the greatest living authority on the English language.

There was an American millionaire who had an alphabet safe in his office. It was “set” at night to a certain word, and unless the letters of that word were touched in the proper order it could not be opened. One evening the millionaire set it himself. The next morning he told his head-clerk to open the safe. The clerk came back and said there was something wrong. He was told to go and try again. He returned and once more said he could not get the safe open. The millionaire swore at him. Then an idea occurred to the clerk. “How did you spell *door*, sir?” he inquired. “Don’t be a darned fool,” said the millionaire; “I spelt it all right—*dore*.”

That was phonetic spelling, as he understood it. And you find the same thing in good old books. We have seen *door* printed “*dore*” and “*doar*” in the very same line. So that we wonder, after all, whether phonetic spelling would really, in the long run, be less chaotic than the present system.

We often think that a great deal too much is made of correct spelling. Of course it is part of the business of scholars and writers, but why should other people be over-worried about it? The Duke of Wellington, when Prime Minister, wrote the word “immediate” as “imiediate” on the covers of numberless letters. And what on earth did it matter? It was important that he should be exact in his own line of business—and not at all important that he should be exact in the business of a lexicographer.

A religious paper, in announcing the annual assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at Wolverhampton, recalls “the remarkable personality of the late Dr. Charles A. Berry, who was the mainspring of Congregationalism in the town.” We also remember Dr. Berry. On the occasion of one of Mr. Foote’s lecturing visits to Wolverhampton the reverend gentleman referred to him from the pulpit as a “professional infidel.” Mr. Foote retorted that Dr. Berry was a professional Christian, whose salary was larger than the platform earnings of all the professional infidels in England put together. Mr. Foote offered to prove this by figures to the satisfaction of any committee of honor, but Dr. Berry thought discretion the better part of valor, and maintained what is sometimes called “a dignified silence.”

A correspondent has asked Mr. Foote whether he had any knowledge of an extraordinary incident which is referred to by Mrs. Besant in her work on *Theosophy and the New Psychology*. Mrs. Besant writes as follows, the correspondent says:—

“Mr. Bradlaugh, who was a very strong mesmerist, put his wife into a trance, and while in this condition he asked her to go, in mind, to London—several hundred miles off—and tell him what she saw in the office of the *National Reformer*. She stated that she could see the inside of the office, and that the compositor had put the proofs in the machine upside down. On further inquiry Mr. Bradlaugh found that what had been stated by his wife, when in the clairvoyant condition, was perfectly correct.”

Mr. Foote replied to this correspondent as follows:—

“I beg to say that I know absolutely nothing about the strange case of clairvoyance which you say Mrs. Besant states as occurring between Charles Bradlaugh and his wife—a lady whom Mrs. Besant never knew. And while not doubting Mrs. Besant’s personal honesty I do not believe a word of the story.”

We may add that “putting the proof in the machine upside down” is not a very intelligible expression.

The Kaiser’s reference to God as “the old ally” of the Hohenzollerns reminds one of the versified version of the telegram sent by the Kaiser’s grandfather to his queen after the bloody battle of Gravelotte in 1870:—

“The Lord be praised, my dear Augusta!
We’ve had another awful buster.
Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below!
Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

These lines are ascribed to Coventry Patmore.

The Rev. Dr. Griffith John has spent fifty years in China as a representative of the London Missionary Society, and the Rev. R. Wardlaw Thompson has just published an account of his work during that long period. Dr. John is regarded as one of the greatest of foreign missionaries. His praises are in all the home churches. Well, what has he accomplished? “It is an extraordinary fact,” says the *Christian World*, “which Griffith John, like Dr. Richard (another Chinese missionary) recognises with entire frankness, that the most astonishing outcome of the missionary propaganda hitherto has been the great Taiping rebellion, which is estimated to have cost from fifteen to twenty millions of lives.” Again: “Up to now, also, he recognises that it is only the poor and uneducated that have been influenced by the Christian preaching.”

Of course, Dr. John is beaming all over as he glances into the future. China is on the point of opening wide her arms to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. Both the literary and the governing classes are almost ready to welcome and adopt and live by the Christian Faith. Nothing is easier to account for than this optimism of the professional missionary. Were he to affect pessimism the sinews of war would cease to be supplied by the Home Churches and his calling would collapse.

Bishop Wilkinson is at it again. Now he quotes from a lecture which a Japanese Bachelor of Divinity is supposed to have delivered in India, to the effect that the great demand in Japan just now is for Christian teachers in the schools. This is all moonshine, and sensible people will not heed it. Why doesn’t Dr. Wilkinson look after his North and Central Europe diocese, and let England and Wales alone to fight their own battles without any interference from his mischievous pen. He has been proved to be a lying prophet.

Ever and anon something new turns up. Nathaniel Schmidt is a Professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures in Cornell University, New York State, and he has just published a book, entitled *The Prophet of Nazareth*, in which he informs us that, as soon as the Christ of the Creeds has passed away, we shall be in a position to search for the historic reality. If the supposed words of Jesus are rendered into the Aramaic dialect, it will be seen that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, nor anything else, but simply a prophet sent from God. Thus, if this is true, the whole fabric of orthodox theology falls to pieces, and “all the life and teaching and influence of Jesus are reduced to terms of pure naturalism.” Professor Schmidt is no doubt correct; but, in that case, it is difficult to see where God comes in. Pure naturalism knows no deity. Pure naturalism is pure Atheism.

The Rev. Dr. Broughton is a fluent speaker, who loves to make people laugh. One evening his subject was “The Life of Power,” when many of his remarks were more than funny. What does he mean by the world? Does it include all the people who do not glory in being members of the Church? If so, he fathers altogether false ideas upon it. “According to the world,” he says, “power means wealth, culture, numbers.” Certainly not according to the Atheistic or Secularist world, and more certainly still, if possible, not according to the scientific world. But Dr. Broughton’s own idea of power is quite as erroneous. By power he means ability to open prison doors and to walk out of tombs. We have not seen that species of power on the earth yet. In reality, power means force of character, weight of personality. There is no other kind of mental or moral power.

In appearance, Christians are very much like other people. They are neither better nor worse, as a rule, than the average of mankind. But Dr. Broughton claims that they possess the power of the Holy Ghost, or that they are constant recipients of power from on high. The marvel is where they keep it, and what they do with it. No display of it is ever witnessed. They perform no feats by means of it. Dr. Broughton has no information to offer, but flies off to describe the work of the Holy Ghost, about which he knows no more than about the man in the moon. It is the trick of the trade.

The Rev. Dr. Hunter, of Glasgow, labors under the sad delusion that God is ever seeking man. “We describe ourselves,” he says, “as seekers after God, but the truth is we seek God because he first seeks us. Our upward yearnings and strivings are the answering movement of our spirits to the touch of his spirit.” Then what a shockingly poor seeker God must be. He has some 1,500,000,000 children, all of whom he passionately loves and sorely needs. And yet, for all his omnipotent and omniscient seeking for them, he has not succeeded in finding one in every twenty of them.

to this day. If there is a God, there is a fathomless mystery here. If there is no God, we understand it all. Nevertheless, the theologians are quite content. Some of them do very good business in the name of this strangely impotent father.

The awful hypocrisy of such pious twaddle becomes manifest when it assumes the form of prayer. In the *Christian World Pulpit* for September 12, we find "A Prayer in the Time of Religious Declension," and this is how it goes: "Almighty God, the Hope of Israel and the Savior thereof in time of trouble; we pray unto thee.....for those who are wandering from thy ways in darkness, and forgetting thee more and more. Have mercy upon them, and turn them to thyself." All the people thus prayed for, God is said to love with an infinite, everlasting love, and to need for his own happiness, and yet though they are wandering from his ways and forgetting him more and more, and though he is the Almighty and their Father, he does not have mercy upon them, and turn them to himself. Why is this? We ask the divines for an explanation, and they are dumb, or resort to irrelevant quibbling. This cruel irresponsiveness, this heartless inactivity, this painful aloofness and unbroken silence of the Christian God is an unanswerable argument against his existence.

One journal, at any rate, takes something like our own view of the projected Herbert Spencer memorial in Westminster Abbey. While admitting that "Spencer's memory deserves all the respect we can pay it," the *Daily Mirror* adds: "Yet it must in common justice be remembered that the Abbey is not, primarily, a Pantheon, but a Christian temple, and that Spencer believed neither in Christianity nor in any other form of revealed religion."

Rev. J. A. Richards, perpetual curate of St. Bartholomew's, Camberwell, wrote the following letter to the *Daily Chronicle*:-

"If the ecclesiastical authorities in Paris had been asked to permit a memorial to Ernest Renan to be placed in Notre Dame, of course they would have refused, and no one in England would have been surprised, nor would anyone have raised the cry of intolerance. Yet it may be doubted whether Renan was such an avowed opponent of the Christian Church as Herbert Spencer. Why, then, accuse the Dean of Westminster—a truly broad and liberal-minded man—of intolerance? Westminster Abbey is, before all things, a Christian church. Would a memorial to Spencer be permitted in the new Roman cathedral at Westminster or in the City Temple?"

It would be difficult to answer this.

"A Radical Parson," writing to the *Daily Chronicle* on the same subject, said: "I think if the story of the last days of his life could be circulated it would be a wholesome warning to any who might be led to follow his teaching." What on earth does the man mean? Has he been hearing some cock-and-bull story about Herbert Spencer's death-bed?

The editor of "The Churches" column in the dear *Daily News* finds room for a longish paragraph on a Christian crank who goes about on the promenade at Brighton, clad in a long garment of white and a girdle of the same color, with long sandy hair, and carrying a long alpenstock and a well-thumbed Bible. Had this man been doing anything sensible at Brighton the *Daily News* would have taken no notice of him. No doubt it feels that Christian cranks, at any rate, must be interesting figures to the majority of its readers.

A swarm of flies took possession of the church at Furzobrook, Dorset, so that it was impossible to conduct divine service. How lucky it was not a swarm of slower insects, such as swarmed over Egypt, and induced the sorcerors of that country to exclaim "This is the finger of God." His trademark, as it were.

The *Athenaeum* came out strong in a brief notice of the new, enlarged edition of Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Freethought*. "Mr. Robertson's views," our contemporary said, "are well known." But are they any the worse for that? "He inclines to the view that Montanus never existed." What a terrible crime! "He regards commercial motives as a main support of religious belief." Nonsense! Mr. Robertson is not exactly an idiot. What he holds is that commercial motives have a great deal to do with the maintenance of Christianity as an institution. And every man of sense knows he is quite right. "Mr. Robertson is always stimulating and often amusing." Well, that is much more than the *Athenaeum* is. Our contemporary should be a little more subtle and artistic with its sarcasm.

Fathomless is the originality of some preachers. Discouraging on the text "Behold I stand at the door and

knock," a man of God recently exclaimed: "Who is the I? He is the progenitor of every other I in the universe." The mystery deepens. Most people do not know who Jesus was or whether or not he ever lived. Some think he was a highly-gifted man, who taught in God's name. A few hold that he was more than man and less than God. Others maintain that he was God masking himself in humanity. But this preacher knows that Jesus is the ancestor, the forefather, the bringer forth of the human race. It is wise to have the point settled once for all by one who knows.

Where was "Providence" when Joseph Barker and another workman named Berkeley fell from the roof of St. Peter's Church, Fylde-road, Preston, on to the floor of the nave, a distance of nearly forty feet? Barker died from his injuries in a few minutes, and Berkeley was taken to the hospital in a critical condition. Couldn't "Providence" have warned the poor fellows that the scaffold was breaking? Any decent human being would have done so.

What a strange taste some people have for relics! We see that the museum at Wesley's House has just received some exhibits from an anonymous donor, including John Wesley's small writing-desk and Charles Wesley's bureau. The Rev. W. G. Beardmore has also presented "a portion of the chintz curtain which hung round the bed upon which the founder of Methodism passed away." This sort of thing, of course, is capable of indefinite development. Perhaps we shall hear in time of some such relics as the following: a heel of Wesley's last pair of boots—the tail of Wesley's last nightshirt—a feather from the bed on which Wesley died—the poker with which Wesley last stirred the fire—a finger of Wesley's winter gloves—a button off the trousers in which Wesley preached his last sermon—a piece of the handkerchief in which Wesley blew his nose for the last time; never washed since. No doubt these relics would be valued very highly at Wesley's House.

Rev. Forbes A. Phillips, the vicar of Gorleston, put in an appearance recently at the Yarmouth Police Court. He appeared in the rôle of a Passive Resister. Certain people, he said, had been before the Bench for refusing to pay a certain portion of the rate because of the denominational teaching. He appeared as a Passive Resister, and objected to pay that portion of the rate which went to undenominational teaching. We congratulate the reverend gentleman on his protest. Surely, if Nonconformists object to pay for Church teaching, Churchmen should object to pay for Nonconformist teaching.

Madame Humbert, who has been called the greatest swindler of the nineteenth century, and who has just been released from prison on account of the state of her health, was always a very pious lady. Before leaving prison she was given the bag containing the effects which were taken from her on her conviction. One of these was a prayer-book presented to her by her daughter. It was one of her most precious possessions, and the great Thérèse turned over its pages reverently while awaiting her departure. It is surmised that she laid by a good nest-egg while she had the chance, and that she will live comfortably upon it for the rest of her days, until she dies in the full odor of sanctity.

In the midst of anarchy and horror in Russia the pious Czar starts off on a pleasure trip in the Gulf of Finland. What a thing! Would it hurt Russia if he never came back? He might sail on to England, settle down here, and take the chair at Exeter Hall meetings.

Without discussing the ethics of assassination we may admire the courage of Miss Konoplianniko who sent the consummate brute, General Minn, to his last account. She was hung for the deed, of course, but she faced the scaffold without a tremor, and we are glad to know that she refused the services of a priest.

During the massacre of Jews at Siedlce (according to a Reuter telegram from Warsaw) the Christian population avoided being looted by hanging holy images and crosses out of their windows. The murders and robberies were clearly planned by the authorities. Of course the object of these outrages is to drown the revolutionary movement in a flood of racial and religious bigotry. It seems to us that the Russian government should be ostracised by the Western Powers as a mere piratical enterprise. No doubt the Czar would be shamed into better courses if all the ambassadors were withdrawn from St. Petersburg.

How absurd it is for Great Britain to break off diplomatic relations with Servia because of the regicides, and to keep

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: 8, Business Meeting in Hall.
WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30,
J. T. Lloyd, "Does Secularism Safeguard Morality?"

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.30, C. Cohen.
CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 11.30 and 6, F. A. Davies.
KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Ramsey, "The Atonement."
NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, James Rowney, "Secularism v. Christianity."
WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, Howell Smith.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Sept. 19, at 8, George Barnett, "Is Spiritualism True? Some Experiences."
HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Lodge Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, at 8, Meeting.
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, W. C. Schweizer, "My Reasons for Becoming a Socialist."
POETH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, T. Holman, "Byron and his Cain."

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My Twenty Years' Fight in Australia.—I.

WHAT I am writing now is not a history of Twenty Years, but rough, and somewhat disjointed notes of my long fight for Freedom in Australia. A few notes of time may not be amiss, as they will help the reader to grasp the situation and understand what it is I am writing about.

I was born January 29th, 1841; joined the Wesleyan Church in January, 1858; became a local preacher or layman, 1860; entered the Wesleyan College, Richmond, Surrey, September, 1864; entered upon the active life of a minister three years later; and resigned my post in 1872. I began to write for Mr. Bradlaugh's journal, the *National Reformer*, in May, 1876, and on the 17th December the same year gave my first Freethought lecture, in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Just seven years later I departed for Australia.

A letter from the Melbourne Secularists had reached Mr. Bradlaugh about May, 1883, asking if he could recommend a lecturer to come over and settle down in that city; and he sent the letter on to me, suggesting that I should answer it if I felt inclined to go. Mr. Bradlaugh never suggested that I should leave England, but left it entirely to myself. I mention this because he told me before leaving that someone had spread the rumor that he was jealous of me and wished me out of his way. I left him a letter absolutely denying that. There never was the least jealousy between Mr. Bradlaugh and myself; we never were rivals, nor did the thought of measuring myself against him ever occur to me, and I am perfectly satisfied that he never anticipated any rivalry on my part.

He asked for subscriptions to enable me to take the voyage, and thus raised £100 for me. I could not have gone without help from some quarter, for my seven years' propaganda in Britain had by no means enriched me.

After a splendid send-off in the Hall of Science, Old-street, London, I parted from Mr. Bradlaugh for ever, December 21st, and left by rail for Plymouth next day. There our friends gave us another send-off, and on December 23rd, 1883, we boarded the *Lusitania*, Orient mail steamer, and in the evening lost sight of old England for a period seven times longer than I had anticipated. My intention was, not to settle down in Australia, but to spend there about three years and then return to England either by way of America or by way of India. In fact, I was in correspondence with Indian Freethinkers as to the time I might be able to visit them.

After a very pleasant voyage, we were entertained at Adelaide, capital of South Australia, by about fifty earnest Freethinkers, February 8th, 1884; and on the 10th of that month we reached our destination, Melbourne, which we found to be a large and beautiful city. The welcome given me by the Freethinkers there was all that the most ambitious man could have desired.

I must explain that the first Freethought lecturer in Australia of whom I have heard was John Tyreman, who had been a clergyman of the Anglican Church. There was also William Denton. Both these gentlemen were Spiritualists, as were also very many of the Secularists who welcomed me to Melbourne. Tyreman and Denton both died ere my arrival. Mr. Thomas Walker had formed the Australasian Secular Association about a year and half before my advent. In many respects he was an able man; but by this time the people wanted a change. I had heard of him long before leaving England, and before I would consent to go to Melbourne I asked those who wrote to me what they were doing with my predecessor. Their reply was perfectly satisfactory.

Besides Mr. Walker there were two other Freethought lecturers in Australia, Mr. Charles Bright, a Jew and a Spiritualist, and Dr. Hughes, who, like Tyreman, was an Anglican clergyman.

In New Zealand Mr. John Ballance, Premier of that colony, was an open propagator of Freethought; so also was Mr. Robert Stout, now the justly honored Chief Justice of the colony.

There was a large amount of Freethought in Australia before my appearance there. In fact, when I arrived I was informed that almost every prominent man in Victoria was a Freethinker. So much was said upon that subject that I felt and said, "I have evidently brought my coals to Newcastle; and the best thing I can do is to take ship and return to England as fast as I am able." But I soon began to understand what sort of Freethinkers those prominent gentlemen were, as the reader will presently see. They were men who had travelled a mile or two along the road to heterodoxy, and felt that no respectable man could think of going farther in that direction. To do so would be simply shocking, vulgar, and unendurable. My predecessor had not much shocked those good people. His lectures had but homœopathic pinches of Atheism in them. But when I began my campaign I gave the people Atheism pure and simple, blank, white, unadulterated, unsophisticated Atheism. I had earnest work to do, to damage and discredit the clergy and to redeem their dupes from the slavery in which they were held. And I declined to mince matters. I had a double task to perform—to finish the emancipation of my own people and to show them that they must demand and secure the full rights of citizens, though they were Freethinkers; and then I had to face a storm of abuse, calumny, and persecution of the bitterest and most unprincipled sorts from the clergy, their dupes, and their tools in government offices. No words can describe the stir, the agitation, the consternation, I may say, caused by my early residence and work in Melbourne.

Before I came our people had not openly charged for admission to the Sunday night lectures, but they had charged in a semi-secret manner only. When I had lectured for a Sunday or two I was told that, if I spoke so, we should have the government down upon us. In surprise, I demanded how? Don't you know, said they, that we have taken this Hall, the Nugget Theatre, which has a theatrical license, and that we have permission from the Chief Secretary to lecture here on Sundays provided we do not charge for admission? Now, your style of lecturing is so extreme that the Chief Secretary will rescind his permit, and we shall be out in the cold.

I never felt more startled in my life! What! living, lecturing, on official sufferance! I could not stomach it. But our people and the office-bearers for the most part seemed to regard the thing as quite natural and appeared willing to submit to that, and even more. The clergy were furious, and their pious journals insisted that the government should put an instant stop to my lectures. The tools of the clergy in Parliament indulged in boundless abuse of me, and one of them declared in the House that if the existing law was insufficient to put down Symes, lynch law would have to be resorted to! No one ventured to rebuke the fellow, the papers reporting it as perfectly Christian and no more than was to be expected.

Our trustees and many of the people became frightened at the portents of the coming tempest, and I had some difficulty in getting their courage up to the sticking point; but they gradually developed the resolution not to be put down without a fight. The clergy went again and again on deputations, and the Attorney-General, a weak, cowardly, and unprincipled fellow, was soon badgered into a battle, for which he was unfit, and in which he was bound to be defeated. The *Daily Telegraph*, a morning paper edited by the Rev. Fitchett, a most cowardly cur, seemed to be run for no other object but to abuse me and hound on the government to crush me. One or two other papers followed to do the same, but they all failed, and wound up their career in a few years, and left me master of the situation.

I had not been long in Melbourne before I felt the absolute necessity of having a paper to advocate and defend our movement. There were three Freethought journals already—*The Wanganui Review*, run by Mr. Ballance, Premier of New Zealand, and two Spiritualistico-Freethought papers, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. But these two were so milk-and-watery that I could have nothing to do with them.

After some trouble, my *Liberator* was launched June 1st., 1884, about three and a half months after my arrival. It was met by bitter howls of execration in most quarters, and the howling and bitterness continued for nearly the whole twenty years of its existence. However, it was just what was needed, and I devoted myself to it absolutely, spared neither work, money, time, nor anything else, but lavished all the resources of my nature upon it. I gradually collected a splendid library, and worked fourteen or fifteen hours a day upon the paper. It circulated throughout Australasia, and was welcomed by the candid and honest as much as it was denounced and hated by the pious. In spite of the boycott the newspapers inflicted upon it, it proved a wonderful success, and my readers for many years could not have been fewer than twenty thousand. And when our great fight came it was this *Liberator* that brought us the sinews of war; and it was it that exposed rascality in pulpit and parliament, and rebuked and smote the high-placed rascals in all the colonies.

The principal parson in Melbourne, when I reached that city, was James Moorhouse, who masqueraded as Bishop of Melbourne, and was referred to as "his lordship," etc., by all and sundry. He had proved himself a coward before my day, and he well sustained that character as long as he remained there. The first number of the *Liberator* contained an open letter to this gentleman, and I gave him a letter weekly until I drove him completely out of the colony. He afterwards became Bishop of Manchester, and is, I believe, still living.

I challenged all the clergy to meet me in debate, and sent a special challenge to the Bishop. This he declined; but his chaplain, Rev. D. M. Berry, took up my challenge, and we met in our Hall of Science for four consecutive nights, devoting two nights to the existence of a God, and two to the resurrection of Jesus. This was in June, 1884. Berry is a well-educated man, as parsonic education goes, but his own party had to confess that he was not the man to give Symes the hammering he deserved. Canon Potter also met me in a sort of semi-debate not long after, but he was a trickster and thoroughly dishonest.

After those debates we held our Annual Conference in Sydney. I was elected President, and in the Theatre Royal, Sunday, September 28th, 1884, the entire audience of three thousand persons rose *en masse* to welcome me. Many hundreds could not gain admission. The Sydney newspapers, though they showed bitterness enough in all conscience, did report our Conference, which the Melbourne prints never did.

So far, no blood had been spilt, and my fight had hardly begun. But I was "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," and judgment was merely lingering. The Melbourne clergy had resolved to put forth all their strength in one united effort to crush me and my *Liberator* for ever, and thus rescue the colony of Victoria from the thralldom of the Devil. They pestered, badgered, and hounded on the government to prosecute me for charging for admission to my Sunday lectures; but, while the government hung fire, an obscure individual named Benn sued me for £600 for charging money on Sundays. The government commenced a similar suit against my chairman, claiming £200. These suits dragged on for many months, much to the chagrin of the clergy, who seem to have expected us to cease charging until the affair was all settled! But we went on charging as if nothing had happened, and gave police and government and the public to under-

stand that we declined to be put down by brute force or by legal trickery, as we were doing what was perfectly legal, and what the Romish priests had been doing with the connivance of police and government for many years.

The two cases were heard together before Mr. Justice Williams, who summed up in our favor, and then, in the most cowardly manner, decided against us. We appealed to the Full Court, which took about a fortnight to deliver its judgment. While that was pending, Mr. Walker and I exchanged platforms, and in August, 1885, I went to Sydney. From Sydney I visited Newcastle, about one hundred miles farther north, to deliver several week-night lectures. On the Thursday a telegram from Melbourne informed me that the Full Court had delivered judgment, had decided against us, and that the government would prosecute me criminally if I charged for admission to my Sunday lectures again. The asses had learnt that I was out of the colony, and had pleased themselves with the notion that they needed but to roar loud enough to terrify me and keep me out of the colony for all future time. "Ay, that's the course to pursue! Threaten the fellow roundly, and we shall never be troubled with this blatant Symes again." Thus they reasoned; but I hurried back as fast as I possibly could, and openly, and with all my might, challenged them to do their worst. We shall see how it turned out.

(To be continued.) JOS. SYMES.

Lucretius.—II.

(Concluded from p. 588.)

NOW that the evolutionary view has practically supplanted the creationist theory in biological science, the account given by Lucretius in the fifth book of the origin and development of the human race is generally regarded as eminently rational for the age in which it was written. But forty years ago, and indeed much more recently, it was a common thing, even for men styled "erudite," to refer sneeringly to the Darwinian hypothesis as the "slime-theory." It is interesting in this connection to read the following from a review of the second edition of Munro's *Lucretius*, contributed to the *Contemporary* for June, 1867, by the Rev. Henry Hayman, B.D.:—

"But most astounding among the Lucretian 'facts' of nature, which the poet asserts as with the assurance of an eye-witness, is that of the origin of the human race, in v. 805-20. The redundancy of warmth and moisture, according to him, produced in favorable localities certain *uteri*, catching hold of the earth by roots. These interesting zoophytes opened under the influence of warmth, and the earth, then young, we must suppose, and juicy, began at once to exude milk for the infant contained within. The poet, like Topsy, 'speaks we growed.' Something like a pumpkin must, according to him, have been the primordial type of humanity.....To such absurdities are men driven in order to avoid a creation in the proper sense of the word."

The reverend reviewer is also careful to call attention to those parts of the poem which are quite unscientific and which contain arguments "singularly inconclusive," such as Lucretius' views of the size of the sun and planets, of "images" striking the eye and thus causing sight, etc. But, as Tyndall pointed out in the Belfast Address, the Rev. Henry Hayman, B.D., quite fails to perceive the "sound and subtle observations on which the reasoning of Lucretius, though erroneous, sometimes rests." Readers may judge for themselves how far the poet's views on human evolution are really "astounding":—

"Just as feathers and hairs and bristles are the first things that appear on the limbs of quadrupeds and on the bodies of birds, so grasses and shrubs were the first things that appeared on the young earth, which afterwards brought forth many different species of living creatures. For none of these ever fell suddenly from

the sky, nor did the animals that belong to the land come out of the briny ocean. Not undeservedly, therefore, has our earth received the name of mother, since she it is that has produced all living things. Even at present we see the rain and the heat of the sun bring forth many creatures upon the earth. But when the earth and the atmosphere enveloping it were young and vigorous, the forms of life were larger and more varied, as was to be expected. First of all came birds. These, hatched in the spring, used to leave eggs behind them, just as now the cicadae in summer shed their smooth shell and then go in quest of sustenance for themselves. After that human beings first appeared. Heat and moisture were in the fields, and a kind of uterine cavity grew in favored spots. These cavities were rooted in the earth, and when the infant, as it developed in the course of time, had forced them open, it sought to avoid the dank earth and gain the upper air. Then Nature directed the pores of the earth to these places, and a milk-like liquid came forth and yielded nourishment to the infant race" (v. 788-813).

However crude the last few lines of this quotation may appear to some students of twentieth century science, Lucretius' account, taking it all through, is more in accordance both with the spirit of honest investigation and with the probable facts than are most ancient theorisings on this question.

In v., 855-861, he hints at a struggle for existence resulting in the elimination of the unfit:—

"And many races of living things must then have died out and been unable to beget and continue their breed. For in the case of all things which you see breathing the breath of life, either craft or courage or else speed has from the beginning of its existence protected and preserved each particular race. And there are many things which, recommended to us by their useful services, continue to exist consigned to our protection" (Munro),

But those monstrosities which people have believed in from time to time, such as Centaurs, Scyllas, Griffins, etc., have never existed and never can exist, for it is impossible for an animal to consist of "two-fold nature and double body formed into one frame out of limbs of alien kinds." The most dull-witted ought to see that a Centaur or man-horse has never existed, for the "maturity of the horse coincides with the infancy of man and the maturity of man with the old age of the horse." (On this point even the special-creationists who, forty years ago, denounced the "slime-theory" would not have opposed Lucretius.)

In v., 1028-1090, he deals with the origin and development of language. Men were impelled by nature to utter various sounds to indicate their wants, just as children spontaneously use gestures and point with the finger to various objects. Different sensations compel even the dumb animals to utter different sounds. "To suppose that some one man apportioned names to things and that others learnt their first words from him is sheer folly, for why should this particular man be able to shape words with his tongue, and yet at the same time others be unable to do so?"

Lucretius most earnestly desires to impress us with the fact that there has been a constant striving towards improved and refined conditions of social and individual life, that there has been a slow but sure progress from the time of the first appearance of mankind upon earth. The desire for social intercourse, the due observance of compacts, the inventions, and the fine arts are the great factors in the upward march:—

"Ships and tillage, walls, laws, arms, roads, dress, and all such like things, all the prizes, all the elegancies too of life without exception, poems, pictures, and the chiselling of fine-wrought statues, all these things practice, together with the acquired knowledge of the untiring mind, taught men by slow degrees as they advanced on the way step by step. Thus time by degrees brings each several thing forth before men's eyes and reason raises it up into the borders of light; for things must be brought to light one after the other and in due order in the different arts, until these have reached their highest point of development" (v., 1448-1457, Munro).

A considerable portion of the sixth and last book

is devoted to the investigation of such phenomena as thunder, tempests, flashes of lightning, thunderbolts, earthquakes, clouds, rain, etc. Here, as in his account of the heavenly bodies and their motions, "Lucretius often gives the right explanation together with a variety of wrong ones." Thus, lightning is "struck out by the collision of clouds: the flash is seen before the clap is heard, because light travels faster than sound." Earthquakes have many causes: underneath the earth are caverns and rocks and rivers; sometimes the walls of these caverns collapse, and mountains then fall and shake the earth. Again, sometimes wind from without enters the caverns, eddying about in them till the crust of the earth gives way, and then whole towns may be swallowed up. But his explanation of the cause of disease (vi. 1090-1187) seems to indicate a belief—in a somewhat crude form, perhaps, but far from unscientific—in the germ-theory. He had previously shown that there are "seeds of things" helpful to life, and here he shows that, on the other hand, there are "seeds of things" harmful to life. The atmosphere becomes tainted by these vicious germs and men inhale the infection.

When we pass from the physical science of Lucretius' system to his psychology, we are confronted by several difficulties and various interpretations. Having set out with the doctrine that atoms and void constitute the sum of things, the All, and that "nothing comes from nothing," he makes this doctrine account for all mental phenomena. Whence arose human consciousness, and, in particular, human volition? The answer is, From the atoms. If the atoms moved eternally in one perpendicular direction, an unbroken sameness would continue for ever. But we see acts of various kinds as a result of human consciousness. This is because the atoms have the power of swerving from the perpendicular direction ("atomic declination"), and this swerving is the origin of our volition. At any rate, this seems to be the gist of the various passages in the second book in which Lucretius discusses the origin of human *voluntas*. Perhaps some confusion has been added to the voluminous comments on these passages by the very frequent translation of the Latin *voluntas* by the English compound "free-will," instead of by the single word "will" or "volition." The poet says that in addition to the actions going on round us, "each individual performs voluntary actions which put all the limbs of the body in motion." But he nowhere says that each individual creates his own motives. In an interesting article on "Lucretius' Argument for Free-Will" in the *Journal of Philology* for 1883, Mr. John Masson considers that one passage (ii., 284-7) implies that "there exists in all atoms and therefore in the atoms of his [man's] soul," a power "to decline at will"—in other words, that Lucretius believed that volition existed in an infinitesimal degree even in what is called unconscious matter. He draws a parallel between this theory and Professor W. K. Clifford's doctrine of Mind-Stuff:—

"Professor Clifford, in order to explain the evolution of Mind from atoms, asserts that every atom of matter corresponds to an atom of Mind-Stuff, that is of something analogous to Mind. He thus builds up Mind out of a multitude of mind-atoms, that is to say of elementary feelings which can exist by themselves as 'individuals,' *simpliciter*, as much as can the Lucretian atoms, but which are almost as small in comparison with the consciousness of any one human being as Lucretius' atoms are in comparison with a human body. Lucretius again who believes in Free-will, can only explain it by assigning Free-will to the atoms. The reasoning of both, starting from a similar standpoint, is substantially the same, and the two theories of 'Mind-Stuff' and of 'Atomic Declination' deserve to be placed side by side."

Only passages containing some specific reference to the Lucretian philosophy have been quoted in this brief outline; and of those passages only the parts touching the cardinal points of the system have been commented upon. But, apart altogether from speculative theories, *On Nature* abounds in

poetical flights of the highest order. The following is a neat and faithful rendering by Mr. W. H. Mallock of a *locus classicus* (book iii., 894-911), and with this we take our leave of the old Roman:—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go:
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
Thou hoardest for thine own,' men say, 'and lo,
All thou desired is gone!' but never say,
'All the desire as well hath passed away.'
Ah! could they only see this, and could borrow
True words, to tell what things in death abide thee!
'Thou shalt lie soothed in sleep that knows no morrow,
Nor ever cark nor care again betide thee:
Friend, thou wilt say thy long good-bye to sorrow,
And ours will be the pangs who weep beside thee,
And watch thy dear familiar body burn,
And leave us but the ashes and the urn.'"

A. D. McLAREN.

Correspondence.

ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Mr. W. K. Fulleylove's letter in your last week's issue is amusing. Is the writer an Atheist posing as a Theist just to raise a little fun? Or does he really suppose himself to be a Theist and to be attacking Atheism? If God ever does take an individual in hand, then God must have a hand to take one in. Is that so? If so, what does Mr. Fulleylove mean by God? What does he mean by "Divine being," "Glorious scheme of redemption," "the Devil," "Jehovah," and what are the "unimpeachable evidences," and who are "the most reliable witnesses that a God exists"? I shall be glad to be favored with some information respecting these interesting items in his letter. Unless he writes somewhat definitely, I must decline to enter into a controversy with him. Probably if he earnestly tried to express his Theism in plain words, he would find himself to be an Atheist. Let him try that, and then send you the results. JOS. SYMES.

THE BABEL OF PRAYERS.

With such talk as this we passed away the time, till we came to a place where he was to sit down and hearken to men's prayers. There were certain holes in heaven, with little covers set upon them in order one by another, like the lids of wells; and by every one of them stood a chair of gold. Zeus, therefore, seating himself in the first, and taking off the cover, gave ear to those that made their prayers to him; and certainly there was great variety and repugnancy in their petitions; for I also, stooping downwards, was made partaker of them, which were to this purpose. O Zeus, that I might be a king! O Zeus, send mine onions and garlic to grow well this year! O Zeus, that my father would die shortly! Another prayed, O that I might survive my wife! O that my plot against my brother may be concealed! O that I might prevail in my suit at law! O that I might get the garland at Olympus! The mariners prayed some for a north wind, some for a south: the husbandman prayed for rain, and the fuller for sunshine. Zeus heard them all, and seriously examined every man's prayers.....When he had done his part at hearing prayers, he removed to the next chair, and taking off the next cover, stooped downwards to oaths and protestations, and when he had enough of them, and crushed in pieces Hermodorus the Epicure, he went to the next seat, and listened to oracles and auguries, and from thence shifted to the door of sacrifices, through which the smoke ascended, and brought with it to Jupiter the name of every one that offered. When he had done with these, he was to take order with the winds and the weather what they should do; to-day let there be rain in Scythia, lightning and thunder in Libya, and snow in Greece; let the north wind blow in Lydia, and the south wind be still; let the west wind make tempestuous the Adriatic sea, and let some thousand bushels of hail be scattered in Cappadocia. When he had made a despatch of all, he went to supper.—*Lucian, "Trips to Wonderland"* (Francis Hickes' translation).

It is so seldom even at the most important moments that our faculties are permitted fully to help us. There is no free space allowed, and we are dragged hither and thither by a swarm of temporary impulses. The result has to stand, fixed for ever, but the operative forces which determine it are those of the moment, and not of eternity.—*Mark Rutherford.*

Heavenly Humor.

THE Bible is a *funny* book
Inspired or written by a spook
To frighten thoughtless folk,
And also tickle and amuse
The thoughtful people—Gentiles, Jews—
Whose brains can "see a joke."

The sense of fun—of all that's odd—
Which God gave man, or *man gave God*,
Pervades "The Blessed Word";
And, being full of art and grace,
The Author jokes with solemn face,
Which makes it more absurd.

If Christ-the-Father-Son-of-God
The surface of our planet trod
And shewed his love for men
By curing ills, we must avow;
If then he loved, he loves not now;
If now, he loved not then.

Among afflicted sons of men
The need is greater now than then
Of Christ's restoring might;
He now is far; he then was near;
He practised there; he doesn't here;
He's now a goodish height.

As God came down from heav'n to die,
He had, of course, to act a lie
His godship to disguise;
He knew that men would never try
To kill their Maker from the sky;
He therefore told them lies.

His deeds were never meant to be
Believed as evidence that he
Came down from heav'n on high,
Because the Jews would ne'er have sought
To nail him up unless they'd thought
That nails could make him die.

He said enough to shock the best,
And did enough to please the rest
Who ne'er had been to schools;
Enough he neither did nor said
To win a wise and thoughtful head,
But just enough for fools.

The salvaged "Christian" says: "I'm glad
That thoughtful Jews thought Christ was mad
And nailed him to a post;
Thank God! their Bible-law they know,
And so Jehovah's rival slew,
And saved me from the 'Roast'!"

The hell-scared godly sneak is pleased
That Christ by godly Jews was seized
As quite a wicked crank,
Condemned to die upon the Cross
For aping Jah, their jealous Joss,
And skewered to a plank.

"As Adam's life brought death and strife,
The death of Christ brings peace and life,"
The Holy Ghost has said;
"Tis false!" says Jesus Christ the Lord;
"I bring not peace, I bring a sword,
And Death will ne'er be dead!"

The qualities of things are all
But relative—the great, the small,
The queer, the good, the bad;
And so, for jokes absurd and odd,
The humor of "The Word of God"
Makes human jokes seem sad.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

THE REAL QUESTION.

"Suppose I should be taken away," said the father to his im provident son; "what would become of you?"
"I'd stay here," the boy answered, smiling. "The question is, What would become of you?"

ENOUGH FOR HIM.

Theorist—Do you worry much about the next world?
Practical man—Thunderation, no! It's all I can do to make both ends meet in this one.

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.30, Joseph Symes.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 3.15, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Davies, "The Light that Failed."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.15, a Demonstration. Joseph Symes, C. Cohen, W. Heaford, F. A. Davies, W. J. Ramsey.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, C. Cohen.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Sept. 26, at 8, D. G. Lindsay, "The Theory of Exclusive Love."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, H. Buxton, "Marriage."

MERTHYR VALE BRANCH N. S. S. (Ruskin Hall): 3.30, T. Bennett, "Scraps of Scripture: A Simple Lesson in Simple Bible Teaching."

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. (Glyde's Restaurant, Commercial-street): 6, George Garrett, "Exodus xxii. 18."

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, "Citizenship."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (69 Joicey-terrace, Oxhill): 3.30, R. Bell, "Education versus Instruction in our Schools."

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