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*No answer has come through the ages  
To the poets, the seers, and the sages  
Who have sought in the secrets of science  
The name and the nature of God.*

—JOHN HAY.

## Bernard Shaw's Religion.

MR. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, familiarly known as "G. B. S.," is not a fanatical worshiper of the Bard of Avon. He has said some severe things about that famous personage. When business is a bit slack Mr. Shaw's policy seems to be to "go for" Shakespeare—whose solid reputation will stand a lot of "going." Byron was a predecessor of Mr. Shaw's in this line of criticism. He even went to the length, in *Don Juan*, of speaking of Shakespeare's "plays so doting"—which many people passed for wits by quoting. But that was only Byron's insolence—deliberate, calculated insolence. He knew better. That may be seen in many passages, and particularly in the way in which he fell upon Campbell for misquoting one of Shakespeare's most beautiful utterances. Mr. Shaw has never gone quite so far as Byron in this sort of poetical blasphemy, but there is no knowing how far he will go now that Tolstoy has started hewing at Shakespeare with his old Russian battle-axe. Nothing that the great "G. B. S." may say, however, will change the fact that he himself is a living illustration of Shakespeare's statement that "one man in his time plays many parts."

I am only concerned here with one of Mr. Shaw's many parts. He may call them his developments; and, for all I know, he may be right. Perhaps he is only finding himself in these days of his prosperity. At the same time, it appears, he is finding God. Or is it that God is finding him? Perhaps they are finding each other. And the mutual recognition of two such distinguished personalities is an event of the greatest importance, and we must believe according to the newspapers—and we must believe them occasionally—Mr. G. Bernard Shaw (it used to be the more plebeian George B. Shaw) was induced to pay a visit to the City Temple, and deliver an address in the Lecture Hall to a crowded audience on "The Religions of the Empire." One of his auditors was the Rev. R. J. Campbell, the pastor of the City Temple flock, in succession to the late Rev. Joseph Parker; and I gather from the report of a sermon delivered by Mr. Campbell on the following Sunday evening that the reverend gentleman was positively "thrilled" by Mr. Shaw's pious eloquence. "When," the preacher stated, "Mr. Shaw said we were God's instruments—his hands, and eyes, and feet, I was thrilled, for though he did not know it he was preaching the gospel of Christ." If we are to believe Mr. Campbell, therefore, the great "G. B. S." has not only found God, but unconsciously found Christ. Which is certainly Mr. Shaw in a new part; though I decline to hazard a conjecture as to which of the "seven ages" he is now passing through.

Many years ago, more than I care to count, I read a paper before the Shelley Society on the religious ideas of the author of *Prometheus Unbound*. I argued that Shelley lived and died an Atheist; that he never differed essentially from the principles expressed in

*Queen Mab*—the only real difference being one of poetic and literary treatment. Mr. Shaw supported me in the discussion, in his own humorous way. He said that when he joined the Shelley Society he thought that all its members were Shelleyites; so he innocently told them that Shelley was a vegetarian and he was a vegetarian, that Shelley was a Republican and he was a Republican, that Shelley was an Atheist, and he was an Atheist; and the result was that he nearly broke up the Shelley Society on the spot.

Mr. Shaw is still a vegetarian. I don't hear much about his Republicanism—and has not the King been to see one of his plays? Nor have I heard much lately about his Atheism. Now he is reported as talking about the Benevolent Will of God. And my wonder is, where will he stop?

Mr. Campbell appears to be broadening out. Some good Christians groan that he is only a disguised "infidel." Will he become an undisguised one? If he does, there will be a vacancy at the City Temple. And what if it were filled by the Rev. G. Bernard Shaw?

It may be said, of course, that Mr. Shaw is a humorist, and that he may have been only poking fun at the City Temple audience. But is that theory consistent with Mr. Campbell's being "thrilled"? Is it consistent with the following extract from a report of Mr. Shaw's lecture?

"Coming to the definition of a truly religious person, he said he was one who held the belief that he or she was an instrument in the hands of a Higher Power..... He believed that the Higher Power, the Almighty Force they called God, could not do the work of this world—as, for instance, transforming this country into a great, noble, and happy place—without their help; and this Force, or this great Benevolent Will of God, had been working through evolution to get men and women with brains and will to do His work. This was the great truth on which they could unite, to do the work and will of God."

This was applauded, and it reads seriously enough; if Mr. Shaw did not mean it, he would be a mountebank, and I am very far from believing him to be anything of the kind, although I admit that he is a master of the back-handed stroke.

Perhaps the explanation of Mr. Shaw's new avatar is to be found in something he said at the beginning of his lecture. He said that you could not have the Empire without religion. So it may be that, after adopting the Empire, he is manufacturing a religion to keep it a going concern, and the result is this Gospel of Evolution, under which Mr. Shaw and all the other men and women "of brains" are to be enrolled as God-Helpers. It is an odd name for a sect, but some of us may live to see it on a banner flying over the City Temple.

I cannot say that I admire Mr. Shaw in this new vein. He is too good to be wasted. And he will be wasted if he goes on preaching in rivalry with Mr. Campbell and Mr. Silvester Horne and Dr. Clifford. *Que le diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* He was more his old self when he told the Free Churches that, if they were wise, they would put up busts of Voltaire in their buildings. The audience laughed at this because they did not understand it. If the Free Churches were wise they would put up busts of Voltaire in their buildings; for if they were wise they would no longer be Christians.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Saint Bowdler.

PROTESTANTS are supposed to be averse to the worship of saints. But, like many other things connected with Protestantism, this is far more accurate in theory than in fact. For there is one saint—Saint Bowdler—at whose shrine this Protestant country pays unceasing devotion. Nor is the origin of this saint lost in the mists of antiquity or otherwise wrapped in mystery. He is of comparatively recent origin. An apparently respectable nineteenth-century clergyman was Mr. Bowdler, who took it into his head that Shakespeare needed very carefully "editing" before it was fit for general reading. So he produced an edition of Shakespeare with every passage deleted that was in his eyes unfit for family reading. Poor Shakespeare! Poor Bowdler! Poor family! Hence the origin of the term "Bowdlerised," although the practice dates much further back, and is one to which Christians have always been peculiarly attached.

Perhaps no other country in the world is so rich in bowdlerised versions of books as is Britain—unless it is America. At any rate, the English-speaking races are supreme in this form of knavery. Volumes might be written dealing with the various editions of earlier English works and translations of foreign works that have been presented to the public in an emasculated form. Some of these works pass through so many bowdlerising stages that by the time the cowardly minds of some Christians and the prurient minds of others have worked their will, the work is quite fit for Christian reading, probably, but decidedly unfit for any other. Many are the examples of the way in which books are castrated for fear of offending Christian prejudices; for the present I am concerned with two only.

Herman Melville, sailor, adventurer, and man of letters, was one whose writings enjoyed a wide measure of popularity about about the middle of the nineteenth century. Possessed of a vivid imagination, a brilliant literary style, and great powers of observation, his admirers are still numerous, although these belong, apparently, to a somewhat limited circle. His first book—*Typee; or, Narrative of a Four Months' Residence Among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquessas Islands*—was published by Mr. John Murray in 1846, and has been recently republished in a cheap, but graceful, form by Mr. John Lane, with Mr. W. Clark Russell's name on the title page as editor. There is also an interesting appendix by Miss M. C. Balfour. So far publisher and public are to be congratulated. But between the reprint and the original edition there is an important difference; and while I am not able to say precisely who is responsible for the difference, someone certainly deserves calling to account. Mr. Clark Russell writes me that his responsibility ends with the introduction—in which case the title page is misleading in writing him down as editor. Mr. John Lane, the publisher, writes as though he is unaware of any bowdlerising having taken place, and promises to look into the matter. Up to the present, however, I have not received any further news from that quarter, although one would think it a matter that might be settled very easily and very quickly. Five minutes' comparison of the reprint and the edition from which it was taken would settle the question.

The difference in the two editions is concerned with the question of missionaries. Melville saw, as most other impartial and competent observers have seen, that missionary work among savages produced more harm than good even when the missionaries were good men, and was still more harmful when the missionary belonged to the opposite class. He deals with this point in an appendix, omitted by Mr. Lane, and in various other parts of the work, all of which amount to a challenge to the missionaries to show that they have conferred upon the natives benefits at all comparable to the vices that have followed on their intrusion. He points out that but little reliance is to be placed upon the average mis-

sionary's story of his hardships or his conquests. He says:—

"To read pathetic accounts of missionary hardships and glowing descriptions of conversions, and baptisms taking place beneath palm trees, is one thing; and to go to the Sandwich Islands and see the missionaries dwelling in picturesque and prettily-furnished coral rock villas, whilst the miserable natives are committing all sorts of immoralities around them, is quite another."

And, after saying that not until he visited Honolulu was he aware that the natives had been civilised into draught horses, and evangelised into beasts of burden, he describes his actual experience as follows:—

"Among a multitude of similar exhibitions that I saw, I shall never forget a robust, red-faced, and very lady-like personage—a missionary's spouse—who day after day, for months together, took her regular airings in a little go-cart drawn by two of the islanders—one an old, grey-headed man, and the other a rogueish stripling—both being, with the exception of the fig-leaf, as naked as when they were born. Over a level piece of ground this pair of *draught* bipeds would go with a shambling, unsightly trot, the youngster hanging back all the time like a knowing horse, while the old hack plodded on and did all the work.

Rattling along through the streets of the town in this stylish equipage, the lady looks about her as magnificently as any queen driven in state to her coronation. A sudden elevation and a sandy road, however, soon disturb her serenity. The small wheels become embedded in the loose soil; the old stager stands tugging and sweating, while the young one frisks about and does nothing; not an inch does the chariot budge. Will the tender-hearted lady, who has left friends and home for the good of the souls of the poor heathen, will she think a little about their bodies and get out, and ease the wretched old man until the ascent is mounted? Not she; she could not dream of it. To be sure, she used to think nothing of driving the cows to pasture on the old farm in New England, but times have changed since then. So she retains her seat, and bawls out: 'Hooke! Hooke!' (Pull! Pull!) The old gentleman, frightened at the sound, labors away harder than ever; and the younger one makes a great show of straining himself, but takes care to keep one eye on his mistress, in order to know when to dodge out of harm's way. At last the good lady loses all patience. 'Hooke! Hooke!' again she cries. 'Hooke tata kanaka!' (Pull strong, men!) But all in vain, and she is obliged in the end to dismount and, sad necessity! actually to walk to the top of the hill!

At the town where this paragon of humility resides, is a spacious and elegant American chapel, where divine service is regularly performed. Twice every Sabbath, towards the close of the exercises, may be seen a score or two of little waggons ranged along the railing in front of the edifice, with two squalid native footmen, in the livery of nakedness, standing by each, and waiting for the dismissal of the congregation to draw their superiors home."

I would apologise for the length of this quotation, but for the fact that these three paragraphs are altogether omitted from Mr. Lane's edition of *Typee*. There is no indication, in any portion of the book, that such omissions have been made, and although I cannot positively say with whom the responsibility rests, there is no question that the passages have been deleted to avoid injury to one of Great Britain's greatest impostures—the Foreign Missionary movement. Miss Balfour states, in her Appendix, that when she first came across Melville's writings she was surprised to find he was not generally accepted as a reliable authority. He was dismissed as a mere romancer. She then proceeds to take Melville's statements of Polynesian life and shows how they are all endorsed by the best writers on the subject. So that Melville was paying the price of his honesty, as Sir Richard Burton and Winwood Reade paid the price for their heresy—neither of them receiving the full credit due to their merits or their discoveries.

The second example of the worship of Saint Bowdler is connected with Mr. Birrell's recent speech at Bristol on the Education Bill. I have before me two reports of that speech, one in the *Times*, which, in spite of its other faults, is yet a newspaper; the other in the *Daily News*, which, in addition to its other faults, is an organ of the Nonconformist

conscience. So far as the *Daily News* report is concerned, it is an excellent lesson in the art of making a man say what he did not say, without putting into his mouth a word he did not utter. There are only two points I wish to note, both connected with Secular education. Mr. Birrell pointed out that in England there are seven schools, and in Wales 158, where there are neither religious instruction nor religious observance. Of one of these Welsh counties—Cardigan—Mr. Birrell said, "Godless Cardigan has no gaol; the amount of crime in Cardigan is less than in any other county in the United Kingdom." Now it is quite possible that, had Mr. Birrell not been anxious to score against the House of Lords, he would not have emphasised this awkward (for religionists) fact. But having done so, the *Daily News* has too much of a Nonconformist conscience to give it publicity. So there is no mention in that truth-loving organ of this portion of the speech. Had Mr. Birrell said that there had been an increase of crime with the cessation of religious instruction, it would doubtless have figured as, "Important utterance by the Minister of Education."

Mr. Birrell also dealt with the House of Commons resolution on Secular Education. According to the *Daily News*, Mr. Birrell said:—

"In introducing this Bill, the Government might have adopted the secular solution. That would have relieved him of much dialectical talk and argument in the House of Commons, and it would not have been so unpopular as many people affected to believe."

What Mr. Birrell really said was this:—

"We might have adopted.....the secular solution..... This would have been the logical solution, and it would have relieved me from much dialectical talk and argument in the House of Commons, which would have made the task of defending our Bill much easier; nor would it have been by any means so unpopular as many people now affect to believe. Great reliance has been placed in the House of Lords upon the great majority which was obtained in the House of Commons against the secular solution. Now I know all about that majority, I rejoice at its size; but I was well acquainted with its manufacture, and I know perfectly well that it contains scores of men who, though they.....sympathised with the Government in their honest attempt to secure for the children of this country, as part of their daily curriculum, religious instruction, still these new men.....felt by no means certain that the final solution had been found."

In other words, the House of Commons majority was simply humbug, and it is admitted to be so by a responsible official when it no longer pays to conceal the truth. But who would imagine from the *Daily News* report that Mr. Birrell exposed the nature of that majority, over which the Nonconformists crowed so loudly, in this manner? According to the *Daily News*, it was only Mr. Birrell's opinion that Secular Education might not be so very unpopular after all. What Mr. Birrell said was, that he *knew* it was not unpopular, for the reason that scores who voted against it believed in it, and believed that no other solution would be final. Verily, great is the power of expurgation! The Holy Ghost may waste away, God the Father be dissipated into a nebulous force, and even Jesus Christ may be refined into the likeness of a municipal reformer. Still the Christian is undismayed, for his real rock of refuge is blessed Saint Bowdler, the bulwark of British Christianity.

C. COHEN.

### Desperate Apologetics.

THE pulpits of to-day, with the solitary exception of that of the Catholic Church, are chiefly distinguished for their numerous and grave self-contradictions. Scarcely any two of them are in complete agreement even on the most vital points in the Christian religion. If you take the Church of England, you will find that on the bench of Bishops conflicting and mutually destructive schools of theology are

represented. One prelate is conservative, utterly opposed to all the liberalising movements of the age, while another welcomes and adopts all the newer forms of thought and expression. One believes that Jesus was God, and as such rose triumphant from the tomb, while another regards him as a cross between God and man, having some but not all of the attributes of each. Stepping over to Nonconformity, you are confronted with deeper chaos still. Here *nonconformity* is indeed the main feature in evidence. Generally speaking, each pulpit is independent of all the others, and glories in its own particular *isms*. If strong, it dominates the congregation; if weak, it becomes the slave of the congregation, and its occupant the most miserable of men. But there is no authoritative external standard by which all pulpits are to be judged. Some there are, indeed, who still speak of the Bible as the court of final appeal; but such talk is worse than foolish, because no two sects have ever agreed as to what the teaching of the Bible on any given subject really is.

The diversity of sounds heard from the pulpits of to-day is amazingly great. One preacher discourses glibly on what he calls the "Logic of God," and another waxes exceedingly eloquent in his affirmation of the utter uselessness of all logical processes in the higher ranges of religious thought. It was the latter position that was vigorously defended by the minister of a prominent Nonconformist Chapel in London on Sunday evening, November 18. The text was John vii. 17. The preacher treated his text as if it contained a veritable utterance of Jesus; but it is well known to readers of this journal that the present minister of the City Temple looks upon John's Gospel as a work of fiction. The preacher began his sermon by declaring that Christ is the subject most anxiously studied by the world at the present time. The world is supremely eager to discover who and what he is, and will not be satisfied until it has crowned him Lord of all, we were repeatedly assured. But is not the preacher aware that Christendom forms but a small section of the world? Does he not know that according to statistics prepared by Christian scholars there are at least 1,000,000,000 people in the world who, not only are not interested in Christ, but have hardly ever heard his name? Furthermore, has it never been brought home to him that the great majority even in Christendom care nothing about his Lord and Master? How inexcusably absurd it is, therefore, to claim that the world is profoundly interested in Jesus Christ. We would be only too considerate if we characterised the assertion as an unmitigated lie.

The preacher did not keep to his text, which runs thus: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." That verse has reference only to the source of the teaching, and not at all to the nature of the teacher's personality. What Jesus is represented as saying is, that doers of God's will should know, not that he himself was God, but that his teaching was of Divine origin. But the preacher went beyond his text, and maintained that obedience to the Divine will is rewarded with the certain knowledge that the Great Teacher was a Divine Being. But even on this point there was no consistency, for in one sentence we were told that for obedient disciples Christ has the *value* of God. But surely to say that a person has the *value* of God is not the same as to say that he *is* God. What the preacher meant by this statement remains a mystery. In reality, however, it is quite immaterial what his meaning was, because his whole sermon was entirely foreign to his text. Its irrelevancy was its most striking characteristic.

In spite of its irrelevancy, however, the sermon was an embodiment of the theological tendency of the present day. According to the preacher, the truth of the Christian religion is intellectually unverifiable. No argument can establish the deity of Jesus Christ. Indeed, argument often succeeds in disestablishing it. There are no intellectual pro-

cesses by which the reality of a future state can be proved. The arguments from prophecy and miracles have been abandoned. Any work on the "Evidences of Christianity" published sixty years ago is worthless to-day. Buckland, Conybeare, Davison, Archdeacon Lyall, Paley, Sumner, Pascal, Soame Jenyn, and Dr. Arnold, once relied upon as all-convincing, irresistible apologists, are now utterly forgotten. Again and again the preacher assured us that "there are truths which no intellectual processes can ever prove, which no argument can ever commend to the reason." "To know Jesus Christ as Savior," he exclaimed, "you must trust him. To find his teaching true you must put it into practice. Obedience is the only organ of spiritual knowledge." But if the preacher had studied his subject more carefully he would have perceived how fundamentally fallacious his reasoning was. He stated that spiritual knowledge comes alone by experience. To know God we must have experience of him. To be convinced of Christ's divinity we must give him our confidence and trust. Such was the teaching of the sermon. But is it not incontrovertible that the preacher was reversing the order of Nature, and so making the Christian claim ridiculous in the eyes of thinking people? An Atheist is a man who has no experience of so-called spiritual realities. He knows absolutely nothing of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost, or of the world to come. Not only does he not do the Divine will; he does not even know that there is a Divine will to be done. How is he to gain the experience that brings knowledge? How is the deity of the Savior to be brought home to him? Evidently, the preacher forgot that Christian experience is possible only to Christian believers, and that Christian believers start with nothing but beliefs, which they mechanically received from other believers, such as parents and early teachers. Consequently, a man must become a believer *blindly*, without rhyme or reason. In other words, Christian beliefs rest, not on knowledge, but on external authority; and it has been discovered that the authority on which they lie is itself without any foundation whatever.

This is a point of the utmost importance. Is it not a noteworthy fact that scarcely anybody ever becomes a believer in mature life? If people do not accept Christianity in their childhood days they never accept it at all. An adult Sceptic remains a Sceptic to the end. The conversions which are said to take place at evangelistic and revival services are seldom or ever from unbelief to faith, but nearly always from lukewarmness to zeal. Believers are manufactured in early childhood, before the reason has commenced to exercise its functions. Children believe on the testimony of those whom they instinctively trust. They believe simply because other believers instructed them to believe. That is the only reason they can give for the faith that is in them.

Now, let us examine the experience which is described as the only convincing proof of the truth of Christianity. The first thing to be noticed is that the strength of the belief and the intensity of the experience are strictly commensurate. No Christian's *feeling* is in excess of his *faith*. And this only shows that a religious person has experience merely of his own beliefs, not of their objects. Shelley believed with all his heart in an ideal woman, and enjoyed sweetest fellowship with her in imagination. She was as real to him as God and the Living Lord are to the devoutest Christian. But she never existed in the flesh; he never met her in the body; every time he thought he had seen her he was speedily disillusioned; and the only conclusion to which we can come with regard to her is that he had communion with her alone as the creation of his own vivid fancy. Well, is not the same thing true of the Christian? What proof has he that God exists, that Christ lives, and that the Holy Ghost is working in his heart? None whatever apart from or beyond his faith. This is exactly what is admitted in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now faith is the assurance of [the giving substance to] things hoped for, the

proving [test] of things not seen." Our preacher made the same admission. That the objects of faith really exist is not susceptible of any intellectual demonstration; and the only evidence relied upon by the believer himself is that his faith produces certain joyous sensations or emotions within him, just as Shelley's faith in his ideal woman did in him.

The rest of the preacher's argument naturally falls to the ground. If God exists alone as an object of faith, his will is but a reflection of the believer's own will. If the preacher had been asked to define God's will he could have done so only in terms of his own. God's will is man's idealised. From the preacher's point of view, it doubtless enjoins church-going, private and public devotions, Bible reading, and Christian giving. In so far as God's will is related to morality, it is more palpably still a reflection of man's will. Indeed, the moral life can be lived much better without than with religious beliefs; and the joy that springs from living wisely and well for humanity's sake is ever so much keener than any joy in the Holy Ghost ever experienced. "Try Christianity," the preacher cried at the close of his discourse; "try it, try it." But we say, "Try the natural life, try living for the good of mankind, without thought of any second life beyond, and you shall experience joy unspeakable and full of glory." And the beauty of this life is that it permits and develops the closest union between head and heart, between the intelligence and the emotions, and so prevents any wasteful expenditure of feeling upon imaginary beings and vapory realms.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Incantation.

SOME years ago the writer was entertained by the ever-genial Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes; and, after he had shown him the portrait of "Dorothy 2," the "Crossed Swords," and other relics described by the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," the conversation, truly such, turned on religious and freethought topics. Sacerdotal ceremonialism was adverted to, and Dr. Holmes spoke of his attendance, on a special occasion, at a pontifical High Mass at a cathedral. It impressed him with all its gorgeous ritual, vestments, genuflexions, crossings, bowings, elevations and censings, as a mystic pageant, a dramatic scene—in short, an Incantation. Altogether, with the hierophant and his assistants, it seemed a spectacle of magical solemnity; and, with its incense, lights, bells, rare music, its "woven paces and waving hands," suggestive of one thought—Incantation.

A day or two from this the writer, with a friend of John Ruskin, was a guest of the poet Longfellow at his table. Within sound of the "Old Clock on the Stairs," and in the panelled dining-room where General Washington once sat, and from whose window one could see the Charles River, the poet told of a previous dinner where Mr. Fay, a strong spiritist, and Professor Agassiz were present. Narrating some marvellous feats, such as the movements of a grand piano through the rooms and up the stairway independent of all visible human aid, the enthusiastic spiritist said to the great man of science, "What do you say to *that*, Professor Agassiz?" The man of science replied calmly to the enthusiast, and said simply: "I should say, sir, that it never happened!"

Both sacerdotal mystery and spiritualistic performance are alike herein. Both appeal to a credulous belief in the supernatural—the priest with the uplifted chalice, the spiritist with his knocks and raps, trance-visions and writings, and all the machinery of "spiritual" delusion. The priest believes that, by the Canon of the Mass, he can conjure the body and blood of Jesus Christ into the holy wafer and chalice, and so effect the miracle of transubstantiation—which Faber named as "the greatest work of God." And the spiritist fancies that, by his methods, he can raise the spirits of the dead and

create a tangible communication between them and the living. Pretensions to a genuine materialisation are attempted, as the writer has seen, in every instance to him, a failure. With the priest and the spiritist it is only a different method of Incantation. They and the Indian Enchanter, the Medicine Man, the Witch Doctor, or any worker in magic, employ mystery, certain acts or words, specific ceremonies, based on a belief in supernatural power, the ability to penetrate the invisible and command the presence of the departed, and "strike its being into bounds." The priest invokes the Real Presence, and the spiritist commands the deceased friend. It is a mutual resort to magic—to Incantation.

So, also, are all the methods of Christian worship—in prayers, in laying-on of hands, in humiliations of the body, kneelings, prostrations, invocations to the Holy Spirit or the Saints, or any acts of voluntary humility, as in penance. So in the outspread hands which bid us "unite in prayer." They all aim at producing a positive effect by supernatural means. Some surprising, incredible results are narrated of these performances as astonishing in their way, as the magic of the Mass or the reported wonders of the spiritist.

And all creeds and all religions are, in this respect, colored similarly. My East Indian Yogi, or fakir, and my West Indian Voodhouist, my Moslem dervish, and my Christian clergyman, are on an equality here. They claim to be thaumaturgists, or wonder-workers—in short, to use and employ incantations. Religion, with its supernatural claims, is a system of magic. Passes, gestures, sacred sentences, exercises, ceremonies, rites, sacraments, oblations, and last, but not least, offerings; these are found in all the varying systems, controlled by a special class, whose aims encourage superstition and foster bigotry and intolerance. The worshiper of any fetish, under any guise or pretence, is usually an intolerant, prejudiced person.

What remains for us, then? Simple, natural justice between man and man; simple equitable laws, natural love, and affection; the use and enjoyment of this life as we find it, and the effort to better it. A "religion which is perfect freedom" in thought, word, and deed, justly so, and tempered by a wise experience, would ever tend to make this a higher and a better world. It is the only world, the only existence of which we know anything or can take any cognisance of. Man is a superior animal, gifted with intellect. His intelligence, governed by reason and formed by circumstance, must be his guide in his conduct. No other criterion can direct him. The course of this world, in its social and political features, will ever adjust itself to its exigencies, we may be sure of that. What we ought to strive to advance is to enlighten the mind, keep the heart true and loving, abolish superstition and cruelty, and in time we, or those who shall succeed us, shall gaze on, and rejoice in, a regenerated world.

GERALD GREY.

#### EUROPEAN RELIGION.

These Oriental religions have little or no organisation. Here in Europe there is nothing so organised as religion. Consider the Catholic faith and the organisation of Rome. It is a marvel of government, of very strict government indeed. And the other forms of Western Christianity are not much behind. The Greek Church is organised as a branch of Government. So, too, to a lesser extent is the Anglican Church, and if the Dissenting bodies, as we call them, are not connected with the State, they have nevertheless a strong system of government. These organisations are not now, of course, so strong as they were. They used to drag the men into religion by force, by State aid, they used to insist on conformity and punish laxity of observance. That is now gone, but a strong and continuous pressure still exists, exerted by the Churches in many ways. All Churches in Europe are always having "missions." Our great cities are full of them, and the country is not free of them. There has to be a continual shepherding of the flock or the Church might dwindle sadly. Men have to be preached at and caught one way or another. All through Europe immense sums are spent yearly in Christianising these poor. In the East nothing of this exists.—H. Fielding, "The Hearts of Men."

#### THE LAW OF DEATH.

The song of Kilvani: fairest she  
In all the land of Savatthi.  
She had one child, as sweet and gay  
And dear to her as the light of day.  
She was so young, and he so fair,  
The same bright eyes and the same dark hair;  
To see them by the blossomy way,  
They seemed two children at their play.

There came a death-dart from the sky,  
Kilvani saw her darling die.  
The glimmering shade his eyes invades,  
Out of his cheek the red bloom fades;  
His warm heart feels the icy chill,  
The round limbs shudder, and are still.  
And yet Kilvani held him fast  
Long after life's last pulse was past,  
As if her kisses could restore  
The smile gone out for evermore.

But when she saw her child was dead,  
She scattered ashes on her head,  
And seized the small corpse, pale and sweet  
And rushing wildly through the street,  
She sobbing fell at Buddha's feet.  
"Master, all-helpful, help me now!  
Here at thy feet I humbly bow;  
Have mercy Buddha, help me now!"  
She grovelled on the marble floor,  
And kissed the dead child o'er and o'er.  
And suddenly upon the air  
There fell the answer to her prayer.  
"Bring me to-night a lotus tied  
With thread from a house where none has died."  
She rose and laughed with thankful joy,  
Sure that the god would save the boy.  
She found a lotus by the stream;  
She plucked it from its noontide dream,  
And then from door to door she fared,  
To ask what house by Death was spared.  
Her heart grew cold to see the eyes  
Of all dilate with slow surprise:  
"Kilvani, thou hast lost thy head;  
Nothing can help a child that's dead.  
There stands not by the Ganges' side  
A house where none hath ever died."  
Thus, through the long and weary day,  
From every door she bore away  
Within her heart, and on her arm,  
A heavier load, a deeper harm.  
By gates of gold and ivory,  
By wattled huts of poverty,  
The same refrain heard poor Kilvani,  
*The living are few, the dead are many.*  
The evening came—so still and fleet—  
And overtook her hurrying feet.  
And, heartsick, by the sacred fane  
She fell, and prayed the god again.  
She sobbed and beat her burning breast:  
"Al! thou hast mocked me, Mightiest!  
Lo! I have wandered far and wide;  
There stands no house where none hath died."  
And Buddha answered, in a tone  
Soft as a flute at twilight blown,  
But grand as heaven and strong as death  
To him who hears with ears of faith:  
"Child, thou art answered. Murnur not!  
Bow, and accept the common lot."

Kilvani heard with reverence meet,  
And laid her child at Buddha's feet.

—John Hay

#### THE OLD STOIC.

Riches I hold in light esteem,  
And Love I laugh to scorn  
The lust of fame was but a dream  
That vanished with the morn  
And if I pray, the only prayer  
That moves my lips for me,  
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear  
And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal  
'Tis all that I implore;  
In life and death a chainless soul,  
With courage to endure. —Emily Brontë.

An honest man has nothing to fear.—Robert Burns.

### Acid Drops.

The most hateful side of Protestantism—its sheer, hard, pharisaic, bigotry—was never more vilely displayed than in its attitude towards the French Catholics in their present trouble with the Government. The Liberal newspapers are the worst sinners. That is because they are Nonconformist. You can see by the tone of such references as they make to the something like civil war which is going on in France, that they positively gloat over the breaking in of church doors by soldiers and firemen. The worshipers in those French churches are only Catholics, and what do *their* feelings matter? But what a row there would be, on the part of these same Nonconformist newspapers, if the doors broken open were the doors of Protestant churches!

Swift remarked that most men have religion enough to make them hate each other. Sentimentalists call that bitter. Well, it is true; and all other adjectives are superfluous. Catholics and Protestants hate each other with a perfect hatred. But stay, that is not quite accurate. Catholics are nearly perfect in that respect; Protestants are absolutely perfect. Catholics hate like passionate wild beasts; Protestant hatred has the cold, deadly venom of a serpent.

Lying on the ground across the doorway of one church the "inventory" agents found the poor parish priest—and in some French parishes the priest *is* poor. It was pitiable; you may possibly call it childish; but, for all that, it was not contemptible. Perhaps the poor priest felt in some dim way that no hostile feet ought to enter the church except over his body. Now we cannot despise a feeling like that. There are some Freethinkers who would be all the better for a little of it. Men's beliefs are not of very much importance unless they are prepared to do something for them. No Freethinker who will not sacrifice a little ease and comfort, or dare the shadow of a danger, for his own principles, has the right to laugh at that poor French priest. And what right have the safe and prosperous hirelings of English Protestantism to laugh at him? Certainly he has not their cleverness, but he is miles above them in the moral scale.

Frankly, we do not like this breaking in of church doors—any more than we should like the breaking in of the doors of Secular meeting-places. Any fool in power can order soldiers to do that sort of thing, and soldiers have a habit of obedience. But this policy is unworthy of the able men who form the present French government. It is particularly unworthy of M. Clémenceau and M. Briand, who are outspoken Freethinkers. Being such, they should act more wisely and considerately towards Catholics than Catholics have acted towards Freethinkers. What are our principles worth if they allow us to imitate the bad example of our enemies? We ought to be true to *our own* principles. And how do *our* principles justify a squabble for the possession of churches? What do *we* want with churches? They are of no use to us. They are only designed for one purpose, and that purpose is foreign to our objects. Why could not the French Catholics have been left the free use of the churches they had been accustomed to worship in? And why should *we* trouble about the "sacred" objects inside them—even if they are of gold? Is the possession of churches we don't want, and of gold we don't want either, worth all the bad blood and malignant fever of civil war? For civil war it is, although the scale as yet is limited.

London Baptists met at the City Temple to denounce the Congo horrors in general and King Leopold in particular. The Rev. W. Y. Fullerton, who occupied the chair, spoke of King Leopold as one with "nerves of steel and a heart as cruel as the grave"—one who had "out-Heroded Herod." "Not even the Sultan of Turkey," he added, "could have done what King Leopold has done in the Congo; the Sultan may have the heart to do it, but he never has the nerve to carry it out." Dr. Clifford went one better than this. He said he "did not remember any name in the history of cruelty that could be put higher than the name of Leopold II., King of the Belgians." Well now, we will suppose that this is true—as very likely it is. The question then arises, What improvement has two thousand years of Christianity really made in the world? King Leopold is a person of quite ostentatious piety. He is a most faithful son of Holy Mother Church—the Catholic Church. And perhaps that is half the reason why the Baptists denounce him so vigorously. Had he been a true-blue Protestant they might have found his cruelty at least a shade less detestable.

Mr. Fullerton, after his indictment of King Leopold, said, "We appeal to God." That sounded sublime. He added,

"We also appeal to the British Government." That sounded ridiculous. One would hardly have thought that God Almighty required such assistance.

Rev. J. J. S. Bird, of Bath, a Church clergyman, left estate valued at £7,580 odd. Rev. G. M. Wilson, of Great Canfield, Essex, left £29,313. Their present address may be conjectured.

Kensington Baptist Church, Liverpool, has been discussing whether a man can be a Christian on a pound a week. Well, it all depends on what is meant by a Christian. Certainly a man could follow the teachings of Christ on a much smaller salary. A thorough-going disciple could do it on nothing a week. All he has to do is to "labor not for the meat that perisheth" and "take no thought for the morrow." He would have to take up his residence in the workhouse, perhaps, if the nation did not find him quarters in a prison; but he would be a very Christ-like Christian.

A correspondent of the *Daily News*—Mr. W. Dunn, 59 Barber's-lane, Stamford-hill—says that on returning "a gold watch with jewelled hands" he received a letter from the owner "wishing him every blessing to body and soul and hoping to meet him in heaven." The pious letter-writer forgot that the hope might not be mutual.

It is true, after all. Rev. Dr. Aked *has* been asked to take the pastorate of Standard-Oil Rockefeller's church. In replying to the deputation, the reverend gentleman said he could not give a definite answer, as he felt that he should consult the congregation of Pembroke Chapel before coming to a decision. We should think so! But the woman who hesitates is lost—and it is very likely true of the man.

Rev. Dr. Madison Clinton Peters, pastor of the Baptist Church of the Epiphany, New York, is retiring from the ministry, and is going to preach henceforth in the Majestic Theatre. He says there is more real brotherhood amongst Oddfellows and Freemasons than there is in the churches. We should be sorry to contradict him.

The North Wales Methodists do not appear to be very comfortable. Their Association has been meeting at Chester and complaining of many things. Sabbath desecration was the first. English visitors came along and devoted the Lord's Day to amusements and sports. Then again "Popery" was very active, and was drawing away "weak Protestants" from the godly Dissenting fold. Worse still, it was difficult to get young men of decent intelligence to enter the ministry. According to the Rev. Robert Parry, B.A., the result of the Synodical examination recently held in Colwyn Bay was anything but satisfactory. Some of the papers sent in were surprisingly deficient in merit. Some of the candidates were so incompetent that it was astonishing that they had obtained the sanction of their respective monthly meetings to sit for examination. Rev. John Williams, one of the examiners, added that many of the young men, who had studied for years in the theological colleges of the Connexion, did their work so badly that hundreds of Sunday-school scholars could have produced better papers. All of which seems to show that the pulpit is now being recruited from the intellectual dregs of the population.

Some weeks ago we wrote an article on "Blessing the Nets." Our readers will remember that at the commencement of the herring season the "blessing the nets" ceremony was performed in Yarmouth parish church. A lot of fishing nets were hung about the sacred edifice, and God's protection was asked for them, as well as for all the fishermen who would use them. The newspapers now report that all the nets taken to the parish church on that occasion, and solemnly blessed, have been lost. What a beautiful answer to prayer!

Mr. Justice Grantham got into a theological argument with the Christian Scientists in the Chisholm case. Miss Turner, one of the witnesses, was treated by his lordship quite satirically. "You believe," he asked her, "that your prayer is of the same efficacy as those of Christ when he was on earth?" The lady answered, "Yes." "And you take money for your prayers!" he exclaimed. Well, what about Christ himself? Did not rich women minister unto him of their substance? Is not this indirect payment? And has his lordship never heard of payments to priests for masses to hurry souls through purgatory? Is not that taking money for prayers? On the whole, it seems to us that Mr. Justice Grantham swallows a camel and strains at a gnat.

Gladstone used the Nonconformists. He never let them use him. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is made of different stuff. He was to have attended a Nonconformist meeting at the Queen's Hall on Friday evening, November 23, but his doctor forbade him to go. From a religious point of view, therefore, it was a clear case of providential intervention. Sir Henry, however, was not to be completely done—even by "providence." He sent a letter to be read at the meeting, which was got up by the Whitefield Central Mission. It is notorious that Nonconformity rules the roost in the Cabinet. Mr. Birrell positively boasts of being a Nonconformist. He evidently regards it as a great distinction. No wonder that, as a Minister of Public Instruction, he brought in a Nonconformist Education Bill.

Seventy Liberal Nonconformist members of Parliament met at the House of Commons under the presidency of Mr. Perks, and they unanimously decided that all possible steps should be taken to reject the Lords' amendments to the Education Bill *en bloc*. This, of course, is only what was to be expected. The Bill left the House of Commons a Nonconformist Bill, and the Lords have transmogrified it into a Church Bill. But the reason the seventy Nonconformist M.P.'s assigned was quite jocular. They gravely decided that the Lords' amendments had turned the Bill into a sectarian measure. Just as if it were ever anything else!

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., positively drivels when he works his pious vein for the godly *Daily News*. A recent article of his in that paper was headed "In a 'Godless' Board School." The school in question is situated in Huddersfield. It has a spacious Assembly Hall, and six hundred children trooped into it. The master took his stand on the rostrum, baton in hand, and announced "Hymn 131." Twelve hundred little hands opened half as many hymn-books, the piano gave the tune, and the six hundred voices sang:—

"Praise ye the Lord; 'tis good to raise  
Your hearts and voices in his praise;  
His nature and his works invite  
To make this duty our delight."

The "grand old tune" (we hope he doesn't consider them grand old words) sung by those "beautifully fresh and sweet voices" brought Dr. Macnamara's "jaded and perplexed spirit (he has our sympathy) back to Hope and Faith." We presume he means that it was pleasant to listen to the fresh and sweet young voices singing a good tune. No doubt it was. But as for the words—well, it probably didn't matter a straw what they were.

Dr. Macnamara wished he could take those children up to the House of Lords and let the Bishops hear them sing. What would happen? he asks. Ay, what? Does he fancy the Bishops are as sentimental as he is? They have heard children sing hymns, in all probability, oftener than he has. It would not surprise them; it would not make them lose their heads; they are on *business* in this Education struggle, and he may be sure they will stick to it.

Remembering his *Daily News* audience, Dr. Macnamara pillows away in the following fashion:—

"The little hymn-books are closed. The master reads devoutly and with the trained intonation of the practical teacher, the Parable of the Sower. The Great Book is reverently shut. The little hands go up and the little eyes are closed, and six hundred little lips [twelve hundred, surely!] recite the Lord's Prayer."

Little hymn-books, little hands, little eyes, little lips—it quite overwhelmed little "Dr. Mac.," who collapsed on the Great Book.

And now a word in conclusion. Dr. Macnamara is almost speechless with adoration before the Lord's Prayer. Will he kindly indicate a single passage in it that is of the smallest value to any man, woman or child on this planet?

General Booth is going to Japan. He hopes to spend April in that country. Will he arrive on the first of the month?

General Booth says he is highly satisfied with the work of the Salvationists in Japan. He states that they have been instrumental in rescuing 30,000 geisha girls. His arithmetic is probably—well, ambitious. The Salvation Army has not rescued 30,000 Piccadilly girls in London. Yet it has been on the job here for some thirty years. No doubt successful rescue work is easier at a distance. There are so many sceptics at close quarters.

Rev. F. A. Russell, of the King's Weigh House Church, believes that Jesus was born at Nazareth, and that his

mother was not a virgin. Granting that he *was* born, it is a certainty that he was born in the same way as everybody else. Whether or not he ever lived is as yet an unsolved problem. If he ever existed, it is clear that his doing so was not an act of condescension on his part, but rather a necessity thrust upon him. Mr. Russell rejects the Virgin Birth as taught in Matthew and Luke, but accepts Paul's Christology without demur. But, really, if Paul's Christology is correct, why should anyone boggle at the Virgin Birth?

Mr. Russell talks a vast deal of sheer nonsense. According to him, God made many unsuccessful attempts to "get himself expressed as Savior among men in consonance with free rational experience"—whatever that may mean. "He tried to come in the gentle Buddha," and failed. "He tried to come in Confucius, the avatar of the middle class," and failed. "He tried to come in Socrates, who brought philosophy from the clouds," and failed. He tried to come in Jesus, and at last succeeded. In glorifying Jesus, Mr. Russell is unjust to all the others mentioned; and what he says about Jesus is simply not true. What could be more absurd than the following: "He (Jesus) walks through all the centuries in power and in triumph"? Dr. Horton is much nearer the truth when he says that the Christianity of to-day has "exactly reversed the principles of its Founder"—which means that Jesus is walking through the present century in shameful defeat, and with a bowed head.

A friend at the Antipodes sends us a copy of the *Prohibitionist*, a Temperance paper published at Christchurch, New Zealand. In a marked editorial we see that the insolence of one subscriber, who was applied to in the usual way for his remittance, is contrasted with the good feeling of another. The insolent correspondent was "an old Christian worker"—the good natured correspondent did not "go to church" and "is, I fear," the editor added, "an agnostic."

"Surely," the *Prohibitionist* editor exclaims, "the Christian has no right to be outdone by the agnostic in courtesy and kindness." Why not?

The Liverpool *Weekly Post* publishes an *Almanack*. The editor of it is evidently a person who possesses an extraordinary amount of ancient and modern knowledge. Amongst the "Notable Events" for the month of December he has the following: "7, Saturday; The Deluge, or Noah's Flood, 2348 B.C." We are then told that it is "high tide" at one minute past midnight. That's all right, anyhow. But we are puzzled to understand how Noah's Flood can be located on one particular day. According to the Bible story—which, if it isn't true, is the only account we have—it took forty days of hard rain, besides a water-supply from "the fountains of the great deep," to put the world into complete liquidation. Which of the forty days was *the* day of the Flood?

The Rev. Dr. E. Hermitage Day, vicar of Abbey Cwmhir, has just published a book, entitled *On the Evidence for the Resurrection*, which the *Church Times* pronounces of "great value." Wherewith does its "great value" lie? It is admitted by the reviewer that it is only a re-hash of the old evidential food on which faith has always been nourished. The arguments do not satisfy the intellect, for unbelievers have never been convinced by them. The reviewer calls Strauss, Harnack, Wernle, and Schmiedel Sceptics, and describes their arguments as "sometimes absurd and sometimes mutually destructive." As a matter of fact, Strauss was an exceedingly devout Christian, and Professors Harnack and Schmiedel are sincere worshippers of Jesus; and for another Christian to dub them Sceptics is a piece of impertinence.

But what is the evidence for the Resurrection? Outside the New Testament there is none. Dr. Day adduces four main proofs that Jesus rose from the tomb. The first is "the two personal records of St. John at the sepulchre." Clearly such records are evidentially valueless. In point of fact, there are no "personal records of St. John at the sepulchre." As to the Emmaus narrative, which is the second evidence presented, the least said the better. Whence did Luke derive the story? Dr. Day thinks he must have had "some special source of information, and suggests Joanna." Others hold that Luke was one of the travellers. Others contend that he must have "sat at the feet of the Virgin Mary." But nobody knows. And this evidence also falls to the ground.

The third proof is "the witness of the grave-clothes." But nobody who saw those clothes has written about them. Their witness must therefore be dismissed as worthless. But the silliest of all the proofs is the fourth—"the failure

of the Jews to account for the open grave." When did the Jews try to account for the open tomb? The Jews never knew that there was an open tomb, nor do they know to this day. There are many Christian scholars and dignitaries of the Church who laugh the empty grave to scorn. Over against Dr. Day we will place Canon Henson who pooh-poohs the witness of the open tomb. There is absolutely nothing in it; and its absurdity is unfathomable.

A Liverpool reader sends us a religious tract which is being circulated in that city. It emanates from pious Glasgow, where godliness and gain associate together more fraternally, perhaps, than in any other place in the world. The price printed upon it is 4d. per 100, and if the issuers get that figure in full they must make a pretty good profit. All that, however, is by the way. The tract itself is what we want to say a word about. On the front of it is a rough wood-cut of a sailing ship, under which is the word "Emigrants" printed in big letters. Below that is printed: "For the time of sailing, destination, charges, etc., see other side." The "other side" is a curiosity; worthy, indeed, to keep company with that "Jesus Christ and Company, Limited," bill that was issued at Sunderland the other day. We venture to reproduce it in full, so that our readers may see the sort of thing that still holds the field of Christian propaganda:—

#### "EMIGRANTS.

Emigrants for Emmanuel's land should lose no time in having their berths secured, as ONLY ONE vessel can ever succeed in reaching that country.

Vessel's Name ...	... Gospel Ship, Rom. i. 16.
Port which it leaves ...	... City of Destruction, 2 Pet. iii. 10.
Bound for ...	... Emmanuel's Land, Heb. xi. 16.
Time of Sailing ...	... To-day, Heb. iii., 7, 8.
The Fare ...	... Without money and without price, Isaiah lv. 1.
Captain's Name ...	... JESUS CHRIST, Heb. ii. 10.
Crew ...	... Workers together, 2 Cor. vi. 1.
Passengers ...	... Sinners saved by grace, Rom. v. 1, 2
Sea, over which it passes	... Time, Rev. x. 6.
Lighthouse ...	... Holy Scriptures, Ps. cxix. 105.
Compass ...	... Truth, John viii. 32.
Sails ...	... Faith and Love, 2 Thess. i. 3.
Wind ...	... The Holy Spirit, John vi. 63.
Storage ...	... Grace, Isa. lv. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 9.
Anchor ...	... Hope, Heb. vi. 19.

Passengers are supplied with everything on the voyage.—Phil. iv. 19.—'My God shall supply all your need,' etc.

All are invited.—Rev. xxii. 17.—'And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

The vessel affords ample accommodation.—Luke xiv. 22.—'And yet there is room.'

Reader! Are you on board this Gospel Ship, bound for glory? If not, why not? Ah! why?

There is no possibility whatever of a single soul being lost on the passage; but all who refuse to go on board will be eternally lost, and will be tormented in the LAKE OF FIRE for ever and ever.—Matt. xxv. 46; Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

'Christ died for the ungodly.'—Rom. v. 6."

There you are! That is the good old Christianity which has money in it yet, in spite of elementary schools and university extension.

The "Gospel Ship" sails to-day. Well, in that case it is a poor look out for those who visit the wharf to-morrow. They will have to spend the rest of their days in the City of Destruction—where we dare say they will be able to meet the gentlemen who ran the emigration agency. They don't go on board themselves; their business doesn't admit of it; they have to book up every berth—for others—in the "Ship of Fools."

The sails of the ship are "faith and love." But the love in proportion to the faith must be as Jack Falstaff's broad was to all that intolerable quantity of sack. For all who don't avail themselves of this emigration offer are to be "tormented in the lake of fire for ever and ever." This is "love" with a vengeance. But there is always a joke to be got out of this sort of tragedy. The last line of all is "Christ died for the ungodly." That is, for those who are frizzling in hell. Which prompts one to ask whether hell would have been any hotter if he had never died at all.

Tolstoy has written an article against Shakespeare, calling him an inferior playwright, destitute of genius. Christians have an instinctive hatred of great Freethinkers.

We are sorry to see that a Woman Suffrage meeting at Brighton, with Mrs. Snowden and Mrs. Despard as the chief speakers, broke up in disorder through male rowdiness. It will be some compensation if the ladies recognise

that the disturbance of other people's meetings is a game that more than one side can play at.

Mr. Joseph Smith, president of the Mormon Church, has just had his forty-third child by his fifth wife. He ought to have had a medal after that achievement, in view of President Roosevelt's sermons on the population question. Instead of that he has been fined £60 as a polygamist. The court might have given him six months' imprisonment, but he pleaded that his last marriage occurred in 1884, and he had not seen his way to abandon his wives in deference to the subsequent Federal law. He might easily have pleaded the Bible in his defence; for the Bible was written by polygamists for polygamists.

Rev. W. P. A. Johnman, of Hawick, in a special sermon to young women, said, "He feared that in this country the supernatural was being hustled aside to make way for frivolity and amusement, with cremation at the end." The reverend gentleman forgets that his own faith offers everlasting cremation to the vast majority of mankind.

Mr. Haldane, the lawyer who is acting as Secretary of State for War, has been talking about the spiritual welfare of the Army. What the Army wants is not more religion, but better officers and better training. Neither does the Navy want more religion; it has too much of it already. What it wants is more justice and decent treatment for the jack tars. We advise Mr. Haldane to stick to his last.

A great infidel-slayer, according to his own report, has been edifying the Young Men's Christian Association at Norwich with a lecture on the results of unbelief. He appears to claim quite the usual number of "converted infidels" as his own catch, and amongst them a "Mr. Bishop, of Northampton." Well, it is some thirty years, we think, since Mr. George Bishop, who was then a very young man, with no particular position in the Freethought movement, went over to Christianity, and subsequently became a Church of England curate. We never heard that he attributed his "conversion" to this Mr. Adye, who seems to be a City missionary. Indeed, we don't recollect hearing of this Mr. Adye before, mighty infidel-slayer as he is—at least, in his own estimation. We believe, however, that Mr. Bishop is still alive, at Nottingham; and we should like to know whether he is prepared to write Mr. Adye out a certificate. In the meanwhile we may ask that gentleman whether he has any fresh eggs in stock.

The curate was telling the Sunday-school children that missionary societies ought to be supported, and strengthened his case by telling them that there were no schools and no churches for poor little boys and girls in heathen Africa. Then he put the question; "What should we save up our half-pennies and our pennies and shillings for?" And his youthful audience cried with one voice: "To go to Africa!"

Sanity and simplicity are the distinguishing marks of the loftiest genius, which may be described as inspired common sense. The great artist never loses touch of facts; he may let his imagination soar as high as the stars, but he keeps his feet firm-planted on the ground. All the world recognises the sublimity of Greek sculpture and Shakespeare's plays, because they are both true to nature and fact and coincident with everlasting laws. The true sublime is not fantastic; it is solid and satisfying, like a mighty Alp, deep-rooted first of all in the steadfast earth, and then towering up with its vineyards, its pastures, its pine-forests, its glaciers, its precipices, and last of all the silence of infinitude brooding over its eternal snows.—G. W. Froot, "Flowers of Freethought."

For He who has denied to the most devoted psalm-makers and moral poets all beautiful thoughts and all literary reputation, lest they should be praised too much by their earthly fellow-creatures, and thereby forget heaven, where the angels have already engaged board for them in advance;—Ho, I say, provides us other profane, sinful, heretical authors, for whom heaven is as good as nailed up, all the more with admirable ideas of earthly fame, and this indeed from divine grace and mercy, so that the poor souls, since they are really here, be not altogether wanting, and that they may at least enjoy upon earth some of that joy which is denied to them in heaven. —Hene.

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,  
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

—Pope.

### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 2, Co-operative Hall, Darn Crook, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at 3, "The Upshot of Mr. Blatchford's Crusade Against Christianity"; at 7, "The Lords and the Education Bill: What will Dr. Clifford Do Now?"

December 9 and 16, Queen's Hall, London.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 2, Forest Gate; 9, Glasgow; 16, Belfast.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 2, Liverpool.

MR. SYMES'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 2, Birmingham; 9, Leicester; 15, Bedlington; 16, Newcastle; 17, Hetton; 18, Spennymoor.

E. J. CHAPMAN (Johannesburg) writes: "Some months ago I had given me a copy of your *Bible Romances*. I read it, and was delighted; for it answered questions I had often asked others, and could never get satisfactory replies to. Since then I have become a regular subscriber to your paper, and intend to remain so."

W. B.—The vindication of Joan of Arc is quite a modern thing. The reverend gentleman simply shows the danger of a little knowledge. Voltaire was ahead of his time in most things; why expect him to be so in everything? As far as our reading goes, it was Hume who paid the first noble tribute to Joan of Arc—and Hume was a Freethinker.

J. L. EVANS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

H. C. A.—Glad you think this journal is "doing splendid service." We note that, in hearing Dr. Macnamara at the *Tribune* Rendezvous, you "thought how differently he would have spoken if he had understood the religious question, which," you say, "he might, if he only read the *Freethinker*."

D. BAXTER, newsagent, 32 Brunswick-street, Glasgow, will be pleased to receive and transmit donations towards the cost of Mr. Cohen's "Salvation Army" pamphlet.

E. HIRST.—Sent as requested.

B. J. DAVEY.—The article was satirical.

W. E. MACKRELL.—Pleased to hear you have secured us two fresh subscribers by the simple plan of passing on your copy of the *Freethinker* after reading it; also that since you "became a reader, both of the late *Pioneer* and of the *Freethinker*," you have been "greatly enlightened by many excellent articles."

J. A. H. REA congratulates us on "such a magnificent attendance of Birmingham residents, including a goodly number of ladies," at our Town Hall evening meeting; and adds that "no church in Birmingham had such an audience that night." "Such visits as yours, sir," this correspondent says, "do more good for Freethought than one can well imagine."

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £5 18s. Since received: F. W. Thompson, 2s.; H. J. Hewett, 1s.; W. A. Holroyd, 1s.; Savill, 2s.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; W. Schmiechen, 2s. 6d.; H. G. Farmer, 1s.; Porth Branch, 2s. 6d.; C. Shepherd, 1s.; H. M. Ridgway, 2s. 6d.

W. P. M.—Thanks for cuttings.

F. W. THOMPSON.—Yes, you ought to be able to do good work with the tracts. Hope you will not be disappointed in the Queen's Hall lectures you are "looking forward to."

A. KEELER.—Who is the Mr. Beadle, converted Atheist, that you heard lecture? You did good service in asking questions at his meeting. Thanks for the cuttings.

G. ROLEFFS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

J. BRYCE.—Shall appear. Thanks for good wishes.

J. BROUGH.—The *Sunday Chronicle* is not amongst our exchanges. Thanks for cuttings. Glad to hear you say that Mr. Lloyd improves each time he lectures at Manchester.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

DROPLET.—In our next.

E. MOORCROFT.—We would rather set one man thinking than a hundred applauding; and if our articles have any salt in them it is due to our pen being unfettered. The sentence you refer to was probably, "Refrain from doing that which everyone else may not do."

T. D.—There could be no "direct descent" in those days except in the male line. That is why they had to make up Christ's genealogy through Joseph, who, on their theory, was no blood relation to him at all.

D. WHITE.—Will be forwarded as promptly as possible. Not surprised to hear that the Salvation Army competes with all sorts of agents for worldly business.

G. VIGGARS.—It is a good way ahead. Send details when arrangements are fixed up.

J. M. DAX.—Replies to Mr. Blatchford should be sent to the *Clarton* office. Glad you are better and joining the Merthyr Branch.

C. GERISCHER.—We had seen it; thanks, all the same.

A. B. MOSS.—Many thanks. Too late to do it justice this week. Will deal with it in our next.

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

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### Sugar Plums.

Tyneside "saints" will note that Mr. Foote is paying one of his rare visits to Newcastle-on-Tyne to-day (Dec. 2). He lectures afternoon and evening in the Co-operative Hall, Darn Crook, which we understand is both commodious and centrally situated. No doubt friends will be present from many places within reasonable distance of the "canny" city. The advertising has been fairly well done, but there is always need for trust in the zeal of the local "saints," who can circulate handbills and give publicity to the lectures by word of mouth amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Those who come to Newcastle from a distance to hear Mr. Foote's lectures will be able to get tea at Watson's in Nelson-street. It is necessary to state this in civilised England on the blessed Sabbath.

Mr. Lloyd lectures for the Liverpool Branch to-day (Dec. 2) in the Milton Hall, Dauby-street, both afternoon and evening. The local "saints" will do their best to give him crowded meetings. He is sure of a hearty reception.

Mr. Lloyd had good audiences at Manchester on Sunday in spite of the foggy weather, and was enthusiastically applauded at the close of his evening lecture. He performed the interesting ceremony of "naming" a child of two Branch members. Many strangers were present.

Mr. Symes lectures at Birmingham to-day (Dec. 2). Tea will be provided at the Prince of Wales Assembly Room between the afternoon and evening lectures for the accommodation of old friends of Mr. Symes's who may come from a distance to meet him.

Mr. Bonto's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, is still going off well, and we hope it will continue to do so for many a day. It is being translated into French and German, with a view to publication at Brussels and Hamburg. In that way its usefulness will be widely extended. It is curious that the press conspiracy of silence has had so little effect on the circulation of this pamphlet. Much the greater part of ten thousand copies has been sent out from our publishing office in the course of a few months. This is another illustration of the truth that our movement owes nothing to the press, either for good or evil; which is a tribute to our independence and vitality. "A breath unmakes them as a breath has made" cannot be spoken of us.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, 16 Elm-grove, Cricklewood, London, N.W., had the following communication in last week's *Athenaeum*:—

"I have been asked to write the biography of G. J. Holyoake, and, although the chief documents are promised to me, there may be some of your readers who have interesting letters from him. If they will kindly forward them to me, I shall be much obliged. I will copy and return them as quickly as possible."

Mr. McCabe knew Mr. Holyoake only during the last years of his very long life, and has no personal knowledge of the more agitated period when the famous Secularist was really in the thick of the fight for freedom. It will be very difficult for Mr. McCabe, with his well-known surroundings, to do justice to the relations between Holyoake and Bradlaugh, for instance; nevertheless, we hope for the best, and Mr. McCabe's incontestable ability may triumph over all the difficulties of his task.

Our review of two new books by Mr. F. J. Gould unavoidably stands over till next week. We are sorry, but it cannot be helped in the make up.

## They Are Coming Round!

JUST when I was within a few days of departing for the South, December 1888, I was rushing up Gray's Inn-road towards King's Cross, when I met a Wesleyan minister. We knew each other and hastily exchanged greetings, for both were in a hurry. "I am just off to Australia," said I, "on a Freethought lecturing tour."—"Are you?" said he. "O Symes, I wish you'd come back with us!"—"My dear fellow," said I, "you're fast coming after me!" He smiled; we shook hands and parted.

What an immense change has come over the clergy since then! Orthodoxy is quite dead except in the young, the ignorant, and the brainless. If I needed anything to confirm the opinion that I did the right thing in leaving the pulpit, that I have done properly in attacking religion and trying to destroy it root and branch, I should see it in the change "to us ward" that has taken place among the clergy during the past thirty years. If they had continued as orthodox as they were when I first knew them, I do not think that could have influenced me at all, for my change was a personal and individual development, which, by the way, is still proceeding, in spite of advancing years. Still, I am immensely gratified to find the clergy treading in our steps.

At present I wish to quote a few passages from recent "Christian" authors bearing upon the nature of the Bible and Christianity, for such quotations may be of great use to many of our people who have neither the leisure nor the books necessary for independent study. A number of splendid books have seen the light during the past few years, written, I may say, by our pupils—I mean the gentlemen, no disrespect—among the better clergy. I cannot imagine that men situated as they are could have written what I am alluding to if our great Freethought movement of the past fifty years or so had not inspired those authors to write for a public which our work had prepared to appreciate their books. They have set in scholarly language what we and our Freethought predecessors have so long been proclaiming in popular style. Without our precedent work these scholars would suffer now all the slanders, public odium, and persecution that have been so plentifully meted out to us by piety and fanaticism; and some of them would probably have been imprisoned for blasphemy or for writing of the Bible in ways calculated to rob the public of all faith in "God's most holy Word." Whether the said gentlemen ever openly acknowledge our work or not, we gladly welcome theirs, especially as their words will penetrate into circles we cannot directly influence. The chief thing we regret in our clerical pupils and assistants is that they fail to behave logically in practical life, that they still cling to the corpse of a creed whose death they have helped to hasten. But I, for one, do not expect too much consistency in human nature, especially where hereditary and social influences bear almost unlimited sway. It requires more than average courage to face certain ostracism, general abuse, and poverty into the bargain. *Credo experto.*

I have several books to quote from and may as well begin with the oldest of them. Professor A. H. Sayce is an able and remarkable man, and yet most provokingly fanatical respecting the historic reality of that manifest fiction, Abraham, and one or two other Biblical matters. However, I can forgive his fanaticism in view of so much that is liberal and rational in his works. In his *Fresh Light From the Ancient Monuments*, as far back as 1895, he says some things that must prove gall and wormwood to many of the devout; and in his Gifford Lectures, 1902, there is very much more of a similar character. I will quote an item or two from the former work, after referring to a text or two in the Bible. The "infallible Word of God," which cannot err, not to hint at its circulating falsehood, mentions Cyrus about a dozen times; in several texts he is called "king of Persia," viz., 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23; Ezra

iii. 7; iv. 3; Dan. vi. 28 ("the Persian"); x. 1. Nor is that all. In one text Cyrus is made to issue a decree, "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia," etc. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23).

In face of this, Professor Sayce says, he "was not king of Persia" (p. 5); "the most startling revelation they [the inscriptions] make is that he was not king of Persia at all" (p. 144). And there is much worse to follow. In Isaiah xlv. 28 and xlv. 1 the Lord calls Cyrus his "shepherd," his "Messiah," and otherwise speaks of him as his servant and chosen instrument, just as if he were an orthodox Jew. Indeed, these Bible texts led many to regard Cyrus as a Monotheist; but Dr. Sayce says he was a Polytheist. The Lord did not know everything in those days of his youth—and seems to be no wiser now.

In Professor Sayce's Gifford Lectures on *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* there is much I do not like, and which so clever a man should not have said; but there is very much more good material than I can presume to select. Here is a choice sentence from page 6: "The first fact which the historian of religion has to bear in mind is, that religion and morality are not necessarily connected together." If that wholesome truth had been known and acted upon for the past 200 years what a world of horrid abuse and slander foremost Freethinkers would have escaped. Never mind. We have preached that truth so incessantly that even our pious opponents are adopting and utilising it. We are winning. On page 7 he goes one better—"What we term morality was, in fact, a slow growth. It was the necessary result of life in a community." How many hundreds of times have I been compelled to say that during the past thirty years! and I am sure my fellow-lecturers have had to do the same. Yes, those in the opposite camp are bound to follow us, bound to echo us; and if they beat us in goodness, we shall never complain.

On the next two pages mine author proceedeth even farther. "It was," says he, "in the community, and in the social relations of men to one another, that the ethical sense was first developed." Just so. He might have added that animals or beasts also developed their morality in the same way; and, by the time he again writes upon ethics, let us hope he will clearly perceive that God—if God there were—could not be moral so long as he were a solitary, inasmuch as mutuality is of the essence of morals. But this writer proceeds: "The association of morality with religion, therefore, is not only not a necessity, but it is of comparatively late origin in the history of mankind. Indeed, the union of the two is by no means complete even yet. Orthodox Christianity still maintains that correctness of belief is at least as important as correctness of behavior; and it is not so long ago that men were punished and done to death, not for immoral conduct, but for refusing to accept some dogma of the Church."

No, sir, the heretic does not refuse to accept Church dogmas, he cannot accept them; and, when honest and courageous, he refuses to pretend to. But, say, how long would it be ere men were again persecuted and done to death, etc., if the clergy could have their unfettered way? How long would it be ere they attempted to exterminate each other, as their predecessors did for so many centuries?

But the learned Professor proceeds: "The first step in bringing religion and morality together was to place morality under the sanction of religion. The rules of conduct which the experiences of social life had rendered necessary or advantageous were enforced by an appeal to the terrors of religious belief. Practices which sinned against the code of social morality were put under the ban of the gods and their ministers, and those who ventured to adopt them [the said sinful practices] were doomed to destruction in this world and the next. The *Tapu*, which was originally confined to reserving certain places and objects for the use of the divine powers, was invoked for the protection of ethical laws, or to punish violations of them; and the curse of heaven was called down, not only upon the enemy

of the tribe, but upon the enemy of the moral code of the tribe as well. Religion thus became tribal as well as personal; the religious instinct in the individual clothed itself with the forms of social life..... it was no longer only a feeling of fear or reverence on the part of the individual which made him bow down before the terrors of the supernatural and obey its behests; to this were now added all the ties and associations connected with the life of a tribe. The ethical element was joined to the religious, and what has been termed the religious instinct or consciousness in the individual man attached itself to the rules and laws of ethical conduct. But the attachment was, in the first instance, more or less accidental; long ages had to pass before the place of the two elements—the ethical and religious—was reversed, and the religious sanction of the ethical code was exchanged for an ethical sanction of religion. It needed centuries of training before a Christian poet could declare: 'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right'" (pp. 9, 10).

Here Mr. Sayce misquotes Pope without improving him; and Pope, though a nominal or conventional Christian, was anything but a Christian poet. But let that pass. If my memory serves, Pope says:—

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight!  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

Volumes of evangelical abuse have been heaped upon the poet for that most un-Christian couplet, and no wonder; for how can they damn a good unbeliever if his life proves his faith to be of the right quality? And if the clergy cannot damn people, their occupation is gone."

If the Gifford Lecturer will only fully work out and assimilate the precious truth embodied in that quotation, he will discover two things he seems still to be ignorant of—viz., first, that the truth he has more than glimpsed is absolutely fatal to religion; and secondly, that he himself is no longer a Christian, but something immensely better. Morality never had a more deadly foe than the religion which damns a man for unbelief—that most monstrous perversion of justice ever known, and the occasion and cause of all the priestly persecution ever inflicted upon unfortunate people.

Professor Sayce is keenly alive to the defects, limitations, and failures of the religions of ancient Egypt, Babylonia, etc., but apparently he fails to perceive that all he has to say against them applies with equal force to his own religion. In the next quotation I will supplement and correct him by notes in brackets, as this will save space and perhaps emphasise what I say. "The attempts," he says, "to show that ancient Egyptian religion [or Christianity] was a sublime monotheism..... have their origin in a confusion between the aspirations of individual thinkers and the actual religion of their time. There are, indeed, literary monuments rescued from the wreck of ancient Egyptian culture which embody the highest and most spiritual conceptions of the Godhead [what an admission for a Christian to make!], and use the language of the purest monotheism. But such monuments represent the beliefs and ideas of the cultured few rather than of the Egyptians [or, later, of the Jews or the Christians] as a whole, or even of the majority of the educated classes" (p. 11).

I may, for the present, close with the note that ancient Egypt passed on her highest conceptions to the cosmopolitan students of Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, etc., and out of the combined superstitions and philosophies of those cities arose Christianity, and all the elements of which were furnished by the old Pagan religions. Dr. Sayce has helped us to make that truth clear; and, in my opinion, his Gifford Lectures are quite sufficient to rip up, expose, and so logically to destroy that Christianity he seems anxious to conserve.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

## The Coming of the Millennium.

It is pleasing to meet with a Socialist who does not allow his Socialistic proclivities to blind him to the crudities and absurdities that are common to the younger and more headstrong believers in the Gospel of Socialism, and are not unknown even amongst those of maturer growth and presumably greater mental development. The latter are probably past praying for. Beyond a certain age most men and women are insusceptible to new ideas, and incapable of any widening of their mental outlook. As for the young—shallow thinking and crude reasoning are natural in youth; but for the young there is some hope, and that is why most teachers and philosophers would prefer a youthful following to an elderly one. Not without justification has it been said that the future of a nation is in the hands of its young men (and let us hasten to placate Teresa Billington by adding its young women) of twenty-five. And we could wish that everything possible might be done to assist the process of clear and sane thinking amongst both men and women of that age. We think the latest book of H. G. Wells will help toward that desirable end, therefore we commend it to all who have the largest part of their life still to run, and especially do we commend it to those with leanings in the direction of Socialism. For H. G. Wells is the Socialist to whom we have referred in our opening sentence.

*In the Days of the Comet*\* is a novel in which all the gifts of its author are well displayed. Mr. Wells, in his story, combines the human interest with imaginative science in that effective fashion he has largely made his own in this country. It is a tale of how this earth comes into collision with a comet, with the result that, while no injury is done to the material structure of the world, there is an immediate arrest and alteration of the course of human affairs. Or perhaps a Socialist would put it that there is no alteration in the course of human affairs, but that Mr. Wells has, as it were, taken a leap forward, skipped over several intervening centuries, and landed us right into the social millennium. What Mr. Wells pictures may be what we are coming to after an indefinite lapse of time. Of such things other seers have written time and again. But here we have no gradual evolution. Mr. Wells places the momentous event that leads to the establishment of the new order of things in our own time, and the story of its happening is put into the mouth of the leading character in the novel, who, fifty years afterwards, narrates what led up to, and what succeeded, the great change. The coming within the orbit of our globe of the strange visitant from sidereal space, and its effect on terrestrial affairs, form the most striking portion of the book. Interwoven with this, however, there is an interesting love problem (not very satisfactorily solved), and the whole book makes capital reading. We are not going into details of the plot—if plot in any strict sense of the word can be said to exist. Doubtless many of our readers have already seen the book. Our purpose is to comment on one or two passages that impressed themselves upon us in the course of our reading.

One weak spot in Labor and Socialistic propaganda the author of *In the Days of the Comet* indicates with unerring finger; one fallacy in their argument he nails relentlessly to the counter. Nothing is more common than to hear Landlordism and Capitalism denounced by Socialistic writers and orators as though Landlordism and Capitalism constituted a conscious, deliberate, and semi-diabolic conspiracy against Labor and the Working Man. Which, of course, is absurd. Most of the leaders in the Labor Movement know better than to believe such nonsense; but the less intelligent of the rank-and-file are obsessed by the above infatuation, and the leaders are apparently content they should continue

cherishing the delusion. It operates admirably in stirring up the working man to fiery resentment of the tyranny of his overlords. We must quote from Mr. Wells, for the passage is too good to omit, particularly as coming from an avowed Socialist:—

"We had our angry, confident solutions, and whosoever would criticise them was a friend of the robbers. It was a clear case of robbery, we held, visibly so; there in those great houses lurked the Landlord and the Capitalist, with his scoundrel the Lawyer, with his cheat the Priest, and we others were all the victims of his deliberate villainies. No doubt they winked and chuckled over their rare wines, amidst their dazzling, wickedly-dressed women, and plotted further grinding for the faces of the poor. And amidst all the squalor on the other hand, amidst brutalities, ignorance, and drunkenness, suffered multitudinously their blameless victim, the Working Man. And we, almost at the first glance, had found all this out; it had merely to be asserted now with sufficient rhetoric and vehemence to change the face of the whole world. The Working Man would arise—in the form of a Labor Party, and with young men like myself and Parload to represent him—and come to his own, and then—? Then the robbers would get it hot, and everything would be extremely satisfactory."

There is a fine, healthy vein of sarcasm in the above extract, and in this shorter one:—

"To us youngsters with the positiveness, the rationalism of youth, it seemed that the strikes and lockouts, the overproduction and misery could not result simply from ignorance and want of thought and feeling. We needed more dramatic factors than these mental fogs, these mere atmospheric devils. We fled therefore to that common refuge of the unhappy ignorant, a belief in callous insensate plots—we called them plots—against the poor. You can still see how we figured it [he is writing fifty years after the great change] by looking up in any museum the caricatures of capital and labor that adorned the German and American socialistic papers of the old time."

A pathetic little figure in the book is that of Mrs. Leadford, the hero's mother. The hero—not a very heroic figure, but probably all the more human for that—is so engrossed in his personal grievance against fate as to behave in an extremely selfish—not to say callous—fashion towards her. Mrs. Leadford's religious belief is of eighteenth-century type; but, as happens in not a few Christians, she is by nature much better than her creed. There was a hell in that religion of Mrs. Leadford's—"a red-haired hell of curly flames that had once been very terrible"; and young Leadford had been taught to believe "that most of our poor, unhappy world was to atone for its muddle and trouble here by suffering exquisite torments for ever after, world without end, Amen." But his mother radiated her own tremulous gentleness even upon God, and redeemed him from all the implications of vindictive theologians. She provided, in fact, as her son says, an effectual answer in herself to all she would have taught him. Even after the change Mrs. Leadford clung to her old conception of religion through sheer force of intellectual habit. It had become a part of her. But she made one admission that reads deliciously. Her son asked her one day if she, with her tender heart, still believed in that hell of flame. She vowed she did. But—"You know, Willie, dear," she said, "I don't think anyone will go there. I never *did* think that." We fancy there must be a great many nominal believers in eternal torment who, in the secret recesses of their minds, entertain the vague hope that the doctrine may not be true after all.

We quite believe the Atheist we met recently who assured us he had been made so by reading the Bible. For ourselves, the perusal of Christian literature, and the occasional listening to a Christian sermon, would suffice to keep us in the path of heterodoxy, despite any temptation to swerve therefrom. Consequently we have a fellow-feeling for Mr. Wells's hero when he tells us his faith was seriously weakened by reading Burble's *Scepticism Answered*. Young Leadford was indebted to a curate, who lodged with his mother, for setting him definitely on the road to unbelief. The curate lent him Burble, and encouraged

him to keep up his reading after he had left school. His experience of religious apologetics speedily convinced him, as it has convinced many others, that the case for doctrinal orthodoxy was an exceedingly poor one.

We are in doubt whether we should hold Mr. Wells responsible for the rather indiscriminating criticisms placed incidentally in the mouth of his hero. We are surprised to find him alluding to the "gassy prose" and "atmospheric verse" of Shelley. The latter phrase might be interpreted as not uncomplimentary, but the former scarcely sounds flattering; and, what is of much more consequence, it is not just. Further on he refers to a "now forgotten writer called Ruskin, a volcano of beautiful language and nonsensical suggestions, who prevailed very greatly with eloquent, excitable young men in those days." This appears calculated to ruffle the serenity of not a few individuals in the Socialist camp who revere the author of *Unto this Last* as a "Master."

No one acquainted with the writings of Mr. H. G. Wells will question his possession of a strong sense of humor. His *Invisible Man*, for instance, presents us with a remarkable picture of the grotesquely funny blended with the pathetically tragic. The possession of a keen sense of humor is something one might well pray the gods for. Think what it might save the world from! The blatant posturings of a German Emperor, for example; the incredible pretensions of a Roman Pontiff; the vamping of religious and political humbugs of all kinds. Such people could not maintain their self-deception if they realised its absurdity, and assuredly they would find it impossible to continue imposing on the general public if the latter shared that sense of the ludicrous which saves the favored few. The crime of *lese-majestie* and belief in Papal Infallibility would vanish with much other nonsense in a burst of Homeric laughter. It is indeed well that even those with a serious message for humanity should recognise the value of satire, irony, and humor of every variety, from the jocular to the sardonic, as weapons in the cause of truth.

Mr. Wells, as we say, is happy in possessing a sense of humor; and some of his descriptions of things as they were before the Change—that is, as they are now—are brimming over with quiet playfulness, though his fancy is grim enough at times. Take his inventory of the contents of that abomination inseparable from respectable bachelor poverty—the "bed-sitting" (and eating) room, for instance. It could only have been bettered by Dickens; and his verbal sketch of a "scullery" as it exists in ordinary shabby-genteel houses, is equally good. One could quote largely in illustration, but there must be limits to quotation in a three-column article.

One gathers that Mr. Wells, like others who decline to blink the facts of life, and who feel compelled to reckon with the hot impulses of human nature, realises that the problem of sexual passion will be somewhat difficult of solution even under Socialism. The sexual instinct—in its original nature simple enough—has, under civilised conditions, taken on a most baffling complexity. It may be, as Socialists hope, that less artificial conditions of life would lead to a simplification of the sexual problem. We may safely say, however, that so long as humanity lasts, sex will constitute the most important factor in society, if only because it is so largely an elusive and incalculable factor. William Morris, in his *News from Nowhere*, is forced to touch the problem; but he evades the difficulty rather than meets it squarely. H. G. Wells presents us with the concrete case of a young and beautiful woman who frankly avows her love for another man without having any desire to break with the one to whom she has first attached herself. She loves them both, she says. The two men love the woman, but then each likes and respects the other, so that the situation seems an awkward one. Number two deems it expedient to place a distance between himself and the couple, and subsequently takes unto himself a wife on his own account. This is very like what happens often enough now. But,

under Socialism, according to Wells's conception, this arrangement would not be a satisfactory one. Why should there not be untrammelled freedom of intercourse between a man and a woman, though either or both may have a special sexual tie elsewhere? To ask the question is to suggest the difficulties of the case to any intelligent individual. It will afford some indication of the radical change Mr. Wells supposes to have taken place in human nature when we state that at the close of his book the reader is allowed to understand that all the four above alluded to eventually come to live together as one family. We might mention at this point a possibility that Mr. Wells appears to have overlooked in his account of the sequel to the Great Change. To be sure, the whole tale is a fantasy; but if one result of the Change was that numbers who had previously disliked each other began to regard one another with favor, is it not likely that many who had formerly been devoted to one another would discover they had made a mistake? It might conceivably work both ways. At any rate, there are latent possibilities both of tragedy and comedy in this idea that seem not unworthy of treatment by Mr. Wells.

Like most Socialists, Mr. Wells is filled with a profound sense of the sordidness of the lives of the many; and, with an eager resentment of the depressing and deteriorating conditions under which the majority of us live, even when we are above the level of the "submerged tenth," and have a tolerable share of the necessities of life. A passionate yearning for the beautiful in nature and in art is a distinguishing trait of many of the apostles of Socialism, and it is wholly good that they should strive without ceasing to stimulate in the masses of the people consciousness of how much of the real joy of life they are missing. But it is idle to pretend that the great body of the people has any acute perception of the meanness, squalor, and injustice of the common lot. An Edward Carpenter may picture in burning words the feelings of a sweated tailor on his board of slavery, or the emotions of a convict behind his iron bars; but the thoughts are the thoughts of Edward Carpenter, and not those of the average tailor or convict. An intellectual and poignantly sensitive observer is much more alive to the misery and degradation of the poor than the poor are themselves. Indeed, it is this dull, obstinate apathy on the part of the latter that constitutes one of the main obstacles to reform. That the poor are so content and happy in their debasement is surely the most tragic circumstance of all. And, in so far as Socialism is working along Secularist lines to rouse the people from their lethargy, it is performing a necessary and highly commendable work.

GEO. SCOTT.

## Correspondence.

### CREATION AND DESIGN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is gratifying to have critical and discerning readers. Mr. C. D. Thomson's severely analytical examination of the terms "Design" and "Creation" is very interesting; but he appears to me to take a narrow, professional view of the word "Designer." I take it that when a theologian speaks of design in nature he means that a careful observation and comparison of natural processes will afford evidence of *purpose* in the universe. That, at least, is the sense in which I understood Dr. Young to use the word "Design," and I dealt with it accordingly. Mr. Thomson seems to argue that a designer must necessarily be a copyist. In this I cannot agree with him.

GEO. SCOTT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Chas. D. Thomson's letter, published in your issue of last week, does not convince me that Creation and Design are necessarily "utterly and mutually exclusive." It would be interesting to learn how Mr. Thomson proposes to show that Creation is "uncopied origination," and that Design "depends upon previous psychological copying and

imitation." Until Mr. Thomson can conscientiously and reasonably prove these statements of his, I can only take his words as the outcome of mere assumption. My simple observations have always tended to show that Design and Creation were connected with one another, and that one was NECESSARILY the outcome of the other. Possibly Mr. Thomson can refute this; but I would be very much obliged to him if he would prove that his refutation is correct.

GERALD CHRISTIAN.

### MR. BOOTH'S ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am very pleased with Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on Mr. Booth's indescribable Army; what he says illustrates and confirms what I saw of it and said of it in Australia, where I never missed an opportunity of exposing that giant sham. I am myself more than satisfied that the Salvation Army, so-called, lays itself out to cultivate vice and crime for the profits it brings, just as the Romish priests do in their Confessional, etc. This is a serious charge to lay at their door, but one incident in my Melbourne experience will justify it. One day, eight or ten years ago, an old man called on me and said, "Mr. Symes, I've been to the Salvation Army to see if they could do anything for me; and I saw Major [giving his name], and he said, 'Go and chop some wood; and we will give you your dinner, or tea.' I said, 'I can't chop wood; I am too old and feeble for that.' The major leaned over the desk and said, 'Have you ever been convicted?' 'No,' said I, indignantly. 'Then go and do something and get run in; and we'll look out for you when you come out of prison,' said he."

I at once prepared the incident for the *Liberator*, published it, and hung it in the window of our office—not far from the Parliament Buildings, and within a very short distance of Booth's Victorian headquarters. Hundreds read it in that window, including members of the Army, but no one denied it; I doubt if anyone called it in question.

A man who can make himself a millionaire by bogus charity and shameless and incessant cadging is not likely to be troubled with qualms of conscience, nor will he or his agents shrink from the most demoralising courses to keep their nefarious system in full swing.

The worst thing about it is that Australian politicians, for the sake of votes, will do anything for the Army or for the Romish priests, and all the newspapers in the country are ever ready to advertise and assist both swindles—they have money, you see, and the newspaper owners know it.

JOS. SYMES.

### THE CIRCULATION OF THE FREETHINKER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It has been my practice for some time past to take two copies each week, but in futuro I shall take at least three. After reading I post on to some stranger, in the hope that the seed may not fall on stony ground, but blossom forth into a subscription to what is probably the best Freethought journal in the world.

Any way, it is edited by a man who is full of pluck and fights with his face to the foe, and does not mind owning up when he is in the wrong.

If every reader will commence at once by taking as many copies as he (or she) can afford, and keep on taking them and putting the copies in the way of different persons, it will help and encourage you and the other "tomatoes" in the good work.

The Public Libraries will not provide the *Freethinker*, but there is nothing to prevent me and others from providing a copy; and each time I go to the library the "F." goes also, and is laid on the "Cain-and-Abel."

Considering the shameless way in which your organ is boycotted, I consider it the duty of every Freethinker to do as indicated in the foregoing lines.

Will they do it? I hope so.

FAIR PLAY.

Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the sufferings of wretches I cannot relieve! Poor houseless creatures, the world will give you reproaches but will not give you relief. The slightest misfortunes of the great, the most imaginary uneasiness of the rich, are aggravated with all the power of eloquence, and held up to engage our attention and sympathetic sorrow. The poor weep unheeded, persecuted by every subordinate species of tyranny; and every law which gives others security becomes an enemy to them.—*Goldsmith*.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): Joseph Symes, 3.15, "What is the Use of God—if God there be?" 7, "Christ's Broken Promises; or, Christianity Hopelessly Bankrupt."

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, W. C. Schweizer, "The Jungle; or, The Necessity of Socialism."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Dec. 5, at 8, Dr. Robert Park, "Fallacies of Reincarnation Ideas."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): John T. Lloyd, 3, "Secularism at the Bar of Reason"; 7, "Does Secularism Safeguard Morality?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, a Lecture or Impromptu Discussion.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Darn Crook): G. W. Foote, 3, "The Upshot of Mr. Blatchford's Crusade Against Christianity"; 7, "The Lords and the Education Bill: What will Dr. Clifford Do Now?"

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Dec. 6, at 8, M. Weatherburn, "Government by Party."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, T. Cleary, "Ruskin."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (N. S. S. Room, Town Hall): 6.30, S. Holman, "Is the Bible True?"

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