

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

TO ANY MARTYR FOR LIBERTY.

Thou hast left behind

*Powers that will work for thee; air, earth and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.*

—WORDSWORTH: *Sonnet to Toussaint l'Ouverture.*

William the Conqueror.

THE Czar could not conquer Japan, but General Booth has done it. He has not occupied the whole country yet, but he has captured Tokio, and the rest is only a matter of time. As soon as the Russo-Japanese war was thoroughly over, and Eastern waters were safe for travellers who wished to avoid all risk of going to heaven prematurely, General Booth arranged to visit the land of the chrysanthemum, with a view to bringing it under his world-famous banner. In due course, he set sail from his London headquarters, called at several of his dominions on the way, and finally arrived at his intended new kingdom. His road to the capital was one long triumphant procession. He might have said after Cæsar, if he had thought of it, *Veni, vidi, vici.* Indeed, it is very doubtful if Julius Cæsar, after all, could hold a candle to General Booth. Shakespeare called him "the foremost man of all this world," but that was three hundred years ago, and not even the mightiest of poets was able to foresee the wonderful world-conqueror who was to adorn the end of the nineteenth century and dazzle the beginning of the twentieth.

Some sceptical persons are inclined to doubt the reports of General Booth's conquest of Japan. But these people are too hard to satisfy. Ordinary men and women may be quite sure that the reports are perfectly true. The General did not leave anything to the mercy of accident. He took his own reporters with him, and as they are soldiers in his own glorious Army, it is certain that their records are the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

These inspired reporters, the principal of whom is Mr. Commissioner Railton, inform us that there is a competition between Japan and Korea as to which shall hurry up the most rapidly to the Christian fold, or rather to that section of it which General Booth is the chief shepherd. What other missionaries have failed to do has been promptly achieved by William the Conqueror. All the leading men of Japan have been won over. True, they have not yet published their conversion, but that, of course, is held back for a time in order not to produce too great a shock. Japan is used to earthquakes, but an earthquake of that character and dimensions might startle Asia and unsettle the whole civilised world. It is also rumored—but this must be stated with some reserve—that the Mikado himself is more than favorable, and is only awaiting the proper opportunity to proclaim himself a soldier of the Cross. It is even whispered that he has ordered a large parcel of red jerseys at headquarter store prices, and that he seriously contemplates resigning in favor of General

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Booth as soon as the new Mikado is ready to occupy the post. Sanguine hopes are entertained that this act would mean the swift conversion of the whole of Asia to Christianity; and this, in turn, would mean the near approach of the Millennium, since Europe and America are already full of Christians, and Africa is almost converted to the true faith in consequence of the sublime example of European Christians, not only in South Africa, where they most abound, but also in the Congo Free State, where the Natives are "going to God" by thousands out of sheer admiration of the white man's Christian virtues.

There are carpers and cavillers, of course, besetting the path of every great enterprise; and some of these wretched creatures hung around General Booth's royal progress in Japan. Several of them had the incredible impudence—indeed, it was little short of blasphemy—to ask him wicked and irritating questions based upon the book of a spiteful and malicious writer called Manson, which ought to be suppressed by the Christian government of Great Britain. Questions were boldly printed in the *Japan Chronicle*, a daily newspaper which, alas, enjoys a large circulation and considerable influence. When the General was at Kobe, where this scandalous paper is published, he requested and arranged for an interview with one of its representatives; but on learning that it had treated him with criticism, instead of the praise to which he is entitled, and had even urged him, for the sake of the Army, to answer Mr. Manson's questions, he cancelled the interview, his "sole reason" being that his "advisers" on the spot were of opinion that—

"After your leading article of Friday, no possible good would follow an interview which would certainly be treated in your columns as matter for unfair criticism and biased contention."

This grave and dignified rebuke, which might have abashed Satan himself, was treated by the editor as "a gratuitous insult." He was unable to understand why one paper should be denied an interview, which was accorded to others, simply on the ground that it had printed some English criticisms of the Salvation Army, with a few mild comments of its own. That is how the sinful editor regarded his abominable crime. He had even the audacity to say that he had "invited Mr. Nicol to contribute a written statement" in reply to those English criticisms. Just as though the General were answerable to anyone but God Almighty!

It is well that god-fearing Englishmen should appreciate the full extent of this editor's wickedness. Instead of falling on his knees, and imploring the divine pardon for having offended God's greatest servant on earth, this man—rather, this fiend—presumed to write in the following fashion:—

"Mr. Nicol knows that he would have been at perfect liberty to draw the attention of the public to our shortcomings in our own columns. But, as usual, the 'General' retreats into an impregnable position, and refuses either to be seen or heard unless he and his business are to be subjected to fulsome flattery and no questions are to be asked in the public interest. On the lecture platform, supported by men well-known for their moral and upright lives, the 'General' will discourse on the past and present of the Salvation Army, and even on its future, or descent on his own life; but the 'unanswered indictment' of Mr. Manson is still unanswered,

nor does the 'General' invite questions from his audience which might lead to some enlightening conclusion. The advisers of 'General' Booth may consider that they have done wisely in refusing to allow us to interview their respected leader, but the inference to be drawn by every fair-minded man from this absolute and autocratic refusal to permit the 'other side of the question' to be investigated is creditable neither to the 'General' nor to his advisers—but it is typical."

Note the foul-mouthed fury of this thwarted scribbler, who is probably no better than an infidel. Fancy his suggesting that the General should go all the way to Japan to "invite questions," when everyone knows that the object of his visit was something very different.

On another page of the same number of the *Japan Chronicle*, there was a report of the General's meeting at Daikokuza, where Chief Judge Tamaru delivered a short address on the Army and its work, in the course of which he said:—

"If the work of the Army prospered in Japan the present heavy taxes would be enormously reduced. Then they would be able to save money, so as to buy villas and take pleasure trips to Tokyo."

Yes, the Lord be praised, the work of the Salvation Army is to lead to something far more substantial than questions.

Look at the position of women in Japan. The General is going to change all that. He has laid the foundation of a league for the protection of Oriental women generally. Myriads of geisha girls will live to bless his name. Has he not—as he promised he would in *Darkest England*—taken all the Piccadilly girls to the strawberry-beds of Essex? Is not Piccadilly now the most moral place in the world? And what General Booth has done in the West shall he not also do in the East? Who shall say him Nay?

Why should the Lord's chief servant on earth trouble about questions? Questions can wait. Let the great and glorious work go forward. He who is not for us is against us. Sweep all the critics aside. Onward, Christian soldiers!

General Booth may lose on every "Colony," and make money on every "Shelter," and compete in the open market with Emigration and Insurance agencies, and carry on a gigantic earthly business in the name of heavenly salvation. But what of that, if the Lord's work prospers? Hallelujah! Excelsior!

William the Conqueror is home again. No doubt he will see King Edward once more at Buckingham Palace. Oxford is granting him the D.C.L. degree. He is to wear his new university robes at his grand reception in the Albert Hall. Members of the Chinese and Japanese Embassies will occupy seats in the Royal Box. The International Staff Band and the Chalk Farm Band (oh what a fall was there!) will discourse appropriate music. And, happily, the Lord Chamberlain's ban is now removed from *The Mikado*.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity's Decay.

A TOLERABLY honest survey of the present position of Christianity must be anything but cheering—to a believer. One after another cherished doctrines are being attacked and discarded, while some of the best types of mind, both inside and outside the Churches, are in open or ill-concealed revolt against its teachings. Definite dogmas are fast becoming the exclusive property of the ignorant or uncultured, the opposite types preferring to hide their scepticism, even from themselves, in a vague profession of faith that may mean anything, but which usually mean nothing. The types that assume leadership in the various Churches become poorer each generation, and even these are only able to attract audiences by making their teaching more social or political, and necessarily less religious. Agreement among Christians on matters of religion is a sheer impossibility, while such harmony as exists is generally sectional

in character and dependent upon hatred of a common enemy. And, meanwhile, the party in the State that aims at social regeneration, independent of religion, becomes steadily and ominously larger.

Under these circumstances, the complaint of the Moderator of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches, that the Church is not making progress, is well founded. This gentleman complains that the Baptists are practically stationary in the face of an increase of population; the contributions to the Baptist Missionary Society has fallen £5,000 in a single year; and, worse than all, Christian teachings are losing their force. The latter point, at least, is too obvious to need notice, although some comment may be made upon the Moderator's diagnosis of the situation. As a matter of course, prominence is given in this diagnosis to the influence of the "New Theology." There must be, he says, something critical in the condition of the Church when it is possible for a philosophy so shallow to attract her interest and threaten her peace. That the "New Theology" is "shallow," or that Mr. Campbell, if he desires the character of a profound thinker, is fortunate in finding himself in the Christian Church—a place where mediocrity will carry a man furthest—I should be the last to deny. The significance of the "New Theology" is not that it is a product of profound thinking, but that it is symptomatic of the general dissatisfaction with Christian teachings. Mr. Campbell is simply providing a home of refuge for such as are strong enough to perceive the weakness of Christianity, but too weak to give their intellect the reins and follow it wherever it leads. And in this manner he and his kind are as much of a danger to robust thinking as those who altogether prohibit the exercise of reason in matters of religion.

The Moderator, Mr. Macalpine, complains that we do not deal fairly with religion. We accept the teachings of natural science without question; we look upon all questions of religion as belonging to the sphere of doubt. Many accept the Copernican system, the conservation of energy, the doctrine of evolution, solely upon the evidence of experts, and without our being in any position to test the evidence for ourselves. Yet in the field of religion, when expert testimony is brought forward, when men in every land, "of all grades and of every intellectual status, from the king on the throne to the peasant in the hovel.....have told us.....that their lives were transformed when they believed the Gospel.....this overwhelming mass of evidence is swept aside by men who claim to be scientific, notwithstanding the fact that many who bear this witness have been recognised as the most eminent thinkers and the most acute observers of their day."

The complaint has a certain superficial smartness about it that appeals to an ordinary religious gathering, but there is really nothing in it. The two cases are not in the least degree analogous. It is true that much of what most of us believe to be true in astronomy, in physics, in biology, or in chemistry, we believe upon the evidence of experts, and are seldom in a position to test the matter for ourselves. But, then, we know that if we did care to put ourselves to the necessary trouble we could find out each for himself the facts upon which scientific teachings rest, and thus make our beliefs independent of all authority. In addition to this, there is a common agreement among our experts as to the truth of what is laid down in scientific text-books, and where agreement is not, the grounds of disagreement are stated, and each is left to form an opinion as seems best. And, finally, scientific teachers have no obvious interest in speaking falsely or in championing one scientific statement instead of another. For these men are neither maintained nor supported because of what they teach, but because of how they teach. They are not supported in order that they may champion a subsidised "truth," but that they may discover what is the truth in their respective departments, and teach that and nothing else.

But what is the case in the field of religion?

Here all is statement, with no adequate proof either offered or possible. Here men are subsidised, not because of a method of investigation or of teaching, but in order to perpetuate a settled thing. They are not placed where they are to investigate, but simply to inculcate. And there are, in this case, very obvious interests why they should keep to certain lines, and resent all efforts at change. They are tied to their teaching by sheer mental laziness—by the disinclination of the average mind to strike out in a new direction, a force more powerful than ever now that the clergy are recruited from so poor a section of the community. They are tied by the love of power—most powerful with those who are least fitted for its exercise—since dissent from the stipulated teaching means loss of office. And they are swayed by the fear of sacrificing their livelihood—a fear that may operate in more ways than one. There is no need to imagine many of the clergy saying deliberately to themselves that they will pretend to believe for the sake of a living. To assume this is really to give them credit for greater strength of mind than most of them possess. For a conscious hypocrite is, after all, a man of some strength of mind. He has convictions, and knows what they are. He does not surrender them—he simply conceals; and that, I repeat, argues strength—not the same degree of strength evidenced by the one who will neither surrender nor conceal, but still strength. But when men feel that an expression of dissent means expulsion and loss of a living, many will find a thousand and one excuses for stifling their doubts and disbeliefs. As it is, no one can doubt for a moment that, could every clergyman in the Christian Churches say exactly what he thinks concerning Christian doctrine, without endangering his means of living, the exodus of the clergy from the Churches would soon resemble that of a swarm of rats from a sinking ship.

But what, after all, is the evidence of all these hosts of people concerning Christianity, and what is that evidence worth? People have told of the comfort they derived from the Gospels. Others of the manner in which their lives have been transformed by belief in Jesus; and yet others of the wonderful effects of a Christian conversion. So far as the first is concerned, no one need be concerned in questioning the general truth of the statement. Comfort is a personal affair; and, excluding deliberate falsehood, each one must be accepted as an ultimate authority as to what is comforting or discomforting. It is, at best, a statement of individual inclination, and it is ultimately a question of habit and education. A man's testimony as to the comfort derived from gin, or golf, or football, or a horserace, would be quite as conclusive in its way, and would prove quite as much. Personally, I could not conceive myself deriving comfort from either the Gospels or the life of Jesus. But this, too, is only an indication of personal habits and training, although quite as good, as evidences, as any other personal testimony. So, too, of the tales told concerning changed lives and conversions. Although here something has to be said in addition. And the something is, that the statement of miraculously-changed lives is just a Christian myth. It is a psychological and moral impossibility. It is a sheer impossibility for anyone's nature to undergo a sudden and radical alteration. A new direction may be occasionally given to old tendencies, and dishonesty of character in one direction be changed to dishonesty in another. But this is all. Dishonesty is not suddenly transformed into honesty, nor is a liar suddenly transformed into a truthful character. All such testimonies are either a repetition of hoary revivalistic falsehoods, or they are testimonies of inoffensive characters painting their pre-conversion days black in order to magnify the value of their capture. The fact that such stories, contradicted as they are by all experience, should gain currency in religious circles as the sober truth, is alone enough to disprove the alleged value of religious influences.

Even though all these stories were to be accepted as true, and they were enforced by the gradual change

for the better—which may occur—and which is sometimes attributed to the influence of Jesus, even then the case would be inconclusive. For all we have then, as a fact, is a feeling of consolation or an improved character. But these are cited, not as proof of their existence, but as evidence of their cause. And this is sheer fallacy. My testimony that I have a feeling joyful or painful, that I feel morally better or worse than I used to feel, is good enough so far as it goes; but I am no more an authority as to cause than I am as to the origin of a headache, a stomachache, or a fit of indigestion that I may be troubled with. I *must* be right about the symptoms; I may be, and often should be, quite at sea concerning causes. Let Mr. Macalpine eliminate all that may be due to education and mere human association, and then consider how much is left that may be safely attributed to the influence of the Gospels or the belief in Jesus.

It is quite an error for Christians to write and speak as though Freethinkers were not as conversant as they are with all they cite as evidence. All the facts they cite are cheerfully admitted; it is their interpretation of them that is at fault. Brought up to interpret their feelings in terms of a traditional theology, they regard the interpretation as being as unquestionable as the phenomena themselves. Ignoring the purely physiological causes responsible for the extravagances of the revival meeting and of conversion, they persist in an explanation that belongs to a pre-scientific period. Lacking the strength of mind to properly apply the historic method to their religious beliefs, they fail to realise that the Christian religion, in common with all religions, has its real roots in the savage conception of nature, and has no real justification for its existence except in the savage state. Above all, the modern Protestant cannot see, or will not see, that the Christian Church—the Mother Church—conquered the modern world by force, and was really maintained by force. Where other and later churches have grown it has been because of the field prepared by the Catholic Church, or in proportion as they could imitate its methods. Where the policy of the older Church could be followed, other Christian churches have held their ground. Where this was not possible, there followed an inevitable decline. And not all the preaching of Britain's fifty thousand clergy can arrest the decay of a creed whose death-sentence is confirmed by every advance of our civilisation.

C. COHEN.

The Passing of the Faith.

A FEW weeks ago, the religious journals were bewailing the disquieting fact that the statistics of the Wesleyan Methodist Church showed a decrease of 2,000 full members, 2,000 junior members, and of over 6,000 in the number of persons on trial. Then, at the last meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, it was regretfully pointed out that Congregationalism is a dismal failure, so far as reaching working men is concerned, and the adoption of some new methods of working was earnestly advocated. A little later, the Social Questions Committee of the National Free Church Council sent a Special Commissioner to South Wales to inquire into the causes of the stupendous reaction that has set in in that country after the Evan Roberts' Revival; and we now read that this agent "found that there had been enormous losses in the membership of the churches," that "drinking clubs flourish on all hands," as well as public houses, that "evidences of immorality were met with in several districts," and that everywhere "the ordinary religious services" fail to keep the people. Practically all the Nonconformist bodies report losses, leakages, growing indifference, and a lamentable invasion of the very sanctuary of God by the secular spirit. This is what is quietly and irresistibly going on while the leaders are hotly wrangling over the relative merits and demerits of the Old and the New Theology.

But it is not among the Nonconformists alone that such losses are occurring. We find that the Church of England is obliged to make the same humiliating confession. In the *Hereford Times* for June 15, we come across a long report of "the second conference of clergy and laity for the rural deanery of Abbey-dore," which was held on the previous day under the presidency of the Bishop of Hereford, to discuss the relations between the "Church and the masses." The Bishop, in his opening address, mournfully admitted that the Church of England and the masses were sadly out of touch with one another. I quote his words as reported:—

"Persons who knew anything about the life of London were becoming more and more convinced that the Church, in the metropolis, at any rate, could not be said to be the Church of the people in the real sense of the term. It was more or less the same in all their great cities, and he knew something of Manchester, Bristol, and one or two others. Even in rural dioceses, the question troubled them when they thought of the number of men who were not actively attached to the Church.....Hooker, in his day, described the Commonwealth and the Church as only different names for the same people, but they could no longer claim that was so."

Dr. Percival was followed by several speakers, all of whom were compelled to agree with his general statement. The longest-winded of the orators, it appears, was the Rev. F. Lewis Donaldson, vicar of St. Mark's, Leicester. Mr. Donaldson is a prominent member of the Christian Social Union, and editor of the *Commonwealth*. As might be expected, he is a red-hot Socialist, and it was from an exclusively Socialist point of view that he harangued the conference. Freethinkers will be interested to see the following pre-eminently truthful sentence contained in his speech: "The secular movement, headed by the late Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, had a following for a time, but it was only for a time." Here is another of his calm, unprejudiced estimates: "Mr. Robert Blatchford's recent outbursts had failed to provoke a response amongst the working-classes." Setting such highly dispassionate utterances aside, we are in full agreement with Mr. Donaldson when he affirms that Christianity is not in possession of England and Wales. That assertion cannot be intelligently challenged, its truth being notoriously patent to all who keep their eyes and ears open. And yet this defender of the Faith went on to observe that the working-classes are profoundly loyal to Jesus of Nazareth. He reminded his hearers that "some time ago, when there was the demonstration (the dramatic descent upon London) of the men from Leicester, a crowd of men on Tower Hill, at the name of Jesus, threw their hats in the air and shouted hurrah." It will be remembered that the reverend gentleman acted as chaplain of the Leicester unemployed on their sensational march to London; and we know how to estimate his reference to the hurrahing of "a crowd of men on Tower Hill." When he uttered the undoctored truth, he admitted that the masses of the people throughout the country are alienated from the Church, which they regard not as a friend, but as an enemy—as "a foreign body outside their lives."

Mr. Donaldson maintained, however, that this "was not an alienation of head or mind with most people," but a merely sentimental alienation—an alienation, that is to say, not from Christianity, but from Christians; but on this point he was corrected by Mr. H. S. Perris, of London, who contended that the divorce of the people from the Church was intellectual as well as sentimental. Then Mr. Perris proceeded to denounce, in vehement terms, all forms of theological dogmatism. Quoting Lessing, he exclaimed: "Christianity has been tried for nineteen centuries; the religion of Christ is yet to be tried." "If they looked round the religious world to-day," he said, "they found the old theological orthodoxies everywhere *in extremis*. The world was weary of the cast-iron fetters of doctrinal subscription, but was yearning to have

the emphasis laid upon the simple gospel message of fraternity and love."

Now, both Mr. Donaldson and Mr. Perris are equally at sea as regards the real cause of the failure of the Church. According to the former, constitutionally, the Church of England is perfect; the most democratic institution in the world, being "built upon the Incarnation, the divine humanity of Christ." She lacks nothing. But she has been false to her own constitution. Instead of being *par excellence* the Church of the people, she has apostatised from her Lord and become the Church of the rich and privileged classes. The people have left her because she first left the people. There may be a grain of truth in that allegation; but, at best, it is only a one-sided truth. The Church is being "abandoned," not only by the poor and unprivileged, but quite as much by the rich and privileged. The Rev. Preb. H. W. Webb-Peploe, vicar of St. Paul's, Onslow Square, London, stated, the other Sunday evening, that his congregation is not half as large to-day as it was some years ago, because the people of this generation have largely renounced the religion of their fathers and mothers. The fact is, that the fashionable West-enders are not one whit more attached to the Church than are the dilapidated East-enders. The Individualists, as well as the Socialists, are ceasing to be religious because both alike find it no longer possible to believe the doctrines of any known religion. Mr. Perris wants "the simple gospel message of fraternity and love"; but does he not know that such a simple gospel is not to be found in any religion in the world? Can he detect such a "simple gospel message" in any part of the New Testament. Religion, as taught in the Bible, is founded on theology, and all theology is, of necessity, dogmatic. Is Mr. Perris prepared to throw supernaturalism to the wind, and be content with "fraternity and love?" If so, he cannot be a Christian in any accredited sense whatever; if not, then he cannot do away with theological dogmatism. Whenever a theologian decries creeds and dogmas, he only means the creeds and dogmas of other people, not his own; the dogmatist being only the man who differs from him. The denunciation of dogmatism by religious people is the most hypocritical cant conceivable.

If these theologians only looked the facts straight in the face, they would perceive that the ebb of supernatural belief is in exact proportion to the flow of natural knowledge. As it was the suppression of the old Greek and Roman culture, or the arrest of the onward march of Science, that made the nominal triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire possible, so it is the re-awakening and triumphant progress of the ancient spirit of inquiry that should be held accountable for the somewhat rapid decay of Christianity during the last four or five decades. "Fraternity and love" are of this world, and, if given fair play, they will drive other-worldism clean out of the field of vision. "Fraternity and love" are purely ethical qualities, and may be practised in all their plenitude of power and glory by Secularists. Clearly, even to Mr. Perris, the religion of Jesus includes much more than "the simple gospel message of fraternity and love," for he passed on to remark, among other things, that one of the "striking hours of the Church" would come "when the Church squared matters between Dives and Lazarus in some such way as its Master did." Well, how did its Master "square matters between Dives and Lazarus?" By sending the former to hell and the latter to heaven—*after death*. Is that the kind of squaring of matters between rich and poor that Mr. Blatchford would be satisfied with? Christianity is a religion of *postponements*, of *post mortem* settlements, of deferred fulfilments, or, in other words, a religion of other-worldism. And this is perhaps the principal reason why the people are giving it up and leaving the Churches stranded on the beach of superstition.

Mr. Donaldson and Mr. Perris may be excellent Socialists, but to their Socialism they add faith in God, in the supernatural Christ, and in the world to

come; and there are elements in this added faith which are not only inconsistent with, but in direct opposition to, the central principles of Socialism, which is, doubtless, the reason why so few Socialists are professing Christians. The Bishop of Hereford enjoys the distinction of being under the curse of Father Ignatius, which is a splendid testimonial to his soundness in the faith of the New Theology; but the New Theology, as much as there is of it, is fully as contrary to reason as the Old, and much less self-consistent. An ounce of supernaturalism is as bad as a ton. To pick and choose among the miracles is a silly child-play, as long as an Almighty God remains: to him, Virgin Births are quite as easy as Resurrections. It is the supernatural, as such, that is unbelievable, not certain quantities or certain forms of it; and it is from the supernatural, as such, that the people, rich and poor alike, are steadily drifting away. It is the Faith as a whole that is dying. It is Christianity itself that is being renounced, not specific doctrines or dogmas only. Belief came in with ignorance; with knowledge it is going out. It arrived on the back of fear; confidence, the offspring of intelligence, is politely showing it the door. It was born in the night-time, when even the stars were hidden; mid-noon shall witness its interment. Its devotees, its beneficiaries, are naturally doing their utmost to put off the (to them) evil day. They are adopting all manner of means to prolong its life. They would like to turn back the clock. But the trend of things is too strong for them, and their profitable idol is quietly slipping out of their hands.

J. T. LLOYD.

Josephus and the Gospels.—I.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

Sub-Editor of the "Freethinker" and author of the
"Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers," etc.

If any proof were necessary of the uncritical tastes of the majority of English readers, it might be found in the continued issue of editions of Josephus, all containing the famous forgery (*Antiquities* xviii., iii. 3), in which "that learned Jew" is made to certify his belief that Jesus was the Christ, and that he rose again from the dead on the third day as the divine prophets foretold (although, as far as our information goes, they quite omitted to foretell anything of the kind), and that the tribe of Christians "exists to this day."

That the passage is a forgery needs little argument. It has no connection with the preceding or subsequent sections. The phrase "to this day," when he is speaking of the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, is opposed to the method of Josephus. It is not cited by any of the apostolic fathers, nor by Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Arnobius, Minutius Felix, nor Lactantius; although highly important in their disputations both with the Jews and Gentiles. Nor is it hinted at by Origen, Clement of Alexandria, or Tertullian, each of whom was well acquainted with Josephus, and often quoted from his works. Origen, indeed, expressly states of Josephus that he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ. It is first quoted by Eusebius, for whom Niebuhr can find no better name than a "detestable falsifier." The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says: "It is unanimously believed to be, in its present form at least, spurious, and those who contend even for its partial genuineness are decidedly in the minority." De Quincey more emphatically declares that "this passage had long been given up as a forgery by all men not lunatic." Yet the lumbering translation by Whiston continues in demand, more probably for this spurious passage than for any other reason.

We wonder how many of those who boast of the testimony of Josephus to Christ have ever read the section immediately following that passage. It almost seems designed to ridicule the story of the miraculous conception, for it tells how a beautiful

woman named Paulina was enjoyed in a temple by one Mundus, who pretended to be the god Anubis. The Unitarian minister, John Jones, in the sequel to his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, does not scruple to connect this story with that in the first chapter of Matthew. If we do not take it as a satire on the Christian story, it may, at any rate, serve to indicate the trickery of priests in that day.

The absence of all mention by Josephus of the new-born brotherhood of Christians, remarked by the keen insight of De Quincey, has never received sufficient attention. The "monstrosity of this omission," as that fine writer calls it, becomes apparent when we consider his chronological position, extending from A.D. 37 to the end of the first century. His opportunities were complete. He was of royal and sacerdotal lineage. He had studied experimentally the doctrines of the various Jewish sects or schools of philosophy as he preferred to consider them. He had a personal share in "the history of the time, and had access to the works of Nicolaus of Damascus and other historians, as well as to direct documentary and personal evidence. In the opening of the fourteenth book of his *Antiquities*, he declares that he has taken great pains to omit no facts of consequence, "either through ignorance or laziness." He devotes above forty chapters to the time extending from Herod the Great to Pilate. Yet he knows nothing of the alleged facts of the Gospels. He knows nothing of the alleged massacre of children because Herod had heard of the birth of a child with neither family nor fortune to support his claims. He himself was for several years governor of Galilee, the very district where most of the miracles ascribed to Jesus are said to have been performed, yet he gives no particulars of them.

The narratives in the Gospels, if we leave out of consideration the birth stories in Matthew and Luke, begin with the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Luke iii. 1), not more than eight years before the birth of Josephus. His father, Matthias, was in great reputation in Jerusalem at the very time of the alleged ministry and crucifixion of Jesus, and should surely have known something of the preternatural darkness, the earthquake, and rending of the veil of the temple, and the rising of the dead from their graves, and their coming to Jerusalem. Yet Josephus has no information upon these wonderful events. He knows nothing even of the death of Jesus, although he tells us of a false prophet of the Samaritans whom Pilate ordered to be slain. His own connection with Palestine ran abreast with the generation succeeding Christ, that dating from the crucifixion to the destruction of Jerusalem. But he knows nothing of the wonderful work of Paul, Peter, and the other Apostles.

He describes at length all the particular parties and religious fanatics and impostors among the Jews, yet is absolutely ignorant of the Christians, never mentioning them either in his *Wars of the Jews*, written about A.D. 73, or in his *Antiquities*, written about twenty years later. Many Jesuses, three of them high priests, are mentioned by him and their acts recorded, but no Jesus Christ. He dwells on the origin of the Galilean sect founded by Judas of Galilee, and this, he says, was the latest sect which had originated among the Jews. But the mention of Judas, his followers and their doctrines, does not lead him to mention Christ nor the Christians. He appears to be utterly ignorant of a body of men who, as De Quincey says, "should have challenged notice from the very stocks and stones of their birthplace." Had he known of them he would surely have inveighed against them on the same ground as he did against the Galileans for renouncing the custom of the Jews, and, by their fanaticism, giving that nation a bad character among the Romans.

But the question arises whether Josephus did not, by this latest sect of Galileans, intend the Christian. Justin, of Tiberias, as well as Josephus, was in Galilee, and yet neither of these historians knew anything of the Christians. Josephus knew much of Judas of Galilee, and of the sect of Galileans

which he founded, and it is at the least possible that some confusion has arisen. Josephus tells us that they arose at the time of the procuratorship of Coponius (A.D. 6 to 10). Judas, their leader, sought to revive the tradition of a theocracy and re-establish the kingdom of God. He was a teacher as well as a revolutionist, and taught that men should regard God as their only ruler and Lord. The Jewish historian proceeds to say of his followers: "They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor, indeed, do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord."

Origen informs us that Judas was regarded by his followers as the Messiah (Homily on Luke xxv.). Basnage says: "The Romans sent some forces against Judas, and he miserably perished." Possibly his fate was the same as that of his sons James and Simon, who were crucified by order of Tiberius Alexander, procurator (A.D. 47). Josephus ascribes to his sect the origin of all the troubles ending in the destruction of the city and Temple. De Quincey, in his essay on the Essenes, says: "We have little doubt that the Sicarii and the Zealots were both products of the same great sect of Galileans, and that, in an imperfect sense or by tendency, all were Christians." No doubt the current view of Jesus is quite contradictory to the rebellious characters ascribed by Josephus to Judas, but it is not difficult to discern some similar elements in the gospels which, we must bear in mind, were compiled when all hopes of a temporal kingdom were at an end. In the many injunctions to follow him, even to leave the dead to bury the dead for that purpose; in the command to call no man master; in the selection of twelve apostles, who were promised they should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; in the record that the people sought to make him a king; in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the lament over that city "how often would I have gathered your children together"; in the accusation against him that "he stirreth up the people"; in the virtual admission before Pilate; in the inscription over the cross; and in the cry of the disciples after his death, "we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"; those who list may see signs that the legend of Jesus is mixed up with that of a temporal deliverer. Only in John is the statement found that "my kingdom is not of this world."

(To be continued.)

CONSECRATION.

Consecration is, after all, nothing but a priestly trick. What sensible man believes that the Holy Ghost, if such a being exist, is at the beck and call of every Catholic or Protestant bishop? Can the "universal spirit" dwell exclusively in certain places? Can the third person of the Trinity have sunk into such an abject state as to dodge in and out of buildings, according as he is wanted or not? Is there any difference that the nose, or any other sensitive organ, can detect between a consecrated church and an unconsecrated chapel? Can the geologist or the chemist discern any difference between the consecrated and the unconsecrated division in a cemetery? Is the earth affected by priestly mutterings? Do the corpses lie any more peacefully, or decompose any more slowly, for the words pronounced over the mould that covers them? Or is there any appreciable virtue in the consecrated water, with which the Protestant and Catholic are alike baptised, and with which the latter sprinkles himself periodically as a preservative against evil? Reason finds no difference; it is perceived only by Faith, which may be defined as the faculty which enables a man to see what does not exist.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

A chariot will not run on only one wheel: neither, without a man's own labor, will fate bring these things to perfection.—*The Hitopadesa.*

In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find.
—*Shelley.*

Acid Drops.

The Bishop of London's visit to Finsbury Park did not lead to the capture of North London. On the contrary, it appears to have been a fiasco. One letter-writer in the *Daily News* says it "did more harm than good," as the "infidels" had the largest crowd they have ever seen there, with a correspondingly large collection. "The Atheists," this gentleman says, "would like such an exhibition every Sunday." Another correspondent regards it as "a very lamentable fact that the Church, as a whole, has but few men sufficiently trained to meet the atheist."

The Palestine Exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, is declared to be "not a missionary enterprise," but the Bishop of London—who is silly enough for anything—has been puffing it as a sort of antidote to "infidelity." This man actually thinks that a map of Palestine proves the truth of the Bible, and that a model of a Jewish tomb proves the Resurrection. He reminds us of the American who visited Mount Ararat and brought away with him "a stone from the very spot" in order to silence all objectors to the story of the Flood.

At this Palestine Exhibition, there is a model of the Court of the Tabernacle, reproduced with exact dimensions, with the brazen altar, the sixty pillars, the mercy seat, the seven-branched candlestick, and the high priest in his vestments. Everything is there but—Jehovah! It is like "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark.

Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, the eminent Wesleyan preacher, who has returned from a visit to India, tells the story of how an old Hindu came from a distant village to talk with a missionary. The old man thought of becoming a Christian. But suddenly he stopped and asked: "Sahib, if I become a Christian shall I have to get drunk, for I should not like that?" This is too good to be spoilt with words.

"It is a miserable and humiliating thing to say," Mr. Pearse added, "but the only drunken man I have seen on the Indian Continent, has been the British soldier." We won't spoil that either.

Mrs. Francis Campbell, in a recent article on "The Sphinx in the Gutter" in the *Westminster Gazette*, gave the following opinion of missionary work amongst the heathen:—

"Last year, when I was in Morocco, I asked Dr. Rosen, who is, perhaps, the most familiar of all Orientalists, with the Mohammedans, if any are really converted to Christianity, and Dr. Rosen said: 'No; though,' he added, 'some of them take pay to appear so.' And exactly the same applies to the Jew. Not long ago, a Jewish gentleman who is, like many of his nation, deeply concerned for the children, said to me, 'You have missions for Jews. There are some Jews who figure in missionary reports as having been converted; but a Jew can no more change his faith than he can change his skin—he is a Jew always.' And that, after many long years spent among Eastern races, is my own fixed and firm belief. I have seen the missions at work, and I say deliberately, that the vast sums of money sent out of England for the conversion of Jews and Mohammedans, is money wasted."

If this were said in the *Freethinker*, it would be vulgar; indeed, the editor of the *W. G.* is profoundly impressed with the belief (founded on mere ignorance) that this journal is both vulgar and illiterate. But when Mrs. Campbell puts her name to the indictment in the *Westminster*, it becomes perfectly respectable. Of course, its truth is the same in both cases.

A clergyman was questioning a class of boys in an Ancoats school on their religious instruction. After explaining how good it was to avoid occasions of sin, the reverend gentleman asked: "What should a man avoid who is in the habit of getting too much drunk?" And a sharp boy answered: "Please, sir, a policeman."

What a miserable creature is Orchard, the murderer turned informer, who has been edifying the American public with his religious professions in court. He has been converted since his arrest, he has joined the Church, and he has tears at command. Altogether, a finished hypocrite. Of course, he knows he is not going to heaven—at least, not hurriedly; for the authorities know how to take care of informers.

Fiction is said to be in decreasing demand at the public libraries. If the decrease continues it will be a poor look-out for the New Testament.

King Edward is all right now. The Young Men's Christian Associations Conference have sent him a telegram expressing unalterable loyalty and devotion to his Majesty's person and throne.

Field-Marshal Oyama has retired and is living on half pay in a modest house in Tokio. He has gone in for farming. He was induced to do this by a farmer while shooting. "Surely," the former said to him, "you can do something better than that." The great soldier agreed, and acted accordingly. It is to men of this kind that General Booth has been carrying his "Blood and Fire" gospel.

Oxford University is making General Booth a D.C.L. In view of the legendary statements officially circulated respecting the Salvation Army, some people may fancy this means Darned Common Liar. But it doesn't. It means Doctor of Civil Law. And that isn't so strange, after all; for the General's legal knowledge is not to be sneezed at. He got a lot of people to subscribe on the strength of a Trust Deed, which is a legal instrument, and yet is nothing but waste parchment, seeing that nobody has any status under it except William Booth, and that the only person who can call William Booth to account is William Booth himself.

General Booth, immediately on his arrival on Sunday evening, was interviewed by a *Daily Chronicle* representative. Some of the things he said are not worth troubling about. When he speaks of the future of Christianity in Japan he is only playing the prophet—which is always a risky role; witness the cases of the late Dr. Cumming and Prophet Baxter, who couldn't manage to bring about the end of the world though they were always foretelling it. His tribute to the good qualities of the Japanese is another matter. "There are," he said, "no children in Japan who go to school without breakfast, and you never see children with bare feet and not decently dressed, or a woman who is not respectably covered." That is what they are *without* Christianity. What would they be *with* it? The condition of Christian England furnishes the answer.

A comical leading article appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, in reference to Mrs. Besant's lecture on Theosophy in the Queen's Hall. The Secularist was sneered at for "assuming that beyond his own senses there is nothing." Then the writer went on to talk about photography registering millions of heavenly bodies invisible to the naked eye, about a delicate apparatus that registers the heat of a candle a mile and a-half distant, about "X" rays, and telephones, and wireless telegraphy. Evidently he imagines that Secularists have a rooted objection to microscopes and telescopes, and a passionate hatred of spectacles. Certainly there is nothing in all those triumphs of science that he referred to which leads to the "spiritual" world of Mrs. Besant's sentimental lecture and his own ludicrous article.

Mrs. Besant is now the acknowledged leader of the Theosophists. Talking to a *Daily News* interviewer, she spoke of telepathy and said "there may be free communication between mind and mind." It had nothing to do with the physical body. She had come across many people who communicated in that way—"and, of course," she added, "I myself do so frequently." The interviewer respectfully asked for the name of any well-known person with whom she had thus exchanged thoughts. That was a poser. But the lady is up to this sort of difficulty now. "No," she replied, "I am not fond of making statements of that kind without proof. I do not see that it would do any good, and it might make enemies." You see the lady did not hesitate in "making statements" until she was asked for evidence. It was then that she became cautious.

Mrs. Belsborough, of Alderley, was going to church with her husband; a cyclist knocked her down, and she never recovered consciousness. Another case of "Providence."

Two successive paragraphs in one of Monday's newspapers were headed, "Wesleyan Church Burnt Down" and "Suicide of a Rector." This illustrates the watchfulness of "Providence" and the supporting and consolatory power of Christianity.

The Rev. H. Elvet Lewis is a poet, a minor poet it may be, but still a poet of some distinction in the vernacular of Wales. The leading article in the *British Weekly*, for June 20, is from his imaginative pen, and one is bound to pronounce it a lovely poem. Poetic in phraseology, the writer clearly intended, and labored hard, to make it; but,

poetic in *idea*, he as certainly did not wish the reader to take it. As nothing but a poem, the article is very, *very* beautiful; but in dealing with it here, we must have sole regard to the author's controlling *motive* in composing it.

The article is entitled, "The Holy Spirit as Soul-Winner." Now, mark you, Mr. Lewis is uncompromisingly orthodox, and to him, arrayed in the complete armor of orthodoxy, the Holy Spirit is the *sole* winner of souls. That is the Holy Spirit's profession, his one business in life; it is also a monopoly which he guards with jealous care. "The Spirit is the one soul-winner," says Mr. Lewis, "there can be no other." Let us emphasise the last clause: "*There can be no other.*" Ministers, evangelists, and revivalists, are called soul-winners. Dr. Torrey is said to be the arch soul-winner of the present day, and Gipsy Smith was recently described as one of the most successful soul-winners in Christendom just now. But Mr. Lewis assures us that there can be no other soul-winner than the Holy Spirit, in which case, Dr. Torrey, Gipsy Smith, and Evan Roberts must take a back seat. In reality, all sky-pilots are vain pretenders, arrogant usurpers of Divine powers and glory.

Such is Mr. Lewis's teaching in the article under consideration. Has it never struck the poet-preacher's mind that, in calling the Holy Spirit "the one soul-winner," he is guilty of heaping infinite dishonor and endless guilt on his heavenly head? If there be a Holy Spirit, and if soul-winning be his business, his proper name is Vile Scoundrel, Black Fiend, for hell is crowded with countless myriads of lost souls in consequence of his not attending to his business! Has Mr. Lewis never thought of this and trembled? If his teaching be true, there are at least five millions in London alone whose souls are dead in trespasses and sins because the Holy Ghost neglects his work. Heathendom, past and present, with all the unmentionable horrors, cruelties, beastialities, and abominations which preachers are so fond of attributing to it, ought to lie as an all-crushing burden of guilt on the conscience of "the one soul-winner."

Yet let Secularists take care. The Spirit may have designs upon them, and may startle them any moment by the exercise of his converting power. "No one is secure from his surprises. What though a man should build his castle of unbelief with thick walls and challenging towers, boasting himself safe from God and all the armaments of the Invisible, can he venture to sing his revised *Nunc Dimittis*? By no means." Let the whole Freethought party tremble in its shoes! Any moment the Holy Spirit may win all the souls within it, and confer upon it the new and glorious name of The Zion Pilgrimage Party! There is no telling what miracles *may* happen. In any case, it is wise to be on the alert!

A Boston man directed that his corpse should be cremated and the ashes mixed with sufficient cement to form a solid stone—which was buried in Roxbury cemetery. Fancy the adventures of that block when Gabriel blows the resurrection trumpet!

A week of prayer is announced for the conversion of Japan. It is a special advertisement of the missionary business. Nothing more. Besides, if prayer will convert Japan, what need is there for missionaries?

There is hope for the conversion of China yet. Mr. Aked baptised seven Chinamen the other day in the Fifth Avenue Church, New York. A millionaires' Church should be able to afford that performance once or twice a week, for Chinamen can't be so very expensive while there are four hundred millions of them.

Mr. Smuts explains the Transvaal Education Bill. It seems to be very sensible and liberal up to a point. Religious instruction is to be confined to simple Bible teaching. "Dogma," we read, "will not be permitted." Mr. Smuts forgets that the inspiration of the Bible is itself a dogma.

Nonconformist greed for "simple Bible teaching" in all "provided" schools at the nation's expense is—precisely as we expected—driving Churchmen towards "the secular solution." The *Church Times* has now definitely committed itself to the policy of Secular Education. After pointing out that the Premier's supposed idea of "equitable provision for all religions alike" is impracticable, our High Church contemporary says:—

"The only reasonable alternative is to leave the provision of religious teaching entirely to voluntary effort. This is the solution which we advocate, and we now claim for it the support of the Prime Minister." Another step towards "The Only Way."

The *Christian World* is vexed with the *Church Times*. Our Nonconformist contemporary really believes in Secular Education under the rose, but principle is one thing, and party policy is another thing. So it chips at the High Churchmen by saying that "if they cannot have their particular 'ism' taught at the public expense in the elementary schools, they are determined that no religious instruction at all shall be given there." Quite so. If the High Churchmen can't have the prize, the Nonconformists shan't have it! Isn't that natural? Church and Chapel both want the same thing—and it isn't a thing that can be divided. Church says, "Well, if I can't have it, you shan't have it." Chapel answers, "Oh, the villain!" Both are rogues—and one is a hypocrite.

We have often said that the Nonconformists would never agree to "the right of entry"—that is, allowing the ministers of all the various denominations to enter the elementary schools at certain times and impart religious instruction to the particular children whose parents wish it—because the Nonconformists know that, while the Anglican men of God would often do this work, the Dissenting men of God would not do it at all. This view of ours is borne out by a significant piece of news from Cardiff. It appears that an arrangement was made for free Church voluntary services in the workhouse, the Free Church ministers agreeing to take two week-night services and one Sunday afternoon service each per year; but this arrangement has broken down through the failure of these gentlemen to keep their engagements. Now the Nonconformist Ministerial Union has requested the Guardians to appoint a Nonconformist paid chaplain, and this has been done at a cost of £50 a year. These are the gentlemen who talk about the "holy divorce" between religion and the State. No wonder the "Church" Guardians laughed at the "failure of the voluntary system."

Hampstead Borough Council has instructed a committee to draft by-laws dealing with street noises, and especially with organ-grinding. By what is called "a snap vote," the words "church bells" were added to the instruction. How often has a sick man echoed Othello's cry of "Silence that dreadful bell!" There will probably be less occasion for such echoes in future at Hampstead.

An extraordinarily small quantity of effective brain appears to be necessary in a pulpit. Take a leading preacher like the Rev. R. F. Horton. This gentleman has been holding forth on "Our Social Conditions." He referred to the case of an English workman in London, who failed to find employment, and died of sheer starvation; and to the opposite case of a rich man spending £1,000 on a single dinner. "No man out of a madhouse," the preacher exclaimed, "can suppose that that is the will of God." But if there be a God, no man out of a madhouse ought to suppose that it was *not* the will of God. Nothing can possibly happen *against* the will of Omnipotence. We are bound to conclude, therefore, that the Deity (always supposing the existence of such a being) starved the workman and gorged the rich man, and then set the Rev. R. F. Horton preaching about it for the divine amusement. And the moral is that preachers can't think, but can only talk.

Rev. R. J. Campbell prefaces his City Temple sermons with a prayer. These one-sided conversations with the Deity are of inordinate length. The one before us—reported in the *Christian Commonwealth*—fills a whole long column of the smallest type. Couldn't the reverend gentleman let the Deity off easier? But the truth is, perhaps, that these outpourings are really addressed to the congregation. We might call them, in music-hall language, an extra turn.

The sermon that followed the aforesaid prayer, contained some better things than the supplication did—which was all treacherous sentimentalism. "We have spent years and years," Mr. Campbell said, "in wrangling over the particular brand of creed which is to be taught to the children of the nation in our public schools, and we are only just beginning to wake up to the fact that it may be as well to inquire, in the first place, whether these same children are properly housed and fed. If all the energy that has been wasted in ecclesiastical quarrels during the last five years on the subject of religious education had been directed towards awakening the national conscience to the duty of caring for neglected and underfed children, the problem would have been solved long ago." The wonder is that Mr. Campbell doesn't see that such an utterance is a condemnation of Christianity. The clergy yawn and rub their eyes when other people are up and doing.

Mr. Campbell himself has the fatal Christian inability to think efficiently. The really important point he has

naturally overlooked. What the squabbles of the Churches have prevented is the proper education of all the children in England. The problem of neglected and underfed children is totally different. It belongs to the general question of social reform. And it is obvious that this problem, as well as many others, could have been attacked with far better promise of success, if the great mass of the children had been properly educated.

"Labor not for the meat that perisheth," said Jesus Christ. The *Christian Commonwealth* is an organ of the "New Theology," and goes in for Jesus Christ, the whole Jesus Christ, and nothing but Jesus Christ. Yet it gives its readers "Household Hints," and one of them is headed "To Reduce Superfluous Flesh."

Reading through that superfluous flesh "hint," we found it to be simply a disguised advertisement of somebody's fat-reducing process. All the other paragraphs in the same "Household Hints" column were of the same business character. This sort of thing would be quite wrong, of course, in a Freethought paper; it seems to be all right in Christian papers, bent on making the best of *both* worlds.

The following travelling sketch appeared recently in the *Manchester Guardian* :—

"When he got into the compartment, which was already nearly full (writes 'D. E.'), he shut the door in a leisurely fashion and pulled up the window, standing, meanwhile, on my foot. Therefore, the impression he left was not pleasing. Then he subsided heavily into a seat and gazed round with watery eyes. 'Do any—of—you—ladies mind—if I smoke?' he asked, pulling out a stumpy and blackened clay. 'Now my missis—my missis says to me, "Ye can *chew*, ye can *chew* as much as ye like, but ye musn't smoke." No; no smoking allowed in our house.' He meditated for a few moments, and absent-mindedly put back his pipe. Suddenly he began again: 'Miss, have you ever been to Colwyn Bay?' No one replied. 'Miss, have you ever spent a holiday in Colwyn Bay?' Still no reply. 'Have you ever spent your holiday in Colwyn Bay?' The occupants of the carriage were apparently engrossed in reading. A girl of about sixteen sat shaking with laughter and holding a large story-book open before her. Leaving the subject of Colwyn Bay, he made a grab at the book, saying sternly, 'Is that the Bible?' 'No, it isn't. Leave go!' said the girl. 'Then it ought to be. At our house we read nothing but the Bible. Nothing of that sort (pointing contemptuously at her book) allowed in our house.... You don't know what you're reading,' he added, with great penetration; 'you don't see a word you're reading. If you lived at our house you wouldn't get any of that reading there.' Here the train drew up at a station, and although it was not my destination, I dismounted with the rest and entered another carriage."

Broughton (Manchester) is in an awful condition. Out of a population of 74,000 odd the adherents of every religious creed only number 6,850. A local man of God, the Rev. C. H. Watkins, asks people to pray for Broughton. It seems to have gone too far for that. Mr. Watkins told a *Daily Dispatch* interviewer that the "indifference" of the people there was "appalling." "They will listen to you," he said, "when you call upon them, but you make no impression on them. If they objected to dogmatic religion, if they were troubled with doubts, there would be hope for them. They are simply indifferent." Of course, the reverend gentleman, in saying hope for them, means hope for the clergy. It is their prospect that is so depressing.

Mr. Justice Phillimore, at the Essex Assizes, has sentenced John Whale, one of the Peculiar People, to two months' imprisonment for "neglecting his child" by not calling in a doctor during its fatal sickness, but acting instead upon the instructions given in the Bible. The man was put back after the jury's verdict to see if he would promise to give his children medical aid in future. This he quietly but firmly refused to do, and the judge proceeded to pass sentence. He admitted that the man was of good character and moral life, but said that he was silly and unreasonable. Well, if people are to be sent to prison for being silly and unreasonable, there will have to be an immense increase of accommodation. Mr. Justice Phillimore might find *himself* on the wrong side of a cell door. For he professes to believe what the Peculiar People believe, and is, therefore, as silly and unreasonable as they are, only he has less courage and consistency.

Gibbons, who led the workless workers' march to London some time ago, has played many parts. He was for many years a public performer, and the old passion seems to have overcome him again, for he has joined the Salvation Army. He is now marching to heaven; some say, with the unemployed still.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

To Correspondents.

- GAMBRIW.—Why trouble your head about Christians who solemnly ask whether the late Colonel Ingersoll's four-year old daughter pinned a flower on his coat, and whether he lifted her up, kissed her, and said, "God bless you, my little child"? Do you think that Christians of that calibre would ever become Freethinkers? Let them slide, and attend to more promising material. The question is sheer silliness. Besides, Ingersoll's daughters are women, and the younger of the two has a son about seventeen years of age; so you can guess how up-to-date the "four-year old daughter" story is.
- D. J. D.—As you give only initials and no address, we are obliged to acknowledge your response to Mr. de Caux's letter in this column. We note your pleasant wish that the two could be twenty.
- C. J.—You also give only initials and no address, so we must say here—"received with thanks."
- J. DE B.—Thanks for cuttings.
- H. A. GILES.—We have passed your letter on to our shop manager, who will attend to it. Pleased to hear that you have been supplied regularly by Wymans, but others experience difficulty, and we are quite unable to understand the policy of that firm in relation to the *Freethinker*. Sometimes it is a bigoted manager who is responsible for all the mischief.
- RICHARD HARRIS.—Glad to have your interesting letter, but please don't move further in the matter you refer to.
- A WOMAN FREETHINKER (Bristol).—We suppose you wish to remain anonymous. Thanks.
- ABRACADABRA.—We have tried pretty well everything within the limit of our means to push the *Freethinker* along, including what you suggest; and we are persuaded that the personal interest of our readers is our best advertising asset. If they will go on steadily introducing the paper to friends and acquaintances we shall see daylight yet. A little press advertising on special occasions does good; we advertised last week's number a bit. The case is not as "disheartening" as you fancy. Our circulation keeps improving; last week's was the highest of late records; but the process is slow, if sure, and we need all the patience we learnt in waiting twelve months for a door to open—in Holloway Gaol.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- G. B. EYLES writes: "I am very pleased with the *Freethinker*, which I bought last Thursday evening in Hyde Park, and I hope to have it every week in future."
- J. A. REID.—There will be these differences of opinion, at any rate for a long while. Sir Oliver Lodge seems to us perfectly serious and sincere.
- J. JONES.—Pleased to have such a veteran's tribute to what you are good enough to call our "great ability and ardent devotion." At your age words do not fall lightly from the pen.
- W. CROMACK.—Glad to have your encouraging letter. We are quite satisfied that half-a-dozen leading Freethinkers could govern England better than the pious politicians who get the job in their hands. Three-fourths of the worst evils could be swept away by the exercise of a little common sense, and plenty of courage and good feeling.
- W. BRADBURN.—A. J. Waldron as a scholar is a ghastly joke, and Waldronites remind us of Milton's—"within the lowest deep a lower deep."
- E. ROBERTSHAW.—Sent as requested. Thanks. If our readers will do a little missionary work "on their own"—and they will soon come to enjoy it—our circulation will show the good results.
- T. HOPKINS.—Thanks for humorous letter and enclosure. We note your opinion that "the difference between religion and disease is the difference between cabbage-water and the smell thereof." The joke about the Englishman and the Frenchman is first-rate. We shall probably find it handy some day. Glad you considered last week's *Freethinker* "cheery." But did you ever know us downhearted?
- W. J. CATON says he brought last week's *Freethinker* to the notice of a lady friend, and she expressed the greatest surprise, as she did not think that such a paper existed. On reading it she was delighted, and is going to pass it on to several friends of hers. We are sending a free copy to the lady for six weeks, and we once more urge upon our friends (who should be as many as our readers) to push the paper along in this way.
- G. WOOLSTON, 27 Sydney-street, Brighton, is anxious to hear from local "saints" who will join in forming an active Branch of the National Secular Society. He says there is room for good work there.
- JOHN HUTCHISON.—We had already written a paragraph on the matter. Your letter should do good.
- G. ROBERTS.—Thanks for cuttings—also for letter.
- GEORGE JACON.—No invention of ours, but the common idea of German newspapers.
- NO NAME.—Received with thanks.

T. D.—Thanks for the Professor James book, which we are glad to have.

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

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has his faults—perhaps we should say the defects of his qualities—but no one ever accused him of cowardice; in fact, he likes shocking people, and commonly indulges his inclination. We are not surprised, therefore, that he mentions the *Freethinker*, and that not disparagingly, in one of the lively Prefaces in his new book of plays. Here is the passage in which this journal and its editor figure:—

"Popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its chief sensation a sanguinary execution after torture, for its central mystery an insane vengeance bought off by a trumpety expiation. But there is a nobler and profounder Christianity which affirms the sacred mystery of Equality, and forbids the glaring futility and folly of vengeance, often politely called punishment or justice. The gibbet part of Christianity is tolerated. The other is criminal folly. Connoisseurs in irony are well aware of the fact that the only editor in England who denounces punishment as radically wrong, also repudiates Christianity; calls his paper *The Freethinker*; and has been imprisoned for two years for blasphemy."

Mr. Shaw's memory is at fault on the last point. Mr. Foote suffered only one year's imprisonment. He doesn't want to take credit for two, or to double the crime of the Christians who imprisoned him. The one year was bad enough—for him and for them. That twelve months' suffocation in a narrow prison cell undoubtedly flawed his superb physical constitution. On the other hand, the decadence of what Mr. Shaw calls "popular Christianity" has been going on more rapidly since 1883.

Since the previous paragraph was in type we have received a presentation copy of *John Bull's Other Island*, with the following inscription:—"To G. W. Foote, the hero of page 182, from G. Bernard Shaw." It is a pleasant display of one of Mr. Shaw's undoubted virtues—good-temper under criticism.

There is an article by Mr. Foote on "Those Wicked Sunday Schools," in the current number of *John Bull*. It was written at Mr. Bottomley's special request, and deals with the suppression of Socialist Sunday Schools by the "Moderate" majority on the London County Council; these schools being obnoxious, of course, because their teachings was so unorthodox; in fact, they were stigmatised as "Atheist Sunday Schools." Mr. Foote was able to say something, incidentally, about the long-continued persecution of the Birmingham Secularists, on somewhat similar lines. And as the press—including the Socialist press—has been so obstinately silent on this matter, we hope Freethinkers will take the opportunity to push *John Bull* round this week. When we can get a hearing it is well to make the most of it.

In memory of Miss Susan B. Anthony, the well-known American advocate of woman's rights, the sum of £12,000 has been raised. This sum will secure the £2,500 a year for the next five years, necessary for carrying on the work she so ably superintended. Miss Anthony was a Freethinker; and helped in writing the outspoken "Women's Bible."

Ingersoll's *House of Death*, which has not been obtainable for some time, is now on sale again at our publishing office.

The *tabu* of Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (a book that even Cardinal Newman praised) by the London County Council, suggested some pertinent questions in last week's *Academy*. The following passage will interest our readers:—

"To discuss whether 'immoral subjects' ought 'to be brought to the notice of boys and girls' is gross hypocrisy in people who make no protest whatever when the nasty-minded puritan thrusts into their hands the family scandals of Absalom and of the patriarch Judah, on the pretext that the 'open Bible is a heritage of the Reformation.' It will be time for our educators to consider the moral effect of *Mary Barton* when they have screwed up their courage to say what they think of the suitability of large portions of the Holy Scriptures for use in schools."

The world moves. What was "blasphemy" in the *Freethinker*, a quarter of a century ago, is now being said right and left. And we are not jealous. We are only glad.

The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, has voted a grant of £30 to the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society, in recognition of its long and hard fight against municipal persecution, and as an encouragement in its future battle against the same sinister influence.

We print a few more extracts from letters received by Mr. de Caux or sent direct to Mr. Foote, just in order, as we said, to show that the editor of the *Freethinker* has warm friends as well as zealous detractors.

W. P. Kennedy hopes Mr. Foote will "return refreshed to his noble work." Sam and Lizzie (Manchester), as two good friends of the movement wish to be referred to, express—

"A sincere wish that you may long live to fight uncompromisingly in the cause of intellectual freedom."

W. P. Adamson says:—

"I never had the pleasure of meeting or seeing you, but I know you have most unselfishly devoted yourself to the greatest but most unpopular of causes—the real Redemption of Humanity. You have faithfully carried out the trust reposed in you by the great Charles Bradlaugh."

J. Thackray says:—

"What would the Freethought party be without the *Freethinker*? I think it possible I am your oldest reader. I picked up No. 2 in an omnibus, and have never missed a single copy since. It was a red-letter day in my life. I felt as if I had discovered, not a new star, but a new sun."

John Grange, who used to be a valuable Freethought advocate himself until business absorbed his time and energies, says:—

"I cheerfully respond with my mite. Mr. Foote, as you well say, possesses exceptional abilities. Long, long ago he dedicated these to the service of Freethought. From his mission he has never swerved. Come what may, he faces his foe. His logic is trenchant, his language forceful and lucid, and hidden principles are made manifest to the commonest intelligence by his pen-pictures. Verbosity is an utter stranger to his literary style. Thought pervades every sentence. Each word carries its due weight. Combining his qualities of head and heart, he is a martyr-master to whom Freethought owes more than it can ever pay."

Richard Green says:—

"The only deduction from my pleasure in sending is the feeling that it is but a poor and inadequate return for the instruction and enjoyment your writings afford me."

A Bristol lady reader (we don't know that we are at liberty to print her name) says:—

"I have taken the *Freethinker* for very many years, and always pass it on by post or leave it at railway stations or other places. I was speaking to a friend of mine who had never seen one; he asked me where it might be got, and I am sending him this week's with its excellent reply to Sir Oliver Lodge."

We hope the sale of the *Freethinker* will be pushed at the open-air meetings in London during the summer. Mr. Foote has done gratuitous service as President of the N. S. S. for more than seventeen years, yet there are some London Branches that don't seem to think they ought to take any trouble to sell this paper at their meetings. When a Branch speculates in three copies, and nearly a hundred times as many are sold at two non-Branch meetings, there is evidently something wrong somewhere.

The Scotch Churches in Council.

It has been jestingly remarked that theological disputation forms the favorite intellectual recreation of Scotchmen. Whether it be true or not that the modern Scotsman has any close acquaintance with theology or metaphysics, certainly the Kirk and its affairs still bulk largely in the public eye. As witness the elaborate reports of the proceedings of the General Assemblies provided by the leading Scotch dailies, and the large amount of space constantly devoted by them to controversy on religious matters.

The annual May Meetings of the three principal divisions of the Protestant Church in Scotland—which meetings are held simultaneously in the Scottish capital—are of outstanding importance, if we may judge from the prominence given to them by the newspapers. The Assemblies—as these gatherings of clerical and lay delegates from each of the three Churches are called—are prominent features of the religious side of life in Scotland. The Church of Scotland, the United Free, and that faithful if antediluvian remnant which continues to style itself the Free Church, have once again all three met in their respective council chambers and discussed ecclesiastical affairs. The nett result of the combined clerical and lay deliberations has been of small moment, save perhaps as affording additional indication of how the wind is blowing in theological circles in Scotland. Apart from the discussions at the Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland, anent the drawing up of a new and more flexible formula of adherence, to be subscribed to by candidates for ordination, the most significant incident has been the appointment—by the United Free Church—of Dr. Marcus Dods to the Principalship of New College. It is not so very long since Professor Dods was under grave suspicion of heterodoxy, and one must regard his election to the Principalship as an intimation that the United Free Church is disposed to countenance that "progressive theology"—to quote a phrase some of the clergy find so convenient—which Dr. Dods, in his occupancy of the chair of New Testament Exegesis, did not a little to popularise.

For many months, the chief Glasgow daily (in many respects an admirably conducted paper) has, from time to time, been urging the Church of Scotland to face the question of creed revision honestly. It has pointed out repeatedly that the pews are in advance of the pulpit. It has warned the Church that she cannot indefinitely postpone the adjustment of her Confession of Faith necessary to bring it into line with the thought of the age. It had strong hopes (much too sanguine, as has been shown in the sequel) that the recent Assembly would grapple frankly with the issue, and in a leading article on the "Formula" debate it confessed its disappointment with the result. The Assembly labored, and brought forth a not very formidable mouse. The Fathers and brethren of the Kirk adroitly evaded any recasting of the stereotyped official creed, but they moved in the direction of making it easier for the candidate for holy orders to accept the Confession. The formula of adherence, as approved by the Assembly, is now simple in construction and does not commit the subscriber to every line of the Confession, but only to a belief in "the reformed faith therein set forth."

Theologians are experts in the art of juggling with words and phrases. Quite a considerable section of the Church of Scotland Assembly was desirous that the Formula should be so drawn up as to leave an intellectual loophole. It was proposed that adherence should only be demanded to the *substance* of the doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith. There was some talk of the distinction between the word "substance" when understood in a scholastic sense and the same word when used as a colloquial expression. But, to the plain man, its ambiguity is very evident. In fact, the word "substance," when applied to a credal document, is so indefinite that

the widest latitude of interpretation can be indulged in if one is gifted with the necessary subtlety of intellect, and—one may add—if one is sufficiently unscrupulous. In the course of the discussion, it was aptly described as a vague term having much power to loose and little to bind. To a layman—Lord Balfour of Burleigh—belongs the credit of securing for the newly-drafted Formula such approach to rigidity and straightforwardness as it contains. In accordance with established usage, the amended Formula has to be referred to the various Presbyteries for their consent or otherwise. Which means that the matter will again come before the General Assembly next year.

Few who compare the theology of the Scottish Churches at the present day with the popular theology of a few generations back, could forbear smiling at the audacious allusion of Dr. M'Crrie, Moderator of the United Free Church, to the mutability of the State and the unchangeableness of the Church. No wonder the *Glasgow Herald* retorted bluntly in the following words:—

"It is no less true that the Church is in a state of change, and that, consequently, she has suffered from the State's unchanging adherence to the laws of trusts and contracts. Ecclesiastics must realise that although they are at liberty to square somewhat brutal facts with high and dry theories about Church and State by any word-jugglery that pleases them, the plain man is tired of that kind of thing, and wishes them to find some way of reconciling the world to the Church."

We may wish them joy of the latter task.

It is an amazing circumstance (or is it not?) that clergymen cannot be brought to recognise the truth and speak it. Any ordinary man knows well—and the laymen in the Churches know quite well—that the current interpretation placed upon scriptural teachings and the ancient confessions of faith differs widely from the interpretation of earlier days. Yet clergymen persist in talking as if the Church had never moved from her original standpoint, and as if the Church's presentation of religious truth had never varied. This pretension of immutability is not far removed—if at all—from sheer dishonesty. It is not possible even for the Christian clergy to remain permanently incapable of intellectual development, though many of them strive their hardest. It is true they have—as a body—lost all title to be considered leaders of public opinion—if they ever possessed such a title. Their tendency is always to lag behind. They lead public opinion in the same way as the tender of a railway engine leads the train when the engine has been reversed. But being part of the train, they cannot help advancing, however little they may contribute to the motive power.

The clergy must know very well that unchangeableness is no more a characteristic of the Church than it is of any other institution. She digests new ideas more slowly; that is all. But she cannot avoid swallowing them sooner or later. Like an invalid with a weak stomach, she puts off taking her medicine as long as possible, but the obnoxious draught must go down. And the pretence that the modern Church preaches the same faith as that of our forefathers is merely an attempt to save the clerical face. It would never do to admit frankly that past generations of clerics were wrong. That would be tantamount to declaring that the dead and gone Doctors of Divinity knew no more about the Divine than the average human biped does. And, inferentially, it might suggest to the general public that the present race of pulpiteers and theological professors have just as little authority to speak on such matters. So the situation is glossed over with magniloquent and specious references to the wider vision that has been graciously vouchsafed to us in matters spiritual during these latter days, and we are counselled to respond with reverent gladness to the guiding touch of the God of Truth.

One noteworthy fact emerged from the Assembly deliberations, and that is, that even in Godly Scotland the Churches are not self-supporting. If it were not for special endowments and the donations

of a few wealthy members the Churches could not pay their way. And when people lose taste for paying for their religion, the sincerity of their belief in its utility is more than doubtful. Out of a total of 1,050 congregations connected with the United Free Church, 700 are not self-sustaining. Well might Dr. Ross Taylor, in bringing forward the report on the Sustentation and Augmentation Funds, remark that it was difficult to see how 350 congregations, after sustaining ordinances amongst themselves, were adequately to help the 700 which are not self-sustaining. Of course, the United Free is in peculiarly straightened circumstances just now owing to the tying up of its funds through its litigation with the "Wee" Free. But this only emphasises the fact that the current ordinary income of the Church is not sufficient for its needs. The average Scotchman is proverbial for his frugality, and it is not surprising if he considers that modern Protestantism scarcely offers him value for his money. It is men like Baird, Overtoun, and Coats who keep the Churches on their feet in Scotland. These representatives of plutocracy are doubtless well satisfied that their benefactions to the Churches are of the nature of well-invested capital. It is all to their advantage that preachers of the gospel of patience, poverty, and humility should be planted over the country to blindfold the people and dissuade them from asking the why and the wherefore of things.

The need for more money was a general plaint at the Assemblies. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, in his closing address, referred to a problem confronting the Church, the gravity of which, he thought, she had not estimated. In recent years, there has been a great decline in the supply of candidates for the "holy ministry." For some time past, the number of entrants into the divinity halls, year by year, has barely equalled one-half of the average annual pulpit vacancies. The Moderator said he could well believe that men were deterred by the prospect of poverty. How was it possible for the clergy to live on the miserable stipends offered them, many under two hundred pounds, comparatively few over three hundred pounds, a year?

It is very certain that hundreds of thousands in this country—we might say millions—would be exceedingly glad to receive a regular assured income of two or three hundred pounds a year. And besides, what are we to think of Christians who are deterred from serving the Lord by monetary considerations? It is admitted by the Established Church Moderator that the present cash inducement is inadequate to secure a steady supply of ministers. Yet if it were suggested by an Atheist that men turn to the Church for the sake of a genteel livelihood, and prefer a lay calling when such livelihood is not furnished by the Church, it would probably be taken as an insult. Yet it appears to be just the plain, unvarnished truth in the matter. Make the pulpit sufficiently attractive financially and there will be no dearth of occupants—of a kind. Of a kind is said advisedly, for the Moderator also commented on the deficient education received by embryo clergymen. He declared the Church lost many who would have strengthened and adorned the ranks of her clergy. It is quite evident that amongst the clergy, as amongst the laity, the Church is face to face with the same difficulty—how to thoroughly educate men and yet retain their allegiance to the Church. Education (in the broadest sense of the word) and faith do not run well together in harness. Those who obtain an occasional peep behind the scenes in clerical life have more than a suspicion that many clergymen who once gave their assent to the Confession of Faith are now little better than Agnostics.

The Assembly debates would be incomplete without a discussion on the prospect of the reunion of the Churches. This subject was brought forward both at the Established and at the United Free Assemblies. Strong hopes were entertained in many quarters that this year the way would be paved for a working amalgamation between the two bodies. The prospects seemed favorable. There has been a union

of the Calcutta Missions of the two Churches—partly on grounds of economy and partly to avoid further scandalising the natives by the spectacle of two competing bodies preaching an identical doctrine. And there has been a joint Conference on Sabbath Observance, where—to quote a local critic—the two Churches vied with each other in their zeal for compelling everybody to spend the Sabbath after the fashion approved by them. The unanimity of the Churches on the Sabbath Observance question is most edifying. But a comprehensive scheme of Church union seems to be far off still. The loaves and fishes constitute a stumbling-block. The debate in the United Free Assembly showed that the leaders of that body hold disestablishment of the Church of Scotland to be a vital pre-requisite of union between the Churches. On the other hand, at the closing proceedings of the Church of Scotland Assembly the Moderator (Dr. Mitford Mitchell) asked that the United Free Church should discontinue its agitation for disestablishment, and indicated pretty plainly that the Church of Scotland had no present intention of throwing the endowments to “the moles and bats.” Freethinkers are more than sympathetic with any genuine demand for a severance between Church and State from wherever it comes. Otherwise, we may heartily wish that the “differences” between the Churches should continue with unabated virulence. Such differences constitute a striking object-lesson in the value of Christian precepts, and help to bring about religion’s undoing.

GEO. SCOTT.

Martin Luther.

LIBERTY of conscience is not the natural fruit of the Reformation, but an indirect and unintended result. Nor is liberty of conscience a reality in any part of the German Empire. Christians are allowed to differ among themselves, but Freethinkers are prosecuted for dissenting alike from Catholic and Protestant. Since the present Emperor’s accession there have been many blasphemy prosecutions, sometimes for what would be regarded in other countries as very mild expressions of disbelief. Several men and women have been sentenced to severe penalties for exercising the right of free speech, which, in the land of Goethe, Heine, Strauss and Schopenhauer, is still confined to professed Christians.

The Reformation, in fact, was a superficial movement. Except for its moral revolt against the sale of indulgences, it touched no deep and durable principle. It merely substituted an infallible Bible for an infallible Church. Differences of opinion crept into the Protestant fold, but that was an accident, arising from the varied and discordant nature of the Bible itself. Every new Protestant sect had to fight as strenuously for its right to exist as ever Martin Luther fought against the Catholic Church. Protestantism, in short, was one priesthood saying to another priesthood, “We are right and you are wrong.” The Catholic Church had an immense advantage in its central organisation; the Protestant Church could only operate from different points; hence it was unable to bring about the same uniformity.

The movement that was not superficial was the scientific and humanist movement, of which the Reformation was, in a certain sense, an episode. Italy and France did more for the world than Germany. Martin Luther was a great fighter, but not a more heroic one than Giordano Bruno. Melancthon was not so important a man as Galileo. Rabelais even, with all his dirt and jesting, was more in the stream of progress than Luther, and far more than Calvin. In the long run, it is knowledge and ideas that rule the world. Luther was not great in knowledge, and certainly not great in ideas. He was a born fighter and a strong character. His proper

place is among the heroic figures of history. He was a man of leading, but scarcely a man of light.

Luther was violently opposed to the scientific movement. He called Copernicus an old fool. He would hear nothing against the accepted Biblical theory of the universe. Genesis was to him, as well as to the Pope, the beginning and the end of sound science. Nor was he more friendly to philosophy. Draper truly asserts that the leaders of the Reformation “were determined to banish philosophy from the Church.” Aristotle was vilified by Luther as “truly a devil, a horrid calumniator, a wicked sycophant, a prince of darkness, a real Apollyon, a beast, a most horrid impostor on mankind, a public and professed liar, a goat, a complete epicure, this twice execrable Aristotle.” Such was Luther’s style in controversy. We commend it to the attention of Protestants who rail at the *Freethinker*.

Liberty of conscience is a principle of which Luther had no conception. He claimed the right to think against the Pope; he denied the right of others to think against himself. His attitude towards the Anabaptists was fiendish. During the Peasants’ War he urged the authorities to exterminate the rebels, to “stab, kill and strangle them without mercy.” Melancthon taught that heretics “ought to be restrained by the sword.” Luther likewise declared that whoever denied even one article of the Protestant faith should be punished severely. Referring to a false teacher, he exclaimed, “Drive him away as an apostle of hell; and if he does not flee, deliver him up as a seditious man to the executioner.”

Hallam, Buckle, Lecky and all reputable historians, agree that the Protestant party held the same principle of persecution as the Catholics. It was not disputed that death was the proper punishment of obstinate heresy. The only dispute was—which were the heretics and who should die?

Luther’s influence was very great in England, as Calvin’s was in Scotland, and the leaders of the Reformation in our own country had no doubt as to the justice of killing men for a difference of opinion. Cranmer taught that heretics were first to be excommunicated; if that made no impression on them they were to suffer death. It satisfies one sense of the fitness of things that Cranmer himself perished at the stake. Beacon taught that the duty of magistrates with regard to heretics was to punish them—“yea, and also to take them out of this life.” This same Beacon called upon the temporal rulers to “be no longer the pope’s hangmen.” He preferred their being the hangmen of Protestantism. Latimer himself said of the Anabaptists who were executed, “Well, let them go!” Bishop Jewel, the great apologist of the Protestant Church of England, in answering Harding the Jesuit, replies in this way to the charge of being of the brotherhood of Servetus, David George and Joan of Kent: “We detected their heresies, and not you. We arraigned them; we condemned them. We put them to the execution of the laws. It seemeth very much to call them our brothers, because we burnt them.”

Calvin held the same persecuting doctrine. All who opposed him were dealt with ruthlessly. He was a veritable Pope of Geneva. His treatment of Servetus was infamous. But so universal was the principle on which Calvin acted, that even the mild Melancthon called the cruel roasting of Servetus at a slow fire “a pious and memorable example for all posterity.”

Protestantism boasts of having asserted the right of private judgment. It never did anything of the kind. Not a single leader of the Reformation ever asserted such a principle. Erasmus did, though not in decisive language; but Erasmus never belonged to the Protestant Church, and his humanity, no less than his philosophy, brought upon him the vituperation of Luther. The hero of Protestantism did not intend the consequences of his revolt against Rome. He would have been appalled at the thought of them. He made a breach, for his own purposes, in the great

wall of faith. He did not anticipate that others would widen it, or that the forces of reason would march through and occupy post after post. He simply did his own stroke of work, and we do not judge him by later standards. We only object to the extravagance of Protestant laudation.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will it seem an impertinence if I ask Atheists to freshen up their knowledge of biology? If they would take the trouble to glance at the recent work of the experimental school of Zoologists—men like T. H. Morgan, Loeb, Driesch, Herbst—they would discover that the Darwinian theory of Natural Selection is practically discarded as a factor in the formation of new species. This, of course, does not mean that Evolution is disproved; on the contrary, we are getting (slowly) a real understanding of the process.

Atheism is so sound and philosophical a doctrine that we do not require it be bolstered up by obsolete biological superstitious.

I make this protest because, to judge by the speeches and writings of my fellow Atheists, Natural Selection seems in danger of becoming a fetish—to be worshiped much as the Bible is by Jews and Christians. I need not say that, if Natural Selection be unsound, the Bible is not thereby proved to be a Divine Revelation.

M. D. EDER.

[This correspondent deals with a point that was not raised in our article on "Bernard Shaw in the Pulpit," to which he probably alludes. The share of natural selection in the formation of new species was not under discussion. The question was, is it a factor in evolution? Or rather—to confine that particular discussion to its essentials—is natural selection, through the struggle for existence, a fact? If it be a fact, it explains adaptation as a result without design as a cause, and it settles the theory of divine wisdom and beneficence. That is all we were concerned with. And we are not called upon now to express any opinion on the doctrine of the origin of species which is referred to by our correspondent.—EDITOR.]

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 20.
THE President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, F. A. Davies, T. Gorniot, J. T. Lloyd, W. Leat, Dr. R. T. Nichols, J. Neate, C. Quinton, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, J. T. Thurlow, F. Wood, V. Roger, C. Bowman, E. A. Charlton, H. Farmer, R. Brooks, E. Woodward.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the first business was the election of Committees, etc. Miss E. M. Vance was re-elected as General Secretary; Messrs. Leat and Samuels as Monthly Auditors; Messrs. Roger, Leat, Wood, and Samuels as a Benevolent Fund Committee. The resolutions passed by the Conference were dealt with, and Messrs. Farmer, Charlton, and Quinton were elected as a Sub-Committee to report upon the question of an Organising Lecturer.

The Secretary was instructed to make arrangements for Demonstrations in the Regent's, Victoria, and Brockwell Parks, and at Parliament Hill.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

MIDNIGHT.

Unfathomable Night! how dost thou sweep
Over the flooded earth, and darkly hide
The mighty city under thy full tide,
Making a silent palace for old Sleep;
Like his own temple under the hush'd deep,
Where all the busy day he doth abide,
And, forth at the late dark, outspreadeth wide
His dusky wings whence the cold waters sweep!
How peacefully the living millions lie!
Lull'd unto death beneath his poppy spells;—
There is no breath—no living stir—no cry—
No tread of foot—no song—no music-call—
Only the sound of melancholy bells—
The voice of Time—Survivor of them all!

—Thomas Hood.

TRAGEDY.

It has been said that tragedy purifies the affections by terror and pity. That is, it substitutes imaginary sympathy for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest, beyond ourselves, in humanity as such. It raises the great, the remote, and the possible to an equality with the real, the little, and the near. It makes man a partaker with his kind. It subdues and softens the stubbornness of his will. It teaches him that there are and have been others like himself, by showing him as in a glass what they have felt, thought, and done. It opens the chambers of the human heart. It leaves nothing indifferent to us that can affect our common nature. It excites our sensibility by exhibiting the passions wound up to the utmost pitch by the power of imagination or the temptation of circumstances; and corrects their fatal excesses in ourselves by pointing to the greater extent of sufferings and of crimes to which they have led others. Tragedy creates a balance of the affections. It makes us thoughtful spectators in the lists of life. It is the refiner of the species; a discipline of humanity.—

—William Hazlitt.

The morning drum-call on my eager ear
Thrills unforgetten yet; the morning dew
Lies yet undried along my field of noon.

But now I pause at whiles in what I do,
And count the bell, and tremble lest I hear
(My work untrimmed) the sunset gun too soon.

—R. L. Stevenson.

DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISESTABLISHMENT.

I had many provincial prejudices to get rid of after settling in England. It appeared at first the plainest duty in the world to unite with the dissenters in their agitation for the Separation of Church and State. After a year or so, I began to wonder at never seeing at their meetings any of the great liberal thinkers, none of the scientific men.....I revised the whole matter carefully, and reached the conclusion that I had been cheated by the phrase, "Separation of Church and State." No genuine separation of that kind has ever taken place. In America, the separation of Church and State has invariably meant merely the separation of the State from one particular Church—the English Church—to the extent only of establishing all sects along with it. By the exemption of Church property from taxation the whole community is taxed in the interest of those churches. Then by the legal establishment of the aggregate Sabbatarianism of the churches, by appointing and paying national chaplains, by supporting in treaties and by military force the propaganda of missionaries, orthodox Christianity is made a national American institution. Sectarian churches are, indeed, all enjoying established privileges in America unknown to the English Church.—M. D. Conway, "Autobiography," vol. ii, p. 291.

The man who will stand by another in affliction as well as at a feast: in calamity, in a famine, in a tumult: who will follow him even to the King's Court or the Cemetery—he is indeed a friend.—*The Hitopadesa*.

On all occasions it is well to be a little more than tolerant, especially when a wiser and better man than ourselves thinks differently from us.—*Landor*.

Nothing is more disgusting than the crowing about liberty by slaves, as most men are, and the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble.—*Emerson*.

MAN AND NATURE.

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility;
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes for good.
Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave:
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave.

—Matthew Arnold.

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.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Christianity in Heathen India." Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "The Ethics of Secularism"; 6.15, "Why I am an Atheist."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 10.30, J. W. Marshall, "Jesus a Glorified Crank."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The New Theology."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, a Lecture.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Business—Consideration of Trip.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 7, a Lecture.

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