

# THE Freethinker

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*Curious, I say, and not sufficiently considered: how everything does co-operate with all; not a leaf rotting on the highway but is indissoluble portion of solar and stellar systems; no thought, word or act of man but has sprung withal out of all men, and works sooner or later, recognisably or irrerecognisably, on all men!*

—THOMAS CARLYLE.

## Quackery.

THIS is not to be an article on the patent-medicine and pill trade. There are many worse quackeries than that. If you pay a shilling for a box of Purgem's pills you may at least get a little whole-some soap and bitter aloes for your money. But you may pay many pounds for "religious consolation," for instance, and get nothing in return except sheer worthless charlatanry. Nay, it may be worse than worthless; perhaps a poison to yourself, and a corruption to the party who supplies it.

There is a paper called the *Referee*, which was founded by earnest journalists, one of whom was Mr. G. R. Sims. That gentleman has grown older and more prosperous, and has turned his back on the heresies of his honest youth. He and the *Referee* have both become eminently respectable. Mr. Sims himself still keeps to "Mustard and Cross," but he diversifies it with more solid victuals. He is wonderfully fond of talking about eating and drinking; and, although he has dropped his mother-in-law, he continues to be eloquent about his liver. We have only to add the sacred word "Tatcho" to satisfy our readers as to Mr. Sims's eminent place in the list of great Englishmen. On the whole, it is not surprising that the *Referee* has refused to insert an advertisement of the *Freethinker* in its holy columns.

Like a good many other respectable papers, the *Referee* is fairly good at sailing near the wind. In the very last issue, its Paris correspondent narrowly escaped shipwreck. Had such stuff appeared in the *Freethinker* there would have been frightful howls of protest, and it is very likely that the *Referee* would have screamed "Police!" But, of course, this is a very far-fetched supposition. Dirty jests on a dirty play are not to our taste, and we are glad to think that they are not to the taste of our readers.

The same number of the *Referee* contained a last article by "Merlin," and right under it a report of the funeral of Mr. David Christie Murray. "Merlin" and Mr. Murray were the same person; and as the subject of the article was "Theories of the Soul" it is obvious that it was written before the author had any first-hand information on the subject. An article by him now on the same topic would probably be more interesting, and certainly more valuable.

An old proverb bids us speak nothing but good of the dead. Something may be said for it as a sentiment—nothing as a policy. A cynic can always find food for mirth by reading tombstones. When little Charles Lamb was taken into a churchyard by his sister Mary, he went round reading the inscriptions, and came back to her at last and asked where all the naughty people were buried. We do not propose to imitate the hypocrisy of so many epitaphs. Truth is, after all, superior to politeness; especially when politeness is only another name for falsehood. Moreover, a public man must be judged by public

standards—whether living or dead; and if his friends are free to praise him, others should be equally free to criticise him.

We do not hesitate to say, therefore, that the *Referee* did well to put "Merlin" forward on its front page for many years as the writer of "Our Handbook." He admirably represented the paper. A fourth-rate novelist, with a smattering of superficial information and a fluent superficial style, was just the man to do the work for which the *Referee* hired him. "Merlin" was a quack, and it was natural that he should write in a quack paper. He was an all-round quack—sound on nothing, and slippery on everything. But his favorite pose was that of a reluctant unbeliever; one who really couldn't believe the orthodox faith, and yet was obliged to warn the world against losing that priceless possession. For ever so many years he lent himself to that facile trick of renegade apologetics. We suppose he had his reward in pence. He also had his reward in the contempt of those who saw through him.

"Merlin's" last article in the *Referee* was just as good, and just as bad, as any of its predecessors. He showed his ignorance—or pandered to the ignorance of his readers—by introducing "Multiple Personality" as though it were a recent discovery of American scientists; whereas, what Ribot called the "diseases of personality" has been familiar to pathologists for ever so many years. Then there was an insolent reference to Mr. John Davidson, who, whether he happens to be right or wrong in an argument, is immensely "Merlin's" superior—being a real poet, and a writer of vigorous, pregnant, and vivid prose. There was also the customary reference to "blank materialism," and the childish way of prefacing a pretendedly rational bit of controversy about the soul with the statement that "it is by Faith and by Faith alone that we can so much as conceive ourselves to approach a solution of the eternal problem." There was likewise the old hollow-turnip-and-candle terrorism with respect to the awful prospect which would be opened up to the world by the aforesaid "blank materialism." All which shows that even the indifferent intellect of Mr. Murray was fully conscious of the fact that no honest and candid argument in favor of the soul and its immortality was possible. Even he recognised that the readers' minds had to be suborned on the one side, and terrified on the other, before the logic of the orthodox faith could hope to pass their scrutiny.

"Merlin's" quackery was the quackery of all his tribe. People who differed from him were warned of the terrible consequences. It was suggested, though never expressly asserted, that the man who doubted the "great truths" of religion would soon be visited by an eruption of moral small-pox. He would plague his wife, kick his children, quarrel with his friends, forsake his principles, and betray his party. Even if he did none of these things he would be awfully miserable; life would be a burden, sleep would forsake his couch, and he would be lucky to escape a suicide's grave. Of course it was all silliness. The doubter does not wallow in wickedness or die of melancholy. But the pretence that he does so keeps many from the path of investigation—and that is the real object of the quackery.

G. W. FOOTE.



## On Thinking.

NOW and again, in the lull of the storm between rival political or religious parties, the truth is seen that the question of education ought properly to include more than the cramming of children with stereotyped formulas. Thus Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, at the performance of a public function, recently declared that the important thing in connection with our public schools was whether children were being taught to think. Very few will quarrel with the dictum, although many, it is to be hoped, will realise that the task of training children to think is not a school question alone. It belongs quite as much to the home; indeed, the lessons learned at school are usually only effective when they are enforced or emphasised by the home environment. In this connection, it would be interesting to know how much the parents, who listened to and applauded the statement quoted, did to encourage their children in this matter. Doubtless all of them would be pleased to see their children exercising their intelligence in certain directions, and would be pleased to encounter the customary childish posers. But would they encourage their children thinking in *all* directions? There's the rub; for, after all, it is the unfettered exercise of the mind in all directions and on all subjects that is important from the point of view of development.

Bearing in mind, also, that the Premier's speech was delivered at a semi-religious ceremony, before a religious audience, and with many ministers of religion on the platform, it would be interesting to know what part, in the opinion of the gathering, religious instruction plays in developing a child's ratiocinative powers. It cannot be claimed that children understand the doctrines taught—even adults are at sea here—and, in the absence of understanding, what room is there for reasoning? It is a mere parrot-like repetition at best. Nor is it usual to encourage children to exercise their naturally critical intelligence on such instruction. If this were done, the childish common sense brought to bear upon religious teachings might have a powerful effect in developing more critical habits among parents. Many children make really praiseworthy efforts to bring their parents up properly, and train them to become rational beings. Plenty of children point out to their parents the weak points of the religion that is taught them, and, if the latter were only wise enough to profit by the criticism, they might soon become quite reasonable creatures. But the child's questions are evaded, his criticisms are suppressed, he is told that he must not think this, or he must not ask that; everything that can be done is done to discourage thinking so far as religion is concerned, and one must have a poor conception of the normal workings of the mind to imagine that such a policy can be without injurious consequences in all directions.

It is of extreme importance that the education given to children should teach them how to think. What they think about is of only secondary importance. And it is important with the child because the child is the prelude to the adult. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman was quite correct when he said "want of thinking is the great danger and drawback of the age, and one of the inherent vices of Englishmen"—one is only surprised at a prominent politician saying so. But the statement is, unfortunately, true enough; for although, in a sense, everybody *thinks*, yet real, strenuous, individual thinking is one of the rarest of qualities. Out of any thousand people taken haphazard all, but a very small percentage, are content to have their thinking done for them by their daily newspaper, their political leader, or their religious minister. People are mentally gregarious to a frightful degree. They can neither act nor think with comfort save in a crowd. In the ordinary way, what they mistake for an opinion is mere prejudice—a mere echo of a cry

inspired, in all probability, by the poorest form of self-interest, or by want of courage to look facts in the face.

People do not think. But why should they? Can anyone say that thinking is encouraged, or that the thinker is held in any particular honor? Of course, we esteem *great* thinkers, in a way; that is, we profess to be proud of them. But what are the facts? If a vote of the whole of the people was to be taken on the question of a pension, or a peerage, or a decoration, there can be little doubt that a great footballer, a record-breaking cyclist, or a popular soldier would easily get the larger number of votes. The death of Herbert Spencer caused far less stir among the general public than would be caused by the demise of a prominent pugilist. Among the people generally, genuine independent thinking is so far unwelcome; that there is nothing else that so exposes one to misrepresentation and petty persecution. In politics, such a person would be so great a nuisance that he would be cold-shouldered by every political party in the States; while a candidate for election who gave his full opinions on all subjects would find it almost impossible to win a constituency in the whole of Britain. If he exercised his intelligence on ethical questions and pointed out, as he might easily do, how much of our current moral teaching is sheer cant and superstition, he would be denounced as a teacher of immorality and a public danger. Instead of his conclusions being taken for what they were worth, and, at all events, accepted as the serious contribution of an earnest thinker, press and pulpit would combine in his condemnation, and he would find himself shunned as a moral leper. In religion, the position would be more difficult, and the treatment more severe. The average Englishman thinks little enough on politics, still less on ethics, least of all on religion. It has taken over two hundred years for certain tolerably obvious conclusions concerning the nature of the Bible to gain currency among educated Christians, and even now they are treated as more or less revolutionary. The facts concerning the origin and development of religious ideas are still unknown to most people, although commonplaces to students for three-quarters of a century. There is not a church or chapel in Great Britain that really encourages independent thinking, and should so unwelcome a phenomenon occur the daring innovator becomes the butt of every miserable little pulpit-banger, and the objective of all the charges that have done duty against heretics for generations. If "Thou shalt not think" is not taught from the pulpit in so many words, it is at least no unfair inference from a deal of what is taught, while the independent thinker is made to feel in a variety of ways that his presence is anything but welcome.

Ought we, then, to expect people to think under prevailing conditions? Mankind in the mass will always seek to get through life as comfortably as is possible, and will naturally avoid such courses as expose them to discomfort or injury. And so long as independent thinking involves either or both of these things, so long will it be true that want of thinking is one of the vices of Englishmen. The fault is not that of any individual; it is a fault that results from the general conduct of society as a whole. In the very nature of the case the martyr—upon even the smallest scale—must be an exception. Exceptional virtues can only be practised by exceptional people; only those that are common will be practised by mankind at large. And if we wish to see Englishmen cured of what Sir Henry Bannerman calls their "inherent vice," we must see to it that society ceases to punish any of its members for a difference of opinion. When we give the same encouragement to independent thinking that we now give to conformity, and therefore to mental sluggishness and hypocrisy, we shall have started to make the thinker a far commoner phenomenon than he is at present.

This "inherent vice of Englishmen" did not originate with the present generation—it is not even the exclusive property of English people. Others



share it, and as a consequence of antecedents common to all. For fifteen hundred years, the people of Europe have been in the clutches of the Christian Churches, and during the whole of that period the one uniform feature of these, the one thing on which they have agreed, has been hatred of non-conformity, a desire to press all minds into the one mould, a determination to suppress free speech, and so eradicate Freethought at all costs. The one insistent lesson has been that of right belief, the one constant warning that of the sinfulness of trusting human reason. Generation after generation people saw heretics punished, questioners suppressed, critics damned. They were made to feel in a thousand different ways that a Christian society could forgive any offence save that of the fearless use of one's intelligence. And seeing this, with much more to the same end, there is small wonder that independent thinking is as rare as it is. The wonder is, rather, that it has not ceased to exist altogether.

This, as a matter of fact, is Christianity's capital crime against the race. Other offences have a more dramatic aspect; the hecatombs of people offered to the religion of brotherhood, the long, lingering lives of heroic spirits in Christian prisons, may make more moving reading, but these are unimportant at the side of (or, at any rate, are only of first rate importance so far as they bear on this point) Christianity's influence on rare development. The constant elimination of a more serviceable mental type, with the preservation of a type unthinking, credulous, and sheepish, have combined to keep the race at a much lower level than it might otherwise have attained. Every generation is moulded by the beliefs, the customs, the institutions by which it is surrounded, and which it either modifies or perpetuates for its successor. Had the traditions of the Christian people of this country and of other countries been different to what they are, independent thinking might easily have been more common than it is. But against independent thinking are the massed forces of inertia, self-interest, and religious teaching; and although one here and there may prove strong enough to fight against them, the mass will inevitably accommodate themselves to their surroundings. To rail against the individual is useless; it is the whole social tone we have to modify, and which is responsible for his being what he is. Christianity has worked hard, and for long, to manufacture a race of mental cowards. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—a Christian speaking at a Christian ceremony—was recording, by his complaint, the measure of its success.

C. COHEN.

### "What is Man?"

THIS is an ancient question which has received varied and conflicting answers through all the ages of human history. With two only of those answers is it the purpose of this article to deal, and with these two only by way of criticism on a sermon by Canon Hensley Henson which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 24. The Canon quotes an eloquent passage, which contains one of the two, from Mr. Frederick Harrison's book, *The Creed of a Layman*; and the quotation is made in order to fiercely attack the view therein presented in defence of its opposite. Mr. Harrison describes man as a being of absolutely no importance except to himself, as a being less than nothing, as an insignificant speck in the vast domain of Nature. These are his own expressive words:—

"Nothing can enable us to conceive the infinitesimally trivial position of man in the Universe as revealed by modern science, whether we consider him in space, in time, or in the secular evolution of matter or of life. Watch the faintest mote hovering in a sunbeam, and try to imagine its relation in scale to our earth; isolate the minutest microbe perceptible by the most powerful microscope, and imagine it in relation to the most distant star, shown by the most powerful telescope, in

the nebula of Orion—all this would be nothing compared with the infinitesimal littleness of man in the infinite Universe. And now try to imagine this mite pronouncing on the nature and the attributes of the Author and Ruler of the Universe, or try to imagine the Author and Ruler of this Universe attending to the supplications, sufferings, and human yearnings of this infinitesimal mite."

Now, this emphasis, indulged in "with pitiless insistence, on the relative pettiness of all things human," irritates the Canon very much, and he solemnly assures his hearers and his readers that it deliberately leaves several important "considerations out of reckoning, which are competent to reverse" that estimate of man, "and to justify the ancient belief of the Psalmist in the power and providence of God." We will now examine these considerations as presented by the preacher.

The Canon's first argument is drawn from what he calls "the trustworthiness of the human faculties," which is "the grand supposition on which the whole fabric of scientific knowledge is raised." He grants the trustworthiness of the intellect as employed in the service of science, and this is certainly tantamount to acknowledging the essential accuracy of the scientific estimate of man in his relation to the Universe. "If, then, man is justified in thus trusting his own intellect, why should it be so absurd for him to attach importance to other and perhaps greater faculties of his own nature?" The "other and perhaps greater faculties," mentioned by the Canon, are the conscience and the heart. But is it reasonable to suppose that the testimony of either of these two powers ever contradicts that of the intellect? The conscience is nothing in the world but a rational being pronouncing on moral questions, nor is the heart anything save an intellectual being expressing himself emotionally. All moral and emotional activities ought to be under the guidance and control of the intellect. Does Canon Henson deny this? Surely he must know that what he terms "the persistent and aspiring hopes of the human heart," in the religious sense, spring from certain theological beliefs which find no justification before the bar of reason; and more surely still he cannot but be aware that "what we term the moral sense arose from the social instincts and habits which, under pain of extinction, are developed in every society of men and animals," or that "morality depends on sociability, and varies with the peculiar conditions of each particular association."

Thus the Canon's first argument falls to the ground, having no support whatever except from the unintelligent beliefs of religion. The preacher's second argument is that "there is something profoundly irrational in making mere greatness of scale the measure of truth and importance." It is extremely difficult to discern the point of this sentence. "Nothing turns on the size of the Universe," observes the preacher; but who ever maintained that, in the preacher's sense, anything *does* turn on it? The point is that in this big Universe man is practically of no account; *she heeds him not at all*. Dr. Henson asserts that if our faculties are indeed to be trusted the Universe is both intelligible and moral. Which faculty declares the Universe to be intelligible? No faculty except the dislocated faculty that believes without evidence. If the Universe is intelligible it can be rationally explained—is Canon Henson prepared to undertake the stupendous task? Which power has discovered that the Universe is moral? Will the Canon kindly inform us what he means by attributing morality to the Universe? Is the whole of it moral, or only a part? Is lightning moral when it enters a house and kills a dozen people? Is an earthquake moral when it annihilates huge cities and their inhabitants? Has an active volcano the grace of morality? The Universe is both big and powerful; but if it possesses any moral sense at all, it is perpetually trampling it under foot.

The most comical of all arguments is the Canon's third, which is thus put: "The progress of science does not involve any change in the deliberate judg-



ment of mankind as to the intrinsic superiority of the Moral over the Physical." Granted. But what does "Moral" signify as opposed to "Physical"? What are we to understand by "the greater world of the Spirit, the world in which man for all his contemptible weakness knows that he is at home, and finds himself, in the consciousness of that knowledge, strong to bear up against all the pressures of the Universe"? Does the Canon mean by "the world of the Spirit" anything beyond the world of thought, and reflection, and poetry, and imagination? If he does, will he describe it, and tell us what proof of its existence he can adduce? If he does not, on what ground does he believe in the power and providence of God? Atheists set as high a value on morality as Theists; but they are fully convinced that morality has no other value whatsoever save as a condition of the well-being of society. Outside the world of man and gregarious animals they can discern not the slightest trace of morality in the whole Universe. If Canon Henson can, will he be good enough to point it out to us?

The preacher is incapable of conceiving of the Universe except as a thing made, a creation, and so he must speak of its Author. To science the idea of creation is totally foreign, and science knows absolutely nothing of any Author. But let us meet the preacher on his own ground. Here is a passage in which he virtually surrenders his whole position:—

"Let it be admitted that if we depended alone on the physical Universe we should be led to a non-moral conception of its Author; that there is a seeming conflict between the testimony of the human conscience and that of Nature; that it is hard to bind into a single and coherent doctrine the truth of science and the truth of the Gospel, then we are brought to these two propositions. On the one hand, we cannot but interpret the lower by the higher, and hold fast by our conviction that the testimony of the human conscience is true even in the teeth of all the threatening suggestions of science and history. On the other hand, we admit a place for reverent and reasonable Agnosticism. We are ready to allow that our vision is short and the range of our knowledge restricted."

Assuming, then, that the Universe has an Author and Ruler, assuming, also, that we are to interpret this Author and Ruler by man, the highest creature made and ruled by him, to what conclusion must we come concerning this infinite Being's morality? Thus judging, are we not irresistibly driven to the painful conviction that, on moral grounds alone, man is a creature of whom his Author and Ruler has every reason to be unfathomably ashamed, and that this Author and Ruler is a being whom his creature man should hold in unspeakable contempt? Even the fundamental doctrines of Christianity itself are a confirmation of this finding of the intellect. The dogma of the Atonement is a grim confession of the complete failure of God's creative masterpiece. To believe in the existence, power, and providence of such a God is to contradict the testimony of all the knowledge in our possession.

No wonder Canon Henson flies for refuge to "a reverent and reasonable Agnosticism"; but the refuge is less substantial than a dream. Agnosticism is only the Greek for Ignorance; but what is there that ignorance can reverse or in what sense is ignorance reasonable? If we are ignorant, it is highly reasonable to own up to it; but Canon Henson makes such assertions in this sermon as only the actual possession of the completest Gnosticism, or knowledge, could justify. "We are ready to allow that our vision is short and the range of our knowledge restricted," says the preacher, after talking glibly about the incarnation of God in Christ, and about man as the vindicator of God's morality. Then he has the audacity to warn us not to form our judgment of man except as he "is seen in Christ." But where and how are we to see Christ? As Canon Henson well knows, modern criticism is rapidly relegating Christ to the region of myth and legend.

What, then, is man? As the creature of an Almighty and good God, a gigantic, scandalous, inexcusable failure, his Maker's crowning disgrace.

In the presence of man the Deity stands eternally discredited and condemned. Against this conclusion the Canon can bring nothing but the irrational dogmas of the Church. What, then, is man? According to science, "the most dominant animal that has ever appeared on earth," being "as the beasts that perish, the chief of them all, truly, but in the very essence of his being as the rest, no more and no less, with no Divine significance in his life, and no larger hope in his death." The main difference between him and all other living things lies in the quantity and quality of his brain. Why he is here no one can tell; but being here in the possession, he knows not how, of a larger and more powerful brain than all his neighbors, he is impelled, by the very instinct of life, and in proportion to the strength and efficiency of his intelligence, to live as healthily, as usefully, and as happily as he can. When asked, "Why is goodness better than power, self-sacrifice nobler than self-indulgence, and justice greater than force?" he can only answer by saying that such qualities are valuable because, in practice, they serve the best interests of the race. That is all. There is no higher authority, no sounder sanction, no saner standard of judgment known to us, nor required by us. What is a well-spent life? A life devoted to the welfare of all concerned. What is man? The prodigy and freak of Nature? An animal run to brain? In any case, having so much brains he can do no better than use them to the best advantage of himself and all around him.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Why Should We Want to Believe?

IN a former issue of the *Freethinker*, we adverted to a charge that is often made against Atheists, the charge that with us it is not so much a case of inability to believe the sublime truths of religion as a case of deliberate refusal to accept them. This, of course, is an old charge, though it has somewhat changed its form in recent years. It used to be said by the older school of opponents, that Atheists rejected Christianity because Christianity constituted a standing reproach to their manner of life. This, with a good many, was but a polite way of expressing the opinion that laxity of morals was really at the root of most Atheism. Some Christian writers and preachers, in fact, scorned to resort to anything savoring of euphemism, and roundly declared it was nothing but the Atheist's evil mode of life and corrupt heart that rendered him averse to according homage to the spiritual truths of religion. The Atheist did not want to believe, they said, because it did not suit him to believe. If he believed he would require to renounce his vices, give up his sensual life, and cleanse himself from the mire of sin. And as he preferred to live a life of selfish indulgence and sinful pleasure, he naturally did not wish to believe the pure and holy doctrines of the Christian faith, which doctrines, we are assured, are quite irreconcilable with anything but the highest moral rectitude and the most supreme self-sacrifice. This, or something like this, was the orthodox Christian view of the Atheist not so many years back. And it is the view of some Christians yet, as witness Dr. Torrey of pious memory. But we would fain entertain the hope that few Christians nowadays, save those who are negligible from an intellectual point of view, ascribe ignoble motives to the Freethinker when he opposes Christianity. It is coming to be pretty generally recognised that the label which a man attaches to himself, or which has been attached to him at his birth, is of small value as an index to his character. Conduct is what really matters in the affairs of life, and conduct is determined by many other things besides religious belief. Any fair-minded Christian with a little experience of the world knows this very well. Christians of the Dr. Torrey type are survivals from the bad, old days of bigotry and persecution. They are a passing



type, though not yet extinct. And though intellectually a negligible quantity, they have to be dealt firmly with when come across, if only because they exercise such a pernicious sway over the less intelligent section of the populace.

Christians still say, however, that Atheists do not want to believe. It is true that the reason generally imputed to the Atheist to account for his declinature is not now of so unworthy or insulting a nature as formerly. Instead of his rejection of the dogmas of Christianity and the Christian conception of deity being set down to moral depravity, it is now ascribed to intellectual perversity or mental deficiency. It is, forsooth, intellectual pride which prevents us surrendering our hearts and our wills to Christ; or else we lack spiritual insight. A local clergyman is reported to have said, some time ago, that all Atheists were blind. But I scarcely think that is the trouble so far as our rejection of religion is concerned. The trouble is—as so many of our friends the enemy sadly recognise—that we Atheists and Freethinkers see a great deal too much for them, and decline to be blindfolded in the interests of the churches or of any form of supernaturalism. Doubtless we are lacking in that marvellous and mysterious organ of vision known as the eye of faith. The eye of faith is a means of vision which presents, in combination, the most extraordinary microscopic and telescopic powers, together with a quite remarkable faculty for overlooking the obvious. The course of evolution has not helped to conserve this wonderful organ in the Atheist, and as it apparently can only be kept in effective order at the expense of the eye of reason, I see no cause to regret its atrophy.

But is there any reason why we should repudiate the charge that we do not want to believe in Christianity? The question might rather be retorted on the Christian, Why *should* any sane individual wish to believe in Christianity? Pass in review the various articles of belief that go to form the Christian creed, give careful examination to each, and it would puzzle anyone to show why—while any doubt as to their truth exists—they should be accepted by any educated human being. Take the doctrine of hell-fire, for instance. This is still an article of faith to many millions of Christians all over the world, though advanced Protestant theology, prompted by the modern spirit of humanism, has sought to damp down the furnaces a little. Is there any valid reason why I should believe the devilish doctrine that millions of my fellow-creatures are to be tortured for all eternity? Why should I want to believe it unless it is known to be true? And does anyone *know* it to be true? Is there not a sufficiency of visible and undeniable evil and misery in the universe without drawing on our imaginations for further and deeper horrors? Is there such a dearth of actual tragedy in human experience that we must needs conjure up dismal pictures of the hypothetical doom awaiting us in a problematic world beyond the grave? Will it not be time enough to believe in such a ferocious doctrine as eternal punishment when we know it to be true?

The doctrine of Christ's atonement is, presumably, another of those Christian truths that Atheists do not want to believe. Volumes innumerable have been written to explain how the death of God's Son (really God himself) could possibly reconcile sinful man God; and, so far from making the problem clearer, they have but increased its obscurity. Cardinal Newman admitted that it was impossible to understand how the sacrifice of an innocent victim could appease the justice of the Almighty. It was utterly irreconcilable with human ideas of justice. Which simply means that the Christian story of the expiatory sacrifice on Calvary fails to commend itself to the reason of man. That being so, why should reasoning beings accept (or wish to accept) a doctrine, eminently unreasonable, at the bidding of others who have no shadow of authority to advance or proof to offer by way of warrant for its verity?

It is unnecessary to linger over this question of the Atonement. Its fundamental absurdity has been repeatedly demonstrated in these columns. To the plain man in the street it remains a hopeless riddle. By the theologian it is dubbed a "mystery." The word mystery has ever been utilised by priests to fence off their doctrines and practices from the critical and inquiring gaze of the sceptically inclined. But there are no mysteries in religion save such as are created by the ministers and devotees of religion. Religion hangs up a curtain of imposing appearance, and whispers in reverent, awe-struck tones of the profound mysteries concealed behind it whereon the human eye dare not look. But when anyone has the temerity to draw the curtain aside nothing but emptiness meets the gaze. There is nothing there, and one would dearly like to know how many priests are thoroughly aware in their innermost consciousness—as thoroughly aware as any Freethinker of us all—that the curtain screens no ineffable mystery, but merely conceals a void. To many people the real mystery must be how the priest has imposed upon humanity so long.

It needs not, then, for my present purpose that the doctrine of the Atonement—the saving power of Christ's death—should be examined minutely. Nor need space be taken up in considering whether there is any evidence whatever to show that a necessity existed for attempting a reconciliation between God and man. So far as the latter aspect of the matter is concerned, the very possibility of man's sinning against God has been utterly scouted. With an omnipotent, omniscient God reigning over the universe, every action of man—whether for good or evil—can only mature with the consent of God. God, indeed, in virtue of his reputed foreknowledge of all the eventualities of life, is—in relation to man's conduct—not merely accessory to the fact or after the fact, but accessory before the fact. On our earthly plane the human being occupying a similar relation to a criminal would be held equally guilty with the latter, and would be amenable to the law. Which reflection, of course, may only cause the godly to murmur that God's ways are not man's ways. This is no doubt quite true. Only, if the orthodox Christian conception of God and his ways be correct, it seems to me that in this regard the honors rest with man. However, this inquiry need not now be pursued. Without discussing the practicability of man so far defeating the will of an omnipotent Deity as to sin against him, and so necessitate an atoning sacrifice, it is enough for us that the most competent theologians have admitted the incomprehensibility of the Atonement and all that is involved therein. It may fairly be asked why, in face of this incomprehensibility, anyone should be expected (or should desire) to believe in it until we are supplied with conclusive evidence of its truth.

Then there is the God idea itself. Nothing is more common than the allegation that Atheists reject belief in deity because they do not want to believe in God. And this is said as if it were matter for reproach. But why should anyone want to believe in God as depicted by the various religions, in the entire absence of any satisfactory evidence of the actuality of such a being? Can any theologian tell us with certainty what God is, or how man and God stand related? And failing a precise, unevasive answer to these questions what claim has the God idea on our intellectual allegiance? No believer in God has ever yet succeeded in producing a definition of God that was not in contradiction with itself or with the facts of nature as we know them. Bearing this in mind, are not rational individuals precluded from entertaining the God idea, save perhaps in an attenuated, amorphous form that can be of no practical value as an incentive to right conduct?

Nature, taken as a whole, does not reveal to us a Creator deserving of human love and worship. Some of the pages in Nature's book are undoubtedly beautiful, but many others one is fain to turn over as hurriedly as possible. If, as is frequently asserted, God is manifested in his works, then it must be said



that the works of God, regarded in the mass, are not good. As a consequence, the only legitimate conclusion must be that their author is not good. Only a being permeated to an insufferable extent with self-sufficient egotism could contemplate the world and what it contains, and yet rejoice in the prospect as "very good" to behold. To be sure, the standard of goodness we appeal to is a human one solely, but then we have no knowledge of any other. If belief in God is to be justified to mankind it must be by an appeal to human standards of appraisal. Otherwise any attempt at the justification of God or his ways is nought but sheer futility. Perhaps some kind Christian, when next the spirit moves him to rebuke Atheists for their refusal to accept the God of the Christian creed, will restrain himself a moment and endeavor to tell us why we *should* believe in his God. I confess to a sincere anxiety to know.

GEO. SCOTT.

### Acid Drops.

The ladies boss the Theosophical movement; which some people think is very natural. Mrs. Besant considers herself the head of the world's Theosophists, but the world in this case does not seem to include America. Another lady, Mrs. Tingley, runs the show over there; and she is said to despise and denounce Mrs. Besant with all the breath in her body. Mrs. Tingley, it appears, is coming over to England to start a branch of *her* business, in opposition to Mrs. Besant's. She will be accompanied by another lady, the Hon. Nan Herbert, who is a sister of Lord Lucas. It is a ladies' affair altogether.

Mrs. Tingley sided with Mr. Judge, who had to quit the Theosophical Society in England, not so much for forging Mahatma letters as for being found out and exposed by a very capable outside journalist. It was Mr. Judge who tricked Mrs. Besant into believing that *she* received Mahatma letters in succession to Madame Blavatsky. Mrs. Besant was an easy, because a willing, dupe; and the way in which he played upon her credulity is one of the most amusing chapters in the history of imposture. Mrs. Besant found out eventually that she had been deceived, but she never took the trouble to undeceive those that *she* had deceived. The forged Mahatma letters had been of assistance to her, and why quarrel with one's good luck?

Mr. Grayson's return as Socialist member for Colne Valley led the *Nottingham Guardian*—which is a Liberal, that is to say, a Nonconformist paper—to parade its ignorance on a matter quite off the track of politics. Our contemporary asked people not to be frightened by the present Socialist agitation, but to remember that "the nation survived the Chartist agitation of days gone by and the Atheistic agitations of Tom Paine and Mr. Bradlaugh." Charles Bradlaugh *was* an Atheist; Thomas (not Tom) Paine was *not*. Paine was a Deist, and actually wrote against Atheism. The *Nottingham Guardian* writer might do worse than buy and read Paine's writings. It would increase his information, and might improve his English—for Thomas Paine was the master of a masculine style.

Christians never look religious facts in the face. If they did they would inevitably cease to be Christians. The contention always is that Christianity is a divinely-revealed and, consequently, perfect religion, and that all its ministers are divinely ordained—God's own spokesmen. Recently, the Crown selected the Rev. James Waring, of Leeds, to succeed the Rev. Mr. Hockley, as vicar of St. Savior's, Hoxton. It turns out that Mr. Waring is a Low Churchman, and thoroughly evangelical, while Mr. Hockley is of the High Church persuasion, and profoundly ritualistic. Now, the Bishop of London, himself High Church, protests against the selection of Mr. Waring for Hoxton, on the ground that he would revolutionise—"overthrow all the traditions" of—the whole parish. That is to say, one man of God would utterly spoil the work of another man of God. And yet the great Bishop is blind and deaf to the fact that his very statement of the case is the strongest possible argument against the Divine origin of Christianity and the Divine inspiration of its ministers.

The Bishop of London's great anxiety to maintain continuity of doctrine and practice in making ecclesiastical appointments turns out to be thoroughly hypocritical, because,

in the case now before the public, it applies only to one of the two parishes concerned, namely, that of St. Savior, Hoxton. He was more than willing to institute a High Churchman to the parish of St. Matthew, Westminster, although of the three former vicars only one was High Church, the first being Evangelical, and the second Broad Church. Impartiality seems beyond this civil servant.

Some time ago, we referred to the long prayers preceding Mr. Campbell's sermons in the *Christian Commonwealth*. We see that they are getting shorter—for which the Almighty should be thankful, if he is supposed to hear them.

Rev. R. J. Campbell has said neither "Yes" nor "No" to the invitation of the Independent Labor Party to stand for Cardiff. If he is well advised he will say "No"—unless he wishes to leave the pulpit altogether for a political career—in which case what would become of his handsome salary?

If Mr. R. J. Campbell had his way the world would be set right in a fortnight. The New Theology is an infallible remedy for all human maladies. If men only believed it, and were in dead earnest, the whole thing would be done. This is what the City Temple oracle has just been telling the people of Wales. He carries a cure-all about with him. Under the New Theology, which is Socialism, Great Britain would be a perfect paradise—"without hunger, without drunkenness, without vice, without crime, without anxiety and dread of old age." That is the old, old story, told by every fanatic in every age and country since the world began, and the world is still out of joint and groaning in its pain. The New Theology will go the way of all discredited catholicisms.

Mr. Campbell told the Independent Labor people at Cardiff that "Socialism was a practical expression of Christianity as he understood it"—and the statement was greeted with loud applause. How odifying! Mr. Campbell preaches Christianity as the road to Socialism. Mr. Blatchford opposes Christianity to make way for Socialism. We don't want to interfere in the quarrel, as far as Socialism is concerned, but obviously the Christian religion cannot be both *for* and *against* Socialism; and the fact that it can be so regarded by two leading Socialists shows what a hanky-panky religion it is.

On one point Mr. Campbell spoke out with gratifying clearness. We clip the following from the report in the *Daily News* :—

"He advocated secular education, saying that of far more importance than the religious education of children was their physical well-being. The parson, whether of church or chapel, should be turned out of the schools of the people altogether. The Churches had gone wrong on the question of education. No one Church was more to blame than another. They were wrangling like thieves over the particular brand of creed to be taught to children."

Mr. Campbell's "Christian Socialism" or "Socialist Christianity" may be forgiven while he goes straight for Secular Education—which will be the death of all the creeds. It is only a question of time.

A London newspaper—one of the halfpenny budgets for ninnies—gravely reports that the Bishop of Carlisle, speaking at Wigton, announced the great discovery that knowledge was not education, and that a man might be stuffed with information and a fool all the time. We beg to assure both the newspaper and the bishop that the discovery is an old one—two or three thousand years old at least. Even in modern English literature you may find something about it. Old Hobbes—Atheist Hobbes, as they used to call him—once said to a learned person: "Sir, if I had read as many books as you have, I should be as foolish as you are." Buckle—another Freethinker—said that there were some men whose learning only ministered to their ignorance, and who, the more they read, the less they knew. And then there was Tennyson who sang that "Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers." The Bishop of Carlisle must try again.

"I defy anyone," Bishop Thornton, of Blackburn, says, "to refute the statement that the reformed National Church has been at the head of every movement for the education of the masses." Bishop Thornton could fill the Ananias vacancy. We admire him in a way, though; there is no half-and-half about him; he is a whole-hogger in his own line.

Compulsory religious instruction is abolished in the Italian communal schools, but the Court of Appeal at Rome has decided that it is not lawful to remove the crucifix from its



place of honor in the buildings themselves. Christianity clings to its last bit of privilege.

The cheek of these parsons! The vicar of Edmonton—the Rev. E. A. B. Sanders—proposed that the handsome parish hall in course of erection should be associated with the name of Charles Lamb, who lived in the parish and was buried in the churchyard. This proposal was adopted, and the new building, which is to cost £5,000, will be known as the Edmonton Church Hall and Charles Lamb Institute. This is no doubt good business, from the parson's point of view; but, all the same, it is consummate impudence. Charles Lamb did not belong to Mr. Sanders's Church. He belonged to no Church. He was a Freethinker. That he was buried in Edmonton churchyard simply means that he could not then be buried anywhere else. Parson Sanders had no right whatever to associate Charles Lamb's name with such an enterprise. It is a desecration.

Rev. John Rayner Sylvester Parkinson has been committed for trial at the Lincoln Assizes on a charge of fraud. When arrested at Elland Rectory he was preparing his sermon for the following Sunday. We wonder when he will preach his next one—and whether there will be anything about that arrest in it.

We lacked space last week to refer to an article in the *Academy* by Mr. Arthur Machen on "The World to Come." There is next to nothing in the article about its subject. A good deal of room is taken up by a savage attack on Mrs. Besant; who, by the way, believes in the world to come as devoutly as Mr. Machen or any other High Churchman or Catholic—for we are not sure which this gentleman is. Room is also given to a nice, sweet display of Christian temper with regard to Freethinkers. Paul said that "the greatest of these is charity," but Mr. Machen does not agree with him. Faith and hope are all right, but charity is a beggarly virtue—especially in relation to unbelievers. These people used to be burnt alive; but they are allowed to live now, and we daresay Mr. Machen thinks they ought to be grateful even for being kicked—seeing how preferable that is to vivisection. This is a tolerably legitimate inference from his adjectives. We were going to pick out a few of them, but on the whole we think it best to give the entire passage, so that our readers may be able to form a just judgment for themselves on the complete evidence:—

"The imbeciles, the pack of gibbering ignoramuses who call themselves 'Freethinkers,' the people who have taken out letters of marque to discuss every subject of which they know nothing, who are ready to dash in with their free and easy solutions of questions which have perplexed all philosophy and all religion in every age, are constant, among many other follies, in representing the Catholic Faith as chiefly concerned with a vague hereafter, as wickedly indifferent to the goods and ills of the present earthly state. They talk of the saints, these impudent blockheads, as persons who view with indifference the sorrows of earth, while they look forward to a future of harp-playing. One forgives them the jokes about the harp—one does not expect an appreciation of the sublime symbolism of Music from the hooligans and larrikins of thought—but they might at least get their facts right. But perhaps it is beneath the dignity of 'free thought' to trouble itself with the mere technical detail of facts; your Freethinker cannot be bothered with the wretched dry-as-dust business of knowing anything accurately on any subject whatsoever. 'Blether' is so much more 'simple' and 'big-hearted' and the rest of it."

What flowers of Christian courtesy! Imbeciles—gibbering ignoramuses—impudent blockheads—hooligans—larrikins! Such is the language of an apostle of "the religion of love." And the cream of the joke—for it has a jocular side—is that Mr. Machen probably regards all this as smart railery. He reminds us of the village wit in the public-house, who told his admiring auditors that he had chaffed a victim until he couldn't hold up his head. "I did chaff him," he said; "I called him all the names you could think of."

Mr. Machen seems to be particularly tetchy about the harp-playing joke. It makes him spit out the insinuation that Freethinkers don't understand and don't care for music. Well, he is mistaken. Beethoven and Wagner—perhaps the two greatest names in the art of music—were both unbelievers. And did not Shelley, the Atheist, write some of the loveliest verses on music in all literature? Perhaps we had better not cite Mr. Swinburne, or the *Academy* champion of faith may go raving mad. We believe in charity; so we refrain.

Another writer in the same number of the *Academy* "goes for" the Jews—like a good Catholic. Yes, it must be a Catholic this time. Mr. Rowland Strong declares that—"The Jews owe everything to Christianity, but Chris-

tianity owes next to nothing to the Jew." This is the exact reverse of the truth. Christianity has done nothing for the Jew, except treating him with unlimited (and sometimes unspeakable) persecution. On the other hand, Christianity owes pretty nearly everything to the Jew. It borrowed the Jew's Bible, and it borrowed the Jew's God. God the Father is simply Jehovah. God the Holy Ghost is Greek, but God the Son again is Jewish. Jesus Christ was a Jew—the Mother of God was a Jewess—the apostles were all Jews—and the last of all, "born out of due season" (Paul), was a Jew likewise. Had there been no Jews, there would have been no Christians. That is as clear as daylight.

The same number of the *Academy* contained a letter of protest from Mr. John Davidson, the poet. Mr. Davidson had been quoted as saying that "the more masculine and less delicate minds among men dislike women except in their sexual relations." But what Mr. Davidson really said was something very different—namely, that "the more masculine, and therefore more delicate, minds among men dislike women except in their sexual relations, as mothers, wives, lovers, sisters." The *Academy* had completely reversed the first half of Mr. Davidson's sentence, and entirely misrepresented the second half by omitting the explanatory words at the end. Mr. Davidson said that this perversion of his statement had been "done designedly and very meanly"—that it was "the basest lie that has been acted in the name of literary criticism"—and that the editor of the *Academy* should retire and "make room for some honester man." Whereupon the editor refers to his "mistake" as being "inadvertent"—which is infamous nonsense; and, instead of apologising or regretting, rather congratulates himself on "drawing this elegant protest" from Mr. Davidson. Surely this man does well to talk about *elegance*, after the epithets he passed in Mr. Machen's article; and we are not surprised at his perpetrating a gross outrage on Mr. Davidson, and chuckling over it afterwards—for Mr. Davidson is a Freethinker, and the editor of the *Academy* is a Christian, and this is a sufficient explanation.

It is an old trick of the baser controversy to sneer at a man's ill-manners when he vigorously resents an insult or an outrage. A man lies about you, and you call him a liar. "Oh," he says, "what shocking language!" Well, the reply to him may be found in Sophocles:—

"Thou sayst it, and not I; for thou hast done  
The ugly deed that made these ugly words."

At last, after nineteen hundred years, "Christianity has its great opportunity." Mr. Walter Rauschenbusch, in a book published by Macmillan & Co., at 6s. 6d. net, says so, and Mr. Rauschenbusch knows, for he is a professor in a theological college in America. But the situation is perilous in the extreme. The future of the world trembles in the balance. Let us all take warning in time. The gist of the wonderful volume is compressed into these two sentences:—

"We are standing at the turning of the ways."

"It rests upon us to decide if a new era is to dawn in the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God, or if Western civilisation is to descend to the graveyard of dead civilisations, and God will have to try once more."

God has had his share of tries, and is as far from success now as ever. Would it not be wise to bow God out of the field, and let man have an unfettered go at the game of transforming the world?

Here is another specimen of the species known as believing whole-hoggers. The honor of discovering this interesting relic belongs to the Rev. Dr. Warschauer. This time it is a Low Church vicar of a large and prosperous parish who has swallowed the Bible from cover to cover. "Nobody believes every word in the Bible," said Dr. Warschauer. "Pardon me," retorted the clergyman, "but I do! The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, the Old Testament as well as the New, for the whole of the Old bears the authoritative sanction of our Lord." "It's all as plain as a pikestaff," he added; "'a highway shall be there; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.'" Fancy a teacher of the people with his reason fast asleep, a leader of the rising generation with his understanding buried under a vast waste of impossible beliefs.

Robert W. Miles, a middle-aged coal-yard foreman, of Canterbury, has been sentenced to seven months' hard labor for indecently assaulting Louisa Wickens, a little girl of eleven years. The Recorder called him a hypocrite. A letter was read in court, written by him to the girl's father and mother after the offence, in which he thanked them for their "kindness and grace" in forgiving him, and quoted



several texts of Scripture in support of their action. This precious epistle concluded with "Yours in Christ Jesus."

Another apostle of "blessed be ye poor" has gone the Lord knows where—though we can venture a guess. Rev. Thomas Henry Clark, of Weston-super-mare, left £34,258. Pity the poor clergy!

The Rev. James Orr, a Glasgow theological Professor, who recently asserted that, at Yale University, America, there were two Thomas Paine Societies more than eleven years before Thomas Paine was born, is about to publish a great book on the Virgin Birth, in which he promises to convert that beautiful old legend, common to most religions, into a well-established historical fact. After all, the age of miracles may not be over. If two Thomas Paine Societies flourished at Yale between eleven and fourteen years before the famous Freethinker ever saw the light of day, Virgin Births would not take such high ranks in the miraculous scale as many people have been led to imagine. At any rate, Dr. Orr is the right sort of man to solve the problem!

The Rev. D. S. Evans, speaking at the Harwich Ruridecanal Conference, advocated cold meals for church-goers on Sundays, everybody's first and most important duty on that day being to appear before God in the sanctuary. After such a Puritanical declaration, one is agreeably surprised to learn that Dr. Evans favors Sunday golf for business men who have no time for amusement during the week. Had he been a Nonconformist, he would have been a *consistent*—bigot.

When a minor French poet showed Voltaire his "Ode to Posterity," the great wit said he was afraid it would never reach its destination. In last week's *Christian Commonwealth* there was "A Letter to America," from the pen of Mr. Dawson, the editor. That is likely to miscarry too.

Mr. Dawson tells America (we don't know why) that the working-men of this country are very religious animals. "You will never hear," he says, "in any truly representative gathering of British working-men, a depreciatory word in regard to the Carpenter of Nazareth or the Christian Scriptures." This may be perfectly true—and perfectly unimportant; for representative gatherings of British working men do not discuss religious topics. Mr. Dawson's reason, however, is worse than his statement; it is because British working men "revere both" Christ and the Bible, and feel that the first was more than a carpenter, and the latter a book by itself. Mr. Dawson has evidently a poor acquaintance with the British working men.

Mr. Dawson has a tolerable supply of Christian check. He refers to Mr. Robert Blatchford as one "who calls himself an agnostic, if not an atheist, and, while arguing against Christian doctrines, lives an essentially Christian, altruistic life." Note the sublime egotism! Altruism and Christianity are the same thing, and every good man—even an atheist—is a Christian without knowing it. And we daresay that Mr. Dawson considers this insult to Mr. Blatchford's intelligence a very happy compliment to Mr. Blatchford's character.

Suppose Mr. Blatchford were to say that Mr. Dawson, or his chief, Mr. Campbell, professes to be a Christian, but is, morally speaking, a very good Atheist. Would not these gentlemen confound his impudence?

The Prime Minister has been waited upon by Catholic and Church of England deputations protesting against the new Training-Colleges regulations. He has also been waited upon by a deputation of leaders of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches expressing satisfaction with these regulations. It is the same old game: Church *versus* Chapel. And the Liberal government is the Nonconformists' tool.

"Colonel" Wilson, of the Salvation Army, being interviewed by a representative of the *Daily Dispatch*, said that he "absolutely and entirely refuted" Mr. Manson's statements. By "refuted" he simply meant "denied." Well, denial is easy. Besides, the actual worth of "Colonel" Wilson's denials may be gauged by his concluding declaration that "General Booth will not let us fight against wicked statements." What a good word that is! *Wicked!* But what does it mean? A "wicked statement" is evidently one that cannot be answered.

Everybody knows that Dr. Torrey thoroughly understands his job. He gives his audiences just exactly what he is

aware they wish to receive, and so he and they are usually in close touch. They enjoy hearing dead Freethinkers slandered, and he slanders them without scruple. But lately this man after God's own heart sublimely eclipsed himself. Speaking in New York, he stated that "for years he and his whole family had depended solely on prayer for their food and clothing; that when they wanted anything they asked for it, and they got it, too." This is the most barefaced and contemptible form of conscious lying imaginable! This is hypocrisy enormous enough to reach to the most distant stars! No wonder this scoundrel dares to wickedly slander dead Deists and Atheists when he does not hesitate to slander the God whom he professes to worship and to proclaim as the Savior of the world. At last the American religious newspapers and our *Christian World* unite in denouncing him as—well, to put it mildly, as a man who doesn't tell the truth. The *Freethinker* bluntly called him a liar long ago, and is now amply justified by the religious press for so characterising him.

When Dr. Torrey was in London, his own committee admitted openly that he was well paid for his work; and there is no case on record of his refusing monetary acknowledgment. No fact is more firmly established than that all successful evangelists and revivalists are most handsomely remunerated. Theirs is a famously good paying business, as anyone who has had the slightest experience of such things can bear witness. The *Boston Congregationalist* tells Dr. Torrey to his face that he "notoriously gets part of the money to buy food and clothes by preaching," and that, though he may have no definite salary, "he gets good wages." Of course he does; and he gets much better paid as a peripatetic revivalist than he ever did as a stated pastor, and much more easily, too.

Father Vaughan denounces the "smart set" for their vices, and they flock to hear him and find it great fun. Over in America, the Rev. C. F. Aked, the man from Liverpool, is doing the same sort of thing. He has accepted the pastorate of a millionaires' church, and we read that at Chataqua, during his summer vacation, he has been going in for a "fierce attack on the luxurious and idle rich." Of course, the luxurious and idle rich enjoy the sport. They take Mr. Aked's attacks as a condiment; like mustard or horse-radish with beef. And the reverend gentleman, at his time of life, must pretty well understand his function.

We have often read of "God in the Car," but that phrase was the title of a novel, with the contents of which God had nothing to do. But now we read that the Christian Heavenly Father inhabits a travelling "Mission Car," on the outside of which is printed in large letters, "Prepare to meet thy God." At present, this precious car is in the market, and may be had "cheap for the Lord's work." Of course, there is nothing new in this. Jehovah lived in a box for many years, and, so housed, accompanied his people Israel on all important expeditions, and especially to perilous battlefields.

A young man named Moorhead fell from his bicycle while riding down a steep hill at Scariff, near Bandon, C. Cork, and died a few hours afterwards of shock and concussion of the brain. It was on Sunday—and he was an evangelist. More "Providence."

A curious case has just been decided at Munich. A family named Wolf played off "ghost" tricks upon an aged widow with money. They drove her nearly crazy, and then got all her money out of her under the pretence of clearing the spirits out of the premises. Wolf is now doing five years' penal servitude; his wife and one of his daughters are doing two years each, and another daughter eighteen months.

Rev. Wm. Roberts, vicar of St. Ann's, Hoxton, has to pay £75 damages and costs for libelling by postcards a Camden Town auctioneer, Mr. Alfred Squires. "I preach righteousness," the reverend gentleman said in the witness-box. But the question was, what did he practise?

Here is a chance for the company promoter—if the job is not already in safe hands. Mr. C. J. Lacy, Basingbourne House, Fleet, Hants, appeals for subscriptions towards a fund of which he is honorary treasurer. £3,000 at least is wanted towards "maintaining" what is called "the Garden Tomb" outside Jerusalem, which "authorities are satisfied is the actual sepulchre of our Lord." No mention is made of the fact that this is not the *only* holy sepulchre. There are others. J. C. appears to have occupied several. Still, none of them is the worse for that. They are all authentic. Of course. And as there are plenty of fools in the world, with plenty of money amongst them, we daresay the Garden Tomb enterprise will flourish.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

## To Correspondents.

- J. B. writes: "Thank you for copies of the *Freethinker* you have sent me. I hope its sale will continue to grow. It brings light in dark places. I shall take it regularly." Such a letter should encourage the "saints" to keep on sending us the names and addresses of persons likely to become regular readers of this journal if it were only brought to their notice properly. We will forward a free copy to all such persons by post for six consecutive weeks.
- G. F. F.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- G. ARMITAGE.—The whole thing is a complete misrepresentation, but the liars are insignificant and we are so used to such things; besides, the paper is a gutter-rag beneath contempt. To answer anything in it publicly would be like noticing the shrieking insults of a drunken streetwalker.
- F. S. writes: "As an old-time admirer of Mr. Touzeau Parris I have much pleasure in enclosing herewith a cheque for £5 towards the Fund you are raising on his behalf. I am indeed sorry to learn that not only has his health given way, but he has also fallen on evil days financially. I trust there may be a generous and also a quick response to your timely appeal on his behalf."
- GEORGE PAYNE (Manchester) writes: "I am sorry to learn from to-day's *Freethinker* that another old Freethought lecturer is under a cloud. I think I never heard Mr. Touzeau Parris more than once, but I have a very satisfactory remembrance of the lectures I then heard. I have pleasure in enclosing a cheque for £3 3s. as a contribution to the Fund being raised on his behalf."
- E. ROSSMANN (Germany), renewing his subscription to the *Freethinker*, says: "I beg leave to express the high gratification I have derived from the reading of your paper for several years. I have always found its contents equally interesting and instructive."
- M. D. E. sends subscription to the Touzeau Parris Fund "in memory of old Hammersmith days and teachings."
- J. H.—May deal with it next week.
- THE TOUZEAU PARRIS FUND.—First *Freethinker* List:—Major John C. Harris, R.E., £5; F. S., £5; George Payne, £3 3s.; M. D. E., 5s.; Kingsland N. S. S. Branch (collection), 10s.; H. Walsh, 10s.
- Per E. M. Vance:—Hume Nisbet, £1; H. M. Ridgway, £5; R. Child, 5s.; E. M. Vance, 5s.; T. S., 2s. 6d.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.
- C. L. BUCHANAN.—Yes, it is best to order this journal through newsagents when possible. It gets better known in that way. Glad to hear of your "indebtedness" to the *Freethinker*, and that "thanks to it" you have made "a household of Atheists."
- P. MCG.—We are unable to increase our expenses, and cannot offer you any remuneration for articles or other matter. As a matter of fact, we have as much copy as we can use at present.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Very likely the holiday had something to do with your *Freethinker* not turning up last week; but any blame must attach to your newsagent; we published punctually. Thanks for cuttings. John Dryden, long before you, said that "Priests of all religions are the same." You see it is an old story—and an old species.
- J. LAZARNICK.—Always pleased to receive cuttings on which we can base a paragraph.
- T. W. HAUGHTON.—Freethought has no connection with Socialism or Anti-Socialism. Misrepresentations on this point will occur, and it would be impossible to correct them all.
- J. DOUGLAS.—Copies of the "Salvation Army" Tract forwarded.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.
- D. WAUDBY.—In our next.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
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- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
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## Sugar Plums.

Owing to the August Bank Holiday the "Sugar Plum" and "Correspondents" part of this week's *Freethinker* is not as full as usual, and some matters that would otherwise have been dealt with in "Acid Drops" have unavoidably to stand over till our next issue." Our readers will understand.

In ordinary circumstances we should have held the appeal on behalf of Mr. Touzeau Parris over until after the holidays, but we understood that the case was one of more or less urgency, in consequence of Mr. Parris's physical infirmities. Only a few subscriptions have reached us by Tuesday morning (Aug. 6), but there will doubtless be a longer list of acknowledgments in our next issue. We earnestly hope so.

The first subscription that reached us for the Touzeau Parris Fund was from Major John C. Harris, R.E. Our dear old friend—if he won't mind our saying so—never lets the grass grow under his feet when he is on an errand of benevolence. He usually manages to be the first subscriber to any object that appeals to his sympathies; and his good-nature is so large a target that it is not very difficult to hit. Not that there is any maudlin sentimentality about him; for he is perfectly sincere, and sincere persons are never sentimentalists. Major Harris's head always runs a good race with his heart.

Two provincial friends were as prompt as Major Harris was, but they did not get their *Freethinker* as soon as he did, and they had farther to send through the Post Office. The letters of F. S. and Mr. George Payne came by the same delivery. F. S. has always been a very generous supporter of the Freethought movement, and Mr. George Payne's subscriptions were acknowledged in the *Freethinker* more years ago than we like counting.

The New York *Truthseeker*—the leading Freethought journal in America, and we believe the oldest—notices our recent bother with the *Clarion*, and concludes as follows:—

"The same thing has happened before in the past forty years. The 'newer' soldier gets the notion that he is the people and that Freethought was born with his espousal of it. This is likely due to his unfamiliarity with Freethought history and traditions, and his ignorance of the labors of those who have gone before him. Sometimes he impresses his error on his followers with results even more saddening than his own personal obsession. Mr. Foote is large enough and secure enough in his position as the foremost exponent of Freethought in England not to be disturbed by this familiar manifestation, and he has only done his duty in pointing out the dangers to which one who overzeals himself is exposed."

This, to quote the title of a Browning poem, is "How it Strikes a Contemporary."

## THE BIBLE AND SEXUAL MORALITY.

Who, that is not manacled and hoodwinked by his Hebraism, can believe that, as to love and marriage, our reason and the necessities of our humanity have their true, sufficient, and divine law expressed for them by the voice of any Oriental and polygamous nation like the Hebrews? Who, I say, will believe, when he really considers the matter, that where the feminine nature, the feminine ideal, and our relations to them, are brought into question, the delicate and apprehensive genius of the Indo-European race, the race which invented the Muses, and chivalry, and the Madonna, is to find its last word on this question in the institutions of a Semitic people, whose wisest king had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines?—*Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy."*

Paradise, and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was?  
For the discerning intellect of Man,  
When wedded to this goodly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.

—Wordsworth.

There is only one pure kind of kingship; an inevitable and eternal kind, crowned or not: the kingship, namely, which consists in a stronger moral state, and a truer thoughtful state, than that of others; enabling you, therefore, to guide, or raise them.—*John Ruskin.*



## Were the Jews Savages?

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

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

THE Jews are a sensitive people. Fifteen centuries of Christian persecution have only rivetted their attachment to their ancestral faith. It may be well, therefore, at the outset to disclaim any attempt to specially stigmatise a race which has influenced the religious beliefs of nearly one-half the world, and which can fairly claim to have done its share in promoting the work of civilisation. The inquiry, "Were the Jews Savages?" should provoke no more hostility than a similar inquiry as to the Egyptians or the Ancient Britons. If answered, as here, in the affirmative, the affirmation should be taken as a compliment, as measuring the height to which a single people may advance.

The inquiry, however, is pertinent, because the main opposition to the doctrine of evolution is founded upon the records of the Jews, and prejudices against scientific teachings are instilled into the minds of children on the ground of their incompatibility with "revealed truth" in those records. Whatever traces can be brought from the Bible itself to confirm the evidence derived from the monuments of all other ancient peoples—from the wrecks of lake-dwellings as from the burrows and tumuli of prehistoric man, showing that man has progressed from a savage state, are of importance as clearing away a main hindrance to the right study of human evolution.

It is manifest nothing but traces of savagery can be expected in a record, the earliest portions of which were probably written one thousand years after Jewish contact with the Cushite, Accadian, and Egyptian civilisations, and which throughout reflect rather the usages of the time of their writers than those of the age they refer to.

The distinguishing mark which every Jew bears on his person is one of those traces which take us back to times antedating civilisation. We know from monumental records that circumcision was practised among the Egyptians before the time of Abraham. The ascription of a sanitary reason for the rite is evidently an afterthought. Whether we consider it as a symbolic sacrifice to the sun, or—what is more probable—as a phallic rite, or—what is most probable—as a sign of subjection to a higher power, certainly the practice of circumcision is one of a class only found to arise among savages. Herbert Spencer says:—

"That circumcision was among the Hebrews the stamp of subjection, all the evidence proves. On learning that among existing Bedouins the only conception of God is that of a powerful living ruler, the sealing by circumcision of the covenant between God and Abraham becomes a comprehensible ceremony. There is furnished an explanation of the fact that in consideration of a territory to be received, this mutilation, undergone by Abraham, implied that 'the Lord' was 'to be a god unto' him; as also of the fact that the mark was to be borne not by him and his descendants only, as favored individuals, but also by slaves not of his blood. And on remembering that by primitive peoples the returning double of the dead potentate is believed to be indistinguishable from the living potentate, we get an interpretation of the strange tradition concerning God's anger with Moses for not circumcising his son: 'And it came to pass by the way in the inn that the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet' (Ex. iv. 24, 25).—*Principles of Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 68.

Among other proofs that circumcision was a mark of subordination to Jahveh, Spencer mentions that Antiochus, who brought in foreign gods, forbade circumcision, which was strongly insisted upon by the Maccabees. Hyrcanus having subdued the Idumeans, made them submit to circumcision; and Aristobulus similarly imposed that mark on the conquered people of Iturea.

The use of the stone knife in circumcision by Zipporah, as well as the knives of flint used by Joshua and by later Jews,\* is of some significance as lingering relics of the stone age, as well as the command to build the altar of unhewn stone (Ex. xx. 25). It is also not without significance that Jahveh preferred to dwell in a tent even when a temple was offered him.

Of the savage practice of mutilation in warfare we have instances in the case of Adonibezek, whose thumbs and great toes were cut off by Judah (Judges i. 8), and of Nahash the Ammonite, who offered terms on condition of his opponents losing their right eyes (1 Sam. xi. 13).

David purchases Saul's daughter with one or two hundred foreskins of the Philistines (1 Sam. xviii. 25-27; 2 Sam. iii. 14).

The practice of sacrificing hair for the dead is frequently referred to, and from the repeated injunctions against making cuttings in the flesh (Lev. xix. 28; xxi. 5; Deut. xiv. 1), we may judge that gashing, if not tattooing, was not unknown even in the late time of the Deuteronomist.

In the earliest pictures we have of the Jews they are in the pastoral stage, having bows and arrows for hunting, with which, as in the case of Esau, they supplemented their simple food supply. Although Cain is described as a tiller of the ground, his parents, the first pair, are represented as living in a garden without clothing, habitation, arts or information. It is noticeable, moreover, that the first handicraftsman mentioned, Tubal-cain, is a worker in metal. In Hebrew, the common name for workman, *chirash*, means in particular the worker in metal or hard materials, while the word for arrow (*chatz*) and gravelstone (*chazatz*) are both related to *chazatz*, to cut. We find little evidence of the Jews having reached the agricultural stage until their settlement in the land of Canaan. The patriarchs are all herdsmen, whose sons and daughters, even in the case of the most wealthy, attend to their flocks. There is no indication of any such subdivision of labor as we know obtained in Egypt prior to the time of Abraham. No passage points to the existence of such primitive trades as those of mason and carpenter. On the contrary, it would appear that these occupations formed part of the common domestic work. Even in the time of David he had to send to King Hiram for masons or build him a house, and but a little prior we read that "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel"; while in the time of the invasion we read that "the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron" (Judges i. 19).

Women were employed not only in preparing meals and tending flocks, but in the tasks of drawing water and grinding corn. That these tasks devolved on the females because of their being very laborious is proved by the fact that this was the work to which bondmen and captives were put. Not only was concubinage usual in the patriarchal period, but the concubine might be dismissed at any moment. The husband was addressed as *lord* by his wife, and, indeed, the very term for husband, *baal*, is the same as for lord and master. Women, in default of having sons, were inherited by the brother of their husband, and a man had the first right to marry his cousin. In former papers I have pointed out that kinship was less regarded when not on the mother's side, and that marriages were permitted which are now deemed incestuous by all civilised people. Marriage was usually by purchase, though there are some traces of the prior stage of capture. In the case of Jacob, service was substituted for purchase, but as shown by Dr. Robertson Smith, in his fine work on *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, Jacob's was a *becna* marriage (*i.e.*, one in which the

\* Josh. v. 2. According to the Septuagint version (Josh. xxiv.), the stone knives with which Joshua circumcised the children of Israel were afterwards found in his tomb.



husband leaves the family and passes into the family of his wife). This is probably alluded to in Genesis ii. 24. When Abraham sought a wife for Isaac, his servant thought the condition would probably be made that Isaac should settle with her people.

Allied to the custom of maintaining the family by the marriage of kinsmen was the institution of the *goel*, or blood avenger, an institution recognised in the Deuteronomic law as late as the time of Josiah (Deut. xix. 6). Traces of the totem system of kinship may be found in the clan crests or badges, alluded to in Gen. xlix. No less than one hundred and eighty Biblical names have been shown to have a zoological signification. Caleb the dog tribe, Doeg the fish tribe, may be instanced as specimens. It has even been conjectured that the origin of prohibited food arose as a totem tabu, and totem marks are supposed to be referred to in the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 5). The Jewish tendency to animal worship is instanced in the well-known story of the golden calf, in the making of golden calves by Jeroboam, in the worship of the brazen serpent said to have been made by Moses, to which incense was offered down to the time of Hezekiah; and it is noticed both by Isaiah (xlvi. 17) and Ezekiel (vii. 10-11). The brazen serpent was an evident fetish, the notion of its being of efficacy in serpent bites being as distinct a proof as could be offered that its worshippers were in a state of culture now known only among savages.

Other remnants of fetishism among the Jews may be found in their sacred trees and pillars, so frequently referred to in the earlier portions of the Bible. Abraham is said to have planted a tree at Beersheba as a religious emblem (Gen. xxi. 33). Jacob is twice mentioned as setting up a pillar. The Rev. T. K. Cheyne admits that, "In spite of the efforts of the 'Jehovist' who desired to convert these ancient fetishes into memorials of patriarchal history (comp. Gen. xxxi. 45-52), the old heathenish use of them seems to have continued, especially in secluded places" (*Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. ii., p. 70). Isaiah (lvii. 6) speaks of libations made to stones in his own time, evidently unaware that the worshippers could have cited the precedent of Jacob, who, in pouring oil upon the stone (employing an established mode of honoring living persons) performed one of the commonest acts of fetish worship. We should judge that the act was in propitiation of the supposed indwelling spirit to whom he ascribed the dream, if we trust to the analogous instance related of the Blantyre negroes by the Rev. Duff Macdonald, who tells us "Very frequently a man presents an offering at the top of his own bed beside his head. He wishes his god to come to him and whisper in his ear as he sleeps" (*Africana*, vol. i., p. 60). The fetishism of Jacob appears still further in the conditional and selfish character of his vow. If fortune favored him then the stone should be his Bethel, or home of god. According to Jewish tradition, Jacob's pillar was religiously treasured in the holy of holies (Smith's Bible Dictionary article, "Bethel"). We shall not be surprised at this early fetishism when we remember that Jeremiah had to denounce "Kings, princes, and their priests and prophets which say to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth" (Jer. ii. 26, 27). The worship of teraphim fetishes remained long among the Jews, indeed Hosea laments as a misfortune that "the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without teraphim" (Hosea iii. 4). Laban calls the teraphim his "gods" (Genesis xxxi. 30). And so does Micah (Judges xviii. 18-24). In the thirtieth verse of the latter chapter the word "Manasseh" has been substituted for that of "Moses" in order to conceal the fact that the direct descendants of Moses actually worshiped images down to the days of the captivity. Teraphim were kept in the household of David, and these household gods, as we gather from the story of Michal substituting one for her husband (1 Sam. xix. 13), were rude images in human form.

The great Jewish fetish was the ark of the covenant in which Jahveh was supposed to reside. As with other wandering tribes, the god was kept in a box and carried about, being taken as a standard into battle, and deemed a prestige of victory. The ark, like many fetishes, was *tabu* except to the priests, and Uzzah was suddenly smitten to death for merely preventing it from falling. That the worship of images and even the most atrocious sacrifices to them did not stand in the way of participation in Jahveh worship we have the most conclusive evidence from Ezekiel, who tells us "when they have slain their children to their idols then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it, and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house" (xxxiii. 39). The stories of Jephthah's daughter and of Abraham and Isaac are sufficient to show that human sacrifices were at one time customary, and in the Levitical law remains the ordinance "None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xxix. 30), while the Psalmist tells us "they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils" (Psalm cvi. 37). The worship of "devils" is alluded to in Lev. xvii. 7, 2, and Chron. xi. 15; and although the Revised Version reads "he goats," it makes it more apparent that Azazel was an evil spirit supposed to reside in the scapegoat, upon whose head the sins of the people were placed.

That sacred prostitution went on in Jewish temples, as we know from Herodotus and Lucian, was the custom both in Babylon and Syria, we have evidence in the word *kadesh*, signifying at once a harlot and a holy one, a consecrated person and a sodomite. References to them are found in Gen. xxxviii. 21; 1 Kings xiv. 23, 24; xv. 12; xxii. 46; 2 Kings xxiii. 7; Hos. iv. 10-19; v. 14. Deut. xxiii. 17, 18, prohibits them not entirely, but only insists on their not being of the house of Israel, and in declaring "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore or the wages of a dog [that is, of a sodomite] into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow," only stipulates that the money offered for any impure purpose should not be dedicated to Jahveh. The first verse, as Dr. Inman remarks, tolerates the practice, but declares the slaves of desire must be of foreign extraction. Hence we find in the Bible that a strange woman is synonymous with a strumpet, and the religion of other nations is continually spoken of as whoredom. That pedrasty and other unnatural offences existed among the Jews as well as among the Canaanites we have evidence, not only in the frequent reference in their laws, but from the case recorded in Judges xix. 22.

In such superstitions as a belief in dreams, in witches, wizards, and sorcery we may see further evidence that the Jews were once in a savage state. Even in the worship of Jahveh the Urim and Thummin were used in divination (Num. xxviii. 21; 1 Sam. xxiii. 9; xxvii. 6, and xxx. 7-8). Casting lots was another method, and one of the Proverbs tells us "the whole disposing thereof is with Jahveh" (xvi. 31). It is significant that in Arabic the word *cohen*, which is the Hebrew for priest, signifies diviner. Jahveh himself indeed is throughout depicted as a savage deity, a passionate, relentless, and cruel partisan, "a man of war," a jealous god visiting the sins of the fathers on the children. At the outset he was the tutelary deity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the God of the Jews, just as Chemosh was the god of the Amorites (see Judges xi. 24). It was not until the time of the prophets that prominence was given to Jahveh's regard for ethics.

To anyone who reminds me of the boasted superiority of the Mosaic morals, I would remark that it is evident from Exodus xxxiv., that the original Decalogue was devoid of the ethical provisions now found. And these commandments are strictly tribal. The command, "Thou shalt not steal," was no protection to the Egyptians; the command, "Thou shalt not kill," certainly did not apply to the Amalekites. Mr. Herbert Spencer has recently reminded us that, "Ferocious as were the Mexicans, and bloody as were their religious rites, they never-



theless had, as given by Zurita, a moral code which did not suffer by comparison with that of Christians, the one like the other claiming divine authority" (*Clerical Institutions*, p. 814).

A custom carrying us back to savage times was that of not only slaying a criminal, but also destroying his sons, daughters, and cattle as in the case of Achan (Joshua vii.). Mr. Wake, in his suggestive work on the evolution of morality, declares that the general character of the Hebrews compares, on the whole, very unfavorably with that of their Egyptian oppressors. The same author remarks:—

"But, although the wilful homicide of a Hebrew was punished with death, the beating to death of a slave is to be punished only if the slave die under the master's hand (Exod. xxi.); a circumstance in which the Hebrew law compares very unfavorably with the Egyptian regulation. The barbarous *lex talionis* is fully enforced, and the regulations as to compensation for injuries sustained by the 'pushing' of oxen, remind us more of the ingenuity of a Kaffir chief than that of a divine lawgiver. The killing of the thief caught in the act is an ordinary regulation of primitive societies, and the making of restitution shows that the immorality of the act was not considered, but only the loss which it occasioned. Death was, as we should expect, inflicted for adultery, but the lying with a woman who was not the property of another, either as wife or betrothed, has the same want of immorality as among the peoples of antiquity in general" (vol. ii., p. 60).

The instances already given are, I venture to think, strongly corroborative of the belief that the Jews bear marks of having emerged from a condition now only found among savages, and this conclusion is confirmed by the existence of the barbarous law of jealousy given in the fifth chapter of Book of Numbers, under the heading "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying." It provided that any man who was jealous of his wife might, simply to satisfy his own suspicions, and without the slightest evidence against her, bring her before the priest, who, taking holy water, charges her by an oath of cursing to declare if she has been unfaithful to her husband. The priest is to write out the curse and blot it into the water, which he then administers to the woman. If she has been faithful the water will save the husband any further divorce proceedings, but if faithful it will prove innocuous. A law like this with the accompanying superstition, offering such opportunities for crime under the mask of justice, can only be paralleled among the lowest tribes of Central Africa.

### Crumbling Creeds.

BY THE LATE COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

THERE is a desire in each brain to harmonise the knowledge that it has. If a man knows, or thinks he knows, a few facts, he will naturally use those facts for the purpose of determining the accuracy of his opinions on other subjects. This is simply an effort to establish or prove the unknown by the known—a process that is constantly going on in the minds of all intelligent people.

It is natural for a man not governed by fear to use what he knows in one department of human inquiry, in every other department that he investigates. The average of intelligence has, in the last few years, greatly increased. Man may have as much credulity as he ever had, on some subjects, but certainly on the old subjects he has less. There is not as great difference to-day between the members of the learned professions and the common people. Man is governed less and less by authority. He cares but little for the conclusions of the universities. He does not feel bound by the actions of synods or ecumenical councils—neither does he bow to the decisions of the highest tribunals, unless the reasons given for the decision satisfy his intellect. One reason for this is, that the so-called "learned" do not agree among themselves, that the universities dispute each other, that the synod attacks the ecumenical council, that the parson snaps his fingers at the priest, and even the Protestant bishop holds the pope in contempt. If the learned can thus disagree, there is no reason why the common people should hold to one opinion. They are at least called upon to decide as between the universities or synods; and, in order to decide, they must examine both sides; and, having examined both sides, they generally have an opinion of their own.

There was a time when the average man knew nothing of medicine—he simply opened his mouth and took the dose. If he died, it was simply a dispensation of Providence; if he got well, it was a triumph of science. Now this average man not only asks the doctor what is the matter with him—not only asks what medicine will be good for him, but insists on knowing the philosophy of the cure, asks the doctor why he gives it, what result he expects, and, as a rule, has a judgment of his own.

So in law. The average business man has an exceedingly good idea of the law affecting his business. There is nothing now mysterious about what goes on in courts or in the decisions of judges; they are published in every direction, and all intelligent people who happen to read these opinions have their ideas as to whether the opinions are right or wrong. They are no longer the victims of doctors, or of lawyers, or of courts.

The same is true in the world of art and literature. The average man has an opinion of his own. He is no longer a parrot, repeating what somebody else says. He not only has opinions, but he has the courage to express them. In literature, the old models fail to satisfy him. He has the courage to say that Milton is tiresome, that Dante is prolix, that they deal with subjects having no human interest. He laughs at Young's *Night Thoughts* and Pollok's *Course of Time*, knowing that both are filled with hypocrisies and absurdities. He no longer falls upon his knees before the mechanical poetry of Mr. Pope. He chooses, and stands by, his own opinion. I do not mean that he is entirely independent, but that he is going in that direction.

The same is true of pictures. He prefers the modern to the old masters. He prefers Corot to Raphael. He gets more real pleasure from Millet and Troyon than from all the pictures of all the saints and donkeys of the Middle Ages.

In other words, the days of authority are passing away. The same is true in music. The old no longer satisfies, and there is a breadth, color, wealth, in the new that makes the old poor and barren in comparison.

To a far greater extent this advance, this individual independence, is seen in the religious world. The religion of our day—that is to say, the creeds—at the time they were made, were in perfect harmony with the knowledge, or rather with the ignorance, of man in all other departments of human inquiry. All orthodox creeds agreed with the sciences of their day—with the astronomy and geology and biology and political conceptions of the Middle Ages. Those creeds were declared to be the absolute and eternal truth. They could not be changed without abandoning the claim that made them authority. The priests, through a kind of unconscious self-defence, clung to every word. They denied the truth of all discovery. They measured every assertion in every other department by their creeds. At last, the facts against them became so numerous, their congregations became so intelligent, that it was necessary to give new meanings to the old words. The cruel was softened, the absurd was partially explained; and they kept these old words, although the original meanings had fallen out. They became empty purses, but they retained them still.

Slowly, but surely, came the time when this course could not longer be pursued. The words must be thrown away—the creeds must be changed—they were no longer believed—only occasionally were they preached. The ministers became a little ashamed—they began to apologise. Apology is the prelude to retreat.

Of all the creeds, the Presbyterian, the old Congregational, were the most explicit, and, for that reason, the most absurd. When these creeds were written, those who wrote them had perfect confidence in their truth. They did not shrink because of their cruelty. They cared nothing for what others called absurdity. They failed not to declare what they believed to be "the whole counsel of God."

At that time, cruel punishments were inflicted by all governments. People were torn asunder, mutilated, burned. Every atrocity was perpetrated in the name of justice, and the limit of pain was the limit of endurance. These people imagined that God would do as they would do. If they had had it in their power to keep the victim alive for years in the flames, they would most cheerfully have supplied the fagots. They believed that God could keep the victim alive forever, and that, therefore, his punishment would be eternal. As man becomes civilised he becomes merciful, and the time came when civilised Presbyterians and Congregationalists read their own creeds with horror.

I am not saying that the Presbyterian creed is any worse than the Catholic. It is only a little more specific. Neither am I saying that it is more horrible than the Episcopal. It is not. All orthodox creeds are alike infamous. All of them have good things, and all of them have bad things. You will find in every creed the blossom of mercy and the oak of justice, but under the one and around the other are coiled the serpents of infinite cruelty.



The time came when orthodox Christians began dimly to perceive that God ought at least to be as good as they were. They felt that they were incapable of inflicting eternal pain, and they began to doubt the propriety of saying that God would do that which a civilised Christian would be incapable of.

We have improved in all directions for the same reasons. We have better laws now because we have a better sense of justice. We are believing more and more in the government of the people. Consequently, we are believing more and more in the education of the people, and from that naturally results greater individuality and a greater desire to bear the honest opinions of all.

The moment the expression of opinion is allowed in any department, progress begins. We are using our knowledge in every direction. The tendency is to test all opinions by the facts we know. All claims are put in the crucible of investigation, the object being to separate the true from the false. He who objects to having his opinions thus tested is regarded as a bigot.

If the professors of all the sciences had claimed that the knowledge they had was given by inspiration, that it was absolutely true, and that there was no necessity of examining further, not only, but that it was a kind of blasphemy to doubt, all the sciences would have remained as stationary as religion has. Just to the extent that the Bible was appealed to in matters of science, science was retarded; and just to the extent that science has been appealed to in matters of religion, religion has advanced—so that now the object of intelligent religionists is to adopt a creed that will bear the test and criticism of science.

Another thing may be alluded to in this connection. All the countries of the world are now, and have been for years, open to us. The ideas of other people—their theories, their religions—are now known; and we have ascertained that the religions of all people have exactly the same foundation as our own—that they all arose in the same way, were substantiated in the same way, were maintained by the same means, having precisely the same objects in view.

For many years, the learned of the religious world were examining the religions of other countries, and in that work they established certain rules of criticism—pursued certain lines of argument—by which they overturned the claims of those religions to supernatural origin. After this had been successfully done, others, using the same methods on our religion, pursuing the same line of argument, succeeded in overturning ours. We have found that all miracles rest on the same basis, that all wonders were born of substantially the same ignorance and the same fear.

The intelligence of the world is far better distributed than ever before. The historical outlines of all countries are well known. The arguments for and against all systems of religion are generally understood. The average of intelligence is far higher than ever before. All discoveries become almost immediately the property of the whole civilised world, and all thoughts are distributed by the telegraph and press with such rapidity that provincialism is almost unknown. The egotism of ignorance and seclusion is passing away. The prejudice of race and religion is growing feebler, and everywhere, to a greater extent than ever before, the light is welcome.

These are a few of the reasons why creeds are crumbling, and why such a change has taken place in the religious world.

Only a few years ago, the pulpit was an intellectual power. The pews listened with wonder, and accepted without question. There was something sacred about the preacher. He was different from other mortals. He had bread to eat which they knew not of. He was oracular, solemn, dignified, stupid.

The pulpit has lost its position. It speaks no longer with authority. The pews determine what shall be preached. They pay only for that which they wish to buy—for that which they wish to hear. Of course, in every church there is an advance guard and a conservative party, and nearly every minister is obliged to preach a little for both. He now and then says a radical thing for one part of his congregation, and takes it mostly back on the next Sabbath, for the sake of the others. Most of them ride two horses, and their time is taken up in urging one forward and in holding the other back.

The great reason why the orthodox creeds have become unpopular is, that all teach the dogma of eternal pain.

In old times, when men were nearly wild beasts, it was natural enough for them to suppose that God would do as they would do in his place, and so they attributed to this God infinite cruelty, infinite revenge. This revenge, this cruelty, wore the mask of justice. They took the ground that God, having made man, had the right to do with him as he pleased. At that time, they were not civilised to the extent of seeing that a God would not have the right to make a failure, and that a being of infinite wisdom and

power would be under obligation to do the right, and that he would have no right to create any being whose life would not be a blessing. The very fact that he made man would put him under obligation to see to it that life should not be a curse.

The doctrine of eternal punishment is in perfect harmony with the savagery of the men who made the orthodox creeds. It is in harmony with torture, with flaying alive, and with burnings. The men who burned their fellow-men for a moment, believed that God would burn his enemies for ever.

No civilised men ever believed in this dogma. The belief in eternal punishment has driven millions from the Church. It was easy enough for people to imagine that the children of others had gone to hell; that foreigners had been doomed to eternal pain; but when it was brought home, when fathers and mothers bent above their dead who had died in their sins, when wives shed their tears on the faces of husbands who had been born but once; love suggested doubts, and love fought the dogma of eternal revenge.

This doctrine is as cruel as the hunger of hyenas, and is infamous beyond the power of any language to express; yet a creed with this doctrine has been called "the glad tidings of great joy"—a consolation to the weeping world. It is a source of great pleasure to me to know that all intelligent people are ashamed to admit that they believe it, that no intelligent clergyman now preaches it, except with a preface to the effect that it is probably untrue.

I have been blamed for taking this consolation from the world—for putting out, or trying to put out, the fires of hell; and many orthodox people have wondered how I could be so wicked as to deprive the world of this hope.

The Church clung to the doctrine because it seemed a necessary excuse for the existence of the Church. The ministers said: "No hell, no atonement; no atonement, no fall of man; no fall of man, no inspired book; no inspired book, no preachers; no preachers, no salary; no hell, no missionaries; no sulphur, no salvation."

At last, the people are becoming enlightened enough to ask for a better philosophy. The doctrine of hell is now only for the poor, the ragged, the ignorant. Well-dressed people won't have it. Nobody goes to hell in a carriage—they foot it. Hell is for strangers and tramps. No soul leaves a brown-stone front for hell; they start from the tenements, from jails, and reformatories. In other words, hell is for the poor. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a poor man to get into heaven, or for a rich man to get into hell. The ministers stand by their supporters. Their salaries are paid by the well-to-do, and they can hardly afford to send the subscribers to hell. Every creed in which is the dogma of eternal pain is doomed. Every church teaching the infinite lie must fall, and the sooner the better.

#### A NIGHT SCENE.

The stars came gliding out of the sea  
To gaze on the sleeping city,  
With a tremulous light in their glances bright  
Of wonderful love and pity.

The breeze was breathing its olden song  
In a drowsy murmurous chanting;  
While the noble bay, with its moonlight spray,  
Kept time in a slumberous panting.

The city couched in a deep repose,  
All toil, all care suspended;  
The roar and the strife of its turbid life  
In the calm of nature blended.

Alas! I sighed with a weary sigh,  
That all the sin and sorrow,  
Now dreaming there, so calm and fair,  
Must wake afresh to-morrow.

Would that the whole might thus rest on,  
Entranced, for ever sleeping;  
The sea and the sky, and the stars on high,  
And those myriads born for weeping.

—James Thomson ("B. V.")

When boys blow bubbles, every one runs after his own bubble; in matters of faith, every one blows and runs after his own bubble—and calls it religion.

England supports three armies to preserve and advance its morality, religion, and glory, and they are clothed in blue, black, and red.

We talk as familiarly of heaven and hell as if the one were a palace for our own particular use, and the other a prison for those who differ from us.



**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), G. A. Aldred, 3.15, "Christian Criminals"; 6, "Why I am an Atheist."

**CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.:** Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies. a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. A. Davies, "An Hour with the Devil"; 6.15, a Lecture.

**KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S.:** Ridley-road, 11.30, a Lecture.

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.:** Parliament Hill, 3.30, H. Wishart, "The Development of an Atheist."

**WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.:** Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, H. Wishart, "The Development of an Atheist."

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

**WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S.:** Beresford-square, 11.30, G. A. Aldred, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

**FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane):** Annual Services; speaker, Joseph McCabe; 2.45, "The Truth About Science and Religion"; 6.30, "The Church and Social Progress." Hymns, etc., by the Choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band.

**OUTDOOR.**

**BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.:** Near "The Ship," Camp Hill, 6.30, H. Lennard, "Is the Bible Inspired?"

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