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The habitual study of poetry and works of imagination is one chief part of a well-grounded education. A taste for liberal art is necessary to complete the character of a gentleman. Science alone is hard and mechanical. It exercises the understanding upon things out of ourselves, while it leaves the affections unemployed, or engrossed with our own immediate, narrow interests.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT.

“What Price God?”

My readers must not be alarmed. The title of this article is not mine. It is a quotation from a respectable author.

Having set that matter right, I proceed to make a digression. Twenty-four years ago I read out some extracts from leading authors to a crowd of deeply interested listeners. It was in the Lord Chief Justice's Court in the great Gothic building in the Strand. I had been brought there from Holloway Gaol, where I was doing twelve months for “blasphemy”—or, as my indictment put it, for bringing the Holy Scripture and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt; and I was being tried again for “blasphemy” on another indictment. Lord Coleridge sat upon the bench, and being a gentleman, who had taken the Christian disease very mildly, he gave me fair play. He did not attempt to check me when I read out passages from expensive books, substantially as “blasphemous” as anything I had printed in the *Freethinker*; and, in referring to these passages in his address to the jury, he said that he failed to see any essential difference between many of them and my own writings. One of these passages was the famous one in Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, comparing the Christian Trinity to three Lord Shaftesburys. It was expunged from future editions of that book, but it was there then; and I was able to remark that Matthew Arnold had got a pension of £250 a year for his “blasphemy” whilst I had got twelve months' imprisonment for mine—which showed the difference between “blaspheming” to the classes and “blaspheming” to the masses.

Matthew Arnold's was a Civil List pension. I did not grudge it him. He was a fine writer; I read some of his poems with delight; and if one man got thousands of pounds for slaughtering Afghans, Ashantees, or Zulus, I could not see why hundreds should not be paid to the man who added to the world's treasury of beauty by writing *The Forsaken Mermaid*. I did not refer to the Arnold pension enviously or maliciously; I simply had to do it in my own defence.

The author of the phrase “What price God?” is also a Civil List pensioner. I refer to Mr. John Davidson, journalist, poet, and playwright. The phrase occurs in *The Theatrocrat*—of which more presently. Meanwhile let me say that I do not grudge the Davidson pension either; on the contrary, I rejoice at it. When dozens of pensions are accorded to nobodies, and the widows of nobodies, I cannot weep because one is allotted to a distinguished man of letters, who has many fine qualities, but whose work is not very marketable. Some

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people think that such pensions ought not to be given at all. Well, I am not going to argue the question; I am only concerned to say that, while they are given, I am glad to see one falling to the lot of Mr. John Davidson.

In my last week's article on the late David Christie Murray I had occasion to say that Mr. Davidson—to whom he had insolently referred—was “immensely his superior, being a real poet, and a writer of vigorous, pregnant, and vivid prose.” Mr. Davidson is really a poet; he has a fine command of metaphor, and he can write strong blank verse—which is a very rare thing. Passion and imagination and intellect he possesses beyond all but the greatest living English poets who belong to a previous generation. Nature gave him many good gifts: but she withheld one, which would have enabled him to do justice to all the rest. There is a lack of concentration and orderliness in his work; and the result is that, instead of giving us fine creative masterpieces, he gives us something inferior, though adorned with splendid purple patches, and occasional lines of tremendous power.

The Theatrocrat is called by its author “A Tragic Play of Church and Stage.” Certainly it is a play in form; there are acts, scenes, and dialogue; but the characters are not vital, one is not concerned with their fortunes, and when they die (for some of them perish untimely) it is the death of stage-puppets. The truth is that Mr. Davidson wrote this play to deliver a message, and good plays were never written in that fashion. There are messages in Shakespeare's plays, but they are not put into the mouths of his characters; they have to be deduced by the active minds of his auditors and readers, in the same way that we learn (if at all) from Nature herself.

One of Mr. Davidson's characters in *The Theatrocrat* is the Bishop of St. James's. He is the avowed mouthpiece of Mr. Davidson's views. He is an Atheist; or rather he would be if Mr. Davidson did not dislike the word. He writes a play to be produced at a great London theatre, and speaks the prologue himself; his speech being so full of Atheism that the outraged audience, led by a “fighting parson” (perhaps a Waldron), rush upon the stage and mob him, so that he dies of his injuries. “All is Matter, all,” he says; and a voice from the gallery cries, “What price God?” The atheistic Bishop answers the question. God is—

“The shutters of the mind;
A fire-proof curtain: ghastly *oul-de-sac*;
A last excuse; sublime taboo; a tip;
A patent medicine: an accepted lie.”

That is enough. “Atheist! Blasphemer!” the audience shout. This stings him to further opposition—and then the climax comes. It is told by Mark Belfry, a Yankee theatre-agent, who witnesses the scene:—

“A fighting parson crossed the floats and all
The stalls came after bellowing—men I mean.
The pittites followed and the gallery boys
Are breaking forms and shying splinters. ‘God!
‘For God!’ they roar, parson and moneyclender,
Broker and banker, counterjumper, peer.
The women, too; they all believe in God;
Duchesses, milliners, wives and prostitutes, [pays.]
They scream for God. God pays! you bet! God”

Before this extraordinary Bishop dies he is brought upon the stage—I mean *The Theatrocrat* stage—to “say a few more words,” as they put it in religious

circles. He speaks to his friend, Sir Tristram Sumner, proprietor and manager of the Grosvenor Theatre—suggestive of Sir Henry Irving and the Lyceum:—

“Terror and splendor, Tristram! Who shall tell—
Who shall persuade the kings that God is not,
The politicians, usurers, financiers,
Priests, warriors, that depend on God to bear
The burden of their inhumanities?
All inhumanity that flings itself
On God's unsearchable device will fight
To the last drop of blood, last laboring sigh,
For God and Heaven and Hell. And who shall teach
The orphans that their mothers are not; who
Unpeople Heaven of lovers, children, saints?
Women will fight with babies at their breasts,
Old palsied hags, peace-lovers, cripples, cowards,
When this is put to war. Their sons that died
In battle where are they? Their enemies
That should lament in Hell? The little child
That lived a year and holds its parents hearts
In dimpled hands for ever? Christ himself
That pardoned wanton women, where is he?”

Only a true poet could have written that penultimate query—and the whole passage is singularly powerful. Of course, it exhausts the Bishop, who just adds that “through the mists of tears and blood” he sees—

“A greater breed of men, a nobler world,
An independent power in the Universe,
The Universe itself become aware —”

and dies upon his prophecy.

The vision of the future is very brief, and not very convincing. This is partly due to the fact that the dying Bishop is short of breath, but more to the fact that Mr. Davidson finds it easier to denounce what is than to picture what shall be. The whole thing, however, was done before him in one of the most soaringly sublime passages of *Prometheus Unbound*, where the magical genius of Shelley compresses all the leading mental and moral features of enlightened and renovated humanity into one grand and glowing description—leaving us at a loss which to most admire, the sagacity of his intellect, the splendor of his imagination, or the superb mastery of his style.

My readers, who cannot all be lovers or students of poetry, will probably thank me for turning to Mr. Davidson's prose. Fortunately, from this point of view, he opens with a prose Dedication (as he rather curiously calls it) of nearly eighty pages. It is intensely interesting, and extremely characteristic. Mr. Davidson delivers his mind on all sorts of subjects—literary, social, political, and scientific, as well as religious; and, incidentally, he lets off a good many squibs of eccentricity and waywardness—which one is apt to come across in the writings of men who have suffered from the lack of an appreciative audience, and have caught the trick of watching themselves over-closely and listening too much to their own voices.

Mr. Davidson states his general philosophy in clear language—if the public would only read him. Here is a summary of his position:—

“Man is an inhabitant of the earth, which is one of the smallest planets of one of the smallest systems in the Universe; but man consists of the Universe, of the whole Universe in its condensed form, being permeated and pervaded by the omnipotent, omnipresent Ether, being soaked in it, being drunk with it, being it. There is nothing anywhere higher than man; there can be nothing higher than the Universe become self-conscious. In his uninstructed time man called the Ether which permeates him, which is his ecstasy, God and gods: ‘Out of God he came,’ he thought; ‘and back to God he should return’; or he called it Nirvana and an infinite peace. Imagination is the radiation of the omnipotent Ether. Only the whole Universe become conscious could have imagined God the Creator. Now man knows that there is no God; that nothing was made; that all is a becoming; that he is the Ether, condensed, evolved; and that he will devolve again into that invisible, imponderable form of Matter.”

It will surprise most of our readers to learn that the writer of that strong statement declines to call himself an Atheist.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Parents and Children.

“FROM bogey to bogus” is a phrase I came across recently, used as descriptive of the development of religious belief from the fear of the ancestral ghost to the mass of insincerities that now do duty as religious conviction. The description is not at all a bad one. Certainly it would be difficult to otherwise describe the process in as few words and with equal accuracy. About the origin of religion—whether ghost-worship gives us the beginning of religion or whether it is only derivative—there may be a difference of opinion, but there can be little question to an unprejudiced mind that deliberate hypocrisy and semi-conscious self-deception make up a large part of what passes for religion among civilised people. We have professions of faith that are seen to be worthless as indications of practice, assertions of profound conviction that are belied by an almost pathetic striving after evidence that will really convince, and, above all, a strong desire to make the interests of religion paramount, with a most decided want of courage in seeking to bring this about in an open and honest manner.

A good illustration of this last point is seen in the use of the phrase “Parental Responsibility” by religious writers and speakers in connection with the education controversy. Time was when religious leaders claimed that religious instruction should be given to children because it was the truth. One need not endorse such a claim to be able to appreciate it. It at least expresses conviction. Nowadays the position is changed. On the one side we have men like Dr. Clifford, whose aim is to get their religion taught at the public expense, asking for religious instruction in the public schools on grounds of citizenship; while his opponents, whose aim is on all fours with his own, using a cloud of words, amid which the rights of parents, and the responsibilities of parents, play a large part. None of them are bold enough to put their real object into plain English, which is to force a religion upon children merely because it is their particular faith, and, by taking advantage of the child's weakness and helplessness, perpetuate the *clientele* of their respective churches. To lend one's energies to making children staunch sectarians is not a very noble effort at best; but to do this under the cloak of regard for the rights and responsibilities of parents makes the task even more detestable than it would be otherwise.

With many, “Parental Responsibilities” and “Parental Rights” are looked upon as synonymous. But this is by no means the case. The responsibilities of a parent towards a child are, in truth, enormous; his *rights* are of the smallest possible dimensions. It is the child's rights, not often enough considered, and the parents responsibilities, too often neglected, that are of importance. Too often, again, the rights of parents is a phrase which covers a proprietary right—that of being at liberty to do as one pleases with one's own, and expresses resentment at any social regulation of a parent's dominion over his offspring. Whatever truth there may be in this view of the case can only be so far as the parent may properly resent such infringements on his liberty of action as are calculated to prevent the proper discharge of his responsibilities. And this, in turn, opens up the question of how far, and in what sense, can the child be considered as one of the parent's possessions? Certainly not as a mere article of property. Parents no longer possess, nor do they claim, the right of, inflicting death on their children. Even punishment may only be inflicted within certain limits; while, on the other side, certain requirements of the child—food, clothing, shelter, etc.—are made compulsory upon parents within the possibilities of their circumstances.

And this leads to the really vital point that while there are certain relationships between parent and child that can never be superseded, or ignored without danger, the child is a social asset, deriving its whole significance from the fact, and consequently

all questions of parental rights and responsibilities have to be considered from this point of view. The parents' immediate responsibilities are to the child, but ultimately they are to the society of which both parent and child are expressions. The right of the child against the parent is that, having been brought into the world, he shall be fitted, so far as is possible, to play his (or her) part of the larger social life to which it belongs. And the responsibility of the parent to both child and society is that he shall do all that lies in his power to this end.

These are simple truths—so obvious that they may seem trite; yet their very obviousness leads to their neglect, while a due recognition of them would certainly dispose of much of the verbiage current on the subject of parental rights and duties. To realise this, one need only take the religious question, to which I have already referred. Here the rights of the parent mean that the parent shall have the power, and at the public expense, to force upon the child certain speculative religious opinions that may or may not be correct, but which a number of people believe to be quite erroneous, and which nearly all will admit cannot be proved to be true. The only intelligible justification of this is that the parent honestly regards religious belief as essential to the child's future welfare. This reason, while not justifying the demand to have the religious instruction given at the general cost, does give an intelligible reason for giving religious instruction; and one can only point out, as a corrective, the obvious fact that people of all sorts of religious belief, with those of no religious belief at all, lead equally worthy or worthless existences. And if this is not enough to convince them that their view of the case is erroneous, one can only abstain from further argument, and hope for the time when people will be blessed by the possession of a keener intelligence.

For my own part, I altogether deny the moral right of a parent to force upon a child any or every opinion he may hold as probably true. In the nature of the case, one cannot put before a child all the reasons that incline one to this or that view of a speculative opinion. All that the child gets is the parent's decision—not given as a debatable conclusion of a doubtful subject, but as the truth, to be placed in the same category with those truths upon which a common agreement exists. The same individual, if dealing with an adult, would proceed in a very different manner. He would present his conclusion as merely his opinion, with the avowed or tacit admission that he might probably be in error. It is, too, extremely probable that on religious questions he would not express even the same opinions to an adult that he would to a child. Indeed, most people have to unlearn, even when they continue religious, a great deal of the religious instruction given them as children. The instruction given to children as to the nature and origin of the Bible, the existence of God, and of a future life, are strangely different to that which educated Christian adults believe about these things. It is not merely that the views of the adult are expressed in a manner suitable to a child's intelligence; they are different views altogether. And all of this means that those parents who, in asserting their "rights" force religious opinions upon children, are really taking a cowardly advantage of the helplessness of the children that are under their control. It was said of executions for heresy, that to burn a man because he differed with you was to place an exaggerated value upon your own opinions. And surely one might say with equal justification that to load a child's mind with probably inaccurate and misleading views of nature and man, to teach things that it may take years of mental effort to unlearn, is forming a quite unwarranted estimate of the value of one's own religious convictions. A sense of the value of one's own personality in the destinies of the universe may easily be carried too far.

More regard for the rights of children, and less for the rights of parents, might easily have obviated much of what has done duty as the "Education con-

troversy." If people had asked by what right constantly-changing religious opinions are placed before children as unquestionable truths, many might have realised that it had no reasonable basis in either intelligent regard for the child's warfare or for its future social efficiency. It might then have been realised that religion is precisely one of those subjects that cannot, with profit, be taught to children. If religion is to be intelligently adopted it must be when the child has reached an age that allows the probability of mature reflection. At least one London clergyman has publicly advocated the withholding of all religious instruction from children until they are thirteen or fourteen years of age; and the counsel shows far more confidence in both Christianity and youthful human nature than believers usually display.

To bring up children in religious, or even in moral, straight-waistcoats is quite unnecessary. Children require guidance, it is true; but the guidance that is really effective takes more the shape of removing unnecessary obstacles from their path than that of driving them with a check-rein along selected roads. If the information could be obtained, I should expect to find that the really healthiest and sanest characters the world has seen are those whose instincts have been allowed the fullest play in youth, with a timely word of counsel where necessary, but without a constant insistence upon the tremendous importance of religious beliefs or moral precepts. Human nature is, after all, fundamentally sound, and the best educators of the child, as well as the best friends to the race, are those who provide for the free expression of human instincts under healthful and reasonable conditions.

C. COHEN.

The Mythic Gospel.

ACCORDING to the Gospels, as they stand, Jesus claimed complete possession of his disciples. It is reported that the twelve left all and followed him. They were to take his word as law on every point. Their wills were to be absolutely in subjection to his. One man was cruelly censured because he wished to go home and bury his father before obeying the command, "Follow me." Another was held up to public ridicule because he ventured to breathe a similar request. Jesus insisted on being the Master, or nothing; first, or nowhere. The taking up of the cross of discipleship meant the putting of all else in a secondary position. All earthly love was to be subordinate to the love of Jesus. Such was the claim Christ made. "It was a claim to the inner sanctuaries of the inner souls of men, a claim rising above the claim of the nearest kindred—of father, of mother, of husband, of wife; a claim that rose above nation and race; a claim put forward without any kind of apology, and without argumentation; and he expected an answer, and when he got it he was not surprised."

Now, was such a claim justifiable? Had Jesus the right to make it? The Rev. J. Douglas Adam, D.D., of Brooklyn, U.S.A., undertakes, in a sermon which is published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for August 7, to answer that question in the affirmative. Dr. Adam's discourse is founded on Matt. x. 37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." In Luke xiv. 26, we find an absurdly intensified expression of the same supreme claim. According to Dr. Adam, the claim "rests at least upon three bases. The first basis of his claim is in his own character; the second basis of his claim is in the need of him upon whom he makes the claim; and the third basis is in the need of the world upon him upon whom he makes the claim."

The first basis is the character of Jesus. Strangely enough, instead of telling us what his character was, Dr. Adam speaks of his message as "the final and

complete revelation of the Father." The truth is that the character of Christ is an unknown quantity. It is one of the unsolved mysteries of time. And so, not daring to deal with his character, after mentioning it, Dr. Adam praises his teaching, eulogises his consciousness, and sings the merits of his gospel. And here also he is treading extremely unsafe ground. He assures us that to Jesus alone belongs the glory of having revealed God "as a forgiving Father, and as a forgiving Father to the uttermost." In the person and life of Jesus we "are face to face with a revelation of the character of God, beyond which there is no further message—the absolute love of God. There is no such revelation in the Asian, nor in the ethical religions of the world, nor in the Jewish religion, nor in modern society." But the whole of this assertion is entirely false. The so-called revelation of God as a forgiving Father is common to all the great religions. Read the Old Testament and you will find that *forgive, forgiveness, and forgiven* are terms in frequent use in all parts of it. "But there is forgiveness with thee" is the central, all-important message of Judaism concerning God. What on earth did Dr. Adam mean, then, by denying this? And what is true of Judaism is likewise true of the ancient religion of Egypt, of Mithraism, of many Indian cults, and of the Greek religions. To all these religions the doctrine of forgiveness is common. There is a forgiving Father who, on the ground of some piacular offering made by a Divine or human scapegoat, remits the transgressions of his people. Readers of Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, are aware how utterly untrue Dr. Adam's statement is.

But we go further and emphatically denounce the doctrine of forgiveness, by whatever religion taught, as subversive of true morality. We hold, with Mr. Bernard Shaw, that "popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its chief sensation a sanguinary execution after torture, for its central mystery an insane vengeance bought off by a trumpety expiation." It is in this "insane vengeance bought off by a trumpety expiation" that Dr. Adam seems to glory; and it is on the ground of such a message about God that he justifies Christ's claim to the supreme affection of mankind.

We maintain, on the contrary, that Christ's doctrine of forgiveness, being anti-ethical, does not entitle him to the first place in the world's heart. But perhaps the second basis of his claim is more substantial, namely, "the need of him upon whom he makes the claim." In this division of the sermon we come across a great abundance of smoothly-flowing rhetoric and vague assumptions, but not a trace of sane reasoning and calm thinking. It is all very well to assert that Christ "saw life steadily and saw it wholly," and that the vision accounts for his weeping, for his lonely prayers in the night, and for his death on Calvary; but where is the proof that he proclaimed any new truth about the life he is said to have thus seen? Dr. Adam adduces none. Instead, he simply rants, without rhyme or reason, on several irrelevant subjects. One of these is freedom. "We all believe in freedom," he says; "but let us remember, both in London and New York, that there is a spurious freedom." Of course there is; and of course, "there is no such thing as absolute freedom." That is a veriest truism; but to affirm that "true freedom can only spring from the centre where we are united," that is to say, from "absolute obedience to the mind of Christ," is to utter a falsehood against which Christendom bears daily witness. Equally irrelevant is the reference to the "self-chosen life." According to Dr. Adam, every "self-chosen life" is inconceivably lonely. The man who takes his life into his own hands, the man who organises his career according to his own best judgment, who prepares plans and programs for his own guidance as a member of society, this man, however intelligent and well-intentioned he may be, is doomed to insufferable loneliness, "the solitude of Cain, the solitude of David after his sin." "Oh, the loneli-

ness of a self-chosen life!" But if we render supreme obedience to the will of Christ, we shall realise the most glorious companionship, and never once feel despondent and solitary. To this pious outburst the experience of myriads upon myriads of present-day unbelievers gives the direct lie. Hearers and readers of such stuff should cleanse their minds with a strong dose of Emerson's sane philosophy, or with a quotation from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Honest Man's Fortune*, such as—

"Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late."

Dr. Adam specifies four things which we may do with our lives. "We may throw them away—some are doing it; we may use them respectably for ourselves; we may use them philanthropically ourselves, without prayer and surrender to God; or we may lay them down at Jesus' feet, and let him pour the power into them." Now, observe that Dr. Adam frankly admits that we may use our lives "philanthropically ourselves, without prayer and surrender to God"—in which case it would seem that "prayer and surrender to God" are a culpable waste of time and energy. Why should we lay our lives at Jesus' feet if we can spend them in works of philanthropy without doing so? But the object of laying them at Jesus' feet, we are reminded, is to enable him to "pour the power into them." What power, please? The only power required is the power to use our lives in the service of the race; and this power, according to the preacher's own admission, we possess and may exercise, without any reference to Jesus at all. Hence "prayer and surrender to God" are, to say the very least, superfluous.

To complete this argument, we will pass on to the third basis of Christ's supreme claim—namely, "the need of the world upon him upon whom Christ makes the claim." This is only a repetition of the second basis, which we have already shown to be incapable of bearing the weight put upon it. Much of what Dr. Adam says under his third head is profoundly true, but wholly irrelevant to his thesis. It is true that no man liveth to himself, because he is perpetually exerting an influence, for good or evil, upon all his neighbors. It is true that the lives of others have a just claim upon us; but this is a fact fully revealed by the teaching of science and experience. This is true, but it is not true that we cannot meet the social claim without submitting ourselves to the yoke of Christ. Dr. Adam is described in the *British Weekly* as one of the great preachers of the age, and that is doubtless a correct estimate of him; but the frightful fact disclosed in this sermon is, that he is either grossly ignorant, or hopelessly prejudiced. If he "saw life steadily, and saw it wholly," as he says Jesus saw it, he would not make the foolish assertion that only Christians understand the art of loving and doing good. The following looks and sounds like "drivel for the dregs": "Our children demand our love, and it is because they demand our love Christ asks that he should have the first place, because love to him will ensure and enrich that love. No women in New York who love their children, but they would love them a great deal more if they loved Christ. They love their children enough to give them bread and beautiful clothes, and a place in society, but they do not love them enough to pray for them, nor to teach them the Word of God, nor to give them the great influence of a holy example. If they loved Christ, oh! with what a much greater wealth of love they would love their children!" If that statement is honest it is shockingly ignorant, being entirely false. Has Dr. Adam ever known intimately a single Atheist's home-life? We could take him into a hundred Secularist homes in which love is beautifully crowned lord of all. It is admitted that in such homes parents do not pray for their children, nor teach them the Word of God, and that for the good reason that they believe neither in God, nor in his Word, nor in the utility of prayer; but this unbelief in the supernatural robs

the love enthroned of none of its sweetness, tenderness, and intensity.

As a justification of Christ's claim to the supreme allegiance of mankind, Dr. Adam's sermon must be pronounced a complete failure. Indeed, from every point of view the utterance is entirely unsatisfactory. For example, much is made of Horace Bushnell's saying, "The best way to love God is to let God love you." Well, if God is, and loves me, he will love me whether I let him or not; and if Almighty God loves me with an infinite and eternal love, if his love streams into my poor heart and fills it to the brim, I shall have no choice but to love him in return. The preacher avers that the same thing is true of Christ's love, because Christ, too, is God. But if the preacher's gospel were true, there would be no need of formally preaching it. The very existence of Atheism is an unanswerable argument against the existence of an omnipotent God of love. The fact that not more than one-third of the human race can be set down as Christians proves conclusively that the Christ of the orthodox Church is an invention of its own, and that his alleged winsomeness is, in every case, in exact proportion to the persuasive powers of his reputed servants; and from this we know what inference to draw.

J. T. LLOYD.

How Joseph Smith Succeeded.

BY BENSON M. LEWIS.

JUDGING by the extent of his contribution to history and taking into account his lack of education, Joseph Smith, Jr., was one of the most remarkable men in that group of Americans who were born in the first decade of the nineteenth century. That group included Emerson, Longfellow, Lincoln, and Whittier.

Uncle Sam has not yet found the exact quantity that will eliminate Mormonism as a factor from the national equation. Smith did not organise a sect; he founded a new religion. Renan says: "Islamism is the last religious creation of humanity." But Mormonism is a distinct religion as well as Islamism. Many sects have sprung up within historic times; but a sect is only a division from some established belief. It is easy to form a sect. Let a dispute over some doctrine or ceremony arise and stubbornness will do the rest. Mohammed and Smith each brought out a new Bible and professed a divine commission.

There is a similarity in the announcements of the prophets of new revelations. Moses, we are told, received two tablets of stone written upon by the finger of God. Zoroaster claimed to have received the Zendavesta direct from heaven. Mohammed, while dozing in a cave on Mount Hira, was visited by Gabriel and told to go and teach. Joseph Smith said he had visions and was directed to the place where he found a box containing plates engraved with a sacred record of the early inhabitants of America. This was the Book of Mormon. The publication of this book was opportune. At that time the theory that the aborigines of America were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel was widely discussed and seemed plausible. It was a stroke of genius to fit the story of Mormon into this niche in history, for none could contradict the narrative however much they might suspect the man who brought it out. What else could have been selected as the basis of a new sacred history that did not cross the path of some known records. The promoters of Mormonism should be given full credit for the originality of their scheme in bringing out a new Bible with America as its holy land.

The Book of Mormon has no standing in literature, yet it would be impossible to convince a quarter of a million of Latter-Day Saints that it is fiction and a crude imitation of the Old Testament. It is their sacred book.

In regard to Smith's claims, there are three opinions: That they are true; that they are entirely false; that there is some truth in them.

The latter view seems reasonable. Knowing from the family history that Joseph's ancestors on both sides were believers in dreams, saw visions, and heard voices which they regarded as supernatural, and that they were superstitious to an extraordinary degree, it may be granted that he did dream, or imagine that he had dreamed, the things that he claimed and that he believed they were divine revelations. There is no boundary to dreamland, and the dreamer's word is the sole evidence. That Joseph dreamed about religion is probable, for he says the religious excitement of the time set him to thinking. That buried plates should have appeared in his visions was in keeping with his occupation as a money-digger or searcher for hidden treasure.

The secrecy with which he guarded the plates and their early and final disappearance is presumptive evidence that if he ever had any plates they were either manufactured for the purpose or were a few fragments he found somewhere, and that they would not bear inspection by competent investigators.

Joseph's school days were brief and the facilities such as obtained in country districts in those days. He was not an apt scholar. The family did not stand well in the community, and they owned nothing. Such was this new prophet's equipment, and now, three-quarters of a century after he organised the first society, the number of Latter-Day Saints is given as 300,000, and they hold the balance of political power over a large section of the Far West.

Smith succeeded beyond his wildest dream, no doubt. How did he do it? Lack of education did not hinder him. Among the founders of religions how many were educated to any considerable degree? Renan says: "Religions are not founded on reason, nor can they be overthrown by reasoning."

Several things were required to launch the Mormon craft. Spaulding's unpublished novel supplied the hull, a mortgage on the farm of Martin Harris served for ballast, while Sidney Rigdon's eloquence filled the sails. Smith stood at the helm and boldly ploughed out upon the sea of popular credulity. His claim to divine inspiration met such a storm of criticism from all sides that the attention of the people was drawn to this persecuted prophet.

An altar fire once kindled is hard to extinguish. Persecution only fans the flame and scatters the fire-brands.

Public baptism by immersion brought many converts. People who would not enter a church building will help to swell the crowd to witness an outdoor religious exercise. It was so in the days of John the Baptist. "John did baptise in the wilderness, and there went unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem and were baptised in the river of Jordan."

The effect of a fervent exhortation delivered at the creek side, the minister standing in the water, and the evident sincerity of the first candidates who submitted to be immersed without change of clothing, moved many others to take the step at the psychological moment.

While it is true that the popular interest in religion which existed in those days contributed to the success of the new belief, the claim that it would not have been possible to establish such a church at any other time since is refuted by history. Spiritualism took form twenty years later, Christian Science began in the last quarter of the century, and Dowieism came later.

No injustice need be done to the Sage of Concord, if we compare his public life with that of the Prophet of Palmyra. Ralph Waldo Emerson was two years older than Joseph Smith, Jr. Emerson was graduated from Harvard in his nineteenth year and became pastor of a Boston church in his twenty-sixth year. In the following year (1830) the Book of Mormon was published and the Church of the Latter-Day Saints founded by Smith, who was then in the first half of his twenty-fourth year. His education was such as an indolent boy could acquire in a few months' attendance at a backwoods district school. The grammatical blunders which appeared or nearly

every page of the Book of Mormon testify to his illiteracy. Smith was killed by a mob in 1844, while in his thirty-ninth year, so that his active period as a prophet was about fourteen years. Several years before his death, Mormonism had assumed the position of a political problem of large proportions, and its membership was increasing rapidly. Mr. Emerson died at seventy-nine after fifty years of public life. There is no easy method of comparing the results of their work; for while Emerson made a wide and deep impression on the intellectual world, he left no organised following. Smith left a completely organised hierarchy and a large body of zealous followers, and has made a large and indelible mark upon the history of our country.

While many things contributed to the success of Mormonism, it is clear that Smith's audacity was an essential element. A man with more education or less nerve would not have attempted to establish such claims as his. Psychologically he was the man to do such a thing.

The success of these new beliefs proves that among the masses a large number are always ready to accept any novelty in religion that comes out, and the bolder the claims of the prophet, the greater will be the following.—*Open Court* (Chicago).

Acid Drops.

One doesn't hear much of "Labby" nowadays, for he has left parliament and lives (like a wise man) in Italy. We believe that he also guides from afar the policy of *Truth*; and we are not surprised to see in that paper a statement about the Czar somewhat similar to statements that have been made from time to time in the *Freethinker*. It is said that the relations between the Czar and his mother have become strained; she, being a sensible woman, does not approve of his being so much under the influence of the Grand Duke Peter Nicolaievitch, who "has filled the villas in the Imperial park at Peterhof with monks and holy magicians, with whom the Czar holds daily and lengthened consultations." Fancy the despotic government of a hundred million people being in the hands of such a poor superstitious creature! What a convincing proof of the doctrine of "Providence"!

Men of God went buzzing round the British Association at Leicester. Sermons galore were preached on the Sunday. No less than three Bishops were on the job, besides Father Cortie, the Jesuit. The Bishop of Southwark tried his hand at something novel. He declared that the task of the present day "is the task of making human life more worthy of God." We should put it the other way round. The great task of the present day is the task of making God more worthy of human life. What does the New Theology, for instance, aim at? Its real object is to civilise God. That is why Mr. Campbell tells us that the Bible God is behind the age.

The Bishop of Glasgow came up smiling with his little lot. His mouth was full of the praises of science. Great as its achievements are, he said, there are even greater to come. Well, that is a pretty safe prophecy. But the Bishop ought to be telling of the greater things that religion is to achieve. Probably he couldn't think of them—and it must be admitted that they require an active and powerful imagination.

Father Cortie went one better than the Bishops. He represented the Church as the best friend of intellectual progress, and declared that Catholic priests were leaders of research in every department of science. We did not know this before. But it is good to live and learn.

The Fabians have a summer-school in Wales, where the faithful sit at the feet of Gamaliel Shaw. The New Theologists also have a summer-school in the Principality, where the faithful of that flock sit at the feet of Gamaliel Campbell, assisted by the Rev. Dr. John Hunter, of Glasgow, and other lights of the old-new gospel. Dr. Hunter's address on "Inspiration, Ancient and Modern" was reported at some length in the *Liverpool Daily Post*. The reverend gentleman took the view (to put it briefly) that whenever man says or does anything true and good he is inspired by God to say or do it; and all the rest that man says and does is to be credited to his own account. Which is a very con-

venient theory for the men of God, though not very flattering to poor man. But it was always thus. The men of God have invariably played "heads we win and tails you lose" with the people.

"The triumphs of mechanical genius," according to Dr. Hunter, are all "inspired." We know now who is the real author of Armstrongs, Krupps, Gatlings, and Maxims. Not that this is quite as novel as it looks—for the Bible says that "the Lord is a man of war."

Most interesting, even amusing, is the strange evolution of the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Less than a year ago, he became a Christian. What he was previously we are not informed. The Christian soon blossomed into the Socialist. Whether the Christian and the Socialist can live happily together is, as yet, a mystery. Signs are not wanting that they must be divorced. At any rate, Mr. Campbell brought down the house at Cardiff the other day by saying that "the parson is a hindrance and a nuisance." There is nothing surprising about that observation except that it was made by a parson. Nor was there anything to be astonished at in the following remark, except that it fell from the lips of a Christian: "Christianity is a mere fetish." But the great man more than brought down the house with a third declaration—namely, that what matters is, not "what brand of belief, but what brand of feeding and of clothing" we have. Well, here is a Socialist who is at once anti-parsonic and anti-Christian. What will be the next development?

Dr. Horton has spoken *ex-cathedra*. God's immanence is an empty dream of the New Theology. God does not indwell the Universe; he is not immanent in all men; "God is immanent in you only when you are Christ-like," says this Nonconformist pope. Now we know where we are; the last word has been uttered.

Quite miraculous is the humility of some ministers. The Rev. Archibald Brown, of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, compares himself to the cocus worm, of which it takes 70,000 to weigh a pound. His comfort, however, is that the cocus worm "is not linked with corruption, but is merely a very tiny little insect." It was as a cocus worm that Mr. Brown accepted the invitation to the Tabernacle. Of course, God takes this worm by the hand, and makes him irresistibly great; and woe to the man who would dare say to him, "You worm!" The cocus worm would then turn, his face burning with resentment, and there would be prompt retaliation.

Though a cocus worm, "which are 70,000 to the pound," Mr. Brown is high-minded and self-assertive. Mr. Brown claims to be God's spokesman. So also does the Rev. Silvester Horne. Now, Mr. Horne is led of God to believe and teach that the only salvation of Christianity lies in the Institutional Church. The same Holy Spirit directs Mr. Brown to curse the Institutional Church, saying, "My deep conviction is that the Institutional Church is the Devil's own invention." Here are two cocus worms, of which 70,000 are required to make a pound, snarling at each other in the name of the Lord, whose mouthpieces they pretend to be!

The Nonconformists are resolved to control the Government. We learn that a committee of Free Church members of Parliament is hard at work drafting "an ideal Education Bill to guide the Cabinet in the preparation of next year's measure." This draft is to serve as "a valuable lead" to the Government "as to what Nonconformists want for a permanent settlement of the vexed issue." Everybody knows what they want—the establishment and endowment of their own religion, or the nearest possible approach to it, and the total exclusion of all other religions. Their demand is the quintessence of hypocrisy. In their insistence on the teaching of religion in the schools, the Anglicans and the Catholics are perfectly consistent; but the Nonconformists can ask for it only at the expense of selling the very principle on which they came into existence.

What will God do with his "sick ones" during the current month? His official advisers intimate that they will not trouble him about them during these miserable dog-days, and that they do not wish to be bothered themselves. So they have published the following: "Notice.—The Wednesday 3 p.m. meetings of prayer for God's sick ones will not be held during the month of August. Friends are asked not to send requests for prayer in August." How inexpressibly sad!

Mr. Joseph Edwards, founder and now part editor of the *Reformers' Year Book*, has long been working at his idea of

a great Central Institute for all "reform" societies. The idea seems to us a good one—up to a point. There would manifestly be a saving of time and energy if all "reform" society offices could be found in one big building, and if common halls were available for their members' and public meetings. We are glad to see, therefore, that Mr. Edwards has taken the first practical step by getting a committee together, including Mr. W. H. Lever, M.P., Dean Kitchin, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., and Mr. W. T. Stead—and we hope the idea will soon be carried into realisation. But we do not believe—and we have told Mr. Edwards so—that the project will be of much advantage to very advanced bodies—say, like the National Secular Society. The boycott of "extreme" heretics will not go out of fashion in a hurry. Even "reform" people are quite capable of it. We speak from long experience.

The Rev. John S. Simon, President of the Wesleyan Conference, says that Christians must not follow their inclinations, must not do the things they like most, but the things they like least; must surrender their own programs and adopt those prepared for them by others. If a Christian has a natural aptitude for law, he must go in for navigation. If he yearns to be a doctor, he must turn farmer. If he would so love to be a preacher, he ought to join the staff of a music-hall. This may sound tremendously pious, but it is arrant nonsense all the same; and it is as false as it is foolish.

The President is a Methodist to the marrow-bone. According to him, the Methodist Revival, under Wesley and Whitefield, "made England a new nation." The nation was then "born again, born from above." The coming of Methodism was "the rising of a river that rolled out from a celestial source," and that "filled this land and spread into the waste places of the earth." And yet, in spite of all that, the Conference declared that now a river of scepticism is rolling from an infernal source and filling this same land, and that so disastrous are the consequences that a man of "unique qualifications"—the Rev. Frank Ballard—must be set apart that he may, in some way, dry up this Devil's river of death, and cause God's river of life to roll and fill the country once more. But where does God come in? How did he permit scepticism to arise at all? Surely, the present state of things is by no means creditable to the Christ whose reign is said to be supreme!

The Methodist Pastoral, issued by direction of the recent Wesleyan Conference, opens with a note of regret that the Wesleyan Church reports a decrease in membership. This is said to be "for the first time for many years." It will probably not be the last.

What notions of science some people have! The late Canon Liddon, of St. Paul's, a learned theologian and a great preacher, once said that he overcame the law of gravitation every time he lifted his hand to his head. The same idea was expressed by the writer of an article in last week's *Academy*. "We do not in the least understand," he said, "how it is that the human will can annul for the moment the law of gravitation, in the act of lifting the arm; but this event is of such common occurrence that we do not call it miraculous." Of course the *Academy* writer doesn't understand how the human will annuls gravitation. Neither does anyone else. For the human will does nothing of the kind. If this writer were to sit in a jockey-scale, he would find that it made no difference to his weight whether he lifted his arms or held them down. And weight is simply the measure of gravitation. What the writer has confusedly in mind is the fact that gravitation may act in concert with other forces, and that the result will then be one of more or less complexity. Say a stone is resting on the earth. Gravitation keeps it there. But a man may pick it up. Yes, and a whirlwind may blow it up. And the law of gravitation is no more broken in the one case than it is in the other.

The *Academy* writer misuses the word "miraculous" just as he misunderstands gravitation. A thing is not miraculous because it is uncommon. A miracle is something contrary to the regular course of nature, performed by a superior power, in order to demonstrate its presence. This is the only definite meaning of "miracle." Every other meaning of it is simply metaphorical.

It is nonsense, too, to talk about "the lower law giving way to the higher." No law of nature ever gives way to anything. The higher forces rest upon the lower, and pre-empt them. A human brain is a higher thing than a turnip; but gravitation (for instance) acts upon both alike. If it did not, there would be a chaos instead of a cosmos.

The London Missionary Society is in serious financial difficulties. Its revenues have been steadily decreasing for years. A little while ago, a special appeal was issued for an increase of income of £16,000 a year; but instead of an increase there has occurred a lamentable falling-off. The deficit stands at £34,481. Indeed, the society is almost on its beam ends, and its home secretary gives notice that if there be further deficiency this year "it will be impossible to finance the work of the Society in 1908." This is only one of the many symptoms of the decay of Christianity.

So widespread and determined is the anti-Christian spirit in Italy that it has been thought advisable not to celebrate the sacerdotal jubilee of the Pope. This is how the *Catholic Times* explains the abandonment: "A concourse of Catholics, native and foreign, would run serious risk of insult, and perhaps outrage, at the hands of the wild sectaries and furious anti-clericals, who are ever on the lookout for an opportunity to manifest their hostility to the Church." Persecution, by whomsoever resorted to, is a short-sighted, idiotic, suicidal policy, and must be denounced; but that quotation clearly shows that the Church is conscious of her growing weakness. Even the Holy City no longer believes in or respects the Holy Father! Another indisputable symptom of the decline of Faith.

There is going on a tremendous rushing away from the "Centre," which is the cross of Christ. Even Dr. Robertson Nicoll admits and bemoans the fact in a leading article in the *British Weekly* for August 8. Christianity is being practically abandoned, on all sides, within the Churches themselves. Ministers "have rejected intellectually the central truth," they "heap scorn upon the doctrines that first shook their souls, on the messages which they themselves once preached, on the songs they sang in their youth." Dr. Nicoll's heart is sick within him as he witnesses this wholesale retreat from the Cross. He admits that all this may go on "for the time, and the songs of the Priesthood may be struck from our hymn-books or left there on sufferance. But it will not be for long." Well, prophesy is easy and cheap, and we will not indulge in it. But the process complained of by Dr. Nicoll is three hundred years old, only to-day its virility and its pace are enormously increased.

A "brilliant young minister" has had a "call" from Lancashire to Essex. The holy spirit has taken him to Southend-on-Sea, where he will manage to be as happy as possible in this miserable vale of tears, until he receives a "call" to something better, or a last "call" to sing the Glory Song in the beautiful land above. Having been in Southend some five minutes (more or less), the reverend gentleman has confided to a local interviewer his views as to the proper management of the town. Apparently he is going to get the Free Church Council (Catholics and Churchmen may go and hang themselves!) to make Southend a Christian (or rather a Nonconformist) paradise. But like other paradises it will be rather empty. There will be no beer for the trippers, and little amusement for the visitors. Particularly on Sunday. The reverend gentleman has his eagle eye on the military band which attracts thousands to Clifftown Parade on Sunday evenings. He hasn't quite made up his mind (what he has) whether there shall be a band at all on Sundays, but he is certain that it will have to stop playing secular music. When he makes up the program there will be nothing but hymn-tunes.

What the "brilliant young minister" says about music shows the limited extent of his understanding. There is really no such thing as "secular" music or "sacred" music. Music is music—and there's an end to it. It may be applied to secular words or religious words, to secular purposes or religious purposes. That is true. But the alleged distinction between "secular" and "sacred" music simply does not exist. And as for the Sunday band on the front, it will probably survive the reverend gentleman's displeasure. We don't bot, but we fancy the odds would be about a million to one.

The "brilliant young minister's" objection to Sunday bands shows that he has a good eye for business. He ended the interview by expressing a hope that he would have a good time in Southend, and a large and flourishing congregation. Naturally. But the pious hope ought to have been charged for at advertisement rates. Had he been running a tripe-shop instead of a church, he would not have been advertised gratuitously.

Kil Chang No is the "Evan Roberts" of Korea. Kil Chang No is well advanced in years, and blind. During the

years of his youth and prime, the Lord did not see fit to employ him, although the poor Koreans were going down to hell in their thousands. At last the Lord called him, and he answered, "Here am I." Then the Lord said, "Go, and convert the missionaries." Mr. No went, and the missionaries were converted. Then the Divine voice thundered, "Go, and convert the Churches." Mr. No went, and the Churches were converted. Then the Almighty King of Love commanded, "Go, and do what thou canst to bring the wretched outside heathen to my footstool." Mr. No obeyed, and in a year's time the number of Korean Christians has been doubled. Alas, however, even the Lord and Mr. No combined are not equal to the task of saving Korea, and so they are earnestly appealing for 500 additional missionaries to assist in the work. Well, Mr. No, we wish more power to your elbow, for work such as yours and your Welsh comrade's only hastens the coming of the glorious Kingdom of Man.

It is very seldom that Christian ministers acknowledge that defeat has ever dogged the footsteps of a man of God. Being God's chosen spokesman, it is impossible that failure should ever overtake him. But the Rev. T. H. Darlow, who has been for years in charge of a column in the *British Weekly*, admits that Paul's visit to Athens "appears to have been practically a failure." But he hastens to tell us that the apostle's sermon was not a success simply because of the overweening pride and intellectual haughtiness of the Athenians. Quite so; but a message from the only true and living God, delivered by his own appointed ambassador, in the power of the Holy Ghost, would have convinced even the intellectual giants of the first and greatest Athens!

The Rev. Alexander Martin, M.A., D.D., Professor of Theology in the New College, Edinburgh, has the reputation of being an exceptionally brilliant defender of the Faith. Without doubt he is an eminently ingenious one. Indeed, his ingenuity sometimes smacks of disingenuousness. Dealing lately with the famous saying attributed to Jesus, "Resist not evil," he justified it on the ground that it applies only to private life, and not at all to the State. It is the individual, in his private capacity, who is forbidden to resist evil; the State must resist and punish it to the utmost. "Jesus Christ is not laying down the law for communities here," we are told; "he nowhere does. He speaks to the private life, leaving societies and nations free, as they are inherently bound, to maintain right in the world by the final argument, if need be." The fault of this apology is that it is too ingenious, and that in the Sermon on the Mount there is no trace of it. Such, however, is the loyalty of the modern Church to her Divine Lord and Master.

The Rev. Dr. F. W. Bussell, in his Bampton Lectures just published under the title of *Christian Theology and Social Progress*, observes, in the most naive style possible, that "only a moral God is intelligible or attractive," and that "God must be good and just." You are quite right, learned divine. An evil and unjust God is unthinkable. However, a most pertinent question urges itself upon us: Do the facts of life bear witness to the goodness and justice of God? Dr. Bussell candidly confesses that they do not. "To see this," he says, "requires faith." Well, Freethinkers have always said the same. Evidences, proofs, verifications are sadly lacking; there is nothing to rely upon but faith.

Faith has always been a mighty miracle-worker. It triumphs over absurdities, and laughs impossibilities to scorn. Preaching at St. Paul's, a few Sundays ago, the Rev. Canon Newbolt supplied his audience with an apt example of this truth. "A church," he said, "empty it may be, not discharging its proper functions as a religious centre, forsaken by the tide of population, and left bare of those who can attend its services, is yet, where it is, a valuable witness for God." "This (empty church) is God's House; here is the seat of his Majesty—recognise his presence." A man who can believe, and urge others to believe, such ineffable nonsense—well, there is no absurdity he is not capable of.

Even Dr. Clifford has at last spoken the truth. "We are not a free people," he said. We are slaves. Catholics are tyrants, Anglicans are despots, peers are plunderers, and priests are usurpers. "We are in the grip of our masters," he declared. Had he gone on telling the truth, he would have added, "And we Nonconformists are as tyrannical, despotic, and grabbing as the others." But Dr. Clifford's time was up before he came to that. What a loss to the Universe!

Rev. B. G. Popham, vicar of Holy Trinity, Lee, begs his congregation to come to church in time. He also begs them to "sing in tune or out of tune" but sing somehow. He likewise begs them to recollect that he could do with bigger collections. It was sure to end there.

Rev. H. F. Tracey, of Dartmouth, has "just had an application from a curate whose chief recommendation seems to be that he has just come out of a lunatic asylum." And not a bad recommendation, either. The late Bishop of Exeter once confirmed thirty-eight lunatics, and said that he had found such persons peculiarly susceptible to religious influences.

How much does it cost to convert a Jew to Christianity? £30,000 is the estimate of Herr A. Rosensbranch, a converted Jew, who finds fault with the methods of the various Societies that gather in cash for turning questionable Jews into more questionable Christians. Of course, the £30,000 is not all devoted to the converted Jew. It is mostly devoted to the converting Christians.

A London (Church of England) clergyman, who does not wish his name to be disclosed, writes us with respect to the Salvation Army. He is a reader of the *Freethinker*, while, of course, differing from it on "its purely religious line of thought." "I find much in it," he says, "with which I am in agreement on other subjects; one in particular, the attitude it takes towards the Salvation Army, and the opinion it has of that, on the whole, huge imposture. The *Freethinker* uses very strong language about the Army and its ridiculous old chief in its issue this week, but the language I consider is none too strong. I have known the Salvation Army from its beginning. I followed closely the discussions about the Darkest England scheme and the submerged tenth, and I have had intimate experience of the Army's methods, and I do not hesitate to say that the business is largely a trade upon the credulity of the benevolent public, in the interest of the Army as a religious organisation." Our correspondent wonders what future times will think of the almost royal honors paid to the head of this "pretence of philanthropy." We haven't much doubt on that point.

Mrs. Catherine Tingley will have arrived in England by the date of this week's *Freethinker*. The leader of American Theosophists is accompanied by several other ladies, and their object is to set up a Theosophical movement here in opposition to the one under Mrs. Besant's leadership. Such is the beautiful spirit of "the new brotherhood" which is going to reform the world!

These lady advocates of Theosophy intend to establish "a central school for Theosophy in the New Forest." The great Desert of Sahara might be more appropriate. Theosophy's only relation to this world is what Carlyle called "the cash nexus."

Rev. Nathaniel Shelmerdine, late of Pershore House, Pershore, Worcester—and now of God knows where—left £74,498. We see that the Rev. Canon Tetley Rowe, of Chatham, is making an effort in the same direction. He has given up his living, which is worth a clear £250 a year, on the ground that it cost him double that amount to occupy the rectory. A number of poor people might occupy it for less.

Ambition.—An over-mastoring desire to be vilified by enemies while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead.—*Ambrose Bierce* ("Dod Grile").

The fear of death and darkness is mainly produced by the falsehoods told of them; men therefore fear to go to the one and children to the other.

The nearer the doctrines of different sects of religion approach each other, having little to differ about, the greater is their mutual antipathy.

When the character of the given problem is insolubility, we solve it in proving it insoluble.—*Novalis*.

We had a merry passage with the widow at the Commons. She was howling—part howling and part giving directions to the proctor—when crash! down went my sister through a crazy chair, and made the clerks grin, and I grinned, and the widow tittered—and then I knew that she was not inconsolable.—*Charles Lamb*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

To Correspondents.

- VERITAS.—Pleased to see your letter in the *Consett Chronicle*. Pastor Rey's letter is easily shown to be valueless, and you perform the task quite satisfactorily; but the average Christian doesn't think at all, and the publication of Pastor Rey's letter—which seems, on the face of it, to favor the Bishop of Durham's view—was a very doubtful advantage to the cause of truth and justice. Of course, you are not responsible for that.
- RICHARD JOHNSON, subscribing to the Touzeau Parris Fund, says: "In his own way he has done a lot of good work for Free-thought, and I hope the Fund will be well supported."
- J. G. CARTER, one of our new readers, says he "cannot speak too highly of the *Freethinker*."
- RICHARD MORRIS.—Pleased to have your encouraging letter and enclosure.
- THE TOUZEAU PARRIS FUND.—Second *Freethinker* List:—Richard Johnson, £2; P. Bridger, 5s.; George Scott, 5s.; J. P., 5s.; F. W. Lloyd, 2s. 6d.; Kingsland N. S. S. Branch, £1 1s.; C. H. Wren, 5s.; R. Carroll, 10s.; W. H. Hawkes, £1; W. H. Morrish, £1; Elizabeth Lechmere, 5s.; W. W. Kensett, 4s.; E. J. Kensett, 1s.
- Per E. M. Vance:—W. Humphries, 10s.; H. G. F., 2s. 6d.; W. Davies, 1s.
- JOSEPH CHAMBERS.—Useful cuttings are always very welcome.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Shall be glad to see you at the Annual Dinner. We are not surprised at the non-insertion of your letter. Christians were never madly in love with fair discussion.
- E. LECHMERE.—The European Powers can interfere promptly enough in Morocco and other places where there is something to be gained by virtuous indignation; but they can do nothing for the poor tortured natives of Congoland—for the opposite reason.
- A. W. LEVISON.—Charles Bradlaugh always fought within the law, and he was always opposed to violence. We do not know whether Mr. Victor Grayson, M.P., is correctly reported. The chances are that he is not. Anyhow, you may rely upon it that Charles Bradlaugh would not have urged the mob on to violence; and that, if he had done so, he would have been in the thick of the trouble. He would not have egged excitable men on, and kept himself at a safe distance from the danger.
- J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings and good wishes.
- F. W. WALSH.—The conspiracy of silence against us is, of course, intended to prevent us from being known, and naturally it succeeds in doing that to a considerable extent. That we are so hated is, however, a kind of compliment. It shows that this is the one paper in England that really "touches the spot." We do not wonder that you only heard of us two months ago, though you have been reading "advanced" literature for so many years; neither are we surprised that you read the *Freethinker* "with delight." Your letter also gives us pleasure. We are keeping the Free Will subject till the summertime is over.
- F. S.—Will be useful; shall deal with it next week.
- WE must once more announce that we cannot notice anonymous communications.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—E. Rushen, 2s.
- J. A. REID.—In our next.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- W. H. MORRISH (the Bristol veteran) writes: "I have very favorable remembrances of Touzeau Parris as an outspoken and sensible advocate, and am sorry to read of his failing health."
- W. W. KENSETT.—Thanks.
- J. MARTIN.—Glad to hear you read the *Freethinker* with "very great pleasure" on account of "its clear language and truthful statements, coupled with a pleasing literary style."
- H. G. F.—We understand that the Rev. Stanley Parker is "called" to Brighton, where he will probably find the "converted infidel" game not so easy as it was at Plumstead. We note what you say about his rabid slandering of Paine and Ingersoll until Mr. W. T. Stead took the matter up—about his promise to deal with Mr. Stead's matter in a week or two—and about his obstinate silence ever since. If the photograph in the local paper is like him, the mouth explains it all.
- G. JACOB.—Discussion is of little use where there are fundamentally different points of view. Thanks for cuttings.
- C. W. S.—An excellent letter of yours in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*.
- J. SCOTT.—Your postcard was the first intimation we received of the death of Mr. G. Thwaites, of Stockton-on-Tees. We were glad to meet him again at the last N. S. S. Conference, but he said then that he did not expect to see another. One by one the veterans go. We hope those who succeed them in the fight will be as stalwart.
- R. MARTIN.—Belfast is the classic city of religious fanaticism. Catholic and Protestant hate each other there perfectly. Even children's excursions have to be guarded against attack. No

wonder there is civil war in such a place over other questions. Religious fanaticism kills reason and good temper—on both sides.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

The committee's appeal on behalf of Mr. Touzeau Parris must have escaped the eyes of some of our readers in consequence of the holidays. It is therefore reproduced in this week's *Freethinker*. We are running a "*Freethinker* List" of our own, and our friends and readers generally are requested to forward their subscriptions direct to us. Subscriptions will be acknowledged in our columns weekly until the Fund is closed, and we hope to be able to pay over a good sum to the treasurer by the first of September. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to G. W. Foote, and crossed.

Mr. Touzeau Parris is better known to the older Free-thinkers who can carry their minds back from twenty to thirty years ago. He was very actively engaged on the Freethought platform during Charles Bradlaugh's great parliamentary struggle, and for some ten or twelve years afterwards. Mr. Parris is a scholar and a man of much natural ability, and his lectures were always useful and creditable to the movement. It is sad to those who knew him in the old days to see him in his present afflicted condition; and we earnestly hope that the Freethought party will do something, promptly and handsomely, towards lightening the burden of old age and helplessness.

Those who can give pounds are not the only ones that should subscribe to the Touzeau Parris Testimonial Fund. Those who can only give shillings should also do their duty. We appeal to the rank-and-file of the party to send us whatever small sums they can afford. We want to see a long list of subscriptions next week, with plenty of half-crowns and shillings, as well as larger figures.

The N. S. S. Executive left in the President's hands the matter of reopening Secular propaganda in Bristol. Mr. Foote has arranged for Mr. H. Wishart to visit Bristol and deliver some open-air lectures, with a view to starting an active N. S. S. Branch. Mr. Wishart will be lecturing there on Saturday evening (Aug. 17), and on the following day. Unfortunately we are not informed in time of the name of the spot where the lectures will be delivered, but there will be an advertisement in Saturday's local press, and Bristol "saints" who wish for further information should apply to Mr. H. Long, 10 Bath-buildings, Cheltenham-road. Mr. Wishart will have Freethought literature with him. We may add that he is an able and persuasive speaker, and that the Freethinkers should rally round him in this effort.

The N. S. S. Executive is organising a few Freethought Demonstrations in London. The first will take place next Sunday (Aug. 25) in Victoria Park at 3.15 in the afternoon. The list of speakers includes Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and Mr. F. A. Davies. East London "saints" should try to bring a great crowd round the N. S. S. platform on this occasion.

Just before going to press we hear that Professor Ferrer, the eminent Spanish educationist, who was so nearly done to death by Spanish bigots on account of his Freethought, is in Liverpool this week and wishes to meet the Freethinkers there who desire to congratulate him on his release from the clutches of the new Inquisition. A meeting has been arranged to take place at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, on Thursday evening (Aug. 15) at 8, when all sections of Freethought opinion will doubtless assemble to do honor to Professor Ferrer.

A Look Backward and a Prophecy.—I.

BY THE LATE COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago the people of this country, for the most part, were quite orthodox. The great "fundamental" falsehoods of Christianity were generally accepted. Those who were not Christians, as a rule, admitted that they ought to be; that they ought to repent and join the Church, and this they generally intended to do.

The ministers had few doubts. The most of them had been educated not to think, but to believe. Thought was regarded as dangerous, and the clergy, as a rule, kept on the safe side. Investigation was discouraged. It was declared that faith was the only road that led to eternal joy.

Most of the schools and colleges were under sectarian control, and the presidents and professors were defenders of their creeds. The people were crammed with miracles and stuffed with absurdities. They were taught that the Bible was the "inspired" word of God, that it was absolutely perfect, that the contradictions were only apparent, and that it contained no mistakes in philosophy, none in science. The great scheme of salvation was declared to be the result of infinite wisdom and mercy. Heaven and hell were waiting for the human race. Only those could be saved who had faith and who had been born twice.

Most of the ministers taught the geology of Moses, the astronomy of Joshua, and the philosophy of Christ. They regarded scientists as enemies, and their principal business was to defend miracles and deny facts. They knew, however, that men were thinking, investigating in every direction, and they feared the result. They became a little malicious—somewhat hateful. With their congregations they relied on sophistry, and they answered their enemies with epithets, with misrepresentations and slanders; and yet their minds were filled with a vague fear, with a sickening dread. Some of the people were reading, and some were thinking. Lyell had told them something about geology, and in the light of facts they were reading Genesis again. The clergy called Lyell an Infidel, a blasphemer, but the facts seemed to care nothing for opprobrious names. Then the "called," the "set apart," the "Lord's anointed" began changing the "inspired" word. They erased the word "day" and inserted "period," and then triumphantly exclaimed, "The world was created in six periods." This answer satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance, but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

More and more was being found about the history of life, of living things, the order in which the various forms had appeared, and the relations they had sustained to each other. Beneath the gaze of the biologist the fossils were again clothed with flesh, submerged continents and islands reappeared, the ancient forest grew once more, the air was filled with unknown birds, the seas with armored monsters, and the land with beasts of many forms that sought with tooth and claw each other's flesh.

Haeckel and Huxley followed life through all its changing forms from monad up to man. They found that men, women, and children had been on this poor world for hundreds of thousands of years.

The clergy could not dodge these facts, this conclusion, by calling "days" periods, because the Bible gives the age of Adam when he died, the lives and ages to the flood, to Abraham, to David, and from David to Christ, so that, according to the Bible, man at the birth of Christ had been on this earth four thousand and four years, and no more.

There was no way in which the sacred record could be changed, but of course the dear ministers could not admit the conclusion arrived at by Haeckel and Huxley. If they did they would have to give up original sin, the scheme of the atonement, and the consolation of eternal fire.

They took the only course they could. They promptly and solemnly, with upraised hands, denied

the facts, denounced the biologists as irreverent wretches, and defended the Book. With tears in their voices they talked about "Mother's Bible," about the "faith of the fathers," about the prayers that the children had said, and they also talked about the wickedness of doubt. This satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance, but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

The works of Humboldt had been translated, and were being read; the intellectual horizon was enlarged, and the fact that the endless chain of cause and effect had never been broken, that Nature had never been interfered with, forced its way into many minds. This conception of nature was beyond the clergy. They did not believe it; they could not comprehend it. They did not answer Humboldt, but they attacked him with great virulence. They measured his works by the Bible, because the Bible was then the standard.

In examining a philosophy, a system, the ministers asked: "Does it agree with the sacred book?" With the Bible they separated the gold from the dross. Every science had to be tested by the Scriptures. Humboldt did not agree with Moses. He differed from Joshua. He had his doubts about the flood. That was enough.

Yet, after all, the ministers felt that they were standing on thin ice, that they were surrounded by masked batteries, and that something unfortunate was liable at any moment to happen. This increased their efforts to avoid, to escape. The truth was that they feared the truth. They were afraid of facts. They became exceedingly anxious for morality, for the young, for the inexperienced. They were afraid to trust human nature. They insisted that without the Bible the world would rush to crime. They warned the thoughtless of the danger of thinking. They knew that it would be impossible for civilisation to exist without the Bible. They knew this because their God had tried it. He gave no Bible to the antediluvians, and they became so bad that he had to destroy them. He gave the Jews only the Old Testament, and they were dispersed. Irreverent people might say that Jehovah should have known this without a trial; but, after all, that has nothing to do with theology.

Attention has been called to the fact that two accounts of creation are in Genesis, and that they do not agree and cannot be harmonised, and that, in addition to that, the divine historian had made a mistake as to the order of creation; that according to one account Adam was made before the animals, and Eve last of all, from Adam's rib; and by the other account, Adam and Eve were made after the animals, and both at the same time. A good many people were surprised to find that the Creator had written contradictory accounts of the creation, and had forgotten the order in which he created.

Then there was another difficulty. Jehovah had declared that on Tuesday, or during the second period, he had created the "firmament" to divide the waters which were below the firmament from the waters above the firmament. It was found that there is no firmament; that the moisture in the air is the result of evaporation, and that there was nothing to divide the waters above from the waters below. So that, according to the facts, Jehovah did nothing on the second day or period, because the moisture above the earth is not prevented from falling by the firmament, but because the mist is lighter than air.

The preachers, however, began to dodge, to evade, to talk about "oriental imagery." They declared that Genesis was a "sublime poem," a divine "panorama of creation," an "inspired vision"; that it was not intended to be exact in its details, but that it was true in a far higher sense, in a poetical sense, in a spiritual sense, conveying a truth much higher, much grander than simple fact. The contradictions were covered with the mantle of oriental imagery. This satisfied bigotry, hypocrisy, and honest ignorance, but honest intelligence was not satisfied.

People were reading Darwin. His works interested not only the scientific, but the intelligent in all the walks of life. Darwin was the keenest observer of all time, the greatest naturalist in all the world. He was patient, modest, logical, candid, courageous, and absolutely truthful. He told the actual facts, and colored nothing. He was anxious only to ascertain the truth. He had no prejudices, no theories, no creed. He was the apostle of the real.

The ministers greeted him with shouts of derision. From nearly all the pulpits came the sounds of ignorant laughter, one of the saddest of all sounds. The clergy, in a vague kind of way, believed the Bible account of creation; they accepted the Miltonic view; they believed that all animals, including man, had been made of clay, fashioned by Jehovah's hands, and that he had breathed into all forms, not only the breath of life, but instinct and reason. They were not in the habit of descending to particulars; they did not describe Jehovah as kneading the clay or modeling his forms like a sculptor, but what they did say included these things.

The theory of Darwin contradicted all their ideas on the subject, vague as they were. He showed that man had not appeared at first as man, that he had not fallen from perfection, but had slowly risen through many ages from lower forms. He took food, climate, and all conditions into consideration, and accounted for difference of form, function, and instinct, and reason by natural causes. He dispensed with the supernatural. He did away with Jehovah the potter.

Of course, the theologians denounced him as a blasphemer, as a dethroner of God. They even went so far as to smile at his ignorance. They said: "If the theory of Darwin is true the Bible is false, our God is a myth, and our religion a fable."

In that they were right.

Against Darwin they rained texts of Scripture like shot and shell. They believed that they were victorious, and their congregations were delighted. Poor little frightened professors in religious colleges sided with the clergy. Hundreds of backboneless "scientists" ranged themselves with the enemies of Darwin. It began to look as though the Church was victorious.

Slowly, steadily, the ideas of Darwin gained ground. He began to be understood. Men of sense were reading what he said. Men of genius were on his side. In a little while, the really great in all departments of human thought declared in his favor. The tide began to turn. The smile on the face of the theologian became a frozen grin. The preachers began to hedge, to dodge. They admitted that the Bible was not inspired for the purpose of teaching science—only inspired about religion, about the spiritual, about the divine. The fortifications of faith were crumbling, the old guns had been spiked, and the armies of the "living God" were in retreat.

Great questions were being discussed, and freely discussed. People were not afraid to give their opinions, and they did give their honest thoughts. Draper had shown in his *Intellectual Development of Europe* that Catholicism had been the relentless enemy of progress, the bitter foe of all that is really useful. The Protestants were delighted with this book.

Buckle had shown in his *History of Civilisation in England* that Protestantism had also enslaved the mind, had also persecuted to the extent of its power, and that Protestantism in its last analysis was substantially the same as the creed of Rome.

This book satisfied the thoughtful.

Hegel, in his first book, had done a great work, and it did great good in spite of the fact that his second book was almost a surrender. Lecky, in his first volume of *The History of Rationalism*, shed a flood of light on the meanness, the cruelty, and the malevolence of "revealed religion," and this did good in spite of the fact that he almost apologises in the second volume for what he had said in the first.

The Universalists had done good. They had civilised a great many Christians. They declared

that eternal punishment was infinite revenge, and that the God of hell was an infinite savage.

Some of the Unitarians, following the example of Theodore Parker, denounced Jehovah as a brutal, tribal God. All these forces worked together for the development of the orthodox brain.

Herbert Spencer was being read and understood. The theories of this great philosopher were being adopted. He overwhelmed the theologians with facts, and from a great height he surveyed the world. Of course he was attacked, but not answered.

Emerson had sowed the seeds of thought—of doubt—in many minds, and from many directions the world was being flooded with intellectual light. The clergy became apologetic; they spoke with less certainty; with less emphasis, and lost a little confidence in the power of assertion. They felt the necessity of doing something, and they began to harmonise as best they could the old lies and the new truths. They tried to get the wreck ashore, and many of them were willing to surrender if they could keep their side-arms—that is to say, their salaries.

Conditions had been reversed. The Bible had ceased to be the standard. Science was the supreme and final test.

There was no peace for the pulpit; no peace for the shepherds. Students of the Bible in England and Germany had been examining the inspired Scriptures. They had been trying to find when and by whom the books of the Bible were written. They found that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; that the authors of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Esther, and Job were not known; that the Psalms were not written by David; that Solomon had nothing to do with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Song; that Isaiah was the work of at least three authors; that the prophecies of Daniel were written after the happening of the events prophesied. They found many mistakes and contradictions, and some of them went so far as to assert that the Hebrews had never been slaves in Egypt; that the story of the plagues, the exodus, and the pursuit was only a myth.

The New Testament fared no better than the Old. These critics found that nearly all of the books of the New Testament had been written by unknown men; that it was impossible to fix the time when they were written; that many of the miracles were absurd and childish, and that, in addition to all of this, the gospels were found filled with mistakes, with interpolations and contradictions; that the writers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not understand the Christian religion as it was understood by the author of the gospel according to John.

Of course, the critics were denounced from most of the pulpits, and the religious papers, edited generally by men who had failed as preachers, were filled with bitter denials and vicious attacks. The religious editors refused to be enlightened. They fought under the old flag. When dogmas became too absurd to be preached, they were taught in the Sunday-schools; when worn out there, they were given to the missionaries; but the dear old religious weeklies, the *Banners*, the *Covenants*, the *Evangelists*, continued to feed their provincial subscribers with known mistakes and refuted lies.

(To be concluded.)

For every leaf the loveliest flower
Which beauty sighs for from her bower;
For every star a drop of dew;
For every sun a sky of blue;
For every heart a heart as true.

For all who toil at honest fame,
A proud, a pure, a deathless name;
For all who love, who loving bless,
Be life one long, kind, close caress;
Be life all love, all happiness.

—P. J. Bailey.

"Thus Saith the Lord."

DOGMATISM, said Douglas Jerrold, is only puppyism grown to maturity. This sarcastic wit never said a truer thing. We call a young fellow a puppy when he is conceited and impudent, and we call a man dogmatic when he betrays the same qualities in controversy. Yet every Church prides itself on being dogmatic. Rome is dogmatic and Canterbury is dogmatic. Without dogma there is no theology. And what is dogma? An opinion, or a set of opinions, promulgated by somebody for the blind acceptance of somebody else. Arrogance, therefore, is of its very essence. What right has one man to say to another, "This is the truth; I have taken the trouble to decide that point, and all you have to do is to accept what I present you"? And if one man has no such right to impose his belief on another, how can twenty thousand men have such a right to impose their belief on twenty millions? This, however, is precisely what they do without the least shame or compunction. Before we are able to judge for ourselves, the priests thrust certain dogmas upon us, and compel us to embrace them. Authority takes the place of judgment, dogmatism supplants thought. The young mind is rendered slavish, and as it grows up it goes through life cringing to the instruments of its own abasement.

When a superior mind rises from this subjection and demands reasons for believing, he is knocked down with the Bible. A text is quoted to silence him. But who wrote the text? Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, John, Peter, or Paul. Well, and who made them lords over us? Have we not as much right to our own thoughts as they had to theirs? When they state an opinion in the pompous language of revelation, are they less fallible than the rest of us? Obviously not. Yet prophets and evangelists have a trick of writing, which still clings to their modern representatives, as though they could not be mistaken. "I am Sir Oracle," they seem to say, "and when I ope my lips let no dog bark." No doubt this self-conceit is very natural, but self-conceited people are not usually taken at their own estimate. Nowadays, we laugh at them and try to take the conceit out of them. But what is absurd to-day is treated as venerable because it happened thousands of years ago, and prophets are regarded as inspired who, if they existed now, would be treated with ridicule and contempt.

The style of downright God-Almighty-men is very simple. They need not argue, they have only to assert, and they preface every statement with "Thus saith the Lord." Now suppose such a declaration were made to-day. A man with no greater reputation for sense than his neighbors stands up and shouts "Thus saith the Lord." Should we not look at him with curiosity and amusement? Would he not strike us as a silly fanatic? Might we not even reflect that he was graduating for a strait-waistcoat? The fellow is simply an ignorant dogmatist. What he believes you must believe. Reasons for his belief he has none, and he cannot conceive that you want any either. Yet it would never do to exclaim, "I am your lord and master," so the grown-up puppy shouts "Thus saith the Lord," in order to assure you that in rejecting him you reject God.

Suppose we heckle this loud-mouthed preacher for a minute. "You tell us, Thus saith the Lord. Did he say so to you, and where and when? And are you quite sure you did not dream the whole business?" Probably he answers, "No, the Lord did not say it to me, but he said it to the blessed prophets and apostles, and I am only repeating their words." "Very well, then," a sensible man would reply, "you are in the second-hand business, and I want new goods. You had better send on the original traders Moses, Isaiah, Paul and Co.—and I'll see what I can do with them." If, however, the preacher says, "Yes, the Lord did say it to me," a sensible man replies, "Well, now, I should have thought the Lord would have told somebody with more reputation and

influence. Still, what you assert may be true. I don't deny it, but at the same time your word is no proof. On the whole, I think I'll go my way and let you go yours. The Lord has told you something, and you believe it; when he tells me, I'll believe it too. I suppose the Lord told you because he wanted you to know, and when he wants me to know I suppose he'll give me a call. What you got from him is first-hand, what I get from you is second-hand; and, with all due respect, I fancy your authority is hardly equal to the Almighty's."

"Thus saith the Lord" is no argument. It is simply

"The dark lanthorn of the spirit
Which none can see but those who bear it."

Nay more, it dispenses with reason, and makes every man's faith depend on somebody else's authority. Discussion becomes impertinence, criticism is high treason. Hence it is but a step from "Thus saith the Lord" to "Believe or be damned." Very impolite language, truly, yet it is the logical sequence of dogmatism. Fortunately the time is nearly past for such impudent nonsense. This is an age of debate. And although there are many windy platitudes abroad, and much indulgence in empty mouthing, the very fact of debate being considered necessary to the settlement of all questions makes the public mind less hasty and more cautious. "Thus saith the Lord" men can only succeed at present among the intellectual riff-raff of the populace.

Looking over the past, we see what an immense part dogmatism has played in history. "Thus saith the Lord" cried the Jewish prophets, and they not only terrified their contemporaries, but overawed a hundred generations. "Thus saith the Lord" cried the Christian apostles, and they converted thousands of open-mouthed slaves to a "maleficent superstition." "Thus saith the Lord" cried Mohammed, and the scimitars of Islam flashed from India to Spain. "Thus saith the Lord" cried Joe Smith, and Mormonism sprang up in the practical West, with its buried gold tablets of revelation and its retrogressive polygamy. "Thus saith Reason" has been a still small voice, sometimes nearly inaudible, though never quite drowned; but now it is swelling into a mighty volume of sound, overwhelming the din of sects and the anathemas of priests.

G. W. FOOTE.

HYMN OF THE AVERAGE.

It wearies to aim at distinction
Or wage an unusual strife;
I'd just be an average mortal
And live just an average life.

I'd fall with the average losses,
Succeed with the average gain,
Rejoice in the average sunshine,
And rail at the average rain.

I'd love with the average fervor,
And hate with the average strength,
Complain with the average grumbling,
And live to the average length.

Theologies mix and confuse us;
When done with this world of the proud
I'd just be an average angel
And float on an average cloud.

—McLandburgh Wilson.

A famous French preacher was descanting from the pulpit with great eloquence on the beauties of creation. "Whatever comes from the hands of Nature," he said, "is complete; she forms everything perfect." One of his congregation, very much deformed, with a large hump, went up to him at the close of his discourse, and asked, "What think you of me, holy father?—am I perfect?" "Certainly?" replied the preacher,— "a perfect hunchback."

A SHORT SERMON.

Man's ingress into the world is naked and bare,
His progress through the world is sorrow and care,
His egress out of the world is no one knows where,
But if we live well here, we shall do well there,
And I could tell you no more if I preached for a year.

Proposed Fund for Assisting Mr. Touzeau Parris.

The name of Mr. Touzeau Parris is well known in Free-thought and Socialist circles, and we believe the friends of either or both the movements indicated will readily respond to an appeal to assist Mr. Parris, who is now incapacitated from all employment by a series of paralytic strokes.

Mr. Parris was intimately connected with the stirring enterprises associated with the Free-thought work of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant, and for many years lectured on the Free-thought platform in London and the provinces with persistent courage and energy, combining popular methods with varied scholarship. Nor did he relinquish his platform activity until absolutely compelled by ill-health.

In other directions, also, Mr. Parris testified his keen interest in public questions and reforms. With the late William Morris he was on terms of close friendship, and he was a familiar figure in the discussions and propaganda carried on at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith.

Mr. Parris originally had a business of his own, which was lost through one misfortune after another. Till May last, he held a position in London, in spite of much weakness, and he gratefully acknowledges the consideration with which he was allowed by his employers to continue in a post for which his vigor in the last years was scarcely sufficient. He is now, however, finally obliged to retire from any kind of work, and is practically dependent on the kindness of friends for support in his declining years. Mrs. Parris has a small annuity, which ceases at her death. Mr. Parris has in hand about £180, and the sale of his library and pictures will add a small amount to this sum.

The Committee issuing this appeal would use the fund in whatever manner might seem required to meet Mr. Parris's wants; but, should medical opinion (as it is hoped) justify such a course, it is proposed to purchase, for a little over £400, an annuity of £1 per week.

It is obviously desirable that the fund should be promptly collected and applied, and we earnestly invite subscriptions, which should be made payable to the Treasurer.

H. BRADLAUGH BONNER, G. W. FOOTE, JOHN M. ROBERTSON, G. BERNARD SHAW, CHARLES A. WATTS; SYDNEY A. GIMSON, *Treasurer*; F. J. GOULD, *Secretary*.

Correspondence.

THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I will gladly forgive Mr. Eder any scores he is able to make if he will only keep to the point at issue. He declared positively that Natural Selection was an obsolete superstition, "practically discarded as a factor in the formation of new species." I declare, just as positively, that his statement is inexcusably inaccurate. So far from Natural Selection being discarded, there is now left only a few survivors of the band of scientific men who formerly opposed it. The battle to-day is only as to the details of selection—as to the actual kind of variations that nature selects.

If nature eliminates "harmful variations," as Mr. Eder admits, that is Natural Selection. It implies the survival of favorable variations only, from which evolution results.

Mr. Eder's appeal to the lens of the triton shows that he is unacquainted with the modern doctrine that somatic cells owe their special forms and functions entirely to the situations in which they develop, and that in other situations they are capable of becoming other kinds of cells. Thus, there are cells in the iris capable of giving origin to the lens. From a fragment of begonia leaf, as is well known, an entire plant may arise. This shows that cells normally destined for one function only—that of leaf-cells—may develop into every kind of cell. This retention of ancient powers is less marked in the higher animals, but it is not easy to perceive how its presence can tell against the theory of Natural Selection.

It is impossible here to discuss the question of the evolution of pain. Suffice it to say there are no such difficulties as Mr. Eder implies. Pain is useful; therefore it is an object of Natural Selection.

Nowadays, one often hears the statement that Darwin's doctrine is "discarded." The expression is never used by responsible scientific men. Those of them who differ (to some extent) from Darwin, use the word "disputed," and apply it only to the view that nature selects small variations as distinguished from "mutations," not to the doctrine of

Natural Selection. Even they are only a small minority. The statement that Natural Selection is discarded is made, as a rule, only by mendacious clergymen, or by clergymen ignorant of the technical meaning of the terms "mutation" and "selection." In the camp of these people, Mr. Eder, a professed Atheist, by some extraordinary chance finds himself.

I repeat emphatically that, apart from Natural Selection and miracle, no doctrine of evolution is now before the scientific world.

D. WAUDBY.

Look how they sit together!
Two bitter, desperate antagonists,
Licking each other with their tongues, like fists,
Merely to settle whether
This world of ours had ever a beginning,
Whether created,
Vaguely undated,
Or time had any finger in the spinning:
When lo!—for they are sitting at the basement—
A hand, like that upon Belshazzar's wall,
Lets fall
A written paper through the open casement,
"Oh foolish wits!" (thus runs the document)
"To twist your brains into a double knot
On such a barren question! Be content
That there is such a fair and pleasant spot
For your enjoyment as this verdant earth.
Go eat and drink, and give your hearts to mirth,
For vainly ye contend;
Before you can decide about its birth,
The world will have an end!"

—Tom Hood.

It was once ruled in an action for libel brought by a clergyman against a pamphleteer, that to call a lawyer a fool was actionable, because one could not be a fool without being a bad lawyer; but that the same term applied to a clergyman was not actionable, since a man might be a fool and yet a very good parson.

"Mamma," said a little lad, "I don't know how Satan turned out such a bad fellow: there was no devil to put him up to it."

My life shall be a challenge, not a truce!
This is my homage to the mightier powers,
To ask my boldest question, undismayed
By muttered threats that some hysteric sense
Of wrong or insult will convulse the throne
Where wisdom reigns supreme; and if I err,
They all must err who have to feel their way
As bats that fly at noon; for what are we
But creatures of the night, dragged forth by day,
Who needs must stumble, and with stammering steps
Spell out their paths in syllables of pain?
—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

THE PLACE FOR HIM.

A revival meeting was in progress, and Sister Jones was called upon for testimony. Being meek and humble, she said: "I do not feel as though I should stand here and give testimony. I have been a transgressor for a good many years, and have only recently seen the light. I believe that my place is in a dark corner behind the door."

Brother Smith was next called upon for his testimony, and, following the example set by Sister Jones, said: "I, too, have been a sinner for more than forty years, and I do not think it would be fitting for me to stand before this assembly as a model. I think my place is behind the door, in a dark corner with Sister Jones."

And he wondered why the meeting was convulsed with the laughter of those who came to pray.

—Cleveland Leader.

SAVED.

Saint: "There are certain difficulties connected with the entrance of a rich man into the Kingdom."

Sinner: "They don't affect me. For years my property has all been in my wife's name."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

THE FIRST CATTLE-SHIP.

Noah had just taken the animals aboard the Ark.
"And yet," chortled Mrs. N., the last time I crossed they wouldn't let me take poor dear Fido."
Thus we see that every cloud has its silver lining.—*Sun*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6, F. A. Davies.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Charles Bradlaugh as I Knew Him."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, W. J. Ramsey, "The King of Glory."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, Messrs. F. Schaller and H. B. Samuels.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, H. S. Wishart, "The Farce and Fraud of Christian Socialism."

COUNTRY.

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

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Bottom of Key Hill, Hockley, 6.30, H. Lennard. Wednesday, Aug. 21, at 8.15, in the Bull Ring, "The Life and the Creed."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, meets for Discussion; The Mound, 7, meets for Discussion.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S.: Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, George Whitehead, a Lecture.

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