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If half the thought which is given to obscure questions in theology or metaphysics had been given to the question of making men more comfortable by building better habitations for them, what a much happier and more endurable world it would have been.—ARTHUR HELPS.

“Life Beyond the Grave.”

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

MY LORD,—On two successive days, recently, you courageously undertook to address the business men of your cathedral city on “Life Beyond the Grave”; and as the discourses you then delivered bristle with inaccurate and fallacious statements, I wish respectfully to point these out to you, in order that you may justify them, if possible, and if not, apologise for them. I write to you as an unbeliever in personal immortality, but also as one who is anxious that justice should be done to all concerned. In these addresses, as published in the *Christian World Pulpit*, you impress me as being scarcely fair either to Science or to Paganism, and also as misrepresenting the attitude of the Old Testament to the subject you are discussing.

While dealing with Science you admit that it has nothing to say for immortality, and that consequently “biologists, physiologists, and psychologists to-day are on this matter, in vastly preponderating numbers, frankly and strictly agnostic”; but are you not aware that, in the opinion of so great a biologist as Professor Metchnikoff, “Science cannot admit the immortality of the conscious soul, because consciousness is a function of special elements in the body that certainly cannot live for ever”? This distinguished experimentalist affirms further that “death brings absolute extinction,” and that “immortality exists only for very low organisms that renew their lives by repeated divisions with complete regeneration, and that have no highly-developed consciousness.” You specially commend Professor James’s lecture on *Human Immortality*; but surely your lordship cannot be ignorant of the fact that neither William James nor John Fiske, a predecessor in the same Lectureship, did so much as pretend to be able to advance a single convincing argument for a future life, all they wished to do being to show that Science offers no insuperable objections to it.

Your reference to Pagan theories of immortality is unfortunate. You merely say that “there have been over wide areas of mankind forms of belief in the life beyond in which Christianity has had no kind of interest at all, which indeed Christianity excluded and discounted.” The only example you cite is from Homer’s *Odyssey*; and then you conclude that it was a shadowy, unsubstantial, joyless, bloodless idea of immortality that men got through what you call natural religion. But is it fair to pick about the lowest conception of a future life to be found in all Paganism, and to judge the whole system by that, while higher and nobler ideas therein contained are utterly ignored? Why does your lordship quote from Homer’s *Odyssey* rather than from Plato’s *Apology*? Socrates faced death jubilantly, and said with confidence, “Noble is the prize, and great the hope.” “What would you not give,” he asked his

judges, “to converse with Orpheus and Musæus and Hesiod and Homer? I am willing to die many times, if this be true.” “If death is a journey to another place, and the common belief be true, that there are all who have died,” he exclaimed, “what good could be greater than this, my judges”? But Socrates was not afraid of extinction, for he said: “If death is the absence of all sensation, and like the sleep of one whose slumbers are unbroken by any dreams, it will be a wonderful gain.” Whether Socrates actually believed in immortality or not, is not at all certain.

Your lordship is also guilty of making a partisan use of highly-debatable passages of Scripture. You quote Job xix. 25-27; but as you well know, that is one of the most difficult passages in the Old Testament. For one thing, there is no certainty that the Hebrew text here is sound. The words rendered in the Revised Version, “And after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God,” are specially doubted by recent critics. The Revised Version gives two alternate marginal renderings for the first part of the passage, and you yourself adopt, for the second part, the marginal alternative, which is widely different from the one in the text. You must also be aware that Siegfried regards verse 25 as a later gloss, and as contradictory of the general teaching of the book. Then the other text you quote, Isaiah xxvi. 19 (My dead bodies shall arise), does not refer to the general resurrection at all, but to the resurrection of those Hebrews who had died during the captivity in Babylon, and who, according to the prophet, were bound to share the national recovery from exile. “Thy dead shall live,” not beyond the grave, but once again on the earth, in beloved Palestine. Is it quite honest, think you, to employ such verses as if their meaning were beyond dispute, as you do in the one instance, or in total disregard of the context, as in the other?

Coming to your own arguments for a life beyond, I am struck by their conspicuous inadequacy and illogical character. You repeat, and fully endorse, St. Paul’s argument as epitomised in the words, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” I admit that there is a sense in which, because of the nature of the Christian hope in Christ, those words are true; but in the sense in which you take them they are palpably false. You say:—“Can you doubt that the actual moral effort which has gone to make the best characters would have the nerves of its strength cut if it were not for the belief in an infinite extension and an everlasting truth? Suppose a man has gone on ten years struggling against a fault. He is getting old, and he does not seem to be making much progress; as he looks back ten years or twenty years, he cannot say, ‘I have made conspicuous progress, I have actually overcome this fault.’”

You proceed to observe that men generally are dissatisfied with the progress they make towards a perfect moral life, which is doubtless true; but you infer from that unsatisfactory progress that it would not be worth while trying to make any progress at all were it not for a belief in a life beyond. Then you add these significant words:—

“If it be true that I am working at a character which through eternal ages is to be perfected, then beyond all possibility of doubt it is worth my while to take infinite pains to eliminate my faults at their root, to make no quarter with evil in any shape.”

But is it not worth your while to take such infinite pains even if at death you cease to be forever? Is it not worth your while to do your utmost to serve the race to which you belong during your life here, whether this life is to be followed by another or not? There are no faults of character except those which are injurious to society; and surely the sense of responsibility to society ought to be a sufficient inducement to take infinite pains to get rid of such faults. Does your lordship mean to say that the best characters are to be found only among Christians? Fully two-thirds of the world's population are non-Christians; have you the audacity to assert that all those teeming millions are morally inferior? According to your own testimony, Buddhists have no belief in a second life; are you prepared to declare that the five hundred millions who profess to follow Buddha are, on an average, behind Europeans in ethical development?

Your lordship's second argument for immortality is even worse than the first. It is true you do not develop this second argument, but one can see that you lay enormous emphasis upon it. In the words of the Bible you triumphantly ask, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" You maintain that your God is a being of absolute righteousness, and that therefore the right must prevail somewhere or somewhen. Clearly the right is not victorious on earth. Even the most pious city in Christendom is chock-full of the very worst evils. Even in your lordship's own city the right is often trampled under foot. There is no doubt whatever but that the Judge of all the earth is not doing right in this life. Therefore, you aver, there must be another life, in which righteousness shall hold complete sway. But does it not occur to your lordship that another and much more rational inference may be, and is, drawn from the existing state of things? The Bible says that God is the Most High who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Is it according to his will that the earth should be the abode of devastating wrongs and demoralising influences? If so, how can you describe him as an infinitely holy and righteous being? If not, on what ground can you account for his colossal failure? You say that he most certainly will abolish all evil hereafter; but I contend that if there be a God, you can only estimate his character by what he is doing or not doing here and now. You have absolutely no data on which to form a judgment of his possible future conduct except the facts of the present. If he does not set things right in this world, you have no moral right to console people with the assurance that he will do so in any other. You may believe that he will, but you do not know; and the law of probability is dead against it. Are they not infinitely more consistent who do not believe in your overruling God at all, who rather teach that mankind are left to their own resources, and that if they do not work out their own salvation they shall certainly perish; and whose only hope for the future of the race lies in the gradual spread of natural knowledge, and not in the possible intervention of any supernatural beings or forces, here or hereafter? I readily grant that, if the Christian doctrine of *post-mortem* rectifications and settlements were abandoned, your lordship's occupation would be completely gone, at least, in its present form; but do you not really think that you would do the business men of Birmingham a much better service were you to leave the supernatural and the Great Beyond alone, and give yourself to the noble task of enlightening them as to what they themselves must be and do in their relations to one another and to the rest of the community, before the pressing problems of the day can be solved?

Wishing your lordship good health, and increasing success in the really useful work of your profession,

I remain, your obedient servant,

CELTICUS.

Notes on Theism and Atheism.—III.

(Concluded from p. 275.)

A VERY much larger book than Mr. Ballard's would be needed to discuss all the fallacies and false analogies it contains. My purpose is to note only those on which comment may be of use. One of these is the author's use of the word "cause." He rests part of his argument for the existence of God on the principle of causation. He also notes that to this the objection is raised that, in positing a "First Cause" as the cause of the universe, we are only pushing back the difficulty a step, since either there is something existing uncaused, in which case the argument from causation breaks down, or, if otherwise, the difficulty remains. But this, he adds, is an "amazing instance of lack of perception," because "first" in this connection "has no time reference, and expresses but an order of thought." Really, the amazing lack of perception lies with Mr. Ballard, and not with the objector. The whole value of assuming a "First Cause" lies precisely in the "time reference" which Mr. Ballard disowns. Causation is a question of time or nothing. Or if Mr. Ballard merely calls a particular cause "first" either because the human mind must take something as a starting-point, or because human capacity will not allow us to push the inquiry further back, then it is admitted that we have not reached an absolute first cause at all, but have merely assumed something for mere convenience. And in this case one may well inquire why we should not stop with the universe of which we know something rather than call in something else of which we know absolutely nothing—not even that it exists.

And even when we have reached the point of assuming a god we have really added nothing to our knowledge, nor have we created an instrument of investigation. The primitive atom may be a myth, the universal ether a pure assumption, but at least the conception of the ether and of the atom has been serviceable in the history of science. But "God" not only does nothing, it leads to nothing, and only serves to prevent useful work being accomplished. Of course, Messrs. Ballard and Fitchett believe the contrary. The former says that "Theism.....supplies for all phenomena a foundation as real as measureless, as actual as incomprehensible, as sufficient as indefinable." Mr. Fitchett more concisely says the "conception of God is the key which unlocks all the mysteries of the universe." Putting the two statements together, it is most interesting to learn that the measureless, incomprehensible, indefinable creed of Theism gives us a key which unlocks every mystery—only one is inclined to wonder what on earth it all means. Nor would it be safe to assume that either of the writers could enlighten one. Both of them know their audience, and fully realise that, so long as a certain number of loud-sounding words are strung together, the meaning matters little. In fact, the less intelligible the better. There is a considerable number of people in the world with whom inability to understand what is said is accepted as a sure sign of the speaker's or writer's profundity.

Seriously, however, one would ask what is the mystery to which Theism gives the key? In the whole history of human knowledge is there a single question, no matter how elementary, that has had light cast upon it by Theism? I know of none, nor, I think, does anyone else. Instead of a key that unlocks mysteries, it has been a bolt keeping fast the door that led to their deciphering. And the moral is seen in the fact that there is not a branch of positive knowledge in which Theism does not stand discredited.

Mr. Ballard and Mr. Fitchett are in cordial agreement as to the dreadful consequences of Atheism. With characteristic courtesy Mr. Fitchett says the choice between Atheism and Theism is a choice "betwixt an archangel and Caliban." Atheism also

breaks "with instinctive and rudimentary morality," while Mr. Ballard assures us that satisfaction of mind, deepened self-esteem, a lofty ideal and fervid hope, are all "inseparably associated with Theism." In spite of this, however, there is hope, even for the Atheist. For Mr. Ballard is forced to sorrowfully admit, "Undoubtedly an atheist may fulfil an atheist's conception of duty," although this would, of course, be poor beside the lofty ideal of Mr. Ballard. Mr. Fitchett also admits, with a sanctimonious "Thank God," that "Many Atheists are good men"; but this "is in spite of their creed"—which adds insolence to the writer's natural ignorance. And then comes this heartrending picture of a world dominated by Atheism:—

"Grief could have no comfort, mystery no explanation, truth no necessary sacredness, loss no compensating equity.....Love would be left with broken heart and empty hands.....The feet, made beautiful because they bring good tidings, would run no more on errands of pity to far-off lands and wild races. Can the human imagination picture a committee of Atheists starting off, at risk and cost to themselves, to transform savage races into a nobler type by the news that no God exists?"

The picture is a terrifying one, and yet—one dares to hope. For somehow or other the actual Atheist does not quite fulfil the description. So far as the police records can afford any guide, Atheists are certainly not *more* criminal than Christians—probably less so. In ordinary life they do not desert their wives, ill-use their children, turn on their friends, or shirk their responsibilities in any greater degree than Christians—again their shortcomings in this respect are probably less marked than those of believers. Personally, I should not be at all surprised to find that the average Atheist is decidedly superior to the average Theist. Certainly my own experience supports this view. There is less pretension about them, and less cant; but certainly a stronger, sturdier sense of right and wrong, likely to be much more serviceable in actual life than the self-righteous cant of the average religionist, whose moral development is seldom sufficient to cause him to act with tolerable justice towards his fellow-citizens.

It may be granted that Atheists would not be likely to form missionary societies for the purpose of preaching Atheism to savages. Yet it is not quite established that Theists have raised any race of savages in any part of the world into a nobler type by "the news that God exists." *Trade* has been advanced, savages have been taught—or forced—to were trousers, taught—or coerced—into mumbling religious formulas; they have been inoculated with two or more vices for every one they have discarded; and in many cases they have been raised off the planet altogether. But what race has been made better by the news that God exists? Perhaps Mr. Fitchett, or someone else, will explain.

Atheists may not travel abroad to convert other races. Neither do they clamor for gunboats to protect them abroad, nor stir up wars to advance their sectarian interests. But if they do not rush abroad to preach their opinions to savages, they remain at home trying to convert Christians. And surely, Messrs. Ballard and Fitchett, there is something in this? Surely their desire to correct the errors of their fellows here is worthy of some recognition? For they are not acting thus for the benefit of their soul. They are not seeking a reward hereafter; and they certainly get little material recompense or comfort here for taking so much interest in the development of Christians. They face discomfort and loss in opposing the opinions of a majority; what do men like Mr. Ballard and Mr. Fitchett risk in their advocacy? They may both be perfectly honest men for all I know to the contrary. Honesty, of a kind, is not incompatible with stupidity or irreconcilable with conceit. But at least one cannot safely infer the honesty of a man preaching a doctrine that exposes him to no peril and may, as it often does, lead to reward. The Atheist, however, does give a guarantee of his honesty, mistaken though he may be. There is no doubt of his sincerity; and one man

advocating an opinion—even though it be an erroneous one—that is, both unpopular and personally unprofitable—counts more in the mental and moral life of a nation than ten thousand who make themselves the mouthpiece of a socially fashionable and financially wealthy superstition.

I have spent three articles on Messrs. Ballard's and Fitchett's productions, and doubtless many of my readers may be asking, Are they worth it? Well, intrinsically they are not; but, as I said at the opening, they serve to illustrate a type of mind upon which and by which religion lives. They enable us to put ourselves in the place of the average religionist, and to realise what his mental attitude is towards such questions as Atheism and Theism. Better men would not serve the same purpose nearly so well. They might hold the same beliefs, but they would be expressed in a different manner, and they would represent, in a way, a very limited class. It is charitable to assume that neither Mr. Fitchett nor Mr. Ballard really understand Atheism; and, not understanding Atheism, their appreciation of Theism is necessarily inadequate. For a knowledge of both can only be derived from a knowledge of their history, and this is an aspect ignored by both writers. The only foundation for a belief in God is the ignorant guessing of the primitive savage. Without that such an idea would never have existed. And above the savage all human development is the record of the dying of God and the growth of Atheism. Atheism begins when man discerns that some portion of nature—no matter how limited—is outside the scope of supernatural agency. It grows exactly in proportion as vitalism gives place to mechanism, as the natural ousts the supernatural. Step by step the gods are driven back; slowly but surely Atheism grows. All the force of powerful priesthoods in alliance with threatened interests have failed to crush it. It grows because it is an expression of a great principle of mental development. Mr. Ballard may proclaim his "True God" and Mr. Fitchett denounce the unreasonableness and dangerous nature of Atheism; but so did a certain elderly lady once try to hurl back the Atlantic with a housebroom. And Mrs. Partington's effort, with its result, is paralleled by the laughable and intellectually contemptible efforts of these two champions of a doomed creed.

C. COHEN.

Religion and Knowledge.

IT is customary with many religious teachers of to-day to draw a distinction between religion and theology. While readily, even gladly, admitting that, in the light of modern knowledge, every Body of Divinity or systematised confession stands hopelessly discredited, they yet congratulate themselves and their followers on the alleged fact that religion is still as much alive as ever, and on the eve of its final, universal triumph. That they are entirely mistaken is really beyond dispute. The so-called distinction between religion and theology is simply a figment of a diseased imagination. Every truly sane person is fully convinced that, apart from theology, religion, in any historic sense, is utterly unthinkable. Indeed, all the religious leaders of the age, with the single exception of a few prominent ethicists, are firm believers in, and enthusiastic proclaimers of, the supernatural. Every believer in God is, to that extent, a theologian; and without belief in God religion, in every ecclesiastical signification of the term, is impossible. Whenever a Christian minister disparages theology, the real object of his attack is not theology as such, but any and every theology except his own. The theology of Augustine, of John Calvin, or of John Wesley, is unbelievable because irrational, because out of harmony with present-day intelligence; but the New Theology is eminently believable, being philosophic, scientific, and reasonable. The New Theologian may not put his argument just in that form, but

that is exactly what it amounts to. We hold, on the contrary, that all theologies are alike unbelievable, and all the religions founded upon them equally absurd. We resolutely contend that any faith in the supernatural is based not upon knowledge, but upon ignorance. We go further still, and declare that one of the inevitable results of the dissemination of scientific knowledge is to discredit, and gradually displace, every supernatural religion.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, in an article entitled "Of Religious Ignorance," makes eloquent fun of the high claims to knowledge put forth by the orthodox Church. In that despised institution there has been "such an accumulation of what appears to be knowledge, and is not; such an abundance of promisory notes, with nothing in the bank." Of "bad debts and worthless paper" there has been a deplorably large crop. The "dogmatic systems which the church has created" are declared to be of absolutely no value. "J. B." waxes exceedingly bold, and says:—

"The twentieth century becomes increasingly impatient with the fourth century. The affirmations of that age are still supposed to bind us. We have only to read the controversies which led up to those decisions—surely the most dreary, empty, and arid literature that ever mortals for their sins could be condemned to wade through—to realise that these men are simply stamping and handing to us so much worthless paper money. Their *homoousion*, *homoiousion*, their jargon of *Ousia*, *Agenneton*, and what not, amount to how much? These controversialists are like the idol-makers Isaiah satirises—they make, unmake, and remake their deity."

As an iconoclast of other people's theologies, "J. B." has no equal. He grinds them to powder without mercy. He even goes the length of quoting Leslie Stephen's bitter sarcasm: "It is enough to say that they (the divines of the fourth century) defined the nature of God Almighty with an accuracy from which modest naturalists would shrink in describing the genesis of a black-beetle." With that extract "J. B." is in perfect agreement, and so are we. Then he makes the following quotation from Maeterlinck:—

"For although it has not, perhaps, been incontrovertibly proved that the Unknown is neither vigilant nor personal, neither sovereignly intelligent nor sovereignly just, or that it possesses none of the passions, intentions, virtues, or vices of man, it is still incomparably more probable that the Unknown is entirely indifferent to all that appears of supreme importance in this life of ours."

Here we have the opposite extreme to the one occupied by orthodox divines. Speaking of the latter, "J. B." says: "What we know is that these confident dogmatists did not know what they thought they knew. The universe had given them no authority to speak as they did; certainly no authority to teach us." We agree. Of Maeterlinck, however, "J. B." says in effect: "He is not half so ignorant as he pretends to be." That is to say, he blames both the Gnosticism of Athanasius and the Agnosticism of the twentieth-century Rationalist, and places himself somewhere between the two. Now, is it possible to be betwixt and between, neither the one thing nor the other? Our essayist seems to believe that it is, and that this is the only defensible position to hold. Let us see.

As is well-known, this clever religious writer is a Christian minister of vast power and influence. His eloquence is known in all the churches. He worships God and preaches Christ, and when he is in the devotional vein no one would dream of scenting any heresy in him. But who or what gives him authority to believe in and worship God? On what grounds does he preach Christ as the Savior of the world? What proof is there that the Christian religion, or any other supernatural religion, is true? On these questions "J. B." is dumb. His city of God is always hidden under a mantle of black fog, and he walks along its streets as one in a perpetual dream. Sometimes he speaks of deity as if he were identical with nature; sometimes, as if he were differentiated from and transcended it; sometimes, as if he were a person,

who can hear and answer prayer; and sometimes, as if he were an impersonal influence or principle pervading the universe. But *does* such a person, such an influence, or such a principle exist? Referring to religious history, or the religious experience of the world, "J. B." asks, "What is behind it all? Behind our religious emotions, our symbols, our systems?" Continuing, he says:—

"That intense spiritual ecstasy which at moments in our life has thrilled us, what relation has it to the immensity outside; to that All of things which comprise Orion and the Pleiades, to existence and reality in their outmost and inmost? Is this thrill, this emotion, all shut up in ourselves? We read of it, indeed, in our brother man, and its existence in him has made religious history. But is there any answer to the thrill from outside?"

Direct replies to such queries "J. B." does not even attempt to supply. Instead, he delivers himself of vague, ambiguous, hopelessly confused and confusing expressions. We challenge anyone to tell us what exactly is meant by the following:—

"Faith will henceforth build itself not on the old ignorance, but on the new knowledge. And we are finding there an excellent basis, firm and wide. What does this new knowledge offer? In our view of it at least, it is one vast and continuous contribution to faith."

What is this new knowledge, and in what sense is it a vast and continuous contribution to faith? It is all very well to speak of "cosmic magnitudes" and their "message"; but "cosmic magnitudes" have absolutely nothing to say about God and a spiritual world; and Science, in all its departments, is utterly silent concerning their "message." But this religious history, this religious experience of mankind, what is behind it all? *Nothing but faith resting on ignorance.* "J. B." cannot be unaware of the undeniable fact that every religion had its origin in an age of gross ignorance and blind superstition. Our ancestors believed in deities because they did not know the laws of nature. Because of ignorance, a man's shadow on the wall, or his reflection in the water, developed into a double or second self; the double, into a ghost; and the ghost, eventually, into a god; and the gods, many into one Supreme Being. Through ignorance, the sun, because it moved, was believed to be alive, and men bowed down and did homage to it; and when it was discovered that the sun was not alive, the inference was drawn that there existed somewhere a living being powerful enough to keep the sun ever on the move; and human worship was transferred from the sun to the sun's ruler. Historical criticism has proved beyond the possibility of reasonable dispute that all religions, even the highest and best, may be traced back to some such source in wondering and fearful ignorance.

What is behind religious experience? Religious beliefs, and nothing else. As "J. B." himself has often told us, the universe keeps unbroken silence. Our only safety lies in unquestioning obedience to her iron laws. Our prayers she never hears, or hearing, disregards. Petitions, however passionate, are lost upon her.

"On her great venture, man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.
More aid than that embrace,
That nourishment, she cannot give: his heart
Involves his fate; and she who urged the start
Abides the race."

It is unworthy of "J. B." to accuse unbelievers of religious ignorance. Many of them are as well versed in the history of religion, and as intimately acquainted with the ins and outs of religious experience, as he is himself. Is it not as reasonable for them to reject his theology as it is for him to repudiate that of Athanasius or of Thomas Aquinas? Surely, our friend forgot his good manners when he referred to "the crude materialism, the crass religious blunderings of Haeckel and his school." Can he point out one "religious blunder" of which Haeckel is guilty, or tell us in what sense his so-called

materialism is "crude?" The orthodox describe our friend's theology as worse than crude, and his religious counsels as lower and more dangerous than any mere "blunderings." But to call opponents names is not to answer their arguments. Abuse never won a cause yet. It is not due to their astonishing ignorance of the facts of man's so-called religious nature, but to their growing acquaintance with their origin and character that the public are according such hearty welcome to the teaching of such men as Darwin, Tyndall, Haeckel, and Spencer. While the theologians are praying for a religious *renaissance*, a scientific *renaissance* is in full swing throughout Christendom, and men and women are hailing it with supreme delight.

J. T. LLOYD.

Shelley Letters.—II.

It would be an ungracious task to go through these Letters with a view to showing the full extent of Shelley's ingenuous ignorance of the world in what we have called his embryonic period. His sentimental fatuity is sometimes astonishing. It seems almost unnatural even at his age and with his lack of experience. Mr. Dobell surmises that he suffered from a surfeit of eighteenth-century Rosa Matilda novels; and that partly, at least, he derived from them the "crude ideas as to the problems of life and the relations between the sexes" which filled his head. We believe there is a good deal of truth in this, but the influence of Godwin should not be overlooked. In some respects, Godwin's influence over the youthful Shelley was good; in some respects, it was decidedly bad. Shelley lived long enough, although his career was painfully brief, to recognise the weaknesses of Godwin's philosophy, and the still more distressing weaknesses of his character. One might say, indeed, that, on the whole, Shelley was singularly unfortunate in his early friendships and companionships. There was a quite injurious predominance of the female element, for one thing; and the habit he had of picking up casual friends of the other sex, and viewing them through the mist of his own irrepressible enthusiasm, was not counteracted by the normal, and in the main beneficial, influence of the ties of blood. The only thing in all Shelley's letters that grates upon us is the way in which he refers to his father, and even his mother, not to speak of the rest of the family. They did not understand him, and on the whole they treated him badly; but he ought not to have read his parents moral lessons, and criticised them with such emotional detachment, when he was only nineteen. Respect for their age, as well as reverence for their ineffaceable relationship to him, should have restrained his tongue and pen. It was altogether contrary to his essential nature to act in this way; the nature which reveals itself, not only in the productions of his maturity, but in all that we know of the actions of his manhood. The fault really lay with those "crude ideas" to which Mr. Dobell refers. Shelley had got hold of the fantastic idea—or rather the fantastic idea had got hold of him—that blood relationship and family ties were accidental nothings. He tells Miss Hitchener so in one of these letters. But the life of the world has never yet been conducted on such a basis, and there is no reason for believing that it ever could be. Nature has appointed for us that it is through the family that we must be introduced to humanity. Shelley's better genius, even then, was drawing him away from those fantastic notions. We see how bitterly, though not unforgivingly, he resented Hogg's attempt to seduce Harriet in one of his absences from home. In a later letter he says, "I hope to have a large family of children," and adds that it will bind him closer to his wife. This is the voice of uncorrupted and unsophisticated nature. Some people have wondered that Shakespeare was so much interested in the fortunes of his house at Stratford-on-Avon, but was

it not a sign of that broad normality of thought and feeling which underlies every effort of his amazing genius? If his head reached the stars his feet were always on the solid ground.

Shelley's mind at that time was "quite uncritical," Mr. Dobell says, "full of visionary notions, and devoid of that sense of the humorous which is the great safeguard against the formation of false views of life." In this criticism we largely but not completely concur. Shelley was not devoid of the sense of the humorous. No man is a humorist under twenty. Shakespeare himself could not have even conceived Jack Falstaff at that age. Wit sparkles in his first comedies, but humor comes afterwards. Shelley, of course, had nothing like Shakespeare's humor; but he was not destitute of the faculty. There are some notable passages in *Peter Bell the Third*; the satire on Wordsworth's want of creative imagination is Aristophanic, and reveals a new vein in Shelley's genius; there are delicious touches in the *Witch of Atlas*; and the translation of the *Hymn to Mercury* is perhaps the most sustained piece of delicate humor in the whole range of English poetry.

Mr. Dobell also observes that while it would be foolish to assert that Shelley could ever have rivalled Shakespeare in humor, it is "not too much to say that Shelley, had he lived but ten years longer, would have rivalled, at least in all the more peculiarly poetical qualities, even Shakespeare himself." Such an opinion cannot, from the very nature of the case, be anything more than a conjecture. Men and affairs have a way of developing themselves, in the course of ten years, which baffles the most penetrating sagacity. We know what Shakespeare was by what he did—and we know every other writer in the same way. All that anyone can do who differs from another on such a question, is to state a contrary opinion. We have always had an intense admiration for Shelley, but we cannot regard him as standing quite so near the throne of the sovereign of English literature. Shakespeare seems to us incommensurable. We may not precisely catch what Mr. Dobell means by "all the more peculiarly poetical qualities," but unless the definition is very much narrowed down we do not see how the comparison can be maintained. Nor, as a matter of fact, is it possible, in our judgment, to separate the qualities (whatever they are) which Mr. Dobell refers to from the other qualities which were included in the composition of the genius of either poet. How, for instance, are we to separate the dramatist from the pure poet in a great play? And you really cannot have a great play without poetry—a fact which Mr. Bernard Shaw and other modern dramatists often overlook. Now it is indisputable, we think, that Shelley has written the only great English play since the Shakespearian age. But fine as the *Cenci* is, can it be placed beside one of the Master's earlier plays, like *Romeo and Juliet*? A mightier life pulses through Shakespeare's work. And if we think merely of the composition, beautiful as Shelley's last poignant Act is, and written throughout as no other poet for two hundred years could have written it, there is nevertheless a something beyond all this in the writing of Shakespeare. When the miraculous young poet of *Romeo and Juliet* wrote the scene in which Romeo finds the supposed dead body of Juliet he brought a new electric power into the world's poetry; and when he made Romeo say—

"O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest;
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh"

he struck an entirely new note in English literature—a note which has often enough been imitated, but which has never yet been sounded by any man but himself.

Shelley belongs to the great family; he is lovely, adorable, and ravishing; but, after all, Shakespeare is the natural head of the house; and the rest of the family have never failed to know it.

With respect to Shelley's genius in itself, Mr. Dobell makes some interesting comments. He says

that other writers have produced works of great promise at the age of nineteen or twenty; but he, for his part, can see "absolutely no promise" in Shelley's early verse and prose of "the great things which were to follow." We are afraid that this criticism is only too true. Some of Shelley's early productions are enough to make us split with laughter—when we remember who wrote them; for otherwise they are of no interest whatever. His brain was boiling, but it was not worth skimming. When he began to mature, however, the process was extraordinarily rapid and comprehensive. He was soon a great poet, a great prose writer, a great critic, and a great thinker. Nine years of his life were crowded with glorious achievements; masterpiece followed masterpiece with astonishing celerity; it seemed as if he were half-prescient of that day of doom in the Bay of Spezzia, and were hastening to complete his defiance of time and oblivion. A short while before his death he said "I am ninety." Yet his powers were then riper than ever; we believe he had the capacity of much more and probably greater production in him; and, from every point of view, the drowning of Shelley on that fatal July day in 1822 was in all probability the heaviest loss that English literature has ever sustained.

Shelley's ill-luck in being so often led to put his love and trust in those who were unworthy of it, is noted by Mr. Dobell; and already in these Letters, he detects the first note of Shelley's pessimism. "Here," he says, "we see the beginning of the lesson which the world teaches to all who would rouse it from its lazy acquiescence in things as they are, out of which the devotion of the hero, the patriot, and the martyr seek in vain to uplift it. Shelley was destined to learn this lesson fully before the end came." Nevertheless, as Mr. Dobell confesses, it did not sour his disposition or abate his love for humanity. That is true, anyhow; and the question arises whether it was not precisely the tragical elements in Shelley's life that made him the poet he was. He has himself expressed the general truth, of which his own case is a supreme illustration:—

"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

The dawn of discord with Harriet was coincident with the dawn of his genius. His flight from England, the suicide of Harriet, the separation from his children, the death only a few years afterwards of Mary's little boy; these and other sad and even terrible experiences were the blows of fate that welded the iron of his genius into the steel that was requisite for its finest achievements. And perhaps, in a final estimate, everything depended in the first instance on that flight from England. Was it necessary for him to go to Rome (Mr. Dobell asks) in order that "his genius should have its fullest scope and reach its supreme development?" It was. The prosaic England of that day was not sufficient stimulus to his imagination. He realised himself in the "Paradise of Exiles—Italy." Above all at Rome, amidst the crumbling ruins of a dead empire and the gigantic relics of a perished civilisation. He saw beauty everywhere—beauty on the grave of greatness. Visibly before him were the links connecting the present world with antiquity; all his powers of mind and heart were kindled by the suggestive spectacle; the hour had struck for his becoming the poet of humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Man usually believes, if only words he hears,
That also with them goes material for thinking.

—Goethe.

When you endeavor to explain the mystery of the universe
by the mystery of God, you do not even exchange mysteries
—you simply make one more.—Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

There was the inevitable discussion of Socialism at the Baptist Congress. The professional Christians present, who all pretend to have a divine revelation—and the same one all round—were all at sixes and sevens on this subject. So beautifully lucid and illuminating is the good old Christian faith! Even after the lapse of nearly two thousand years no one knows exactly what it is. And no one ever will know now unless Jesus hurries up his Second Advent and explains his Gospel before the world is completely sick of it.

One Baptist leader, the Rev. J. G. Greenhough, said that there were as many Socialisms as there were advocates, and that Mr. Grayson's was wild and irresponsible enough to satisfy any inmate of Bedlam; and as for Mr. R. J. Campbell's theories, no one seemed to understand them but himself. Mr. Greenhough, in short, was entirely opposed to Socialism. He was replied to by another Baptist leader, the Rev. Dr. Clifford, who said that Mr. Greenhough had uttered some of the wildest travesties of the Socialist position. Thus they agree!—these men of God, with Omniscience behind them (or is it within them?) to "guide them into all truth."

Men of God nowadays will discuss anything on earth except the one thing that matters, as far as they are concerned—namely, their religion. Christian ministers will discuss Socialism, or anything else that happens to draw audiences; but if they are asked to discuss Christianity, they answer, "No, thanks; we're not having any."

The dear *Daily News* wouldn't give a line to the biggest Freethought meeting in London, but it reports the ravings of Prophet Baxter, whom it must know to be the biggest charlatan in London. Baxter has been prophesying the end of the world all his lifetime. All his fixtures, and their number is legion, have been falsified; but every time he is proved a false prophet—and from the same old dream-book called the Bible—he just moves the fixture on a bit, and his dupes are perfectly satisfied. His latest fixture for the big events he has always been predicting is 1922-1931. During that period all who are alive will see—what they will see. Meanwhile old Baxter flourishes on the profits of fooling credulity. This the *Daily News* knows, or ought to know; but, although a trickster, Baxter is a Christian, and therefore "one of us" to the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience.

There were 9,625 persons imprisoned for debt in England in 1868 before imprisonment for debt was abolished. There were 12,014 persons imprisoned for debt in England in 1906. England is a Christian country. That explains it—and a lot of other things too.

One of the subjects up for discussion at the Woman's Congress in Rome was religious instruction in public schools. By an overwhelming majority the Congress voted for its complete abolition. The vote would have been cheering enough had it been passed by "mere man," but its significance is intensified when passed by women. We hope congresses of women in England will follow this excellent example.

The Rev. A. C. Hennigan, B.A., a Japanese missionary, appears to be a great favorite with heaven. The other day he asked the Lord for twenty or thirty converts, and at once the Lord gave him forty-eight. What occurs to us is that Mr. Hennigan woefully neglects his duty. While at it, why didn't he ask for the whole of Japan? He would have been granted China into the bargain. If Mr. Hennigan did his duty, there wouldn't be a single heathen on the globe to-morrow!

The secularisation of Sunday is going on apace even within the churches. A Baptist deacon recently handed the minister a secular paper on a Sunday morning, and was surprised when the man of God told him that what he could not see of politics during the week he was content to do without. When deacons read secular newspapers on the Lord's Day, it is no wonder ordinary members make it a day for golf, or houseboat parties, or week-end bridge in country houses.

It is stated that the South-Eastern Railway is issuing in France handbills calling attention to the fact that many public institutions worthy of a visit are open on Sunday. Many French people will no doubt be pleased to learn that we have developed thus far, but many more who come as visitors

to the Franco-British Exhibition will be bored to death by our London Sunday. The Exhibition itself will, of course, be closed. British cant and British religion would never consent to the opening of so dangerous a rival to the churches. But French visitors may go to some of our museums and art galleries, where they will be able to compare the number and behavior of the Britishers to be met there with what is to be seen in their own institutions on public holidays. And then they will probably wish themselves back home.

On Easter Sunday the Duke of Westminster, who is owner of a fast motor-boat, raced her at Palermo and won the International trophy. The *English Churchman* cries out at the dishonor done to Almighty God. The Duke, however, is satisfied.

"The fear of death" was the title of a recent sermon by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. The sermon dealt with the fear that most people—Christian people—have of death, but which Mr. Campbell believes that, as Christians, they should not have. Yet it is as Christians that people are, and have been, afraid of death and what was supposed to come after. There is nothing in ancient literature that would lead one to believe that their existed amongst either Roman or Greeks the morbid fear of death that afterwards obtained amongst Christians. Their existed, of course, a dislike of dying, which was but natural, and, in a sense, healthy. But the prevalent note in Greek and Roman literature is to treat life as a voyage with death as the shore upon which all travellers land, earlier or later. Prof. Mahaffy notes that among the inscriptions on Greek tombs, the dominant is a sad resignation to the inevitable, the grief that comes from parting with dear friends and relatives, but nothing morbid. The Pagans took life in a healthy, naturalistic spirit, and faced death with a calmness and courage born of wisdom and comparative freedom from superstition.

The morbid fear of death among the Western people is substantially a product of Christians. Not the fear of death, as death, but of what Christianity taught was awaiting people on the other side of the grave. Probably no people have dealt so much with death as have Christian writers and preachers. No people have ever so exhausted their imagination in depicting the terrors that awaited the majority in the hereafter. The descriptions of hell by Catholic and Protestant theologians now read like the ravings of lunatics, and lunatic the world would have been had it ever clearly and full realised such teachings. Life, to the sincere Christian, became one long preparation for death. The world became a huge charnel house, humanity a gigantic funeral procession, and the Christian one of the greatest of cowards in the presence of death.

We use the last expression deliberately. The sincere Christian, unless he be an unreasonable egotist, really does fear death. The historic dwelling upon the theme proves it. The stories of the miseries and terrors of "infidel" death-beds adds to the proof. Cowards themselves, they cannot realise either the old Pagan or the modern Freethought temper in the presence of death. They read their own psychological states into the minds of their opponents. Fortunately for the world, the number of really sincere Christians who mentally visualised their creed have always been in the minority. Otherwise, the condition of things would have been much worse than they were, or are. Christian preachers may complain of the small number of true believers that have at any time existed, but the careful student of life will realise that their fewness was the condition of the world retaining its health and sanity.

Dr. Griffith John says that "what the Chinese need above all else is the knowledge of God." A much greater man than Dr. John thought that the knowledge of God, if obtainable, would be a hindrance rather than a help to human progress. Confucius, though he believed in God, positively declined to speak about him to his followers, and put the whole emphasis of his teaching upon man's duty towards his neighbor. Europe has had what Dr. John calls the "knowledge of God" for many centuries; but it is beyond the power of even Dr. John's apologetic genius to specify a single ethical virtue, displayed by Europeans, which is the direct, or even the indirect, outcome of possessing that alleged knowledge.

The Chinese are not a nation of ignorant, degraded, depraved, and savage people. Professor Macalister, who has just visited the country, speaking at the annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society, unwittingly let the cat out of the bag in these honest words: "The Chinese are a clever people, as good as ourselves in many ways." That eminently

true sentence knocks the bottom out of all the Missionary Societies represented in China, and proves that the missionaries who endeavor to Christianise the inhabitants are nothing but impudent intermeddlers. If the Chinese are as good as ourselves without Christianity, why offer them an unforgivable insult by the proposed scheme to "flood their land with Christian literature"?

The *Daily Telegraph* for April 30 contained an article on the methods of Barnum being adopted by "enterprising ministers who desire to entice the democracy back to church." In the course of this stinging leader it is observed that Sunday observance is falling more and more into disuse in every part of the English-speaking world. "In France," it is added, "the congregations are mainly composed of women, and the vast majority of men never go to church at all. In Germany, one-third of the population consists of Socialists, whose Atheism is generally avowed, and even the Evangelical communities report more seriously every year upon the alarming decay of religious enthusiasm. Amongst ourselves and in the American cities the same signs have been multiplying during the last twenty years." This must have been pleasant reading for the *D. T.'s* public. And not on the first of April either, but the last.

More dry rot in the Churches! St. Luke's Church, Torquay, one of the wealthiest in the district, reports for the first time a deficiency of £187 for the past year. Other churches in that fashionable town also report deficiencies of £113, £102, and £77. The local *Directory* reminds people that giving to the Lord's work is a privilege; but will the reminder induce them to shell out?

The first Buddhist monk has arrived here from the East—to convert England. His name is Bhikkhu Ananda Metteyya. He is a Scotchman. Of course! Newspapers took him up at once, and the bold Macgregor got a first-rate advertisement in forty-eight hours. Even a Buddhist missionary isn't a Scotchman for nothing.

Atheists are always committing suicide. Talmage said so—Torrey says so—and who shall contradict them? Here is another case in point. Robert Brice, a fishmonger's manager, who committed suicide at Conder-green, near Lancaster, left a letter addressed to "all whom it may concern," in which he used such Atheistical expressions as "O, my God!" "God have mercy on me." "God bless you all." Torrey ought to publish a collection of such proofs of his accuracy.

Rev. Thomas Lloyd, rector of Theydon-Garnon, Epping, has been fined £2 and £5 costs for brawling in his own church. It was a row with a churchwarden over the collection.

The *Free Church Year Book* attributes the decrease of nearly 18,000 in the number of Free Church communicants to the reaction after the revival in Wales. This is just what we predicted. After the debauch of excitement came lassitude and disgust. And what of poor Evan Roberts, the "Lord's instrument" in the Welsh revival? From time to time it is stated that he is expected to return to the Lord's vineyard, but that is not likely to happen—in this world. Those who know the facts understand why.

At the recent meeting of the Baptist Union it was frankly admitted that during last year there had taken place a lamentable decrease of numbers. One minister said that "the middle classes were slipping away from them in every part of the country, and these classes formed the best elements of our English life. There was also a loss of hope in the churches." Another complained that "recent criticism of the Bible and expression of strange theological views" were playing sad havoc with the faith of both ministers and people." But a third maintained that the arrested progress of the Church was only local and temporary, and had for its cause the alarming spread of materialism and rationalism. "Let us not lose heart, however," he added; "we shall soon have a great revival." Yes, doubtless a revival will come, and yet each successive revival only accentuates the process of decay.

Not only is the membership of churches decreasing on a large scale; it is also an acknowledged fact that there is a "general loss of conviction, of faith, a loss of the sense of guilt, a failure to realise the grandeur of salvation, and the terrors of the world to come" among the members who remain. The idea of conversion is being given up, and there is thus taking place a well-nigh universal breaking with St.

Paul. In other words, the churches are rapidly repudiating Christianity, and becoming centres of social intercourse merely, instead of the temples of the Holy Ghost. Thus we learn that Freethought is gaining ground even in the tabernacles of the saints.

A sky-pilot said the other day that God never obtrudes himself, but systematically keeps in the background. The Holy Ghost is only a humble helper in the work of salvation, and is often silently doing his part without anybody being aware of his presence. He is so modest and retiring that he prefers to let the world go to wrack and ruin rather than be guilty of self-advertisement. Of course, the sky-pilot takes infinite pains to be always in evidence. Over-modesty is never *his* weakness.

Methodists are greatly concerned at the decrease of members as shown by the latest returns. Many theories are propounded to account for the decline, among others the lack of individual drinking-cups at the Communion. People will not tolerate, says one writer, the insanitary practice of taking the Communion from a cup that is used in common. We were not aware that Methodists were so particular. Anyway, God Almighty ought to be able to protect his followers from the assaults of microbes at the Communion-table

Among all the causes named as responsible, wholly or in part, for this decrease, the right one is studiously ignored. The real cause of the declining membership of the Methodist Church is the cause that is playing havoc with all the Churches. This is the gradual but sure decay of Christian belief before the development of modern thought. Here and there a favorite preacher may attract large audiences, but this is more a matter of personal attraction than anything else, and even then he has to steer clear of purely Christian doctrinal topics. The congregations of such men as Mr. Campbell, for instance, are not brought together by interest in Christianity, as such, but by the personality of the preacher, or because there is the attractiveness of heresy about his utterances, or because he deals with matters that are in no sense peculiarly Christian. The mass of the people have no longer any vital interest in Christianity, and the result is seen in the inability of the churches to maintain their hold on the rising population.

The Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, Secretary of the Baptist Union, speaking at its recent meeting in Bloomsbury, said that what is needed to check the decay of the churches is "acquaintance with God." The reverend gentleman was quite right. Nothing else can prevent Christianity from becoming extinct. Unfortunately for Mr. Shakespeare's cause, "acquaintance with God" lies among the grim impossibilities of human life. As God has never seen fit to make himself known, how on earth can anybody become acquainted with him? Acquaintance with the Unknown is a contradiction in terms.

On second thoughts, however, we are sure that Mr. Shakespeare was wrong. What is needed to keep religion alive is not man's acquaintance with God, but God's acquaintance with man. If the Christian God exists, it is his own fault that the churches are dying of consumption. It is his own fault that two-thirds of the human race have never heard of him. It is his own fault that his only begotten Son is in disfavor even within the very Sanctuaries that bear his name. It is his own fault that the Wesleyans and the Baptists, who call themselves the light of the world and the salt of the earth, are decreasing in numbers at such an ominous rate. And to say that all this is his own fault is equivalent to affirming that the Christian God does not exist. Indeed, the grandest and most conclusive proof of his non-existence is the history of the Church, which, it is selfishly claimed, is the place of his abode.

The President of the Baptist Union says "it is to be feared that we are producing a race of Church members who are ignorant of the Scriptures, and who never look at the Bible." The secretary of the Union also declares "The Bible is not read. Ignorance of it among candidates for the ministry is simply appalling." Well, what would these gentlemen have? If people are to believe in the Bible, what is the use of their being encouraged to read it? If they do read it—intelligently, that is—it is folly to expect them to continue believing in it. These gentlemen should make up their minds as to what it is they really desire.

The President of the Union also laments that there is danger of the Christian religion fading out of the life of England, France, and Germany. With this we quite agree.

There is not only a danger, but a practical certainty of it doing so. The process may be hastened or delayed, but its completion is a practical certainty. Other superstitions preceded Christianity, and it is possible that some other superstition may succeed it; but a religion or a god that possessed the quality of immortality is one of the things humanity has never been ingenious enough to invent.

Among the methods adopted by one American preacher—a Rev. W. Minifie, of Atlantic City—is to illustrate the sermon by lantern slides, have all the pews opened by young ladies dressed in white, and present the congregation with picture postcards. Presently we may see people paid so much per hour to attend church—and we should be far from suggesting that the money would not be well earned.

A cyclone played the devil with Griffin (Georgia). It cut a path a hundred yards wide through the place. Several persons were killed and more injured, and twenty-five public buildings were destroyed, including the Baptist Church. "Providence" didn't pay the least respect to one of its own houses. It struck blindly—as it always does.

We overlooked a strong case of "Providence" last week. A schoolmaster named Charles Taylor, of Bradsall, Derbyshire, was visiting his sister at Little Steeping, Lincolnshire, and attended "divine service" in the village. On entering the church he knelt down to pray, and died while still kneeling. Had such an incident occurred in a Secular Hall the Christians would have shaken their heads mysteriously, and recognised a divine judgment.

Mr. Foote arrived at Liverpool late on Saturday night (May 2). Providence, or whoever runs the meteorology department, got up the usual treat for the editor of the *Freethinker*. There was a tremendous thunderstorm in the early hours of Sunday morning, with a deluge of rain. Mr. Foote saw and heard it all, but is still alive. Providence, or whoever it was, only succeeded in burning down a Mission Hall.

Correspondence.

A COSTLY BUSINESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Looking over an "Acid Drop" in the *Freethinker* of April 26, *re* the decline of membership in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, I cannot refrain from giving you a critical examination of a report which appeared in the *Northern Echo*, a few days ago, of the Primitive Methodist district circuit, which extends from Seaham Harbor, in Durham, to Alwrick, in Northumberland. In this district, the report says, there are 259 chapels and 69 ministers, and 7,567 local preachers and Sunday-school teachers. The income is £42,274 14s. 8d., and the expenditure £32,560 7s. 4d., and the increase of membership for the year is 75; a *splendid result*, is it not? It works out as follows: it took 7,627 preachers and teachers a twelve-month to save less than one-fourth of a soul per chapel, and the cost per soul comes to £434 2s. 9d. Converting the Jews is not in it after this. I think if as much money and energy were expended in the propagation of Freethought, more than 75 souls would be raked in at the year's end.

JAMES COSSEY.

German Freethought Congress—1908.

THE biennial Congress of the "Deutscher Freidenkerbund" is to be held this year in Frankfort-on-Maine on June 12, 13, and 14, and delegates from all parts of Germany are expected to take part in the proceedings. The matters to be discussed will be of an eminently practical character; and although the program has not yet been fully decided upon, it is expected that resolutions of a far-reaching nature on Freethought activity in the "Vaterland" will be passed. The program will be further referred to in due course, and, in the meantime, the Frankfort Freethought Society makes an appeal to Freethinkers of German nationality resident in this country to give their financial support towards making the Congress a success. Contributions with this object from German Freethinkers will be duly acknowledged in our columns and forwarded to the proper quarter, or friends may send direct to the Frankfort Secretary, Herr Hemrich Monheimer, Gunthersburg Allee 1, Frankfort a/m.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 10, New Theatre, Aberdare: at 2.30, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live"; at 6.15, "Heaven and Hell: Where and What?"

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 10, a. and e., Victoria Park; 17, a. and e., Parliament Hill; 24, a. and e., Victoria Park; 31, a. and e., Parliament Hill.—Address: 241 High-road, Leyton.

GEORGE JACOB.—You are mistaken. We don't say that Holyoake was not an Atheist. We have argued that he was. But we have noted the fact that he repudiated the term Atheist in his old age, giving it a fresh (and false) meaning in order to do so.

G. HULL.—Always pleased to know of admirers of Ingersoll. Glad you were "greatly pleased" with our article. Thanks for cuttings.

A. MARTIN.—(1) We see no particular good in Freemasonry in a country where there is freedom enough to do everything useful above board. On the other hand, we see no particular harm in it, except as anything may be turned to harm. But you won't, in any case, be able to become a Freemason in this country without using a Theistic formula. (2) We take trouble to see that advertisements in our columns are honest; it is not our business to guarantee the things that are advertised.

E. PACK.—Thanks for the useful cutting.

HANNAH WALSH.—We appreciate your wishes.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.—Donations, £165: Annual Subscriptions, £173 3s. 6d. Received since.—R. T. Nichols, £3 3s.; Hannah Walsh, £1; W. Horrocks, £1; R. Stirton and Friends (quarterly), 19s.; Edward Jones, 10s. 6d.

W. HORROCKS, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I greatly admire your strenuous efforts on behalf of Freethought and the right of free speech. I am sorry you have not been able to visit Manchester oftener during the past season, as I always enjoy listening to your lectures." We have paid Manchester the usual number of visits during the winter—two.

E. LUCHMERE.—We won't try to explain an incident which is in all probability fabulous. It is an old "wheeze," that of persons being struck blind after defying God.

R. STIRTON sends a second quarterly subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, and says: "It is from several friends and myself. I have undertaken to collect and forward as much as I can each quarter. The amount may not be always the same, but I shall try to keep it from being less. I fancy if one or two in each town were to take a little trouble to collect from their friends, who possibly don't like the trouble of sending themselves, a considerable aggregate amount would result."

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

EDWARD JONES writes: "To you more than to any other man do I owe my freedom from superstition. May the President's Fund grow and flourish, and may you long give the benefit of your valuable services to the cause."

WATCHFUL.—Too late for this week.

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

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

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.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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.

Mr. Foote had very good audiences in the big Picton Hall, Liverpool, on Sunday, and the N. S. S. Branch was delighted and encouraged by the day's proceedings. Even the collections were exceptionally good. Mr. Roleffs presided in the afternoon, and Mr. Holmes in the evening. There was some

well-appreciated music before both lectures, rendered by members of the Branch. Mr. Foote was in excellent form, and his lectures were enthusiastically applauded. A large number of ladies were present at the evening meeting. Many questions were asked and answered after both lectures; there was also some discussion.

We hear that there is to be a big rally of South Wales Freethinkers at Mr. Foote's lectures to-day (May 10) in the New Theatre, Aberdare. In the afternoon at 2.30 the people of that district will have an opportunity of hearing, probably for the first time, a lecture on "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" In the evening they will be able to hear something about a subject they are all supposed to be interested in—"Heaven and Hell: Where and What?" On the top of the poster the Branch has printed a quotation from one of Mr. Foote's articles: "The whole philosophy of life is to learn what is true in order to do what is right."

"Though popular bigotry, aided by a manifestly biased judge, secured a victory in the London trial for blasphemy, Mr. G. W. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*, and president of the English National Secular Society, clearly earned the admiration of all lovers of justice, fair play, and equal religious liberty, by the manly fight he made in vindication of the principle that blasphemy, *per se*, is not a crime. I think he won the fight, for, by all reports the man, Boulter, was convicted more for the coarse and scandalous manner of his utterances than for their blasphemous character. I suppose we are to understand from this on that, in England, blasphemy is only a crime when uttered by a poor and obscure individual, and in what the judge and jury may regard a coarse and scandalous manner. Secularists might not object that one of their lecturers should now and then suffer a penalty for undue coarseness if street preachers were likewise held accountable for the character of their utterances. If one should be polite in his repudiation of religion, the other should be polite in his avowal of it. A man should not be tried for one thing and convicted for another as was done in this case."—*The Searchlight* (Waco, Texas).

The May number of the *Positivist Review* contains a very good article by the editor, Mr. S. H. Swinny, on "Nature and Righteousness," with reference to Mr. Fielding Hall's new book, *The Soul of a People*. Other articles appear in the same magazine from the pens of Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor E. S. Beesly, and other Positivist leaders. We hope its readers are increasing in number. Mr. Swinny himself is always worth reading. He is a man of culture and refinement, but he understands the sovereignty of principles. We are glad to remember that, although his own methods of advocacy are so vastly different from those of Mr. Harry Boulter, he saw the real question at issue in the last "blasphemy" prosecution with perfect clearness; and his subscription to the Defence Fund was an earnest of his perspicacity and sincerity.

We see that Mr. Swinny, on the motion of Mr. Martin White seconded by Prof. Hobhouse, has just been elected Chairman of the Council of the Sociological Society.

Very good work, in the way of open-air propaganda, was done by the Edinburgh Branch last year. This was largely due to Mr. W. D. Macgregor, the Branch president, who is unfortunately incapacitated by illness just now. What is wanted to make the outdoor work successful this year is the assistance of half-a-dozen "saints" who will prevent the speaking, selling literature, and everything else being left to one or two persons. Those who are willing to take some part in the work should lose no time in communicating with the Branch secretary, Mr. N. Levey, 3 East Richmond-street, Edinburgh.

According to the Sunday League's annual report, 43,618 visitors to the British Museum were registered during the 30 Sundays on which it was open during the past year—making an average of 1,453 per Sunday. Yet the secretary of the Lord's Day Rest Association pretends that it is not worth while keeping the place open for the few who go there. The Curator of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Industrial Museum, reports that the attendance was "always better on Sundays than on any other day in the week." Bristol Art Gallery had an average Sunday attendance of 316; Newcastle Public Library, 530; Bradford Art Gallery and Museum, 5,000. These are reassuring figures.

Mr. J. H. Levy has published, at sixpence, through L. Nelson, 11 Abbeville-road, London, S.W., the paper on "The God of Israel," which he read before the Inter-

national Positivist Congress at Naples at the end of April. It is an excellent paper, and extremely well worth reading. Mr. Levy speaks as one of the "Chosen People" by blood, but as a Freethinker and a Positivist by conviction. What he has to say about the religion of his own race is interesting. He shows quite clearly how Jehovah emerged as the principal deity in a competition of local gods for the worship of the Jews. He also shows how the worship of Jehovah became ethicised by the later prophets—long before the time of Jesus. "When men worship a good being *because* he is good," Mr. Levy argues, "it is goodness which they worship." "When the gods become ethicised," he concludes, "they necessarily fade away; for the conviction is borne in on us that the moral attributes with which they are draped are the reality, and the ghostly figures with which they are associated have no necessary connection with them, and are mere figments. The practical objective of all religion which has any worth, or any chance of permanent survival, is the formation of character. There is a struggle for existence between religions; and that which tends to produce the best men and women—the fittest to contribute to the promotion of happiness—will inevitably prevail. Not in theology, but in ethology—not in vain dreaming, however pleasant in itself, but in resolute pursuit of truth—shall we find the scientific basis of the religion of the future. The theology of the churches does but block the human advance. From the time of Balaam onward, every ass who has been urged forward has seen a supernatural obstacle in the path; and it is for that reason I ask you to rejoice with me that the last of the deities of civilisation is following in the wake of his predecessors, and that religion, divorced from the superstitions which have enthralled it, will at last be a blessing and a bond of union for all mankind.

Mr. Levy also sends us a *Funeral Service*, the words by himself, and the music by C. B. Mabon. This is issued through the same publisher at a shilling. Mr. Levy writes as one who believes that the flame of individual consciousness is extinguished at death, and also that this belief is more consistent than are supernatural conceptions with the highest virtue and humanity.

The lightning quickness of Voltaire's mind, which strikes every student of his voluminous writings, is further exemplified by what Professor J. Churton Collins says in his new book on *Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau in England*. Voltaire came to England after his liberation from the Bastille; his age at the time was thirty-two, and he remained some two years and eight months in this country. His mastery of our language was extraordinary rapid. "In a few months," Professor Collins says, "Voltaire could both speak and write English with perfect fluency. He studied our manners, our customs, our police, our laws, our constitution, our politics, our religion and religious sects, our divinity, our philosophy, our science. He made himself a perfect master of our literature, and of our literature in all its branches. He prided himself, and not without justice, on his English composition, both in prose and verse."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday, and will be held in the Secular Hall, Manchester. There will be, as usual, two business sittings, morning and afternoon, and a public meeting in the evening, at which addresses will be delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, and other speakers. We hope there will be a large gathering of Branch delegates and individual members from all parts of the country. The Conference Agenda will be printed in the *Freethinker* for May 24.

An effort is going to be made, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, to bring the London "saints" into more frequent intercourse. A start will be made on Wednesday, May 20, at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, at 8 o'clock. A large hall has been engaged, and N. S. S. members are invited to attend, and they will be at liberty to introduce a friend. Non-members wishing to attend should apply for a ticket of admission to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Mr. Foote will be present, with Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd and other colleagues. There will be a little music and plenty of opportunity for introductions and conversation.

Without liberty there can be no such thing as conscience, no such word as justice. All human actions—all good, all bad—have for a foundation the idea of human liberty, and without liberty there can be no vice, and there can be no virtue.—*Ingersoll*.

The Sayings of Jesus.—VI.

(Continued from p. 277.)

WE come now to the sayings in the three Synoptical Gospels, which, it should be borne in mind, were compiled by second-century editors from more ancient writings. The latter were, in all probability, Greek translations of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" and of the collection of sayings now known as the "Sermon on the Mount."

Renan's idea of the growth of the whole body of sayings recorded in the Gospels is that many of the more educated of the primitive Christians possessed copies of a number of these supposed utterances, and that "each author sought to make his copy complete by consulting the papers of others." Everything that was deemed to be of "the spirit of Jesus" was eagerly seized upon, and inserted in each small collection—which collections were afterwards combined and revised. This theory of the compilation of the *Logia* is, no doubt, in a certain degree correct, as may be exemplified by the "Sermon on the Mount." Of this "Sermon" Mark gives but twelve verses, which are found scattered in four different chapters and recorded as uttered on four different occasions. Luke's version comprises thirty verses, which are represented as all spoken in an address delivered on one and the same day—upon a plain. Matthew's complete "Sermon" extends to 107 verses (three long chapters), and these, like those in the Third Gospel, are stated to have been spoken upon one occasion—on a mountain.

The theory of Renan is, however, silent upon one important point—the origin of the sayings in the numerous small collections—and this is the matter chiefly to be considered. Much misapprehension appears to exist among rational critics upon this point. According to some, a large number of the sayings put in the mouth of Jesus was derived from Buddhism; according to others, from the writings of the ancient Egyptians, etc. Yet the real and undoubted source is the simplest imaginable, and to the historian Josephus we are indebted for the clue. Speaking of the Essenes, he says:—

"They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body.....There are also among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets."

The "holy books" and "writings of the ancients" were the Hebrew scriptures—Old Testament and Apocrypha. As an example of rules of conduct selected "for the advantage of soul and body" may be instanced the "Sermon on the Mount"; as a notable example of prophetic knowledge obtained by a careful study of the "holy books" may be cited the so-called "Revelation of St. John the Divine." The last-named author was undoubtedly an Essene, and may possibly have been the individual whom Josephus calls "John the Essene," who was killed soon after the commencement of the Jewish war (A. D. 66-70).

The Hebrew ancient scriptures were, beyond all other writings, the constant study of all educated Jews. Josephus tells us (Antiq. xx. xi. 2) that though he himself had "taken a great deal of pains" to acquire a knowledge of the Greek tongue, the learning of any other language beside their own was discouraged by the Palestinian Jews. "But," he adds, "they give the testimony of being a wise man to him who is fully acquainted with our [religious] laws, and is able to interpret their meaning." This being the case, we can readily understand how the most learned among the Essenes—including those afterwards known as Nazarenes—applied themselves to the task of interpreting, altering, modifying, and reconstructing a number of precepts and moral sayings, scattered throughout the "holy books," for the formation of a code of morals and rules of conduct to be observed in the society. This I take to be

the origin of the Sermon on the Mount, which a later generation, unacquainted with the source, ascribed to Jesus.

Some alterations were, of course, necessary in the wording of the reconstructed sayings, otherwise they could not be published as new; but the spirit and sense of the Old Testament passages were retained, and in scores of instances much of the phraseology also—sufficient, at any rate, to indicate the source. As a sample of this pious literary work I select the first six verses of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus is represented as pronouncing blessings upon certain classes and conditions of men.

"THE POOR."

Matt. v. iii. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Luke vi. 20. "Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God."

Which of these sayings is the original? There is, of course, a wide difference between being "poor" and being "poor in spirit." Now, judging by a number of utterances attributed to Jesus in the Gospels (Matt. xix. 23-24; Luke vi. 24, etc.) it would seem that Luke's version—"the poor"—is the correct one. Why, then, it may be asked, has Matthew rendered it "the poor in spirit"? An explanation which I have seen offered is to the effect that when, after a time, many well-to-do converts had entered the church, it was considered expedient to add the words "in spirit"; but this is perfect nonsense. Had such been the case, how is it that Luke's Gospel—which is of much later date than Matthew's—still retains the original? The real explanation is simple: in the original passage in the "holy books" from which the saying was derived something was said about spirit. This passage reads:—

Isaiah lxvi. 2. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit."

According to this inspired statement, the Lord God looked with special favor on "the poor" who were humble and penitent. The reference is, of course, to those who were actually "poor"; not to the "poor in spirit." Luke's version is thus more correct than Matthew's, while both are explained by the Old Testament passage which suggested the beatitude.

"THEY THAT MOURN."

Matt. v. 4. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Luke vi. 21. "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."

These statements are untrue: thousands of believers in Jesus have mourned for the greater part of their lives, and have gone to the grave un comforted. The author of the Beatitudes had, however, what he considered divine authority for the saying. Did not the prophet Isaiah, when filled with "the spirit of the Lord God" (lxi. 2-3), declare that the Lord had promised—

"to comfort all that mourn.....to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning."

The Old Testament passage had reference only to the return of the Jews from exile; but the early Christians interpreted it as referring to Jesus and his followers. Matthew saw in it a promise "to comfort all that mourn," and calls the mourners "blessed." Luke notices chiefly the latter part of the passage—"the oil of joy for mourning"—and makes the weepers laugh and be "blessed."

"THE MEKK."

Matt. v. 5. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

Only Matthew records this saying, which, needless to say, is untrue. The "meek" do not "inherit the earth," and never have done. The bold and the unscrupulous push "the meek" to the wall, and enjoy most of the good things of this life. This saying, like the two just examined, was taken from the Hebrew "holy books."

Psalm xxxvii. 11. "But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

It is quite possible that "the meek" may, with truth, be called "blessed," but not for the reason specified.

"THEY THAT HUNGER."

Matt. v. 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Luke vi. 21, 25. "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.....Woe unto you, ye that are full now, for ye shall hunger."

Which of these sayings is the original? Needless to say, there is a wide difference between a craving for food and a desire to attain "righteousness." The saying, as given by Luke, is, of course, untrue, but it gives a clue to the passage in the "holy books" from which both sayings were derived. This is the following:—

Isaiah lxxv. 13. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty," etc.

Here we have the promise that God's servants—"the righteous"—who had hungered and thirsted should be filled—a statement which Matthew has paraphrased in a very remarkable way. Instead of saying that "the righteous" who hungered and thirsted should be filled, he says that those who hungered and thirsted "after righteousness" should be filled—which is not quite the same thing. Luke's version is thus the more correct.

"THE MERCIFUL."

Matt. v. 7. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Talmud. "He who is merciful to his fellow creatures shall receive mercy."

Both these sayings were derived from the Hebrew "holy books." The source passage reads:—

Psalm xli. 1. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor [or weak]: the Lord will deliver him in the day of evil."

Here we have the word "Blessed" which the Gospel writer has applied to each case. It is not stated in the Old Testament passage whether the promise of deliverance refers to this world or the next. Similarly—and consequently—it is not stated in the Gospel saying whether the promised mercy is to be granted in this world or in that to come.

"THE PURE IN HEART."

Matt. v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

This statement, like most of the other Beatitudes, is untrue: no one, however pure in heart, has "seen God." The saying appears to be a deduction from the following passage:—

Psalm xxiv. 3-5. "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.....He shall receive a blessing from the Lord."

Here we have Matthew's authority for saying "Blessed are the pure in heart." The "seeing God" is simply a rational inference drawn from the fact of "ascending the hill" upon which God was supposed to dwell (probably Sinai) and "standing in his holy place." Arrived there, the privileged person would, like Moses and the seventy elders, actually see God—"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel" (Exod. xxiv. 9). The writer of the Fourth Gospel had evidently never read this portion of the Old Testament, for he says himself in his Epistle (1 John iv. 12), and he also makes John the Baptist say (John i. 18): "No man hath seen God at any time."

This completes the first six "Beatitudes" in the Sermon on the Mount. As will be seen, no divine knowledge or acquaintance with the will of "the Father" was needed as regards the blessings pronounced on the poor, the meek, the pure in heart, etc. The new sayings are merely paraphrases of, or deductions from, much older sayings, and contain nothing new. They further contain not a single idea that cannot be found in the source passages, and the latter explain any divergences when there are two versions of the same saying.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Some Unpublished Remains of Samuel Butler

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

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

AMONG British poets, Butler stands unique. He has had imitators, but no equals—"Hudibras" remains our greatest comic poem. It appeared in an age of satire and lampoons, but it towers above them like plays of Shakespeare above the Elizabethan drama. Of Butler's life, little is known. "All," says Dr. Johnson, "that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor." Not till the age of fifty, was he known as an author, and then his work, the first part of "Hudibras," was anticipated by a thief, and under-sold. It took the world by storm. The king made it his companion:—

"He never ate, nor drank, nor slept,
But 'Hudibras' still near him kept
Nor would he go to church or so,
But 'Hudibras' must with him go."

As Professor Henry Morley remarks, it was probably the thief's edition which came first and was very portable, that the king carried with him. "But for the author, Charles the Second cared nothing and did nothing." Nor was the popularity of "Hudibras" ephemeral. For several generations it was read by almost every reading Englishman, and even now, Butler's lines are more often quoted than those of any other poet except Shakespeare. Such phrases as "Compound for sins they are inclined to By damning those they have no mind to," "Prove their doctrine orthodox, By apostolic blows and knocks," etc., are familiar in our mouths as household words. His wit, supplied from every source of reading and observation, seems inexhaustible. And he is wise as he is witty. His burlesque is as much above the common cry of burlesque as George Eliot is above the thousand and one lady novelists. His hits are palpable. He is a great sham-dispeller, as pithy and direct though not as sustained as Swift, but without his virulence. His prodigality of illustration, though objectionable to the ordinary reader, is the delight of well-read men. He is as familiar with Goropius Becanus, as with the Bible, and has Aquinas equally with Ovid at his finger's ends.

Even as a rhymester, Butler is almost unique. Who can forget such daring doggerel as—

"Deleterij med'cines
(Which whosoever took is dead since)?"

Butler himself says his writings have not "anything to commend them but the plain downrightness of the sense." It is manifest from his unpublished MSS., from which this observation is taken, that this was his distinguishing quality. "When but a boy," says Aubrey, "he would make observations on everything one said or did, and censure it to be either well or ill." But it is none the less evident that his sagacity is preserved with the attic salt of native wit.

Butler's place in English literature is, moreover, historical. He marks the reaction against Puritanism. He registers the growing disbelief in magic and astrology. He displays more than any other writer the customs, prejudices, growing toleration, and learning of his time.

It seems scarcely credible that there should be any considerable number of unpublished remains of a poet so renowned in a quarter so accessible as the British Museum. Yet such is the fact. It is true the MSS. in question were only acquired in November, 1885. But, except a notice by Mr. Gosse in his paper on Butler in Leslie Stephens' *Dictionary of National Biography* that "several of the pieces are unpublished," I am unaware of any attention having yet been paid to this valuable acquisition, and I can learn of no efforts for its publication.

The MSS. consists of two volumes, numbered 36,625—6. The first is in the handwriting of Butler himself, and consists for the most part of draughts of ideas to be utilised in his poems, arranged under

various headings, such as Honor, Love, Religion, Wit, Conscience, Government, Marriage, Magic, Physig, Fanatigs, etc. Here we see Butler in his workshop. He appears to have jotted down, without much erasure, his thoughts in couplets or small distiches under these headings, and to have written in prose many ideas he intended to incorporate in his verse. On one sheet he has compiled a list of synonyms; on another, he has written down what looks like the projected titles of short works. The second volume was apparently made by the bookseller, Jacob Tonson, and is for the most part a copy of the more connected and easily decipherable portions of the first volume, together with a series of prose satire "Characters." Of these two volumes, a considerable part was published in 1759 under the title of *The General Remains in Verse and Prose of Mr. Samuel Butler*, edited with notes by R. Thyer, Keeper of the Public Library at Manchester. These contain much that is second only in merit to "Hudibras," among others, a satire on the Royal Society, entitled "The Elephant in the Moon," and "A satire upon the age of Charles II.," in which he exposes the vices of what has been supposed to be his own party. He says:—

"For those who heretofore sought private holes
Securely in the dark to damn their souls,
Wore vizards of hypocrisy, to steal
And slink away, in masquerade, to hell,
Now bring their crimes into the open sun,
For all mankind to gaze their worst upon."

There is a satire upon a Hypocritical Nonconformist, beginning—

"There's nothing so absurd, or vain,
Or barbarous; or inhumane
But if it lay the least pretence
To piety and to godliness,
Or tender-hearted conscience
And zeal for gospel truths profess
Does sacred instantly commence.
And all, that dare to question it are strait,
Pronounced th' Uncircumcised, and Reprobate."

The second volume of Thyer consists of the satiric prose characters, and "Some Thoughts upon Various Subjects," in some of which, Butler's Freethought is very manifest. Thus he says:—

"It is a dangerous thing to be too inquisitive and to search too narrowly into a true religion; for fifty thousand Bethshemites were destroyed for looking into the Ark of the Covenant, and ten times that number have been ruined for looking too curiously into that Book, in which that story is recorded."

"The more silly and ridiculous things are in themselves, the more sacred and solemn pretences they require to set them off.

Men inflict and suffer persecution for Religion with equal zeal, and though both pretend to conscience, both oftentimes are equally mistaken.

The end of all knowledge is to understand what is fit to be done; for to know what has been, and what is, and what may be, does but tend to that."

The disciple of Hobbes is seen in the following:—

"Men ought to do in religion as they do in war. when a man of honor is overpowered and must of necessity surrender himself up a prisoner, such are always wont to endeavor to do it to some person of command and quality, and not to a mean scoundrel."

He writes at length:—

"Clergymen expose the kingdom of heaven to sale, that with the money they may purchase as much as they can in this world; and therefore they extol and magnify the one, as all chapmen do a commodity they desire to part with, and cry down the other, as all buyers are wont to do that which they have the greatest longing to purchase, only to bring down the price, and gain the better bargain by it."

All of which he has condensed into the couplet, unpublished:—

"Religion is the interest of churches,
That sell in other worlds in this to purchase."

—32,626, F. 65.

Again he says:—

"Religion is ordered much more to the advantage of the seller than the buyer."—32,625, F. 163.

He remarks:—

"The first quarrel and murder that ever was committed in the world was upon a fanatic emulation in

religion, when Cain killed the fourth part of all mankind, his brother Abel, merely out of zeal for seeing the truth of his brother's religious worship preferred before his own, though God himself were judge. And ever since that time much about the same proportion of all mankind has constantly been destroyed by the rest upon the very same account."—F. 163.

He has jotted down but crossed the lines—

"The first murder that we find
Was ever done among mankind
By jealous rage and fury about
Religious worshipping fell out
When furious Cain, having slain his brother,
One fourth of mankind killed the other."

—32,625, F. 65.

He notices that Christianity "having served an apprenticeship to tyranny, as soon as it was out of its time, set up for itself."

"For no wars else of Turks or renegados
Were ever so inhuman as crusados." —F. 62.

The following was doubtless too strong to be printed:—

"One quibble in Scripture, viz., *Tu es Petrus*, has done almost as much mischief to mankind in general as all the excellent precepts of justice and morality has been able to do good upon particulars."—F. 142.

In the remains is printed the couplet:—

"The greatest saints and sinners have been made
Of proselytes of one another's trade."

But not the lines which follow:—

"'Tis hard to understand a proselyte
Distinctly from a wholesale hypocrite.
The money of all Faiths is orthodox,
And loftiest steeples have gilt weather-cocks."

Thyer printed the lines:—

"The sob'rest saints are more stiffnecked
Than the hottest-headed of the wicked."

But not these:—

"Nature permits the mongrel breed
Of mules no further to proceed,
For there's but one in every race
Begotten between horse and ass.
Which makes the sons of zealous saints
To prove the greatest miscreants." —F. 61.

Or—

"That pray and fast but to devour
With greater greediness and power."

Like Burns, Butler has a good word for auld Nickie ben:—

"The devil was more generous than Adam,
That never laid the fault upon his madam,
But like a gallant and heroic elf,
Took freely all the crime upon himself." —F. 5.

Butler's love for the Jews was scant. He several times speaks of the superiority of the Gentiles to God's chosen people, and says:—

"St. Paul was glad to approach to Nero, the greatest tyrant in the world, to deliver himself out of the hands of his countrymen."—F. 135.

Again—

"The law of Moses never disallowed
A Jew to perjure for his neighbor's good,
But only has enjoined him to forbear
Against his brother only to forswear,
Provided always they pulled off their shoes
And took th' oath on the hams of other Jews." —F. 37.

Nor has he much sympathy with those Christians who—

"Cobbled a religion up that's neither
The New or Old, but forged of both together.
Made peaceful precepts o' th' New Testament
For rapine, blood, and war as pertinent,
As orthodox and apostolic hold,
As all the desolation of the Old." —F. 61.

The Catholics are still less in favor. He writes:—

"The Egyptians that worshipped onions and leeks
were more humane than Catholics, for they forbore to eat what they adored."

"There is no cheat in all the world nor trick
But has a twang and smack of the Catholic...
That thinks to be religious without piety
And eat instead of worshipping the deity.

As Wolsey pulled down many a monastery
To build a church to Christ and his own glory." —F. 21.

In his prose thoughts are found some of the most pronounced of Butler's utterances, and we cannot but suspect that their freedom has kept them

hitherto unpublished. What could be happier than this?

"Divinity is a speculative science of finding out reasons for things that are not within the reach of reason."—F. 226.

And how is it that—

"They that endeavor to redeem the world from error and imposture, have a very ungrateful employment, for if they do any man good it is against his will, and therefore they must not only reward but thank themselves. For as madmen always hate their physicians, the people can never endure those that seek to recover them from their dear dotage."—F. 150.

For, as he says—

"Men take up Religion just
As they do other things, on trust;
No matter at how hard a rate
To those who never mean to pay't." —F. 65.

In the following thought, Butler seems to go beyond the mark in the audacity of his Freethought:

"The saints in heaven do not believe in God and the devils in hell do. For St. Paul says faith and hope have no being in heaven, and it is written in the Gospel that the devils believe and tremble."—F. 154.

The heterodoxy of the foregoing will surely be forgiven for the idea that love is all in all in heaven, as expressed in Butler's beautiful lines:—

"Love is too great a happiness
For wretched mortal to possess,
For, could it hold inviolate
Against those cruelties of Fate,
Which all facilities below
By rigid laws are subject to.
It would become a bliss too high
For perishing mortality.
Translate to Earth the joys above,
For nothing goes to Heaven but love."

In another place he says:—

"If we imagine we believe in God because we believe in the scriptures we deceive ourselves; for if I tell a man something of a third person which he believes, he does not believe the third person but me that told it him."—F. 196.

"He that appears to be of no religion may perhaps be as much a not-willer to dishonesty as a religious person, but can never have so much power to commit any great or considerable mischief. If such intend hurt they would pretend to believe. For the saint and the hypocrite are so very like, that they pass all the world over undistinguished, the difference being only in the inside, of which we have no guess, until it be too late, but by symptoms that commonly bely both. All we are sure of is that the hypocrites are the greatest number, more devoutly zealous in appearance, and much more crafty than those that are in earnest."—F. 196.

"Religion never made any man in the world just and honest, who had not some foundation for it in his nature before."—F. 163.

"The Roman Emperors had no sooner embraced the Christian religion but the bishops of Rome persuaded them to remove the seat of the Empire into the East, while they possessed themselves of the chief city and metropolis of the world, Rome. And by this means, in few years after, divided the Empire into two parts, which weakened it so that as they exposed the Eastern to be utterly destroyed by infidels, while they encroached upon the Western, they rendered that so feeble, that it was not able to defend itself against the invasions of the barbarous Northern nations, until they reduced that also into almost as low a condition. Meanwhile, they made their greatest advantages of the miserable calamities of the Christians, who in any public affliction fled to them (as all religions use to do their Temples and Altars), for refuge or consolation at least, which brought them so much reverence and veneration, that it was not uneasy to improve their authority to what height they pleased."—F. 160.

Our limits have only permitted us to notice passages in Butler's unpublished remains which bear more or less closely upon his Freethought. To those who know the author it is hardly necessary to say that we have by no means picked out all the plums. Under such headings as Nature, Reason, History, Princes and Government, Criticisms upon Books and Authors, etc., sharp, terse, cynical, and sensible maxims are found as strongly directed against shams and hypocrisy as those few we have cited bearing upon religion.

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, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, G. Short, a Lecture; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "God so Loved the World."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, Mr. Ford, "The Charity of Religion."

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

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (New Theatre): G. W. Foote, 2.30, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" 6.15, "Heaven and Hell: Where and What?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Meets every Thursday at 8.15.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, William Simpson, "Do Socialists Understand Socialism?"

OUTDOOR.

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

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Square, Wednesday, at 8, George Weir, "The Heavenly Zoo."

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LIVERPOOL: Shiel Park (Shiel-road and Bowles-street), 3, "Is Faith in Christ a Good Thing?" Birkenhead Park Gates, 7, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

BURY: Monday, May 11, at 7.30, "Christ's Useless Sacrifice."

MANCHESTER: Tuesday, May 12, Stevenson-square, at 7.30, "Christism and Socialism."

WIGAN: Wednesday, May 13, at 7.30, "Christ's Teaching Bad."

ROCHDALE: Thursday, May 14, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "The Failure of Christism."

LEEDS: Friday, May 15, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "The Immorality of all 'Revelation.'"

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