

THE Freethinker

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The distance, and as it were the space around man, grows with the strength of his intellectual vision and insight: his world becomes profounder; new stars, new enigmas, and notions are ever coming into view.

—NIETZSCHE.

Paine the Pioneer.

COMING up from Aberdare on Monday morning I bought a local newspaper, and it happened to be the *South Wales Daily News*. On one of its pages I found a paragraph headed "Old Age Pensions." It opened with the statement that "It was Ruskin who first propounded the policy of old age pensions." Whereat I smiled, and recalled Pope's line that "A little learning is a dangerous thing." Your ordinary journalist knows a little, and makes it go a long way; no doubt he seems a wonderfully well-informed person to the ordinary reader—just as the one-eyed man is king of all the blind; but when a better reader comes along the case is altered.

Now I am not going to run down Ruskin. I owe him too much. I remember so well how, in my nineteenth year, I came across *Modern Painters* and the *Stones of Venice*, and how I walked up and down in a fever of delight over purple passages of his splendid eloquence, reminding me of the great Atlantic rollers that I had watched in my boyhood sweeping along so majestically before breaking in tumultuous foam upon the shore. Soon afterwards I became acquainted with his sociological writings. They taught me some things that were quite new to me, and some things that I had already suspected. I really read him, instead of chattering about him after sniffing at a few of his pages, as so many have done. How common, for instance, is the statement that Ruskin was a Socialist; it is pretty well taken for granted on both sides; yet he was *not* a Socialist, and he pointedly disclaimed being anything of the kind. This is not, of course, any objection to Socialism; I merely refer to it as illustrating the truth that many great writers are more talked about than read.

Ruskin wrote powerfully and brilliantly about old age pensions—pensions for soldiers of the ploughshare as well as soldiers of the sword. And I held then, as I hold now, that his arguments are unanswerable. But it is not a fact that Ruskin "first propounded" the idea. It had been more or less dimly suggested by men who were dead long before he was born. But the man who first gave the idea a thoroughly practical form was Thomas Paine. It is still the fashion to call that great man "Tom" and to treat him accordingly; but the fact is, as Hazlitt and Cobbett recognised—and they were both good judges, from very different standpoints—that Thomas Paine was one of the very greatest political writers of all time.

Paine had a noble heart as well as a strong head. How finely he reproved Burke, who bestowed such rare eloquence on the sufferings of Marie Antoinette, and had no word of sympathy for the sufferings of the people of France. "He pities the plumage," Paine said, "and forgets the dying bird." It was natural that such a writer, in dealing with the question of national income and expenditure, in the

Rights of Man, should turn an eye of compassion on the aged poor. "It is painful," Paine said, "to see old age working itself to death, in what are called civilised countries, for daily bread." He demanded a remedy for this sad state of things—"not as a matter of grace and favor, but of right." Every honest man contributed to the greatness of the State in which he lived, and deserved assistance when old age rendered him incapable of helping himself. This was, indeed, recognised by the Poor Law; but Paine proposed to abolish that heartless system altogether, and to go to work in quite another way. The approach of old age began at fifty; old age itself began at sixty, and at that time of life a man's labor "ought to be over, at least from direct necessity." Paine's proposal was that £6 per annum should be payable to all persons over fifty, and £10 per annum to all persons over sixty. Considering the purchasing power of money then and now, this was more at sixty than Mr. Asquith offers at seventy.

There were other wise and beneficent proposals in Paine's scheme for lightening the burdens and brightening the lot of the people. That portion of the *Rights of Man* is well worth studying still. Many will be surprised to learn that he drew up a graduated income-tax table, in which every £1,000 of income was taxed higher and higher, until at last it was taxed twenty shillings in the pound, and the entire surplus was thus absorbed by the State.

Mr. Asquith's old age pensions proposal will doubtless be carried, for no political party will dare to offer it open opposition. It may even be modified, with respect to the age of recipients, and brought nearer to the proposal of Thomas Paine. And the credit of introducing it will belong to our new Premier. Some will say that the credit is accidental, as the proposal would have had to be introduced by somebody, since it had become inevitable. That may be so, but the chronological fact remains, and Mr. Asquith will be able to point to it with pride. But in all such cases the real credit belongs to the pioneers, who *made* the thing inevitable. When the great mass of men reach a certain point in the progression of opinion and sentiment a change of procedure is unavoidable, and therefore comparatively easy; and it matters very little whether this or that man presides over the actual alteration. A law carried to-day is but ostensibly carried by the legislator whose name becomes publicly associated with it; in reality it is the work of the pioneers, the men of better heads and better hearts than their fellow-citizens, who were consequently in advance of their times, who anticipated the progress of the human intellect and conscience, who were often born too soon for their own personal happiness, though not for their reputation on the page of history. Thomas Paine was one of the greatest of these pioneers, and history will yet do justice to his name. He was persecuted and vilified when living, and a mountain of calumny has been heaped over his grave. But men of his size and importance can afford to wait for their vindication. He lived and wrought in the light of principles, and as the light of those principles is shed abroad his value will be perceived. He never sought applause—he had a pride that half disdained it—but no one ever cared more for the real good of mankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

Faith and Fact.

TO its various publications, the Harmsworth Press has just added a *Daily Mail Year Book of the Churches*. Apart from the miscellaneous information incident to such publications, the book consists of a series of brief articles contributed by various sections of the religious world, each discussing the religious outlook from his or her peculiar point of view. Among these, there are two that I purpose noting in the present article—one by Professor Edward Hull, Secretary to the Victoria Institute, who writes on the "Attitude of Scientists towards God and the Bible," the other by the Rev. F. Ballard, who discourses on "Modern Agnosticism," how it should be met, and, of course, defeated.

So far as Professor Hull's article is concerned, one may say that it is about as misleading as an article can well be that does not stoop to deliberate falsehood. What it can do in the way of fostering false impressions it does. Consciously or unconsciously, the article is so worded that unwary readers may form an opinion quite unwarranted by the facts. The aim of the article is to prove that, with rare exceptions, scientific men are Christians. We are, indeed, told that, "with a very few exceptions, such as Professor Haeckel in Germany, Christianity has no opponents amongst men of science." This statement being made "without hesitation," one looks for proofs, and these, as English public opinion goes, should not be hard to furnish. What we find is the statement that there are "hundreds of cultivators of science and natural history.....of whose religious beliefs we know nothing." There are others who attend public worship, who make no outward profession, but "have not accepted the offer of salvation in Christ," yet "it may be assumed that such persons are on the side of revealed religion; and that if a crisis should arise in which it was necessary to openly profess Christ, or reject Him openly, they would be found ready to sacrifice life itself in defence of the truth."

Now, as English public goes, to again use this serviceable phrase, the silence of scientific men is highly suggestive. To come forward as a pronounced Christian, or even as a religionist, to speak from a Christian platform, or write in defence of certain aspects of Christianity, gives the average man of science in this country a position of public importance he could not easily get otherwise. To the average Britisher, with his almost complete lack of interest in things scientific, Sir Oliver Lodge's contributions to religious controversy have given him a publicity that he could not easily have obtained otherwise. Mental ability alone cannot be certain of securing widespread notice in this country. The fame of a name like that of Darwin was not secured among the mass of his countrymen by an appreciation of the value of his work, but by the religious controversy his theory evoked. The tuft-hunter, the social toady, or the man who wishes to see his name prominently before the public, has every possible inducement to proclaim his belief in Christianity, if it exists; while the man who is not combative by nature, and who wishes to remain unmolested in his scientific investigations, has every inducement to remain silent. There is, therefore, a significance about the silence of these "hundreds" of scientific men that Professor Hull either cannot or will not see. His conviction that there are some who are "not far from the kingdom of God," is a piece of mere pulpit cant, and like much religious cant, not devoid of insolence.

Quite in the style of a Christian Evidence Lecturer, Professor Hull gives two lists of names in support of his thesis. One is concerned with scientists who are dead, the other with those who are still living. Of the former, two observations may be made. The first is that to those who *know* some of the names would have been best left uncited. The name of Faraday, for example, who deliberately said that if he trusted himself to reason about Christianity he

should cease to believe in it, is anything but convincing testimony. The second observation is, that to quote such names as Hugh Miller, or Professor Sedgwick, with others of the same class, is to almost convince one of the writer's lack of capacity or straightforwardness. For the theories by means of which these men harmonised their scientific knowledge with their religion are now repudiated by every reputable thinker in the kingdom. I do not believe for one moment that Professor Hull accepts these theories. Why, then, does he parade the beliefs based upon these theories as reasons for convincing others?

Of the list of living scientists, one need only ask one question. How many of them are Christians in any genuine sense of the word? Sir Oliver Lodge is cited. But Sir Oliver Lodge is no more a Christian than is Professor Haeckel. Mere profession of belief in a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-something that he chooses to call God, does not make him a Christian. To be a Christian, in any honest sense of the word, is to have belief in those doctrines that are laid down in official confessions of faith or that make up what is historically known as Christianity. How many living scientists believe this? How many honestly believe in miracles, in inspiration, in special creation, in a special providence, in a miraculous birth, in the divinity of Jesus, in the miracles of Jesus, in the resurrection of Jesus, or in heaven or hell? I do not believe that Professor Hull would find in the whole of the kingdom, half-a-dozen scientific workers who would say they believe these things without their making a number of distinctions, explanations, and reservations that quite destroy all the Christian or religious value of such doctrines. Why, the clergy themselves are 'getting ashamed of them, let alone men of science.

Professor Hull has a third list of names of scientists whom he admits are "often regarded as unbelievers," but he says that "even amongst them there has been a germ of belief in Revelation—which may have ultimately developed and ripened into Christian faith." Amongst these are cited Huxley—on the strength of his statement that a man might get literary culture from the Bible; Sir Charles Lyell, whose heresy, Alexander Bain tells us, was dragged out of him at the dinner-table and in the drawing-room; and Professor Tyndall, who deliberately challenged the Christian world on the question of prayer, and whose famous Belfast Address sent the Christian world nearly crazy. It is really difficult to deal with such special pleading in temperate language. One can only congratulate oneself with the reflection that not even the sectarian ingenuity of Professor Hull can hide the fact that the princes of modern science, from Laplace onward, those who have marked out a course along which others have been compelled to travel, have been Freethinkers.

I have left myself but little space to deal with Mr. Ballard's contribution; but as I have only just concluded a criticism of this gentleman's abilities, this is the less to be regretted. His contribution is interesting chiefly on account of the admissions of the extent to which Christianity is losing its hold on the people. There is, he points out, an increasing absence of the adult population from church, the religion of the upper classes is a mere conventional attachment to the Established Church, while the middle and poorer classes are so affected by the "modern atmosphere" as to lose a great deal of interest in religious subjects. There is also an "unparalleled multiplication of literature of all kinds, ignoring religion altogether." Other influences are cited; the analysis winding up with the rueful admission that "During the coming century there appears to be every reason for believing that such anti-Christian influences will be increased rather than diminished." The outlook for the religionist is, therefore, not of the brightest.

Mr. Ballard also remarks that "the militant secularism represented thirty years ago by Mr. Bradlaugh has passed into a more quiescent stage..... A smouldering fire of bitter antagonism to everything Chris-

Christian has been maintained by the National Secular Society." He also adds that the Society has "scarcely any respectable buildings available for its purposes." Now it may be true that Secularism, as Secularism, does not play such a large part in the conscious interest of the public as when Charles Bradlaugh was waging both an historic political fight and a theological fight at the same time, and when, moreover, Freethought itself was a much greater novelty than it is to-day. But Bradlaugh are not every-day figures, and the combination of the political and theological interest is not always present. Moreover, the novelty of Secularism has worn off. The mere fact of a man disowning Christianity no longer attracts attention; the reverse is rather the case. But all this means that Secularism has entered on a new phase of its history. Much of the old method is not now necessary because much of the old form of Christian belief is now discredited and dead. Thirty years ago, Christians were ready, on public platforms, to defend their faith. Who will do so now? Even Mr. Ballard himself lacks the courage to do so against a qualified opponent of Christianity. Secularism has all along pursued its fight against supernaturalism, changing its tactics only as Christianity altered its front. The truth also is that the secularising forces of life are immensely more powerful than they were thirty years ago. The number of non-believers has enormously increased, while Christianity is apologetic and persuasive where it was arrogant and dominating. The truth of this is practically admitted by Mr. Ballard, who says, immediately after referring to Secularism as "quiescent," that "it cannot be denied that religious doubt and definite opposition to Christian faith have grown rather more than less with the passing of the nineteenth century," thus disproving in one sentence what he has stated as true in another.

The undeniable truth—and the only one with which Christians and Freethinkers are really concerned—is that Christianity is weaker to-day than it has ever been before, while Freethought forces were never so active. Whether the Secular Society owns fine buildings or not is a matter of little importance, although as a matter of fact the halls in which Secular meetings are held are now much finer than they were thirty years ago. But this is a mere matter of finance; and although one may allow that this aspect is likely to appeal strongly to the average clergyman, students of the progress of thought will not be greatly affected thereby. Mr. Ballard naturally believes that the Churches ought to appoint special men to grapple with the forces of Freethought. Well, the Methodist Church has appointed Mr. Ballard, and one would like to ask, What has been the effect? How many Freethinkers has Mr. Ballard won back to Christianity. One can safely say, None. He may have prevented one here and there from leaving the fold. That is the most that he can do; this is the most that can be done by anyone. When people move it is in the one direction; and that is towards Freethought.

C. COHEN.

Was Jesus a Divine Man and Nothing Less?

THERE are three main views of the person of Jesus Christ prevalent in Christendom. The majority of Christians regard him "as none other than the eternal and only-begotten Son of God become man, the Word made flesh." According to this view, Jesus forms a class by himself. He is absolutely unique, the only being of the kind in the universe. He is God made or become man, and is theologically styled the God-man. In other words, he is neither God nor man, but an inconceivable mixture of the two. As the erudite Dr. Shedd used to say, he is a theanthropic, or divine-human person, a new being dating only from the virgin birth at Bethlehem. Another conception of the person of Jesus is that it

was purely human, but yet unique in that sinlessness and idealism were attributes of it. Jesus was born without the taint of original sin, and he lived an absolutely sinless life; and being sinless and ideal, he was also Divine. Therefore, those who thus regard him call him the Divine Man. According to another view to be met with in out-of-the-way corners of the Church, Jesus was only an ordinary man chosen of God to be the world's Supreme Teacher. He was a man who saw into the central depths of the Divine Nature, and who, in consequence, became the agent of a new religion. Or, as Nicodemus put it, he was "a teacher come from God."

Now, there is all the difference in the world between a God-man and an Ideal Man. The two are different in kind, and not merely in degrees. The God-man, we are told, "was essentially what other men are not," while the Ideal Man was what all other men are potentially and may become. The God-man may be dismissed as an impossible chimera, as an absurd creation of metaphysical dreamers, as a being who never was on land or sea. A being essentially different from ourselves ought to be unthinkable by us. Indeed, the present tendency in theology is to deny that there is any essential distinction between the Supreme Being and mankind. And we hold that the conception of a Divine or Ideal Man is equally grotesque. An ideal man is a being who exists only in thought, while a divine man is a contradiction in terms.

The Rev. Richard Morris, M.A., B.D., of Dolgelly, in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, discusses the question, "Was Jesus a 'Divine Man' and Nothing More?" As an orthodox divine, his answer is bound to be in the negative. If Jesus is Ideal Man, he argues, he is of necessity infinitely more. Does not Mr. Morris perceive that if Jesus is more than Ideal Man he cannot be Ideal Man? To call him who "was essentially what other men are not," Ideal Man, is to talk sheer nonsense. Mr. Morris is quite right in saying that the view that Jesus was a Divine Man only substitutes one group of difficulties for another; but he is utterly wrong when he imagines that a God-man can also be an Ideal Man. The one of necessity excludes the other.

Now, what are the difficulties involved in the supposition that Jesus was Ideal Man? We cannot follow Mr. Morris into all the silly statements he makes about sin and God's relation to it, about the impossibility of arresting the progress of sin, after it had once come into existence, by a Divine fiat, and about God in Christ at last arresting it by an infinite act of self-sacrifice. Suffice it to say that the reverend gentleman's doctrine of sin contradicts all the principles of psychology, and is untrue to the facts of daily life. The sin of which Mr. Morris treats is an invention of theology, and the students of the evolution of the race only laugh at it. The awful sense of guilt which is said to be inherent in all mankind ever since the fall in Eden is one of the products of a now decadent Calvinism, but which once held sway over such vast areas. There is no proof whatever that such a thing as sin exists at all. That it is human to err, that no man is perfect, is true enough; and it is also true that a genuine sense of guilt only accompanies personal wrong-doing. No man was ever born guilty or sinful, in the theological sense. Now, to say that Jesus had no sense of sin is not in itself equivalent to claiming that he was fundamentally different from other men. It only means that he was not a modern theologian, or that he lived and died before the Pauline Epistles were written. It only means that he was more nearly normal than most of his followers have ever been. What the New Testament says of his sinlessness could with equal truth be declared concerning the lives of myriads of men and women to-day who call themselves "miserable sinners." Jesus did not call himself "a miserable sinner," and in fact he had amazingly little to say about sin at all.

Even assuming the full historicity of the Gospels, there is not even the shadow of evidence that Jesus was ethically superior to his contemporaries. Taking

his teaching as it stands, it never once rises, even at its best, above the level already reached by the greater prophets of the Old Testament. "But he left us a perfect example," it is claimed. Where is that perfect example to be found? More than once he spoke disrespectfully to his mother. On one occasion he refused to see her when she specially asked to speak to him. He was evidently not on good terms with his brothers and sisters. He was never married, never became a father, never interested himself in politics, never tackled social and economic problems. The first thirty years of his life were spent in complete obscurity; and of the short period of his public ministry, apart from the teaching and the wondering, we know next to nothing. Where, then, is the perfect example? Where does the Ideal Man show himself? Mr. Campbell asserts that "in our day, most people are agreed that in Jesus we have the most perfect life ever exhibited to humanity"; but where, pray, is that "most perfect life" on exhibition? Certainly not in the Gospels. What we see there is a worker of strange, incredible miracles, and a teacher of impracticable ethics. But where is the perfect example? Once he told his disciples, after washing their feet, that he had given them an example, and Peter tells his readers that, in suffering for them, Jesus had left them an example that they should follow his steps; but, again, where is the example of that "most perfect life" to be seen?

We may be referred to his death as the splendid culmination of his career, and as summing up the example of his life; but his death, apart from the theological interpretations put upon it, and these are so various and so conflicting, differs in no essential particular from the death of Socrates, or from that of any other martyr. Indeed, according to orthodoxy, his death was not an example at all, but furnished, or became, the objective ground on which alone God could justly redeem a lost world. Mr. Morris takes for granted that Jesus was the Ideal Man, and states the difficulties in the way of his being such unless he was infinitely more. If Jesus had been the Ideal Man, we frankly admit that his appearance in the middle of the process of evolution, instead of at its close, would have been an insoluble mystery. In reality, Mr. Morris explains the appearance of the Ideal Man by bringing in the God-man as a substitute. That is to say, he explains the Ideal Man by annihilating him. Instead of taking the Ideal Man for granted, we ask for historical proofs of his advent, and, finding none, conclude that he never came. "A Divine Man," says Mr. Morris, "would have served only to reveal the world's misery: the God-man removes it. A Divine Man would have driven all other men in terror from himself: the God-man draws men unto himself." We do not know what a Divine Man would or would not have done, had he arrived; but we do know that this imaginary God-man has not removed the world's misery, has not drawn all men unto himself.

In the light of the history of the last nineteen hundred years, we pronounce that God-man a pure myth, and in the light of the knowledge that comes from Science we declare that the Ideal Man is yet to come. The Churches are sadly at variance with one another as to who and what Jesus of Nazareth really was. Some of them are still hugging the old dogma of his proper Deity, singing his praises as "very God of very God." Others cling to him as the highest and noblest and most beautiful among the sons of men. All alike are working with all their might to establish his supremacy, in the one sense or the other, and to crown him Lord of all in the hearts of mankind; and with what result? During this month of May, nearly all the Churches are forced to make the humiliating confession that for some time now they have been steadily losing ground, and that the people will have neither their all-powerful and all-loving Savior, nor their perfect Example. The world is gradually turning its back upon them. A well-known Congregational minister, the Rev. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, whose orthodox Evangelicalism is

beyond doubt, addressed the Baptist Union, recently, in the following lugubrious tone:—

"Things are not well with us just now. The decrease of membership is an ominous sign. True that statistics are not altogether safe guides, and some are busy explaining them away. But it is no time for cheap and easy explanations to salve our consciences. We must face them honestly. Our churches, somehow or other, have lost their grip."

Mr. Jones declared that "there has been a great moving of landmarks and great unrest in the theological world. The scientific movement, with its doctrine of evolution, and the critical undercurrent, have largely affected our young men. We are hesitant and undecided; we don't know where we are." That is the true explanation of the present growing impotence of the Churches. The belief in Christianity, in all its forms, is dying out. Men's minds are widening and eagerly welcoming the new knowledge which is choking the old faith. The Christian God-man is coming down and taking his legitimate rank among the innumerable God-men of Pagan mythology, and the Ideal Man of the less orthodox is being discovered to be a natural impossibility—a flat contradiction of the great law of evolution. And in this we rejoice, because truth is better than superstition, and knowledge a grander and safer guide than faith. Christ goes, but Man comes.

J. T. LLOYD

The Sayings of Jesus.—VII.

(Continued from p. 299.)

MUCH importance has been ascribed to the fact that the Golden Rule—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matt. vii. 12)—was enjoined by Confucius half a millennium before the time of Christ; that the injunction to "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," etc. (Matt. vii. 19-21), had been uttered centuries before the birth of Jesus by Gotama Buddha; that to recompense injury with kindness (Matt. v. 43-48) was one of the precepts of the ancient philosopher Tao-teh, still preserved amongst the teachings of Taoism; that a portion of the Gospel narrative describing the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv. 31-46) is somewhat analogous to a Judgment scene contained in the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Dead." But these, and one or two other moral precepts from the same sources, do not affect the great body of sayings ascribed in the Gospels to Jesus. For the origin of the latter we must seek amongst Jewish literature. The Golden Rule, for instance, is said to have been enunciated by Hillel as a maxim well known in his day—"Do not unto others what you would not have others do to you" (Talmud). The Gospel writers would thus be acquainted with this and many other precepts without taking them from any particular source.

Many of the sayings put in the mouth of Jesus, again, were simply proverbs or maxims in use amongst the Jews of the first century. Amongst these may be cited the Mote and beam in the eye, the Camel and the eye of a needle, the parable of the House built upon sand and rock, the Giving alms in secret, the Judging one's neighbor, and several others, which are still preserved in the Talmud. Amongst the proverbial sayings were such as the following: the blind leading the blind; the straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel; the casting pearls before swine; the laborer being worthy of his hire; a good tree bringing forth good fruit, and the reverse; the having ears to hear, etc.

A large number of sayings of this character would be known to the Nazarenes, as well as to the Jews of other sects, the source or originators being unknown. Setting aside, then, all those of the nature mentioned, we find that nearly the whole of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics (omitting the fictitious stories called parables) were derived

from, or suggested by, passages in the Hebrew sacred writings—the new sayings containing not only the subject-matter of the source passages, but in many cases the phraseology also, or at least sufficient to identify them.

For a reason which will be presently apparent, I take, first, some examples from the Old Testament Apocrypha:—

GOSPEL SAYINGS.

Matt. vi. 7. "And in praying, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do."

Matt. vi. 14-15. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matt. xviii. 15. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, shew him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

Luke v. 32; xviii. 13. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.....God be merciful to me a sinner."

Matt. xiii. 43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Luke xviii. 7-8. "And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is long suffering over them? I say unto you that he will avenge them speedily."

Matt. xxiii. 37-38; Luke xiii. 34-35. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

In the foregoing examples it will be noticed that, apart from the many verbal coincidences, which plainly indicate the source, there is not a single idea in the words ascribed to Jesus which is not also found in the pre-existing sayings. The Gospel Jesus knew only what the Gospel writers knew, and the latter knew nothing beyond what they had read in the Jewish scriptures. It goes, of course, without saying that such a clear case of plagiarism as that shown in the last example could not be allowed to pass unchallenged. Orthodox critics now contend that the Second book of Esdras was written long after the Gospels, so that the author of that remarkable work must have seen the Christian writings and borrowed from them. Samuel Sharpe, for instance, says in his *Hebrew Nation and its Literature*: "The Second Book of Esdras, which also finds a place in the Apocrypha, is a Latin work, written after the death of the Roman Emperor Caracalla" (the latter was assassinated A.D. 217). It is also pointed out that Jesus Christ is named and referred to in 2 Esd. vii. 28-29. The latter statement is perfectly true; but it is easy to see that the passage is a Christian interpolation. It reads:—

"For my son Jesus shall be revealed with those that be with him, and shall rejoice them that remain four hundred years. After these years shall my son Christ die, and all that have the breath of life."

This absurd interpolation is placed in the middle of a long prediction with which it has nothing to do, and even obscures the sense. It is quite true that 2 Esdras has come down to us in a Latin translation; but there are other versions extant—Syriac, Æthiopic, etc.—derived, like the Latin, from the original Greek,

OLDER WRITINGS.

Ecclus. vii. 14. "Make not vain repetitions when thou prayest."

Ecclus. xxviii. 2. "Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he hath done unto thee; and if he have done it, thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest."

Ecclus. xix. 13. "Admonish a friend; it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more."

Prayer of Manasses. "Thou, therefore, O Lord.....hast not appointed repentance to the just...but thou has appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner."

2 Esdras vii. 97. "Their face shall shine as the sun, and they shall be made like unto the light of the stars, henceforth no more to return to corruption."

2 Esdr. xv. 8-9; vii. 73. "Behold the innocent and righteous blood crieth unto me, and the souls of the righteous cry out continually. I will surely avenge them, saith the Lord.....For how great a time hath the Most High been long suffering over them that dwell on the earth."

2 Esd. i. 28-33. "Thus saith the Lord God Almighty.....I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.....I sent unto you my servants the prophets, whom ye have taken and slain.....Thus saith the Lord Almighty, Your house is desolate, and I will cast you out as the wind doth stubble."

which our English Revisers have collated to correct the Latin version.

There remains to be considered the question of date. The first witness I shall call upon this point is Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 198), who in one of his works (Strom. iii. xvi.) refers to the writer of the apocryphal 2 Esdras, and calls him a "prophet."

The next witness is Irenæus (about A.D. 180). Speaking of the Greek Septuagint having been translated from the Hebrew by seventy elders who, working separately and independently, "all read out their translations in the very same words," he says (Heresies iii. xxi. 2):—

"And there was nothing astonishing in God having done this,—He who.....in the time of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians, inspired *Esdras the priest*, of the tribe of Levi, to recall and re-write all the words of the former prophets, and to re-establish with the people the Mosaic legislation."

The book of 2 Esdras professes to have been written by "the prophet Esdras, the son of Saraias.....of the tribe of Levi, who was captive in the land of the Medes, in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians" (2 Esd. i. 1-3). This statement Irenæus no doubt firmly believed; the book was therefore ancient in his days. The account of the books of the Law having been re-written by Esdras and five scribes, under the inspiration of God, is found in 2 Esd. xiv. 19-48.

The last witness which I think it necessary to call is Luke, the compiler of the Third Gospel, who has quoted from the "Hen and chickens" paragraph in Esdras. The paragraph in the latter book reads:—

Esd. i. 28-33. "Thus saith the Lord Almighty: Have I not prayed you as a father his sons, as a mother her daughters, and a nurse her young babes, that ye would be my people and I should be your father? I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings: but now, what shall I do unto you? I will cast you out from my presence.....I sent unto you my servants the prophets, whom ye have taken and slain, and torn their bodies in pieces, whose blood I will require of your hands, saith the Lord.....Your house is desolate, I will cast you out as the wind doth stubble."

After having read this paragraph Luke made Jesus say (xi. 47-50):—

"Woe unto you lawyers! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So ye bear witness and consent unto the works of your fathers..... For this reason, also, the wisdom of God said, *I will send unto them prophets and apostles; and of them they shall kill and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation.*"

Luke, it will be seen, has taken the liberty of altering a statement of fact into a prediction, besides adding "and apostles," and making the words apply to "this generation"; but there can be no doubt as to his representing Jesus as quoting from Esdras, whose pretended revelations he calls "the wisdom of God." It will also be seen that the "Hen and chickens" passage is in complete harmony with the rest of the paragraph in Esdras, and properly belongs to it. It was not, then, the author of 2 Esdras who borrowed from the Gospels, but the early Christian Gospel-maker who borrowed from 2 Esdras.

Furthermore, the writer of the Fourth Gospel appears also to have been acquainted with the writings of Esdras; for he makes his Jesus say (xvii. 12):—

"Holy Father.....I kept them in thy name whom thou hast given me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled."

This is a clear reference to the following alleged command of the "Lord Almighty" to Esdras:—

2 Esd. ii. 26. "As for the servants whom I have given thee, there shall not one of them perish; for I will require them from among thy number."

The writer of the Fourth Gospel interpreted this passage as referring to Jesus and his disciples, and in the words quoted above represented that reputed Savior as telling his "Holy Father" that he had

obeyed his command as far as was possible. None of the disciples had fallen from the faith save Judas the traitor, and the lapse of this apostle (having been foreordained in Psalm xli. 9) was inevitable "that the scripture might be fulfilled." In no other "scripture" but 2 Esdras is a mandate of such a nature recorded.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

Rev. F. C. Spurr, in the *Christian World*, laments the growth of Atheism in France. A great Church difficulty, he says, is "the presence of undisguised and militant Atheism amongst the working men. It is not simply inoffensive Agnosticism, or sheer indifference, but brutal Atheism. God is categorically denied, and the Bible, without the least discrimination, held up to public scorn. The number of prints in Paris devoted to the propagation of Atheism is astonishing." Mr. Spurr means by "brutal Atheism," apparently, no more than plain-spoken Atheism. We quite understand his preference for "inoffensive Agnosticism."

Mr. Spurr bought a "sheaf" of Atheistic prints and found their tone to be "very low," one of them being "unspeakably vile." He does not condescend to inform us wherein the unspeakable vileness consisted. The charges he actually brings against French Atheism, even if true, would not prove it to be either "brutal" or "unspeakably vile." There is nothing "brutal" or "unspeakably vile" in confounding Catholicism with Christianity, in mistaking "the crimes of the priests for the ethics of the Gospel," or in having "for a fundamental axiom the absurdity that Science alone represents truth, and faith represents imbecility." If this were a correct representation of it, which largely it is not, it would not justify its being called the worst names in the vocabulary. French Atheism may have its defects, but, as a whole, it is neither "brutal" nor "unspeakably vile." But most assuredly it is a "brutal" and "unspeakably vile" action to deliberately misrepresent it.

Mr. Spurr refers to an exhibition held in the Place de la Nation on Easter Sunday as "so utterly vile and loathsome that even an advertisement describing it would not be permitted in England." We are rather curious to know what this exhibition could have been. Mr. Spurr does not say, and the tone of the article scarcely gives a reader confidence in the sanity of his taste or the honesty of his judgment. This description, again, may be no more than another illustration of Protestant pruriency and Christian scurrility.

The cheerful side of Mr. Spurr's article—cheerful, that is, to Freethinkers—is the recognition of the hopelessness of Protestantism capturing the French people. They are giving up Catholicism, and their immediate destination is Freethought; which means that the French people are freer from the social cant and humbug that rule in England, and that mental and moral cowardice does not flourish with them so freely as with us. Mr. Spurr says that there is, among the French, "an absence of the church-going instinct. In England, amongst a certain class of people, it is regarded as a mark of respectability to attend, with more or less regularity, a place of worship. That feeling does not exist among the corresponding class in France. There it is the church-goer, not the absentee, that is marked." Which endorses what has been said as regards the relative hypocrisy of the two peoples. Mr. Spurr also remarks that the work of evangelisation is greatly hampered by the fact that theatres and places of amusement are open on Sunday. Doubtless; but these are not likely to be closed so that people may be driven from sheer weariness into church. And, when all is said and done, the French way of spending Sunday makes far more for mental, physical, and moral health than our own so-called "day of rest."

Apropos of the above. The *Evening News* is paying the expenses round Europe of a party of young ladies selected by the readers of that paper. On leaving Paris, one of the ladies, a Miss Wagon, remarked: "I think the men make better husbands than the English." The rest laughed, and then Miss Wagon explained. "Wherever we went in Paris," she said, "the whole family—the husband, wife, and children—were enjoying themselves together. You don't find that in England." We commend this observation to Mr. Spurr—and others.

Considering the desperate efforts being made in some quarters to convince the public that Socialists are in the main believers in Christianity, and that Christianity and Socialism are essentially harmonious, it is worth while noting the opinion of the Rev. T. Waugh as given in a religious contemporary. He points out that of the three million enrolled Socialists of Germany, nearly all the leaders and a big majority of the men are "Infidels and Atheists," and this is "largely true of the million and a half in America, and the two millions in France and Italy." He also points out that the vast mass of English Socialists, "like Mr. Blatchford himself, are sworn foes of the Church of God." Those who know what Socialism is out of England will be aware that Mr. Waugh has hit the nail on the head. And in England the truth of the statement only admits of question because a handful of Christian Socialists do the shouting, and the majority remain silent for fear of offending English religious opinion.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon, author of perhaps the most trumpery pious novel ever written, has done a tract on "The Kansas Prohibitory Law and its Results" for the United Kingdom Alliance. In the course of this leaflet the reverend gentleman says that—"In very many towns the church members hold the balance of political power at elections, and elect all the city officials." How gratifying! But we should like to know how this nice arrangement works out in other directions. What is the state of the human intellect in Kansas? How does free inquiry and discussion go on? Judging from the number of people who swear by such a commonplace person as Mr. Sheldon, we should imagine that Kansas is still susceptible of a good deal of improvement.

War is being declared against the old Confession of Faith in Scotland. Dr. Templeton has just written a long letter against it in the *Glasgow Herald*, pointing out its great defects in the light of present-day knowledge and sentiment, and declaring that few people of any education and intelligence really believe it, although they are supposed to. Dr. Templeton's letter is largely endorsed in a *Herald* editorial, which suggests the drawing up of a new creed—that will, of course, be just as true and inspired as the old one. This new creed should set forth "those truths by which Christian men live, and for which they would even be prepared to die." On this basis it would probably be the thinnest creed that ever was invented.

Side by side with that article on the Confession of Faith, the *Glasgow Herald* had another on the Bible and English Literature. The article is a plea for the retention of the Bible in public education, and it abounds in marvellous statements about the Protestant fetish. We will notice one or two of them. It is asserted that "practically all English prose, and nearly all English poetry, is founded on the Bible." Now, on the face of it, this is extremely ridiculous. There is only one great English book founded on the Bible, and that is the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Milton's epic is not founded on the Bible at all from a literary point of view; all the power and beauty of it comes from two sources—his native genius and his classical culture. What he owed to the Bible was its impossible subject, which becomes more and more fatal to it as the years roll by. Shakespeare, of course, is out of the question altogether. His subjects are purely human, and his style is in keeping with them. His plays and poems, as literature, are quite independent of Biblical influence. Much is made of the few Biblical allusions in his plays, but if the whole of them were cut out it would not affect the value of Shakespeare's total production. Besides, it must be remembered that his plays were nearly all written before the Bible, in the form of the Authorised Version, was made available to the general body of the English people. That was in 1611. And, curiously enough Shakespeare's last three plays—*Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*—were all as far away from Christianity and the Bible as could possibly be; in fact, they were all absolutely pagan. It is worth noting, in this connection, that Mr. Benson intended to play *Cymbeline* at the recent anniversary celebration in the Stratiord-on-Avon theatre, but was prevented from doing so by the vehement objections of the Rev. Mr. Arbuthnot, vicar of the parish.

Our Scottish contemporary traces a fanciful stream of literary development in England from the Elizabethan to the Victorian age, under the controlling influence of the Bible. Nothing could be more fantastic. The truth is that the Bible stands quite apart from English literature. It is something entirely unique. It is couched in an English that never was written or spoken by the English people. We defy the *Herald* writer to produce any facts to the contrary. One has only to read the English of the Authorised Version, and the English of the Revisers'

dedication and introduction, to see what poles asunder were the two languages. The English of the Bible was a special form of English; it grew up through several generations of translators; it was dedicated to the Holy Scriptures, and was never used for anything else. This is a conclusion which is absolutely demonstrable. No doubt of it could exist in the mind of anyone who had faced and studied the facts.

Here is another pious maggot from the *Herald* writer's brain. "It is hardly too much to say, he declares, "that the reason why France has not a Milton, a Burns, or a Wordsworth, is simply that the French people never took the Bible to their hearts as the British have done." What profound criticism! Nothing is allowed for the different geniuses of different nations. Scotland has a Burns, and France has a Béranger; and the difference between the two is mainly a difference in national characteristics. The Bible has essentially as much to do with it as the man in the moon. It is true that France has no Milton. Who would expect it? But Italy has Dante; which again is quite natural, for France and Italy, though both called "Latin," possess very different temperaments.

We could point out more absurdities in the *Herald* article, but we must conclude, and we will do so with a hint to the writer. The seriousness and the sense of mystery, which he notices in English poetry, are due to natural conditions, rather than to the translation of certain Hebrew writings. It is largely due to our climate, and still more largely to our nearness to the sea. We cannot stay to work this out at present, but the *Herald* writer may try to work it out for himself. It will be an exercise for him in scientific investigation; which is so much better, after all, than the reveries of superstition.

The Rev. F. J. Dawson has been compelled to resign the pastorate of the Baptist Church at Maldon, because he does not believe that Jehovah sent two bears to devour the forty-two children who mockingly cried "Baldhead! Baldhead!" after the prophet Elisha. Mr. Dawson is now without hope of any further employment as a Christian minister in consequence of using his common sense in dealing with an old legend found in the Bible!

Mr. Campbell's latest printed sermon is on "The Lamb's Book of Life." We see no mention in it of mint sauce and green peas. This is a sad oversight.

Mr. Campbell really ought not to have wound up his sermon with a quotation from George Eliot's "Choir Invisible." George Eliot was a Freethinker, and one of her finest ethical aspirations should not be tacked on to the Lamb of God business, as though she had some sort of connection with it herself.

Mr. R. J. Campbell regards himself as the "best hated man in the British pulpit." He regards this as a compliment. This may be so; it is also some little evidence of the brotherly love developed among other preachers by Christian belief.

The New Theology people have started a League of Progressive Thought and Social Service. How delightfully vague! But there is no reference to Christianity, which is "progressing" backwards, and will soon be "outside."

Rev. Dr. Warschauer records his belief that the story of the raising of Lazarus is "without any foundation in fact." How long will it take him to learn that the same is probably true of the whole Gospel narrative? Honest, plain-minded people will find it very difficult to believe any part of the New Testament on the authority of nameless writers who dish up "crammers" with the utmost circumstantiality.

There were six leaderettes on the front page of last week's *Christian Commonwealth*; the first on the Liquor Traffic, the second on Government Concessions, the third on the Dundee Election, the fourth on Legislation for Shop-Workers, the fifth on Old-Age Pensions, and the sixth on Beyond the Grave. The sixth topic used to be the first in importance; it is now the last; by-and-bye it will be left out altogether.

There are a million and a half more men than women in the United States. Yet two-thirds of the Church members are women, and only one-third men. The "priest and the woman" again.

Dr. Washington Gladden says there is something wrong about this state of affairs. We agree with him. It is wrong that so many women should remain in the churches after so many men have left. Still, we have no doubt that this will be rectified in time. When other avenues of occupation are freely opened to women, they will act precisely as the men have, in the main, acted. The best will leave, the more sheepish will remain. The Church of the future will be very much a congregation of sheep headed by asses.

What capacity some people have for overlooking facts! Mr. J. Allanson Picton, for instance, writes to the *Christian Commonwealth* pointing out a certain unfairness in the round-table proposal for settling the Education question. The idea is that representatives of the various Christian Churches should meet together, discuss the situation, and come to an agreement, which the Government would be ordered to carry out. But the Christian Churches are not everybody. There are others. Mr. Picton says that the Ethical Societies and the Rationalist Press Association ought not to be ignored. Not a word from this gentleman about the Secularists. Has he never heard of them? Well, other people have. The Secularists have done all the fighting for the Ethicists and Rationalists, and they will have to do all the fighting that still remains to be done. We may conclude by reminding Ethicists and Rationalists (they are the same people) that what they do not choose to see does not, therefore, cease to exist.

John Morley nagged at Bradlaugh over his Oaths Act. But he has been very glad to avail himself of it since. He has gone up (or down) to the House of Peers as Viscount Morley of Blackburn, and in the ceremony of admission he made affirmation instead of taking the oath. We are glad to hear it. But he couldn't have done that without Bradlaugh's Act.

Revivalism is practically dead. It may have a kick or two left in it, like a dying jackass, but it is substantially done for. Even one of the Christian papers last week referred to "the Welsh fiasco" and "the notorious failure of the late Torrey-Alexander mission." We may add, because the Christian papers won't, although they know it, that the mission was settled by the action of that dreadful man, the editor of the *Freethinker*, who so thoroughly exposed Torrey's infamous libels on Paine and Ingersoll. It was Mr. Foote's action that gave Mr. Stead his opportunity. We do not mean by this that Mr. Stead deserves small credit for what he did. On the contrary, he deserves immense credit. He was the only Christian journalist, so far as we know, who had the courage to tell Torrey the truth. All the others were dumb dogs—though they were well aware of the facts.

A church is hardly the place, and during the service is hardly the time, to shout "There is no God." A Socialist writer, called Heimann, found this out to his cost. He went through that performance during the May Day service in the Church of St. Michael, Vienna; and the congregation nearly tore him to pieces. They acted like brutes, which is not surprising when we remember their faith. We cannot say, however, that we have any sympathy for their victim. He ought to have known better.

The other Sunday evening, Dr. Clifford went to hear Dr. Saleeby lecture on "Herodity." Dr. Clifford's comment on the discourse was that "as far as could be judged from the lecture he [Dr. Saleeby] was not aware that there was such a book as the Bible." Dr. Clifford seems hardly aware that there is any other book than the Bible.

The Rev. Dr. Frank Ballard, the Wesleyan Christian Evidence lecturer, says that "four-fifths of the adult population" are practically non-Christian. He admits that the modern atmosphere is by no means friendly to the faith. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Home Mission Society, he referred to those who said that the present anti-Christian sentiment was "but a passing wave, and would soon fizzle out, but he would have them take care that it was not a wave that was fizzling in." Dr. Ballard evidently understands the signs of the times, and is not confident that home missionaries and Christian Evidence lecturers will succeed in stemming the ominously rising tide of Freethought.

Home Words for May has an article on the coming Pan-Anglican Congress. We read that Bishop Tucker is going to tell the story of Uganda, the African country which "in the course of thirty years has emerged from barbarism to Christianity"—as if the two things were always so far apart from

each other. On the other hand, the Bishop of Calcutta will have a different tale to tell. "One great task of the Church in India," it appears, "is to deal with cultivated races, who either still profess the old religions, or else, having lost their faith in superstitious rites and ceremonies, have drifted into blank atheism." Yes, cultivated people, with a tendency towards Atheism, are a very tough problem for Christian Missions.

Tornadoes in the Southern States (U. S. A.) have killed 500 persons, injured 4,000, and destroyed £1,400,000 worth of property. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

"In God we trust" is apparently to be put back on the American coinage. They trust in God over there. But we must not forget their addendum: "Everybody else—cash!"

Raisuli, the Morocco brigand, is described in *Answers*, by the manager of the band performing at the London Hippodrome, as "a good, a holy, a deeply-religious man." And why not? We put the question to Christians. David was a good, holy, and deeply-religious man; and he was a bandit too.

The Rev. Dr. Horton is at it again. Preaching the annual sermon of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society the other day, he drew such a glowing picture of the recent conquests of Christianity in heathen parts as would lead the ignorant among his hearers to imagine that the whole world was rapidly turning to Christ. Take the following extravagant sentence: "The whole of Indian life and thought are penetrated by the germinal powers of the Gospel of Christ." This will be news to "the traveller in India"; but then we must bear in mind that it is not "the traveller in India," but "the student of missions" at Hampstead, who is qualified to judge. Fifty years ago a careless British sailor dropped his Bible over the bulwark of a warship in Nagasaki Bay, and a Japanese General on parole in the harbor picked it up, and he and his family were converted. Then followed this amazing statement: "Is it possible that only half a century has passed since that seed was dropped in Japan, and now that little seed has brought Japan into the comity of the Western nations?" Why, Japan is a distinctly Christian country. Everybody who is anybody there is a disciple of Jesus. "The peculiarity of Japanese Christianity is that the Generals of the Army, the Admirals of the Fleet, the Members of Parliament, and the leaders of thought are amongst the members of the native Christian Church."

Is it not absolutely undeniable that such statements are monstrously false and misleading? Every fairly intelligent person cannot but know that neither India nor Japan has the slightest desire to become Christian. And the same thing is true of China. How many converts are there in India after a whole century of missionising? Only three millions in a population of three hundred millions. All the Protestant Missionary Societies represented in China can only boast of 180,000 native Christians in a population of 400,000,000. A couple of years ago, Dr. Horton himself pronounced Foreign Missions a dismal failure, and their present marvellous triumphs exist only in his own fertile imagination.

The Rev. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, told the Baptist Union that "the world cares more to hear of Jesus as a Redeemer than as a Teacher." Naturally, because the world is lazy and wants to have everything done for it by another. As Savior, Jesus only says, "Believe and be saved," but as Teacher, he says, "Do these words of mine and live"; and it is ever so much easier to believe than to do. But what does Mr. Jones mean by the world? As a matter of fact, the world is finding out that it does not want to hear of Jesus in any capacity whatever; and as his own pessimistic address abundantly testified, even the Churches are getting out of touch with him, the dominant note within them being, not faith, but interrogation. "Our churches," he said, "somehow or other, have lost their grip."

We are promised—or threatened—a visit from the "Wall-street evangelist," the Rev. W. Wilkinson. This gentleman addresses American stockbrokers every day on spiritual matters, and is said to be recognised as a friend by all the financiers. The purifying influence of Mr. Wilkinson on American finance may be gauged by revelations one sees in the newspapers from time to time. Now he is going to try his hand in this country, and we have no doubt that the results will be equally striking.

C. M. Alexander, the Christy Minstrel evangelist, is coming over to England again in June. But not with Torrey. His preaching partner this time is Dr. Wilbur Chapman. Whether the new combination will "save England" remains to be seen.

The Wesleyan Home Mission Committee are arranging for the regular visitation by Wesleyan clergymen of all inmates of lunatic asylums belonging to their sect. A "Wesleyan Minister" writes to the *Methodist Times* protesting against this arrangement as being "extremely undesirable." He points out that "religious depression and melancholy are too often the cause of their being where they are," and thinks that the visit of the Wesleyan minister would only tend to exasperate their disease. There is a mixture of truth and common sense about this opinion that is quite refreshing. And it loses none of its piquancy by appearing in the *Methodist Times*.

"A report of crimes committed in the Dominion of Canada, published in the *Family Herald*, gives these interesting figures: 'The position occupied by the principal religious denominations in relation to crime was as follows: Roman Catholics, 39.7; Methodists, 10.0; Presbyterians, 8.5; Baptists, 3.1. According to the last census the position held by the above-mentioned denominations for the last ten years in regard to crime is told in the following figures: Roman Catholics, 41.50; Methodists, 17.07; Presbyterians, 15.68; Baptists, 5.90.' Are Freethinkers ignored in this list because they have no religion, or because they have committed no crimes?"—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. R. J. Campbell may be a very advanced person—using the general run of Christian preachers as a standard—but he has still a deal to learn. In a recent sermon he said that it seems curious to read that the primitive Christians "were accused of Atheism and immorality.....the fact was that they stood for a purer religion and a higher morality than that from which men's thoughts were turning away." The statement that the primitive Christians stood for a higher morality is a familiar story, but there is not a shadow of foundation in fact for it. Morality, as such, was the last thing the early Christians troubled themselves about. St. Paul's opinion that if there were no resurrection from the dead there was nothing for it but to eat, drink, and be merry is evidence of how much value was placed upon mere morality. We can safely invite Mr. Campbell for any authoritative reference proving that the early Christians placed any value upon morality, as morality. And certainly it was not the higher morality of the Christians that impressed the better class of Pagans. Men like Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius saw nothing in their teachings superior to that furnished by Pagan moralists, and those who are conversant with the facts know that a far saner and healthier ethic was taught in the Pagan world than was ever held by Christians.

The idea of the early Christians standing for a higher morality is perfectly laughable in face of the facts that (1) the Christians accused each other of all kinds of immorality, (2) we know as a historic fact that the wildest and the most unethical opinions and practices flourished among Christians at a very early period of their history, and (3) morals underwent a very marked deterioration under the dominance of Christian influence. The sober truth is that much as modern Christians find fault with each other, they are ethically much superior to those of the earliest ages. If Mr. Campbell, in place of such absurd statements as the one quoted, will set himself the task of discovering in what way Christian moral teaching was superior to Pagan teaching, where it was that Christians made a stand for morality, *per se*, and when it was that Christianity effected any actual improvement in conduct, he may discover things for himself and enlighten others at the same time. History in the mouth of a parson is always a curious thing; and in this respect there seems little to differentiate the new theologians from the old ones.

The Rev. H. H. Carlisle, now minister of Balham Congregational Church, told the congregation, in his very first sermon, that Christ "sleeps in the soul of every man." What a queer thing for the all-loving Savior to do! Why does he sleep and neglect his work? Fancy a man going to hell with Christ the Lord asleep in his soul! Nothing is too silly for a man of God to utter as long as the word "Christ" is in it.

Rev. Edward Mitford Weigall, of Frodingham, Lincs., left £37,226. Another good man gone wrong. What is it the Scripture says? "And in hell he lifted up his eyes." But that doesn't stop the clergy from making a pile if they can.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

June 7, N. S. S. Conference, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

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

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.—Donations, £165; Annual Subscriptions, £179 16s. Received since.—T. Hopkins, £1; F. Whatcott, 2s. 6d.; A. Waymark, 2s. 6d.; J. D. Brazell, £1;

NORTH LONDONER.—What does it matter what Christian Evidence blackguards say about us? They act after their kind. To slander Freethinkers is as natural to them as it is to a pig to grunt. Let them rave. We are not so foolish as to take legal action against them. They have too many friends on benches and in jury-boxes. As a matter of fact, since you ask, every penny of the Blasphemy Defence Fund went through the N. S. S. bank account; the balance was paid out of the N. S. S. funds; and proper receipts for all the expenditure are in the Secretary's hands, and have probably by this been through the auditor's hands too.

A. G. ROYSTON.—We are always glad to send the *Freethinker* for six consecutive weeks, gratuitously, to the address of any person who is considered likely to become a regular subscriber. Thanks for your good wishes.

C. W. MACLEOD, writing from Cape Colony, says: "I heard of the *Freethinker* for the first time about six months ago, and immediately wrote for it, and I may say that it quite exceeded expectations." This correspondent asks whether Freethought works can be obtained in Dutch. We advise him to apply to the editor or publisher of *De Dageraad*, Amsterdam.

W. P. BAIL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. LACK.—See paragraph.

H. L. DARTON.—Pleased to hear from you. We note your corroboration of our statement that the old *Oracle of Reason*, with which Holyoake was connected, was indeed "warm."

A. V. TURLING.—We shall have to refer to the Harriet matter in our next article, so we do not answer your question in this column.

J. F. P.—Places of religious worship are exempted from local rates, but they must be used for no other purposes. This generally works out as meaning no other purposes that bring profit. Your previous letter does not appear to have reached us.

J. TULLIN.—We see no reason why Freethought propaganda should not be revived at Sunderland. The whole district might be worked next winter, with the assistance of the N. S. S. headquarters, which would be forthcoming if the local "saints" would do their share.

A. D. CORRICK.—Of course the strongest motive proves itself so by its action—just as the strongest man does in a contest. Self, apart from motives, is a fiction; the motives constitute the self. We will try to explain the whole subject a little later on.

J. R. LICKFOLD.—The person referred to is a wilful disturber of Freethought meetings, and a vulgar slanderer of Freethought advocates. Why should he be honored by "replies" in this journal?

W. A.—Too late for this week.

G. H. EXALL.—Will refer to it in our next.

R. IRVING.—Will be ready in a fortnight or so.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Your cuttings are useful.

T. HOPKINS.—Your letter from "Hades" is remarkably cheerful. Professor Mivart must have been right. Mr. Foote is keeping in good fettle. He thoroughly enjoyed his Welsh visit.

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

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Sugar Plums.

South Wales was well represented at Mr. Foote's meetings on Sunday at Aberdare. Friends came from all parts, and some from long distances; one veteran travelling nearly sixty miles by rail, and actually walking twelve miles to get the train. Pembroke, Carmarthen, Swansea, Cardiff, Porth, Merthyr, Mountain Ash, and a heap of other places, whose names were stated to Mr. Foote, but which he cannot remember, helped to swell the fine gatherings in the New Theatre. And the reception given to the N. S. S. President and editor of the *Freethinker* was strikingly enthusiastic. Aberdare was nearly the centre of the "Welsh revival," and the Freethinkers displayed plenty of Welsh fervor without the drawback of Welsh superstition. Questions were asked after the lectures, and the little opposition there was had a few encouraging cheers; but the great bulk of the large audiences were thoroughly sympathetic with the lecturer; they laughed and cheered with untiring zest. One very gratifying feature of the meetings was the presence of many young men and a considerable number of ladies. It is evident that Freethought is a growing power in South Wales. The "revival" has caused a decided reaction there, and the *Freethinker* has found hundreds of fresh readers in consequence. Next winter the N. S. S. must work South Wales thoroughly. In the meanwhile there will be some open-air propaganda, which will keep the ball rolling.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday in the Secular Hall, Manchester. The full business Agenda will appear in next week's *Freethinker*. Meanwhile we once more express a hope that there will be a first-rate attendance of Branch delegates and individual members from all parts of the country. Not only England, but Scotland and Wales ought to be well represented. It is probable that the President will have some good news in the Annual Report. We may add that the usual lunch has been arranged for between the morning and afternoon sittings of the Conference, and as the number of seats at the tables is limited those who want to secure tickets should make early application to the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. The price is 2s. each, and the repast is sure to be a very good one this time; the "saints" may take our guarantee for that. There is also a Whit-Monday trip for the delegates and other visitors being organised by the Manchester Branch. Of course there will be the usual public meeting on the Sunday evening in the Secular Hall, and speeches will be delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, etc.

With respect to the social gathering at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, which was announced in our last issue, London friends will please to note that the date is changed from Wednesday, May 20, to Thursday, May 21. There are reasons why the Thursday evening is more likely to suit the convenience of those who would attend. Members of the N. S. S. are free to introduce a friend, and non-members who would like to be present should apply to Miss Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., for tickets. There will be a little music and much opportunity for conversation. Mr. Foote will attend as President, and will be supported by several colleagues, including Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd. There is no charge for admission.

Mr. F. J. Gould, as we previously announced, has resigned his position as secretary and organiser to the Leicester Secular Society, and is now acting on behalf of the Positivists. The parting took place with perfect friendliness on both sides. The Secular Society entertained Mr. Gould at a farewell tea on April 26. He begins his Positivist work on May 24. But he hopes to lecture occasionally on the Secular platform, for he has not abandoned his Secularism, but, as he believes, has gone on with it a little further.

"Salvation Army Sweating" is the heading of a handbill calling a "public meeting of protest" at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Wednesday evening, May 27, at 8 o'clock, under the auspices of the London District Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. Mr. Pete Curran, M.P., is to preside, and several leading Trade Unionists are to speak. Some of our readers will probably attend.

Mr. Wishart's open-air lectures at Liverpool on Sunday drew good audiences, but towards the end the rowdy element began to assert itself. We hope the local "saints" will rally round the Branch platform and assist in keeping order. Mr. Wishart has also been lecturing at Rochdale, Wigan, and Bury.

For Christ's Sake.

"A careful study of the Evangelists some time after this (my own) imprisonment, satisfied me that the religion of Jesus involves persecution."—G. J. HOLYOAKE, *The Last Trial for Atheism* (1878); p. 116.

"The flames of hell are only the flashings of the exterminating, vindictive glance which faith casts on unbelievers."

"Faith has within it a malignant principle. Christian faith, and nothing else, is the ultimate ground of Christian persecution and destruction of heretics."—FEUERBACH, *Essence of Christianity* (1881); pp. 255-369.

"The Gospel had brought with it its old credentials. It had divided nation against nation, house against house, child against father. It had brought 'not peace, but a sword,' the event long before foretold and long before experienced."—J. A. FROUDE, *History of England*, vol. iii., p. 369.

"The Vedas and the Shastas—the writings of the Buddhists and those of the Parsees and the Chinese—contain nowhere such a justification of wholesale murder as do the Scriptures of the Jews and of the Christian. From these have been drawn the power to persecute, and, if possible, to exterminate those who worship God in a different fashion to those in power."—DR. THOMAS INMAN, *Ancient Faiths and Modern*, p. 62.

AFTER the imprisonment of Adams, Holyoake, and others for Atheism, it was urged—by some of the more discerning Christians, who could see that, instead of crushing the Freethought movement, it only advertised the cause and reflected discredit on their own creed—that this persecution was not to be attributed to Christianity. But as Maltus Questell Ryall justly pointed out, "Christians set a watch upon them—Christians informed against them—Christians prejudiced the public against them: by Christian pay were hireling lawyers retained—by Christian witnesses confronted—by the Christian press misrepresented—by Christian juries found guilty—by Christian judges condemned." Mr. Holyoake, who endorsed this view of the case, added, "It is necessary to put the argument in this cumulative form to satisfy some understandings."

To-day, when we point to the monstrous crimes committed by Christians for the sake of their religion—the Holy Wars, the Inquisition, the persecution of Jews and heretics—we are again told that these things were not a consequence of Christianity, but were done in opposition to the teachings of that religion, which teaches us that we are to love even our enemies. Mr. Loring Brace, who most Christians think has given them a complete vindication of their religion in his apology, *Gesta Christi*, a work which will not stand the slightest critical pressure, uses the stereotyped formula as follows: "The history of the Christian Church has been a history of opposition to her Master in the matter of hate and persecution of opposing beliefs. The vestures of the historical Church are stained deep with the blood of the innocent, shed for ideas which they believed true" (p. 442). The Atheists and unbelievers who protested against these atrocities were merely, according to Mr. Brace, "those nominally outside of Christianity who had felt its influence through denying the name." In other words, although the unbelievers opposed Christianity as an incredible superstition, and fought against its cruelties and oppressions, yet, nevertheless, they were Christians all the time without knowing it! This is adding insult to injury with a vengeance; not content with giving the Freethinker hell on earth while he is alive, they mean to label him Christian after he is dead.

In answer to this travesty of truth and justice, we cannot do better than quote the uncompromising reply of Holyoake to a similar suggestion, especially in view of the fact that an attempt is being made to slur over and ignore his Atheism and Freethought. Holyoake observes:—It will not do to say that Christians have not been wise enough to see, nor good enough to act up to, the divine gentleness of Christ. The Christian Churches have been presided over by pastors of penetration enough to see whatever there was to be seen, and purity enough to act up to it. He continues:—

"If Christ be the symbol of love and gentleness to all who believe in his name, how is it that in every part of

the world the Freethinker should fear to fall into the hands of the Christian? How is it that he must set a watch upon his words in every town and hamlet in our land, lest the free expression of his deepest convictions should cost him his position, his employment, and his character? Branded, outcast, and friendless, the Christian's door is the last at which he would knock—the Christian's fireside is the last at which he would find a welcome—and the average Christian pastor, who in knowledge, duty, and example most nearly resembles the Christ whom he preaches, is the last man whose path the Freethinker would wish to cross, or into whose ear he would venture to pour the tale of his expatriations" (*Last Trial for Atheism*, pp. 116-7).

Holyoake wrote this manly and indignant repudiation before he had allowed himself to be patronised by the sickly and sentimental ministers who fawned upon him towards the latter end of his career.

Let us examine the question a little more closely. Why is it that a religion, which its professors are never tired of recommending as the religion of love, should have shed more innocent blood and caused more suffering than any religion the world has ever seen?

Undoubtedly the doctrine of Salvation by Faith, as the historians Buckle, Lecky, and Lea have conclusively shown, was the main cause; for if it is necessary for the people to believe certain doctrines in order that they may escape spending eternity in hell, then, argued the Church, it is necessary to prevent men, by force if necessary, from bringing these beliefs and doctrines into disbelief.

What the historians have omitted to mention, however, is the fact that Jesus Christ himself is responsible for this doctrine, for he roundly declared "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). The late Charles Haddon Spurgeon—who, by the way, did Christ the honor of believing he meant what he said—declared that he could not "conceive any punishment too severe for final unbelief," and founds his opinion on the very text we have quoted. He observes:—

"The other day an inquirer said to me, 'I cannot believe'; and I gave him no answer but this—'then you must be damned.' Had I nothing else to say? No, nothing else; I had no comforts to offer, no hopes to present to an unbeliever. 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.' There is an honest intolerance about these words of our Lord; he does not stammer and hesitate and say, 'I fear ill may occur to you,' but he says outright that you will be damned."*

Mr. Spurgeon here clearly recognises the intolerance of Christ which modern apologists so violently deny. In another sermon he roundly declares:—

"As the black cloud is the mother of many rain-drops, so dark unbelief is the parent of many crimes. And what if I should say that unbelief concentrates the vice of ages into a moment, and gathers up the virus of all the offences of the race in one transgression? I should not be far from the mark."†

Now if Mr. Spurgeon sincerely believed what he preached, and we have no doubt that he did do so, then it was his logical duty to persecute unbelievers to the utmost extent of his power. But as the power of the clergy to persecute has become very limited in these degenerate days, he takes the next step to it; he cuts off all communication with them. In a sermon with the elegant title, "Driving away the Vultures from the Sacrifice" (No. 1993), in which he says that he regards unbelievers "as worse than carrion-crows," he continues:—

"It is not for us to speak sweetly of those who deal scurvily with Christ. If they be enemies of Christ, our Sacrifice, they cannot be friends of ours. We shake the dust from our feet against those who reject the doctrine of a crucified Savior, slain in the sinner's stead. They are no brethren of ours who reject the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Mr. Spurgeon merely carried into practice the teaching of Jesus, who tells his disciples that in

* Sermon (No. 1027), "A Solemn Impeachment of Unbelievers."

† "The Danger of Doubting."

the event of any city rejecting their teaching, they are to wipe off the very dust from their feet against them, and "it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city" (Luke x. 10-12). That is to say, that those who rejected his teachings were worse than those who committed unmentionable crimes!

"Oh but," objects some Christian, "how can you accuse Jesus of persecution when he not only commanded us to love one another, but even taught the duty of loving our enemies." Yes, he told other people to love their enemies, but he declined to love his own, for he says: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). And again, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). If any doubt is left as to how he would treat those who rejected his rule, the following murderous instructions to his disciples will dispose of it: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke xix. 27). And yet Matthew Arnold, with these things staring him in the face, could put that phrase into circulation, "The sweet reasonableness of Jesus"! Suppose Confucius or Buddha had given such devilish advice to their disciples, how Christians would have seized on it as an example of the intolerance of the heathen religions!

The disciples were as intolerant as their Master. John, "the beloved disciple," says:—

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10, 11).

Paul declares if anyone preached any other gospel than the one he patronised "let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8, 9). And again, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). He also speaks of "an evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews iii. 12). And we find in the book of Revelation that unbelievers are classed with "murderers and whoremongers" (xxi. 8), who "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." We should be quite justified in calling the Bible the Persecutors' Handbook; and, as St. Augustine remarked, "If the New Testament contained no examples of the apostles employing force, this was simply because, in their time, no prince had embraced Christianity."* It is time people began to see the true inwardness of this "religion of love."

No one understood this religion better, or expounded it more clearly, than Ludwig Feuerbach; he had himself been a fervent Christian and studied theology at the university of Heidelberg; he had studied it from within and knew the structure from the basement to the summit; he emancipated himself and has since emancipated thousands by the marvellous force and clearness of his analysis of Christianity as contained in his *Essence of Christianity*. He explains in a sentence why the religion of love is also the religion of hate. He says:—

"The Bible curses through faith, blesses through love. But the only love it knows is a love founded on faith. Thus here already it is a love which curses, an unreliable love, a love which gives me no guarantee that it will not turn into hatred; for if I do not acknowledge the articles of faith, I am out of the sphere of love, a child of hell, an object of anathema, of the anger of God, to whom the existence of unbelievers is a vexation, a thorn in the eye."†

Every word of this can be proved with mathematical accuracy: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" exclaims the psalmist, and declares "I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them my enemies" (Psalms cxxxix. 21-22). Yes, and those who would know what perfect hatred of man can do, when inspired by the love of God, should read how Christians punished unbelievers when they had them

at their mercy. The Protestant was as merciless as the Catholic where he had the power.

Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, who declared "the cardinal wickedness is unbelief," saw and explained quite truly, the apparent contradiction between the command to love our enemies and David's boast that he hates the wicked, and sits not with the ungodly. He explains as follows:—

"For the sake of the person I should love them; but for the sake of the doctrine I should hate them. And thus I must hate them or hate God, who commands and wills that we should cleave to his word alone."

Thus, as Luther plainly admits, it is the doctrine—that is, the doctrine of salvation by faith—which is the cause of this hatred. He continues:—

"What I cannot love with God, I must hate; if they only preach something which is against God, all love and friendship is destroyed; thereupon I hate thee, and do thee no good. For faith must be uppermost, and where the word of God is attacked, hate takes the place of love.....And so David means to say: 'I hate them, not because they have done injury and evil to me and led a bad and wicked life, but because they despise, revile, blaspheme, falsify, and persecute the word of God.'"

"Rather than God's word should fall and heresy stand, faith would wish all creatures to be destroyed; for through heresy men lose God himself."*

And he lays it down that kings and magistrates, where they find "scandalous errors, whereby the honor of the Lord Christ is blasphemed and men's salvation hindered," then they ought "to apply the sword with all force, that doctrine may be pure and God's service genuine and unperverted, and also that peace and unity may be preserved" (p. 324).

Later on, when Calvin brought Servetus to the stake for heresy, he assured him, when leaving his cell only two hours' before he was burnt—with green wood to prolong the agony—that personally he bore him no ill will, "and parted from him," says Feuerbach, "with a sense of being thoroughly sustained by the Bible" (p. 322). Which, of course, he was.

Calvin was not a fine character; he was cold, cruel, and malicious. Ingersoll declared that Calvin and Knox "fitted one another like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast"; but there have been many of the finest, purest, sweetest men and women who ever stepped on this planet, turned into monsters of cruelty by this devilish faith. Take the character of Queen Isabella, so execrated by Protestants as the introducer of the Inquisition into Spain and the exterminator of Jews, Moors, and heretics. Prescott, the historian, tells us that her piety "shone forth from the very depths of her soul with a heavenly radiance, which illumined her whole character," and "such was the decorum of her manners, that, though encompassed by false friends and open enemies, not the slightest reproach was breathed on her fair name in this corrupt and calumnious court."† Yet it was this pious and virtuous Queen who declared: "In the love of Christ and his maid mother, I have caused great misery and have depopulated towns and districts, provinces and kingdoms."‡ Prescott, speaking of her sanction and approval of the Inquisition, says: "Like a vein in some noble piece of statuary, it gives a sinister expression to her otherwise unblemished character" (p. 259).

Or take the case of our Queen Mary, "bloody Mary" as she is called for her persecution of the Protestants. "Few people," says the historian Froude, "have been more incapable than Mary of knowingly doing a wrong thing,"§ and of Cardinal Pole, who shares with her the responsibility for all the terrible suffering inflicted during her reign, he says, "Convinced, if ever there was a sincere conviction in any man, that the course he was pursuing was precisely that which God required of him, he labored on in his dark vocation." Far from being a

* Cited in Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, p. 325.

† Prescott, *History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, p. 346.

‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Art. "Inquisition."

§ Froude, *History of England* (1862), vol. vi., p. 355.

* Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, vol. ii., p. 22.

† *Essence of Christianity*, p. 265.

bad man, "His character," says Froude was irreproachable."*

Apart from their religion, they were humane and unselfish rulers, but their religion turned them into devils of cruelty and hate. But the cruelty was not in them but in the evil faith which caused them to commit the frightful crimes for which they are responsible. These crimes—once the pride of the orthodox, but which they now disavow and would gladly consign to the oblivion—we shall treat of in a future article. It is an unpleasant and revolting task to explore the secret torture chambers of the "religion of love." It tends to send the blood to the head with indignation. But it is the duty of the Freethinker to show what this creed has done and that the feeling still survives, although the power to exercise it has almost passed away.

W. MANN.

Shelley Letters.—III.

WE will now proceed to draw upon this correspondence with Miss Hitchener. There is plenty of serious matter in it, and some unintentional fun; for the youthful Shelley, with his principles, and his enthusiasm, and his plentiful ignorance of the world, did things in the gravest manner that were calculated to afford great amusement to ordinary people.

First, with respect to Miss Hitchener herself. We have already said that there was not a trace of sexuality, at least from the physical point of view, in Shelley's attitude towards her. Mr. Dobell lays emphasis on this fact. "Much as Shelley admired her mental qualities," he says, "it was without any thought of her as an object of sexual affection." Mr. Dobell suggests that the lady would probably have been better pleased if the young poet had rated her mental powers less highly, and loved her at least a little; enough, perhaps, to flatter her woman's pride without upsetting her equanimity or his domestic peace. No suspicion of this possible state of her mind suggested itself to Shelley; otherwise he could never have written a certain passage in the twenty-seventh letter. The lady had not yet yielded to his passionate requests that she would join his household. He was going over to Ireland, with Harriet and her sister Eliza, to assist in the salvation of that unhappy country. Southey and others regretted their going, but the good Mrs. Calvert wished them success. On this hint Shelley bursts forth in the most unfortunate manner:—

"We shall have success: I am perfectly confident of the impossibility of failure. Let your pure spirit animate our proceedings. Oh that you were with us! You have said you are not handsome: but, though the sleekness of your skin, the symmetry of your form, might not attract the courtiers of Dublin Castle, yet that tongue of energy, and that eye of fire, would awe them into native insignificance."

That will do. It is perfectly decisive. Shelley could not have had any sexual inclination to Miss Hitchener. Had his thoughts tended that way, nature would have told him that to address her in such a style was a pure imbecility. No woman ever relished a compliment to her mind at the expense of her person. And the "tongue of energy" and "eye of fire" are suggestive of a political amazon on the warpath, if not of a domestic shrew in the heat of a virtuous objurgation.

Throughout these letters, Shelley addresses the lady with feverish sentimentality. And he is so serious about it! One cannot help laughing. Just listen to this:—

"My dear friend, believe that thou art the cheering beam which gilds this wintry day of life,—perhaps ere long to be the exhaustless sun which shall gild my millenniums of immortality."

That was the youthful Shelley's way of saying,

"Come and live with us." Several letters further on, he flames forth in this style:—

"My true and dear friend, why should we be separated? When may we unite? What might we not do, if together! If two hearts, panting for the happiness and liberty of mankind, were joined by union and proximity, as they are by friendship and sympathy."

Could anyone but the callow Shelley ever have written in that fashion? The "panting hearts" and the "uniting" would have rendered another man suspect. But this one was almost, if not entirely, without original sin. In the very next sentence he says, "how Harriet and her sister long to see you!"—which they may have said, but could hardly have meant. And then, in the very next paragraph, he inquires of the lady, "Have you any idea of *marrying*?" But let us proceed. Here is a passage from a later letter:—

"I perceive in you the embryo of a mighty intellect which may one day enlighten thousands. How desirable ought I not to be, if I conceive that the one spark which glimmers through mine should kindle a blaze by which nations may rejoice!"

This ardent wooer of the lady's mind finally exclaims: "Let us mingle our identities inseparably, and burst upon tyrants with the accumulated impetuosity of our acquirements and resolutions." It is not recorded that the "tyrants" suffered anything in consequence.

Shelley was, in fact, writing to Elizabeth Hitchener; in reality, he was writing to a creature of his own imagination. Yet in the course of these letters he sometimes speaks his natural sentiments, and they always do him honor. With regard to money, for instance, how generous he was! How unselfish! "Have you no money?" he asks Miss Hitchener—"Write and say so. If not, we can easily spare some." There spoke the Shelley whose purse was always open to his friends. To the last, in spite of all deceptions, he was the most exquisite gentleman in this respect. "Give it to him; his necessity is greater than mine"—said Sir Philip Sidney, mortally wounded on the field of Zutphen, when they brought him water to drink, and a poor common soldier, desperately wounded in the same battle, cried out for it as they passed. It was one of the sublimest words that ever came from the lips of man. And it was in the spirit of this grand utterance that Shelley lived from first to last. He grew in wisdom with his years; no growth was possible in the nobility of his character. Because of this Byron's better nature was moved to pay Shelley that immortal tribute. "I never knew another man," he said, "who was not a beast in comparison with him."

Let us take the following passage from an early letter to Miss Hitchener, and recollect that the writer was only two months over nineteen:—

"By the bye, I have something to talk to you of—Money. I covet it.—What, you? you a miser! you desire gold! you a slave to the most contemptible of ambitions!—No, I am not; but I still desire money, and I desire it because I think I know the use of it. It commands labor, it gives leisure; and to give leisure to those who will employ it in the forwarding of truth is the noblest present an individual can make to the whole."

Sincerely meant, and finely said! This was a philanthropist without guile. What other philanthropist—and we have many of the species nowadays, both amateur and professional—has had this splendid vision of beneficence? Helping a man of genius on the material side is the highest form of philanthropy; yet only those of a certain loftiness of soul are capable of it; for it presupposes an absence of all that envy and hatred of superiority which is so shamefully common a characteristic of our poor human nature.

Shelley's marriage with Harriet had consummated the quarrel with his father. That highly respectable gentleman was ready to provide for as many bastards as his son chose to beget—and told him so; but a misalliance was an unforgivable sin. Financial supplies were cut off, with the exception of £200 a year,

* Froude, *History of England* (1862), vol. vi., pp. 496-531.

to keep the young fellow from stealing and prison—as the angry parent stated. This was too little for Shelley's domestic necessities: far too little for his reckless generosity. He wanted money badly. So the offer of £2,000 a year was made to him if he would entail the estate on his eldest son, and, in default of issue, on his brother. He did not accept it. He treated it with disdain. This is what he wrote to Miss Hitchener:—

"Do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such contemptible injustice and intility? that I will forswear my principles in consideration of £2,000 a year? that the good-will I could thus purchase, or the ill-will I could thus overbear, would recompense me for the loss of self-esteem, of conscious rectitude? And with what face can they make to me a proposal so insultingly hateful? Dare one of them propose such a condition to my face—to the face of any virtuous man—and not sink into nothing at his disdain? That I should entail £120,000 of command over labor, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes, on one whom I know not—who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane, or use this for the worst purposes, which the real delegates of my chance-given property might convert into a most useful instrument of benevolence!—No! this *you* will not suspect me of."

There is no sentimentality or flightiness here. Matthew Arnold himself admitted its "high and noble ring."

But apart from principle and generosity, this noble youth was grotesquely inept in money matters. Writing to Miss Hitchener in January, 1812, he said that his uncle was going to send him £50, and he added:—

"I shall likewise make money in Ireland. All the money I get shall be squeezed out of the rich. The poor cannot understand, and will not buy, my poems: therefore I shall print them expensively. My metaphysics will also be printed expensively,—the first edition, that is (I am vain enough to hope for a second)."

Writing the next month from Dublin, with a prospect of £400 a year from his family, he says it "will be quite enough for us all: our publications will supply the deficiency." Our *publications!* He was to make money by poems and metaphysics! What a dream! His books never sold. It does not appear that half-a-dozen copies of even the great *Prometheus Unbound* went over the publisher's counter. One clever reviewer—was it not Theodore Hook?—said that the volume was rightly called *Prometheus "Unbound,"* for who would ever think of binding it? Such was the taste of the "rich," and their parasites, in that evil time.

Shelley understood, however, that he was not to print his *Address to the Irish People* "expensively." "I shall wilfully lose money by it," he told Miss Hitchener. He was over there, full of the enthusiasm of illusions, bent on hurrying forward the Irish millennium. He seems to have thought it possible, in one of the few really fine phrases in these letters, to "breathe a soul into the corpse of a nation"—or, as he puts it in a subsequent letter, and still finely though less energetically, to win "the high delight of awakening a noble nation from the lethargy of its bondage." His *Address to the Irish Nation* was not a masterly document. How could it be at his age? But it was something unique in the literature of Irish patriotism, and it contained advice which is still needed in Ireland, especially on the subjects of religion and tolerance. Shelley's methods of distribution were odd—as might be expected. "Copies," he says, "have been sent to 60 public-houses." He sat at the window of his lodging and threw copies out to persons who "looked likely." Harriet was "ready to die of laughter," and "Percy looks so grave." The comicality of it was lost upon his eager spirit.

Shelley also went upon the platform in Dublin, and was much applauded. The people welcomed the young English aristocrat who was so enthusiastic in their cause. But there was soon a little rift within the lute. "More hate me as a freethinker," he wrote, "than love me as a votary of freedom." It

was an old story over again. "Prejudices," as he wrote, "are so violent." People will not be saved by those who dissent from their religion. The mental servitude in which they have been trained from infancy destroys, or weakens to the last degree, their only chance of redemption. G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

THE PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There may exist a difference of opinion as to whether the proposed Conference respecting the religious difficulty in national education should be called at all, but if it is to be called together, there can be no doubt whatever that it ought to be representative of all who have either principles to maintain or grievances to remedy. Who are to be invited in this gathering and what precisely are they to discuss? Will the whole question of the advisability of the State making itself responsible for religious teaching be open for discussion, or is this fundamentally important matter to be taken for granted? If the purpose of the Conference is merely to find the greatest common measure of doctrinal agreement among the leaders of a few powerful religious sects, without reference to the rights and opinions of minorities, then whatever else it may do, it will certainly not end the difficulty that faces us. Should the minorities be overlooked in the invitations to attend this Conference, it will be their duty immediately to combine in order to resist decisions respecting which they have not been consulted.

H. SNELL, *Secretary.*

Secular Education League, 19 Buckingham-street,
London, W.C.

Primitive man, arguing from the known to the unknown, and believing that feelings and passions like his own were animating the world around, obstinately insisted that benefit and suffering followed right and wrong. The friends of Job crudely attributed his sufferings to his sins. And yet doubts could not be stifled. The Tower of Siloam fell on the just and the unjust alike. If righteousness was to be justified by its results, a longer term was necessary—hence the heaven and hell of Christianity, and the passing of the soul from life to life as postulated in the East. But if we ask for proof of these tremendous dogmas, the only answer is that they are necessary to vindicate the moral government of the world. That world may, indeed, have its morality; but its morality is something far beyond our comprehension. What we mean when we talk of morality is something which has grown up in the social life of man and that changes with the progress of that life towards greater unity. Had man been differently constituted, morality would have been different. Had no race of animals attained the social state, it had never existed. From the human point of view, there is only one sense in which morality can be attributed to nature: man's environment was such as to allow the social organism to live and grow. It is only from the existence of humanity that we can infer the beneficence—the partial and conditional beneficence—of nature.—H. S. Swinny, "Positivist Review."

INFIDEL FRANCE.

France is the country where the people, as distinguished from a wealthy refined class, most lives what we call a humane life, the life of civilised man.—Matthew Arnold.

Obituary.

WITH deep sorrow I have to record the death, after a brief illness, of Francis Baxter, formerly Secretary of the Ball's Pond Branch N. S. S. For upwards of twenty years he was my friend: a man of exemplary personal character, clear-thinking, modest, and unassuming, faithful unto death to the principles which had served him as a guide and an inspiration throughout his life. In reverent and sorrowful silence, as befitted his gentle spirit, surrounded by his family and friends, he was laid to rest in Dartford Cemetery on Friday afternoon last.—EDMD. POWNCEBY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "The Conversion of General Booth"; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Christ and Buddha."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Curse of the Cross."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30 and 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Benefit of Unbelief."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, A. Allison, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

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

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): H. P. Ward, 2.45, "The Gospel of Secularism"; 6.30, "Why be Moral? A Secularist Answer." Hymns, etc., by the Choir.

OUTDOOR.

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

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LIVERPOOL: Shiel Park (Shiel-road and Bonler-street), 3, "Is the Resurrection True?" Birkenhead Park Gates, 7, "Secularism the Finest Faith."

BURY: Monday, May 18, at 7.30, "The Failure of Faith in Christ." Tuesday, May 19, at 7.30, "Christianity's Sandy Foundation."

WIGAN: Wednesday, May 20, at 7.30, "Is the Resurrection True?"

ROCHDALE: Thursday, May 21, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain." Friday, May 22, "Secularism the Finest Faith."

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The train leaves Waterloo Station, No. 1 Main Platform, at 11.15 sharp.

Addresses will be delivered after the visit to the grave.

Return trains leave Brookwood at 2.31, 5.19, 7.59, 8.43.

All communications respecting the above should be addressed to the Hon. Sec. of the Fellowship,

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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