

THE Freethinker

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*'Tis the old history ;—Truth without a home,
Despised and slain—then, rising from the tomb*
—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

Socialism and Religion.

WE are neither for nor against Socialism in this journal. We are for Freethought all the time. Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, Socialists, Anarchists, may all have their place in the world, and go their own way, as far as we are concerned. We take no part in their controversies. We advocate something that is good for all men and women of all parties. There are only two things in the world of any real importance—Reason and Humanity. The first is the only true guide; the second is the only true inspiration. And when this gospel is generally accepted, every problem of human society will become simpler and easier, and the worst difficulties of human progress will gradually disappear.

Socialism may be, for all we know, the political and social faith of the future. We express no opinion on the subject. But we do say that Socialism—or anything else—that has to work with human material which is poisoned by superstition, and corrupted by priestcraft, will do very little good for the world. A change in human nature is necessary to every change in human society. To imagine that the old human nature, under the old influences, will produce a really new civilisation, is as absurd as to imagine that oxygen and hydrogen, in certain proportions, will combine as something else than water.

We rejoiced, therefore, when Mr. Robert Blatchford broke through the conspiracy of silence maintained by Socialist leaders on the subject of Freethought. We welcomed his crusade against Christianity, and we were pleased to see that he had the active support or good wishes of his colleagues in the *Clarion*. We could not help seeing, however, that there was danger ahead. Socialism was spreading rapidly, and that very fact involved a peril. When it was powerful enough, when it commanded votes and decided elections, when it had its representatives in parliament, it would be worth patronising. It might also be worth nobbling. And all sorts of people are patronising it—and the more astute clergy are nobbling it. In ten years time, unless the free-thinking Socialists have the courage of their convictions, Socialism will belong to the Christian Churches.

Mr. Campbell's irruption into the Socialist movement is but one instance out of many, but it is a typical one. He had been a Socialist only a couple of years, if as long as that, when he published his *New Theology*; yet he boldly claimed that the New Theology was the religious expression of Socialism, and that Socialism was the economical expression of the New Theology. In his more recent book on *Christianity and the Social Order* he explains that he really does not mean that all unbelievers should be driven out of the Socialist movement. It sounds very generous—of course; but such generosity shows how the wind is blowing.

Many people do not know that there was a strong Socialist movement in England in the first half of last century, and that it died right out, and was

succeeded by Chartism. Why did it die out? The answer is simple. It was killed by religion. Christians got hold of it and strangled it. On the one hand, they declared that Socialism would only do good and prosper by becoming *Christian Socialism*. On the other hand, the Socialist leaders who were also bold Freethinkers—such as Southwell, Holyoake, Paterson, and Matilda Roalfe—were cleared out of the way by means of "blasphemy" prosecutions. Holyoake, in 1842, lecturing on behalf of the fund for the defence of Southwell, spoke as a Socialist missionary, and this was his complaint. "During the last two years," he said, "the wet blanket of orthodoxy has been drawn round the shoulders of Socialism, and it seems to have stood shivering between Christianity and Infidelity, with too much honesty to adopt the one, and too much expediency to own the other." Two years later, Matilda Roalfe, fresh from Calton Jail, declared that "Socialist leaders had proved the very best enemies of Socialism." They had "set about *Religionising* themselves," and talked nonsense about the red-hot Republicanism of Moses and the whole-hog Socialism of Jesus Christ. And what was the result? "Socialism," she said, "is practically defunct—considered as an element of political progress, it is nothing." And the event proved that she was right.

The Socialism of to-day is encountering the peril which overwhelmed the Socialism of last century. And the worst of it is that even the *Clarion* is beginning to show signals of distress. Mr. Blatchford himself wrote as follows a few months ago:—

"Some Socialists regard Socialism as a political creed, and would keep their religious ideas apart from it. But to me Socialism is a part of a great humane religion; and I cannot sacrifice the whole to a part. With us of the *Clarion*, Socialism is part of a religion. We are, as I have told you, religious men and women."

In that same article Mr. Blatchford denied that he was an Atheist. Yet he is obviously as much an Atheist as Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were; and his anxiety to clear himself of the odium of the term is not reassuring.

Mr. A. M. Thompson went further than that in last week's *Clarion*:—

"To us, whose Socialism is also based upon religion, the evidences of its spread amongst religious people is not at all surprising..... We of the *Clarion* believe and contend that the scientific light of the last fifty years has necessitated the readjustment of religion to a newer theory of life; but yet we remain infinitely nearer in attitude to the Christian or Buddhist whose religion means the succor of the fallen and suffering than to the sceptic whose irreligion merely means licence to self-indulgence."

This is the very twang of the tabernacle. Mr. Thompson has caught it to perfection. "Irreligion"—"licence"—"self-indulgence." How familiar it all sounds! And what cant it is! Mr. Thompson is not inside the church yet, but he wears a reverential face on the doorstep, and flings stones at his fellow Freethinkers who pass by. We tell him plainly that "the sceptic whose irreligion merely means licence to self-indulgence" is a creature of the pious imagination. And what about Determinism? Can men believe as they would, or do they believe as they must? The idea of a man being "a sceptic" for any other reason than because his intelligence turns that

way by the weight of evidence, is worthy of two places—a gospel-shop and Bedlam.

Mr. Thompson had something more to say on the same subject:—

“Religion is the basis of our Socialism as it is of the great majority of those middle-class people who have been converted to Socialism by the *Clarion*. It is the religion of Humanity which has brought together in our Fellowship those who have become Socialists by suffering and those who have become Socialists by sympathy. And whatever our differences of opinion as to the details of our beliefs, religion may well draw into one common Fellowship those Christians as well as those Agnostics who sincerely believe.”

What on earth is Mr. Thompson driving at? If he means this seriously his mind is in a sad state of confusion. What resemblance is there between the “religion” of Humanity and the “religion” of believing that a child was born without a father and that a man worked miracles and rose from the dead? Monmouth and Macedon both begin with an M, and comets and peacocks both have tails. In the same way, Humanists and Christians both have a “religion.” But in no other way. And we daresay the Christians are sagacious enough to see it. They are not offering toasted-cheese to Mr. Thompson; he is offering it to them. Neither are they likely to nibble at the bait. But he had better take care that he does not make a mistake some fine evening and walk into his own trap.

We hope the *Clarion* men will pull up in time and cease talking about their “religion.” There are enough Socialist leaders already playing that foolish and not too honest game. A cause can be given away in spite of its growth in numbers and influence. There is such a thing as too rapid expansion. You may win over the mob only to find in the end that the mob has won over you. And where are you then?

G. W. FOOTE.

Psychology and Christianity.

PSYCHOLOGY is a comparatively new science. Until recently the study of mental phenomena was regarded as a department of metaphysics. It was held that the human mind differed, not only in degree, but absolutely and generically from mind in the lower animals. But with the advent of the theory of evolution there sprang up an entirely new method of examining psychological processes, whether conscious or sub-conscious; and the pursuit of this scientific method soon made it clear that the highest psychical action in the most highly-developed man may be traced back to its crude beginning in a simple response to the stimulus of the environment. As Professor W. H. Hudson well says, “the business of scientific psychology is to follow the process of progressive integration and differentiation, step by step, from reflex action, through sensation, instinct, memory, reason, the feelings, and the will, relating their progressive changes at every point with corresponding changes in the nervous system.” Then the Professor emphasises the following important point:—

“But more than this: the principle of continuity further warns us against any attempt to fix a barrier between physiological and psychological phenomena. The manifestations of physical and mental activity have also their unity of composition, for the life of the body and mental life are species, of which life, properly so called, is the genus.”

Now, the Rev. W. R. Inge, M.A., D.D., Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, claims psychology as an invaluable ally of Christianity. It was to that effect that he addressed the last Church Congress; and the views he then expressed are still further popularised in that epoch-making thesaurus, the *Daily Mail Year Book of the Churches*. Psychology, the Professor informs us, tries to “discover the natural history of the religious consciousness as it

manifests itself in the life of the individual.” But he warns us against expecting too much from it at first. “The psychology of religion,” he admits, “is a very young science, which is only feeling its way to important results. We must not ask impatiently what it has proved, or to what practical use it can be put, but rather what light it promises to throw upon Christian life and Christian belief.” The subtitle of the paper is “Psychology as an Aid to Christianity.” Up to the present, however, the aid is yet to come; it is merely a thing of promise, not of actual fulfilment. And Christians must learn to wait patiently for the honoring of this promissory-note, in as full a belief as is possible that solid cash awaits them in the not very distant future. Such is the assurance which Professor Inge ventures to give them.

And yet it must not be inferred that psychology has hitherto rendered Christianity no service at all. For one thing “it has once for all put out of date a manner of thinking and speaking about religion which was common enough from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.” As examples of that manner, Dr. Inge quotes from Hobbes, Gibbon, and Shelley, the quotation from Hobbes being as follows: “Religion is superstition sanctioned by the State.” Of course, the Professor is careful not to tell us that the purpose of Hobbes was very largely political; but, allowing that to pass, is the habit of calling religion “superstition” out of date? Is not the number of those who so regard it larger now than ever it was before? Furthermore, Hobbes framed a definition of religion that has never been surpassed: “Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind or imagined from tales publicly allowed, RELIGION; not allowed, SUPERSTITION” (*Leviathan*, p. 34). Is that definition out of date? Has psychology made any discovery that affects it in the slightest degree? Is it out of date to claim reason or common sense as the “tribunal before which religious belief must be brought up for acceptance or rejection?” There is a sense, we know, in which the work done by the Free-thinkers of the past was so completely successful that the arguments which they employed are now entirely out of date; but that is fully accounted for by the fact that the Christian apologists of the present have utterly abandoned as worthless the evidences, or proofs, of Christianity on which their fathers so confidently relied. Dr. Inge is himself aware of this, for he says that “the older generation of scientists had not much difficulty in meeting the arguments of the evidential school,” a school which, he admits, is now out of date. But to say that the eighteenth-century attitude to Christianity, or its “common sense rationalism,” is now out of date is to be guilty of a mischievous misrepresentation. On this particular question psychology is absolutely silent.

Evidently Professor Inge belongs to the new school of Apologists, whose one appeal is to the testimony of religious experience. He charges “the older generation of scientists” with brushing this aside with “lofty disdain.” Well, what aid does psychology offer to Christianity with respect to the experiences to which belief in it gives rise? Dr. Inge cannot tell us. All he can say is that the young science treats them “seriously and respectfully.” But when he affirms that “the psychology of religion has shown that religion is an integral and normal part of human nature,” he commits an unpardonable scientific blunder. It is quite true that psychology examines religious experience with due seriousness and respect, but it is not true that it makes the smallest contribution to religious apologetics. It certainly does not declare that religion is “an integral and normal part of human nature.” The psychological study of religion has brought into prominence the undoubted truth that religious beliefs are essential to religious experiences, and that the character of the latter is invariably determined by that of the former. Both may be perfectly sincere, but their sincerity has nothing whatever to do with the objective truth of religion. On one point, however, the testimony of psychology is direct and dis-

inct. It has learned that in the absence of religious belief there is no religious experience, and that the former is always absent unless mechanically instilled into the mind. Consequently, religion is not "an integral and normal part of human nature"; it is not even an excrescence, but rather a foreign graft artificially inserted in the stock of humanity. Dr. Inge admits that there are psychologists who "try to explain all intense religious feelings as morbid symptoms, connected with derangement of the nervous system." How on earth, then, can he claim psychology as "an aid to Christianity"?

We must bear in mind that Dr. Inge is a Professor of Divinity, and that, as such, he is naturally prejudiced against all psychologists who treat religion as a psychological illusion. To him, Feuerbach, Lombroso, and Max Nordau are hopelessly eccentric, simply because they brand religion and all forms of genius with that stigma. But there are other psychologists, such as Leuba and Ribot, to whom the religious sentiment is merely a fact which they are called upon to "analyse and follow in its transformations," but the "objective value or legitimacy" of which they are not competent, as psychologists, to discuss. The strange thing in this connection is, that Professor Inge is bound to concede the justice of this limitation as applied to the psychological treatment of religion. Take the following characteristic passage:—

"The object of psychology is to determine the genuine character of each religious experience, in and for itself, putting aside any interpretation of it imported from other sources. The psychologist, when he confines himself strictly to his own sphere, must do justice to the conviction of a transcendent world of spiritual reality, but must abstain from passing any judgment as to the objective truth of the conviction. He would be passing beyond the limits of his special subject if he were to discuss the bearing of religious experience on ultimate truth. That is an inquiry which lies altogether outside his province. Psychology endeavors to determine the laws which regulate the growth or decay of the religious life, but it makes no pretence to hold the keys of the great mysteries which lie behind psychical experience."

Now we hold that, even on Dr. Inge's own showing, Christianity derives no aid whatever from psychology. Freethinkers are prepared to acquiesce in the statement that religious beliefs may be honestly cherished, and that religious experiences are often thoroughly sincere; but they are also convinced that in such a statement there is not even the shadow of proof that the beliefs and the experiences have any corresponding realities behind them. Whatever Leuba and Ribot may or may not say on this point, we maintain, on purely psychological grounds, that religion is not "a normal state of the healthy mind," but rather an abnormal state of a mind diseased, and that it is not a spontaneous growth except when the soil has been laboriously prepared for it. Leave a child to itself, and it will never become religious. This is a statement capable of the fullest and most conclusive verification. Indeed, we are impelled to make the assertion that if religion *were* a normal state of the healthy mind, a spontaneous growth in every normal heart, such a fact would be a strong presumptive evidence of its objective truth. That such is not the case has been established by innumerable instances that cannot possibly be controverted.

We have now seen that Dr. Inge has wholly failed to justify his thesis. Even the most remarkable conversions psychology can satisfactorily explain without any reference whatsoever to any supernatural agency. "Account for these changed lives," loudly demands the revivalist. We can, and do, account for them in a thoroughly natural way. Conversion is psychologically a most naturally explicable event. But on the assumption that religion is objectively true, we boldly declare that to account for the unchanged lives, which are so overwhelmingly in the majority, is a task beyond the powers of the wisest revivalist in Christendom.

J. T. LLOYD.

Science and the Church Congress.—II.

(Continued from p. 323.)

THE undeniable fact—and it is one that by itself effectually disposes of Christian claims—is that not only did Christianity not add to the existing store of knowledge, but it so discountenanced and fought against it that it sank out of men's minds, almost ceasing to exist even as a memory. No one who has an adequate conception of the state of scientific knowledge as it existed six or seven hundred years after the establishment of Christianity will deny that it was in every respect lower than before the Christian religion assumed power. Literally the scientific knowledge of antiquity had to be rediscovered, much as the palæontologist unearths the extinct forms of animal life, and reconstructs for us the fauna of a bygone epoch. And it is only stating the plainest of historic facts to say that the impetus towards a saner study of nature than that permitted by the Church owed absolutely nothing to Christianity either for its spirit or on the score of assistance. The impact of Mohammedan civilisation, which, because it was beyond Christian influences, had kept alive much of the spirit and results of ancient science, and the direct effect of Pagan learning at the period of renaissance, served to reawaken a spirit of healthful inquiry which the Church, powerfully as it fought, was never able to again crush. Left to the influences of Christianity alone, it is impossible to see how or when Europe would have emerged from the night of the Dark Ages.

This last consideration is one to which sufficient attention is not often paid. The historical knowledge of the average person is so slight, and wrong conclusions on the subject are so carefully fostered, that because the revival of learning occurred in Christendom it is taken to have been, in part at least, a product of Christian influences. A closer acquaintance with the period, however, proves that the Renaissance was essentially a revival of the old Pagan learning in both knowledge and spirit. In art, in literature, in the desire for civic freedom and dignity, as well as in the wish to acquire a more exact knowledge of nature, the best and most admirable features of the Renaissance were frankly Pagan. The Christianity of the intervening centuries represented largely a break in the development of the human intellect; a period to which no one looked for information, and in which no one sought for inspiration.

Mr. Tennant, as we have seen, does not deny the evil influence of Christianity on scientific thought, although he does put in some sort of an apology for it. Some portion of this apology is so misleading as to almost involve positive falsehood. What, for example, is one to make of the following?—

"The superstitions which Christianity owed to their pagan culture, with regard to demoniacal agencies, charms, and magic, doubtless would retard the progress of sound views as to the treatment of disease if views of this kind were ever voiced. But such an attitude in Christian men cannot be attributed to their Christianity."

The last sentence is simply astounding; and to make it Mr. Tennant must possess a quite phenomenal faith in the ignorance or credulity of his readers. The doubt whether sound views as to the nature of disease "were ever voiced" evinces a strange lack of acquaintance with the state of knowledge existing in antiquity. Five hundred years before the Christian era Hippocrates had asserted that all madness was due to disease of the brain. Galen and others carried on the same teaching, and elaborated its application. Lucretius definitely ascribed *all* disease to natural causes. And what is more striking still, the development of medical and surgical science continued among the Mohammedans, while among the Christians it gave place to exorcism and miracle-cure. This last fact is really decisive. The Mohammedans actually built their medical science—from whom Europe gained a fresh start at

a later period—upon the remains of the Pagan medical knowledge preserved at Alexandria. Christians also had the same knowledge at their disposal, and the result was seen in its complete suppression, and the establishment of views that for centuries made plague and pestilence periodical visitors, and manufactured a dozen lunatics for every one for whom it provided shelter.

The attitude of Christian men towards disease, says Mr. Tennant, cannot be attributed to their Christianity. To what, then, are we to attribute their views? Let it be granted for the moment that sound views on disease and general science did not exist among the ancients. The claim is that Christianity effected a vast improvement in the world's welfare. But if we consider all that is involved in such things as hygiene, the proper understanding of disease, and the general application of scientific knowledge to life, and as, admittedly, Christianity was altogether deficient in sound views on these matters, but, on the contrary, established and maintained quite erroneous opinions, the impossibility of it having effected any improvement in the world's affairs becomes manifest. For the whole truth is, as Buckle long since pointed out, that civilisation develops not so much by increased moral aspiration as by the growth of knowledge and its application to life.

It is difficult to believe that Mr. Tennant does not know that the attitude of the early Christians towards disease was directly based upon scriptural example and precept. From one end of the Bible to the other disease is universally regarded as of supernatural origin, to be treated by supernatural methods. The New Testament thoroughly enforces the same lesson. Among the most prominent works of the gospel Jesus is the healing of disease by a touch or by a word, the casting-out of devils from lunatics and epileptics. The cure of disease "in my name" was one of the special powers conferred upon the disciples by Jesus; the explicit teaching is that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," and last, but by no means least, Mr. Tennant belongs to a church which confers upon him at his ordination the power of curing the sick by supernatural methods. When, therefore, Origen said "It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, and pestilences," when Augustine said that "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons," when Tertullian denounced surgery because it desecrated the temple of the Holy Ghost, and when other Christian writers denounced the sinfulness of resorting to medicine to cure disease, they possessed the highest possible authority—for a Christian—for all they said and did. When, too, one finds a Christian clergyman, before an assemblage of clergymen, and in defiance of both historic and Christian teaching, making statements such as the one criticised, one need feel little surprise that the average person should be ill-informed on such matters. In other walks of life such wild statements would disqualify a man from taking any further part in public affairs. Here, the long-established practice of distorting the truth in the interests of Christianity supplies such people with a Bill of Indemnity.

There is only one other remark of Mr. Tennant's that calls for observation. This, not so much because of what is said as on account of all that it implies. As we have seen, Mr. Tennant admits that in purely scientific matters Christianity, as such, had nothing to teach the world, but endorsed opinions that were already partly outgrown. It would also be an easy task to prove that in the matter of morality teaching as good and as effective as anything in Christianity was current among non-Christian writings. But at least one would imagine that on the nature of the Bible and of religion Christianity would have been able to give the world reliable and useful information. How little it taught the world that was reliable, even in its own department, may be seen in the admission that "the acquisition of a scientific knowledge of nature has

forced upon theology the recognition of the untenability of her traditional view as to the authority of Scripture." It is also conceded that science has rendered many other services to religion.

The position is really almost amusing. Here is a religion on behalf of which the most extravagant claims have been, and are, made. In its service are many thousands of professional speakers and writers who, in virtue of their office, have pronounced more or less dogmatically on social and scientific matters. Yet all the time more accurate views of the Bible and of religion have emanated not from those who stood forward as our teachers, but from those whose mind and studies have often enough been of a non-Christian, if not anti-Christian, character. And these more correct views have been "forced" upon the Christian Churches, not adopted by them, as the result of a healthy readiness to embrace truth. What, then, has been the use in maintaining for so long a religious organisation that even in its own department has been incapable of giving the world anything worth having. If the more correct views of the Bible, of man, of the world, are the product of non-Christian criticism and research, is it not plain that theology represents a useless expenditure of time and energy? Nay, worse than useless, since to the fact that sounder views than the churches taught have been forced upon Christians we have to add the loss of time and ability, even of life, that has resulted from thinkers having to fight religious obstruction every step of the way. All that the clergy, all that Christian organisations, even at their best and in their most chastened moments, have ever been able to do is to follow in the rear of scientific workers, re-echoing teachings that have been "forced" upon them by a handful of brave, earnest workers. To justify the expenditure of all the time, energy, and money that religious organisations involve, to justify the maintenance of an army of men 50,000 strong, these men and these organisations should be at least the repositories of truths that could not be acquired in their absence. Do any such truths exist? Is there a single valuable element in modern life that we owe to theology or to theological organisations? I know of none. All along Christianity has played the part of a parasite upon civilised society, demanding nutriment, giving nothing in return, and securing the degradation of the organism on which it lives.

(To be concluded.)

C. COHEN.

Notes on Tour.—I.

MY last notes were written from Sydney, and I had to record a severe drought over a great part of Australia, and days of humiliation and prayer for rain. Now weather conditions have swung round to the other extreme, and devastating floods are the rule over nearly the whole of the eastern coast of Queensland and N.S.W. Indeed, the floods have wrought quite as much havoc among the settlers as did the drought. So clearly is everything seen to be the handiwork of the Great Architect—in Australia as elsewhere. Since these untoward happenings Jehovah has received reinforcements. Sir Harry Rawson, the genial Governor of N.S.W., has, at the request of the citizens, been granted a further term of office, and he declares that it will be his aim to promote the glory of God in the State. Certainly Omnipotence cannot complain of any lack of "barrackers," if I may use an Australian classical expression.

Several well-known missionaries are in a state of great perturbation. A few weeks ago, a subscription list was opened in favor of our leading cricketer, Montague Noble. As we are a great sporting people, the money for this fund has simply rolled in, and the soul-savers are asking where they come in. Several of them have written long, whining letters to the *Herald*, pointing out that thousands can easily be collected for a great cricketer, whilst it is often

difficult to provide a modest £84 a year to send a missionary to the poor heathen in New Guinea or the South Sea Islands. Though I admit that sporting of every kind is overdone here, I am glad to say the great majority of Australians are much more concerned about the result of the test matches than about the destination of either their own souls or those of the "little brown man." The young Australian's answer to the missionary's appeal is, "Bowled out!"

Even in far-off Australia a good deal of interest has been taken in the recent Boulter case, and numerous articles on Blasphemy have appeared in the Sydney papers—most of them betraying the usual press ignorance both of blasphemy prosecutions and of the law on this subject. The *Daily Telegraph* devotes two columns to a general discussion of blasphemy, and an account of trials for that heinous crime. But no mention is made of the trial of Lorando Jones in Sydney in 1871. This man, whom I knew well, belonged to Parramatta, and was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for saying one Sunday afternoon in the local park that "the God of the Old Testament was a cruel, bloodthirsty monster." Owing to the efforts of David Buchanan, a member of the Legislative Assembly, Jones was released after serving one month. Nor is any reference made in the *Telegraph* to the fact that the Criminal Law Amendment Act deals with blasphemy, enacting that nothing said in the way of *bona-fide* argument shall be deemed an offence. What the *Telegraph* man doesn't know about blasphemy amounts to something considerable.

Coming to Victoria, I find the pious *Argus*—the typical "granny" of Australian journalism—complaining bitterly of the small attendances at church on the Sabbath, and calling upon the spiritual guides to "bestir themselves and realise the gravity of the situation." Well, the Victorians cannot "bestir themselves" much further in the way of legislation, for Sunday in Melbourne is already as close a day as the law can make it—hardly equalled in this respect, so the much-travelled say, by the Puritanic States of America, or Presbyterian Caledonia. The *Bendigo Advertiser* takes a brutally commercial view of the paucity of worshipers at "divine service." This journal says that the fare provided is probably not worth the price demanded, and another paper asserts that the average pulpit elocution in Australia would fail to gain a prize in any competition organised by a Debating Society. But the real explanation of the falling-off in church attendance is to be found in the fact that the advocates of Sabbatarianism do not constitute anything like the majority that they think. How is it, then, that they are able to dominate so completely? Simply because they are well organised, while their opponents are not organised at all. I could not help thinking, when I was in the city where Joseph Symes worked so strenuously for our cause, of the way the veteran castigated the "kid-glove Freethinkers," as he called them, who would never join any organisation or assist in any fight against bigotry and intolerance.

In Adelaide, "the city of churches," I heard very little worth recording; but here again a recent occurrence shows the inestimable advantage of organisation. An old Freethinker left £11,000 to the Adelaide Branch of the Secular Society—a Branch at one time vigorous and flourishing, but now almost, if not quite, non-existent. It was thought by some that the old members could have made a fight for the money with chances of success; but when it was ascertained that, the will failing, the estate would go to two grandchildren, it was decided not to contest the case. This course will perhaps meet with general approval; but suppose the alternative had been an escheat to the Crown, what a disappointment and loss to our cause would have resulted!

Here in Perth, West Australia, the last Australian port visited, there never was any Freethought organisation, and I believe such a thing as a real live Atheist would indeed be a *rara avis* in this part of

the world. This State, however, has been far from fortunate in its soul-savers. Quite recently a very prominent Methodist parson—an ex-President of the Conference—committed suicide, declaring that he had been persecuted to death. Another clergyman here acted similarly some months ago. I should not mention these matters were it not for the fact that several times lately the clergy and their hireling press have asserted that increase in suicides is due to the "gloom which must be expected to follow a weakening of religious ties."

A. D. MCLAREN.

Acid Drops.

François Coppée, the French poet just dead, was a fighting Freethinker in the days of his strength. When his powers weakened, after a bad illness, he went back to Catholicism. It was simply a case of pathology.

Rev. Edward Floyer Noel Smith, of St. Mary's Vicarage, Tottenham, left £7,395. Rather a sprat than a whale in the ocean of clerical wealth, but a bloated millionaire in comparison with the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount. We are afraid that the deceased gentleman had to take the wrong turning.

Rev. Thomas Beaumont, of Oakley Lodge, Leamington, left £217,010. Not a sprat this, but a regular whale. How his blubber will burn in hell! We beg pardon—in Hades! That is to say, if Christianity be true. But it isn't, you know. And the clergy are well aware of the fact. Would they act as they do if they believed what they preach?

Christian leaders have been misrepresenting Mr. Campbell's view of "sin"—and "even darker charges have been made against my personal character." But that is "a small matter." The terrible thing is misrepresenting his teaching about "sin"; and as this has just been done for (say) the three-millionth time by the Bishop of Hull (not Hell, mind), Mr. Campbell says "it is surely time that the lie was nailed to the counter." The lie! Well, if it is a lie, let it be called a lie. We have no objection whatever. But what a row the Christians have made from time to time when we have had occasion to use the same word! Hugh Price Hughes, for instance, crawled out of the awkward position into which we had placed him by exposing his Atheist Shoemaker story, on the ground that he couldn't possibly discuss with a vulgar Atheist who used such a dreadful word as a "lie." His dear friend—and colleague in that business—George Jacob Holyoake, backed up the reverend gentleman's objection. And the sweet Christites rolled their eyes piously up to heaven at the thought of our awful behavior. It is shocking wickedness to use the word "lie" about a man of God; and only Atheists used such abominable language at all. So they pretended. But the word was in common use by themselves. We noted case after case in the *Freethinker* at the time. Yet it was no use. Christians might steal a sheep, while Freethinkers might not look over a hedge. And the same thing went on when we called Torrey a liar for deliberately slandering the characters of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. That he had lied could hardly be disputed, but to call him a liar was so vulgar! Yes, because the liar was a Christian, and his accuser was an Atheist. Here we have Mr. Campbell using the word "lie" against a fellow Christian—or, as he might prefer to call him, a Christian fellow; and nobody will take him to task or call him a "vulgar disputant." It is just the same, by the way, in regard to "blasphemy." Freethinkers, and Freethinkers only, are punishable for violating "the decencies of controversy." Christians may violate them as freely as they please. In other words—for that is what it comes to—the Christians are the biggest hypocrites on earth.

Lord Hugh Cecil spoke at the annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society. His subject was sin. It was entirely appropriate to the audience and the occasion.

Good old Liverpool! By a majority of 66 to 23 the City Council has decided against Sunday music in the parks. One of the speakers against it, Dr. Utting, let the cat out of the bag—tail and all. "The found in Liverpool," he said, "the clergymen of the Church of England and other denominations were strongly opposed to Sunday music in the parks, feeling that it would have a prejudicial effect upon the attendance of children at Sunday-school." Professional interest—naked and unashamed!

The late earthquakes around Mount Etna destroyed or severely injured nearly every dwelling-house within an area of six square miles. They also destroyed the boundary walls of the vineyards, while the crops were overwhelmed by *débris* from the fiery craters. To show its impartiality, "Providence" allowed the big church at Ammalati to fall in, and several other sanctuaries to totter.

More "Providence." A tornado that swept across West Louisiana laid the town of Gilliam in ruins. The whole oil region was devastated. Over a hundred people were killed and nearly a thousand injured. "He doeth all things well."

The train that was wrecked in Belgium last week, with such a shocking list of killed and injured, was carrying *pilgrims*. "Providence" again!

The Bible League is still in existence, and has just held its annual meetings. Composed of blind believers, its utterances are bound to be irrational. Giving modern knowledge the go-by, stifling the voice of reason, and despising the dictates of common sense, it glories in its ability to be still loyal to the ancient orthodoxy. The Bible Leaguers are the only Christians now left in England, all others who call themselves such being falsifiers of the truth and wicked blasphemers. Our only comfort is that, although there is a live Dean among them, they are intellectually so out of court as to be incapable of any real mischief.

The Rev. Dr. Ambrose Shepherd, of Glasgow, has just presented the world with a brand new definition of Atheism, a definition calculated to revolutionise the whole thinking of the immediate future on the subject. Preaching the annual sermon of the London Missionary Society in the City Temple, he said: "Atheism, which means inhumanity." This definition will surely commend itself to British Secularists as etymologically the correctest, ethically the sanest, and religiously the most charitable ever framed. They will glory in this charming new name—*Inhumanists*. This is what we are, Dr. Shepherd says so, and a man of God is always right, and let us not forget it; *Atheists* = *Inhumanists*.

Speaking seriously, we challenge this Glasgow sky-pilot to justify his definition. We earnestly call upon him to mention one community of Atheists in which inhumanity flourished unchecked from within. There is at least one society of pure Atheists in his own city; has he the audacity to say that that society is characterised by its inhumanity? Does not Dr. Shepherd know that if you scratch almost any criminal, in or out of prison, you will find a Theist and, most likely, a Christian? The reverend gentleman has more than once declined to meet a representative Atheist in debate; and yet he did not hesitate to lie about Atheism from the Coward's Castle. We ask him, as an honest man, either to produce the verifying facts, or to withdraw this wicked definition.

The Rev. S. Chadwick is a "whole-hogger." The Bible alone is enough for him, and naturally he thinks it should also be enough for others. "There is," he says, "no problem of any condition of life, or anything, the solution of which will not be found in the principles laid down in this Book—questions of money, questions of work and wages, questions of manual labor, questions of social and political economy." Now, this is what one *may* call a believer. We notice that the *Times* is offering to supply an elaborate edition of the Bible on the instalment system. Perhaps Mr. Chadwick has been interviewing Mr. Hooper, and the *Times* intends the Bible to take the place of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Christians deplore the fact that churches and chapels are being abandoned by the mass of the people. London sanctuaries, which were crowded to the doors less than twenty years ago, are less than half-filled to-day. The explanation is to be found in the fact that intelligent folk are getting unutterably sick and tired of the sheer nonsense served out to them from the pulpit. The other Sunday evening, the minister of a large and beautiful Nonconformist chapel, situated in a populous district, discoursed to a very small congregation on Isaiah xxxv.; and when boiled down, all he said amounted to this: "Human experience without God in it is a cold, dry, barren wilderness; human experience with God at its centre is a mirage converted into a pool, a desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose." That sermon had not the remotest connection with the text; and it was palpably false from start to finish. Is it any wonder that the chapel was not even two-thirds full?

Even on his own showing the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw-Thompson's plea for foreign mission defeats itself. In his address from the Chair of the Congregational Union, he made two fatal admissions. In the first place, he contended that the heathen will not burn for ever in hell even if they do not get the Gospel of Christ. In the second place, he conceded that it cannot truthfully be said that the Pagan world is morally in a much, if any, worse plight than Christendom. Then, in the name of common sense, why send men out to reform foreign countries when our own country is confessedly not one whit better than they, if in some respects as good?

With those significant admissions from the Chairman of the Congregational Union in mind, one can see the force of Professor George Adam Smith's pathetic appeal, in his sermon on behalf of the Colonial Missionary Society, not to hamper the efforts of missionaries by allowing reports of how badly Christianity is doing its work at home to reach the heathen. But such reports, being true, cannot be withheld. Besides, Japan, China, and India are beginning to find out for themselves that Christian civilisation is by no means the fine, ideal product they have been taught to regard it.

Mr. W. W. Astor's new residential hotel—the Apthorpe—in New York consists of magnificent suits of flats. According to the newspapers, the hotel is to be barred against Jews. Yet we understand that Mr. Astor worships a dead Jew as a God.

Margaret M'Caffery, a Birkenhead cook, and a religious maniac, was found fatally injured on the Wirral Railway. The jury found that there was not evidence enough to show how she fell out of the train. In a letter found upon her she wrote: "There must be more devotion to our Blessed Lady"—meaning the Virgin Mary. Margaret M'Caffery's own devotion to that personage does not seem to have done her much good.

How well informed Christian critics are! A writer in the *Methodist Times* says that the writers who have taught and who still propagate Socialism, are mainly Agnostics, Infidels, and Atheists. This may be true, but the proof offered is peculiar. The names cited are Paine, Voltaire, Rousseau, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Blatchford. The first three were Deists, and the last only is a Socialist. Christian proof, like Christian truth, is something peculiar to itself.

Mr. R. J. Campbell says, "It rests with the Churches of this land to say what the future civilisation is going to be. Is it to be Christian or is it not?" It rests with the Churches! We rather fancy Mr. Campbell has omitted the Chinese themselves. It is just possible they may have a word to say on the subject.

Presuming the conversation to be genuine, someone has been "taking a rise" out of Professor George Adam Smith. Preaching in the City Temple the other day, this gentleman narrated a conversation he had had with a Mohammedan official. Professor Smith remarked that "the finest form of justice is not to oppress other religions, and not to slay or persecute a man because God has not yet given him your faith." With this the Mohammedan agreed, and added, "It is a lesson hard to learn, and to be true at the same time to your own religion. You Christians seem to be the only people on earth that have learnt it." The Mohammedan must have been a bit of a wag, and Professor Smith must be quite impervious to satire. As a matter of fact, religion for religion, and with equal opportunities for persecution, Mohammedanism has been far more tolerant than ever Christianity has been. Spain under the Crescent and Spain under the Cross, is a good case in point. Christians never have ceased to persecute while the opportunity for persecution offered itself, and have not ceased even to-day. Nonconformists, of whom Professor Smith is one, never cease to cry out about the persecuting policy of the Established Church in this country, and of the Roman Church elsewhere. And the attitude of Christians generally towards non-Christians usually displays as much persecution as circumstances permit. The follower of the Prophet must have indulged in a broad smile after the sober Scotch Professor had gone his way. Assuming, of course, that the conversation really took place. But we must confess to considerable suspicion about the larger number of these "experiences" served from the pulpit. The amount of truth there is in them when they concern *Freethinkers*, we know, and this knowledge does not encourage faith in the rest. And the pulpit is a place in which men's ideal of truth undergoes a wonderful transformation.

Professor Smith also credited Christianity with having secured perfect freedom in India for all religions. We should much like to know in what way Christianity is responsible for this. Those who know the history of our relations with India know that the bigotry of Christians in India has always been one of the most dangerous factors in the situation. Christian bigotry played no small part in stirring up the Mutiny, and it was only against severe pressure from organised Christian bodies that the government of India instituted and carried out its policy of freedom towards religions of all descriptions, and patronage to none.

Rev. R. F. Horton, like other men in his profession, lets the truth out now and then. In his sermon last Sunday on "The Corrosive Press" he said that "signs of corrosion were creeping into the pages of some of the established newspapers, including some of the so-called religious journals." But why "so-called"? Dr. Horton also said that "an enormous number of people were fed on lies." That is because they were brought up on lies—in their childhood, by Christian teachers.

The "corrosive press" is unfaltering in the support it gives to Christianity. It steadily boycotts Freethought and as steadily advertises Christianity. It knows the kind of people that Christianity develops, it knows the type of mind that luxuriates in Church and Chapel, and it rails in, and in the name of Jesus, grabs the profits. And surely Dr. Horton, who desires to see Freethinkers shut out of human society, ought to feel a little gratitude for those journals that so carefully keep their readers from contact with unbelief.

Dr. Horton says that some of these papers actually organise evangelistic missions, import "boy preachers" and "girl wonders," and arrange that half the collections shall be given to either the agency or the preachers. This may be true enough; but let it be noted that this can only be done in collusion with church or chapel, and that the religious papers invariably write up such missions, and print glowing accounts of the "wonderful results" that accrue. All lies, of course, but all part of the religious machinery of the country. Consider how the religious world "worked" poor, half-insane Evan Roberts. Consider how it wrote up the infamous Torrey. Now it is admitted that these missions were ghastly failures; but the religious press, too, knows its public, with its Bourbon habit of neither learning wisdom nor forsaking folly. Dr. Horton cannot both have his cake and eat it. If he wishes people to be intelligently truthful and sanely moral he must be prepared for their ceasing to be Christian. If he will have them Christian, if he will serve them up mythology for history, and place obstacles in the way of getting an intelligent view of life, if he will encourage them to seek the mentally stupefying dissipation of mission service and prayer-meeting, he must not be surprised if they become the dupes of any charlatan that cares to practise on them. The public, such as it is, is largely a product of Christian influences; and if we are to have a different public we must modify the influences that operate on it. The "corrosive press" is not a disease, but a symptom; and if the Amalgamated Press retorted with a series of articles on "The Corrosive Creed" it could provide some very lively reading. Only, in that case, the Christians who now buy would cease to purchase.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, writing in that curious production, the *Daily Mail Year Book of the Churches*, pays the Savior of the world a strange compliment. This reverend globe-trotter admits the present serious arrest of the saving business, and deploras it; but the Churches must wait patiently until some Spurgeon or Wesley or Dale turns up, and becomes the means of spiritual revival and quickening. What price Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost? The former said that all power in heaven and on earth had been imparted to him; and yet, omnipotent and all-loving though he be, the glorious work is at a standstill, and worse, because there is no longer any Spurgeon or Wesley or Dale! But Meyer is here, there, and everywhere—won't he do as well as any Spurgeon, Wesley, or Dale? In any case, the Divine soul-saver deserves our sincerest pity!

"China must be won for Christ, at whatever cost, and as speedily as possible," cry the Churches with a loud voice. But why? Speaking for the Licensing Bill, at the Albert Hall the other day, the editor of the *Methodist Times* said: "Great Britain must come up to the level of China." The truth will out—occasionally.

Bishop Awdry writes another letter from Tokio to the *Times* on "The Character of the Japanese." After pointing

out how the Japanese are rapidly correcting certain faults of theirs, of which they had become conscious, the Bishop says that "we English need to learn something of the peculiar virtues of Japan, and unless we do learn them the result to the British Empire may be disastrous, and that quickly." Individual selfishness, for instance, must not stand against national interest. It is this sense of social discipline which makes Japan so powerful in peace and so formidable in war. "The Japanese have still," the Bishop says, "those excellent qualities in which they startled us by being manifestly superior to ourselves, and they are making rapid progress in those in which they are our pupils." What a confession for a Christian Bishop to make, with respect to a Heathen nation, nearly two thousand years after the birth of Christianity!

"The Spirit always answers the prayers which he himself prompts," says a man of God. Then the Spirit must be a wretchedly poor prompter. The reverend gentleman continues: "Sisera's chariots may number 900, but Jehovah's chariots are 20,000, and we know where the victory lies." So do we; we learn it from history. And yet ministers will deliver themselves of such unutterable twaddle. It is all they have.

How many Christians have raised their eyes in holy horror at the title of Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *Was Jesus Insane?* Mr. Foote's offence, however, was simply being in advance of his time. Some men get up early, and others wait till the world is well warmed. Intellectually speaking, Mr. Foote belongs to the former class. That explains all the ostracism and persecution he has suffered. But he will have his revenge, living or dead, and what does it matter which? His question about the sanity of Jesus—that is, the Jesus of the four Gospels—is being asked now by others. We see from our Paris contemporary, *La Raison*, that Dr. Binet-Sanglé, professor at the School of Psychology, has written "a remarkable work" on *La Folie de Jésus*. The author treats Jesus as a physical and mental degenerate. So much we see from the notice in *La Raison*. We shall see more in the book itself as soon as we are able to obtain it from Paris.

We really don't see why "blasphemy" prosecutions should be confined to Freethinkers. Some of the clergy are sadly in need of a castigation. Take the Rev. S. Chadwick, for instance. This gentleman preached to the Mayor and Corporation of Southampton recently in the East-street Wesleyan Church, and we have been favored with the report of his sermon in the *Southern Daily Echo*. Mr. Chadwick said, "Creation groans, the saints groan, God groans." It was a groaning business altogether, and the reverend gentleman certainly took his share in the doleful concert. But he wound up in this blasphemous fashion:—

"I used to wonder why the millennium was so long coming. If the evangelisation of the world had been committed to a syndicate of smart business men it would have been done much quicker. Why does God not hurry up and get it done? For the simple reason that the Omnipotent cannot move one step faster than the Church is prepared to go."

We quite agree with the preacher on one point. A smart syndicate of business men, having at command the immense income of all the various Christian bodies, would make much quicker progress with the evangelisation of the world. With all that money, indeed, they would soon persuade most people—who, as Carlyle said, are fools—to believe in Mother Hubbard, Bluebeard, or Jack-and-the-Beanstalk—which are all as credible as the Resurrected Christ. What we have to complain of is Mr. Chadwick's "blasphemy" against the Almighty. Fancy this groaning little pulpit-banger giving God the tip to hurry up! Fancy his counter-stating that the Church sets the pace to the Omnipotent! The Lord God Almighty can't go any faster than Chadwick and Co. choose to let him! Why, the Boulter "blasphemy" was nothing to this. Mr. Justice Phillimore ought to make the Southampton "blasphemer" give an undertaking not to repeat his offence.

If the clergy go on in this way we shall seriously think of retiring on an old-age pension. They will be able to run the *Freethinker* so much better than we can. There would be more "blasphemy" in it in one week, under their management, than under ours in twelve months. Perhaps they might give us a job as sub-editor, to tone down their "blasphemy" a bit, for the sake of the weaker brethren, such as Infidels and Atheists.

With his usual disregard of accuracy, the Rev. F. C. Spurr, speaking at the annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, declared that "science itself is on the side of Theism." We ask, which science? Lord Kelvin admitted

that physical science knows nothing of God. He was himself a physicist. But being also a Theist, he maintained that the science of biology pointed to the existence of God. Then a whole host of biologists came forth and affirmed that *their* science took no note of a deity. Will Mr. Spurr tell us, in specific terms, which science is on the side of Theism, and give us his authorities in that particular science?

But Mr. Spurr was quite right when he said that "the great battle of the immediate future will rage over the science of comparative religion." This science proves that there are thousands of Christs, and that they are all wonderfully like one another. Virgin Births and Resurrections are as common as blackberries at the end of summer. To prove the Divinity of the Christ of Christendom, and leave all the others in the lurch, is now a natural impossibility. It is a miracle which not all the Christian Evidence lecturers in the world are able to perform. They have already tried their hands at it, and ignominiously failed.

After all, the fate of the Franco-British Exhibition as regards Sunday opening is not yet decided. Mr. Kiralfy stated recently that if there were an adequate expression of public opinion in its favor the directors would do their best to give it effect. So far, good. The difficulty lies in getting a proper expression of opinion from those who are in favor of the opening. Church and Chapel have an easy means of securing a vote in one direction, whereas those who would vote in the other can only express their opinion individually. If the directors could only be induced to look at the matter from a reasonable point of view, we fancy they would find that the British public—to say nothing of our French visitors—would show their approval by visiting the exhibition in sufficient numbers to justify the experiment.

Of course, letters against the opening of the exhibition still continue to appear. Most of these writers profess to be gravely concerned over the effect such an opening would have on English morals. As English morality appears to be so delicate a thing, we would suggest to Mr. Kiralfy a way out of the difficulty. A notice might be prominently displayed at all the entrances to the effect that the exhibition was only opened for such as possessed a moral character strong enough to stand the strain of listening to a band, walking in the grounds, or visiting an art collection on Sunday. Then Christians would be fully warned of the risk they were running and could stay away.

The Dean of Canterbury deeply regrets that one of the papers issued by the Pan-Anglican Congress contains the following sentence:—

"There is a growing disposition to recognise that geology and other sciences compel us to a theory of our planet and of the whole universe which is at variance with the description of creation given in the first chapter of Genesis."

That there should only be a "growing disposition" to recognise as true that which every schoolboy ought to be well acquainted with is sufficiently deplorable; but that the statement quoted should shock an eminent churchman is enough to disgust one with English public opinion—or it would be if one did not realise what intellectual fossils the mass of our spiritual leaders are.

"We preachers cannot fill the churches now," sighs the Rev. W. J. Stobart, vicar of Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight. He recommends a "dash of pepper" in the sermons "to wake up the listeners." So that those who do go to church find it difficult to keep awake.

The Bishop of London is not a wit, but he is a comical figure, all the same. He raises laughter—at his own expense. The other day, at the annual conference of the Mothers' Union, he stated that he was one of a family of boys, three of whom were ordained, and "those who had not been ordained were the more religious." Of course the mothers present laughed at this unhappy revelation, which seems to bear out the old proverb, "The nearer the church the farther from God."

"It seems difficult," the *Daily Telegraph* says, "to get young men to volunteer for the mission field, more especially if the climate of the particular station does not possess the best of reputations." Missionaries want a good job, and a lasting one. Speedy emigration to heaven is not an alluring prospect. The Glory Song is all very well, but no one wants to start it too soon.

According to the Rev. L. D. Evans, vicar of St. Aidan's, South Shields, "Too many people have come to look upon

the collection plate as an evil to be avoided if possible." This is *too* bad. When the collection fails the Church is indeed on its last legs. And buttons won't do.

A scholarly-looking man, of shabby genteel appearance, was charged before a London magistrate the other day with peddling without a certificate. He had been trying to sell text cards from door to door, and he imagined that he was free to do this in a Christian country, but the magistrate had to remind him that the chief thing here was the law. Prisoner claimed to be the composer of the Queen's favorite hymn tune, "Peace, perfect peace," but he was "financially defunct." He asked for some assistance from the poor box, but he was told to ask at the proper time; whereupon he remarked that the Bible said "Give in season and out of season." But it didn't come off. This is not a Christian country, after all.

Queen's College students, Belfast, are supposed to be Christians, and we daresay they are, for they act as such. They attacked a Christian Science meeting in the Exhibition Hall the other day, pouring volleys of stones through the windows, and "raising hell" generally. How curious it is, by the way, that the students of Christian Colleges are so rowdy! At Edinburgh, for instance, the medical students are a riotous lot, but when the very worst rows happen the inhabitants (and the police) always know it is the divinity students. They take the cake.

Rev. Dr. Aked, the sentimental semi-Socialist preacher who went over from Liverpool to New York to take charge of a millionaires' Church at a big salary, has just been appealing to John D. Rockefeller, who is a member of his congregation. "Everything has progressed," he says, "except Christianity." Well, *that's* true. And how does the reverend gentleman propose to alter it? Why, in the good old way. "Give us money," he cries. Millionaires must provide the funds to make Christianity a success. No matter how they get it! There's no tainted money where religion is concerned. Yes, but will money do everything? Will it overcome "the stupidity of the clergy"—which Mr. Aked indicates as another cause of failure? We doubt it. You can give a fool a big bank account, but you can't make him wise. Mr. Aked is a case in point. He is worse than ever since he took that well-paid job in New York.

Some years ago we dealt with the case of Mr. H. M. Reade, who published a romantic story of his own conversion from "infidelity" to Christianity. This romantic story has been faked up afresh from time to time, and it now contains some astonishing "facts" concerning the Secular party in the early eighties. It states, for instance, that "half of the members of the Secular Society, led by Mrs. Besant and Dr. Aveling, renounced their anti-Christian crusade and joined the Socialists." There is not a particle of truth in this statement. Mrs. Besant was an anti-Christian nearly all the time that she was a Socialist, and she only parted from the N. S. S. after Bradlaugh's death, in the early nineties. Dr. Aveling was a pronounced and active Atheist to the last day of his life.

Rev. Charles Price, pastor of the Strict Baptist Community, Dunmow, Essex, having sought the Lord's advice on the matter, summoned his wife for assault. She had knocked him over and called him an old devil; which hurt him very much, for he was not a devil, though he pleaded guilty to being seventy. Mrs. Price, on the other hand, stated that her husband had kept her without food and money, and that she would have starved but for the charity of neighbors. The Bench found that an assault was committed, and bound her over to keep the peace for six months, which she will not find so difficult, as she declares that she won't live with him again. Pious people quarrel just like the unregenerate.

Mabel Truelove, who threw a cup of vitriol over Elizabeth Robertson, the matron of Reading Gaol, selected a church for the performance. Such is the sanctifying influence of religion!

Mr. George Harwood, M.P., has been telling a Bolton audience that "twenty years ago he used to speak in Mr. Bradlaugh's Hall of Science, and met the scepticism of the time." Used to speak! The expression implies frequency. We were well acquainted with the Hall of Science, and frequently lectured there ourselves, but we have no recollection of Mr. Harwood. Perhaps someone will ask him to explain.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

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

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 31, a. and e., Parliament Hill.—Address: 241 High-road, Leyton.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Yes, we quite understand that Stones, the Protestant missionary, who has to pay that five shillings a week for sixteen years, is the man who used to disturb Freethought meetings in Liverpool, and who was a colleague of the Rev. George Wise.
- E. LECHMERE.—Thanks for cuttings.
- JOHN PATTERSON.—Who is the man who goes about Glasgow telling the public that "Mr. Foote deserted his wife and cohabited with another woman"? Hasn't he a name? Why don't you give it? And why don't you ask him for particulars? We should like to have them. Please obtain them, and send them on. And if the man can't give them, tell him plainly that he is—a Christian.
- G. BRADFIELD.—We quite agree with you that Freethinkers should make more use of the press in ventilating their opinions, and are glad to see that your pressure on the journal mentioned had the effect of shaming it into a little fairness.
- G. JACOB.—Asking "what we are here for" postulates a certain conclusion in the form of a question.
- W. W. ANDERSON.—(1) The only difference that we are able to see between Atheism and Agnosticism is a difference of temperament. Some people are bolder than others. That is all. Both the Atheist and the Agnostic are "without God in the world." To have a God is to be a Theist. (2) Robert Burns was not a Christian in any honest sense of the word. We have never said that he was an Atheist.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.—Donations, £165; Annual Subscriptions, £182 19s. 6d. Received since.—G. L. B., 5s.; W. P. Murray, 2s. 6d.; H. M. Ridgway, £1.
- W. GREGORY.—Pleased to have your letter. The suggestion shall be remembered.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—See paragraphs. Thanks
- R. ELWIN.—Pleased to see *Reynolds'* standing so firmly for Secular Education.
- V. PAGE.—It will be the best course.
- W. DAY.—Sorry.
- J. LODWICK.—Thanks for your trouble, but he is not worth answering.
- W. DANIELS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- G. I. B.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Glad to know that you, as well as your husband, "greatly enjoy" our lectures.
- A. A. S.—See "Acid Drops." We hope it will prove grateful.
- G. ERMANN.—We don't suppose you will have an answer, but if you do we shall be glad to see it. Sorry you were unable to attend the N. S. S. Social. Better luck, perhaps, next time.
- W. N. HARRIS.—Enclosure handed to shop manager. We dealt with the case of H. M. Reade some years ago. There are a few grains of fact to a bushel of fancy in his account of himself. After all, what does it matter if he did come "From Atheism to Christ"? Thousands of Freethinkers, including nearly all the leaders, have come from Christ to Atheism.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for cuttings.
- BRIXTON.—A. J. Waldron's opinions on any subject are utterly unimportant. Whether he settles the Christadelphian, or the Christadelphian settles him, is a matter of indifference to us.
- A. HALL.—Thanks for the reference.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
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Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place next Sunday (Whit-Sunday) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. There will be two business sittings, at 10.30 and 2.30, and a public meeting at 7, which will be addressed by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, etc.

Delegates or individual members who are going to the Conference, and who require accommodation at hotels or otherwise, should lose no time in communicating with the Branch Secretary, Mrs. E. M. Pegg, 15 Mytton-street, Hulme, Manchester.

The tickets for the luncheon at the Merchant's Hotel, Oldham-street, Piccadilly, between the morning and afternoon sittings of the Conference, are 2s. each; and, as the number of seats at the tables is limited, early application should be made, by those who would not like to be disappointed, to the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

The Manchester Branch is arranging an outing for the Monday for the benefit of delegates and visitors. There is to be a Circular Drive to Knutsford, in Cheshire, and back, through as fine a country as any in England. Tickets for the drive are 2s. 6d. each. Hot lunch at Knutsford another 2s. In this case, too, the number is limited, and early application should be made to Mrs. Pegg.

Our appeal last week on behalf of the Fund which is being raised for the benefit of the aged widow and daughters of the late Gerald Massey, has brought us the following subscriptions:—Major John C. Harris, R.E., £5; J. W. de Caux, 10s. 6d.; H. M. Ridgway, £1; G. W. Foote, £1 1s.

Mr. Bernard Shaw took to praising the late Samuel Butler, and especially his *Way of All Flesh*. Mr. Shaw wrote as if he were the "discoverer" of Butler. But he wasn't. We were before him in the *Freethinker*, having given extracts in our columns from the *Way of All Flesh* when it was first published in 1903. It is a very remarkable book and full of Freethought, containing remorseless studies of religious temperament and character. We are glad to see it forming the first volume of Mr. Fifield's new and cheaper edition of Butler's writings. We wonder if *The Fair Haven* will be included.

"The report of his work in Kansas City, Mo., by Dr. J. E. Roberts of the Church of This World is encouraging. The eleventh year of the meetings, which close on the second Sunday in May, has been one of exceptional prosperity, says a paragraph in Dr. Roberts's magazine, *Here and Now*. Two lectures have been delivered each month since October, 1907, and on every occasion the Shubert Theatre, which seats eighteen hundred, has been crowded to the doors. An effort will now be made to raise sufficient funds to warrant the holding of meetings every Sunday next season."—*Truth-seeker* (New York).

Mr. M. M. Mangasarian sends us with "greetings" the Program of the Independent Religious Society's service on April 19. The "Opening Selection," after the organ recital, was the following:—

"I hear through the ages the marching footsteps of the great army of Progress. I salute the nameless, indomitable rank and file, and I bow with reverence before the named and mighty leaders who planned and dared, and made the world brighter by their genius and grander by their heroism."
—G. W. FOOTE."

The "Closing Selection" was from Voltaire: "I have done a little good—and it is by far the best of my works."

Mr. W. W. Collins's new paper, the *Examiner*, published monthly, at threepence, is just half the size of the *Freethinker*; but, of course, prices range higher generally in New Zealand. We see that our gallant contemporary has weathered all the troubles of its first year, and hopes to "become a power in the land." In the April number, the last arrived, we note a reference to the late "blasphemy" prosecution, and some extracts from Mr. Foote's *Flowers of Freethought*. Mr. Collins, we see, talks of nothing but Rationalism now, but apparently he means exactly what he used to mean when he talked of Secularism.

Lord Weardale has accepted the Presidency of the Secular Education League.

The Sayings of Jesus.—IX.

(Continued from p. 331.)

THE Gospel Jesus, though claiming to have come direct from heaven, was, as we have seen, unable to give any description of that mysterious place beyond three or four random statements found in the Jewish "holy books." One of the evangelists, apparently perceiving this, represents his fictitious Jesus as making an excuse for not having done so.

"If I told you earthly things and ye believed not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" (John iii. 12).

It would be interesting to know what "earthly things" Jesus had told the Jews which they did not believe. He certainly gave them no explanation of anything relating to the Universe or natural phenomena, nor any useful information whatever. In vain one searches the Gospels for a single instructive fact or an exposition of anything "earthly" which the scribes and Pharisees of that day did not already know. The Gospel Jesus knew only what the Gospel writers knew—no more and no less. The early Christians believed all the errors and superstitions of the age in which they lived; the Gospel Jesus necessarily did the same. Hence the latter was represented as healing diseases by casting out imaginary evil spirits.

But it does not at all follow that because the Jews might have disbelieved some "earthly things" which appeared contrary to their preconceived ideas, they would therefore have disbelieved when told of "heavenly things" of which they had no knowledge whatever. The Jews of the first century gave credence to the most absurd theories, especially with regard to angels, demons, the heavenly bodies, and natural phenomena. The words put in the mouth of Jesus in the passage quoted would seem, however, to have reference not to the believing "heavenly things," but *understanding* them, as stated in the following passage which suggested the Gospel saying:—

2 Esd. iv. 10-11. "Thine own things that are grown up with thee, canst thou not know; how then can thy vessel comprehend the way of the Most High? and how can he that is worn out with the corrupted world understand the way of the incorruptible?"

There is at least a trifle more sense in this statement than in that placed in the mouth of Jesus; the latter is simply idiotic.

The only example I can discover in the Gospels of Jesus attempting to impart to the Jews a knowledge of "earthly things" is the following:—

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth *and die*, it abideth by itself alone; but *if it die*, it beareth much fruit."

This statement cannot, however, be called an original one; for long before the compilation of the Fourth Gospel the apostle Paul had written (1 Cor. xv. 36):—

"Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest *is not quickened, except it die.*"

Assuming that Jesus uttered the words here ascribed to him, those words are untrue. The seed which "beareth much fruit" is not dead; it retains its vitality for years. A grain of wheat, put in the ground, does not die before bearing fruit. Were such the case, the farmer might as well sow coarse gravel or anything similar that came handy. From this saying we can form some idea of the value to be attached to the words "Verily, verily, I say unto you." These words, more often than not, appear to be the forerunner of a big, bouncing lie.

The reason assigned by Jesus for not speaking to the Jews of "heavenly things" could not apply to the disciples. These benighted individuals were ready to believe anything. Yet, strange to say, Jesus appears never to have said a single word to them on that important subject. Stranger still, the disciples themselves appear never to have thought of asking their Lord and Master for any information respecting the promised land in which they hoped to pass

eternity. One would imagine that the delights of this heavenly country would be their one subject of conversation, to the exclusion of almost every other, and that by persistent questioning they would endeavor to learn from their Master everything about the country and its inmates which it was possible to know. But these twelve nonentities, living in daily communion with Jesus who professed to have come from "the better land," are not recorded to have once asked their Lord anything about that celestial country; and he never once refers to the subject, save in an enigmatical way, and then without giving any information. It does not require much penetration to see that the Gospel Jesus is a purely fictitious person, or that the disciples are simply dummies—mere names—of whom nothing was known, inserted to give some appearance of historicity to the narratives.

With regard to "earthly things" Jesus is equally reticent. He tells the disciples nothing new concerning mundane affairs. On two occasions, it is true, he is represented as saying something they did not know respecting himself and the Hebrew scriptures; but these statements were misleading and not in harmony with fact. Witness the following:—

Luke xviii. 31-33. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and *all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man.* For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again."

Luke xxiv. 25, 44. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe, after all that the prophets have spoken! *Was it not needful for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory.....All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning me.*"

It is scarcely necessary to say that there is not one single sentence in the Hebrew scriptures that has any reference to Jesus. We have, then, in the foregoing statements an incontestable proof of the falsity of the Christian religion. If Jesus uttered the words recorded, he was either a wilful deceiver or an ignorant fanatic; if he did not—and there is no evidence that he ever said anything recorded in the Gospels—then the primitive Gospel-makers, either intentionally or through stupidity, were the authors of the biggest fraud the world has ever seen. The latter, there can be little doubt, was really the case; for we find that all the early Christian writers (Barnabas and Justin are good examples) read the books of the Old Testament solely with the view of discovering passages which they might twist into predictions relative to Jesus.

The last sayings quoted were not, of course, derived from the "holy books"; they were made up, like many others, to suit the fictitious narratives. The alleged fact that Jesus explained "mysteries" to the disciples in private would seem to be an exception.

Jesus to the Apostles: "Unto The Most High to Esdras: you it is given to know the "These things have I not shewed mysteries of the kingdom of unto all men, but unto thee, heaven, but to them it is not and a few like thee" (2 Esd. given" (Matt. xiii. 11). viii. 62).

The only "mysteries" communicated to the disciples were the very obvious interpretations of some of the easier parables, such as the Sower and the Tares.

Returning to the manufactured sayings put in the mouth of Jesus in the Gospels, the following may be cited as fresh examples from the Sermon on the Mount:—

GOSPEL SAYINGS.

Matt. v. 28. "Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Matt. v. 34-37. "Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet.....But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay."

OLDER WRITINGS.

Prov. vi. 25. "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart."

Talmud: "He who regards a woman with an impure intention has already, as it were, committed adultery."

Ecclus. xxiii. 9. "Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One."

Talmud: "Let your Nay be nay; let your Yea be yea." (See Epistle of James—vi. 12.)

GOSPEL SAYINGS.

Matt. v. 39. "But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil."

Matt. v. 39. "But whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Matt. v. 40. "And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

Matt. v. 42. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

Matt. v. 44-45. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven."

Matt. v. 48. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matt. v. 14. "Ye are the light of the world."

Matt. vi. 6. "But when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to the Father," etc.

Matt. vi. 8. "Be not ye therefore like unto them."

Matt. vi. 20. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."

With regard to some of the source passages in the foregoing examples, it should be borne in mind that the Pauline Epistles, as well as the Book of Revelation, were written and in circulation long before any of the Gospels are known to have been in existence. Furthermore, neither the writer of the Epistles nor the author of the Revelation appears ever to have heard of any sayings ascribed to Jesus.

One of the best-known sayings in the Sermon on the Mount is the so-called "Lord's Prayer" (Matt. vi. 9-13), which reads as follows:—

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

This prayer, like all the important sayings ascribed to Jesus, was derived from the "holy books," as will be seen by the words italicised in the following passages:—

1 Chron. xxix. 10-11. "Blessed be thou, O Lord..... Our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power and the glory.....thine is the kingdom, O Lord."

Nex. ix. 6. "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

Dan. iv. 34-35. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.....He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Prov. xxx. 8. "Feed me with the food that is needful for me."

Ecclus. xxviii. 2. "Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he hath done unto thee; so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest."

OLDER WRITINGS.

Prov. xx. 22; xxiv. 29. "Say not thou, I will recompense evil.

.....Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me."

Rom. xii. 17-19. "Render to no man evil for evil," etc.

Lam. iii. 27-30. "It is good for man that he bear the yoke in his youth.....Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him."

1 Cor. vi. 7. "Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?"

Ecclus. xxix. 2. "Give to thy neighbor in time of his need."

Deut. xv. 8. "Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need."

Prov. xxv. 21. "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink." (Rom. xii. 20.)

Rom. xii. 14. "Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not."

Deut. xviii. 13. "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." (See also Lev. xi. 44.)

Phil. ii. 15. "— among whom ye are seen as lights of the world."

2 Kings iv. 33. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord."

2 Esd. xvi. 51. "Therefore be ye not like unto them, nor to the works thereof."

Ecclus. xxix. 11. "Lay up thy treasure according to the commands of the Most High, and it shall profit thee more than gold."

2 Esd. vii. 77. "Thou hast laid up for thee in store a treasure of good works with the Most High."

Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which is to come upon the whole world."

Psal. cxl. 1. "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man."

There are, as everyone knows, two versions of the "Lord's Prayer"—the one above, recorded by Matthew, and a shorter one given by Luke (xi. 1-4). The Prayer, according to Matthew, was delivered at the beginning of Christ's ministry to the whole multitude who listened to the Sermon on the Mount. The Prayer, according to Luke, was given to the disciples in private, at a much later period, and then only in answer to a request of one of them—"Lord, teach us to pray, even as John [the Baptist] also taught his disciples"—from which it is evident that the disciples had never heard it before, though they are stated to have been present on the earlier occasion (Matt. v. 1).

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Shelley Letters.—V.

Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener. Now first published. With an Introduction and Notes by Bertram Dobell. London: B. Dobell, 77 Charing Cross-road, W.C.

WE have already said that the views of a young man under twenty on practical life cannot be of great importance. Shelley's views on sex and marriage must be considered in the light of this psychological truth. We have already noted that he thought marriage "an evil"—an "immense and extensive" evil. Yet he was married himself, and quite happy then with his wife. He was simply stating an opinion that he had derived from Godwin. His mind was in a chaotic condition on the whole subject. In the nineteenth letter to Miss Hitchener, after a reference to Godwin's writings, he speaks of the "detestable distinctions" of sex and hopes they "will be abolished in a future state of being." In the twenty-fourth letter he alludes to a Tale he was writing to explain the failure of the French Revolution. "Some of the leading passions of the human mind," he says, "will of course have a place in its fabric. I design to exclude the sexual passion; and think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject." Truly a wonderful philosophy! It was not the voice of the real Shelley; it was the voice of Shelley the pupil of Godwin—a man of much intellectual power, and a large ignorance of the passionate and tender sides of human nature.

Shelley was a Republican and a social reformer in those early days, but even then he understood the futility of violence and the demoralisation of revenge. "Popular insurrections and revolutions," he says, "I look upon with discountenance. If such things must be, I will take the side of the people; but my reasoning shall endeavor to ward it from the hearts of the rulers of the earth, deeply as I detest them." Reporting a conversation of his with Southey, he says:—

"Southey says Expediency ought to [be] made the ground of politics, but not of morals. I urged that the most fatal error that ever happened in the world was the separation of political and ethical science; that the former ought to be entirely regulated by the latter, as whatever was a right criterion of action for an individual must be so for a society, which was but an assemblage of individuals; that politics were morals comprehensively enforced."

"What can be worse," he asks, "than the present aristocratical system" of England, with its ten million inhabitants, only 500,000 of whom "live in a state of ease" while "the rest earn their livelihood with toil and care"? As a disciple of Godwin, he advocates a system of equality:—

"Were I a moral legislator, I would propose to my followers that they should arrive at the perfection of morality. Equality is natural; at least, many evils totally inconsistent with a state which symbolises with

Nature prevail in every system of inequality. I will assume this point. Therefore, even although it be your opinion, or my opinion, that equality is unattainable except by a parcel of peas, or beans, still political virtue is to be estimated in proportion as it approximates to this ideal point of perfection, however unattainable."

Shelley had begun to recognise the difficulty of reducing theories to practice. He was always inclined to trust more to mental and moral reform than to direct State action. But he never abandoned his early dream of equality. There *was* such a thing as "natural justice," and had the politician "a right to infringe upon that which itself constitutes all right and wrong"? Shelley had not yet arrived at Shakespeare's—

"right and wrong,
Between whose endless jar justice resides."

But his aspiration was sound, as it always was; and, although he lived long enough to perceive that a vast interval must ever exist between present practice and the loftiest ideals, he still sang of the "Eldest of things, divine Equality."

One of Harriet's letters throws light upon Shelley's vegetarianism. Writing to Miss Hitchener on March 14, 1812, from Dublin, she says:—

"You do not know that we have forsworn meat, and adopted the Pythagorean system. About a fortnight has elapsed since the change, and we do not find ourselves any the worse for it. What do you think of it? Many say it is a very bad plan: but, as facts go before arguments, we shall see whether the general opinion is true or false. We are delighted with it, and think it the best thing in the world."

Harriet concludes by referring to a matter which, we may be sure, gave no sort of concern to Shelley, who could be satisfied with bread and water. "As yet," she says, "there is but little change of vegetables; but the time of year is coming on when there will be no deficiency."

We now come to the subject of religion. There are many passages relating to it in this correspondence. We will begin with some curious references to Shelley's conversations with Southey. Here is a striking one:—

"Southey calls himself a Christian; but he does not believe that the Evangelists were inspired; he rejects the Trinity, and thinks that Jesus Christ stood precisely in the same relation to God as himself. Yet he calls himself a Christian."

So that the New Theology is older than the Rev. R. J. Campbell fancies it to be. In a subsequent letter Shelley returns to the question whether Southey could honestly profess Christianity. The passage in which he does this is very interesting:—

"I have lately had some conversation with Southey which has elicited my true opinions of God. He says I ought not to call myself an atheist, since in reality I believe that the Universe is God. I tell him I believe that 'God' is another signification for 'the Universe.' I then explain:—I think reason and analogy seem to countenance the opinion that life is infinite; that, as the soul which now animates this frame was once the vivifying principle of the infinitely lowest link in the chain of existence so it is ultimately destined to attain the highest; that everything is animation (as explained in my last letter); and in consequence, being infinite, we can never arrive at its termination. How, on this hypothesis, are we to arrive at a First Cause?—Southey admits and believes this. Can he be a Christian? Can God be three? Southey agrees in my idea of Deity,—the mass of infinite intelligence. I, you, and he are constituent parts of this immeasurable whole. What is now to be thought of Jesus Christ's divinity? To me it appears clear as day that it is the falsehood of human-kind."

No doubt the word "the" should be italicized. The deity of Christ is *the* falsehood of the world. Shelley never wavered in that opinion. Witness the reference to "the Galilean serpent" in the great *Ode to Liberty*.

Let it be noticed that, in the foregoing extract, Shelley writes "God"—putting the term between inverted commas to show that it is not his own. Let it also be remembered that Harriet stated how

frightened she was at learning that he was an Atheist. Shelley was expelled from Oxford for writing a defence of Atheism; he called himself an Atheist while living with Harriet; he called himself an Atheist in the visitors'-book at an Alpine hotel, after reading the fatuous piety of a travelling clergyman on the same page; and, as Trelawny insists, he called himself an Atheist to the very last. He never admitted the existence of a Personal God—and no other conception is entitled to the name of Theism. "Truth is *my* God," he wrote to Miss Hitchener in the very first of these letters. He never had any other deity.

Shelley tells Miss Hitchener in the next letter that he has "no objection on the score of feeling" to the belief in Deity. "I would as gladly," he says, "perhaps with greater pleasure, admit than doubt his existence. I now do neither: I have not the shadow of a doubt." It is impossible to go further, but his next sentence confirms the step already taken:—

"My wish to convince you of his non-existence is two-fold: first, on the score of truth; secondly, because I conceive it to be the most summary way of eradicating Christianity."

Miss Hitchener is advised not to be frightened by verbal bugbears. "Atheism," Shelley tells her, "appears a terrific monster at a distance. Dare to examine it, look at its companions—it loses half its terrors." He presses her again on the question of Deity:—

"What, then, is a 'God'? It is a name which expresses the unknown cause, the suppositious origin of all existence. When we speak of the soul of man, we mean that unknown cause which produces the observable effect evinced by his intelligence and bodily animation, which are in their nature conjoined, and (as we suppose, as we observe) inseparable. The word God, then, in the sense which you take it, analogises with the universe as the soul of man to his body; as the vegetative power to vegetables; the stony power to stones. Yet, were each of these adjuncts taken away, what would be the remainder? What is man without his soul? He is not man. What are vegetables without their vegetative power? stones without their stony? Each of these as much constitutes the essence of men, stones, etc., as much make it what it is, as your 'God' does the universe. In *this* sense I acknowledge a God; but merely as a synonym for the existing power of existence."

Nothing could be clearer or more decisive.

With respect to Christianity, there has been a general misuse of the term since the advent of modern criticism. Shelley tells Miss Hitchener that the faith which she held is not Christianity at all. "A Christian," he reminds her, "is a follower of the religion which has constantly gone by the name of Christianity." This is perfectly true, and should never be forgotten. The new Christianity, commonly called the New Theology, is Christianity in the last stages of dissolution. It cannot be stated in terms that clearly differentiate it from (say) Mohammedanism. Shelley sagaciously remarks that both a Christian and a Mohammedan "ceases to belong to the sect which either word means, when they set up a doctrine of their own, irreconcilable with that of either religion except in a few instances in which common and self-evident morality coincides with its tenets. It is then morality, virtue, which they set up as the criterion of their actions, and not the exclusive doctrine preached by the founder of any religion." "Your religion," he tells Miss Hitchener, "agrees as much with Bramah, Zororaster, or Mahomet, as with Christ." She had loved God, but "not the God of Christianity—a God of pardon and revenge, whose will could change the order of the universe." Shelley, for his own part, did not doubt Christianity; he was perfectly satisfied as to its falsity. "I cannot conceive in my mind," he says, "even the possibility of its genuineness." This was Shelley's opinion to the very end. Only a few weeks before his death, he wrote of Christianity that "no man of sense could think it true," and that he differed from Moore in thinking it useful.

Shelley leans, however, in this correspondence to a doctrine which is far older than Christianity. He imagines that the soul does not perish, but in a future existence "will lose all consciousness of having lived elsewhere" and "begin life anew, possibly under a shape of which we have no idea." But the only argument he advances is *feeling*. "Reason tells me," he says, "that death is the boundary of the life of man: yet I feel, I believe, the direct contrary." "I cannot submit," he exclaims, "to perish like the flower of the field." Such was his attitude at that enthusiastic age. When his mind ripened he admitted that the desire for immortality was the only, and not very powerful, argument in its favor. From the first he had not believed in the continuance of personal consciousness after death. Finally, as he told Tre-lawny, he was satisfied to know no more on the subject than Plato and Bacon. And if the language of *Adonais* be urged against this view, we should reply that, allowing for the exigencies of metaphor, there is no more expressed than the conception, which Shelley started with, of the individual soul returning to the soul of the universe from which it sprang.

"Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same."

Shelley's real religion, if the word *must* be used—which we are far from conceding—was something very different from what usually passes under the name. Standing in the cathedral of Pisa with Leigh Hunt, listening to the music of the organ, he remarked on what a religion there might be if humanity, instead of superstition, were its object. In the same spirit he writes in one of these letters to Miss Hitchener, that his Address to the Irish People would soon be out, and that—

"It will be instantly followed by another, with downright proposals for instituting associations for bettering the condition of human-kind. I—even I, weak, young, poor as I am—will attempt to organise them, the society of peace and love. Oh that I may be a successful apostle of this true religion, the religion of Philanthropy!"

Shelley was not built to organise human society. He was built to illuminate and inspire it. We might apply to him nearly every line of the magnificent forty-second and forty-third stanzas of his immortal threnody on the death of Keats. His beautiful spirit, speaking through his glorious poetry to generation after generation of the dedicated soldiers of freedom and humanity, bears a strong resemblance to "that Power"—

"Which wielded the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above."

The modern thirst for biography is becoming excessive. No privacy is respected. It is forgotten that public men have private residences, and that men of genius have a life of their own with which the world has no legitimate concern. One is sometimes glad that it is impossible to spy into Shakespeare's house through doors and windows. It may be questioned whether Shelley's letters to Miss Hitchener should ever have been published. But they were drawn upon by Dr. Dowden in his authoritative *Life of Shelley*, and after such a partial use of them it was well that they should be completely accessible. Mr. Dobell has, therefore, rendered a real service to all Shelleyans. As one of long standing, we thank him for his labor of love; and we hope he may some day be able to edit (no one could do it better) that complete collection of Shelley's letters which we have said is so desirable. G. W. FOOTE.

If another man has not the right to think, you have not even the right to think that he thinks wrong.—*Ingersoll*.

No true refreshment can restore thee,
Save what from thine own soul spontaneous breaks.
—*Goethe*.

N. S. S. Social Gathering.

A MOST enjoyable evening was spent at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday, May 21. Prominent members of the N. S. S. from all London Branches, members of the Society from several provincial towns, and a number of strangers assembled to meet the President and the Executive. A musical program was also provided. Violin selections were charmingly given by Miss M. Taylor; Miss Annie Wilson sang very sweetly songs were also given by Mr. Theakstone. Mrs. Van Raalta and Mr. Madden, jun., presided at the pianoforte. Miss Helen Foote played with taste and brilliancy. The feature of the evening was the *debut* of Miss Florence Foote as a promising elocutionist in Tennyson's *The First Quarrel*. Those of the audience who had experienced the pleasure of hearing the President's dramatic rendering of Shakesperian scenes were delighted to find that his daughter shows such promise of sustaining the family reputation. She possesses a charmingly modulated voice of great depth and power of expression.

Altogether the Executive may congratulate themselves on the success of their new departure, and it certainly will not be long before this extremely pleasant experiment in sociability is repeated.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

A Fact.

ONE bright, sunny morning, when walking down a Devonshire lane, I thought I would call on a poor woman who lives in one of the Alms-houses in our village—Mrs. Jones, aged sixty-seven. She has her little home free, and is allowed one shilling and sixpence weekly. This is her sole income; this is the condition of one who devoted her life to nursing the sick. On entering her room, I greeted her with a smile and a good morning, Mrs. Jones, I find you in good luck to-day! I saw the lady of the Manor leaving your house to-day, and I see good things on your table.

"Lady of the Manor, did you say? Her gave me that Tract! The tea and sugar you see was given me by Mr. Goodman. They say he be a Nostic and Infidel! I do not know what he be; I only know he be good to we poor folks."

I took up the Tract, and brought it away with me. I will give a summary of its contents. I found it was against Martha and in favor of Mary. Martha received Christ into house, bustled about getting food ready, and attending to the wants of her guest. Mary sat and listened to our Lord's word. Martha, hurrying to and fro attending to a variety of things, thought Mary neglectful for sitting there listening when she was hard at work. Martha was to be blamed, for the Lord himself blamed her. Mary chose the better part. This is the subject of the Tract given to the poor old woman who had all her life *worked* for the good of her fellow creatures! There is, on the first page, a picture. Martha comes in with bread and fruit; Christ puts out his hand with "take it away"; with the other hand he points to Mary sitting at his feet. This, then, is the teaching of the Christian Church! Martha was to be blamed, for the Lord himself blamed her! What unthinkable evil such teachings have caused, and will cause!

H. S.

PRAYER.

If the naked are clothed, man must clothe them; if the hungry are fed, man must feed them. I prefer to rely on human endeavor, upon human intelligence, upon the heart and brain of man. There is no evidence that God has ever interfered in the affairs of man. The hand of earth is stretched uselessly towards heaven. From the clouds there comes no help. In vain the shipwrecked cry to God. In vain the imprisoned ask for liberty and light—the world moves on, and the heavens are deaf and dumb and blind. The frost freezes, the fire burns, slander smites, the wrong triumphs, the good suffer, and prayer dies upon the lips of faith.—*Ingersoll*.

DICKENS'S RELIGION.

Charles Dickens was not orthodox in his religious beliefs. He always had a very strong aversion to dogma, and described himself as "morally wide asunder from Rome"; whilst of Puritanism he was an uncompromising opponent. During 1843, while living at Devonshire-terrace, he took sittings at Little Portland-street Unitarian Chapel. Of mission work, it is interesting to learn that it did not find favor with him, as evidenced by his writing in 1865: "So Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it."

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, A. Allison.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey; 6.15, F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Ridley-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Sublime Character of Jesus Christ."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30 and 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Salvation Army."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, J. W. Marshall, a Lecture.

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Social meeting, Thursdays, at 8.15.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Annual Meeting—Election of Officers, etc.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, meets for Discussion; The foot of Leith-walk, 6.30, "The Mistakes of Jesus."

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LIVERPOOL: Shiel Park Gates (Shiel-road and Boaler-street) 3, "Belief in God Unreasonable and Immoral"; 6.45, "Christianism, Socialism, Secularism."

BURY: Monday, June 1, Fair Ground, at 7.30, "The Development of an Atheist."

BOLTON: Tuesday, June 2, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain."

WIGAN: Wednesday, June 3, Market Steps, at 7.30, "From Christianity to Atheism."

ROCHDALE: Thursday, June 4, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "The Satisfaction of Atheism."

LEEDS: Friday, June 5, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Belief in God Unreasonable and Immoral."

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