

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*But I've been put into a dreadful passion by two of my cleverest girl pupils "going off pious!" It's exactly like a nice pear getting "sleepy."*—JOHN RUSKIN.

## Rebuking the "Infidel."

It is very difficult to please the Christians. Theirs is the "religion of love," they bubble over with "charity," they are the moral "salt of the earth." This account of themselves is given by themselves, so it ought to be true. But somehow or other they are the most tetchy people on earth when their religion is concerned. If you question it, they frown; if you attack it, they foam at the mouth; and if you leave it alone, they say you are heading straight for hell. There is no satisfying them anyhow. If we criticise the Old Theology, we are told that we are whipping a dead horse. If we criticise the New Theology, we are told to mind our own business. What a pesky lot they are, to be sure!

When the New Theology came along we gave it our attention. We like to be up to date, even with regard to such an ancient and hackneyed thing as religion. Nothing that Mr. Campbell says from the City Temple pulpit, with such a Christopher Columbus air, is really new. The only novelty about it is the place where it is said and the person who says it. But we were informed by so many Christians up and down the country that we ought to criticise "the Christianity of to-day," instead of the Christianity of a hundred or a thousand years ago, that we thought we would take their tip. We have criticised Mr. Campbell's sermons; we have dealt from time to time with articles and paragraphs appearing in the *Christian Commonwealth*; we have given the New Theologians a good place on the bill, as they appeared to desire; yet instead of displaying gratitude, they show resentment and ill-temper.

The *Christian Commonwealth* maintained a long silence. It could not mention such a dreadful paper as the *Freethinker*—just as it could not mention such a dreadful man as the editor, although he was the most applauded speaker at the Memorial Hall meeting on Secular Education. It ought to have been a Campbell meeting; therefore it was a Campbell meeting; and if the truth was otherwise, so much the worse for truth. That was nearly ten months ago, and the same attitude has been kept up ever since. Our contemporary seems, however, to have nursed its wrath to keep it warm. At last it boiled over, and the result is the following leaderette:—

"The *Freethinker* succeeds nearly every week in making itself foolish and in giving the *Christian Commonwealth* a gratuitous advertisement. The last example of its enlightened criticism is particularly entertaining. The reference is to the article entitled 'For of Such —,' which recently appeared in our columns, and the offending sentence is: 'The appeal of his eye would have melted the stoniest materialist.' The *Freethinker* makes us spell 'materialist' with a capital 'M,' and then waxes indignant over the continual attempts to identify 'brutality and callousness with Materialism and Freethought generally.' We would commend to the irate editor of the *Freethinker* the definition of materialism given in Webster's International Dictionary: 'The tendency to give undue impor-

tance to material interests; devotion to the material nature and its wants.' In spite of what the *Freethinker* says, we are not aware that materialists of that type have been renowned for their efforts for 'human betterment!'"

This leaderette, which we shall deal with presently, was not enough. It has been supplemented by a letter to us from the sub-editor, Mr. A. Fenner Brockway. For the most part, his letter is nearly a word for word repetition of the sentences in the leaderette. The differences are very slight. We are not only "foolish," but "*extremely* foolish," in this gentleman's opinion—which does not upset us. That is one difference. And this is another. "May I say," he writes, "that some of my best friends are Free-thinkers, and I know them to be the most tender-hearted of men?" Too tender-hearted, we suppose, to attack either Christianity in general, or the New Theology in particular. Nobody but a hard-hearted *Freethinker* would do that.

Mr. A. Fenner Brockway's letter is type-written. With it he sent his card, bearing the elegant communication: "If you cannot print this letter as it stands do not print it at all." If we printed it as it stood we should have printed "gratuitous" as "gratuous" and "concern" as "consern." We do not mean that the gentlemen could not spell better. But we do mean that his manners are those of an office-boy.

And now for the *Christian Commonwealth* leaderette, which is worthy of an office-boy. No other functionary, even in a Christian newspaper office, would imagine that there was any wit, or argument either, in calling an opponent "foolish," or that there was anything strikingly original in the ancient wheeze about a "gratuitous advertisement." And the taste of this sort of stuff is equal to its sense. Nothing is meaner than the way in which Christian journals, as well as ordinary newspapers, refrain from mentioning each other unless it serves their own purposes. Each is mortally afraid that another paper may derive some advantage. They remind us—the Christian journals especially—of Swift's bitter epigram that most men have religion enough to hate each other. Their conspiracy of silence against the *Freethinker* is religiously observed. They only utter its detestable name in a moment of angry self-forgetfulness. We have not the least objection to advertising Christian papers. We do not dread our readers' perusing such publications. We encourage them to read all sides. We believe that our principles will stand the freest and fullest discussion. And we rather fancy that the more our readers peruse the *Christian Commonwealth* the better they will like the *Freethinker*.

Referring us to Webster's Dictionary for the meaning of a word, is positively childish. Or shall we say it is the office-boy again? Our knowledge of the English language is not derived from dictionaries, but from English literature. At the very best, a dictionary is a record, not an authority. Webster's Dictionary, we know, is very common in newspaper offices. Perhaps that is how the office-boy remembers it. But is it seriously meant that "*the definition*" of the word "materialism" in Webster is what our contemporary states? Or is it the office-boy again? The definition quoted from Webster is a secondary meaning of "materialism." A secondary meaning,

we may add, which is one of the many examples of the action of Christian bigotry on the very language. The primary, the philosophical, meaning of "materialism" is—as the dictionaries (including Webster's) record—the doctrine that there is but one universal substance, and that "spirit" has no independent existence. To talk about a "stony-hearted materialist," or even a soft-hearted materialist, is a mere abuse of language. A materialist, as a materialist, may be right or wrong intellectually; his character cannot possibly be involved in the alternative.

What happened, possibly, was this. Our pious contemporary took advantage of the double use of the word "materialist" to employ it in a way that would reflect on "unbelievers," while leaving a loophole of escape if the slander were denounced. It now explains that by "materialist" it simply meant *sensualist*. Then why on earth did it not use that word at first?

Whether "materialist" is printed with a small or a capital "m" is really too trifling for criticism. Christian journals have a way of printing Secularist, Atheist, Rationalist, etc., without capitals. This is done to diminish their importance. Christian, Theist, Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan, Congregationalist, etc., always appear with capitals in the religious press. This is done to increase their importance. We treat them all alike. That is why we turned our contemporary's small "m" into a big one. But what a pretty loophole it is to creep through—the difference between the size of the first letter of the same word in two different printings! It shows what shallow devices bigots will attempt, when they are arrested, to escape conviction.

G. W. FOOTE.

### A Neglected Factor in History.

It has long been a commonplace that history as it was written was an eminently unsatisfactory performance. Long accounts of the personal doings of kings and rulers, records of battles, sieges, and forays, with an account of a religious revolution by way of decoration, made up the catalogue. Everything else appeared only incidentally. This method of writing history is now, happily, among serious students, obsolete. It may also be said, with considerable truth, that a great deal of history as at present written is an improvement in form rather than in substance. The lives of kings have been deposed from their position of importance, but the lives of prominent men have largely taken their place; or we are favored with much talk, from the religious side, of the providential development of certain nations and the part they are appointed to play in the world's history, and from the non-religious side confusing talk concerning "tendencies" or race, or a description of certain qualities that have enabled one race or one nation to assert its supremacy over another race or nation.

History written in such a manner may well strike one as dealing with the surface of things only. Intrinsicly there is nothing more scientific in attributing great changes to a great man than there is in attributing them to a king. The great man is a problem that has to be explained in terms of the operations of those deep-lying forces that a scientific history should elucidate; he may be useful enough as a summary of those forces that are being studied, but to mistake him for them is a serious misconception. So, too, with other factors named. That certain nations have conquered other nations is obvious. That the conquest was due to the presence in the conqueror of some quality lacking in the conquered, or to a better development of a quality possessed by both in common, is also obvious. To have this much stated adds little or nothing to our real understanding of the problem, which is, "Why have certain people qualities lacking in others, or

why is there in some directions a better development of the qualities that determine survival? History can only become scientific when it ceases to play the part of a descriptive guide-book, and searches into the nature of the deeper forces that mould human destiny. Political rule, personal rule, great men, even national existence, are all transient things compared with the operation of physical and vital forces. These are ever active, and although it may never be possible to reduce human life to a mathematical equation, some understanding of these forces are imperative if we are ever going to understand aright human evolution.

What may certainly be regarded as an important contribution to this aspect of the study of history has been given in a little volume dealing with the probable influence of malaria in ancient Greece and Rome.\* Major Ross rightly points out that the influence of disease in history has been strangely overlooked. Pathologic cataclysms such as plague and cholera, which come and disappear, have, of course, been noted, and the number of the victims duly chronicled. But the influence of those diseases which settle among a people and oppress it generation after generation has been ignored. Yet "in the international struggle for supremacy or existence, a people of whom a large proportion have passed through a sickly childhood cannot but be at a disadvantage compared with more healthy nations; and it is quite possible that the sudden introduction of an endemic disease among a people hitherto dominant in the world may end in its rapid downfall as regards science, arts, commerce, and war." Believing this, the authors suggest that "the conqueror of Greece was not so much the Macedonian or the Roman as that great tyrant which now holds half the world—malaria." And as with Greece so also with Rome.

Of all diseases, malaria would seem to be the most effective in sapping the strength and energy of a people. Malaria is a recurrent fever produced by a small parasite, carried from individual to individual by a special class of gnats. A single individual entering a country carrying the malaria parasite will be enough, other conditions favorable, to infect a whole people. The effects of this disease are of a peculiarly disastrous character, the more so that they are of a slow cumulative character that may escape attention for a considerable period. Major Ross, who knows more about malaria in modern Greece than any other man in the United Kingdom, says that, out of a population of two millions and a half, one million were attacked by malaria in 1905. In one part of Greece 50 per cent. of the children examined were infected. Now malaria is not a disease that kills as plague kills, nor is it a disease that attacks and departs, leaving one little the worse for the experience. The parasite may remain in the body for years, causing frequent relapses. There is a loss of energy, physical and moral. Its effects on children would be a "constant drain upon the growing body, (which) must put a check upon the development, physical and mental, of each generation.....The succession of febrile attacks would alone be a serious tax upon the growing, while the consequent anæmia.....must make the child incapable of prolonged application, and rob him, to a large extent, of his powers of mental receptivity. In a few generations a type of man possessing extraordinary mental and physical powers may become, under this scourge of malaria, greatly altered and debased."

Assuming, then, the power of malaria to so undermine the strength and vitality of a people as to form a powerful influence in its downfall—and of this there can be little reasonable doubt—are there sufficient reasons for believing that this factor operated in the cases of Greece and Rome? On this head Mr. W. H. S. Jones, of Cambridge, has brought ample evidence to establish a *prima facie* case for the main contention of his essay. To com-

\* *Malaria: a Neglected Factor in the History of Greece and Rome.* By Messrs. Jones, Ross, and Ellett.

mence with, there is the prevalence of malaria in modern Greece, and the fact that, geographically, the larger part of Greece is favorable to the development of the disease. There are, too, numerous descriptions among the ancient Greek writers of a fever that have fairly clear reference to malaria. Hippocrates writes clearly of the symptoms of a very prevalent fever which, while probably referring, in some cases, to typhoid, must refer in many instances—perhaps in all—to malaria. The curious and suggestive thing is, that there is no clear reference to malaria, as an endemic disease, until about the middle of the fifth century B.C. In Italy the references to malaria, as an endemic disease, does not occur until about 200 B.C., after which it is easy to trace its presence and influence.

How, then, did Greece and Italy become subject to the scourge? As a disease, malaria is due to the presence in the organism of minute parasites which produce fever, recurring every one, two, or three days. Infection is produced by a species of gnat which breed in small pools of water. These three conditions are necessary for malaria—the parasite, the gnat, and the stagnant water, which is the latter's breeding-ground. That the two latter existed in Greece from the earliest times may be safely assumed. All that was needed was that someone should enter the country with the malarial parasite for the gnats to carry it from one person to another. Now, Mr. Jones suggests that as Africa is the home of the disease, we have to look to Greek communications with that country for light on the subject. One source of this contamination may have been the Greek expedition to Egypt in 456 B.C. Moreover, immediately after this date the Athenians were busily engaged on the island of Sphacteria, which is one of the worst malarial spots in the Mediterranean. The Peloponnesian war, too, left large tracts of Attica out of cultivation, which would offer the most favorable conditions for the development of malaria. So, too, in the case of Italy, Mr. Jones suggests that the disease would probably be introduced by Hannibal's Carthaginian mercenaries, while the devastation of Italy in the second Punic war would turn much of the country into marshy land, and would thus breed the mosquito that would become infected by the malarial patients among the Carthaginians.

The fact of the disease being present is unquestionable; the date of its introduction is more open to question, but its influence on the character of a people, once it became endemic, must be profound. A disease that operates, not by weeding out the unfit, but by a general lowering of vitality, is surely one of the greatest afflictions under which a people can suffer. Certainly some such deep-seated cause is far more likely to have operated to the detriment of both the Greeks and the Romans than those causes usually cited by historians. The change from strength and efficiency to weakness and inefficiency, from sober self-control to a petulance, craving for excitement, and desire for cruelty, points, as Mr. Jones says, to some physical defect. Within recent times we have seen how malaria has become epidemic in the Mauritius and converted a health resort into almost a plague spot. A people afflicted in this way enter in the fight for life with the issue decided against them from the start. And when they fall, their fall is due, not so much to the pressure of the enemy from without, as because of the insidious attacks from within.

There is a suggestive passage in the book concerning the effects of influenza which has now become practically endemic. A whole host of nervous and mental complaints are left as the result of influenza, and the cumulative influences of the disease opens up the gravest outlook for the future. Into that subject I have no space now to enter. On the general question, however, Messrs. Ellett and Jones have opened up a new and probably extremely fruitful line of inquiry, and may be congratulated on having thrown light upon an obscure, historic problem.

C. COHEN.

## The Appeal to History.

THE Rev. Dr. Cadman, of Brooklyn, who is now preaching in London, is a divine of some distinction, whose utterances from the pulpit are highly appreciated by a large number of Christian people. He is a scholar of no mean order, and his acquaintance with literature is both wide and thorough. The other Sunday night he delivered at Whitefield's Tabernacle what the *Christian World* characterises as "a notable sermon on religious progress." His text was Haggai ii. 7: "The desire of all nations shall come." Nothing can be plainer than that simple verse. The word "desire" is rendered "desirable things" in the Revised Version, and the reference is to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem after the return of the captives from Babylon. The people were disheartened when they contemplated the exceeding meanness of the new structure as contrasted with the glory of the former one. Haggai's object was to encourage the depressed inhabitants and fire them with dauntless enthusiasm by assuring them that the silver and the gold are the Lord's, and that soon "he will shake all nations, and the desirable [choicest] things of all nations will come," or will be brought to adorn his house, and that "the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." Such is the meaning of Dr. Cadman's text. But as all people familiar with the habits of the pulpit are aware, preachers usually ignore the context of the words on which they base their discourses, and give them a significance never even dreamed of by their authors. These words in Haggai are generally taken as a prophecy of the advent of Jesus Christ, who is declared to be "the desire of all nations." We know that Christ neither was nor is "the desire of all nations." It would be much more accurate to describe him as one "despised and rejected of men," or as "one from whom men hide their face." In itself that is neither here nor there, the one point of importance being that Christ was not in Haggai's mind at all, and that to give his words a Christian application is to twist them clean out of their contextual setting. With that fact in view, we do not wonder at Dr. Cadman's following deliverance:—

"One temper which cannot interpret this text is certainly that of criticism of the Church. I admit that sometimes the Church seems to deserve it, but I have yet to understand that God gave any man the right to impeach an age. Certain people, self-elected by their own consciousness to heights of judgment, place the whole age under indictment and harass the Christian Church with endless statements against it. The true pioneer is always very sparse in mere protest."

How on earth the text suggested the above outburst to the preacher must remain for ever a mystery. But even as it stands, quite detached from its text, the extract is not true to fact. Take the Old Testament prophets and you will find that every one of them *did* impeach his age. They all brought the whole nation under indictment, and were on that account well-nigh universally hated. But let us allow the preacher to proceed:—

"Protest, unaccompanied by any positive action, is a realm in which you cannot afford to dwell. When we substitute abuse for sympathy, and pharisaical denunciations for active effort to bring in the Kingdom of God, we follow the line of least resistance. Sometimes, both beneath and beyond the pulpit, we find those who kill us all the day long, and do not hesitate to lay heavy charges against the Church. Much of this is specious. Let us not be led away or dismayed. If the battle is lost here, let us win it yonder. To-day the greatest heresy of which we can be guilty is to be afraid for the cause of God, to be timorous about the progress of Truth."

That is the language of a man who is conscious that much of the ground on which he stands is insecure. This sentence, "If the battle is lost here, let us win it yonder," shows conclusively that Dr. Cadman knows that part at least of the case for Christianity is not good, and that the preachers are bound to

abandon some of their positions, and seek refuge in others farther away from the enemy's base. "Much of this is specious," which means that there is danger in it, that it is expedient to move away from it, and act as if it were not there. Timorousness would be fatal; to tremble for the ark of God would be to lose it. Hence Dr. Cadman exclaimed, "Whatever you do, do not be afraid. Whether the Church is safe or not, believe that she is, and you may save her yet." After all said and done, however, Dr. Cadman himself is not free from fear, for he said:—

"Send your grammarians to the rear. Send the men who dispute about the age and date of the Pentateuch where they can dispute in peace. In the meantime, save the people by the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Now, the great object of dread to Dr. Cadman is criticism. He cannot endure it. The greatest crime, in his sight, is to "harass the Christian Church with endless statements against it." The Church may be guilty of much that is laid to its charge, but, still, no one has a right to impeach it, because God is for it. We maintain that the policy recommended by the reverend gentleman is essentially cowardly. The fear of criticism is the clearest sign of weakness, and the wish to drive it to the rear presages defeat. If the Pentateuch was written by Moses in the wilderness, scholarship is powerless to disprove the fact. If the whole Bible is the Word of God, no amount of disputation can ever injure it. If Jesus was born of a virgin, and rose from the dead, no scepticism can do any real damage to his cause. But the desire to prevent the critics from approaching these so-called truths of the Gospel indicates that their guardians are not quite sure of them.

Dr. Cadman seems to be laboring under the delusion that to criticise the Church is to bring the age under indictment. But the Church and the age are by no means identical. Indeed, it is the present age that is the Church's most formidable foe. There are many preachers who wax eloquent in their denunciation of the age on that account. Yes, it is at the bar of the age that the Church stands so completely condemned; and it stands thus condemned, not for what it is, but for what it claims to be and is not. No one living would have any grudge against a veritable "cause of God." We claim the right to impeach the Church, not because it is the "cause of God," but because it pretends to be when all the facts bear witness that it is nothing of the kind. We are not enemies of God, but simply unbelievers in his existence; and our only quarrel with such men as Dr. Cadman is, that they call their own work God's work, when it does not possess a single feature that stamps it as, in any sense whatever, superhuman. We understand that Dr. Cadman presides over an exceptionally large church in Brooklyn, but we do not hesitate to say that its strength and prosperity are due alone to the pastor's exceptional ability as preacher and organizer. Other ministers, equally pious, equally loyal and devoted to their Lord, have to be content with small and half-empty sanctuaries, simply because they lack the personal magnetism and charm of their Brooklyn brother.

The most serious indictment of the Christian Church comes from history. As the Bible is overthrown by literary criticism, so is the Church by historical criticism. History declares that all the claims set up on behalf of the Church are absolutely false. Whatever successes it has ever achieved can be fully accounted for without any reference to supernatural interferences, or to any other power than man's own. And what is true of its insignificant successes is equally true of its gigantic failures. As an exclusively human institution, its fortunes are perfectly intelligible; but as a Divine establishment it is its own all-effectual accuser, or, rather, it is wholly discredited by the unanimous testimony of nineteen hundred years. Can Dr. Cadman dispute this statement? Dare he stand up before an intelligent congregation and conscientiously say that the history of the Church proves its divinity? Has he the audacity to assert that the Christ of theology is

now, or ever has been, the "desire of all nations"? Why, even so-called Christian nations are turning their backs upon him. He is reported to have predicted that if he died upon the Cross he would draw all men unto himself and establish his kingdom among them. That prophecy remains unfulfilled to this day, and there is not a single corner, however small, on the whole globe in which it can be said that his kingdom has been set up.

We agree with Dr. Cadman that there is no reason why we should be "timorous about the progress of Truth," and we go further and characterise the modern decline of Christianity as a result of "the progress of Truth." It is the advance of the truth that is emancipating mankind from the bondage of superstition and priestcraft, and setting their feet on the rock of facts instead of on the sands of supernaturalism. In proportion as we discover the truth we become free; and we renounce the Church because it is founded on discredited fables. Is it not undeniable, then, that the preachers object to criticism because they are afraid of it, because they are convinced that, fortified by modern knowledge, it holds their cause and their profession in the hollow of its hands as exposed delusions? But neither their objection nor their denunciation shall be of the slightest avail. It is in vain that they order it to be sent to the rear. It is not it, but they, that must slink away to the background; and they are already doing so, while it is marching on and up to the very forefront. Thus the progress of truth implies the retrogression of religion.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Foreknowledge of Jesus.—II.

(Continued from p. 540.)

OUR examination of the so-called "prophecy" recorded in Matthew xxiv. has brought us up to verse 28—the prediction of a "great tribulation" to come upon the Jewish nation—which is admitted by all critics to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The "signs" named in that chapter as preceding this disastrous event were, however, not historical occurrences, with one exception—that "false prophets" should arise "and lead many astray." Several such pretenders *did* arise between A.D. 30 and 70, and the fact would, of course, be known to the writer of the "prophecy." All the other "signs" were piously concocted from the Jewish "holy books," as may be seen from the source passages which follow.

### GOSPEL SAYINGS.

Matt. xxiv. 7. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.....For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famine and earthquakes in divers places."

Matt. xxiv. 25. "Behold I have told you beforehand."

Matt. xxiv. 8. "But all these things are the beginning of sorrows."

Matt. xxiv. 9. "Then shall they deliver you up into tribulation, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake."

Luke xxi. 12. "They shall lay their hands on you, and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons."

Matt. xxiv. 10. "And then shall many stumble, and shall

### OLDER WRITINGS.

2 Esd. xiii. 31; xv. 15; ix. 3-4. "And they shall war one against another, city against city, place against place, people against people, and kingdom against kingdom.....and nation shall rise up against nation..... And when there shall be seen earthquakes and tumults among the peoples.....then shalt thou understand that the Most High spake of these things from the days that were before thee."

2 Esd. xvi. 18, 37. "The beginning of sorrows and great mournings.....Behold the evils draw nigh."

2 Esd. xvi. 70-71. "For there shall be in divers places, and in the next cities, a great insurrection upon those that fear the Lord. They shall be like madmen sparing none, but spoiling and destroying them that fear the Lord."

Rev. ii. 10. "Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison."

2 Esd. vi. 24. "At that time shall friends make war one

deliver up one another, and shall hate one another."

Luke xxi. 16. "But ye shall be delivered up even by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death."

Matt. x. 35. "For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies shall be those of his own household."

Matt. xxiv. 12. "And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold."

Matt. xxiv. 13-14. "But he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved.....and then shall the end come."

Matt. xxiv. 16, 18. "—then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains.....let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak."

Matt. xxiv. 21. "For then shall be great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now."

Matt. xxiv. 22. "And except those days had been shortened no flesh would have been saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Matt. xxiv. 28. "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Here endeth the grand prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus far—up to verse 28—the great prophecy put in the mouth of Jesus forms an excellent commentary upon what Josephus tells us was a common practice of the Essenes: "There are also among them who undertake to foretell things to come by reading the holy books.....and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets." The Nazarenes, whether Essenes or not, were undoubtedly acquainted with this delightful method of foretelling future events. There cannot be the smallest doubt that, but for the existence of the source passages here quoted, this fraudulent prediction would never have been written.

Returning, now, to our examination of this wonderful "prophecy," we find that the remaining portion—verse 29 to the end—has reference to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. This second coming, as a judge, is announced in the next three verses, which read:—

Matt. xxiv. 29-31. "But *immediately after* the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Now, assuming that this prediction was actually uttered by Jesus, as represented, we have in the foregoing statements a conclusive proof that that personage possessed no foreknowledge of future events whatever, and, so far from being "the Son of God," was nothing but an ignorant and credulous man, as well as a notable example of what he was pleased to call a "false prophet." This is obvious. It is stated in the very plainest terms that the second coming of Jesus "with power and great glory," to judge the world, should be "immediately after" the "tribulation of those days"; that is to say, "immediately after" the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If the statement does not mean this, then words have no meaning.

against another like enemies."

Enoch liv. 11. "They shall rise up to destroy one another; their right hand shall be strengthened; nor shall a man acknowledge his friend or his brother; nor the son his father or his mother."

Micah viii. 6. "For the son dishonoreth the father, and the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house."

2 Esd. v. 2. "But iniquity shall be increased above that which thou now seest."

2 Esd. vi. 25 "Whoever remaineth after all these things shall be saved, and see my salvation and the end of the world."

2 Esd. xiv. 15; xv. 17. "Haste thee to flee from these times.....For a man shall desire to go into a city, and shall not be able."

Dan. xii. 1. "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time."

Enoch lxxix. 3. "In the days of sinners the years shall be shortened."

2 Esd. ii. 13. "Pray for few days unto you, that they may be shortened."

Job. xxxix. 29-30. "From thence the eagle spieth out the prey.....where the slain are, there is she."

Yet, needless to say, neither the second coming of Jesus nor the final judgment of mankind took place "immediately after" that disastrous event. Eighteen centuries have elapsed since the capture and destruction of the Jewish capital by the Romans, and neither of these predicted events has occurred. We have thus a conclusive proof that neither Jesus nor his biographers possessed any foreknowledge of the future. If Christian advocates and commentators were honest they would frankly admit the fact; but to look for such an admission from men of this profession would be to expect too much from Christian morality, which includes, among other virtues, pious lying for the glory of God. The non-fulfilment of these two predicted events being an incontrovertible fact, we need scarcely be surprised to find Christian commentators and apologists endeavoring to give some other meaning to the words attributed to Jesus. The following is a sample:—

"The Apostles asked Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The answer, which occupies the rest of the chapter, *embraces both events in one*. Each of them is a coming of Christ; each is a coming to judgment. The one is a type and shadow of the other. It is quite the character of prophecy to blend together, or hold as it were in one grasp, both its nearer and its more distant fulfilment, so that they *seem* closer together than they really are."

This method of reconciliation is simply apologetic perversion. The "blending together" of two predicted events into one has no existence apart from Christian misrepresentation. So-called "types" and "shadows" are of the same character. Interpreted figuratively, or in a typical or spiritual sense, the plainest words can be made to mean anything the pious Christian distorter or the unscrupulous commentator chooses. But the two events are *not* blended together or embraced in one: verses 5 to 28 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem *only*; then, commencing with verse 29—"Immediately after the tribulation of those days," etc.—comes the prediction of the second coming of Jesus, with his angels, to judge the world. There is, moreover, no authority for saying that the first event is "a type or shadow of the other," or that the destruction of the holy city by the Romans was a "second coming" of Christ; nor has it ever been contended that at the siege of Jerusalem anyone beheld "the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus spoke only of *one* "Coming," viz., "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days," at which time the last judgment was to take place. If the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 be considered a "second coming" of Christ, then the more terrible event which almost annihilated the Jewish nation in A.D. 132-135 (*i.e.*, the revolt of the whole Jewish nation against the Romans under Bar-Cochba) was a *third* coming: but in the Gospel accounts—and we have no other—only *one* "second coming" is predicted—that to judge mankind and bring the world to an end.

Of course, when the words ascribed to Jesus in this grand "prophecy" have to be explained away, the word "immediately" must receive a new interpretation. According to some commentators, when Jesus said "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days" he meant only that his second coming, as a judge, should be "suddenly," no time being specified, and that Christians should therefore be always ready, "for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh." This explanation is, no doubt, ingenious, but it fails ignominiously. The meaning of "immediately" in Matt. xxiv. 29 will be plainly seen from the following passages in the Gospels in which the same Greek word (*eutheos*) is used:—

Matt. xxvi. 74. Peter denied for the third time that he knew Jesus: "And *immediately* the cock crew." (Also John xviii. 27.)

Mark i. 29. "And *forthwith*, when they were come out of the synagogue they came into the house of Simon and Andrew."

Mark i. 31. Jesus "took her by the hand and raised her up; and *immediately* the fever left her."

Luke v. 13. Jesus said "I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him."

John v. 9. "Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."

From the foregoing examples it will at once be seen that the meaning of "immediately" in Matt. xxiv. 29 is "directly," "at once," "forthwith," "without delay," "without any time intervening"; that is to say—"immediately."

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued)

### Acid Drops.

The *Christian Commonwealth*—which we are "advertising" again, you see—is careful to guard against the supposition that the New Theologians are all Socialists. Socialism as Socialism (our learned contemporary says *quid*) must not be placed before Christianity as Christianity. A Christian Individualist is far preferable to an Atheist Socialist:—

"There exists, however much we may deplore it, a school of Socialists who are not only non-Christian, but openly and violently anti-Christian; who inveigh against the Christian religion with coarse and flippant abuse; whose irreverence and rancor spare not even the Person of our Lord and Savior. With these misguided persons we are not called upon to make common cause, merely because they hold certain theories of economics."

This means, of course, that Christian Socialists decline to associate with anti-Christian Socialists—just as if they could help themselves in the long run! And just as if the anti-Christian Socialists mind! Our contemporary simply shows the truth of our repeated statement that a Christian is necessarily a bigot—and the more Christianity he has the more of a bigot he is. "Hold no fellowship with unbelievers," was Paul's cry. It is also the cry of the "New Theology" Christians. They are not a bit better than the "Old Theology" Christians in this respect.

New Theologians don't like jokes any more than the Old Theologians. The *Christian Commonwealth* may weep, as Jesus did; but, like him, it never smiles. It may make others smile, however; and there was a certain provocation in its list of contents last week, which contained the following items:—"The Lord's Supper," and "Science, Salads, and Saucepans."

We commented last week on what looked like another lie for the glory of God. We are happy to reproduce the following letter which appeared in last week's *Christian Commonwealth* and nailed the lie down:—

"Sir,—My attention has been called to a statement in the *Christian Commonwealth* of August 12 to the effect that the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams informed a Montreux audience that Mr. Robert Blatchford had recanted, renounced his agnosticism, and publicly acknowledged belief in a Heavenly Father."

I cannot imagine how the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams can have deceived himself, or been deceived so grossly. I have never recanted; have not in the least changed my opinions; have not renounced my agnosticism; have never made any public nor private acknowledgment of belief in a Heavenly Father.

I have not the slightest intention of withdrawing *God and My Neighbor* from circulation. I shall be grateful if you will correct this mistake.

ROBERT BLATCHFORD."

It is Mr. Rhondda Williams' turn now. Not that it matters much to anybody but himself.

The compulsory oath was abolished in England when Charles Bradlaugh's "Oaths Act" made oath and affirmation optional. Some day or other England will be sensible enough to abolish the oath altogether. Meanwhile we shall have rather foolish comedies like the following. At Acton Police Court lately, two children were called to give evidence. The first was a boy aged thirteen. Mr. Hanbury asked him, "Do you know what an oath means?" He replied, "No." He also said that he did not know what speaking the truth was, neither did he know what telling a lie was. Evidently he hadn't studied the subject; his ignorance was quite impartial. Nevertheless he might have told the truth in his evidence. Mr. Hanbury forgot that telling the truth is not a deliberate act, but an effort of memory. He dismissed the witness as "too ignorant to give evidence." The other witness was a girl of ten. Being asked whether she knew what it was to tell the truth, she replied, "If you tell the

truth you go to heaven, and if you tell a lie you go to hell." She was accepted as competent, but the magistrate must have known that her reply was one of very doubtful accuracy; otherwise a terrible lot of people must go from his court to the "wrong place."

A brow-beating counsel once asked a child witness, "Now then, tell me; do you know where people who tell lies go to when they die?" The child said "No." And the wise old judge on the bench said to the counsel, "I don't either. Do you?" The counsel only got out of a tight corner by a joke. "My lord," he replied, "I am not in the witness-box."

Mr. J. C. M'Walter writes to the *Irish Independent* that "Darwinism has already become a back number." He supposes that Darwinism has been extinguished by Mendelism—which shows that he does not understand either. It is only in Ireland, we should imagine, that nonsense of this kind is paraded in the name of science.

An Irish friend sends us a little envelope which is common in his part of the Green Island. It is circulated by the Church, and the following is printed on the outside:—

"Written Petition TO BE SENT TO

ST. ANTHONY'S SHRINE AT PADUA.

Write your petition and place it herein, then seal the envelope.

Do not enclose Money, Stamps, or Postal Orders in this envelope."

Money is not to go with the petition—at least, not direct from the petitioner. The Irish priests farm the petitioning business, and prefer to make sure of their commission at their own end. Probably they know the game too well to act otherwise.

Mr. Joseph Bates, who is trying to civilise the people of Boston, Lincolnshire, in the name of Secularism, applied for a summons against "a very respectable man" named Benjamin Bachelor, who rushed out of the crowd while Mr. Bates was speaking, seized him by the throat, wrenched his collar open, ripped his vest down the seam, and tore his mackintosh in two. This most gentle Jesuit would apparently have had freedom to pursue that pastime as long as he pleased, as far as the magistrates are concerned, for they seemed very reluctant to grant the summons—and the pious Chief Constable was present to see that Christianity suffered as little as possible at the hands of the "infidel." This head policeman is evidently a very high-and-mighty individual. Head policemen generally are. He referred to Mr. Bates as "this man." He assumed that, being a Freethinker, deprived "this man" of the common protection of the law. He warned "this man" that if he persisted in lecturing (just as Christians do, by the way) the police would not "give him any assistance," even if he were assaulted, or, we presume, murdered. Such is a head policeman's idea of law and order under the stimulating influence of Christianity.

"If he is assaulted he must put up with it." This expression was used by Chief Constable Adcock in open court at Boston, and the magistrates allowed it to pass un-reproved. The law of assault is not to apply against Christians when they attack Freethinkers. Boston is a Christian city.

When will the men of God throw off their baseless pretensions and become human? How long will the public tolerate their proud airs of omniscience and infallibility? They are making themselves perfectly ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible people by claiming to know the "inmost hearts" of all their neighbors, especially of those with whom they have nothing in common. If a man avows Atheism they say: "Don't believe him; he is only shamming to deaden his accusing conscience; in his 'inmost heart' he believes in God." It is a notorious fact that the working classes are abandoning the churches and joining the clubs; but this is what the sky-pilots say: "Deep down in their 'inmost heart' there is an unsatisfied longing which nothing but the grace and love of God can satisfy." This is in reality the worst species of lying—lying in the name and for the sake of the Lord.

The Rev. Dr. Kelman, of Edinburgh, during his recent American tour, met and conversed with a curious specimen, whom he characterises as a "well-known American scientist." This "great man" was expatiating on the pressing problems of American city life. "And what is your solution?" asked Dr. Kelman. "An Emperor!" answered the scientist. Then he added: "And we know of such a man. We are waiting for him, we expect him to come, and his name is—Jesus." We should like to have the name of that "well-known

American scientist." He must be a *rara avis*, the only one of his kind. But what guarantee is there that Jesus would be a greater success as Emperor than he has been as Savior? And if he were a born Emperor he would have taken the reins long ago.

The *Daily Chronicle* people appear to live too much in Fleet-street. That paper expresses surprise at the belief in witches being "still entertained so near London as Tip-tree, a village of 1,000 people in Essex." The belief in witches is common enough in rural England. Why should it not be? There is Bible warranty for it. That is good enough for Essex villagers—though it seems to be nothing of the kind at the *Daily Chronicle* office. Yet our contemporary is ready at any time to declare that the Bible is the Word of God.

Submarine C 17 was launched in great secrecy at Chatham. The launching was done suddenly, without religious ceremony. They couldn't even trust God.

The Rev. J. Ossian Davies, writing in the *British Congregationalist*, asserts that "the most distinguished evolutionists of the day believe in a personal God." Mr. Davies cannot but know that his assertion is utterly false. Even Dr. Russel Wallace, whom he quotes, stated, in an interview with the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, published only a few years ago, that the great bulk of living scientists were rank Materialists, and that he himself did not believe in the personal God of the Churches. Will the reverend gentleman name a few of "the most distinguished evolutionists of the day" who believe in a personal God? This lie has become the fashion with second and third-rate divines, who seem to be morally as hopelessly depraved as it is possible for them to be.

Mr. Davies throws all scruples to the winds, and babbles about "the very daisies around his feet bearing the autograph of the Eternal." How can this man of God identify his Master's handwriting? When did he see the Almighty in the act of inscribing his name on any object? By what authority does he say, "It is only the fool who says in his heart that there is no God"? This is the reckless dogmatism of absolute ignorance. Did we wish to be rude, we would answer in the same silly terms, "It is only the fool who says in his heart that there is a God." Then the two fools could keep each other company, fight it out between them, and let the rest of mankind have a little peace.

According to Canon Newbolt, God and the Devil are at serious loggerheads about man. The Devil says man is frail, and cannot help himself. But he is a notorious liar, and should never be listened to. "God says man is strong, and can use his very temptation to his greater good." If that is what God says, he, too, is guilty of lying. Some men are strong and some are weak, while all are exactly what heredity and environment have made them. In any case, they know their condition without being told by either God or Devil.

The Canon contradicts the testimony of reason and of history, and his own as well. "With God's help there is no temptation that may not be overcome," he says. Both observation and experience assure us that that is not true. There are people doomed by Nature to perish, and neither God's help, nor man's either, does, or can, prevent it. Then there are others, many of them Atheists, who successfully resist all temptation without assistance from any source whatever. If the Canon objects, and affirms that the Almighty does help Atheists, though they know it not, then we ask, why does not the Almighty help all, and prevent the awful wreckage we behold on every hand? Is not the Canon thus convicted of talking sheer nonsense?

A notice of Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography* occurs in the last issue of the *Methodist Times*. The writer's knowledge of Spencer's philosophy may be gauged from the statement, placed within quotation marks, "that consciousness represents a specialised and individualised form of infinite energy, that it is dissolved by death, and that its elements then return to the source of all being." We do not question that these statements represent fair deductions from Spencer's teachings, but to represent this as being the whole of it is simply ridiculous. Spencer's contributions to European philosophy were weighty and permanent, and such reservations as have to be made in the light of later knowledge do not substantially affect the principles upon which that philosophy was built. Probably what the *Methodist Times* writer means is that these were the only aspects of Spencer's philosophy that concern him. This may be so, but then, being a Methodist, his outlook is of necessity somewhat narrow.

"The sorriest business of all," says this writer, is Spencer's timidity. "He dared not thrust right out and take the everyday consequences of his philosophy." We regret as much as anyone that the full consequences of Spencer's philosophy in relation to religion were not worked out and plainly stated. But we are not quite clear that this was due to timidity; certainly not wholly so. Spencer said many hard things against the current falsehoods, and he was generally ready enough to express his opinions when appealed to. But even though timidity played its part, we ought to consider other things in passing judgment. It is the great vice of public men in this country that they habitually suppress or disguise their opinions on religion. If all of them were brave enough to speak out, Freethought—and Christianity—would both be in very different positions from what they are now in. But to be bravely outspoken is to raise up numerous enemies and obstacles; and when men have a great work in hand, in any branch of science or philosophy, they are apt to consider the effect of plain speech on their main occupation. This consideration operated, we know, in the case of men like Lyell and Darwin, and it is safe to assume that it operates in the case of many others. Christian opinion forces public men—when it can—to be either reticent or hypocritical, and this will never be otherwise until Christian opinion is weaker than it now is. The real blame, then, lies, as we have often pointed out, not so much with those who are not as outspoken as they might be, but with the Christian conscience of the country, which has insisted upon conformity as the price of its friendship or neutrality, and would far rather see cowardice and hypocrisy than honesty of speech when it voices doubt of Christian belief.

Alas for Christian Virtue! A person bearing this curious name recently acted in a manner suggestive of the way the article itself has often worked out in practice. He absconded from Bristol Workhouse carrying with him some articles of wearing apparel belonging to the institution. And on a Sunday, too!

According to the *Christian World*, the Anti-Suicide Bureau of the Salvation Army "continues strikingly to justify its existence." Who says so? The Salvation Army. That settles it—for fools; with which species England abounds, especially in matters of religion.

There is a very interesting criticism of that Anti-Suicide Bureau of the Salvation Army in the new sixpenny edition of Mr. Manson's book, *The Salvation Army and the Public*. The Bureau was started on January 1, 1907. At the end of the first week the following figures were given for London alone: "Non-suicide cases 12, Doubtful Cases 5, Lives Saved 194." In one week the Salvation Army had saved 194 people in London from committing suicide. It was a most wonderful success. Yes, and it is more wonderful still when you look into it closely. Mr. Manson points out that, according to official statistics, 537 suicides took place in London during 1906. Only 537 suicides in London during a whole year, and General Booth saved 194 people from suicide in a single week. Prodigious! The Salvation Army thinks so too, for it is now more careful with its figures. It suggests, instead of affirming, which serves the turn nearly as well, and is ever so much safer.

The Anti-Suicide Bureau is simply another piece of General Booth's charlatany. It has not affected the statistics of suicide at all. Certainly, there were 509 suicides in London during 1907 as compared with 537 during 1906. But this has nothing to do with the Salvation Army. The figures have gone up and down, as Mr. Manson shows, during the last thirteen years. In 1896 there was a drop of 56, and in 1904 a drop of 51; so that there is nothing abnormal in the drop of 28 during 1907. The rise and fall of these figures are, of course, due to general social causes.

Mr. Manson points out another awkward fact. General Booth quoted the "suicide" figures from 1890 to 1904 to justify the starting of his Anti-Suicide Bureau. For the whole of England and Wales there had been an alarming increase of suicides from 1,635 in the first year of that period to 2,523 in the last year. Now it was precisely during that period that the Salvation Army "Social Scheme" had been in operation. Instead of brightening "Darkest England" our new Social Savior had apparently only made it blacker; that is, if he had really done anything at all.

The Protestant Alliance is concerned about the forthcoming International Eucharistic Congress in London, which Cardinal Vanutelli will attend as the Legate of the Pope. It appears that King Edward is going to receive the Cardinal at Windsor Castle, and the Protestant Alliance has memo-

rialised Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Minister, that this official recognition of the Catholic religion is contrary to the Act regulating the succession to the Crown. This, however, seems far-fetched, and we are not surprised that Sir Edward Grey has simply acknowledged the receipt of the memorial. But a further appeal has been made to the Chief Commissioner of Police to prevent ecclesiastical processions during the Congress, such processions being a breach of the law, and provocative of a breach of the peace. Your true-blue Protestant is easily excited by anything that savors of the "Papacy," and he may punch Catholic heads and spill Catholic blood—which might lead to the mauling of his own "dial" and the tapping of his own "claret." So the police had better beware.

Catholic papers announce that a procession is going to carry the consecrated wafer through the streets of London. This is enough to drive fanatical Protestants mad. Free-thinkers, having more tolerant minds and more humor, may smile at this tomfoolery.

Mr. Arthur Machen, who writes forcible piety for the *Academy*, had an article last week on "Intolerance"—a subject on which he is not a bad authority. He states his opinion that "blasphemy" and "indecent" are on all fours with each other. Prosecutions for these offences are "exactly similar." "We prosecute for blasphemy," he says, "because it is unpleasant to us; we prosecute for indecency for the same reason." But this is only true in so far as we prosecute all crimes because we dislike them. *Of course* we dislike them; if we liked them we should not try to suppress them. But dislike alone is not the ground upon which we attack them. They are, generally, inimical to the obvious welfare of society; and, particularly, an infraction of the rights of individuals against whom they are committed. Now "blasphemy" as a crime arose when Christianity was established as divinely true by the law of the land. It was not a matter of taste at all; it was an offence against religion, not against good manners. The latter notion has only arisen as an excuse, and a very hypocritical one too, for retaining an old law which is alien to an altered condition of affairs. "Blasphemy," in short, always was, and always must be, a matter of opinion. "Indecency" is only a matter of opinion up to a certain point. It is a matter of opinion whether a low-cut lady's dress in the stalls of a theatre is indecent. It is not a matter of opinion when a man is guilty of "indecent exposure" in the public view.

When Mr. Machen says that "the matter of truth or falsehood does not enter into the question of blasphemy in the slightest degree," he is talking downright nonsense. There never was an indictment for "blasphemy" the language of which supported or countenanced his statement. Persons prosecuted for "blasphemy" have invariably been accused of bringing the Christian Religion into *disbelief* as well as into *contempt*. Judges again and again declared that they "would not suffer the truth of Christianity to be questioned." Mr. Machen simply does not know what he is talking about.

Nonsense follows nonsense in Mr. Machen's last paragraph. He actually asserts that "If the great mass of English people become convinced atheists a man will not be permitted to demonstrate the existence of God in public places." This is a misreading of both the principles and the character of Atheists. Mr. Machen fancies that Atheists would act as Christians have done. They would not. They believe in equal freedom of thought for all. They hate the very idea of introducing force in matters of opinion. They have sufficient belief in their principles to be confident of their victory in free and open debate. Atheists do not merely reject Christianity; they also reject its fanatical and intolerant temper.

Cardinal Moran is a rare joker. Presiding at a Catholic banquet, in connection with the visit of the American fleet to Sydney, he said that the great American nation (meaning the United States) "stands before the world in modern times as the fearless champion and standard-bearer of civil and religious freedom." This will raise laughter in all who know what is really going on in the land of the Stars and Stripes. The truth is that Cardinal Moran only means, at bottom, that the Catholic Church is going very well under Roosevelt, and will do the same under Taft or Bryan. By "civil and religious liberty" a Catholic priest merely means a condition of things favorable to the activity of his Church where it is in a minority. Where it is in a majority, he takes care that such an heretical expression as "civil and religious liberty" never crosses his hallowed lips.

Cardinal Moran spoke of the old penal laws against Catholics as "an indelible blot on the statute-book of

England." He regards the penal laws against Freethinkers, of course, as an embellishment. "Heads we win, tails you lose."

It is difficult to say whether Christian ministers when dealing with "infidels" are greater rogues or fools. Here is the Rev. J. Weller, who preached at St. Stephen's, Walbrook, on Sunday morning, telling his congregation—which probably consisted of a few old women and as many boys—that Charles Bradlaugh, in one of the last letters he ever wrote, acknowledged that he "no longer 'dared' to make the confident denial of his earlier days, 'There is no God.'" Neither in his earlier nor in his later days did Bradlaugh ever say, "There is no God." Consequently he could not have weakened in his denial. Mr. Weller has a Christian conscience and a Christian accuracy. The man in the street would give both a plainer name.

Being interviewed by the *Star* on the report which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, Mr. Weller soon gave the game away. It appears that he impudently asked Bradlaugh to sign a statement containing the words "I hereby declare that I do not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being." Bradlaugh was far too sensible to endorse such a silly declaration—for, of course, everything depends on the meaning of "Supreme Being." He referred the reverend gentleman to his *Plea for Atheism*, and added—"If that does not seem to you to meet the precise question you ask, I would write an answer, only I could not write a short one without misleading you, and my Parliamentary work just now is very heavy." On that basis Mr. Weller erects his declaration that the "dying" Bradlaugh changed his convictions. We leave our readers to decide whether the reverend gentleman is more R than F or more F than R.

Seventy men in the burning Maypole Pit. Hundreds of heart-broken women—wives, mothers, sisters, daughters—waiting round the pit's mouth. And—

"God's in his heaven,  
All's right with the world."

Peter Fishwick, one of the victims in the latest great mine disaster, was found in a kneeling position, apparently having died with a prayer on his lips. His sister said, "It was like him to be found on his knees before his Maker." Yes, and like his Maker to kill him in that position.

Another poor Christian gone to—somewhere. Rev. Ludlow Garratt, of Merifield, Cavendish-road, Bournemouth, left £139,548. "For their works do follow them." But not their cash.

Rev. Richard Jones, of Bodfean Rectory, Carnarvon, left £6,618. He accumulated this by taking no thought for the morrow. In the same way the Very Rev. William Forrest, Dean of Worcester, was able to leave £5,429. Both of them must be wanting iced lemonade badly.

Mr. Michael J. Hanmore, solicitor, of Bray, County Wicklow, has gone the Lord knows where. He was a Catholic, and we daresay he enjoyed the last rites of his Church in dying, so he ought to be in purgatory by this time. He left £7,801 behind him—also his wife, for whom he made a curious provision in his will. He desired her to enter a convent and devote the remainder of her life to prayer, and £1,000 was bequeathed for this purpose. If she declines to enter a convent, she is to receive only her jewelry and wearing apparel. Such is the sublime and tender influence of religion! The wonder is the pious testator did not order that his widow should face the world naked. In that state she would have been a striking piece of Christian Evidence.

William Inskeep, a popular temperance lecturer and local preacher at Heywood, has been sent to prison for deserting his invalid wife and three children. The Chairman of the magistrates said it was one of the worst cases that had ever come before the Bench.

Mr. Tree is going to play the Devil. Poor old Nick! How he has fallen! We think the Lord Chamberlain should interfere. That official would not let Mr. Tree play God (we mean in a drama) or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost; and Satan really belongs to the same syndicate; for the Christian godhead is not a Trinity, but a Quarternion, with God the Devil for the fourth person—yes, and the most important person of all, seeing that without him the other three persons fall amongst the unemployed and finally disappear.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 6, 13, 20, 27, Queen's (Minor) Hall.

October 4, Glasgow; 11, Leicester; 18, Manchester; 25, Stanley Hall, London.

### To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £216 8s. 6d. Received since.—W. P. Kennedy, £1 1s; H. Wyllie, 10s. 6d. (this acknowledgment has been accidentally delayed); W. H. Deakin, £3; A. J. Brown-ing, 10s.

E. GWINNELL wishes us to state that the *Freethinker* has not been in the Harringay Reading Room for four weeks. The "saint" responsible for its introduction might take note.

W. P. KENNEDY, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I am sorry I cannot make it five times as much. Even that would be small value to place on the enlightenment and pleasure your paper affords me in these priest-ridden, superstitious parts [Ireland]."

A. L. (Glasgow).—We are not going to fill the *Freethinker* with the scurrilities of Christian Evidence speakers, or spend our time in correcting their slanders. It is a thankless as well as a disgusting task to hunt vermin. And the people who could be influenced by such propagandists are really too low in the intellectual and moral scale to become Freethinkers.

D. V. GREY.—We fear we cannot burden our pages with all that pious rubbish. Our readers know that religious lunatics exist, without spending half-an-hour in an asylum.

THESIDERS.—Squabbles between Old Theologians and New Theologians in Newcastle Market are of no particular interest. If a drunken Irishman starts up and curses and threatens one of the speakers, it may be amusing to those on the spot, but the mere statement cannot be very amusing to people hundreds of miles off. Besides, there are drunken Irishmen everywhere.

J. W. DE CAUX.—Thanks for the correction. What happened was the addition of an extra cypher—a thing that only too easily occurs both in writing and in printing. Of course, the 100 additional clergy required every year to keep up with the growth of population would only amount to 2,000 in 20 years—as you point out. The positive shortage of clergy remains untouched.

W. H. DEAKIN, subscribing (from India) to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I think the attention of non-contributors to this Fund should be called to the fact that they are deeply indebted to you for their emancipation from some kind of superstitious cult or other, which would worry them for pew-rents, repairs to the Doxology works, altar-cloths, communion plate, bazaars, etc., all of which they are relieved of, for which they should be grateful." The rest of this correspondent's letter, with cuttings about the missionaries, shall be dealt with later.

C. BROWN.—The man of God's idea that, because the origin of life is not definitely settled no attack should be made on the teachings of the Church, is really too foolish for criticism. He might as well say that because we are not certain as to Mars being inhabited, and having great artificial canals, we have no right to dispute the moon's being made of green cheese.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

F. C. WYKES.—Will be useful. Thanks.

G. BERMANN.—Mr. Herbert Burrows did put Disestablishment, Secular Education, and Equal Rights for all bodies dealing with religion, in his election address. He also denounced the Blasphemy Laws in his speeches. On that question he has always been perfectly straight.

C. J. W.—Your verse shows promise, but it is hardly up to publication mark yet.

S. CALMON.—We have already written on it—as much as it merits.

C. W. GEDDES.—The revenues of the Church of England, apart from voluntary contributions, which are only a small part of them, are derived from sources created by the State, first during the "Reformation," and subsequently by various Acts of Parliament. The doctrines and ritual of the Church were also established by the State.

H. BLACK.—We have dealt with the Bradlaugh yarn in "Acid Drops." Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. We very much doubt if reducing the *Freethinker* to a penny would "boom" it. This is not a "mob" journal. A good effect on a few thousand readers is better than an indifferent effect on ten times the number.

W. WINDSOR.—Sent for distribution as desired. Glad you have found our *Bible Handbook* so useful.

EX-SALVATIONIST.—We are reserving Booth's screed on "Woman" for treatment.

J. A. TONKINS.—In our next.

C. W. STYRING.—See our paragraphs. The worst of the lie is that the "glorious free press" will repeat it endlessly without troubling to notice the correction.

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

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### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers a special course of Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall during September, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. It is hoped that London "saints" will do their utmost to give publicity to these lectures, as it is impossible to advertise them effectually over such a vast area as that of the metropolis through the ordinary commercial channels. Miss Vance, the secretary, will be happy to supply "saints" with small, neat-printed announcements of the lectures for distribution amongst friends, acquaintances, etc. Mr. Foote's subjects will be found in an advertisement on the last page of next week's *Freethinker*. It must be understood, however, that they will be subject to change, if anything should occur to make it advisable, but in that case due notice will be given through this journal and the weekly newspapers in which the Society's lecture notices are inserted.

Glasgow "saints" will note that Mr. Foote opens the new lecture season for the N. S. S. Branch on the first Sunday in October.

The Birmingham Branch has secured the use of the Town Hall, by courtesy of the Lord Mayor, for four Sunday evenings during the winter. The Branch wanted Mr. Foote to take all the dates, but for several reasons that was not possible, even if it were advisable. Mr. Foote has agreed to take the first and last Sundays, as before, and the intervening lectures will be delivered by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. This arrangement seems far preferable to the Branch's suggestion. It will show that Secular propaganda does not depend upon one man; and such a demonstration gives the public a broader idea of our strength and resources.

A Christian Evidence lecturer at Leeds wears kilts instead of trousers. Perhaps he thinks the Gospel can be preached more effectually in that costume. But it did not help him much in his debate, before a large audience, with Mr. George Weir on "The Resurrection."

Fourteen young Freethinkers at Birstall, near Leeds, having "got foul" of the Vicar, that gentleman challenged them to debate, and they arranged to be represented by Mr. Wishart, who started with a preliminary lecture, after which a local Branch of the N. S. S. was formed.

The rowdiness stirred up by the Salvation Army at Wigan has died away. Mr. Wishart had two large and quite orderly meetings there last Sunday.

### RUSKIN ON "PROVIDENCE."

Your lovely letters are always a comfort to me; and not least when you tell me you are sad. You would be far less in sympathy with me if you were not, and in the "every thing right" humor of some, even of some really good and kind persons, whose own matters are to their mind, and who understand by "Providence" the power which particularly takes care of *them*. This favoritism which goes so sweetly and pleasantly down with so many pious people is the chief of all stumbling-blocks to *me*.—*Hortus Inclusus*, p. 22.

The withered leaf is not dead and lost, there are Forces in it and around it, though working in inverse order; else how could it rot?—*Carlyle*.

## The Missionary Boom.—I.

"Civilisation did not consist of railways, telegraphs, and representative government, or even of those characteristic British exports—Beer and Bible, but of right living and the cultivation of morality and art. The only satisfactory and lasting civilisation was that which springs up from below. Savage customs were often as powerful for morality as those we sought to inflict upon them, and there was no reason why we should interfere with them more than was necessary to make life and property safe."—PROFESSOR A. C. HADDON, British Association Meeting, 1895.

"But for the most part the 'religious world' is so occupied in hating and despising the beliefs of the heathen whose vast regions of the globe are painted black on the missionary maps, that they have little time or capacity left to understand them."—DR. E. B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, 1873; vol. i., p. 420.

MANY massive volumes might be composed upon the subject of "The evil good men do," and one stout volume might be devoted to missionaries.

There is a boon in foreign missions at present, and a corresponding slump in church membership at home. We were amused by a speaker at one of the May meetings who was bemoaning the falling-off in church membership, but consoled his audience by remarking that they were not the only sufferers—all the other Churches found themselves in the same position.

In spite of all the various devices to make their services more attractive, such as shorter sermons, more music, combined with social attractions, the Churches not only do not make new members, but they are losing the old ones they have already. The coming generation will not have "Christ and him crucified" at any price. Even those who believe in a God are coming to the opinion of old Omar:—

"He's a Good Fellow, and 't will all be well."

People smile at the French aristocrat who declared that God would never damn a person of his quality; but human nature is much the same in all classes, and there are probably few of the religious to-day who do not make a similar reservation on their own behalf.

Christianity is gradually changing and fading away into a colorless ethical system, with scarcely a trace of the original elements of dogma, ritualism, asceticism, and supernaturalism with which it started on its career. It is a dying creed. If it had not been for the money invested in it, it would have died in the last century.

Such being the case, the home consumption being so limited, there is nothing for it but to export the article. This is the secret of the present Missionary Boom. This faith, worn out and cast aside by the intelligent here, is to be patched up and made into a serviceable second-hand suit for our less critical black, brown, and yellow brothers abroad. Africa, China, and India appear to be the chosen dumping-grounds.

The promoters of this boom have even gone so far as to get up a missionary show at the Agricultural Hall, entitled "Orient in London," in which was performed a sort of pious circus, showing different phases of the missionary movement. As there are many interesting items omitted from the pageant, we will endeavor to supplement it by a few facts recorded by travellers and scientists, who speak from knowledge and experience, and do not depend upon missionary magazines for their facts.

There is one great similarity between the missionary movement and the Salvation Army. When the Army is begging for its Self-Denial Week, it is always on account of its "Social" scheme. The collecting-boxes bear the words "Slum," "Rescue," "Social," and "religious" work. The first three words are displayed in fine, bold letters; the word "religious" is in very much smaller type. But as a matter of fact, as Mr. Manson has shown in his book, *The Salvation Army and the Public*—of which we urge every Freethinker to obtain a copy and circulate it among his friends, now that it is published at sixpence—only one-fifth of the money so sub-

scribed goes towards the Social work. The Army thus obtains money to carry on its religious work, while the public are all the time under the impression that they are subscribing towards the Social scheme.

In the same way the missionary movement lives on its claims as a civilising agency, and in both cases the public is too busy to investigate for themselves as to the value of the work done; and many who do not take any interest in the religious part of the program subscribe on account of the social and civilising work they are supposed to accomplish. Mr. Manson has given us a pitiless exposure of the social work of the Salvation Army. We wish someone equally competent would expose the civilising work of these missionary societies. In the meanwhile we will endeavor to throw a little light upon the subject.

The Rev. Silvester Horne, the chief organiser of this missionary show, was turned on by the *London Daily Chronicle* (June 4, 1908) to give an account of this movement, from which we learn that their aim is "to set London thinking and talking about missions"; also "we are going to make them confess a measure of responsibility for the condition of the heathen world. We are going to convince them that between a Christian and an unchristian nation there is a measureless distance." A "measureless distance"! That is to say that Christian nations like Russia and Abyssinia are so holy and virtuous that the distance between them and, say, a heathen nation like Japan is immeasurable! Why, the mere statement of such a thing is enough to make even a Pharisee vomit. No wonder that Nietzsche remarked: "We no longer endure it when a priest even takes the word 'truth' into his mouth."\*

Then we are told—

"the unsearchable riches of Christ.....do not become searchable because we insist that these choicest gifts of the Father are the birthright of all his children. Foreign missions are the Humanitarian Intelligence Department of the world.....Ask Sir Harry Johnston, Mr. H. W. Nevinson, Mr. F. A. McKenzie, what would become of the native were it not for the missionary?"

"The unsearchable riches of Christ"! Well, if they are unsearchable, what is the use of searching for them? "Measureless distance"—"unsearchable riches." What empty babble! It must have been after reading stuff like this that Nietzsche declared that "the English are the people of consummate cant."

We do not know what the testimony of Mr. Nevinson and Mr. McKenzie amounts to; but if it is anything like that of Sir Harry Johnston's, we need feel no anxiety as to the fate of the nations deprived of these "unsearchable riches."

No one could speak with higher authority than Sir Harry Johnston, our Special Commissioner for Uganda, and this is his testimony:—

"It is not on the spread of Christianity that African missions can at present base their claim to our gratitude, respect, or support.....In many important districts where they have been at work for twenty years they can scarcely number in honest statistics twenty sincere Christians—that is to say, twenty natives understanding in any degree the doctrines or dogmas they have been taught, and striving to shape their conduct by their new principles. In other parts of Africa, principally British possessions, where large numbers of nominal Christians exist, their religion is discredited by numbering among its adherents all the drunkards, liars, rogues, and unclean livers of the colony. In the oldest of our West African possessions all the unrepentant Magdalenes of the chief city are professing Christians, and the most notorious one in the place would boast that she never misses going to church on a Communion Sunday."†

The rev. gentleman called for Sir H. Johnston's testimony, and here it is. Perhaps it is only a repetition of an old trick played by another great showman, the late Mr. Barnum, who, when his show was attacked by the press as a fraud, had some large posters printed, giving a glowing account of the per-

\* *The Antichrist*, 1899; p. 296.

† *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1887

formance, and finishing it up with "See daily press." Barnum was proud of the trick, and tells the tale with proper pride in the account he wrote of his own life. If the Rev. Silvester Horne ever writes his autobiography, we hope it will not be so "unsearchable" as to wear out a "measurable" patience in searching for a similar avowal.

Leaving Africa for the moment, let us see what Christianity has done to civilise the natives in a colder climate—viz., Greenland. Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, the famous Arctic explorer, in the preface to the first edition of his *First Crossing of Greenland*—it is excluded from the abridged edition—speaks of:—

"A continuous and irresistible decline of the Eskimo from earlier ease and comfort, ending often in hopeless poverty and sickness, is the result which the Europeans may look upon as their handiwork. But have we not in return given them Christianity and enlightenment? Yes; all the West Coast Eskimo are Christians, at least in name, and enlightenment has so far advanced that most of them can read and write.....Which is to be preferred—a Christian Eskimo, who is able to read and write, and has a certain amount of knowledge on other points, but who is not master of the one art on which his existence depends, who cannot therefore support his family, who suffer from ill-health, and consequently sinks into deeper and deeper misery—or a heathen, who indeed lives, as the missionaries would say, in 'spiritual darkness,' for he knows not much more than he can see with his own eyes, but who generally has a strong constitution and good health, who lives in comfort, and keeps his family comfortably, and is always happy and content? From the point of view of the Eskimo the answer can scarcely be uncertain."

It must be conceded, to put it mildly, that the Gospel has not improved the position of the Eskimo.

We meet with the same tale in New Zealand. Professor Max Müller, a most religiously-minded man, cites the speech of "A grand Maori chief, reputed to have been one of the strongest men in his youth, thus speaks of the old days":—

"In those times the fields were well tilled, there was always plenty of provisions, and we wore few clothes—only our own mats of feathers. Then the missionaries came and took our children from the fields, and taught them to sing hymns; they changed their minds, and the fields were untilled. The children came home and quoted Gospel on an empty stomach. Then came the war between the Pakeha and the Maori that split up our homes, and made one tribe fight against the other; and after the war came the Pakeha settlers, who took our lands, taught us to drink and to smoke, and made us wear clothes that brought on disease. What race could stand against them."\*

This agrees with the opinion of another full-blooded Maori, named Nganah, of Te-Ante-Pah, who thus expressed himself: "Missionary very good man, yes, very good man—for himself. He hold one hand up to the sky; you look up. Then he collar your crop, your horse, cow, and pig with the other. Oh, missionary very good man."† The charge was not unfounded, for Dr. Morrison, the historian of the London Missionary Society, tells us how they "purchased thirteen thousand acres for forty-eight axes." The Rev. Henry Williams, chairman of the Church Mission of New Zealand, claimed eleven thousand, and subsequently twenty-two thousand, acres. He became a bishop in the colony. Mr. Terry, in his work on New Zealand (p. 73), says: "In many cases the natives were quite unconscious of what they had conveyed by these ready-made deeds; tracts of land larger than counties of England were sold or conveyed for comparatively a trifle on half a sheet of notepaper." Mr. Cohen—whose pamphlet of seventy-three pages on *Foreign Missions* contains more facts than other people put into two or three volumes, and forms quite a little pocket encyclopædia on the subject—tells us that:—

"The Church Missionary Society's agents alone claimed 216,000 acres, for which nothing but a few axes and similar things had been given in exchange. The native chiefs, who imagined that they had received the axes in exchange for their hieroglyphics at the foot of

the deeds of exchange, naturally objected to the transaction when they discovered its real meaning, with the inevitable result."\*

Of the natives of Tasmania, of whom there were 7,000 in 1803, there is not a single specimen surviving. The last one died in 1870.

We once heard a clergyman hold forth with great eloquence upon the fact that Charles Darwin was so impressed with the improvement brought about by the Mission to the Yahgans, or Coast Indians of Tierra-del-Fuego, that he contributed to the funds of the Church Missionary Society until his death. Here, surely, was an unanswerable argument for missions. We are now in a position to tell the sequel to that story, and a sad one it is. The first mission was sent out in 1870, says Mr. John R. Spears, who tells the story:—

"To improve the Yahgans, warm houses were built to take the place of twig wigwams. Some of the Yahgans were taught to dig, to plant, to saw lumber, and so on. In return for furs and labor on the missionary plot of ground, the Yahgans received clothing and soap, which they were taught to use. An orphanage was erected, where orphan children were entirely supported."†

And this was the result:—

"But the tribe had been ruined by its friends. The Indians, who had thrived when naked and living on whale-blubber, did not thrive as clothed farm-laborers, living on bread. The woollens of the whites were less efficient as clothing than whale-oil. Children, who had been sturdy and strong when naked in the storms of sleet, died when well-dressed and living in a warm orphanage; every child taken into it died. Pneumonia and consumption became plagues."

In 1871 there were three thousand Yahgans; in 1894 there were less than three hundred. "Of those," says Mr. Spears, "that the traveller now may see, every soul is a cowering, hypocritical beggar."

As Sir Richard Burton, the great traveller and explorer, remarked, in his account of his mission to the King of Dahomey:—

"Nations are poor judges of one another; each looks upon itself as an exemplar to the world, and vents its philanthropy by forcing its infallible system or systems upon its neighbor. How long is it since popular literature has begun to confess that the British Constitution is not quite fit for the whole human race, and that the Anglo Saxon has much to do at home before he sets out a colonelling to regenerate mankind."‡

The physical and moral evil inflicted upon aboriginal races by the missionaries forcing their converts to wear clothes has been enormous. As Sir Richard Burton observes, "European attire in Africa is as void of fitness as an African toilette would be in Europe. Here leather perishes, broadcloth loses nap and stiffens, linen and cotton mildew or change color, gloves feed cockroaches, and flannels shrink to half size" (vol. ii., p. 252).

The same facts apply to our Australian colonies. When the Government took Gippsland away from the blacks, to whom it belonged, they, acting on the principle that exchange is no robbery, gave a blanket annually to each live native; with the following result:—

"An emblem of civilisation, it raised the savage in the scale of humanity, and encouraged him to take the first step in the march of progress. His second step was into the grave. The result of the gift of blankets was that the natives who received them ceased to clothe themselves with the skins of the kangaroo, the bear, or opossum. The rugs which they had been used to make for themselves would keep out the rain, and in them they could pass the wettest night or day in miasmas, warm and dry. But the blankets we kindly gave them by way of saving our souls were manufactured for the colonial market, and would no more resist rain than an old clothes-basket. The consequence was that when the weather was cold and wet the black fellow and his

\* C. Cohen, *Foreign Missions*, p. 4. Mr. Cohen gives as his authority Thomson's *Story of New Zealand*, i., 269, and ii., 154-58.

† "The End of the Continent," by John R. Spears, *Scribner's Magazine*, February, 1895.

‡ *A Mission to Gelele*, vol. 2, p. 207.

\* *The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1885.

† *Freethinker*, April 14, 1889.

blanket were also cold and wet, and he began to shiver; inflammation attacked his lungs, and rheumatism his limbs, and he soon went to that land where neither blankets nor rugs are required. Mr. Tyers was of opinion that more blacks were killed by the blankets than by rum and bullets.\*

The missionary is incapable of understanding that natives can be moral without clothes. Besides, what would the British matrons and old maids say to converts in a state of nature? They would certainly cut off the supplies. So the first thing the missionary does is to get the native to clothe himself—we have seen with what effect.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

### Mr. William Watson.

"Oh, his desert speaks loud; and I should wrong it  
To lock it in the ward of covert bosom."

—*Measure for Measure.*

It is at once the privilege and the penalty of genius to receive the homage of appreciation and vivisection by contemporaries. That task in lesser cases is left for the professors and critics of a later age. Browning's vogue was the basis of many Browning Societies, who explained to the master his own meaning when he had forgotten it. But Mr. Watson is not in need of interpretation like Browning. It is seldom that one finds a poet possessing such admirable clarity of utterance. He has a fine tact of exclusion and rejects all that is gusty, noisy, or unbecoming. The poetry of Mr. Watson has always seemed to us full of an austere beauty, and we think of him not as we think of many poets, as men singing in the guest-hall, but as a ministrant to the Goddess of Liberty, burning, with a severe grace, the incense and the precious gums. Looking back at the books of poetry he has already given us, with their glorious music, we notice the growth of a greater dignity, and a more majestic beauty. His *Lachrymæ Musarum*, which made so notable a stir when Tennyson died, must rank as one of the finest poems we have had for many years. Mr. Watson handled that great theme of august death right worthily. In the picture of Tennyson's reception by his brother poets, Mr. Watson sings exquisitely:—

"Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,  
Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth,  
A kinsman's love beseech."

The description of the dead poet is very fine:—

"Master who crowned our immelodious days  
With flowers of perfect speech."

On the subject of death, indeed, Mr. Watson always writes with dignity. It is not too much to say that "Wordsworth's Grave," "The Tomb of Burns," "In Laleham Churchyard," and "Shelley's Centenary" will be linked indissolubly with the memory of those great writers they celebrate, so penetrating is the insight into the genius of each poet.

Mr. Watson is master of a magnificent vocabulary. His command of splendid and striking imagery is remarkable. His poems are a golden treasury of jewelled aphorisms. Take, for instance, the following felicities of expression:—

"The mystery we make darker with a name."  
"Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,  
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day."  
"Now touching goal, now backwards hurled,  
Toils the indomitable world."  
"Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose  
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes."  
And set his heart upon the goal,  
Not on the prize."

How unforgettable in its way is this:—

"I beheld the waters in their might  
Writhe as a dragon by some great spell curbed  
And foiled; and one lone sail; and over me  
The everlasting taciturnity;  
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,  
Glittering magnificently unperturbed."

\* G. Dunderdale, *The Book of the Bush*, chapter "Gippsland Under the Law."

Mr. Watson's poetry is consecrated to the service of man. His "Purple East" and "A Year of Shame" are full of a noble humanity. He has never concealed his Freethought. It is apparent in "The Eloping Angels," a poem of which any man might be proud; but the splendid audacity in "The Unknown God" has scarce been surpassed by Swinburne himself.

"A god whose ghost in arch and aisle  
Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb;  
But follows in a little while  
Odin and Zeus to equal doom;  
A god of kindred seed and line;  
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine."

In a very fine sonnet addressed to Aubrey de Vere, his brother poet, he expressly voices negation:—

"Not mine your mystic creed; not mine, in prayer  
And worship at the ensanguined cross to kneel;  
But when I mark your path how pure and fair  
How based on love, on passion for man's weal,  
My mind, half envying what it cannot share,  
Reveres the reverence which it cannot feel."

Mr. Watson's poetry, with its high-thinking and noble music, its freethought, its ethical appeal, critics of the future will have to take account. Besides the exquisite music, there is a new note in Mr. Watson's poetry. Here is a new atmosphere of serene thought, without passion and without tumult. Mr. Watson wears his singing robes with unusual grace. And he has a key to the little gate that leads ordinary men to the shining "Realms of Gold," and those who read his books may enter that country and dwell with beauty for a while.

M.

### Belief by Organisation.

*The Difficulty Encountered by Rationalists in Dislodging  
Entrenched Falsehoods.*

BY AUSTIN BIERBOWER.

(Member of the Bar, Chicago.)

THOSE persons are much mistaken who think that they only have to render people intelligent to make them drop irrational beliefs. It takes many generations of training to change the popular view. Irrational beliefs are propagated by organisations. Many believe in the organisations and accept their traditions without considering the evidence for them. They largely leave to the organisations to determine what is true, so that many individuals never consider a proposition. Most irrational beliefs are accepted and handed down with ease when there is a strong organisation behind them. The organisations plan a defence of their creeds, and make every one whose business it is to propagate these acquainted with the character of the defence.

And many who think on the subject are not able to weigh the evidence presented. They are carried along by the false reasoning of the champions of the organisation. The ancient Egyptian and Greek religions were handed down to the common people who never considered whether they were true, and most persons who now receive their religion accept the whole creed of an organisation without consideration of their own.

Rationalists have more to do than to discover the truth and proclaim it. They must propagate it. It has to be hammered into the people; not once but a dozen times must the same thing be said before the many will accept it. Falsehood is so pounded into them by the Churches that those who have different views cannot get a hearing. It is one thing to discover the truth, and another to make it believed. Many can be told the truth a dozen times without accepting it. It takes them all this time to get rid of their old opinion.

New opinions have little chance against organisations. Truth does not spread by its own force, for it spreads but slowly. The people are not set to thinking by mere statements of doubt or of new opinions. It is only when these move many people that they are taken up and spread in a contagion.

The people go in droves, and the droves are now controlled by organisations. Many are faithful to the organisations, and not to the truth. It is their Church which they believe in, and for which they have an affection, and they accept its teachings without question. Nearly all the Churches can show hundreds of years of existence and hundred of saints or intelligent men who have accepted their dogmas. It is not a question of truth alone, but of truth entrenched in living agencies for which they have an affection.

Rationalists should, therefore, not hope for much from their discoveries of truth. They cannot prove their opinions to the satisfaction of the people, and where they do so prove them they are, as stated, but slowly accepted. Answers are given to everything they say, which are preferably received as truth. Men's affection must be overcome, as well as their opinion. People reason on the false as well as on the true, and have learned to make it appear true. What men teach, moreover, is dropped after they pass away, or have had their say. An organisation, however, keeps up, from year to year, and comes often to the people with its dogmas, and sometimes they catch people napping and ready to accept anything that is offered. Men cannot always be reasonable. Many do not want to be disturbed in their views and ways of living, and they may think that if they have not the evidence of their dogmas, somebody else has. Error is entrenched and has great interests to support it. It prospers under the name of truth, and often of a higher truth than the average truth of science. There comes a time to everyone when the traditional view of things seems reasonable. People, moreover, get tired of thinking. They refuse to think again when they have thought once, and perhaps when they do think they do not decide, and so when they think afterwards they think that the evidence is slight which Rationalists present. It is a mistaken view that we have only to make people intelligent in order to make them Rationalists. The irrational have their schools, and they teach the unreasonable as sacred, Christian, or something better than secular. All error is imparted as a higher truth, and is connected with some things that we hold dear.

The ignorant, moreover, are far more numerous than the intelligent, and far more amenable to irrational beliefs, as well as to submission to authority. They more readily believe, requiring little evidence. And there are always some intelligent persons, or those who are thought such, in every "cult," to whom the ignorant look as an authority. They think that intelligent people would not accept their views unless they had considered the evidence sufficient, and so many fail to investigate for themselves the views which they accept. It is difficult to dislodge this element from their opinions. The reasons which Rationalists produce do not reach them, and have little effect when they do. As long as intelligent people accept irrational views many will follow them, and it will be difficult to dislodge irrational views. There needs to be an easier route from reason to the people, and a more ready compliance with reason. A proposition needs to be proven a dozen times before it takes hold of some persons, and unpopular views are not readily received; while many will always believe what they want to rather than what there is evidence for, so that the work of the Rationalist is thereby rendered hard.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Among the rainbow colors that glowed on my horizon, lay even in childhood a dark ring of Care, as yet no thicker than a thread, and often quite overshadowed; yet always it reappeared, nay ever waxing broader and broader; till in after-years it almost overshadowed my whole canopy, and threatened to engulf me in final night. It was the ring of Necessity whereby we are all begirt; happy he for whom a kind heavenly Sun brightens it into a ring of Duty, and plays round it with beautiful prismatic diffractions; yet ever, as basis and as bourne for our whole being, is there.—*Carlyle*.

## Church Wealth in Russia.

IN the year 1902 there were 105,339 members of the "white" clergy and 58,138 monks. The number of the latter rose especially during the reign of Alexander III., as also did the number of monasteries; between 1881 and 1890 no fewer than 160 monasteries were established, that is, 16 per annum. In 1902 there were 862 monastic establishments.

The law gives every church from 91 to 267 acres of land. The total extent of church lands was in 1905 48 million acres, of the value of 71.6 million pounds. Fifteen churches owned more than 3,700 acres. The monasteries receive from 270 to 405 acres, but seven own between 13,500 and 27,000, and six monasteries own more than 27,000 acres. The richest in land is the well-known Solovetz Monastery, with estates aggregating 182,000 acres; next comes the Tsar's favorite monastery at Savovo, owning 70,000 acres. Both churches and monasteries own besides houses, hotels, shops, etc.

The income of the monasteries is very little known to outsiders. In 173 the Sergieff Monastery enjoyed an income of over £20,000 a year, and in 1904 the Valaam Monastery was known to have an income of £22,000. The income of the Holy Synod amounts to over two million pounds. The Moscow Metropolitan receives in salary £600 per annum, to which, however, must be added £400 dietary and a contribution of £7,100 from the monasteries of his diocese—a total of £8,100. His St. Petersburg colleague receives in a similar manner £25,900. The Novgorod Metropolitan, however, receives most of all—£150 in salary, £400 in dietary, and not less than £30,200 from the Novgorod Monastery and its hotel—a total of £30,750.

## THE WELSH "NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE."

Such is the latter state of this old Welsh mountain, of which it used to be said that "whoever slept upon Snowdon would wake inspired." The inspiration which to-day awaits those who wake upon Y Wyddfa is the sight of a rubbish-heap surmounted by a pot-house, with the usual appurtenances of civilisation—post-office, railway-station, refreshment-rooms, cigar-ends, urinals, hordes of trippers, to whom the mountain means no more than the pier at Margate or the terrace at Windsor—almost everything that is civilised except a police-station, and who knows but even that may come? If there is still any "beauty born of murmuring sound" among the dwellers on Snowdon, it must be born of the slow-panting locomotive, or the gurgling of whiskies in the hotel. And the view? In clear weather, we are told, it embraces the coast of Ireland. I have seen it embrace a line of "washing" hung out to dry on the edge of Glaslyn precipice. This is what the Welsh "nonconformist conscience" has made of its holy hill.—*H. S. Salt*, "Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills," p. 105.

## GENTLE JESUS'S PAPA.

We have never been able to admire the God of the Bible. His treatment of Adam and Eve really deserved the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. If Adam and Eve had swallowed not only the "apple," but the tree, the serpent, the angel with the flaming sword, and the voice of the Lord God as it walked in the Garden in the cool of the day, he could not have behaved worse. Adam and Eve's view of the matter has been lost with some of the twelve tribes; but it would, doubtless, have proved interesting reading. Afterwards, God drowned the bulk of his children, like kittens in a pail. Yet this murderous Moloch, when he reappeared as a preacher in Palestine, actually told his followers to "Love their enemies," and to do good to those that ill-used them. The same gentle being who is reported to have said "suffer little children to come unto me" is, we are assured, the horrible monster who commanded the Jews to butcher men, women, and children, and to violate maidens. Can paradox be more paradoxical? This same deity, who torments his enemies in eternal fire the moment death frees their helpless souls, expects his creatures to be ten thousand times more humane than their Creator. Those bloodthirsty savages, the ancient Jews, pacified Jehovah with the blood of animals, and according to the Bible, his own blood is necessary to-day to soften his heart a little, and render possible the salvation of a fortunate small percentage of the human race. It is, indeed, hard to conceive how the human mind can give its assent to such ideas, or how any sane man can reverence such a being. The padded and half-forgotten buffoon, to whom the translators of the Bible dedicated the "Authorised Version," was a paragon of all the virtues and the quintessence of perfection compared with the Jehovah of the Jews.

M.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.****OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3 and 6, C. Cohen.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, Mr. Schaller, "What Christians Believe."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, A. Allison, "My Mortal Soul."

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

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

**COUNTRY.**

DALKEITH (Foresters' Hall): Saturday, August 29, at 7, Debate (N. Levey v. Bernard Donoghue), "Whether Secularism or Christianity has Done Most for Humanity."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Tuesdays and Thursdays, at 8, Bible Classes.

**OUTDOOR.**

BOSTON: Bargate Green (near the Cannons), 2.45, Joseph Bates, "Is There a God?—Nature Interrogated."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street): Mr. Wollen, 3, "God, Polygamy, and Mormonism"; 7, "Behold I show you a mystery."

**H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.**

LEEDS: Friday, August 28, Town Hall Square, at 7.30. Saturday, August 29, at 7.30. Sunday, August 30, Woodhouse Moor, at 3 and 6.30.

NELSON: Tuesday, September 1, Secondary School Ground, at 7, "Woman Cursed by Christianity."

BURNLEY: Wednesday, September 2, Market, at 7.30, "An Exposure of the Salvation Army."

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