

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

The true Shekinah is Man.—ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

Mr. H. G. Wells's Religion.

SOME people look upon Mr. H. G. Wells as quite a second Herbert Spencer. Others regard him as one who has thrown that antiquated philosopher into the shade. It seems to be agreed that he is a great thinker. The newspapers take it for granted, and their authority is transcendent nowadays. Mr. Wells himself appears to be very much of the same opinion. He is quite prepared, like all men who are not modest, to express the most modest view of his own natural gifts; but, on the other hand, his tone grows more and more pontifical, and his attitude more and more condescending. We are therefore doubly sorry to spoil the chorus of eulogy with a note of discord. It grieves us—of course it does—to say that, so far from regarding Mr. Wells as a great thinker, we are hardly able to regard him as a thinker at all. We use the word "thinker" in the stricter sense of the word, as involving an element of positive originality. We see no originality in Mr. Wells. He is a great pensioner on other men's intellectual bounty. But he writes in such a pretentious style, and puts forward borrowed ideas with such an air of novelty, that ordinary readers, who know so little and are so easily imposed upon, are liable to accept him as one of the first geniuses of the twentieth century.

It will easily be understood, then, that we do not consider Mr. Wells's religion a matter of infinite importance. We only deal with it, indeed, for certain secondary reasons. In the first place, we are pleased to be told, after so much questionable posturing, what Mr. Wells's religion really is; in the second place, we want to let it throw a little light, if possible, on his former sneers (and worse) at unbelievers who have the courage to profess and call themselves Atheists. Perhaps we have other reasons, but these will do to go on with.

Some six years ago we took Mr. Wells to task for a foolish and abominable passage in a magazine article, which was soon afterwards included in his *Mankind in the Making*. He had an opportunity of setting himself right, but he refused it, and he must be held guilty of a wilful offence. The passage we refer to occurs on p. 187, in the chapter on "The Modern State." After making a profound bow to God and religion, Mr. Wells proceeded to doubt the advisability of entrusting religious teaching to elementary school teachers. Then he made the amazing statement that the sort of man most likely to insist on children, even his own children, being taught religion was "the downright Atheist." This remarkably foolish statement, which flies in the face of all the facts, was followed by something else fit to match it in the shape of a definition of "the downright Atheist" as—

"the man who believes sensual pleasure is all that there is or pleasure, and virtue no more than a hood to check the impetuosity of youth until discretion is acquired, the man who believes there is nothing else in the world but hard material fact, and who has as much respect for truth and religion as he has for stable manure."

Mr. Wells deliberately chose to let that passage stand. He made himself absolutely responsible for

the statement that the "downright Atheist"—which cannot possibly mean more than the outspoken Atheist—regards sensual pleasure as the only pleasure in life, and virtue as merely a trick of education, and truth as a thing unworthy of rational respect. Now there is only one word to describe this, and we take it from Shakespeare. It is "a lie, an odious damned lie."

Why did Mr. Wells tell that lie? Was it to curry favor with Christians and Theists? Was it to vent his spleen upon men who were more candid and courageous than himself?

We believe it is necessary to answer both these questions in the affirmative. Our reasons for saying so are derived from Mr. Wells's new book, *First and Last Things*, published by Constable and Co., and called secondarily "A Confession of Faith and Rule of Life."

With a large part of this book we have no special concern. We shall refer only to the part which contains what Mr. Wells calls "his metaphysics, his religion."

Let us first take what he says on a very important point that lies at the very heart of theological metaphysics, or metaphysical theology, whichever you like to call it. Mr. Wells writes as though he had excogitated all he says from his own head, but he is merely restating the old doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge. He does not mention Hamilton, Mansel, Mill, etc., but he must be ill-read in philosophical literature if he does not know them. We may admit, however, that he puts the doctrine with clearness and force:—

"Whatever positive class you make, whatever boundary you draw, straight away from that boundary begins the corresponding negative class and passes into the illimitable horizon of nothingness.....all the *not* classes meet in that Outer Darkness. That same Outer Darkness and nothingness is infinite space and infinite time and any being of infinite qualities; and all that region I rule out of court in my philosophy altogether. I will neither affirm nor deny if I can help it about any *not* things. I will not deal with not things at all, except by accident and inadvertence. If I use the word 'infinite' I use it as one often uses 'countless,' 'the countless hosts of the enemy'—or 'immeasurable'—'immeasurable cliffs'—that is to say as the limit of measurement, as a convenient equivalent to as many times this cloth yard as you can, and as many again, and so on and so on until you and your numerical system are beaten to a standstill. Now a great number of apparently positive terms are, or have become, practically negative terms, and are under the same ban with me.....For example, that word Omniscient, as implying infinite knowledge, impresses me as being a word with a delusive air of being solid and full, when it is really hollow with no content whatever. I am persuaded that knowing is the relation of a conscious being to something not itself, that the thing known is defined as a system of parts and aspects and relationships, that knowledge is comprehension, and so that only finite things can know or be known. When you talk of a being of infinite extension and infinite duration, omniscient and omnipotent and perfect, you seem to me to be talking in negatives of nothing whatever."

We have said this, in our own way, any number of times. We have always contended that the word "infinite" is a negative term. By using it as a positive term theology has imposed absurdities and unintelligibilities upon millions of reasonable people who are lacking in subtlety and wariness. Challenge

the theologian at this point, and he can get no further; his whole metaphysical case collapses like a house of cards, and you leave him buried in the ruins.

Mr. Wells acknowledges himself a sort of Pragmatist, and claims to make suitable beliefs for himself. Here is a portion of the result:—

"I dismiss the idea that life is chaotic because it leaves my life ineffectual, and I cannot contemplate an ineffectual life patiently. I am by my nature impelled to refuse that. I assert that it is not so. I assert therefore that I am important in a scheme, that we are all important in that scheme, that the wheel-smashed frog in the road and the fly drowning in the milk are important and correlated with me. What the scheme as a whole is I do not know; with my limited mind I cannot know. There I become a Mystic. I use the word scheme because it is the best word available, but I strain it in using it. I do not wish to imply a schemer, but only order and co-ordination as distinguished from haphazard."

Our readers will be familiar with this reasoning. They will probably note that Mr. Wells nearly gave himself away by using the word "scheme," but saved himself by protesting that he did not include a "schemer." A little further on he repeats this protest. People may tell him, he says, that "this something that gives importance and correlation and significance, is what is meant by God." But he replies that he cannot use that word:—

"Many people would be glad for rather trivial and unworthy reasons that I should confess a faith in God, and few would take offence. But the run of people even nowadays mean something more and something different when they say 'God.' They intend a personality exterior to them and limited, and they will instantly conclude that I mean the same thing. To permit that misconception is, I feel, the first step on the slippery slope of meretricious complaisance."

"I do not usually speak of God," Mr. Wells adds, in his august way—at which the Godites must stand shivering. But he has his unbending moments, he uses the word occasionally, but even then (alas for the poor Godites!) it must be understood that he uses it "as a personification of something entirely different in nature from the personality of a human being." Yet the saddened Godites need not fall into hopeless despair. After all, they are the great majority, they hold the purse-strings, they make or mar profitable reputations, and they are entitled to a little comfort. Mr. Wells throws them a luscious lump of consolation:—

"Yet at times I admit the sense of personality in the universe is very strong.....At times in the silence of the night and in rare lonely moments, I come upon a sort of communion of myself and something great that is not myself. It is perhaps poverty of mind and language obliges me to say that this universal scheme takes on the effect of a sympathetic person—and my communion a quality of fearless worship. These moments happen, and they are the supreme fact in my religious life to me, they are the crown of my religious experiences"

The religionists will relish that sweet morsel. But what is it really worth? Mr. Wells, like other men, has his sentimental moments. He is capable like the rest of us, of demonstrating the truth of Emerson's epigram that our ancestors are potted within us. Even the most emancipated among us return at times, by very easy stages, to the fetishism of our most ancient forefathers. When that return is whole-hearted, it is religion; when it is half-hearted, it is poetry. In the former case, imagination is our master; in the latter case, imagination is our servant. Mr. Wells is probably a little mixed. We daresay he means no more than Byron said in *Childe Harold*:—

"Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and my soul, as I of them?"

But the dear Christian public will take him as meaning a good deal more than this; and we daresay he is not exactly displeased at their misconception.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Curse of Cant.

THERE is nothing so common as cant, and there is nothing more severely condemned. Some years ago, a disappointed and soured man published a spiteful book, entitled *The World of Cant*, in which he mercilessly caricatured the popular preachers and leaders of a certain section of the religious community. The central contention of the volume was that pulpit popularity and denominational leadership are largely the reward of a skilful and systematic use of cant, and the contention was vigorously supported by numerous illustrations, some of which were sufficiently fantastic and ludicrous. But what is the exact meaning of this word "cant"? We sometimes hear it said of a certain man that he is "a canting hypocrite," but what characteristic or quality of hypocrisy does the term "canting" connote? There is probably an allusion in the word to the drawling, sing-song, or whining tone of voice peculiar to a well-known species of beggars. Ben Jonson informs us that, in his day, "cant" was almost synonymous with "professional slang":—

"The doctor here,
When he discourses of dissection,
Of *vena cava* and of *vena porta*.....
What does he do but cant? Or if he run
To his judicial astrology,
And trowl out the *trine*, the *quartile*, and the *sextile*,
Does he not cant?"

It was in the same sense that Robertson, of Brighton, used the term when he said: "They shall hear no cant from me." That great preacher was unable to pronounce the theological shibboleths of his age, or to indulge in the pietistic slang so dear to conventional believers. There is such a thing as the professional religious phraseology, the pulpit idiom, the class-meeting unctuous jargon, the prayer-meeting solemn whine or moan, a unique dialect known all over Christendom. Now, cant in this sense may not be consciously hypocritical, but a vein of hypocrisy runs through it all the same. When in prayer a person says, "O Christ, thou sittest on thy throne and reignest," he may not be consciously or deliberately lying, but he is uttering what he has been trained from childhood to regard as theologically true, but what his intelligence, in spite of all the training, treats as false. His *feeling* and his *knowledge* contradict each other, but he endeavors to reconcile them by some such artifice or white lie as the following: "True, he does not actually reign as yet, but he was born to reign, and the time is coming when he shall see all enemies under his feet and his sovereignty universally acknowledged."

Thus cant signifies a reckless, irresponsible use of theological phraseology, not necessarily or deliberately insincere, but still not thoroughly honest and straightforward. And yet we find that doctors of divinity are guilty of warmly recommending such a canting habit. A lady has a Sunday-school class of girls from seventeen to nineteen years of age. Admittedly these scholars are better educated, more widely read, and generally more intelligent than their teacher. Some of them have fallen so low as to be enthusiastic readers of Blatchford's books. One openly confesses that she looks forward to Friday, "because it brings her the *Clarion* and the *Woman Worker*. The teacher is dismayed, for who knows but a day may arrive when one of her girls may be so degraded as to plead guilty to a special liking for Thursday, because it brings her the *Freethinker*? So, in her anxiety, this teacher applies for advice to an ordained spokesman of the Lord, who, accurately gauging the situation, says to her: "Whatever you do, do not argue with those girls, or goodness knows what mischief may ensue. Unequipped as you are, you must on no account discuss those questions. The result would be disastrous. Why, those thoughtful girls might succeed in robbing you of your own faith." That is a very sensible advice. But the teacher wonders whether she is doing right in taking charge

of such a class, and on that point this is the professional direction:—

"You are very well able to speak of Jesus, and tell your own experience of his grace and love. That is your province; abide in it, and refuse to be led out of it.....You are not president of a debating society, but teacher of a Bible class. This is your splendid opportunity, and is it not sufficient? Keep your own heart open to the love of Jesus, and talk to your girls tenderly and graciously about your own blessed experience of his goodness and mercy. This will tell; it will sink into their souls, and, though it seems to be lost, will be found after many days."

That is cant of the worst possible type. Is it likely, is it even conceivable, that girls of inquiring minds, who read the *Clarion* and the *Freethinker*, will be converted to a belief in Christ as their Savior by a woman without intelligence, who can only tell them how very nice it feels to be a Christian, and how gloriously delightful is the sense of God's love in her inmost heart? Girls with brains could never listen to such nauseating talk. It would be intolerable cant to them, and have the effect of making them look forward still more eagerly to Thursdays and Fridays.

Theologians admit that there are "puzzling questions," with which it requires skill to deal satisfactorily. They may at the same time make game of them, pretending that "to an expert they are shallow and foolish enough in all conscience." But where are the experts who find them so when actually wrestling with them? A large volume was recently issued in defence of the Virgin Birth, the author of which is looked upon by the whole Christian world as one of the most completely furnished expert apologists of the day; but the arguments against the Virgin Birth are still unanswered because unanswerable. There are Christians who still ardently believe that Jesus had a human mother but a Divine father, but their belief rests on nothing but the unsupported testimony of the Church and of what they call their own individual experience of the love of Jesus. That the Church has always held such a belief is true enough; but the Church once held many other beliefs which the growth of Science has forced it, for very shame, to renounce; and already the same fate is overtaking this belief. The Resurrection also belongs to the same category. No Christian experience can prove it; and there is absolutely no other evidence in existence. How exactly the belief in it arose no one, not even Professor Orr, can tell. It is certain, however, that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus sprang up at a time when belief in virgin births and resurrections was rife throughout the world and when Divine Redeemers were as common as blackberries at the end of summer.

We confidently deny that Christian experience possesses any evidential value whatever. It is its own evidence, and nothing more. Religious experience is simply the feeling produced by religious belief, and the quality of the emotion engendered corresponds minutely to the quality of the belief. Unitarians, for example, have experience of Jesus as a man chosen of God to be his own special revealer, not as a God-man, or the second person in the Trinity. If Christian experience is to be adduced as conclusive evidence, surely the experience of Unitarians is as conclusive as that of Trinitarians. But these two experiences are radically opposed each to the other, and so effectually nullify each other. The only explanation of the violent clashing of religious experiences is to be found in the equally violent clashing of the corresponding beliefs which alone produce them. Thus the unctuous talk about the high evidential value of the Christian consciousness is merely sentimental cant. The multiplicity of the different types of religious experience renders any proof or evidence founded thereon practically worthless.

Sometimes we are referred to the testimony of the so-called Christian character for a demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion. But here again we are in the region of pure cant. If by char-

acter is meant good citizenship we have no hesitation in asserting that there is no such thing as a distinctively Christian character. The ideal Christian, according to the New Testament, is a man who has been crucified with Christ to the world, whose affection is set on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth, who has died, and whose life is now hid with Christ in God. Whatever moral virtues are enjoined by Christianity possess no distinctiveness, but are common to all well-developed religious systems throughout the world. People of the noblest moral character are to be found in all parts of the world, irrespective of the religion or no-religion which they may profess. No religion and no nation has the monopoly of the best attributes of human nature. On this point we have now the incontrovertible testimony of those who know. And yet there are thousands of God's men in Christendom who still unblushingly teach that nothing short of faith in Christ as the only Savior can make the best men. The New Testament says nothing of the kind. What this book avers is that faith in Christ is the only condition of peace with God and of inheriting eternal life. The supreme emphasis of Christianity has always been, not on time but on eternity, not on earth but on heaven, not on character but on piety. How utterly false and foolish, therefore, is the claim now being put forward that the Christian religion is the only agency that can make people ideally good and noble. The position is wholly untenable, and those who hold it are either culpably ignorant or deliberately wicked.

J. T. LLOYD.

Religion and Science.—II.

(Concluded from p. 723.)

WHAT Mr. Anderson means by saying that science became "idealistic" by discovering "order, progress, and unity," it is difficult to say. Probably he does not mean anything in particular, but hopes that Theists may read into the sentence whatever suits their theory of things. If he means that order and progress and unity are not concrete objects, but merely mental formulæ, I do not think anyone will quarrel with the statement. "Law," as I have said, is a mere piece of mental shorthand, describing in a word universal experience. "Order" is really only another way of emphasising "law." "Progress" is also a word coined to meet our own convenience, but which is quite meaningless apart from the human conception of things. And "unity" is just another word by which we gather under one head all phenomena in virtue of some quality they have in common. But these are words that are equally the legitimate property of all schools of thought, and cannot well be monopolised by any particular theory.

What Mr. Anderson probably means is that science became *spiritualistic*, a suspicion confirmed by his saying that "All the great names in science to-day are practically agreed that the ultimate reality is spirit." But this is simply not true. It is a mere piece of pulpit "bluff." "Spirit" is not a scientific conception at all, nor has the scientific method any use or meaning for such a word. Most scientists would decline to express any opinion at all on the nature of the "ultimate reality"; they certainly would not tell us categorically what it is. One would, indeed, like to know what Mr. Anderson conceives spirit to be. Does he identify it with the ether? Or is he simply indulging in the familiar pulpit pastime of throwing words about, secure in the knowledge that those for whom he writes will care little about their intelligibility so long as the sound of them is sufficiently sonorous.

Here is another gem from this would-be scientific theologian. "Matter," he says, "as the materialist of the seventies conceived it, has disappeared from the purview of science." Well, suppose this were true, does Mr. Anderson imagine that "matter" is less real to the scientist of to-day than it was to the

scientist of thirty years ago? Is he foolish enough to think that even though the atom be resolved into the ether, or shown to be a swarm of corpuscles revolving around a centre like the planets round the sun, that it is less real? The "materialist of the seventies" would readily have granted that "matter" was only a name used to connote the substance of phenomena, and which so far as we can see remains unchanged through all its phenomenal transmutations. His position remains quite unaffected in essence by any discoveries that have yet taken place in physical science. All that he is called upon to do is to modify his conception of the nature of the atom; and as a matter of fact it is the materialistic scientist who has been largely responsible for our better understanding of the matter.

"Vortex rings in the ether form the basis of all atoms," says Mr. Anderson, with the air of one who has demonstrated this beyond all possibility of doubt. And what is the ether? Is it something or nothing? If this gentleman who sets out to lecture others will pause and pay some little attention to the subject he will discover that physicists treat ether as in itself material. Sir Oliver Lodge would tell him that the "ether is material," and "does not belong to the psychical order of things"; and so it is conceived by all scientists, big and little. But instead of finding what it is that scientific men mean when they talk about the ether, Mr. Anderson proceeds in this delightfully inconsequential way: "What we know as matter is resolved into ether," therefore matter "becomes in the last analysis a mode of mind or spirit." Charming! But is the ether mind or spirit? Or is what we know as mind merely a specialised aspect of ether? I sincerely trust that Mr. Anderson will not take to studying a text-book of physics; it would quite spoil him for writing essays on scientific subjects in such an entertaining manner. And the only enlivening features of the columns of religious journalism I wade through weekly are articles of the kind written by Mr. Anderson. My best thanks are due to him for several broad smiles.

But we have not finished with Mr. Anderson's amazing and amusing *sequentia*. Matter is resolved into ether; therefore matter is mind or spirit. But the ether is all-pervading; therefore "we have scientific authority for the religious statement 'God is omnipresent.'" And attraction is a fact in the physical world; and as love is a kind of attraction, therefore "we have scientific authority for the further religious statement 'God is love,'" and thus "science becomes religious and religion becomes scientific." And when Mr. Anderson adds that "This is the most startling discovery, the most inspiring step in human progress since the advent of Christianity," we can all agree as to the wonderful nature of the discovery, even though there may be some doubt as to its value considered as a factor of progress. Sir Oliver Lodge says somewhere that we cannot deny a sense of humor to the "All"; and, if this be granted, there would seem to be a "cosmical justification for Mr. Anderson's existence.

Before going further, I must point out that the above "startling discovery" is not in *Man and the Universe*, although, apparently, Mr. Anderson thinks it is. Still, it would be unfair to Mr. Anderson not to emphasise the fact that the merit of the discovery is his, nor is it quite certain that Sir Oliver Lodge would care to be saddled with the responsibility for its existence. Whatever Sir Oliver Lodge's faults may be, his knowledge of the actual meaning and state of scientific knowledge prevents him reasoning as does his reviewer. Mr. Anderson says that the great names in science are agreed that the ultimate reality is spirit, and that the scientific and religious views of the world coincide. Sir Oliver Lodge knows better and warns his readers that the two views are still opposed; that while religion requires us to believe that the universe is neither self-contained nor self-sufficient, but that it and we are dependent upon a being or beings of which science has no knowledge; yet, on the other hand—

"Science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything beyond or above itself.....nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves being considered possible."

The fact that Sir Oliver Lodge believes that he can reconcile the two views does not in the least affect the question of what is the actual teaching of science concerning the constitution of the universe.

"No man of science to-day," says Mr. Anderson, "except perhaps Haeckel, would say as Tyndall said, 'In matter I discern the promise and potency of life.'" Now, curiously enough in the address from which this sentence is taken—where it does not appear in the form given—Prof. Tyndall pointed out that the mathematical conception of the atom could not be allowed in the future to dominate scientific thinking, and so was quite prepared, as a materialist, to resolve the atoms into vortex rings without feeling that it destroyed his materialism. But when one is told that no man of science would agree with Tyndall in the view quoted, the answer is that there is hardly a man of science who believes otherwise. They are all saying it, Sir Oliver Lodge implies as much, and Mr. Anderson, in resolving atoms of matter into ether, and identifying ether and life, also says it, although he appears unconscious of the fact. What has really occurred of late years is, that the conception of matter has been enlarged so as to cover all the phenomena with which it is associated.

What Mr. Anderson's conception of matter is it is rather difficult to say. In one paragraph, as I have pointed out, he identifies matter, ether, and mind. In the next paragraph but one, "matter is the instrument through which the great mind expresses its pre-existent harmony." First of all, matter is mind, then it is a mere instrument through which mind operates. You pay your money and have your choice.

Mr. Anderson is right in saying, "It is significant that the resolute facing of the facts of the situation and the attempt to make a new statement of religion.....is made to-day by men of science, not by official religion." This is true, but not unusual. It has always been the scientist who was anxious to face facts, the religionist who shunned them. It has ever been the scientist who wished to get at the truth, the religionist who fought hard in the defence of antiquated error. All this is true, and it is a striking comment on the alleged elevating influence of religious belief. And it is an interesting question as to how much of Mr. Anderson's apologia is really due to a sincere desire to get at the truth and how much of it is due to the lower desire to save some religious belief at all costs? After all, these attacks on Materialism, on men like Haeckel, are not inspired by mere conviction that one is unsound and the other mistaken. The attack commences because Materialism and certain men of science are opposed to religion. Not the spirit of the search for truth, but the unintelligent championship of religious beliefs lies at the root of these efforts. Less than 100 years ago, Mr. Anderson would have been writing Bridgewater Treatises and harmonising religion and science in a manner that most educated people are now ashamed of. Thirty years ago he would have been harmonising the Bible and evolution. To-day he adopts another plan, but the spirit remains the same. The Andersons of theology are as old as the contest between Christianity and science, and the type of the apologist remains substantially unchanged.

Mr. Anderson says: "The public have got the notion that the average clergyman is insincere in dealing with the creed of his Church. The cultured classes know it, and say so; and the masses of the people feel it, though they may not be able to say why."

Well, the popular feeling is often right, and it might easily be correct in the present instance. And it would probably not restrict its feeling to the occupants of orthodox pulpits.

C. COHEN.

John Emerson Roberts.

"THE INGERSOLL OF THE WEST."

NEARLY every Freethinker in America has heard of John Emerson Roberts, who for some years lectured every Sunday, until failing health compelled him to reduce his labors, in Kansas City, Missouri, to the membership of "The Church of This World," a liberal organisation devoted to the propaganda of liberal thoughts and liberal policies. The publication of his lectures in the little magazine, edited by himself, entitled *Here and Now*, taken from an expression made by the late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, now temporarily suspended owing to ill health, attracted many. The liberal press of both America and Europe have reproduced his lectures to such an extent that he is now probably one of the most widely-known of the Freethought advocates in America. From the dark shadows of orthodoxy into the white light of Freethought is a great step to accomplish in a few short years, and yet, when one man can think himself out of orthodox beliefs and openly proclaim Freethought, we must take that as an evidence of the weakness of the orthodox position, being unable, in the mental conflict, to successfully hold its own.

John Emerson Roberts was born at New Carlisle, Ohio, on September 28, 1853, and is, therefore, at this writing, past fifty-five years of age. His childhood days were spent upon a farm, as were many of his peers and compeers, but at this time he had moved, with his parents, to Battle Creek, Michigan. He obtained a fair education, not of the best, perhaps, at this time, but as good as the average youth in his day and age were wont to acquire. Farm life and school occupied his time until seventeen years of age, when he left the farm, gave up agricultural pursuits, and intended to embark upon a seafaring life. But the waves were never intended to carry him in a professional way, for a few months later he found himself, as he suggests, "sidetracked" or rather "beached" at Shurtleff College, Upper Alton, Illinois. Here he studied for the next eight years, taking the Preparatory, Collegiate, and Theological courses. Upon graduation he entered the ministry of the Baptist Church, and this epoch is best told by himself, as he says: "I was now soundly converted, effectually baptised, and joined the Baptist Church. I was then duly sanctified, set apart and ordained a Baptist minister, and, when twenty-five years old, was made pastor of the Baptist Church at Carrollton, Illinois." This happened in 1876, and he held his charge for the next three years. In 1881 he accepted a "call" to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church at Kansas City, Mo., and this was the first introduction the great West had to his eloquence and earnestness.

Was he orthodox at this time? Immensely so. No preacher could have taught straighter orthodoxy than he. Of his work at this time, he says: "I preached hell and damnation for most everybody but Baptists until 1885, when I quit, having really concluded that if the Bible and the Baptist creed were actually true they ought not to be, and that if God was what they said he was he ought to resign." Honest thought! Candid expression! How many preachers are there in America to-day occupying orthodox pulpits who experience the same kind of thoughts but lack the moral courage to express them? One preacher in a million, and for this reason the *Blade* is happy to pay its tribute of gratitude and praise to the subject of this sketch.

Such a mental attitude forbid, through honest motives, to longer preach orthodoxy from a Baptist pulpit, and he resigned his sacerdotal office and joined the Unitarians, a more liberal combination. He commenced his career as a Unitarian preacher at Grand Rapids, Michigan, and in 1887 he was called to the Unitarian church at Kansas city, a post he held for the next ten years with unbounded success. But, mild as was the Unitarian creed, compared with militant orthodoxy, the great mind and brain of Mr. Roberts rebelled even against the modest restraints here imposed, and in 1897 he renounced Unitarianism and began lecturing to Freethought audiences, pure and simple, in the theatres of Kansas City, a work in which he is still engaged. His great success as an expounder of liberal philosophy and mental liberty, of Freethought and all that it implies, has been heralded far and wide through the daily press, and his voice has been heard upon the platforms of Freethought conventions in different parts of the country. Not until his health began to fail him did he cease any of his lectures, but at last he limited his public speeches in Kansas City to a lecture once each month, which is always given on the first Sunday, and during the interim he makes occasional visits to other cities.

—*Blue Grass Blade* (Lexington).

DEATH.—If it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all.—*Shakespeare*.

Correspondence.

OATH AND AFFIRMATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When writing a few days ago to the General Secretary, Miss Vance, for two Freethought Badges, I made reference to an answer given to a correspondent in the *Freethinker* concerning Mr. Charles Bradlaugh's Oaths' Act. It seemed to differ, somehow, with a recent experience I had in the Police-court at Aldershot.

Firstly, I must extend my thanks to Miss Vance for her kindness in forwarding me the copy of the Oaths' Act referred to.

In the case above mentioned it was my first experience in a police-court, and I can assure you I have no desire to again visit such a place. As I was the first witness called, the order of proceedings seemed rather strange; but, anyhow, I managed to inform the presiding magistrate that I had a desire to affirm instead of going through the usual form of taking the Christian Oath. This seemed to take the magistrate by surprise; and, finally, I had to refer the gentleman to the Statute Book. It appeared very evident to me that my case must have been a very uncommon occurrence for Aldershot, so I naturally came to the conclusion that at least one pious town remains. After a little delay I managed to get through the form of affirming, and the case was proceeded with, which resulted in the conviction of accused, for whom (although a witness against) I had a great deal of sympathy.

It was at this part of the proceedings I got the greatest surprise. One of the magistrates, in again looking up the Statute Book, came to the conclusion that I ought to have given my reasons for wishing to affirm—at least, that is what he told me—with the result that many questions were asked me, each of which I avoided answering.

So far, my evidence had been satisfactory; but what I cannot understand is this: why should the magistrate have questioned me with regard to my opinions, after showing such inadvertency in not satisfying himself as to my objections to taking the oath at the outset of the case?

My position as a soldier was not at all a pleasant one, and it is with regard to that that I pen this epistle.

When writing to Miss Vance, I took the opportunity of mentioning the present conditions of a soldier's lot with regard to the taking of an oath at a Court-martial. So far, I have escaped this painful necessity, but a time may come when I find it necessary to still object. With what result? You are perhaps aware of the procedure adopted by the military when a man enlists. I think the methods are absurd.

One of my comrades (the one responsible for my conversion to Freethought) and I have often discussed the absurdities with regard to religion in the Army. It was at one of the many discussions on religion I inquired of him how he became "a member of the English Church" (C. of E.), as he is a member of a most devout family of Freethinkers. "Well," he said, "it was absolutely necessary that I should belong to some persuasion or other, so I told them to dump me down C. of E." How absurd!

When writing to Miss Vance I also asked if steps could not be taken whereby something might be done to do away with this canting hypocrisy in the service. "Unfortunately," she writes, "we have no power to move first in the matter." On the other hand, I should only be too pleased to take the initiative in the matter. Unfortunately, the Army Act prevents me from doing so, unless I like to take such steps as would lead to incriminating myself. Perhaps someone interested in this matter, and who is in a more favorable position than I, would enhance the thanks of a great many of your service readers if the matter could be taken up.

With regard to the *Freethinker*, I hardly know how to thank you and your staff for the untiring way in which you persist in carrying out a great cause.

BR. RHODES PACKIN.

[Magistrates and judges have power to ask a witness on what ground he claims to affirm. The witness's reply must be given (and taken) under the terms of the Oaths' Act (Bradlaugh's). It must be either that he has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief. Nothing more should be said by the witness (or juror) than one of these two things. Magistrates and judges have no right to put further questions, and if they do the witness (or juror) should respectfully decline to answer. We know that soldiers are very unfavorably placed, and we have long intended to write about the matter, and even to attempt something further.—EDITOR.]

Acid Drops.

We were fairly right in the concluding paragraph of our last week's front-page article. The Government is already paying the penalty of trying to settle the Education question again without the slightest regard to principle. It thought to settle the matter by backstairs conferences, and "the right of entry" was trumpeted as the latest solution. Non-conformist leaders in parliament were said to have accepted it. But they are not everybody. There are others. And the others are already speaking loudly against the Runciman "compromise." Nonconformists all over the country, including Dr. Clifford, are declaring that they will never stand it. Already the parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* is obliged to say—"I don't believe that it can ever be carried in the present House of Commons." It also appears that the National Union of Teachers are intensely averse to it. Altogether our forecast is rapidly on the way to realisation.

Liberals have never stood upon any principle in the Education controversy. That is the cause of all their trouble. The present Government has had three Education Ministers and three Education Bills. And this is called statesmanship!

The *Academy* has once more misrepresented Mr. John Davidson by accusing him of saying the very reverse of what he did say. Our pious contemporary publishes his correction of this blunderous outrage, and proceeds to make the matter worse by circuitously calling him a liar. It improves this exhibition of Christian charity by a sinister reference to Mr. Davidson's small Civil List pension, and wonders why he is allowed to "huckster offensive atheism from a booth subsidised out of the State purse." Finally, it charges him with finding his inspiration "in the pages of the *Freethinker*"—which it must know to be flatulent nonsense, and vicious at that. Mr. Davidson should treat such a critic with silent contempt. Oscar Wilde at least wrote like a gentleman; Lord Alfred Douglas writes like a tipsy long-winded fishfag.

The *Academy* boasts of its "pure" English. Well, it refers to the late Victorien Sardou as "a most learned antiquarian." Now there is no such thing as an antiquarian. "Antiquarian" is an adjective; the substantive is "antiquary."

Only a few years ago the City Temple was guarded by police against bodies of London working men who went there to protest against the Rev. R. J. Campbell's slanders. Since then he has become a Socialist, and a zealous Socialist; indeed, he almost poses as the Socialist Messiah. With professional assurance he at once set about declaring that Socialism was the economical expression of the New Theology, and the New Theology the spiritual expression of Socialism. Then he proceeded to rail at Atheists and Materialists within the Socialist party, though he was good enough to say that there was no intention of drumming them out. This was really excellent. It reminds us of a poor, miserable, starved cat we once took in from the snow and ice during a long spell of hard weather. It lay before the fire very timidly, and seemed very grateful for food and warmth. But in less than forty-eight hours it waxed impudent, and wanted to chivy our legitimate old cat off the premises. The result was that we paid a chemist to prepare that proud pauper for his funeral.

Mr. Campbell has just been preaching at the City Temple on the present relations of Religion and the Socialist movement. From the report in the *Daily News* we judge that he may be contemplating another strategical move—unless it is the result of mere inconstancy. He stated that what he had seen on Socialist platforms during the past two years (so soon! so soon!) had caused him some misgiving. Not a few people were attracted to the Socialist movement, not by generous feelings, but by "covetousness, jealousy, and ill will towards those who have large possessions." This is very sad, of course, but the reverend gentleman might have reflected that it is quite in keeping with the philosophy of Jesus Christ, who cried, "Woe unto you rich!" and put Dives in hell for no other reason that he had been wealthy on earth—while Lazarus, who had no other virtue than his poverty and sore legs, was treated to board and lodging in heaven. Leaving the new Jeremiah to think that over, we proceed to deal with what he said subsequently. He admitted that moral passion and noble self-sacrifice were displayed in the Socialist ranks; but, he added, it "cannot be too emphatically stated that the most serious danger which menaces the movement at the present

day is the materialism, selfishness, and anti-social conduct of some of those who profess to be its exponents." From which it appears that Messiah Campbell is burning to whip the dove-sellers and money-changers out of the temple courts of Socialism. But suppose they chase him out instead!

You can never be sure what a modern Christian preacher means by "materialism"—or, for that matter, by any other important word in his utterances. Mr. Campbell might be simply reproaching some Socialist exponents for "materialism" in the shape of eating, drinking, etc. But a little later on he gave quite another color to the term. "It was a regrettable feature," he said, "of much that claimed to be the Social Gospel that it persistently expressed antagonism to religion. The substitution of blatant materialism, under the guise of Socialism, for the quasi-religious materialism which now seemed to hold the field would be an unrelieved calamity." Now we know what the Socialist Messiah means by "materialism." When he puts "blatant" in front of it we recognise that he means something which Christian preachers hate more than vice, and more than crime. He means Freethought, Secularism, Atheism—call it what you will. He means the philosophy which resigns heaven and claims earth—the philosophy which drops God and clings to Humanity—the philosophy which regards Christianity in every shape and form as a thing which the human intellect has outgrown.

Mr. Campbell wound up thusly:—

"There is no hope for the Socialist movement until it once becomes aflame with religious faith. I am not going out of the Socialist movement. My brother Socialist clergy are not going out either. It is the materialist who must go out."

Probably the preacher, at that point, was frightened at his boldness; for he immediately added—"or, rather, to put it in a better way, the materialist spirit must get out of them." But what if it doesn't—as is most likely? Will the reverend gentleman clear out with his brother Socialist clergy then? We rather fancy he will. He seems to us to be sounding a note of retreat.

Now then Blatchford, and Thompson, and Suthers, and Hyndman, and Quelch, and Bax, and all the rest of you "blatant" non-Christians, you hear what Messiah Campbell says. Are you prepared to clear out of the Socialist movement? Are you getting ready for your general exodus? The Oracle of the City Temple is on the warpath. He will send the devil out of you, or send you to the devil. Evidently there is sport ahead for the humorist.

According to the *Daily Chronicle* report, Mr. Campbell made a further statement, namely, that "there was not a single Agnostic on the Labor bench in the House of Commons." How on earth does he know this? Have all the Labor members made him their bosom confidant? Has he looked into the mind of each of them, and seen his real convictions? But, even if it were true, the statement would mean no more than this—that Christian bigotry is still too strong to give "infidels" a prospect of being elected even as representatives of the working-classes in the House of Commons. We are satisfied, however, that Mr. Campbell's statement is not true. Mr. Keir Hardie himself, if he would plainly and honestly state his belief, instead of indulging in vague talk about the Christianity of Christ, would probably be found to have very little more religion (in the ordinary meaning of the word) than we have ourselves. We are not aware that he belongs to any Christian Church, or that he is prepared to subscribe to any Christian doctrine.

Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, is quite wrong when he asserts that the Biblical story of the Flood is distinguished from all other stories by the fact that its "purpose is rigorously moral—to punish sin and to protect righteousness." If the reverend gentleman will take the trouble to read the Greek version as given by Apollodorus, he will find that the cause of the deluge was the "enormous iniquity with which the earth was contaminated."

Mr. Phillips paints the character of Noah with false colors. According to him, there never was such a good man. But in Genesis ix. 20-27 we find another picture of the legendary man, to which the preacher makes no reference. It wouldn't have suited his purpose to mention it, as the one thing insisted upon by him is worship, piety—not character, as such.

An impassioned pulpit declaration is to the effect that "a consistent Christian life has the will of Christ for its law." The human will is free, the man of God continues, but it

must be broken, it must be utterly surrendered, before the Christian life is possible. "How this surrender of the will is consistent with its freedom, we know not; but such is undoubtedly the case." That fully explains why no man on earth has ever lived the Christian life. It pays to preach such a gospel, but it does not pay to live it. It is so nice to talk about it when nobody dreams of putting it into practice.

The Rev. E. W. Lewis, of Clapham, cherishes a charity broad enough to embrace an Atheist like Charles Bradlaugh; but he at the same time nurses a bigotry narrow enough to assert that Bradlaugh the Atheist and Mazzini the Deist were reformers simply because they "drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, which rock was Christ." All good men are claimed as Christians. With equal accuracy might Buddhists claim all good Christians as Buddhists. Mr. Lewis would object to that on the ground of his bigoted belief that "Jesus is the only king of men," which belief is as false as the bigotry begotten of it is demoralising.

Mr. R. J. Campbell, however, while agreeing in the main with Mr. Lewis, maintains that the Eternal Christ, whom they both proclaim, is not *exactly* identical with Jesus of Nazareth. Mr. Campbell gives his followers permission to pray to Jesus, but warns them that "in praying to Jesus we are praying not merely to the Galilean carpenter, but to One who, without having lost consciousness of his identity with the earthly Jesus, is now the ideal humanity which is God made manifest in man, and indwells all." What that sentence means not even Mr. Campbell can tell us. The earthly Jesus has *become* the Eternal Christ; the Eternal Christ is ideal humanity, while ideal humanity is God immanent. How sublimely cocksure about everything is total ignorance; and when total ignorance transforms itself into Christian mysticism, its cocksureness becomes quite miraculous and, were it not for its atmosphere of piety, would be universally recognised as hopeless lunacy.

A man of God says that there is nothing grander than blind faith in God. The present thirst for knowledge is a thoroughly bad sign. "Though all men impeach the love of God," he exclaims, "we believe in a perfect Will bringing all things to a perfect End, which lies out of our sight." One admires such a faith, when sincere, while pitying those who cherish it. To believe, not only without evidence, but against evidence, to believe when all the known facts contradict the belief, *this* is the highest point ever reached by Christian piety. That is to say, religion is most perfect when most silly; most joy-giving when most unnatural; and most Divinely inspired when most insulting to human reason.

"Doubtless God might have ordained it otherwise." The fallacy that underlies that admission is the implication that God has ordained it at all. Things as they are do not postulate a perfect Deity, but, if they postulate a Deity at all, an imperfect and wicked one. Furthermore, even if the present world *is* the work of God, no one has a right to say he could have made it differently. No theodicy has ever been or ever will be a success; and a real God would need none.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer says that "God cannot do much" with rich and strong people; that when he wants to fashion such into his own image, he must first "bring them down to the dust"; and that, in his own case, it was only after his father became poor, and after he himself approached the heavenly throne and said, "God, you are more than money," God began to make him his child. Many and terrible are the limitations and shortcomings and hardships of the Almighty.

Matthew Arnold's famous saying, "There is a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness," is still doing service in the pulpit. "Every attentive reader," we are told, "recognises the presence of a power that makes for righteousness, and against which nothing can ultimately prevail." But Matthew Arnold and the pulpit are mistaken. Every day righteousness lies wounded and bleeding at every street-corner. Every day the wicked is in "great power, spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil." History is not a field on which righteousness has been uniformly victorious. In short, righteousness is a thing for which humanity has had to fight with might and main, with never the slightest aid from any power not itself, and more than once has the battle gone decidedly against it.

Thirteen women and eight men had to be put out of a Liberation Society meeting at the City Temple for causing a

deliberate disturbance in the supposed interest of Woman Suffrage. The two chief speakers interrupted were Mr. Birrell and Mr. Campbell, who have been supporters of Woman Suffrage for a long while. The same night, a Suffragist meeting in the Town Hall, Maidenhead, was interrupted with belting and other noises. As the women passed through the crowds in the streets they were pelted with eggs; after the meeting they were mobbed, and had to be guarded by police along a circuitous route to the railway station. It is enough to make decent people sick. It will soon be "chaos come again." Men are beasts to play at this game, and women are fools to provoke them to it.

We have again and again said, and we repeat it once more, that nothing can justify disorder at properly conducted public meetings. This policy of the Suffragists is the one that is utterly inexcusable, and they will find it out in time, if they only keep on. Every time they try to break up public meetings they are simply presuming on their sex. They know very well how men would be treated who played that game—and they know that the milder treatment meted out to them is due to the unwritten law of respect for their potential motherhood—for it is that, and that alone, which in the long run is their safeguard against physical violence and indignity. The consecration of maternity is around all women in the eyes of every man who is worthy of the name. But man, even the best man, is not yet an angel; the brute lies in him, deep down in some, and near the surface in others—but always there; and these women are appealing to it by their policy of disorder. Well, if they appeal to it enough they may see what will surprise them. Hysteria on the one side, and hooliganism on the other, may bring about a state of things at which every good man and woman would shudder. The Suffragists should try back. But if they must have "raids" and tempestuous "demonstrations," let them at least stop trying to break up public meetings. They are attacking the fundamental condition of human progress, and "that way madness lies."

Perhaps the vehement and violent ladies will resent our advice. Perhaps they will regard us as an enemy of their sex. Well, if so, they are mistaken. We appeal to those who have known us for so many years, and especially to those who have known us longest, for a verdict on that point. We would do anything for woman—except help her to injure herself. As to the parliamentary vote, it is a thing with which we are not concerned here, one way or the other; but we may say that there are some things more important than any vote for anything, and one of them is the right of free speech through the platform and the press. Every despotism knows it must break that down to win. And if you lose that you lose everything. All the rest is a matter of detail.

Prothero's *The Psalms in Human Life*, a cheap edition of which is just included in Nelson's Shilling Library, is well written and an interesting book in its way. According to the announcement on the wrapper, it contains "The History of how the Psalms have guided, inspired, solaced, and comforted Humanity through the Ages." Some of the facts recorded, however, throw a strange light on the "guided and inspired." Catholics and Protestants, for instance, in the sixteenth century, burnt each other most cheerfully, and both sides found "solace and comfort" at the stake and elsewhere in the Book of Psalms. But it did not "guide" them or "inspire" them to tolerance and kindness; on the contrary, it rather supported them in their brutality. Mr. Prothero refers on p. 127 to Houghton and two other Catholics who were executed at Tyburn "with all the horrible barbarities of the time" for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII. as the head of the Church. For some pages afterwards he describes the execution of Protestants like Ridley and Hooper. All of them were fond of quoting from the Psalms. On p. 186 he refers to the execution of Robert Southwell, the poet, who was a Jesuit. At the end of the sixteenth century it was a crime to be a Catholic; to be a Jesuit "was to be a wild beast and hunted down as vermin." Southwell, after lingering three years in a filthy dungeon, was executed on February 21, 1595, at Tyburn. He also quoted the words of the Psalmist in his extremity. "Such was the effect produced by his courage," Mr. Prothero says, "that the bystanders interfered to prevent the executioner from cutting the rope till he was dead, in order that the ghastly formalities of disembowelling and quartering might not be carried out on his living body." These good Christians, of rival Churches, all read and admired the Psalms, and found in them solace and comfort in the miseries they inflicted on each other; and they were "guided" and "inspired" into hanging and burning each other for a difference of opinion, into cutting each other's

half-dead bodies into pieces, and cutting open each other's bellies before the breath was quite out of their lungs. Such was the *guidance* and *inspiration* of the Psalms! It might have been better; it could hardly have been worse.

Isabella Harrison, aged 22, daughter of Mr. Henry Harrison, farmer, of Page Farm, Freckleton, drowned herself in a deep pit full of water. Her father and brother tried to save her in vain. She had been in delicate health "and suffering from religious mania."

Dr. Johnson said that the adjective was the natural enemy of the noun. A case in point is the title of the Catholic Truth Society. This Society has been holding its half-yearly meeting in London, at which there was a call to arms against the spread of literature that "dealt unfavorably not only with the Catholic Church but with the very foundations of Christianity itself." Father Gerard said that "the danger was growing." We believe he is right. And we believe it will grow all the more rapidly through the opposition of the Catholic Truth Society.

Father Tyrrell was excommunicated a few years ago from the Catholic Church. Another "Modernist" now feels the weight of authority. Father Hammersley, of Chatham, has been suspended by his Bishop. Fortunately, not by the neck. The suspension is a *divinis*.

The Spaxton Messiah is an ordained Church of England clergyman, and it is reported that he is to be cited by the Bishop of Bath and Wells before a Consistory Court. The result would probably be that he would cease to be a priest of the Church of England. This would not break up his Agapemone, but we are told it would be "a step in that direction." Stuff and nonsense! People who believe that Pigott's commission comes straight from God Almighty are not likely to trouble about the opinion of "Bath and Wells."

The French barque *Croisette* was wrecked off the Irish coast, at South Rock, Co. Down. Her crew were rescued with much difficulty by the Cloughey lifeboat. The shipwrecked men—all belonging to "infidel" France—insisted on their dog being rescued first. The little bandy-legged half-bred fox-terrier was given the precedence. Capital! It's the best thing we've seen this week.

The Bristol Lord's Day Observance Union held its annual meeting recently at Colston Hall. Being a Christian body, it naturally called for the aid of the police. All these "spiritual" people have a tendency to rely upon "temporal" agencies. Rev. Dunlop Smith, who read the annual report, declared that the Union wanted more members—which we can easily believe—more zeal, and more holy determination to push on their cause; that is, to make as many people as possible unhappy on Sunday. The reverend gentleman complained most loudly of Sunday newspapers "by which multitudes were tempted to spend the day in idleness at home instead of going to Christian worship." Ay, there's the rub! The Bishop of Hereford, another speaker at this meeting, adopted a perfectly professional attitude. He said that "a right observance of Sunday was the greatest bulwark and safeguard of our Christianity, and if we let it go we should be in danger of becoming an entirely irreligious nation." Quite so. This is the very essence of the question. What the clergy really want is a Sunday arranged with a view to the greatest advantage of their business. Their talk about "Sunday labor," and all that sort of thing is simply blarney. Why, they themselves do nine-tenths of their own business on Sunday.

A Blackburn friend wrote us a little while ago, offering to pay for one pound's worth of *Freethinkers* being distributed at a debate that was coming off there. It was a kind offer, but we could not obtain any particulars of the time, place, and other circumstances of the debate. We now see by a newspaper cutting that the debate came off last Sunday in the Market-square. Rev. A. J. Waldron was fetched all the way from London to discuss with a local Atheist lecturer named M'Clellan—local Christian talent being apparently inadequate to the job. The question discussed was "Are all the Morals of David Good?" Waldron seems to have thrown up his brief, for he challenged his opponent to quote a line from the Bible "approving of David's sins." The Atheist speaker appears to have had plenty of friends in the large audience. Bishop Thornton, who sat on the platform (a lorry), acted with all the modesty of a professional Christian. He got up "on his own" and called for three cheers

for the Bible. The result was, according to the *Liverpool Evening Express*, that "the rival parties cheered and counter-cheered for half an hour." It is not reported that the alleged author of the Bible took any part in the proceedings.

The Bishop of Southwark and the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, send a joint letter to the press asking all Christian people to join in earnest supplication that God may chip in to the Education struggle and "rule the issues in mercy to what is best for the children and best for the Church of Christ"—that is to say, the gentlemen who run that colossal and profitable enterprise. No doubt this is all very well in its way, but what a God these people worship! Fancy its being necessary to supplicate him to be good to the "kiddies"! Any decent man (or woman) would do that without asking.

General Booth's "Anti-Suicide Bureau" had another big puff in Tuesday's *Daily Chronicle*. There is no end to the Grand Old Showman's powers of face. The public are informed that this Bureau has saved crowds of people from self-destruction. But who supplies the information? The "Army" officials. And they are "pledged to secrecy" about all details. Of course they are—*now*. They started with figures—absurd figures—lying figures. Mr. Manson exposed their flash arithmetic, and now they are "pledged to secrecy." What is certain is that the statistics of suicide are absolutely unaffected.

James Phipps, the beastly murderer of a little girl of eleven, who was hanged at Knutsford on Thursday, November 12, made a most edifying end. The prison chaplain prepared him most beautifully for the Kingdom of Heaven. He was also induced to write a letter of moral exhortation to his "friends and companions," telling them to go to church regularly, etc., etc. "I know now," he wrote, "what love of God means, and what real comfort religion is." Bah! It is enough to make an ostrich vomit. Religion seems to be nearly always in alliance with selfishness. Had this murderer been brought to any real sense of his position he would have grieved for the poor child he murdered, and asked his God to let him drink the last drop of his cup of atonement. There would have been some hope for him then.

One Tuesday morning's newspaper contained the following three illustrations of "Blessed be ye poor" in its list of Recent Wills:—Rev. Dr. Huddart, of Bedale, Yorkshire, £34,743; Rev. Richard Corser, of Park-hill-road, Croydon, £21,100; Rev. Dr. Smyth, vicar of St. Chad, Headingley, Leeds, £10,491. Three of them in one day's announcements! What a howling farce it is!

PROVIDENCE.

When my Uncle Lem was leaning up agin a scaffolding once, sick, or drunk, or suthin, an Irishman with a hod full of bricks fell on him out of the third storey and broke the old man's back in two places. People said it was an accident. Much accident there was about that! He didn't know what he was there for, but he was there for a good object. If he hadn't been there the Irishman would have been killed. Nobody can ever make me believe differently from that. Uncle Lem's dog was there. Why didn't the Irishman fall on the dog? Becuz the dog would a seen him a-coming and stood from under. That's the reason the dog warn't app'nted. A dog can't be depended on to carry out a special providence. Mark my words, it was a put-up thing. Accidents don't happen, boys.—*Mark Twain*.

A SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE.

The first shock brought down two or three huge organ-pipes in one of the churches. The minister, with uplifted hands, was just closing the services. He glanced up, and hesitated, and said:

"However, we will omit the benediction!"—and the next instant there was a vacancy in the atmosphere where he stood.

After the first shock, an Oatland minister said:

"Keep your seats! There is no better place to die in than this!"—

And he added, after the third:

"But outside is good enough!" He then skipped out at the back door.

—*Mark Twain*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 22, Town Hall, Stratford: at 7.30, "The Bible and the Licensing Bill."

November 29, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—November 22, Fallowfield; 29, Birmingham.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £281 11s. 8d. Received since.—John Scott, 13s. 6d.
- W. GREENWOOD.—Do you really expect us to take all that article—adorned with such a picture—as gospel?
- E. RAGGETT says: "I am delighted with your paper. I keep every one of them, sewing them up and covering them in monthly numbers, which I am lending out to likely persons so as to increase your circulation."
- R. R. McLETCHE.—Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation; also for your interesting letter. See "Acid Drops."
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Always pleased to hear from you. See paragraph.
- H. G. F.—We have looked through the publication you sent us, and especially at the passage marked. We do not think the writer's opinion on the "Secularist movement" is of the slightest importance to anybody but himself. There seems to be an idea in certain quarters that "Rationalists" invented Reason, but some of us have an idea that it existed before them. As for the talk about "construction," we defy them to state, in plain honest language, any single point on which they are collectively agreed except opposition to supernaturalism. And that is precisely what the *Freethinker* has always stood for.
- F. C. HOLDEN (London) denies the accuracy of the report in the Irish paper sent us as to the funeral of Mr. John Enright, of Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. "The funeral of my friend Enright," he says, "was not interfered with by a mob of 300 men armed with sticks forcibly taking the coffin from the Protestant rector and burial party. What did happen was this. The Catholic neighbors were under the impression that deceased had embraced their faith prior to his death, and quite respectfully opposed the taking of the coffin into the Protestant church." We confess we do not quite understand this. If the Catholics "opposed" the Protestant funeral up to the point of preventing it, and acted in this way merely on the strength of an "impression," they did what was from any sober point of view unjustifiable.
- ISABELLA ROBERTS.—We believe the Anti-Infidel League was started by Walton Powell, who was sentenced to fifteen months' hard labor at Bristol for debauching young girls, and immediately afterwards to a further term of imprisonment for bigamy. The person referred to in the advertisement you enclose was a friend and colleague of Powell's. Is not that enough? Thank you for your good wishes.
- W. SUTCLIFFE.—Consult Southey's *Life of Wesley* and Wesley's *Journal*. The latter is now republished in 4 vols. in Messrs. Dent's "Everyman's Library." You will find nearly all you seek there. Ingersoll was quite right. He was a lawyer, and always sure of his facts. Wesley did write against the American rebels, and his tracts on that subject are included in his collected works.
- N. J. EVANS.—Tuesday is too late for the insertion of anything but lecture notices. Next week. Glad to hear that Miss Kough had such a good audience at Wood Green, including so many ladies.
- G. BRADFIELD.—We keep our eyes open, as we see you do.
- W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.
- G. EHRMANN.—We are obliged.
- C. H. HOWSON.—We do not know of a complete edition of Robert Buchanan's poems.
- A. WEBBER.—Thanks. See paragraph based on a fuller report.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Obliged for cuttings.
- J. ORAM.—Tuesday is too late. Next week.
- "FIJI" (Lincoln).—Our subscription rates are published at the end of this section of the *Freethinker* every week. Please look there. Why not try the railway bookstall first?
- H. BLACK.—Your order handed over, but only 4½d. in stamps enclosed. Thomson's collected poems are published in 2 vols. at 12s. by B. Dobell, Charing Cross-road, London, W.C.
- D. McCONNELL.—Under consideration.
- C. R. BELL.—Pleased to read your friend's humorous testimonial to the curative effect of the *Freethinker* on maladies of superstition.
- M. BARNARD.—We know the books you refer to. Genius involves greater sensibility, and greater sensibility is more easily over-

set; that is all the connection we can see between "genius and insanity."

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers this evening (Nov. 22) the last of the Stratford Town Hall course of lectures under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. His subject is "The Bible and the Licensing Bill." This is a lively subject, and we dare say the lecture will be lively too; and, as all seats are free, the hall ought to be packed. "Saints" ought to come provided to contribute liberally to the collection—which, of course, makes no difference to the lecturer, one way or the other.

Mr. Foote's article on the prosecution and imprisonment of Mr. Joseph Bates at Boston has been reproduced in the New York *Truthseeker*, so that the matter is considered to be interesting and important even on the other side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Lloyd's late *Freethinker* article on "The Wholesome Attitude to Death" is reproduced, with proper acknowledgment, in the *Searchlight*, Waco, Texas.

We do not wish that any of our readers should order the *Freethinker* through anyone but their regular newsagent; but we often hear from persons who have the greatest difficulty in obtaining it, and in such cases we strongly advise that the order should be placed at one of W. H. Smith and Son's railway bookstalls, or one of the shops that firm has opened in places where their old bookstalls have passed into other hands. Wymans' people are still too prejudiced to treat this paper with any show of justice, but the managers of some of their bookstalls will, we understand, order a weekly copy on their own responsibility. Should any of Smith's managers raise an objection, we shall be glad to be informed of it, with full particulars in writing, immediately.

Dr. Henry Smith, of Torquay, whose forcible and arresting pamphlet, *Save the Children from the Curse of Strong Drink*, is advertised in this week's *Freethinker*, makes a special point of the superiority of Mohammedanism, as a teetotal religion, over Christianity. "I have proved," he says, "that the Christian Religion sanctions and teaches that Wine containing Alcohol, which is an intoxicating drink, must be taken at Communion. I have proved that the Christian Religion bars the way to total abstinence from strong drink, which is the cause of poverty, crime, disease, and death. I defy anyone to disprove this awful fact. The destruction of this little book by the Clergy will not disprove my assertions." Copies of Dr. Smith's pamphlet can be ordered from our publishing office.

We are advertising two more "bargains" on the last page of this week's *Freethinker*. One is Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*, which is not the lecture of that name, but a written volume of 136 pages. This is a very handsomely printed volume, and the contents are as fascinating as a good novel and as accurate as Colenso. Ingersoll wrote it at the very top of his powers, and it throbs with vitality on every page. The other "bargain" is the late J. M. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*. This volume of 192 pages, with an Introduction from the pen of Mr. Foote, contains a number

of those fine evolutionary essays which our dear old friend and colleague used to write with such a wealth of information and such a command of the best ideas on the subjects treated. It really grieves us to see this precious volume, from a scientific and literary point of view, being offered at such a reduction. It was originally published at half-a-crown: the price now is sixpence—and all the copies left ought soon to be bought up at that price. We want the room and we want the money. That is our reason for selling so valuable a book at so low a figure.

Mr. F. J. Gould has addressed "An Open Letter" to the three Church clergymen who publicly begged the electors in the Wyggeston Ward of Leicester not to return him to the Town Council, on the ground that those who "believe in God and Religion" ought not to elect "one who is doing his best to persuade people that the Christian Religion is false." The bigoted trinity did not succeed; the candidate they opposed had a large majority. Mr. Gould can afford, therefore, to set about them good-temperedly. We venture to quote his reply to their nonsense about his identifying the cause of Labor with the cause of Secularism:—

"You also assert that in my person, as a candidate, the cause of Labor has been identified with that of Secularism. I cheerfully avow that I am a Secularist, though, since resigning the post of secretary to the Leicester Secular Society last April, I have tried to make it clear to all the town that I preferred the name of Positivist—the name Positivist meaning a follower of the Religion of Humanity. But it is not true to say that a Secularist Labor man is binding up the Labor cause with Secularism. Does a Baptist Labor man bind up the Labor cause with the Baptist Church? Does a Church of England Labor man bind up the Labor cause with the Church of England? Does a Jewish Labor man bind up the Labor cause with the doctrines of the Old Testament and the Talmud? Answer me this, reverend sirs; Did I preach Secularism on the School Board? Did I throw my Agnostic ideas at the Education Committee? Fetch out the evidence and speak. Perhaps you may say I moved twice in favor of secular education. I did; and, by leave obtained from the men and women of Wyggeston, I am going to do so again. But a man can move for secular education without being a Secularist or Agnostic or Positivist. There are Christian people in Leicester who are on the side of secular education as the only ending of the miserable delay in the betterment of our national schools; but these people are none the less earnest in their Christian beliefs. I have all along said that neither the Nonconformists have any right to endow their method of Bible-reading out of the public rates nor have the Anglicans or Catholics any right to include their special method in school hours as recognised by Government. I have publicly challenged the Nonconformists of Leicester to discuss with me the justice of the Passive Resistance movement, for I have said that the Movement is foolish unless it is a protest against all kinds of theological teaching in the State schools. Several clergymen of the Church of England in this town (I do not refer to St. Mark's) have thanked me for the fairness of this attitude. So you see my Secularism did not blunt my sense of equity. And I may tell you that on the very first day that I sat on the School Board in 1900, it was my casting vote that put Father Hawkins on the Desford Industrial School Committee, off which he had been kept for years by the votes of Christian members of the Board. Did I do right or wrong? And would you have been as just towards a Secularist?"

There is no price on Mr. Gould's pamphlet, so we suppose it is for free circulation. No doubt he would forward a copy to anyone wishing to have it. The postage would be a half-penny. Address: F. J. Gould, Town Councillor, Leicester.

Mr. Moses Harman, whose new periodical, *Eugenics*, we referred to some time ago, reproduces what he calls our "neighborly" mention of his removal from Chicago to Los Angeles—also our praise of his courage in the advocacy of his opinions, although we do not share some of them. This last fact, of course, is no detriment to Mr. Harman's right to hold and propagate them. We detest the persecution he has suffered, as we detest persecution everywhere. Freedom of thought and publication is the fundamental principle of human progress; whoever opposes it, or interferes with it, is an enemy of civilisation. On that point we never had a doubt, and we believe we never shall.

Mr. Harman says some flattering things about the editor of the *Freethinker*, which we will not reproduce, although we were not displeased to read them. Incidentally, he credits us with nine months' imprisonment: as a matter of fact, it was twelve. He also refers to us as "editor of the *Freethinker*, now and for many years past." As a matter of fact, this journal has never had any other editor than its founder, except during the year when he had to leave the editorial chair and sit on a little three-legged stool in Holloway Gaol.

Jose Nakens: an Appreciation.

SOME months have now elapsed since the Carcel Modelo at Madrid opened its prison gates to release from durance vile one of the noblest of the sons of Spain—José Nakens, who ranks amongst the highest glories of contemporary Spanish literature, a fearless fighter for pure and lofty ideals in individual conduct and in political and social life, and, above all, a staunch, unbending Freethinker. Chivalrous refusal to play the part of jackal, hunting down victims for the Spanish detective force, landed the Grand Old Man of Spanish Republicanism and Free-thought into prison, where doubtless he would have languished for the full term of his sentence of nine years' imprisonment but for the widespread movement of sympathy which the unusual circumstances of his case excited.

Everybody knows the tragic story of Nakens' imprisonment. On May 31, 1906, Mateo Morral made an abominable attempt at Madrid to destroy the life of the King and Queen of Spain by flinging a bomb. The criminal fled for security to Nakens, with whom it was never pretended that Morral had any previous compact or complicity in reference to the atrocious outrage, perpetrated, apparently, by the sole act and undivided responsibility of Morral himself. Morral appealed—not in vain—to the chivalrous soul of Nakens for rest and refuge till the next day, and though a pronounced and active antagonist of Anarchism and its methods, with full knowledge of the dreadful alternatives which faced him—that of possible death at the hand of the assassin; of positive infamy if he dissembled assent and went out to hand over to the police the man who, like Sisera, came confidently to his tent for a night's rest; or the dread vengeance of the law if he either harbored the man and said nothing; or spurned him forth and became arrested, accused, and condemned, just as though he had condoned the crime, and covered up the tracks of the criminal—he solved the dread problem in a manner which only from a narrow, technical point of view savored of illegality, and only from the narrow, precisian's point of view can be called a criminal solution. In a word, a situation such as rarely confronts one man in ten million had been created, from which Nakens had no escape except by suffering some moral or physical disaster: either loss of life from the despair and exasperation of an escaped assassin, or loss of liberty at the hands of "outraged justice" as the price of his refusal to play the part of spy, or—more dreadful to Nakens than aught else—loss of personal honor, tarnished irretrievably by committing that meanest and blackest of all treacheries, the act of delation.

Technically, Nakens' act was illegal, and his chivalrous punctilio criminal. Whilst law is law, and judges are judges, the citizen who will listen to the dictates of personal honor rather than obey the regulations of the police code will have to suffer, and perhaps, like Nakens did, will accept the suffering as one of the inescapable consequences of the possession of a high individual standard of ethics. Mean souls can easily accommodate their consciences to mean acquiescence with prescribed and sacred rules, and will readily frame their lives in a shabby embroidery of conventionalities. But the supreme intellects cannot be tamed and domesticated by mere police cudgellings and terrors of prison: the sense of personal honor and the pride of personal integrity will ever, as in the case of Nakens, uplift the individual soul above the lower walks where steal along the furtive footsteps of the spy.

The release of Nakens was a generous act of clemency on the part of the Spanish Government. The victim was theirs by every right of law and justice, as understood by every administration in the civilised world, and his release, so urgently called for by the unanimous voice of International Free-thought, could only be claimed as a concession of grace, not as a demand of right. The responsiveness of the Spanish Government—so Catholic, and

Jesuitical at that—to an appeal exclusively made by Freethinkers on high grounds of transcendental ethics, and especially by Freethinkers in other lands, affords one more proof of the value and necessity of organised International Freethought. But for the intervention of International Freethought, Ferrer, a perfectly innocent man, would have been garrotted, and the 100 Rationalist schools now existing in Spain would have been quenched in his blood. It was by the same earthly providence that Nakens, technically guilty of harboring a criminal escaping from justice, was spared from dragging his existence through long and weary days of imprisonment till the conclusion of the 77th year of his life, and was unexpectedly restored to the unfettered access of his friends and admirers. His release does honor to the Spanish Government, whose act of grace is all the more generous inasmuch as, in giving back to Nakens his liberty, it let loose upon Christianity a bitter, implacable foe.

When in June, 1906, Nakens fell into the clutches of the authorities, his paper, *El Motin*,* which for twenty-eight years had fearlessly upheld the triple banner of Freethought, Secularism, and Republicanism, suspended publication. On October 1, however, of the present year, the old warrior put on his armor again and revived his beloved paper. There is plenty of room in Spain for a fresh Freethought publication. Only recently a Royal Ordinance has been issued appointing the Virgen del Pilar, the renowned Madonna of Saragossa, as Captain-General of the Spanish Army! A stupendous act of national stupidity of this sort will serve to indicate the cretinism of Spanish Christianity in its official manifestations. Not that the faith flourishes today in the land of the Inquisition with the rank luxuriance of former times. As a matter of fact, despite the deplorable amount of illiteracy prevailing in Spain—eight out of her sixteen millions of people being unable to read or write—the proportion of Freethinkers amongst the more or less lettered half of the nation is very considerable. The daily Spanish press is, for example, decidedly more outspokenly antagonistic to Christianity than the daily press of England, and the spread amongst educated Spaniards of advanced views concerning religion would certainly justify the statement, as a generalisation, that the cultivated intellect and conscience of Spain are definitely antagonistic to Christianity. José Nakens, whose brilliant labors as journalist and splendid example in personal integrity and unflinching heroism did so much to undermine the credit of Christianity in the minds of his countrymen, is, after all, only one of many men in Spain of eminent gifts and conspicuous virtue who consistently throw the weight of their influence against the corrupting forces of religion.

During the early days of his incarceration, when there seemed every prospect that the prison would be his grave, Nakens issued to the world, from the dreary solitudes of his cell, two volumes—*Cuadros de Miseria* ("Pictures of Misery"), and *Muestras de mi estilo* ("Specimens of my style").† The fact that in Spain, of all countries in the world, the leisure of a prisoner like Nakens can be devoted to literary pursuits, and that from the living grave, as it were, can arise the voice of the poor buried victim to apprise the world of his existence, must come as a shock to those who know that in England a prisoner for an offence like Nakens' would be caged like a wild beast and cut off not only from commerce with the outer world, but with contact with everything under the sun save a Bible to read, a bundle of oakum to pick, and a fifth-rate clergyman as ghostly adviser. Both in Ferrer's case and Nakens', letters passed freely to and fro between the prisoners and their friends outside, despite the very serious nature of the charges that brought them within the prison walls. In the humanities of prison administration England has yet much to learn even from Spain,

despite the fiendish cruelties of Montjuich on the one hand, and our self-righteous superiority on the other.

In *Cuadros de Miseria* Nakens presents a quick succession of thumb-nail sketches of the seamy side of Spanish life, and unfortunately the "seams" are wide and all too prevalent. Terrible is the picture he paints of the misery created by centuries of regal and priestly domination in the land where throne and altar have divided the patrimony of the people as thieves divide their spoil, and have dragged to ruin, generation after generation, a naturally clever, intelligent race. To read the short, crisp chapters of this remarkable series of panoramic views of modern life in Spain is to see by concrete instances drawn from life how the Church has coiled itself like a boa-constrictor around the multiform manifestations of political, social, and religious life in the country, and gorged itself into greatness and infamy by demoralising and plundering the nation.

In *Cuadros de Miseria* Nakens insinuates his Freethought through every line of his great delineation. He makes every stone of social ill, standing as a stumbling-block in the way of national prosperity, cry out its impeachment of the cruel and rapacious Church, which is seen to-day as unrepentant and unscrupulous as ever—within, of course, the limits of its shorn and dilapidated possibilities of wrongdoing. We in England who are confronted by a bowdlerised edition of Christianity, emasculated and eviscerated by the surgical operations of sceptical "practitioners" within and without the Churches, must look wider afield—to Spain or Russia, to the wilds of western Ireland or the sleepy recesses of Brittany—to find the pure, unexpurgated specimens of the faith once delivered to the saints.

In the *Cuadros* the attack upon Christianity is provoked by the author's vivid resentment of the widespread ruin, tracing itself in every function of the national life, wrought by the Church. But in *Muestras de mi estilo* the onslaught partakes the character of a more reasoned, unimpassioned outburst of intellectual and moral aversion to Christianity. In this respect his *Vuelta de Cristo* ("Christ's Return") will count amongst the most crushing refutations of the claims made on behalf of the over-estimated hero of the Gospels. "If," said Nakens (p. 70), "I found Christ disposed to work a miracle, I should just say to him, 'Master, you need perform but one miracle; that of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, just to show that you have come to us not merely to discourse about heavenly things. And then just impart to us the receipt for this marvel, in order that it may be reproduced day by day. You may feel certain that in this manner you would change the face of everything on earth, in spite of the fact that you have ever spoken in a tone of disdain of the paltry details related to our material necessities.'"

Nakens is a Freethinker without any sneaking fondness for "our brother Christ." "Master," says Nakens (p. 75), "your coming again will be of no avail unless you bring with you different solutions than those based on charity and posthumous heavenly rewards." Nakens then tells Christ "to desist from offering himself up anew in holocaust to ideas which would solve none of our problems, even if the world were willing completely to practice them. Twenty centuries of misery, sorrow, slaughter, and extermination have for ever discredited them. And if no other proof were available, look at the recent conduct in China of the soldiers of all the nations who pay you worship, and tell me if it is possible even to dream of the redemption of the world by means of Christianity!"

Magnificent, too, beyond praise, is Nakens' splendid chapter (p. 185) on "El Dios de los Pobres" ("The God of the Poor"). Senor Villegas had written thus in *La Epoca*: "To take away from the poor, the wretched and sorrow-stricken, their hope and consolation, by robbing mankind of its God, giving in exchange doubt and despair, would be the summit of infamy." "So it would," said Nakens; "I am quite

* Madrid: Alberto Aguilera 34; published every Thursday.

† Madrid: Domingo Blanco; Libertad 31.

of your opinion. But in order to rob anything it must exist; and the God of the poor is non-existent. At any rate, I don't know his whereabouts. Nor do the poor people who own him." "The summit of infamy," Nakens declares, "is really to have created a God with the selfish and criminal purpose of inducing the poor to resign themselves to the silent suffering of hunger, cold, and injustice, in the hope of realising in another life the happiness enjoyed by those who generously bestow upon them—a God. For it is the highest type of cruelty and the most cynical form of sarcasm to invent, for the benefit of those who own nothing, a God who gives them nothing and in no way helps them to anything, but who drains from his devotees all their strength by dint of excessive toil." Nakens then takes his reader in search of the problematical "poor man's God"; and through all the labyrinth of our social relations—in the hovel where women slave all day for a scanty crust, in the refuse-heap where starved wretches gather garbage for food, in the mine where the fire-damp explodes, in the garrets and slums where consumption and starvation divide the spoil of human lives—he sees no trace of a God, nor even of a Devil, the latter, indeed, finding it much easier to entice souls to ruin when mens' bodies are pampered and their creature comforts are assured. The Atheism of Nakens is spacious, bursting all timorous limitations.

Nakens unites Spartan severity of manner with Spanish dignity and pride. No king more disdainful of the fickle judgment of the crowd than Nakens; no hero of ancient or modern mould more proudly tenacious than he of his lofty, high-souled ideals. Years ago, had he cared to stoop to the dust where the "practical politician" buries his convictions, he might have picked up place and profit in the State. He preferred to remain poor—and honest. Admired by friend and foe for his high qualities as a man, a writer, and a thinker, the chivalry of his life and his splendid devotion to lofty ideals lend lustre to the profession of Freethought. The bead-roll of its heroes and martyrs in every land, and in our own day and generation, is a record—Nakens' own labors, to wit—of which we can all be proud.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

When Did Jesus Live?—I.

IF we admit the Pauline Epistles as evidence—or those which are generally considered authentic—it follows beyond all reasonable doubt that there really was a Jesus who, after his death, was glorified by the members of his sect and exalted to the rank of prophet, and who prior to the sudden curtailment of his life was a contemporary of Paul and the apostles. These epistles fully establish the fact that in Paul's time there existed an apostolic party whose "pillars" were James, John, and Cephas; that James was the head of the Nazarene church at Jerusalem, and was known as "the Lord's brother."

Who this historical Jesus was nobody with certainty knows. My suggestion is that he probably was the fanatic "Jesus the son of Ananus, a plebian," mentioned by Josephus (Wars, vi., v., 3), who was killed during the siege of Jerusalem. One of the arguments employed by those who contend for the authenticity of the forged paragraph in the Antiquities (xviii., iii., 3) respecting "Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man," is that if the miracle-working Jesus of the Gospels appeared in Palestine during the period chronicled by Josephus, that historian could not fail to record the fact. Well, Josephus has given an account of a Jesus who for seven and a half years went about crying "Woe, woe to Jerusalem," and who was killed (or put to death) in A.D. 70. I have further suggested that the Jewish historian might have been misinformed as to the end of this Jesus, a circumstance not at all improbable.

Some years ago, after a careful examination of the early Christian history and the Gospel narratives, I selected this Jesus as the most probable foundation for the Gospel fictions. After due consideration, however, I set him aside as living too late; but this notwithstanding, whenever I think of a historical Jesus, this plebian fanatic rises into view, and latterly I have a firm conviction that he—and he only—was, after all, the real Simon Pure. I now proceed to notice various scraps of evidence which appear to point to a later date than that given in the Gospels.

1. It is admitted by all Biblical critics that for many years after the death of the reputed founder of Christianity, the propagation of that religion was carried on solely by oral teaching, there being for a long time no written Gospels. How long this period lasted is unknown; but Christian advocates, who contend for the apostolic authorship of those works of fiction, make it as short as they can—say, twenty or thirty years. This period of oral teaching, however, was probably very much longer; so that at the time of concocting a written history nothing was really known about Jesus—not even an approximate date of his short ministry in Palestine.

2. It should next be borne in mind that the three Synoptical Gospels are merely revised versions of a more primitive Gospel, with added matter from some other pre-existing Christian documents: consequently, by comparing the narratives common to the three (or to two of them) we get a good idea of a considerable portion of the primitive Gospel. It should further be added that we have no evidence of the existence of the canonical Gospels before the second quarter of the second century.

3. It appears more than probable that the writer or composer of the primitive Gospel had no idea of the time when the Jesus whose fictitious sayings and doings he records had set up as a preacher in Palestine. This may be inferred from the following passages in the First and Second Gospels:—

Matt. iii. 1, 13.—"And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa..... Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptised of him."

Mark i. 4, 9.—"John came, who baptised in the wilderness.....and it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised in the Jordan."

Here, it will be seen, Jesus came "in those days," which is nearly equivalent to "Once upon a time." The Gospel in use amongst the Nazarenes and Ebionites commenced, like the Gospel of Mark, with the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus. The Baptist, who appears to have been a historical character, was introduced as a forerunner in order to fulfil Isaiah xl. 3—"the voice of one crying in the wilderness," "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," etc. The Gospel account of the Baptist is pure fiction, save upon one point—his baptising converts in the Jordan. It is not true that that baptiser was cast into prison because he reproved Antipas for marrying Herodias, "his brother Philip's wife." Herodias was not his brother Philip's wife: she was the wife of another brother—Herod. Philip's wife was Salome, whom the Gospel writer represents as a single girl living with her mother, and as publicly dancing at a feast before Antipas and "the chief men of Galilee." The primitive Gospel writer knew nothing about the historical Baptist; he did not even know when that baptiser lived.

Again, it is more than probable that the names Pilate and Caiaphas—which give a date between A.D. 26 and 36—were not in the primitive Gospel, the words "governor" and "high priest" being used instead. This appears evident from a comparison of the following passages:—

Matt. xxvii. 11. "Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews?"

Mark xv. 2. "And Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews?"

Matt. xxvii. 14. "—inasmuch that the governor marvelled greatly."

Mark xv. 5. "—inasmuch that Pilate marvelled."

Matt. xxvii. 21. "But the governor answered and said unto them," etc.

Mark xiv. 53. "And they led Jesus away to the high priest." Luke xxii. 54. "—and brought him unto the high priest's house."

Mark xv. 12. "And Pilate again answered and said unto them," etc.

Matt. xxvi. 57. "And they that had taken Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest."

When it is remembered that the foregoing passages are revised versions of a simple text, it seems highly probable that the proper names were introduced by the late editors and revisers.

4. When we come to the Third Gospel, which was derived like the First and the Second Gospels from the same primitive documents, we find, instead of "those days," the following paragraph:—

Luke iii. 1-3.—"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness," etc.

The foregoing passage, there can be no doubt whatever, was *not* found in the primitive Gospel; it was composed by Luke himself, who took "the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar" from a later Gospel. The fifteenth year of Tiberius was A.D. 28. At that date Pilate was procurator of Judæa, Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and Philip tetrarch of Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. Thus, to start with, the district governed by Antipas and Philip are incorrectly stated. Next, Lysanias was "tetrarch" of a small province on the north of Palestine near the mountains of Lebanon (whose capital was Abila) from B.C. 42 to B.C. 32: in "the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar" he had been dead sixty years. Annas or Ananus was high priest from A.D. 7 to 14, but at no later period; he was never associated with Caiaphas in the high priesthood.

5. One of the early Christian "fathers," Epiphanius, had in his possession a copy of the Gospel used by the Ebionites and Nazarenes, "which," he says, "they call the Hebrew Gospel." After quoting certain passages from it, he says:—

"The beginning of their Gospel is this: 'It came to pass in the days of Herod king of Judæa, that John came baptising with a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan,' etc.

According to this statement, Jesus and the Baptist appeared as teachers in the reign of "Herod king of Judæa." There were two Herods who reigned over Judæa, viz.—

- (1) Herod the Great (B.C. 37—B.C. 3) under the Emperor Augustus.
- (2) Herod Agrippa I. (A.D. 41—A.D. 44) under the Emperor Claudius.

(The latter is the "Herod the king" mentioned in Acts xii.)

Now, in which of these reigns was it conjectured that Jesus and the Baptist commenced their public ministry? Judging from the Gospels called "apocryphal," it was in that of the second Herod, when no Roman procurator ruled in Judæa, though the name Pilate (which had been introduced in the story of the Crucifixion) was retained.

6. It was believed in the period shortly after the appearance of the first Gospel that the Roman governor (who was then said to have been Pilate) was firmly convinced of the innocence of Jesus. Next, it was assumed that this governor had sent a report to that effect to the reigning Emperor. "From such conjectures," says Lipsius, "to the actual composition of such documents by Christian authors was a mere step." Of this fact there is no room for doubt. In the "Gospel of Nicodemus" is incorporated an "Epistle of Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Claudius" which commences:—

"Pontius Pilate to Claudius his king, greeting," etc.

In the "Acts of the holy apostles, Peter and Paul" Peter is represented as saying to the Emperor Nero:—

"But if thou wishest to know, O good Emperor, the things that have been done in Judæa about Christ, take

the writings of Pontius Pilate sent to Claudius, and thou wilt know all."

Nero, it is stated, followed this excellent advice, and ordered the document to be brought and read out before him. It commenced: "Pontius Pilate to Claudius, greeting." Here we have evidence that the writers of these two Christian "histories" did not know when Pilate or Jesus had lived. Pilate was procurator of Judæa in the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37). Jesus is said to have been put to death about A.D. 30; Claudius reigned from A.D. 41 to 54.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

CLOTHING THE HEATHEN.

When the missionaries first took up their residence in Honolulu, the native women would pay their families frequent friendly visits, day by day, not even clothed with a blush. It was found a hard matter to convince them that this was rather indelicate. Finally the missionaries provided them with long, loose calico robes, and that ended the difficulty—for the women would troop through the town, stark naked, with their robes folded under their arms, march to the missionary houses and then proceed to dress! The natives soon manifested a strong proclivity for clothing, but it was shortly apparent that they only wanted it for grandeur. The missionaries imported a quantity of hats, bonnets, and other male and female wearing apparel, instituted a general distribution, and the next Sabbath the poor preachers could hardly keep countenance before their vast congregations. In the midst of the reading of a hymn a brown, stately dame would sweep up the aisle with a world of airs, with nothing in the world on but a "stovepipe" hat and a pair of cheap gloves; another dame would follow, tricked out in a man's shirt, and nothing else; another one would enter with a flourish, with simply the sleeves of a bright calico dress tied around her waist and the rest of the garment dragging behind like a peacock's tail off duty; a stately "buck" Kanaka would stalk in with a woman's bonnet on, wrong side before—only this, and nothing more; after him would stride his fellow, with the legs of a pair of pantaloons tied around his neck, the rest of his person untrammelled; in his rear would come another gentleman simply gotten up in a fiery necktie and a striped vest. The poor creatures were beaming with complacency and wholly unconscious of any absurdity in their appearance. They gazed at each other with happy admiration, and it was plain to see that the young girls were taking note of what each other had on, as naturally as if they had always lived in a land of Bibles and knew what churches were made for; here was the evidence of a dawning civilisation. The spectacle which the congregation presented was so extraordinary, and withal so moving, that the missionaries found it difficult to keep to the text and go on with the services; and by-and-by, when the simple children of the sun began a general swapping of garments in open meeting, and produced some irresistibly grotesque effects in the course of redressing, there was nothing for it but to cut the thing short with the benediction and dismiss the fantastic assemblage.—*Mark Twain.*

SOME GOOD AT LAST.

Her oldest child, Maria, married a missionary, and died in grace—et up by the savages. They et *him*, too, poor feller—biled him. It warn't the custom, so they say, but they explained to friends of his'n that went down there to bring his things, that they'd tried missionaries every other way and never could get any good out of 'em.—*Mark Twain.*

It appears to us that sky-pilots, like other men, should be judged by their practice. If they show no belief in what they preach, we are foolish to believe in it any more than they do. It also appears to us that their profession is as fraudulent as fortune-telling. Many a poor old woman has been imprisoned for taking sixpence from a servant-girl, after promising her a tall, dark husband and eight fine children; but men dressed in black coats and white chokers are allowed to take money for promises of good fortune in the "beautiful land above." It further appears to us that the sky-pilots should be compelled to come to a reasonable agreement before their trade is licensed. They should settle *where heaven is* before they begin business. Better still, perhaps, every applicant for a license should prove that *some human soul has been piloted to heaven*. Until that is done, the profession is only robbery and imposture.—*G. W. Foote.*

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.

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Bible and the Licensing Bill."

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Religion and Society."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, E. C. Saphin, Lantern Lecture, "Christianity a Sun God."

OUTDOOR.

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.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Corn Exchange, Market-place): 7.30, Joseph Bates, "The Birth and Death of God." Vocal and instrumental music.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, a Lecture.

FALSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Benefits of Unbelief."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Decay of the Church of Rome"; 6.30, "The Evolution of Mind."—I. With over 100 limelight views.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central-buildings, 113 Islington): Sidney Wollen, 3, "The Crimes of the Protestants"; 7, "The Ethics of the Great Religions."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Mr. Finucane, "The Awakening of Reason."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Hedley's Café, 2 Clayton-street): 3, French and German Classes.

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, November 26, at 8, Geo. A. Jennings, "Cremation."

OUTDOOR.

DALKEITH: High-street, Saturday, November 21, a Lecture.

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