

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVIII.—No. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1908

PRICE TWOPENCE

Everything is good which takes away one plaything and delusion more, and drives us home to add one stroke of faithful work.—EMERSON.

Religion and Education.

WHILE it is universally acknowledged that education is a truly excellent thing, religious leaders are perpetually warning the public that in the absence of religion it is powerless to reform the world. By education these special pleaders understand instruction in so-called secular subjects, such as mathematics and natural philosophy. An educated man, in their opinion, is a man who is more or less versed in literature and science. Rejoicing in the spread of education in his day, Lord Brougham expressed the hope that ere long every poor man in the land would be able to read Bacon. Cobbett submitted that it would have been more reasonable to hope the time would soon come when every poor man would be able to *eat bacon*. It is in the same restricted sense that the word "education" is taken by most of the controversialists of to-day. "Man's hope lies in increased knowledge, we are told," says the Rev. J. H. James, of Burton-on-Trent. "Educate, is the cry," he continues, "and I hope for excellent results from education as the handmaiden of religion, but only mischief from her as a substitute for religion." But in thus speaking the reverend gentleman betrays gross ignorance of the real contents of the words "science" and "education," and of their relation to religion. Science embraces every knowable subject under the sun. Its departments are practically innumerable. The field in which it works is Nature, including man. Now, the object of education is to enable the child to appropriate and assimilate the knowledge of Nature that science has already made accessible, and to give the pre-eminence to those branches of that knowledge which are of most practical use in the art of living. It is often said that primarily education signifies the leading or bringing out of what is latent or merely potential in a child's nature. This is doubtless true; but we must not forget that evolution always takes place in response to the action of the environment. *Eduction* is an answer to the call of *induction*.

Mr. James is quite right when he says that "the problem is merely a question of dynamics"; but he falls into a grievous error when he asserts that the indispensable dynamics must come from beyond Nature. For one thing we have no knowledge of anything beyond or above Nature; and, for another, all the dynamic required is already inherent in Nature. Mr. James is an expert declaimer, and an equally expert despiser of logic. Listen:—

"Science can build ships of war and forge death-dealing cannon, but she cannot control the dogs of war, or take away their thirst for human blood. Science can build cities and light them with electricity, but she cannot prevent the moral degradation or lighten the spiritual darkness of those who live in them. Then there are ethics. Inculcate the highest moral principles, give men lofty moral instruction, and they will be pure. But what men need supremely is not instruction, but the power to do right and shun the wrong."

How easily is an ignorant congregation taken captive by such confident declamation. As he proceeds the

dogmatist becomes more and more irresponsibly courageous until he reaches the following climax:—

"It is the simple historical fact that at the very moment that two of the finest systems of ethics were in vogue the ancient world was slowly dying of moral corruption."

Every impartial student of history knows how shockingly exaggerated that picture of the moral degradation of the ancient world is; but even on the assumption of its perfect accuracy, it furnishes no argument in favor of the "power of God," which Mr. James introduces as the supreme purifier of the world. By the "power of God" the reverend gentleman means Christianity, which stepped into that ancient world when it was "slowly dying of moral corruption." Well, did its entrance check the dying process? By no means. "It is the simple historical fact" that the downward trend was only intensified by the official predominance of the Christian religion, and that the downgrade continued until it culminated in the tenth century, which Baronius, the Catholic historian, characterises as the most depraved and morally abandoned age the world had ever seen. Will Mr. James venture to contradict Baronius, as he virtually contradicts the testimony of Uhlhorn concerning the moral status of the ancient world?

Mr. James calls education "the handmaiden of religion." Well, if this definition of education is correct, all we have to say is that both the maid and her mistress have been colossal failures. Had they been successes, the reverend gentleman could not have preached the sermon now under criticism, and his very profession would have ceased to be long ago. In point of fact, however, it is not education that is a dependent of religion, but religion of education. It is education that has, for many centuries, preserved religion alive. Had it not been for its prostitution of the services of the former, the latter would have died long ago. It is the realisation of this truth that is at the root of the bitter and heated conflict that is being waged by the Churches as to which or what form of religion the State schools shall be authorised to perpetuate. The leaders of the various sects are perfectly aware that if religion is banished from the schools its very existence will be seriously jeopardised.

Freethinkers, being unbelievers in supernatural religion of every form, are zealous advocates of its complete expulsion from all rate-aided schools. This they demand from the State as an act of simple justice. They have as good a right to object to the teaching of Dr. Clifford's religion as Dr. Clifford has to oppose the teaching of that of Canterbury or of Rome. But their objection to the teaching of any religion in Government schools is based on the conviction that all forms of supernaturalism have always exerted, and still do exert, a pernicious influence on the development of man's social and moral life. In other words, we are firmly of opinion that the only function of education is to make the scholars good citizens of this world, and not to qualify them for a possible citizenship in another, and that morality, being simply the relation between individuals living in society, should be taught as having its only roots in the society of whose well-being it is so essential a condition. The theologians speak of an eternal and absolutely unchangeable moral law revealed by God thousands of

years ago. But such an unalterable code has never existed, and never will exist. The moral standard of each age, and almost of each country, is peculiar to that age and country. The moral standard in force a thousand years ago no longer applies; nor is the West in subjection to the codes that obtain in the East. There is no such thing as "universal morality." The conscience of Europe is a very different thing from the conscience of Asia; and there is a radical distinction between the Nonconformist conscience and that of Conformity. A man's conscience is the creature and slave of his opinions; and we find that opinions are very apt to vary according to circumstances.

We hold that the dominant note in education should be the ethical. In point of importance everything else should be held as secondary to this. But we must not forget that the ethical note is as old as society itself. A moral code is enforced in every colony of ants, and its central rule insists on the service of all by each. There are drones there as with us, and they are more severely dealt with than among ourselves. Professor Haeckel says:—

"In the human family this maxim ('Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself') has always been accepted as self-evident; as ethical instinct it was an inheritance derived from our animal ancestors. It had already found a place among the herds of apes and other social Mammals; in a similar manner, but with a wider scope, it was already present in the most primitive communities and among the hordes of the least advanced savages. Brotherly love—mutual support, succor, protection, and the like—had already made its appearance among gregarious animals as a social duty; for without it the continued existence of such societies is impossible. Although at a later period, in the case of man, these moral foundations of society came to be much more highly developed, their oldest prehistoric source, as Darwin has shown, is to be sought in the social instincts of animals" (*Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, pp. 64, 65).

Morality, having thus come up from beneath, not down from above, should be taught, not as an independent and eternal reality originally existing in the Divine Mind and Will, but as merely a social relationship. Truth, honesty, sympathy, love, have neither being nor meaning except as indispensable conditions of social welfare; and the conception of social welfare corresponds to the stage of social development to which those cherishing may have attained.

We are sometimes asked to prove the superiority of natural morality to supernatural, and our only answer is that we have never seen, and do not believe in, supernatural morality. All morality known to us is natural; and our contention is that, being natural, it should be developed by purely natural means, and not as the result of an emotional appeal to, or dependence on, supernatural beings and forces existing only as objects of belief. Even its most fanatical defenders cannot claim for Christianity any considerable success as a moraliser of humanity. On that score we attribute to it almost total failure, and therefore confidently advocate secular education, including, of course, as its chief function, the most thorough training in the science of ethics, as the only effective means of rationalising morality and moralising society.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Hearts of Men.—II.

(Concluded from p. 757.)

WHAT is the meaning of religion? How does it arise? Why does it persist? These are the questions with which the remainder of Mr. Hall's book is concerned. The difficulty of reaching a satisfactory definition of religion from consulting religious and semi-religious writers is shown by a collection of nineteen which Mr. Hall quotes at the opening of his work. And this number is far from exhausting the list. Nineteen is but a sample of a huge bulk, and the bulk is due to the fact that

writers have preferred to elaborate their definitions out of their own heads—as the nigger made his wooden god—instead of going direct to the facts. For a definition should express the essence of the thing defined; it should make plain that which all the individuals of a whole class have in common. Mr. Hall on his own account adds another definition, or, rather, two—a preliminary and a final one—neither of which quite fits the facts.

The preliminary definition of religion is that it consists of "a scheme of the world with some theory of how man got into it, and the influences, mostly supernatural, which affect him here. It usually, though not always, includes some code of morality for use here and some account of what happens after death." The final definition is that religion is the culture of the emotions. Now, both the definitions—the last more than the first—along with the others cited and rejected by Mr. Hall, are reached by looking upon the later manifestations of religion and rejecting the earlier ones. The earliest manifestations of religion have no scheme of the world, unless we use that phrase as descriptive of any belief that men have concerning themselves and other things; it has no theory of how man came into the world; and it is not concerned with morality as such. All these things are later associated with religious beliefs; but as all of them can exist apart from religion, they are obviously not essential to its definition. It may be an advantage to religious apologists to so frame their definition of religion as to include only the period when it was associated with certain moral notions and certain cosmic theories, just as certain people talk of their family as having been "founded" by the first Lord Blank, and ignore the fact that the first lord was "founded" by a probably very ordinary individual indeed.

So, too, with the definition of religion as a culture of the emotions. Of course, emotion is associated with religion as it is with everything in human life; but it is no more the essence of religion than it is of political economy. The tendency of civilised times is to lay stress upon the emotional element in religion, because by doing so the influence of the intellectual element is reduced to a minimum; and in civilised times professors of religion feel a not unwarranted dread of the influence of pure intellect on their religious beliefs. But, as Mr. Hill has pointed out in relation to the subjective theory of prayer, so we may point out here—the emotional element can only be appealed to so long as a certain intellectual premiss is taken for granted. People give play to their emotions in relation to religion only because they take it for granted that the beliefs expressed through their emotions are capable of intellectual justification. Convince them that it is otherwise, that they are merely indulging in an emotional debauch, and the result will as surely be a cessation of emotional culture in this direction, as the conviction that prayer has a subjective effect only will lead to a cessation of praying.

Neither definition covers the field; and a definition, to be exact, must include all forms of religion, from the highest to the lowest, must express some feature common to all, after eliminating all disagreements. Is there any feature that all religions have in common? I believe there is. If we take the earliest phases of religious belief we find the outstanding feature of religion to be the belief that there are certain extra natural intelligences exerting an influence upon human life. Take religion in its latest and most developed shape, and we find it enshrines the same belief. It is surrounded by a great number of formulas, mixed up with a great number of other things; but it is there. Remove the conception of an intelligence, like and yet superior to a man, and we are left with an ethical theory, or a cosmical theory; but religion, as religion, disappears. Take, then, all forms of religion, ancient and modern, savage and civilised, and there is only one feature in which they show a common agreement—the belief in supernatural beings. Everything else is adventitious. Above all the culture of

the emotions only plays a prominent place when a consciousness of the intellectual insecurity of religious beliefs manifests itself.

Mr. Hall is emphatically in the right when he says that it is useless to seek to explain man by his religious faiths; you must explain religious faiths by man. But in the course of this explanation far too great use is made of that exceedingly ambiguous and question-begging word "instinct." Man's religions no more develop because of a "religious instinct" than are machines created because there is a machine instinct. Religions and machines both originate in a normal manner; the beginnings of each can be traced, and the development of each understood. A child in learning misunderstands much, but we do not stereotype its misunderstandings under the category of "instincts." So man's religious beliefs are originally misunderstandings of the lessons of experience, attempts more or less conscious to explain phenomena around him. Mr. Hall fully realises this in the following passage:—

"There is not in any god any realisable conception different from that of man. The savage god is hungry and thirsty, requires clothes and houses, has in all things passions and wants like a man.....With later gods is it different? God can be realised only by means of the qualities he shares with man. Deduct from your idea of God all human passions, love and forgiveness, and mercy and revenge and punishment, and what is left? Only words and abstractions which appeal to no one, and are realisable by no one. Declare that God requires neither ears to hear nor eyes to see, nor legs to walk with, nor a body, and what is left? Nothing is left. When anyone, savage or Christian, realises God, he does so by qualities God shares with man. God is the Big Man who causes things."

Now there is no need to call in the operation of any mysterious "instinct" for either the beginning or perpetuation of such beliefs as these. Mr. Hall does, indeed, suggest in more than one place how the early environment of man led to the personification of natural forces, and it is equally clear that the environment—social and intellectual—into which people are afterwards born generally ensures the expression of human feelings in terms of religion. In civilised society it is all a question of education. Given as sound an education as is possible, and left uninstructed in religion, the civilised individual might still speculate over the unsolved problems of life, and marvel greatly at the complexities of nature; it is tolerably certain that he would never develop any purely religious belief.

But why has religion persisted? Mr. Hall says: "Religion in some form or another has always existed, has increased and developed, has grown and gained strength." He also points out that whatever exists, whatever persists, does so because it fulfils a want, because it's of use. Therefore "All religions that have existed have filled some need, all religions that now exist do so because they fulfil some present use." And upon these considerations is built the final conclusion that the function of religion is to provide a necessary outlet for man's emotional nature.

Now although from one point of view nearly all these statements might all be granted, from another they each enshrine an error. In the first place, the statement that religion has increased and gained strength may be met with a flat denial. Religion is never more powerful than it is under primitive conditions. Obviously, a culture stage at which the gods govern almost every operation of life, when hunting, agriculture, warfare, and domestic events all involve an appeal to supernatural beings, cannot be improved upon so far as mere strength is concerned. One aspect of the growth of civilisation consists in limiting the area over which the supernatural rules, and thus clearly makes for a limitation of the power of religion. Religion grows weaker, not stronger; and in proof of that one need only cite the growth of a frame of mind of which Mr. Hall's is typical. And only in a very guarded sense can religion be said to have developed. For an examination of this development proves that

while it has become more doctrinal, yet these doctrines are, in their turn, often an expression of limitations. In the face of the growth of non-religion, religion has stated its doctrines in a more elaborate manner; but the necessity for the more elaborate statement has arisen from the fact that religion had a rival in the field where formerly it reigned supreme. The entire field of physical science represents, historically, something captured from religion. Other tracts of knowledge have also been wrested from religion. One may, of course, speak of a once world-wide empire reduced to the compass of a single country as having increased and developed because the pressure of enemies on its borders have compelled it to better organise its internal economy. There would in this case be a certain accuracy in the expression; in any other sense it would be in the highest degree misleading.

So, too, the argument that religion, because it persists answers to some human need, involves error. It would be correct to say that the destruction of certain scarce birds to provide plumes for the hats of thoughtless women goes on in response to a human need. Obviously, the women who wear them need them, or there would be no market for the plumes. The reply to this would be that it is one of those "needs" that people might dispense with, and which only exists as a consequence of mis-directed education. Everything that is used supplies a need; the only question is, Is it a need that cannot profitably be surrendered or outgrown? Now, obviously, in its earliest phases religious beliefs come into existence and maintain themselves because they correspond with the social and intellectual conditions that give them birth. In this sense they satisfy a need. But when we reach a more developed state of civilisation the "need" becomes as artificial, as unnecessary as the "need" of the fashionable women for osprey feathers. Generation after generation is born into an environment where the educational pressure develops a "need" for religion in all who are not strong enough to revolt. And with them religion is not there because of the organic and spontaneous need for it; the need develops in response to the educational pressure exerted. That religion can be dispensed with, and without the loss of anything really valuable, Mr. Hall, I may repeat, is conclusive proof. And Mr. Hall himself is symbolic of the truth that in spite of educational pressure, revolt against those ancient superstitions enshrined by religion goes on, as he is the incarnation of a promise of their ultimate disappearance.

C. COHEN.

Mr. Runciman's Bill.

IN Mr. Runciman's New Education Bill it is possible many supporters of the secular solution will see very serious dangers. As I do not feel any deep alarm on the subject, it may be of interest to state my reasons. In 1902, I said and I now say again, that I consider Mr. A. J. Balfour's Education Act a proof of very considerable foresight, and even a point gained for efficiency of the schools. Mr. Balfour could see that the fate of the Voluntary, or Denominational schools, was sealed. He perceived the necessity for giving them a moderate prolongation of life, and so he placed the Church and Catholic and Wesleyan elementary schools on the rates as well as on the taxes. Dr. Clifford ejaculated, "Rome on the rates!" but said not a word about Rome having been on the taxes (by means of Government grants) ever since 1870. Mr. Balfour had as much right to put Rome on the rates, and Anglicanism on the rates, as the late School Board and the present Education Committees had, and have, to put the Bible-reading method on the rates. And besides, he avoided the awkward crisis that would have arisen if a general collapse of Church schools had taken place, owing to the failure of subscriptions. The Nonconformists opened a Passive Resistance Movement, which maintained its

foolish flutter for six years. Not a single Nonconformist came forward in Leicester when I issued a challenge on a poster offering to affirm in public meeting the proposition that the Movement was unjust unless it aimed at Secular Education. When I appeared at the local Police-court for non-payment of the Education Rate, I did so on the ground that I objected to the Bible-reading method pursued in the Council schools, under the guise of "Undenominational" religious instruction. Again, not a single Nonconformist asserted that my Police-court action was illogical. And, meanwhile, the Church people (including the Catholics) have never paused in their demand that they shall have their creed subsidised by the State as freely as the Nonconformists have had their Bible-method subsidised. As, owing to a happy evolution of the national census, the Nonconformist population now somewhere about balances the Church population, the result has been a deadlock. Mr. Runciman proposes to end it by two expedients:—

- (1) By definitely providing a daily religious lesson in all elementary schools (except those which contract out), lasting forty-five minutes.
- (2) By adopting an alternating series of lessons on the five school days, thus,—Undenominational Bible; Church; Undenominational Bible; Church; Undenominational Bible, or any similar sandwich plan.

If religious teaching is to be given at all, this arrangement is reasonable. If the subject of theological history and morals is (as is alleged) an all-important one, it merits attention for forty-five minutes a day. In Leicester not more than thirty minutes may be so occupied, and very often the indispensable message of divinity is cut down to ten minutes. It is true that the religious lesson is now to be made a compulsory feature of the timetable in all schools. But the change is more one of form than substance. The enormous majority of elementary schools in this country already accord this honor to the subject by the consent of local authorities.

Again, if religious teaching is to be given at all, the sandwich program is almost perfectly fair. I say "almost" because it throws into the Nonconformist scale an extra lesson per week. But roughly speaking, the division of theological spoils may be regarded as equitable. To the Freethinker, it is of no consequence whether the theology takes an Anglican or an "Unsectarian" shape. Personally, I have always preferred the Anglican or Catholic, because the lessons imparted follow a definite course and expound a definite set of doctrines: and definiteness in teaching is always better than cloudy indefiniteness. If you ask a Catholic or Anglican committee whether they wish the children to believe in the Resurrection of Christ you will get, as a rule, a clear answer Yes. But when I made out a list of doctrines, and asked the Nonconformist Chairman of the Leicester Education Committee whether they were implied in the Bible-reading of the Council Schools, he evaded the question, and said the Committee would not lay down any schedule for the teachers. In any case, I am unable to see that Freethought has suffered any peculiar rebuff by this sandwich syllabus in Mr. Runciman's Bill.

Indeed, it will gain. Nonconformists always looked upon the deceased School Boards as their special opportunity, and they took a pride in the erection and maintenance of the Board (Council) Schools. They retain that pride, though it is chastened by the sight of the rates going to the aid of the so-called Denominational institutions. Mr. Runciman now informs them that, twice a week, their beloved Council Schools will open the doors to groups of Church teachers, either procured from the ordinary staff (who will, however, not be paid for their lessons by the rate-fund) or introduced by the various communions. The National Union of Teachers resented this novelty as soon as it was mooted. They rightly objected that teachers who did not volunteer for these twice-a-week exercises in divinity would be subjected to a subtle

species of test. They would be admired if they offered to teach divinity, and suspected if they refrained. In addition to this problem, you have the further complication of a possible upset in discipline, if professional teachers are not available, and amateur lecturers are imported, so to say, from the streets in order to unfold supernatural secrets to the young English mind. Speaking as an old Board-school teacher, and as a member of an Education Committee, I anticipate lively additions to the history of the national education when Runciman's sandwich is provided for municipal consumption. The Bill provides that a Religious Instruction Committee shall draw up the order and character of the proceedings. I shall not offer myself as a candidate for the Committee in Leicester. It will suffice to let Nonconformists and Anglicans sit together in agreeable consultation, while I await the results and politely claim the right to discuss their reports. Should any friction arise among these ladies and gentlemen, I may find occasion to make a few philosophical remarks. It may, however, be safely prophesied that before the lapse of ten years Runciman's sandwich would prove distinctly unpalatable. Perhaps even five years would be too liberal an allowance for the patience of the righteous. Whatever happens, timid Freethinkers who fear the rehabilitation of the theological system may be reassured. Each Parliamentary Bill assists the coming of the end.

If it is not wrongly digressing into general politics to say such a thing, I may warn all who are interested in social reform, that the ruling classes of this country are not altogether sincere when they lament the time absorbed in "this wretched religious squabble." On the contrary, these contests are proving very valuable to the representatives of the old order of property and privilege. They are satisfied in their hearts at the readiness of the public to treat this education difficulty as a living issue. It gives them all the more time to consolidate their position against the flood-tide of democracy.

However, Mr. Runciman's Bill, may, after all, not pass! And even if it does, it will suffer from incurable consumption.

F. J. GOULD.

When Did Jesus Live?—III.

(Continued from p. 764.)

11. ALL the Christian writings which have come down to us are recastings of older documents. The three Synoptics are revised editions of a more primitive Gospel; the Apocryphal Gospels, now extant, are the same. The "Acts of Pilate," for instance, has come down in three different forms, two in Greek and one in Latin; the "Descent of Christ into Hades" is likewise preserved in three different forms, one in Greek and two in Latin. Each of these, like the Gospels, was derived from a more primitive account.

Amongst the writings of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, who followed the teaching of the apostles and regarded Paul as an interloper and an apostate, are what are called "the Clementines." These consist of the Homilies, the Recognitions, and an Epitome. The first two are simply different versions of each other (one in Greek, the other in Latin); the Epitome is made up from these two. The Homilies and Recognitions, like all the other extant Christian writings, are recastings of an older document, which, after the recasting, became out of date, and being no longer copied soon became lost to posterity.

In one of the volumes of Smith and Wace's *Dictionary of Christian Biography* appears a long and scholarly article on "the Clementines," and another on the "Book of Elkesai," by the orthodox Dr. Salmon, then Regius Professor of Divinity, Trinity College, Dublin. From these articles I make the following extracts:—

- (1) "The Clementines are unmistakably a production of that sect of Ebionites which held the *Book of Elkesai*

as sacred.....They themselves claimed no earlier origin than a date later than the destruction of Jerusalem, an event which would seem to have induced many of the Essenes in some sort to accept Christianity."

(2) "We have noted already that the work which was the common groundwork of the Recognitions and Homilies asserts that a new gospel was published (the Homilies say secretly) after the destruction of the Holy Place. And it seems on other grounds probable that a number of Essenes, who had always held the temple sacrifices in abomination, were brought to recognise Jesus as the true Prophet when the destruction of the Temple and the abolition of its sacrifices fulfilled the prediction which he was known to have made. At this time, then, probably had their origin those Ebionite sects which combined a certain reverence for our Lord's utterances, and an acknowledgment of Him as a divine prophet, with the retention of a host of Essene usages and doctrines; and this date would be remembered as an epoch in the history of these sects."

This was written, it is needless to say, from the orthodox point of view, it being assumed that the historical Jesus lived at the period mentioned by Luke, and that he really gave utterance to the grand made-up prophecy attributed to him in the Synoptics. This prediction, as I have shown, is a purely literary composition, made from the sources I have indicated, and was never uttered extempore by anyone. Setting aside, then, this fraudulent "prophecy," the only known historical Jesus who predicted disaster to the holy city before the war of A.D. 66-70 was the Jewish fanatic who went about crying "Woe, woe, to Jerusalem," and who after the fall of the city would long be remembered, and by many be regarded as a prophet. We thus arrive at a historical fact—of a number of Essenes, under the leadership of James, John, and Cephas, forming a new sect (the Nazarenes or Ebionites) some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and preaching a gospel in which an Essene enthusiast named Jesus figured as a prophet. In a paper, not very long ago, suggesting the primitive Jewish Christians to have been Essenes, I said: "Most remarkable is it, too, that the name 'Essene' is not found anywhere in Talmudic literature, and that we never hear of the sect after the end of the first century. Did its members about that time take the names of Nazarenes?" This question appears now to receive an answer in the affirmative.

12. The next scrap of evidence is an extract from an Apology composed by Quadratus, a Grecian philosopher, on behalf of the Christians, which is said to have been presented to Hadrian on the occasion of that emperor's visit to Athens, either in A.D. 125 or 129. Whether this document and others of a like character were actually presented, as stated in the introduction, may well be doubted; but, being written in defence of the faith, they were copied by Christian scribes as evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and so were preserved for many years. Eusebius, who had a copy in his hands (A.D. 325), has given us the following extract:—

"The deeds of our Savior were always before you, for they were true miracles. Those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed and when raised, but for a long time afterwards. They remained living a long time, not only while our Lord was upon earth, but after his departure; so that some of them have lived to our own time" (Ecc. Hist., iv., 3).

From this excerpt we learn that it was believed in the time of Quadratus that there were people then living who claimed to have seen Jesus and to have been cured of some disease by him. No one, of course, had actually seen these fortunate people; it was merely a matter of common report. Still, if Jesus commenced his short ministry in A.D. 28, it is simply incredible that such a report could have been in circulation a hundred years later. It follows, then, that that reputed Savior must have lived at a much later period.

13. Another philosopher, Aristides, a native of Athens, wrote an Apology about the same time, of which until recently nothing was known except the following notice by Eusebius:—

"Aristides, also, a man faithfully devoted to the religion we profess, like Quadratus, has left to posterity

a defence of the faith addressed to Hadrian. This work is also possessed by a great number unto the present day."

In 1889 a Syriac version of this Apology was discovered in a volume of "Syriac Extracts." In it the writer repeatedly refers to Christ and the Christians, and also to Christian writings, but without naming them. The most important of his statements is the following:—

"The Christians reckon the beginning of their religion from Jesus Christ, who is named the son of God most High.....This is taught from that gospel which a little while ago was spoken among them as being preached; wherein, if ye will also read, ye will comprehend the power that is upon it. This Jesus, then, was born of the tribe of the Hebrews; and he had twelve disciples.He was pierced by the Jews, and he died and was buried; and they say that after three days he rose and ascended to heaven."

Nothing is said about miraculous healing or raising the dead. As regards the death of this Jesus, I cannot see how "pierced by the Jews" can mean "crucified by the Romans." There is certainly some element of doubt upon this matter. The chief point, however, to be noticed is the statement—obviously not derived from Christian writings—that the first propagation of the new religion took place only "a little while ago." If we place the date of the Apology at A.D. 125, and the Crucifixion at A.D. 30, we get an interval of ninety-five years. Now, giving the utmost latitude to the expression, the words cannot by any possibility be twisted into meaning "nearly a century ago." The time, then, indicated in this document for the preaching of the apostles is in flat contradiction to that given in the unhistorical Book of the Acts, and it places the ministry of Jesus several decades later than that recorded in the Gospels.

14. The last of the early Christian writers I shall notice is Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (about A.D. 130-150), who composed a book entitled "An Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord," which is now "lost." We have, however, extracts from it preserved by several writers, including Irenæus and Eusebius. The last-named writer quotes the following, evidently from the Preface, in which the credulous Papias says:—

"For I did not, like the multitude take pleasure in those who spake much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, anyone who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples.....For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice."

Papias's book was in existence up to the year 1218; it is named in an inventory of that date amongst the books belonging to the cathedral of Nismes. If by chance a copy could be recovered, it would certainly be an eye-opener to present-day orthodox Christians. Its simple-minded author made it a practice to ask every elderly Christian who came to Hierapolis and who professed to have been a hearer of one or other of the apostles (whom he calls "elders") what they could remember of the sayings of those preachers. By those means he was able to collect a large number of apocryphal sayings which his interlocutors, or the apostles they had "attended on," had ascribed to "the Lord."

In this case the only point to which I desire to direct attention is that in A.D. 130 or 140 there were men in the Christian Church who claimed to have listened to the teaching of the "elders" or disciples of Jesus. Now, according to the Gospels, the apostles in A.D. 28 were men—and possibly elderly men—who, when two years later they took to preaching, gave instruction to men; certainly not to babes. The interval of time, then, between the promulgation of the gospel by the apostles and the period when Papias questioned the so-said hearers of these apostles could not be anything like a century. Hence,

the evidence derived from Papias points to the same conclusion as that drawn from Quadratus and Aristides—that Jesus lived at a much later date than that recorded in the Gospels.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops.

The Government has carried the second reading of its new Education Bill by a bumping majority. That was practically inevitable. The real hard fighting was bound to come on in committee. Let us hope it will be hard enough.

The *British Weekly* accepts the "right of entry" in the new Education Bill. "We hold more firmly than ever," the editor adds however, "to the old Free Church principle that the State has nothing to do with religious instruction either in schools or in churches." "No measure," he adds, "will ever do Free Churchmen justice which is not a measure of secular education, and this was clearly perceived by our leaders in the great education discussion of the seventies, when Nonconformist principles, we think, were more firmly grasped than they are grasped now." This is true enough. The whole education struggle in England is due to the Nonconformist betrayal of 1870. Some leaders, like Dr. Dale, stood firm for the real principle of Nonconformity—absolute separation between Religion and the State—but the majority "ratted" for the sake of what they deemed an advantage to their own form of ecclesiasticism. Hence all these tears. Without that great act of treachery on the part of Nonconformists, we should have had Secular Education in England.

Rev. F. B. Meyer cannot swallow the "right of entry" without a wry face. He says that "the new arrangement can only be a truce and not a settlement." Which means, of course, that Nonconformists will have another go at the Church when they feel able, although at present they grin and bear it. Dr. Meyer reminds us of the sick Catholic, who was told by the priest that he would have to forgive his worst enemies if he wished to go to heaven. He asked for easier terms, but the priest was implacable. "Well," he said, "I'll forgive them all if I die, but if I don't I'll do for every one of them."

The *Christian World* says its policy has always been "The Bible in the School and the Priest outside." That simply means Evangelical Protestantism in the schools, and every other form of religion, and all forms of no-religion, outside. This is what Nonconformists consider wise and equitable. The check of these men! They are absolutely incapable of seeing any rights but their own. Perhaps we ought to say that they think all the rights there are belong to themselves.

Those responsible for the new Education Bill seek to justify its character by asserting it is a compromise reached after consultation with all parties concerned. All the parties means, in this instance, those bodies of Christians large enough to make their influence felt at the polls. The rest of the nation is not consulted, and is not thought about. So long as Christians agree upon something that will for a while suit them, the rest of the nation is expected to rest content. Thus, the "civic" ideals of Dr. Clifford, and the pious ideals of the Churchman, equally resolve themselves into getting the maximum of sectarian advantage with the minimum of real justice to the community at large. Mr. Runciman justified his measure by saying that there was "a fairly general agreement that we ought, if we could, to avoid purely secular education." Agreement amongst whom? Among the bishops and Nonconformist leaders. No doubt; and so there would be a general agreement among burglars that the police force should be disbanded. But why did not the government, with its loudly expressed sympathy for labor, consider the enormous vote of the Trades Union Congress in favor of secular education? Why not consider the real educationalists of the country who are in favor of secular education? The truth is, that if we possessed a government of any genuine strength of conviction, and one that dared to appeal to the country on the question, it is well within the limits of political probability that a party would be returned pledged to sweep the priest—of all kinds—out of the people's schools.

Reading between the lines, and looking behind the scenes, so far as is possible, it seems highly probable that Churchmen and Nonconformists have been brought to an agreement

on this new compromise as much by a threat of secular education as by anything else. Doubtless, Mr. Runciman informed them, in substance, that this was their last chance, and if they could not agree upon some common policy of plunder, there would be nothing left save to turn honest—without the advantage of gaining credit by recounting their past misdeeds. And to act honestly towards the nation would be too great a departure for either Nonconformist or Churchman readily to take to. The late President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference said that he accepted the compromise because the only alternative was secular education. Sir John Randles, another Nonconformist, said he would "sooner see the country covered with Roman Catholic schools than see the schools without religion." Any kind of religion does for this gentleman, so long as it is a religion. Another Nonconformist leader supports the compromise because "neither party secures a seriously preponderating advantage"—thus reducing the work of education to a mere religious sectarian fight. The *British Weekly* supports the Bill, but adds, that "no measure will ever do Free Churchmen justice which is not a measure of secular education." With this we quite agree; it would give justice, not only to Free Churchmen, but to all Churchmen and to no Churchmen. We need only add that Free Churchmen will not quickly get justice, nor will they deserve it, until they learn to act with some degree of elementary honesty towards the community at large.

The almost utter want of governing principle in Nonconformist councils is shown by the resolution which governs the proceedings of the Special Education Committee appointed by the Wesleyan Conference. This resolution affirms the necessity of a national system of education free from denominational restrictions and especially from the imposition of ecclesiastical tests upon teachers. But it urges that simple Bible instruction should be provided for, with reasonable facilities for religious instruction. That is, we are to have a national system in which the money of all pays for the religion of some; while the State is to collect the children, provide the meeting-place, and then invite the parson in to do his work. There are to be no tests for teachers, but they are to give simple Bible instruction, which involves a test either of an open or of a surreptitious character. Dr. Facing-both-ways Macnamara said, on the second reading debate, that he supported the Bill—contracting out included—because it gave the teacher the power to decline even Cowper-Temple teaching. As an ex-teacher, Dr. Macnamara knows the utter emptiness of such a claim. A teacher who did decline to give Cowper-Temple teaching would be a marked man or woman, and his or her place would soon be made intolerable. So long as there is any religion in the schools, so long will there be tests for teachers. No one knows this better than Dr. Macnamara. We should like, if we could get it, Mr. Yoxall's private opinion on the value of this testimony offered by the accommodating Dr. Mac.

One aspect of the situation is well hit off by "Historicus" in the *Methodist Times*. He imagines an inhabitant of ancient Athens dropping in amongst us, and asking questions about the education controversy. After being told certain things, the visitor says:—

"But I thought you said it was an Education Bill." "Yes, it is." "But you have said nothing about education; these proposals are entirely concerned with religion. Why is it called an Education Bill? I should call it the Religious Squabbles Bill." "Well, we are not much interested in education, except in regard to the religious controversies to which it gives rise." "What a religious people you must be! How crowded your churches must be on Sundays!" "No; the more the priests and parsons fight about the children, the emptier the churches are." "I am not so greatly surprised at that. Do you expect anything different to happen?" "No, I don't, but the priests and parsons seem to do so." And I can imagine the ancient sage depart, sorrowful and puzzled, muttering, "What queer people these Northern barbarians are!"

Strong for a Methodist paper!

The Rev. Dr. Warschauer says that "unbelief is a deadly thing." We agree with him; it is deadly to reverence for sermons, to hymn-singing, and to church and chapel-going; it is deadly to the practice of praying to imaginary beings, to reliance upon supernatural guidance, and to the hope that the wrongs of earth will be swept away in heaven. But we maintain that the death of such things is a distinct gain to human life, in that it helps to concentrate attention on the things that really matter. We confidently challenge Dr. Warschauer to prove that unbelief in the supernaturalism of Christianity is deadly to any vital human interests.

Equally silly and worthless is the reverend gentleman's argument for immortality. "Love is life," he says, "and

its denial is death." Metaphorically speaking, that is doubtlessly true; but in point of fact love exists only as a relation between living beings. To say that the Christian life is "a life which by its quality knows itself to be deathless," is to talk nonsense, because Dr. Warschauer knows as well as we do that Christians die like other people, and that there is no evidence whatever that this mental life survives the death of their bodies. There is no sense in the assertion that Christians are *conscious* of immortality. A man might as well say that he is conscious of the life believed to exist on the planet Saturn.

An American negress has reached the great age of 125; and in recording the fact a religious journal makes the pious but ludicrous observation that probably she would not have lived so long had she not been a Christian.

"Thou knowest all things, O Lord," said a distinguished preacher at the beginning of a ten minutes' prayer the other Sunday night. The rest of the eloquent oration poured into the Divine ears consisted of a long series of direct contradictions of that introductory statement. Among other things, the All-knower was informed that we of Great Britain are the finest people on earth. The German Emperor was probably praying at the same hour, and doubtless he supplied the Heavenly Majesty with the same information on behalf of the German nation. Between the two prayers, and a million other conflicting testimonies, how hopelessly confused and muddled God must have felt before he retired that Sunday night!

Mr. R. J. Campbell thinks that "it is no exaggeration to say, There is no will that is not God's will." Then why on earth does the Christian pulpit exist? What need is there for a Divine Savior? If God is supreme, why is man treated as a guilty rebel, and why is he urged by a million preachers to come to terms with his Maker? If Campbellism is true, Christianity must be false. Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom are two absolutely irreconcilable and mutually destructive ideas.

"The forces of the past described by scientists in the theory of evolution are known by us to be wielded by the God of heaven," triumphantly declares the Rev. Dr. Newton Marshall. We declare that Dr. Marshall *knows* that his claim to such knowledge is spurious. He does not even know that there is a God at all. He is a *believer*, and not a *knower*; and so many beliefs have had to be renounced because growing knowledge shows them to be the opposite of true.

Mr. Bernard Shaw attended a book exhibition at Liverpool and made a speech. A report of it appeared in the *Manchester Courier*, but whether it is accurate or not we do not know. Mr. Shaw appears to be misreported nearly every time he opens his mouth. Still, the *Manchester Courier* is a journal of good reputation, and one passage in the report is really too good, in its way, to be invented. After referring to Dickens and Ruskin, "G. B. S." proceeded to deal with another author, whose name is familiar, but whose address is not ascertainable. This is what he said:—

"The Bible was wonderful literature, and one of the most remarkable happenings in England had been the re-discovery of the Bible, with its extraordinary fascination of language. If people would only study the Bible they would learn everything that was to be learnt about literature. For instance, the Psalms were some of the most beautiful literature that existed, and so were the prophecies of Isaiah from the point of view of music."

We are loth to believe that Mr. Shaw said all this. But there it stands in the report, and it goes before the world on his authority. For that reason we make it the subject of a few comments.

It is not true that the Bible will teach a man all that is to be learnt about literature. It has merits, and sometimes great merits, from a literary point of view, but it is lacking in intellectual power, and almost entirely devoid of wit and humor. Perhaps that is why Mr. Shaw is so fond of it. Men often fall in love with their opposites, and it is not unnatural that the witty and tricky "G. B. S." should prefer something sober and solemn. In the same way, a servant girl won't read *Liza of Lambeth* or *Tales of Mean Streets*; she prefers to follow the fortunes of a persecuted lady of title, who comes out all right in the end, and marries the handsome and high-born hero, over six feet high, very dark, with a heavy moustache, and a military bearing. It is the West End people who read stories of East End life, and *vice versa*.

Mr. Shaw would find it difficult to explain how the Bible helped him to write his plays. We suppose he considers

them literature. What wrinkles did he get from Holy Writ? "We pause for a reply."

We infer that Mr. Shaw has recently taken to reading the Bible. Probably he did not make its acquaintance in his youth, and had the idea it was something like the Thirty-Nine Articles, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or Torrey's discourses. We do not wonder, in that case, at his astonishment. For it contains poetry and pathos and music—side by side, of course, with a lot of inferior matter.

Mr. Shaw is bound to make people stare. He blandly remarked—no doubt as a successful dramatist—that "the English nation had given up going to church and had taken to going to the theatre." He even suggested that "the theatre might take the place of the church." Very likely. But how will this please the good Christians who are delighted at Mr. Shaw's praise of the Bible? What he gives with one hand he takes back with the other. He fondles the left side of the orthodox face and smacks the right. But he is "G. B. S." When you have said that you have said all.

Apart from other expenses incidental to the sport, the people of this country spend on golf balls alone as much as they contribute to the support of foreign missions. Our authority for this statement is the Rev. R. F. Horton, who is greatly scandalised at such a state of affairs. The discovery came to him as a "great shock," and he points out that, if people were only self-denying to the extent of doing without golf, the coffers of the missionary societies would be filled to overflowing. A pertinent reply to such a desire is in the words of an old saying, "Don't you wish you may get it!" And the users of golf balls might safely challenge Dr. Horton to prove that as much good would be done by the money if it were given to Foreign Missions instead of being expended as at present.

There is a "crisis" in the foreign missions of the Church of Scotland and the Glasgow Presbytery has appointed a day of prayer in connection with it. The Lord will be asked to come to the rescue. He won't.

Glasgow Presbytery has also appointed a Temperance Sunday. What they want in Glasgow is a Temperance Saturday. They have Sunday Closing already.

A grave and solemn Consistory Court has been sitting at St. Paul's Cathedral to settle the great problem of what should be done with a "holy" table in All Angels' Church, Bromley. The vicar, as a High Churchman, was very proud of his ritualistic table, but there were objections to it, and the Court ordered its removal within two months. No doubt the vicar and his friends will be able to shift it in that time, even if it be as heavy as the Thirty-nine Articles. But just fancy the "only true religion" eventuating in a fight over a piece of furniture—two thousand years after Christ! Could there be a greater sarcasm?

The vicar in this case soon ran foul of the solicitor on the other side, and referred to him as "pettifogging little lawyer." "This is rather strong language," the solicitor said, "but I'm used to it from clergymen."

The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury gives wonderfully strong meat to the people who throng the Lyceum Theatre on Sunday evenings. On a recent occasion, he was sufficiently audacious to assure them that a man is greater and more important even than a church. What a bold, original idea. Even Shakespeare, in his grandest flights, never surpassed that. No wonder the Lyceum is so uncomfortably crowded. Here is another gem from the same discourse. Though a man is greater than a church, he must not imagine that he is at liberty to live as he likes: he is God's property. The Deity has bought him with a great price, and he exists in the world for his owner's glory. Well, if the owner is to be judged by what he holds, the glory God gets from man is but a poor certificate of character. On Mr. Rattenbury's own showing, the majority of men disown their alleged proprietor, for the one appeal of the sermon was, "Acknowledge your Master, bow to your Owner, give glory to your Lord."

A little girl, in a strictly Sabbatarian home, asked one day, "Mamma, is there Sunday in heaven also?" The mother answered, "Certainly, my child; in heaven it's Sunday every day." The dear little thing sighed heavily, and said sadly, "Mamma, I would rather play in hell."

Rev. James Witherspoon, B.D., has been discoursing at Hawick on "The Use and Abuse of Strong Drink." He argued that temperance people had done good work, but they too often left one form of excess and were drawn into another. The left wing of the temperance movement advocated tyranny in the garb of freedom. "What was wanted," the reverend gentleman said, "was regeneration, relying upon God, and communion with his Spirit." We hope this doesn't mean Scotch.

Dr. Cosmo Lang has been appointed Archbishop of York, with an income, we believe, of £10,000 a year. Speaking at Bradford a few days afterwards, he said "it was indeed a great delight to be once again in Yorkshire." No doubt—at the price.

Dr. Lang went on to speak of "Christian Brotherhood." Capital! One good Christian with £27 8s. a day and another with no pay and no rations. This is brotherhood! Yes, the brotherhood of Cain and Abel.

The last Thursday in November is Thanksgiving Day in the United States. Every patriot eats turkey and washes it down with his favorite beverage. He also reads the President's pious proclamation. Retiring "Teddy" reminds them of the Almighty's blessing which they enjoy, and rather suggests that God himself ought to be proud of the prosperity of "the mightiest republic the world has ever seen." By *mightiest* we presume that "Teddy" simply means *biggest*. Some very interesting experiments are being worked out in the United States, but up to the present nothing has come of them to startle the world—unless it be Millionaires, Trusts, and Lynchings. Athens and Rome still stand for much more than New York and Chicago. President Roosevelt may not think so, but he suffers from what Herbert Spencer called "the patriotic bias."

Mr. Allen Baker, M.P., speaking at Dr. Clifford's tabernacle, gave a list of the books that had most influenced the life of his friend, Mr. John Burns. They were (1) the *Pilgrim's Progress*, (2) *Robinson Crusoe*, (3) Shakespeare's plays, (4) Bacon's *Essays*, (5) John Stuart Mill's writings, (6) Wilson's *Tales of the Border*. What a pity they couldn't drag in the Bible! They would have been glad to hang that book round John's neck.

Two Christians—Mr. F. J. Jannaway, Christadelphian, and Rev. R. E. G. Swann, Congregationalist—held a public debate at the Horns Assembly Hall, Brixton, on Socialism. The former argued that Christianity was opposed to Socialism; the latter argued that Christianity *was* Socialism. How the Christians agree after nearly two thousand years! They are all at loggerheads as to what Christianity *is*. Even that isn't settled yet; in fact, it is less settled than ever.

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., strikes so many people at times as a bit of a "bounder." Speaking at the Institute of Journalists the other day, he referred to his own journalistic days, and of the possibility of returning to the old occupation, and then said that "he believed there was no country in the world in which the work of the journalist was carried out with less prejudice, greater honesty, or more conscientiousness than in Great Britain." Now this is all blarney. The less said about honesty in connection with British journalism the better. We quite agree with Dr. Macnamara that British journalists have little "prejudice." They write anything they are paid for. The "glorious free press" is free to that extent.

Some of the New Theology advocates have suffered persecution—at the hands of their fellow Christians. Rev. R. J. Campbell deprecates this fact. So do we. But we also deplore the fact that Mr. Campbell and his New Theology friends see Freethinkers persecuted with the utmost composure. Look at Birmingham, for instance. The Secularists there are driven from pillar to post by the city authorities, and no "liberal" Christian lifts a finger to help them.

Rev. J. Scott Lidgett's friends seem bent on developing his attack of swelled head. A Christian weekly comes out with the heading, "Mr. Lidgett and the Peers." What on earth do the Peers care for Mr. Lidgett?

Mr. J. A. Mott, from America, says that Korea is vibrating with the Holy Ghost. It would be more to the purpose if Mr. Mott could report that America is vibrating with the Holy Ghost.

"Dying, with the flowers," says "J. B." of the *Christian World*, "is to be etherealised, to have their life concen-

trated, lifted to a higher power." There is something radically wrong here. In what sense can "etherealised" life be spoken of as "concentrated" and "lifted to a higher power"? The death of even a flower means dissolution, dissipation, and *loss* of concentrated power. Death is a return to the state that preceded life. It is the very height of absurdity, therefore, to found an argument for man's personal immortality on what is palpably a false interpretation of death in Nature. Whatever immortality the flower inherits, this man, doubtless, shares; but this is an absolutely different thing from the immortality taught by the Churches.

Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan has every reason to be proud of himself. Verily, he can, and does perform miracles, in comparison with which the raising of Lazarus sinks into insignificance. With such convincing eloquence did he expound the contents of the Gospels the other day, that one hearer went away repeating Rudolf Aricola's words: "The Holy Scriptures are as much exalted above all possibility of error as the God who caused them to be written." We agree. The author and his book are worthy of each other. Countless are the errors of both, history being our witness.

"Then it was that Jesus answered in that full round voice," etc. This is not a quotation from the New Testament, but from a sermon by the Rev. F. Y. Leggatt. And Mr. Leggatt is clearly a man who knows things. He not only knows what Jesus said, but the kind of voice in which he said it. A man whose knowledge extends thus far is beyond criticism. One can only listen and ask for more information—such as, Were all his teeth sound? Was he troubled with corns? We have no doubt Mr. Leggatt will be as well informed on these matters as he is concerning the quality of Jesus's voice.

In the name of the Prince of Peace, the Rev. Dr. David Smith justifies war as being "in the present imperfection of humanity a necessity, none the less a necessity that it is a hateful necessity." Is the Prince of Peace a fraud, then? If under him peace is not secured, what on earth is the good of having him? He has been the nominal ruler of Europe for fifteen hundred years, and yet Europe is just now in danger of being plunged into the most frightful and disastrous war in all history. Purely fictional is your Prince of Peace, Dr. Smith.

A Free Church minister admits that Nonconformists have one fault, namely, that they "are not yet a people intimate with Jesus Christ." If that is so, it is not from lack of talking about him. To listen to them, one would think they are more intimate with him than with anybody else in the universe. But according to the minister just quoted from, it is all idle talk, and nothing more. What is the explanation? Is it not that there is no Jesus Christ to be intimate with save in their own imagination? They do all the talking, all the courting, and all the pleading, while he acts as if he were deaf and dumb and non-existent. A one-sided intimacy is of no value whatever.

Thackeray tells of a lady who could never make up her mind whether Protestantism or Catholicism was the true religion. She left £15,000 to the Pope and £15,000 to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In sporting circles, we believe, this is called "hedging."

General Booth has been having another "triumphant tour" in Germany. The farther he is from England the better he appears to be pleased. His critics in this country are growing in number and importance. Mr. Manson's book is a terrible exposure—and the Trades Unions are on the great William's track. Why doesn't he convert the Kaiser and make fresh headquarters at Berlin? The two armies of the two Williams ought to conquer the world.

One thousand pounds has been offered in America to any Spiritualist or "psychic expert" who can tell, with closed eyes, by the aid of spirits or other occult powers, how many oranges are tipped out of a basket—the person holding the basket being blindfolded as well as the person who guesses at the number. The thousand pounds is not yet earned. "Test the spirits," says the New Testament. This is a good way of doing it.

Many people don't understand how prayer is answered, but the Rev. E. W. Lewis explains it in a Christian weekly. "Prayer," he says, "is like the exerting of special strains in that spiritual continuum in which we live and move and have our being as spirits; it must have a centrifugal effect; passing out from the I-centre to the You-centre; it must have a centripetal reaction, coming back on the I-centre from the whole." It's quite clear now.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended till New Year.)

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—December 6, Manchester. January 17, Belfast.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £282 7s. 8d. Received since.—James Davie, 15s.; G. Lunn, 10s.; W. J. Conroy, 3s.
- J. HARRIS.—H. Musgrave Reade was connected with the Manchester N. S. S. Branch in the early eighties, but he was never the important person he represents himself to have been. We had no personal recollection of him whatever, so you can guess how distinguished he was. He appears to have gone off into Socialist work, and he was apparently just as distinguished in that sphere. According to his own account, he "found Christ" in America, many years afterwards. We daresay he found something else too. He is evidently not altogether to be trusted. His account of the books he read in his infidel days is no doubt to a large extent imaginary. He speaks of his eagerly reading Strauss's *Life of Christ*—and there is no such book. He also represents Strauss as maintaining that "Christ was simply a myth, probably taken from the Hindu god Krishna." It is astonishing that responsible Christians countenance this sort of thing; or rather it would be astonishing if one did not know from history and experience what they are capable of in this line.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—What is the nature of the method you refer to? We note that your Cardiff friend found the only way he could get the *Freethinker* there was through the railway book-stall. Glad to hear he is taking three copies weekly and thanks you for sending him copies in the first instance. If each of our present readers could get us one new reader in 1909 it would be a grand thing all round.
- J. E. STYKS.—You will find the facts about Thomas Paine in our *Infidel Death-Beds*. The stuff you send us from *The Revival* is mere fiction. Stephen Grellet was a pious liar. His yarn concerning Mary Roscoe was investigated by William Cobbett, who called upon her some years afterwards, and found her a sly cunning female whom the Devil (as Cobbett said) would have hugged to his bosom. Cobbett lived and died a Christian, he had no sympathy with Paine's religious views, but he thought the truth was far preferable to lies, however they were meant for Christian edification.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- J. OLIVER.—We cannot agree with you that either the late F. W. Myers or the Psychological Research Society has adduced any real evidence of a future life. With those who believe on such evidence the wish must be father to the thought.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Cuttings received. Thanks.
- DAVID WATT.—We appreciate your gallant efforts to promote our circulation.
- H. PHILLIPS.—Pleased to hear you were so powerfully impressed by Mr. Foote's lectures in the Birmingham Town Hall. We have read the whole of your long letter with interest and encouragement. Don't be depressed by the thought that you can do so little for the cause; do what you can, and you will find happiness in doing it. We should be very glad, of course, if Freethought propaganda could be carried on in your district. Perhaps it may.
- J. ROBERTS.—That the miraculous wine at Cana was intoxicating is borne out by the text of the narrative. Archbishop Trench, in his book on *The Miracles of Our Lord*, plainly censures the "miserable objection" of those who cannot believe that Jesus created "so large and perilous a quantity" of real wine. Dr. F. A. Paley, in his classic work on *The Gospel of St. John*, says it was good wine—that is, fermented wine, and smiles at the Total Abstiners' explanation. The new edition of our *Bible and Beer* will be ready early in January.
- G. BRADFIELD.—Did you really expect to "draw" the Rev. R. J. Campbell? How could he reply to your letter without giving himself away?
- G. LUNN.—Glad you consider our articles on Mr. Wells's new book "a treat," also that you enjoyed our Sunday evening lecture.
- M. E. PROG.—Our paragraph ought to counterbalance the omission you refer to. Mr. Foote is "keeping well," but is feeling very tired just now, and is glad to have freedom from lecturing and travelling—especially travelling—before him in December.
- W. MANN.—Always glad to hear from you, as our readers are glad to see your contributions, which some value far more highly than you do yourself. Carlyle and the rest of them did not fight in vain. Never think it. The rotten "glorious free press" of to-day is doing much mischief, but it won't last for ever. The reaction against it has begun already.
- R. M.—Thanks for cuttings. We particularise as far as possible. It would be a terrible work to do as you suggest in every such paragraph. You will find a good deal of the information you seek in our two pamphlets, *Will Christ Save Us?* and *Christianity and Progress*.
- KINGS LYNN.—We cannot spend our time at the heels of insignificant C. E. S. lecturers. You say that they say nasty things

about the N. S. S. We know they do. They never say anything else.

T. WOODS.—It is a way that Protestants have. They nearly all confuse the Virgin Birth with the Immaculate Conception. Perhaps we may take your hint and deal with "G. K. C." too.

W. SUTCLIFFE.—The colored speaker who found hospitality at the house of Ingersoll, when he could get shelter for the night nowhere else in the city, was Fred Douglas, the famous negro orator. He mentions the incident in his Autobiography. Your suggestion *re* tributes to Ingersoll, including Gladstone's, shall be considered.

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

SECULAR EDUCATION.**A Great Demonstration in London.**

IT is at once my duty and my pleasure to invite the London readers of the *Freethinker* to attend a Demonstration against the new Education Bill, and in favor of Secular Education, at the fine new St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street (near Oxford-circus), on Thursday evening, December 10, at 8 p.m. This meeting is being organised by the Secular Education League. The chair will be taken by Lord Weardale, the League's President; and the list of speakers, which may yet be added to, includes Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. J. Ramsey Macdonald, M.P., Mr. F. Maddison, M.P., Rev. George R. Hogg, Rev. Dr. J. Warschauer, and Mr. G. W. Foote. This is a good representative list of speakers, which ought to command respect and attention.

We must have a crowded hall that night. Readers of this journal should do their best to make that certain. Even if some friends of Secular Education cannot get in, their loss will be a gain to the cause, for it will show the falsity of the common statement that the supporters of the "secular solution" are only a handful.

All seats, of course, will be free, and there will be a collection towards expenses. The doors will open at 7.30.

These are all the necessary facts. I shall not be able to state them again to any advantage, as next week's *Freethinker* will not be out in time to be of much use in advertising the Demonstration.

The Secular Education League has also issued a Manifesto in regard to the new Education Bill. It is out in time to be reproduced in this week's *Freethinker*. Copies of it for judicious distribution can be obtained at the League's office. Applications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. Harry

Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand. Provincial friends, of course, as well as London friends, may make use of the Manifesto.

What I have to say in conclusion is short and simple. Let us have a grand Demonstration at St. James's Hall on December 10.

G. W. FOOTE,
President, National Secular Society.
Chairman, Secular Society, Limited.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had large and enthusiastic audiences at Liverpool on Sunday. Unfortunately the fine new hall in which he lectured was in the Irish Catholic quarter of the city, and as the admission was free a number of interrupters got into the afternoon meeting and uttered foolish and brutal remarks in a strong Hibernian accent. Mr. Foote put up with this as long as possible, in the hope that good-temper and forbearance would make them feel ashamed of themselves, but as they got worse instead of better he was obliged to call upon the stewards to do a little "removing." The evening meeting was comparatively quiet, but one loud-mouthed jack-in-the-box, who appeared to imagine that the lecture was a duet, had at last to be escorted outside. The overwhelming majority of the audience were quite sympathetic and cheered the lecturer very warmly. Mr. Martin presided in the afternoon and Mr. Roleffs in the evening. There were many questions but no formal discussion. Loud and general calls were given for a local Christian speaker at the back of the hall to come upon the platform. He seems to talk very freely about Mr. Foote in his absence, but in his presence was quite another matter, and the gentleman preferred to keep silent.

Mr. Foote has done with platform work for this year. He will try to cut down his arrears of other work during December. Unfortunately it is a very big pile.

Manchester "saints" will note that Mr. Cohen lectures twice to-day (Dec. 6) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road. All Saints. His subjects are attractive, and there should be very good meetings. We hope to hear a good report of them.

Mr. J. Partridge, the Birmingham Branch secretary, informs us that Mr. Cohen had a fine audience in the Town Hall on Sunday afternoon, and a splendid one at night. Both were very enthusiastic, and gave the lecturer a great reception. Mr. Davis's band played good music before each lecture, and won loud applause. The Branch members were highly pleased with the day's proceedings.

The West Ham Branch, having ceased occupancy of the Workman's Hall, where it held Sunday evening meetings last winter, has arranged to resume operations on the first Sunday in January in the lower Public Hall at Forest Gate. Sunday evening lectures will be continued there until the opening of the next outdoor campaign.

The American press gives attention to all movements. The English press gives attention to nothing that is in any way hostile to Church or Chapel. A Conservative paper is a Church paper, a Liberal paper is a Chapel paper. It is not surprising that no notice is taken of even the biggest Freethought meetings; meetings which, if they were more orthodox, would have columns devoted to them. We are glad, therefore, to see a good notice of the recent Stratford Town Hall meetings in the *New World*, a monthly advanced paper just started at Forest Gate. A wish is expressed that such meetings could be held at East Ham, Leyton, Ilford, etc.

Miss Vance was travelling in London the other day with a lady friend when she saw a gentleman wearing the N. S. S. new badge. Introductions took place, and the gentleman, though not a member of the Society, was able to take Miss Vance to a newsagent's shop and prove to her that he took six copies of the *Freethinker* every week for "pushing it round." Of course we are very glad to hear of such things. We also see that the new badge is really useful. Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, supplies badges at 2d. each, and less than that when Branches take more than six. Address: 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Postage for a single one is one penny. Same for six.

The New Education Bill.

A CRITICISM, A PROTEST, AND AN APPEAL.

BY

The Secular Education League.

THE history of recent attempts to deal with the Education question is not very creditable to English statesmanship. Within a few years Education Minister has succeeded Education Minister, and Education Bill has followed Education Bill. The first of these unhappy measures was extinguished by the House of Lords, and few mourners attended its funeral. The rest of them have been carried a certain way and then dropped by the Government itself. Another is now unceremoniously thrown aside, and a fresh Bill hastily introduced in its place. And this Bill is to be almost indecently hurried through the House of Commons.

The new Education Bill is blessed by "moderate" men of all parties. Whispers are abroad that the House of Lords is sure to let it pass. The nation is asked to accept it as embodying a policy of "peace." But the "moderate" men for the most part simply want to get rid of a question of which they are tired, and, while "peace" is an excellent thing in its way, it ought not to be celebrated over the grave of principles.

This so-called Education Bill, like all its immediate predecessors, is nothing but a Bill for adjusting ecclesiastical influence in the elementary schools. It represents the latest stage of the quarrel of religious sects for control of the nation's children. It formulates a temporary agreement amongst the leaders of the two largest religious parties, with a certain offer to the next largest to tempt it into the combination. There is Cowper-Templeism for the Nonconformists, and the Right of Entry and Contracting-out for the Anglicans and Catholics. All other sections of the community, with the possible exception of Wesleyans and Jews, are treated with absolute contempt. The Free Churches, the Church of England, and the Catholic Church are to share the bulk of the national spoil between them.

Cowper-Temple religious instruction, sometimes called Simple Bible Teaching, is firmly and completely established by this new Bill as the State Religion in elementary schools. This is the only religion to be paid for out of the public funds and taught through public machinery. It is to occupy the first three quarters of an hour every morning. The local option to include or exclude religious instruction, given by the Act of 1870, is entirely swept away. The Nonconformists' ideal has thus the primary place, and is so far triumphant. Yet the Nonconformists who are to secure the establishment of the religious teaching they favor in the State schools are the very persons who passionately condemn the establishment of any religion in a State Church, although attendance at church is optional, while attendance at school is compulsory.

There is the old shibboleth in the new Bill about "no tests for teachers." But as the Cowper-Temple religious instruction will have to be given by the teachers, unless they make themselves conspicuous by objecting, every sensible person understands what this "safeguard of conscience" is worth.

Voluntary schools, under this Bill, are expected to be generally taken over by the local education authorities. When they are not so taken over they will come under the contracting-out clauses. Where the Church of England, for instance, cannot afford to carry on its schools, or cannot carry them on successfully, so as to satisfy the Education Board, it will transfer them and fall back upon the "right of entry." This means that denominational religious teaching may be given two (or in practice five) mornings a week in provided schools to all children whose parents desire it. "No part of the cost" is to be borne by the authority, but the authority is to provide a suitable part of the school-house and have it "properly lighted, warmed, and cleaned." That

portion of the expense *must* fall upon the rate-payers. And it is evident that the State brings the children together in readiness for this dogmatic religious teaching.

The "right of entry" is a special endowment of the Anglican Church. It is an entirely new and extremely vicious policy. The schools will be invaded twice a week by outsiders, who will thrust aside the regular teachers, and give the children a denominational interpretation of their Bible lessons, which the teachers will have to be very careful not to disturb. No wonder the teachers are already in resolute revolt against this arrangement.

Teachers may "volunteer" to give the denominational instruction themselves. In that case, a proportionate part of their salary would be paid by the denomination, so that the teachers would have two employers and, indirectly, two paymasters, which, to say the least, is chaotic.

Under the contracting-out clauses the so-called Voluntary schools may continue, and fresh ones may come into existence. They will receive no support from rates, but a grant from the Board of Education of from forty-six shillings and sixpence to fifty-five shillings per scholar, according to the number on the register. In return for their supplemental contribution towards the cost of these schools the managers will have complete control over the religious education. Even the Conscience Clause is abolished as far as they are concerned.

Now, there is obviously no principle underlying this Bill. It is merely a clever effort to reconcile rival forces along the line of least resistance, in order to get some kind of Education Act placed upon the Statute Book, and clear a dangerous obstacle out of the path of the Ministry. No one can suppose for a moment that this is a final settlement, or one likely to last for a considerable time. Every old difficulty remains, and new difficulties are created. Nonconformists and Anglicans will both recover from the momentary betrayal of their opportunist leaders. Their rival ideals will soon be in conflict again. Catholics will not cease to chafe against the financial limitations imposed upon them by this Bill. Local quarrels over religious education will multiply. The teachers will do their utmost to obtain release from the awkward position they are to be placed in. All the elements exist of another fierce and bitter struggle in the no very distant future.

Why have Nonconformist leaders accepted the "right of entry," to which they declared they would never submit? Why have Anglican leaders accepted Cowper-Templeism, which they declared they loathed? Very largely, no doubt, because they are terrified at the growing demand for Secular Education. They are shaking hands for a while in presence of what they regard as a common enemy. But they will have to come to Secular Education in the end. There is no other way of peace. The final settlement of the education problem will necessarily have to rest upon a satisfactory principle. And what principle is there except the one which Secular Education offers?

As modern nations become more and more civilised they recognise that religion and citizenship must be separated, the former being left to individuals or voluntary associations, while the latter only is recognised as the concern of the State. Men of all religions and of none are citizens of the same nation, bearing its burdens, fighting its battles, promoting its interests, maintaining its dignity. Men of all religions and of none are free to enter Parliament and make the nation's laws. And the inevitable upshot of this is that the State must remain neutral in matters of religion, refusing to assist it or hinder it, to patronise it or discountenance it, leaving it to the animation of its own spirit and the pursuit of its own ends. This is the great principle of religious equality, and it logically involves Secular Education in the nation's schools. Not the teaching of Secularism, but the exclusion of *all* "isms," in the interest of concord and equity.

For these reasons it is to be hoped that the new Education Bill will not pass the House of Commons in anything like its present form. The friends of Secular Education, both outside and inside, should offer it uncompromising hostility; and, if it cannot possibly be defeated, they should do their utmost to minimise the advantages conferred upon the leading religious organisations, at the expense and in contempt of the rest of the people.

Anathema Marantha.

LOOKING through a bundle of old letters a few days ago, I came across the following historic document, which, besides being a bit of a curio, may serve to illustrate the beauty of Christian charity in operation, as well as indicate the Christian interpretation of the doctrine of human brotherhood:—

"Newcastle-on-Tyne,
Oct. 26, 1898.

DEAR BRO. BRYCE,—

In accordance with our custom I have to notify you that the Church in Gloucester Street, at its meeting on Oct. 9 withdrew from your fellowship on the ground of your continued absence. Our prayer is that the Lord in His gracious dealings towards you will open your mind to your responsibility toward Him in this matter.

On behalf of the Church,

W. M. BURNETT."

The Church in question was one of a federated group known as the "Churches of Christ," of which I had been a member for some years. Doctrinally, they differ very little from the majority of other sects, except that they do not employ paid clerics, the functions of the pulpit being fulfilled by its members. The regular weekly attendance at the "breaking of bread," which is the principal feature of the morning service, is considered an imperative obligation on all the members, which will account to the uninitiated for the seeming undue importance attached in the letter to "continued absence." These Churches were originally established in this country as the result of the efforts of an American of Scottish descent, named Alex Campbell, a propagandist religious reformer who had a large following in America. Although in many respects a remarkable man, contemporary American literature seems to know little of him, and perhaps his name will only be saved from oblivion by the fact of his having publicly debated with Robert Owen, the Secularist and pioneer of Socialism. The challenge to debate the truth of Christianity, which Robert Owen issued broadcast to the clergy of America, was accepted by Mr. Campbell when no cleric of an oncoming disposition was forthcoming. And while it must be admitted that his dialectical skill was superior to that of his opponent, the position of Mr. Owen was impregnable. The proposition laid down by this illustrious pioneer, that religion had ever been the source of hatred and strife among mankind, was too well supported by the facts of history; and the inference that "peace and goodwill among men" was impossible so long as it held sway over their life and thought, was a just and logical sequence. At the present day, when the abolition of slavery is claimed as a triumph of Christianity, it is worthy of note that while the efforts of Robert Owen for the physical and intellectual improvement of the work-people whom he employed were unprecedented in the social world, his religious opponent not only held slaves, but maintained that slavery was a divine institution and sanctioned by the teaching of the Bible.

Some time prior to the receipt of the above letter I had accidentally, or providentially, come into contact with an individual whose views of life and mode of thought were not only new to me, but were incomparably above my meagre conception and limited view of things. This casual meeting, which led to an intimate friendship, was an important epoch in my mental evolution; it was really the first time in

life that I had been privileged to enjoy the fellowship of a cultured mind. The principal interest for time and eternity had for me, up to that time, been centred in the term "soul," the welfare of which is the subject-matter of religion. But the cultivation of the *mind*, the higher life of thought, the claims of reason, the imperative teaching of science—these were things to which I was a stranger. My old friend's intellectual attainments, and his fearless treatment of religious ideas, were virtually a revelation to me. I had been nurtured amid the fear and gloom of Presbyterianism, and possessed that superstitious awe of the Supreme and his mysterious doings, which is reckoned as a virtue in believers of that dismal creed. It is a psychological truth that the mental habits and outlook inculcated in childhood stand as an obstacle to progress in every sphere of thought; but under such able tutorship the rigid formality in which I had previously lived and moved and had my being, began to thaw, and the hard exterior of my mental crust to become susceptible to the genial influences and enlightenment imparted by a superior mind. My final rejection of Christianity as a religion of supernatural origin did not take place until some few years later, and after my philosophic guide and counsellor had joined the great majority. I speak of him with feelings akin to reverence because his acquaintance was to me the introduction into a new world. He was a man of wide and varied experiences, not the least interesting of which, in connection with these reflections, is the fact that as a young man he had travelled with Robert Owen during his lecturing tours throughout England. The gospel of Secularism, of which he was a constant and zealous advocate, gradually began to appeal to me as of greater social and ethical importance than the religion which I had been taught was the "one thing needful."

It has often been pointed out, as well as illustrated by examples in the *Freethinker*, that the religious public are, in the main, strangers to *truth*, that they do not recognise the moral obligations of strict accuracy when the facts militate against their beliefs. The following incident will further illustrate this religious condition of mind; for, although I was a lay preacher of the gospel, it was from my old Secularist friend that I first learned the nature and beauty of Truth. I was, at the time of which I speak, a member also of a local Christian Evidence Society, established as the result of the efforts of a colored lecturer named Celestine Edwards. This gentleman was the editor of a C. E. paper with the luminous title of *Lux*, and I was deputed to report for its pages a debate that took place at Jarrow-on-Tyne between Mr. Charles Watts and a young man named Marchant. Showing this report, which was, of course, highly colored, after the manner of such religious productions, to my kindly tutor, he went through it sentence after sentence, invariably asking at the end, Is that *true*? As the result of such interrogation I was obliged to admit that little of the report was literally exact, and yet I sincerely thought I was doing God and the cause a service by imaginative exaggeration of the facts. I also, at the same time, was taught a lesson in courtesy which my religious bumptiousness was evidently much in need of. I had headed the report the "Marchant and Watts Debate," but, as my friend very gently pointed out, Mr. Watts being much the older man of the two and an experienced debater (it was, I think, his ninety-ninth debate), he was entitled to the preference in the order of names in the title. This may seem to the reader but a trivial circumstance, but it was one of the most effective lessons I was ever taught. In connection with another piece of work for the same paper, I remember an item of instruction in its columns, expressed in that respectful (!) language of which the C. E. lecturers' vocabulary seems to be mainly composed, to "Ferret out the Rats." I have not been altogether unmindful of that instruction during the years that have elapsed since, but the "rats" have been of a different species than the kind referred to by the editor of *Lux*.

It will be evident, I think, from the foregoing remarks that the "continued absence" which the letter gives as the ostensible cause of my excommunication from the Christian Church did not cover the entire "brunt of my offending." The old gospel of Christ and Him crucified was beginning to emerge with all its crudeness into the light of more modern thought, and the gradual concentration of my attention upon the affairs of this present evil world must have been reflected in my public addresses. It may be worth while to remark that, notwithstanding the claims of the latest Christianity as being a potent social influence, and alone standing for social righteousness, it is Secularism, and not religion, that has emphasised the importance of morality and social well-being, and materially strengthened the bonds of humanity by inculcating, on a rational basis, the spirit of human fellowship. Dr. Agar Beet recently alleged, in a lecture delivered at Gateshead, that the man with no religion was a step nearer to the brute. If the rev. gentleman had said that a man with no religion was a step nearer to *his fellow-men*—that one of the principal barriers to free human intercourse had thereby been removed, and a truly human fellowship made possible—he would have spoken truth. A man *with* religion, who believes, say, that hell is ten degrees cooler than his co-religionists hold (and one need go no further than Dr. Beet for an example), is ever liable to persecution for heresy by his brethren, and offered the alternatives of recantation or expulsion. And, provided a person has not the moral courage of an Agar Beet to "eat the leek," he is *Anathema Marantha*.

To the historical student, the letter above quoted will possess something more than a merely personal significance; he will recognise in it a modified form of the ancient BAN, that powerful ecclesiastical engine which the Romish Church in mediæval ages used with such disastrous effects. It survives in the Churches to which I have referred, under the name of "church discipline"; but in the present state of religious decay, and being socially obsolete, its exercise is a pure farce. The pious hope expressed in the letter, that the Lord in His gracious dealings would open the eyes of the present writer, can hardly be credited with that sincerity which is the handmaid of truth. But, nevertheless, the prayer has been wonderfully answered. It is a common sentiment among religious people that the Lord often answers prayer in a way quite different from what the petitioners expect. And so it has been in the present instance. The mental spittle and clay which the Lord has manipulated in the mind-opening process has been mostly derived from the pages of the much-abused and misrepresented *Freethinker*—so true it is that

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

The *Anathemas* of the Christian Church have not only lost their sting, but she is now anxious to make compromises with living "reverent" Agnostics, and even arch-heretics like Charles Bradlaugh—when they are dead. But an institution that tolerates the Smyth-Pigotts, while it regards intellectual honesty and moral health as of secondary importance compared to the mumbling of worn-out religious shibboleths, is only worthy of the contempt and scorn of self-respecting citizens and lovers of intellectual freedom and moral progress.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

The Christian Religion.—V.

BY COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

(Concluded from p. 757.)

III.

So far as we know, man is the author of all books. If a book had been found on the earth by the first man he might have regarded it as the work of God; but as men were here a good while before any books were found, and as man has produced a great many books, the probability is that the Bible is no exception.

Most nations, at the time the Old Testament was written, believed in slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution; and it is not wonderful that the book contained nothing contrary to such belief. The fact that it was in exact accord with the morality of its time proves that it was not the product of any being superior to man. "The inspired writers" upheld or established slavery, countenanced polygamy, commanded wars of extermination, and ordered the slaughter of women and babes. In these respects they were precisely like the uninspired savages by whom they were surrounded. They also taught and commanded religious persecution as a duty, and visited the most trivial offences with the punishment of death. In these particulars they were in exact accord with their barbarian neighbors. They were utterly ignorant of geology and astronomy, and knew no more of what had happened than of what would happen, and, so far as accuracy is concerned, their history and prophecy were about equal; in other words, they were just as ignorant as those who lived and died in nature's night.

Does any Christian believe that if God were to write a book now, he would uphold the crimes commanded in the Old Testament? Has Jehovah improved? Has infinite mercy become more merciful? Has infinite wisdom intellectually advanced? Will anyone claim that the passages upholding slavery have liberated mankind; that we are indebted for our modern homes to the texts that made polygamy a virtue; or that religious liberty found its soil, its light, and rain in the infamous verse wherein the husband is commanded to stone to death the wife for worshipping an unknown god?

The usual answer to these objections is that no country has ever been civilised without the Bible.

The Jews were the only people to whom Jehovah made his will directly known,—the only people who had the Old Testament. Other nations were utterly neglected by their Creator. Yet, such was the effect of the Old Testament on the Jews, that they crucified a kind, loving, and perfectly innocent man. They could not have done much worse without a Bible. In the crucifixion of Christ, they followed the teachings of his Father. If, as is now alleged by the theologians, no nation can be civilised without a Bible, certainly God must have known the fact six thousand years ago, as well as the theologians know it now. Why did he not furnish every nation with a Bible?

As to the Old Testament, I insist that all the bad passages were written by men; that those passages were not inspired. I insist that a being of infinite goodness never commanded man to enslave his fellow-man, never told a mother to sell her babe, never established polygamy, never ordered one nation to exterminate another, and never told a husband to kill his wife because she suggested the worshipping of some other God.

I also insist that the Old Testament would be a much better book with all of these passages left out; and, whatever may be said of the rest, the passages to which attention has been drawn can with vastly more propriety be attributed to a devil than to a god.

Take from the New Testament all passages upholding the idea that belief is necessary to salvation; that Christ was offered as an atonement for the sins of the world; that the punishment of the human soul will go on forever; that heaven is the reward of faith, and hell the penalty of honest investigation; take from it all miraculous stories,—and I admit that all the good passages are true. If they are true, it makes no difference whether they are inspired or not. Inspiration is only necessary to give authority to that which is repugnant to human reason. Only that which never happened needs to be substantiated by miracles. The universe is natural.

The Church must cease to insist that the passages upholding the institutions of savage men were inspired of God. The dogma of the atonement must be abandoned. Good deeds must take the place of faith. The savagery of eternal punishment must be renounced. Credulity is not a virtue, and investigation is not a crime. Miracles are the children of mendacity. Nothing can be more wonderful than the majestic, unbroken, sublime, and eternal procession of causes and effects.

Reason must be the final arbiter. "Inspired" books attested by miracles cannot stand against a demonstrated fact. A religion that does not command the respect of the greatest minds will, in a little while, excite the mockery of all. Every civilised man believes in the liberty of thought. Is it possible that God is intolerant? Is an act infamous in man one of the virtues of the Deity? Could there be progress in heaven without intellectual liberty? Is the freedom of the future to exist only in perdition? Is it not, after all, barely possible that a man acting like Christ can be saved? Is a man to be eternally rewarded for believing according to evidence, without evidence, or against evidence? Are we to be saved because we are good, or because another was

virtuous? Is credulity to be winged and crowned, while honest doubt is chained and damned?

Do not misunderstand me. My position is that the cruel passages in the Old Testament are not inspired; that slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution always have been, are, and forever will be, abhorred and cursed by the honest, the virtuous, and the loving; that the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, and that vicarious vice and vicarious virtue are equally absurd; that eternal punishment is eternal revenge; that only the natural can happen; that miracles prove the dishonesty of the few and the credulity of the many; and that, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, salvation does not depend upon belief, nor the atonement, nor a "second birth," but that these gospels are in exact harmony with the declaration of the great Persian: "Taking the first footstep with the good thought, the second with the good word, and the third with the good deed, I entered paradise."

The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart. While dusty faiths, embalmed and sepulchered in ancient texts, remain the same, the sympathies of men enlarge; the brain no longer kills its young; the happy lips give liberty to honest thoughts; the mental firmament expands and lifts; the broken clouds drift by; the hideous dreams, the foul misshapen children of the monstrous night, dissolve and fade.

On the New Education Bill.

A SONNET.

THE priests of all the churches have once more
Demanded all our children from the State,
That they the little ones may teach to hate
True knowledge, and to love the sickly lore
That priests and morbid women still adore
As holy truth: the while they falsely prate
Of how Sectarian strife shall soon abate—
Of what sweet peace for England is in store.

O for the stinging whip of bold Voltaire!—
Brave Bradlaugh's bitter skill and angry zeal,
To drive from out the School and from the Land
These churchmen. Friends of Freethought every—
Your children make their innocent appeal: [where,
Will ye for Truth advance with sword in hand?

JULIAN ST. OREY.

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, when he speaks on religion, is as extravagant and irresponsible as any person. Addressing a crowd at the City Temple the other evening, he said of Christ that, "face to face with his compelling God-likeness no man or woman had the power to resist" his appeals. And yet after a three years' strenuous ministry this irresistible God-man had about a hundred and twenty disciples. According to the Gospels, the Jews did most successfully resist both the person and the teaching of the Galilean. According to Mr. Jerome, Christ had only to look upon people, and "at once the Christ within them leapt up to embrace him." "It is so always," added the novelist. In point of fact, it is not so, it never was so, and it never will be so. Mr. Jerome was treating his audience to pure and undiluted fiction.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOV. 26.

THE President in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, C. Bowman, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Leat, Dr. Nichols, J. Neate, C. Quinton, R. Rossetti, V. Roger, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, T. J. Thurlow, E. R. Woodward, and the Secretary.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, monthly cash statement adopted.

The President reported his attendance with Mr. Cohen at the meetings of the Secular Education League, and that a demonstration had been arranged at St. James's Hall, Gt. Portland-street, W., on Thursday, December 10, when all Freethinkers were invited to be present.

Several routine matters in connection with the Propaganda were dealt with, and the Secretary reported that the sale of the new Badge had been exceedingly good, and there were already many instances of it having helped Freethinkers, hitherto strangers, to recognise each other.

The meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

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.

WOOD GREEN (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "The New India."

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.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Lennard, "The Religion of Humanity."

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Corn Exchange, Market-place): 7.30, Ogiyatekha, a native of North America, "Pagan Iroquois: A Study of the Laws, Customs, and Beliefs of the North American Indian." Preceded by musical selections.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, "Hymnology." Thursdays, at 8, Discussion Classes.

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Miss L. Williamson, "The Ethics of Womans' Suffrage."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward, 12 noon, "Does Evolution Destroy Religion?" 6.30, "Marriage and Divorce: An Atheist View."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Tate's Dining Hall, Vicar-lane, next door to Lee's Hall): 8, W. Hynes, "Catholicism, Past and Present."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Buildings, 113 Islington): 7, A. G. Easley, "The Mis-alliance of Christianity and Socialism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen, 3, "The Vice of Christian Virtue"; 6.30, "Man and the Universe: Science, Faith, and God." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, December 10, at 8, G. T. Shyver, "The Domestic Policy of France."

OUTDOOR.

DALKEITH (High-street): Saturday, December 5, at 7, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Mound, at 7, a Lecture.

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