

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

What shall I gain, you say, if I do this thing bravely or that readily? To have done it, I reply; no further promise is held out to you.—SENECA.

Clutching at Straws.

“Drowning men clutch at straws.”—PROVERB

MR. ASQUITH delivered the funeral oration over the Education Bill. It was the fourth of the family, and they all died young. No wonder the orator was very serious. He was even solemn. Some people say he was lugubrious. He shed tears over the grave of the unhappy bantling, and he consoled most mournfully with its “only begetter.” Mr. Runciman is conforming to the tradition of his office; every Minister of Education, of late, has had to bury a Bill; nevertheless, he may have shared his chieftain's grief to a certain extent, for every man is more or less proud of his own production, even if it be “a poor thing but mine own.” Yes, we can conceive that Mr. Runciman dropped one tear into the Premier's pool, but we are much deceived if any other member of the House of Commons was able to show a suspicion of moisture. We have to go to Shakespeare for an appropriate quotation. Probably nine at least out of every ten members, even amongst those who voted for the second reading of the Bill, felt that “The tears lie in an onion that should water this grief.”

Such is the doom of the Liberal policy in regard to Education, and indeed it deserved no better fate. We all know that men of principle have to make compromises, sometimes for the sake of peace, and sometimes for their very lives; and statesmen of principle are subject to the same necessity. But the Liberals have had no intellectual or moral policy in any of these Education Bills. They frankly disavowed all principles. They laid themselves out on “compromise.” They made *that* their principle. It was a miserable affectation of statesmanship. It has failed, and failed ignominiously. The Government had far better have failed in fighting for a bold and honorable policy. A brave beaten warrior commands respect, but if he be timid, and vacillating, and self-hypnotised against using his full strength, no one pities his broken sword.

One party in England, and it is a far larger party than is generally imagined, will regard the fate of the newest Education Bill with anything but dismay. The friends of Secular Education may rejoice. It has been proved once more that the Churches cannot agree amongst themselves over the problem of religious education in elementary schools—even in the presence of the common enemy, who is visibly growing in power and self-confidence. They persist in quarreling over the division of the spoil, and there is a good deal of satisfaction in that; for when certain people fall out, certain other people have a chance of coming by their own. Thus the uncompromising rivalry of the religious sects brings Secular Education nearer as a practical policy; nay, as the *only* policy, since there is obviously no other way of peace and final settlement.

This was apparent to the *Daily News* on Saturday morning, December 5,—the day after Mr. Asquith's

announcement that the Education Bill would be dropped. Perhaps it will not be so apparent on Saturday morning, December 12. For the dear *Daily News* has found and lost salvation so many times on this question before. But this is what the political organ of the Nonconformist Conscience said then:—

“We can see no way out but the abandonment of religious teaching altogether. It is a hard saying, for it will mean that large numbers of children, perhaps the great majority, will grow up without the elements of the faith which the country professes, however little we may practise it. They will be cut off not only from one of the most important influences in our history and literature, but from the sense, however dim, of the spiritual aims and forces that lie behind the common knowledge and interests of the everyday world. The simple Bible teaching provided as much as most children can understand of spiritual things.....But, for better or worse, we suppose the ‘Cowper-Temple’ teaching will go with the rest, and all schools on a national basis will become ‘secular,’ the religious teaching being set apart for private enterprise and care.”

Our dear old contemporary has its nose again in the right direction—if it could only keep there. Its frame of mind, however, is neither sane nor respectable. It throws all the blame of what some are grandiosely calling the “catastrophe” upon the wicked Churchmen. It cannot recognise that Nonconformists were in the least degree at fault. These religionists are so full of sweetness and light; they have all the virtues, while the vices are distributed amongst other denominations. *They* do not want their own way, like Anglicans and Catholics. Far from it. They are so reasonable and accommodating that they were perfectly satisfied with having one half the elementary schools in England under their own thumbs, with the other half gradually drifting into the same position. It was the “priests” of the old Churches that made all the mischief. Not only did they wreck the Education Bill, but they have brought the country within measurable distance of Secular Education. The dear *Daily News* sees it—and deplors it. Not for a moment does our melancholy contemporary see that every Nonconformist who is true to his principles—namely, that Religion and the State should be kept entirely separate—ought to be in favor of Secular Education. It drops principle in the presence of business. It yearns over the poor children who may grow up without a knowledge of the Christian faith; in other words, who may miss the preliminary training for future members of Nonconformist congregations. Could anything be more ignominious? It is a confession that at least a hundred thousand ministers of religion in this country, with the command of vast organisations and a huge income of some twenty millions a year, cannot provide even a modicum of Christian teaching for the children of England—not even with the good wishes and assistance of the great majority of their parents.

The *Daily News* perceives that Secular Education is coming, and is conscious that it will extinguish the privileges of all the Churches, including those which facetiously call themselves “Free.” But in spite of that consciousness it makes a frantic appeal for a little illegitimate consideration. “We believe,” it says, “that most supporters of ‘secular’ education would be willing to accept a prayer or hymn and

a passage from the Bible at the beginning of school." Our contemporary's dose of religious teaching is to be insinuated on the ground that, like the young woman's inconvenient baby, it is a very small one. "For God's sake," it cries, "let us look in somewhere." But the answer of the Secular Educationist is—*Nowhere*. Separation is separation. Religion and the State are to be divorced. That is, sooner or later, the rule in every civilised community. But the Nonconformist organ shrinks from this conclusion. It wants an incomplete separation. The divorced parties are to come together occasionally. The *Daily News* suggests five mornings a week.

It is high time that this sort of nonsense ceased. Secular Education means Secular Education. Dr. Clifford had to face this fact when the Secular Education League was forming. He said that he could not join the League because he was for Secular Education *plus* the Bible—which is *plus* all the religion he cares for. We told him at the time, and we tell his friends now, that Secular Education *plus* the Bible is like soda-water *plus* whiskey. The latter is not teetotalism, and the former is not "the secular solution." The *Daily News* will have to reconcile itself to the fact that the battle of Secular Education has to be fought to a finish.

G. W. FOOTE.

Notes on a Future Life.

ON November 29 I lectured at Birmingham, taking for my evening subject "What is Man's Chance of a Future Life?" The conditions under which the Town Hall is let for public meetings precludes the usual discussion at the close of the lecture, although there is an opportunity for asking questions. As the local Branch of the N. S. S. does not make the conditions of tenancy, it is freed from all responsibility, and consequently it is not against the N. S. S. that any member of the audience need feel any grievance. Nor, indeed, is the absence of discussion wholly regrettable. One so seldom meets nowadays an opponent who has something worth saying, that often the effect of a long speech is marred by one or two irresponsible and irrelevant chatterers at the close of the meeting. Still, a sensible opponent *may* be present, and so the door is always kept open for this intelligent critic of Freethought, who of late years seems to have quite overlooked our address.

This absence of discussion has served as the occasion for a rather lengthy letter from a member of my audience, who explains that he would much rather have dealt with the subject on the spot. As he could not do so, he has put his criticisms into writing, which, after reading, I also regret were not put before the meeting. Not that there is anything new in the criticism, but it is clearly and, so far, well put, and thus would have served the purpose for which discussion was intended. As I have no desire, however, to avoid criticism, I deal here with the main points of my critic's objections, merely summarising his points for the sake of brevity, and omitting one or two points that seem to me irrelevant.

First of all I am asked, did I really mean, as I said, that the question of a future life was one of intrinsic unimportance, and on what grounds could I justify the statement that I saw nothing ennobling in the conception of immortality?

Now I am well aware that it is a common practice with believers in a future life, and also with many unbelievers, to preface their remarks with much talk of the importance of the doctrine, but for many reasons I do not agree with them. To begin with, the validity of the belief in a future life is primarily a question of fact. Is it true? If the answer is in the affirmative, then the importance that attaches itself to the discovery of truth in other directions holds good here. Evidence for it has been sought for thousands of years, but none has been found. Arguments in its behalf have been continually used,

and have never satisfied anyone who did not already believe. So far as we can see, it is a mere blind faith, with no better support than the desire of some people to retain it. But if there is a future life, it is either true of all or of none. If immortality be a fact, then there will be enough to go round. If it is inherent in human nature, the fool and the genius, the good and the bad, will all share in it. It will come to all; we cannot escape it; and there is surely more important work in the world than consuming our time in speculating as to whether we shall get something which, if it exists at all, none of us can escape getting.

There is an importance attaching to the discussion of this belief, but it is extrinsic, not intrinsic. When we find that in virtue of this belief a large army of men are withdrawn from productive pursuits and saddled for support upon the rest of the nation, when we notice the extent to which this belief operates—I believe for evil—upon human life, then it is important to try and settle, if we can, whether it is a really justifiable belief or not. It is from this point of view alone that the belief is of importance. From any other it can well wait for attention.

And I quite fail to see why the conception of immortality should be considered "ennobling." I can understand *life* being considered valuable or valueless, ennobling or degrading. But what has mere length to do with the question of quality? Life remains life whether it lasts sixty years only or is prolonged to sixty million. Badness prolonged will not create goodness; goodness cut short will not make badness. Life, as we know it, must continue as our standard of judgment, and annihilation at the grave can only give us more of something the wise will have ceased to value, or less of something of which we desire more.

No, the conception of immortality cannot "ennoble" life, and it certainly has not ennobled death. Nearly all the cruel customs that cluster around uncivilised funerary ceremonies may be traced to this belief. The terror associated with death amongst semi-civilised peoples—including ourselves—have the same origin. Death cannot avoid being a sorrowful fact in human experience—not the most sorrowful, for their are experiences much more sorrowful than death—but there is no reason in the nature of things why it should be a terrifying one. It is the conception of a future life, filled with manufactured terrors, that has made death the occasion of so much terror, and converted millions of believers into cowards at its approach.

So, also, with the statement that the belief in a future life gives man a "moral leverage." This, again, is a statement often made, but without any proof ever being offered. Of course, a belief held with any degree of intensity is almost certain to have some effect on conduct; the important question is, Is it an influence that uniformly, or even generally, makes for desirable conduct? Now, as a matter of fact, believers in immortality do not themselves accept the existence of this belief as any reliable indication of good character or conduct. In the absence of other information, a business man will not trust a believer in a future life to any greater degree than he would an unbeliever. There is not a single offence of which human nature is capable that even a Christian would regard as incredible were the accused a fellow-Christian. And when believers show by their actions that the man who believes in a future life is as likely to do wrong as the man who does not, it is rather too much to expect Freethinkers to regard this particular belief as supplying a moral incentive not realisable by other means.

It is the same if we take the matter from a social point of view. What moralising power can we trace to this belief in the conflict between the Crescent and the Cross in the Middle Ages? So far as it exerted power, it was in the direction of encouraging a more desperate hatred and a more ruthless bloodshed. What influence for good can be placed to its credit in the quarrel between Christian sects? Of

course, these *might* have been as bitter and as brutal in the absence of this belief, but it is not very probable. Let anyone take even the most cursory glance at the history of legislation during the last thousand years, and then reflect upon the number of brutal, and fundamentally anti-social, laws that have owed their origin to religious feelings, and then say if it is not straining credulity to breaking point to ask us to accept this belief as supplying a unique moral leverage. It may, again, be said that human nature would have shone in no lovelier light had this belief not existed. This may be so; but, once more, the probabilities in that direction are not very great.

I am also informed, quite as though it were an accepted truth, that the constitution of human nature seems to indicate a continued existence beyond the grave. None of these indications are specified, although I am, of course, quite aware of the arguments usually relied on. This was a favorite argument of the late Dr. Martineau, and it is one of which Sir Oliver Lodge appears to be very fond. It proceeds upon the supposed unexhausted possibilities of human nature, and upon the expressed desire for a future life. But our desires are not taken as the measure of fact in other directions, and I do not see why they should be so taken in this. We all have numerous ungratified desires, and this would only add one more to the list. Besides, this desire, granting its genuineness, may easily be no more than the expression of education. Personally, I am not conscious of any desire in this direction; and there are millions of Buddhists whose desire runs in the direction of annihilation.

Naturally, if we concentrate attention upon the purely individual aspect of life, there seems something lacking. But individual existence has been all along fashioned with reference to a larger social life. The great formative factor in the life of each is the general life of which he is an expression. Consequently the "unexhausted possibilities" merely refer, on the one hand, to the truism that if we lived longer we could all do more, and on the other hand to the fact that because the individual is part of a social organism no explanation can be adequate which leaves social requirements out of account. And this larger social life does not cease with the death of the individual; it outlives him, and is as near immortality as we are ever likely to get.

Moreover, it must not be overlooked that our natures are fashioned for conditions as they exist on this earth; not for an assumed different set of conditions elsewhere. Transplant human nature to a life beyond the grave, and, unless we assume identity of conditions, the fish-out-of-water simile will be the best illustration of the result. On the other hand, if the same conditions do prevail, nothing is gained by the exchange, and it remains for the believer to answer the question, Why do we not live on here? And the religious man has always this final nut to crack. God, if he exists, made this world along with all possible worlds elsewhere. If the condition of things here is so unsatisfactory as to make the believer assume a more satisfactory creation elsewhere, on what ground is such a conclusion reached? What right have we to assume that God has done better elsewhere? In criminal matters we have a First Offenders Act, but it is straining complaisance too far to ask us to apply the same principle to Deity when judging the only specimen of his alleged workmanship that we have to hand.

C. COHEN.

The Sacrifice of Isaac.

AT this time of day Freethinkers experience no difficulty whatever in satisfactorily disposing of the Patriarch Abraham. It would be a culpable waste of time, on their part, to elaborate arguments in support of the proposition that as portrayed in Genesis he is a purely legendary character. It is sufficient to state that many of the most eminent

Christian scholars frankly acknowledge the unhistoricity of the narrative. Even a comparatively conservative and cautious critic, like Canon Driver, does not hesitate to affirm that the patriarchal narratives "do not satisfy the primary condition which every first-class historical authority must satisfy," while Canon Cheyne, a bolder though not less mature scholar, oracularly declares that "these traditions [preserved in Genesis] are legends, and not historical records of the times which the 'family history' appears to describe." Now, it is clear, in the light of modern criticism, that the sacrifice of Isaac, being nothing but an interesting myth, cannot be treated as an actual incident, however realistically it may be related.

But although the intended immolation of Abraham's first-born son cannot be regarded as historical, it is undeniable that human sacrifices were frightfully common in ancient times. It was by no means a rare occurrence for parents to pass their children through the sacrificial fires. They did so in obedience to what they believed to be a Divine command. It is in that spirit that Abraham is represented as preparing to offer up his beloved Isaac. "God did prove Abraham" by ordering him to make ready for the cruel deed. Now, while it is highly probable that Abraham never lived, and that Genesis xxii. is wholly legendary, orthodox divines, who are still overwhelmingly in the majority, persist in denouncing all who accept the legendary view. Recently a correspondent who signed himself "H. A. B." addressed the Rev. David Smith, D.D., in these words:—

"I have just had a friend here who for over forty years has been connected with the Royal Courts of Justice. He has a scientific, keen, critical, judicial intellect, and is a Unitarian of an excellent type. He happened one day to refer to Abraham offering Isaac, saying no one could possibly imagine the Almighty giving such a command."

In reply, Dr. Smith pronounces the story "sublime," and characterises "the man who scoffs at it" as having "a prosaic mind," however critical his intellect may be. He goes even further and maintains that such a person "has certainly not a judicial intellect, for he circumscribes the area and excludes facts which are essential to a just verdict." As a matter of fact it is not recorded that the Unitarian scoffed at the story, but that he simply said that "no one could possibly imagine the Almighty giving such a command." The reverend gentleman admits that "we stumble at the story," and that it was, "according to our notions, a monstrous thing that Abraham attempted." On this point Dr. Smith utters himself quite emphatically: "Nowadays, if a man bound his son and lifted his knife to slay him, he would be arrested as a murderous criminal; and if he pleaded that he had done it at the command of God, he would be accounted a lunatic." That is entirely sensible; but the very next sentence is this: "Yet this is precisely what Abraham did." Of course, "the main difficulty is that the Lord commanded it." That is a laughably naive observation; and the explanation is more ludicrous still:—

"The difficulty disappears if we grasp the principle of the *progressiveness of Revelation*. This is an essential factor in the case, and it is unjudicial to leave it out. Abraham lived at the very dawn of Revelation, and many things were then believed and practised which are now shocking to the moral sense developed by centuries of Divine discipline."

Dr. Smith is quite right in stating that in early times human sacrifice was a religious institution and persisted long, even under the Roman Empire, but that to-day it would be punished as the most horrible of crimes. We are in full agreement with him. What was once considered the highest duty and privilege is to-day regarded as the most shocking inhumanity; but what on earth has the so-called "principle of the *progressiveness of Revelation*" to do with the difference between then and now?

From the theological point of view, everything depends upon the answer to that question. A *progressive* revelation is in itself conceivable, but a

self-contradictory revelation is unthinkable. It is self-evident that man is a morally progressive being; but theology teaches us that in God there is, and can be, no progress. He was as perfect, in every respect, four thousand years ago as he is to-day. If to-day, then, he condemns human sacrifices, on what ground can he be described as tolerating, if not directly commanding, them in the time of Abraham? Of Abraham's intended offering up of Isaac, Dr. Smith tells us that "it may be said that the Lord commanded it"; but the man who, in our time, lifted his knife to slay his son on the same plea, would be accounted a lunatic, even by Dr. Smith himself. On the assumption that there exists an unchangeable Deity who is ideally perfect, Dr. Smith's difference of attitude to the two men is inexplicable. If God granted a progressive revelation of himself, he would certainly make it harmoniously progressive; he could not contradict himself at different stages of the progress.

We hold that the history of the moral growth and development of mankind is totally inconsistent with any theory of Divine revelation, and can be explained only on the supposition that no God has had anything to do with it. In reality, the God has always been man's own shadow or reflection, intellectually projected into some fairy realm of the imagination. What we perceive is, not an infinitely perfect Deity gradually making himself known to creatures made in his own image, but a deplorably imperfect one very slowly growing better as he is being evolved out of man's creative fancy. At every stage in the evolution, the God is man's exact image, unnaturally magnified by the poetic faculty. Yet this image of himself, this reflection of his own character, primitive man regarded as a being or beings under whose control he lived. Now, human sacrifice originated in a desire to placate the Deity when angry by sacrificing to him what was held most precious. You remember the story of the immolation of the beautiful Iphigenia by her father Agamemnon. The great commander was on the eve of leading his famous army against Troy. In consequence of some offence he had committed against Artemis, the Goddess prepared a great storm to prevent his sailing. To expiate his sin he was commanded to sacrifice his much-loved daughter. What was he to do? He was in a strait betwixt two.

"To deny
How hard! still harder to comply!
My daughter dear, my joy, my life,
To slay with sacrificial knife,
And with life's purple-gushing tide
Imbrue a father's hand, beside
The altars of the gods.
This way or that is ill: for how
Shall I despise my federate vow?
How leave the ships? That all conspire
Thus hotly to desire
The virgin's blood—wind-soothing sacrifice—
Is the Gods' right. So be it."

Whether the sacrifice was completed or not, a point on which the tragic poets are not agreed, Agamemnon had willed the deed, so that Æschylus was justified in saying:—

"Thus he
Gave his own daughter's blood, his life, his joy,
To speed a woman's war, and consecrate
His ships for Troy."

To us, the two sacrifices are on precisely the same level. According to Genesis, Abraham believed that the Lord required such a gift from him as his only son Isaac; and, according to the Greek poets, the Goddess Artemis demanded the life of Iphigenia as an expiation from her father. But both stories are but interesting legends, illustrating the fact that, when individuals and nations are in a savage state, their gods are savages too. Jehovah was a savage, Zeus was a savage, and Artemis was a savage. In Palestine, as well as in Greece, the character of the deities was but a reflection of the character of their worshipers. Does it not follow from this that the moral progress of the world has been retarded by its objects of worship? The Israelites justified their cruelties and brutalities, on entering Canaan, in the

name of Jehovah. There were deeds they would not have had the courage to perform had it not been for their belief that Jehovah had commanded their performance. Agamemnon would never have had the heart to lay Iphigenia on the altar had it not been for the imagined wrath of Artemis. How well we know that many of the bloodiest wars the world has seen were carried on in the name of the Lord, and that most of them would not have taken place at all had it not been for pious zeal in the cause of religion. Even Dr. Smith gives his case away when he explains that it was Abraham's guilt in consequence of his heartless treatment of Hagar and Ishmail that led him to imagine that Jehovah required Isaac's life at his hands. That is to say, it was Abraham's belief in the Lord that caused him to attempt to expiate one crime by committing another and greater. We conclude, therefore, that the facts of history which theologians seek so hard to justify on Theistic grounds are, when rationally interpreted, but so many eloquent and irresistible pleas for Atheism.

J. T. LLOYD.

Three Great Poets.

THAT much of the popular reading of these days is rubbish, cannot be denied; but the fact that new editions of great writers are constantly coming hot from the printing-presses proves that, with all the ephemeral nature of popular literature, the pessimism of the critics is not entirely justified. We have before us three volumes, each in its way striking evidence of the earnestness of some publishers to provide the public with healthy, intellectual food. Keats, Shelley, and Byron are three poets who, in new and attractive form, are now re-introduced to us.

The position of Keats among the immortals is daily strengthening. His passion for beauty, his love of the living phrase, and power of portraying word-pictures have always made him a favorite of lovers of real poetry. He was, in the truest sense of the word, an artist. If ever human speech became melody, it was in the maturer work of that ill-starred medical student. But just because his work was pure poetry, and not drama, or philosophy, or rhetoric, he has not a European reputation like Byron. As it is, no foreigner can quite understand why Englishmen place Keats so high.

Keats had a wonderful eye for color. There is nothing even in the best of Chaucer and Spenser which can bear comparison with such a study as that of Lamia, the witch-serpent:—

"She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred."

"The Eve of St. Agnes" and "Hyperion" contain most gorgeous coloring. A born painter shuns abstractions and thinks in imageries. To such a mind, it is not enough to tell us, for example, that a night is "bitter-chill." It must proceed to set before us a series of vivid frosty scenes:—

"The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass;
And silent was the flock in woolly fold."

Scott was a poet of great graphic power. Here is Scott:—

"The corbels were carved grotesque and grim."

And here is Keats:—

"The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back and wings put cross-wise on their breasts."

What a magnificent picture he brings before us in the unforgettable lines:—

"Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Keats has been called a Greek, and the statement expresses a truth. Keats was a pagan to the core.

If there is an English poet entirely uninfluenced by religion, it is Keats. He did not attack Christianity like Shelley and Byron. He simply turned his back on it. Like politics, it played no part in his life. His poetic confession of faith is summed up in the concluding lines of his Ode to a Grecian Urn:—

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Shelley was, assuredly, a world-poet in a sense in which Keats was not. He was a prophet, a revolutionary, a pioneer. The educated foreigner must reckon Shelley among the great intellectual forces of the nineteenth century. The fact does not obtrude itself, but Shelley really belongs to a class of writers of which the type is French rather than English, and of which Rousseau is the greatest representative. Rousseau and Shelley wrote, not merely for artistic, but for propagandist, ends. They sought to impress their ideas upon others by the force of eloquence. In the last analysis they are alike, and they fought for the same objects. Shelley did not originate the philosophy in his poetry. He merely adopted it, borrowing from Godwin and the great French Freethinkers of the eighteenth century. But the ideas had all the force of novelty. Rousseau and Shelley merely carried on a great tradition; but to the priest-ridden people they addressed, the views propounded were in truth a new evangel.

The Freethought gospel found its finest expression in Shelley's writings. A great poet, enthusiastic, ardent, and filled with the love of humanity, he imagined all mankind to be on his own level. He dreamed of a coming golden age, and ordinary men and women were awed and inspired by his magnificent and wonderful vision.

At the beginning of this twentieth century we find that Shelley emerges as one of the supreme figures among his contemporaries, destined to immortality of fame. Many of his rivals, who overshadowed him whilst he was living, have almost faded into mere names. But Shelley has a message for generations yet unborn.

What Shelley might have been we cannot conceive. At the age of thirty he was drowned in the sea he so loved. His ashes lie beneath the walls of Rome, and "Cor Cordium" ("Heart of Hearts"), chiselled on his tomb, well says what all who love Liberty feel when they think of this poet of poets:—

"Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,
O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod
To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,
A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne
On ways untrodden where his fathers trod
Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod,
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan."

Byron is a fascinating figure. He flashes through his brief life with a disastrous glory. He is the Napoleon of poetry, and he flings poems broadcast in a golden largesse. He is Milton's ruined archangel, fallen from heaven, and keeping some of his ancient splendor. Europe is aghast at him, and he dies heroically at Missolonghi. And Byronism becomes an epidemic. From Moscow to Madrid whole armies of young men lengthened their hair and shortened their collars, loved poetry and their neighbors' wives.

Byron's fame has crossed all frontiers. He was the genius of English poetry incarnate before the eyes of wondering Europe. He inspired the aged Goethe and the youthful Hugo. Why? For a simple reason. Byron is easy. He deals rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he was at war with Society. He was an aristocrat in exile, a champion of the people. He possessed the imagination of the orator, the faculty of finding large and bold phrases:—

"Roll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean, roll!"

And again:—

"The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glorious Greece, around me see!
The spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free."

These lines have the true oratorical note and ring. There is a trumpet-call in them, and the effect upon ears unversed in the niceties and delicacies of English poetry was enormous. But to English ears the music of Shelley's lyre reveals greater depths of beauty. The melancholy, subtle lines of Shelley have certain attractions not possessed by the grandiose magniloquence of Byron. Think only of the masters of passion—Lucretius, Dante, Shakspeare, Milton. What sweetness proceeding from what strength! They are filled with a lyrical loveliness, the very magic of music. By the side of these Byron's romantic rant and posing are things of "mouthing and coxcombry," as George Borrow has it.

Byron has one glory. He has the gift of wit and satire, his superb recklessness of mocking phrase and rhyme. There, all that was potent and sincere in him became triumphant, and the writer of "Beppo," "Don Juan," and "The Vision of Judgment" is a deathless delight. But the poet of passion is dead. "Zara," "Parisina," "The Corsair," are dead. The weary plays are past resurrection. They are as unreadable as "Frankenstein" or the "Mysteries of Udolpho." Outside his own royal province of satire Byron created nothing of lasting power.

Byron, with his contempt for conventionality, and with his perfect mastery of the lash, is still a live force. Indeed, in that guise, Byron brings to our mind an image and a suggestion of that sardonic laugh and that wondrous song into which Gounod has transformed the Mephistopheles of *Faust*, and has, even more than Goethe, symbolised the modern spirit.

Keats, Shelley, and Byron were the unwilling heroes of one of the most tragic trilogies in literature. These three great English poets, born within seven years of one another, all go to Italy, and are all, within four years of each other, disastrously cut off in the flower of their genius. The singer of the "Ode to a Nightingale," and the singer of "Adonais," are twin stars in the firmament of fame. Byron remains, after Shakspeare, the undeniable world-poet of the English language. He is, above all, the poet of the foreigner, who accuse us of undervaluing him as much as, or more than, we overvalue Keats and Shelley.

M.

LET THERE BE LIGHT!

The imagination of the ages of ignorance sometimes takes a prophetic flight. The old writer tells us how that at the hour of night appointed by the King of Hell for the *Sabbath* of his faithful followers, demons, witches, and wizards assemble from all parts at the rendezvous. The place of meeting is generally a waste heath, a forest glade, or a naked mountain-top. They come from every quarter of the horizon, breathless, dishevelled, frenzied. Scarcely have they alighted, ere they turn towards Satan to pay him their dismal homage. He contemplates with pride the great army of the accursed. They are his, body and soul. The wind moans as it passes over the hellish gang. The moon scarcely dares to peer through the dark fringes of the heavy clouds. Bats, owls, osprays, hover in its pale rays. Soon the sacrilegious ceremony ends, and the orgies begin: nameless dances, contortions, yells, the blasphemies of the damned,—a deafening rout! Woe to the benighted wanderer who becomes the unwilling witness of these hideous revelries!.....But suddenly a low clear sound is heard. It is the crow of a cock in the neighboring village. A ray of light silvers the horizon. With it, everything vanishes; every vestige of the whirling throng is gone. The very grass shows no trace of the footsteps of the gang. What has happened?.....The old writers learnedly explain the transformation. *Neither Satan nor his followers*, they tell us, *can bear the daylight. It is light, then, that drives away devils, witches, and wizards.*—*Albert Réville, "The Devil."*

No man can live happily who regards himself alone, who turns everything to his own advantage; it behoves you to live for another, if you would live for yourself.—*Seneca.*

Acid Drops.

Mr. Bryan, the pious politician, who has thrice failed to get elected as President of the United States, cannot understand his last defeat. We can. He is not such a favorite with God Almighty as he imagines. We infer this from his recent adventure with a "grisly." Mr. Bryan went shooting bears, and a wounded bruin turned upon the hunter, tore his clothes, and nearly did much worse mischief. It was a narrow escape, and we hope Mr. Bryan will take warning. He should remember that the Bible God—who is *his* God—uses bears to punish offenders with. Take that edifying story of Elisha and the schoolboys. The young devils made uncomplimentary remarks on the old gentleman's need of Tatcho, and the Lord sent two bears out of a wood who devoured twenty-one "kids" apiece. Mr. Bryan ought to make the most of his reprieve. We judge that he is in Jehovah's bad graces. Before he stands any chance for the Presidency he will have to "get right with God."

A correspondent sends us the *Edinburgh Evening News* report of the annual meeting of the Tract and Colportage Society of Scotland. We see that the general secretary congratulated the members on the fact that "wholesome literature" to the value of £17,000 had been circulated during the past year. This included 36,000 copies of the Bible. We suppose, therefore, that these copies were all duly expurgated. Otherwise one can hardly see how "wholesome" could be applied to a volume which, in its complete state, contains such stories as Lot and his daughters, Judith and Tamar, the Levite's concubine, the adventures of Aholah and Aholibah, and Ezekiel's dinner.

Rev. Alexander Smellie, one of the speakers at the Tract and Colportage Society's meeting, made a very curious observation. He said that if people could only be got to read the Bible they would have the solution of half of our social and national problems. He forgets that there was a time when Scotsmen all read the Bible—and little else. Were the social and national problems any better settled then? We all know that they were not. Scotland was pious enough under the Covenant, but morals and civilisation were sadly lacking. The late W. E. Henley well remarked that the only relaxations the Kirk left Scotsmen were drink and fornication, and they indulged in both with all the fervor of the national temperament. To a certain extent they do so still. But they are improving. And they read the Bible less.

Malaria in the Punjab has been causing a multitude of deaths. Over a hundred daily have occurred at Armistan alone. Good old "Providence"! He watches over the sparrows—and the Hindus.

The recent "mutiny" of Chinese troops at Nganking, which made a good many foreigners decide to take refuge on a British gunboat, seems to have been due to a very old cause. "The native Press," according to the Reuter telegram, "hints that the trouble is traceable to opposition to the missionaries." Reuter promptly assures us that this charge "is not substantiated." Of course not. It never is. Who on earth, except a heathen, could believe it?

The Lord has not been doing his duty lately by the mission of the Presbyterian Church of England in China. He has allowed his people to get into serious arrears with their subscriptions; and lately an influential prayer-meeting was held in London for the purpose of stirring him up to a due sense of his responsibility in the matter. When we consider that the work is his own, and that if properly done it will redound to his glory, this remissness on his part is wholly incomprehensible; and how small he must feel when hauled over the coals by his own so-called servants.

In a long sermon Principal Garvie argues that the world is a field ripe for Christian harvest, but complains that the reapers are deplorably few, and that consequently the harvest is running to waste. The Principal informs us that God is always calling out for laborers, as if the Lord's own people *could* resist his most urgent solicitation. But if they are guilty of such unspeakable blasphemy, why doesn't he do the work himself? The fact that stares us in the face, however, is that the harvest, though so ripe, is not being gathered into the heavenly barns.

Professor Denny, of Glasgow, admits that the hostility of Indian people to Christianity is stronger now than it ever was before. In a sermon recently published, he represents

the head of a family as strictly forbidding the Zenana missionary to enter his household with the object of introducing Christianity. "We have our own religion," the man said, "and it satisfies us. Why do you come to teach your faith here?" And yet Dr. Denny is in favor of, and strongly advocates, the forcing on those teeming millions in India of a religion which they dislike. Is that a fair and just policy? All that can be said of it is that it is distinctively Christian. Christianity is directly responsible for the worst type of egotism to be found in the world.

Dr. Denny makes a further admission—namely, that India is suffering enormously from what he calls "defiling Western ways," which "shock and revolt their (Indian) women inexpressibly." But surely Dr. Denny is fully aware that these "defiling Western ways" are the ways of Christian peoples. "These things," says the Professor, "are religious and moral horrors to Indian women—those things, and a thousand other things like them, to which men are introduced by Western change and Western social customs." Here is a really powerful argument against Foreign Missions; and this is the third admission which Dr. Denny, were he only a lover of consistency, would be irresistibly forced to make, but which, of course, being a Christian minister, he did not make.

A correspondent lately favored us with two cuttings from the *St. Helen's Newspaper*. One referred to the action of the local Distress Committee, which had promptly enrolled the names of 175 employed for a start, many of whom "had been employed at Messrs. Pilkington's works, and have been thrown out of work for various reasons." The other was a long report of a lecture on "Democracy and Christianity" in the Congregational Church, Brook-street, with Colonel Pilkington in the chair. This lecture was under the auspices of the P. S. A. Brotherhood, and the lecturer was Mr. W. Ward, the president-elect of that body. Mr. Ward's sentiments were of the usual order in such circles to-day. Pious platitudes and sloppy humanitarianism abounded. There was a cheap and easy socialism of words, leading to nothing, and not intended to lead to anything. This sort of thing, with its frequent allusions to the social principles of Jesus Christ, is meant to bamboozle the working-classes. The presence of Colonel Pilkington as chairman is a guarantee of that. This gentleman must have smiled at the lecturer's prophetic sentences about the crooked being made straight, and "everything which was wrong in the civic and national life being swept away." Pilkington Works' men were seeking labor and bread at that very moment, while Colonel Pilkington could congratulate himself on his great wealth. We do not know, of course, how much he is worth, but his brother, Colonel W. W. Pilkington, who died a little while ago, left over £600,000. Both gentlemen must have known that Jesus said "Woe unto you rich!" But it didn't frighten them—and why should it? The whole thing is a farce.

A very pious Christian lady died the other day in East England. She left nearly £100,000 behind her—wherever she went. She expected to go to heaven, and no doubt believed that even there the poor would be kept in their proper places. She used to like playing the Lady Bountiful, but she did it with a keen eye to economy. Once a week—a good many years ago—she used to send down a present from the big house to a certain old couple who lived in one of the lady's cottages and paid a good deal more than the commercial rent of such a structure. The present took the form of a quart of soup, which was such wretched stuff that it invariably went into the pigsty. The old couple weren't very particular, they could eat almost anything, but they couldn't stomach that soup. Yet in return for it they were expected to curtsy and bow and scrape to the people at the "castle," who were all such good Christians, and worshiped as their Lord and Savior a personage who said "call no man master."

Another good Christian put the following advertisement recently in the *Central Somerset Gazette*:-

"Working gardener wanted: married, no children. Cottage. State wage, age and experience. Conservatory. No other Glass. Help given. Must be a Churchman with no Radical or Socialistic views. Wife good flannel washer. Apply Colonel Sherston, Alford Cottage, Castle Cary."

The working gardener, mark, is to be married, but is to have no children; yet the good Christians are never tired of denouncing what they are pleased to call "infidel" ideas on the population question. The gardener's wife is to be a good flannel washer—for other people's children, by no means for her own. Such is the Christianity of the "upper classes" in England.

We noticed that Dr. Drysdale was lecturing the other day at the City Temple on "Rational Religion." We have not seen more than a mere notice of the lecture, and in the notice great prominence was given to a question asked by a Mr. Dawson, which was evidently considered an important one. Mr. Dawson asked, if Dr. Drysdale's Materialism was sound, why should any man bother himself about the greatest good of the greatest number—why should he not look after himself and leave his fellows to look after themselves? We note Mr. Dawson's question here because it so well illustrates the very poor conception of human nature held even by those who pass as advanced Christians, as well as the danger of allowing the Christian conception of life to dominate our thought. One no more needs a belief in a "beyond" or "a divine purpose"—to quote Mr. Dawson—to find a justification for right conduct, than one needs these things for believing in the multiplication table. Less religion and more sane thinking might show Mr. Dawson that one cannot look after oneself without troubling about one's fellows. Whether we like it or not, we simply cannot separate ourselves from the weal and woe of others; and upon this fact rests all moral obligation. Our natures have been moulded into what they are by social intercourse, and to social intercourse we are ultimately referred for any justification of moral theory of action. The curious thing is, that those people who cannot see any reason for behaving decently unless there is a "beyond," where they will reap a benefit, are the ones who assume a superior moral tone in relation to Freethinkers. In their opinion, dishonesty, lying, and the whole catalogue of human vices lose their character as vices unless there is a future life or a "divine purpose." Well, we beg to differ; and we also venture to believe that in differing we entertain a far more wholesome and helpful view of human nature than that put forward in the name of religion.

"Socialism," says Dr. Clifford, "is divine. It is of God." That settles it. All that need be done is to make it blasphemy to preach any other doctrine than that "of God."

The same old story! A *Christian Commonwealth* writer who has been visiting South Wales, reports the state of the Churches is now worse than it was before the revival. "The Churches which were thronged by crowds of men and women who sang and prayed, sometimes the whole night through, are to-day as empty as ever they were." This is exactly what we predicted. Yet let another semi-demented individual arise, or some professional evangelist, saving souls at so much per dozen, succeed in rousing the population, and we shall be treated to exactly the same stories of the immense benefits of the new revival. Perhaps the most deplorable feature of the Evan Roberts revival was the way in which the religious press worked its poor demented originator. The ordinary press is bad enough in its thirst for a larger circulation, but for sheer unscrupulousness the religious press is hard to beat.

At last, it is here. The "true Welsh Revival" has commenced, and is going to cast all its predecessors, most of which are spurious, into the shade. Its initial scenes are laid in Glamorganshire, and chiefly in the Rhondda Valley. The true revivalists are New Theology parsons, the more popular of whom conduct frequent missionary services in the fortunate districts named Happy Wales! Thy day of grace is come. Thou art on the threshold of a new life, this time, the genuine religious life, not the largely false one as formerly. The truth is, however, that Wales has always been and still is the battle-field on which have been waged innumerable fierce wars between the contradictory and hostile religious sects of the land, and that each so-called revival has but done its share in preparing the ground for the seeds of sane thought, healthy feeling, and rational conduct. The advent of the New Theology indicates that the lease of religion there, as well as in England, has all but run out. This is about the last sprint of an emaciated supernaturalism.

One of the scratch bodies brought into existence by the new Education Bill is the Council Schools Protection Committee, which has issued a manifesto stating, amongst other things, that the Board Schools, subsequently known as Council Schools, "have given us healthy and adequate buildings; teachers without theological tests, free servants of education and the State; education progressive, efficient, and directed by the popular will; and by a wise local option and direction there has been absolute religious peace inside those schools." Amongst those who have signed this manifesto are Mr. Graham Wallas, who certainly knows better, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, who ought to know better. Schools in which Cowper-Temple religious instruction is given are not without religious tests for the teachers. All

that can be said is that the tests are not open and public. They are worse. They are surreptitious and cowardly. A teacher who asked to be excused from giving such religious instruction, because he could not do so conscientiously, would never get preferment. Mr. F. J. Gould's case is very much to the point. And what is the "peace" inside the Council schools? We answer by pointing to Mr. Birrell's speech in introducing his (first) Education Bill. In language of honest indignation, he denounced the whole weight of the Conscience Clause being allowed to rest upon the children. He felt strongly about it, and he spoke strongly. Moreover, he tried to remedy it by Clause VII., which provided that the school register should be called *after*, instead of *before*, the religious instruction, and that parents should be free to send their children to school at 9.45 instead of 9. That just and humane Clause was defeated, and defeated by Nonconformist votes; and the weight of the Conscience Clause was still left upon the sensitive shoulders of whatever poor little mortals might be "withdrawn" from religious instruction. So much for the "peace" inside the Council schools. What we want to know is why Mr. J. M. Robertson signed the stupid falsehoods we have quoted.

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., belongs to very much the same fraternity as Mr. Runciman, M.P., only he is not wealthy. The loudest note in their characters is conscious superiority. They are superior persons. But they have only superior *talent*. Nothing higher was included in their composition. Mr. Runciman, with all his cleverness, has come utterly to grief over his Education Bill. He got the darned thing just outside the harbor it was bound for, and there it foundered. But that catastrophe was on the cards from the outset. Mr. Runciman saw many things clearly enough, but he quite overlooked the explosive force of passion and principle. Not having any himself, he did not understand it. He was all right while negotiating (we like that term) with the Archbishop, but his beautiful "compromise" went all abroad the moment the Archbishop had to face the less diplomatic and more earnest members of his own party. For the present, at any rate, it is "Exit Runciman." Dr. Macnamara spoke at Tunbridge Wells within a few hours of Mr. Asquith's announcement that the Education Bill would be dropped. He said that he was amazed at the shortsightedness of the Anglicans, and he ventured to tell them that—

"If they pushed for the Cecil-Halifax claim the conclusion was foregone—they usher the Bible out of the schools altogether. (This was greeted with cheers.) He had no shadow of doubt whatever that the failure of Mr. Runciman's splendid attempt had sensibly strengthened and hastened the movement in favor of the State confining its efforts exclusively to secular education. (More cheers.) He deplored that very much. There was an increasing volume of opinion even amongst religiously-minded people that that was the only way out."

The "cheers" show that the audience was ahead of the speaker. Dr. Macnamara must pretty well see this by now. He has "deplored" the coming of Secular Education so many times, and every time his audience has cheered him exactly the wrong way. What he deplores, the Liberals generally would be glad to see brought about. And the canny "Dr. Mac." is just the gentleman to take the hint when he thinks it is strong enough. He will then drop the "deploping" and go in for Secular Education "baldheaded."

"*De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace*," said Danton, at a critical period in the French Revolution. Freely Englished, and applied to the Churches, it may be read, "Cheek, more cheek, cheek all the time." After converting themselves into electioneering agents up and down the country, Nonconformist leaders are now protesting that they do not take sides as politicians, but as faithful servants of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. With still more "cheek" the *Methodist Times* calmly asserts that the recent Education Bill represents the power of Christian influence over party politics, as though in this instance the former was superior to the latter. As a matter of fact it is precisely Christian influence that commenced the party quarrel and which still keeps it going. Eliminate this and there is no purely educational question that could not be calmly discussed and quickly settled. Over a quarter of a century ago Samuel Butler called attention to the rancor of Protestant dissensions, which he said was finding its way "into the political and social life of Europe, with incalculable damage to the health and well-being of the world." Since the author of *Erewhon* wrote these words all that has occurred has only served to accentuate the warning.

Having interfered in politics, not as politicians but as servants of the Lord, their demands ought not to be treated lightly. Dealing with the rejection of the Licensing Bill, the *Methodist Times* says the Churches "have advanced

certain demands as essential to the Kingdom of Christ, and they cannot sit down under this serious reverse." They cannot, it appears, allow "either a legislative chamber or a political party to veto their demands." This is, at all events, plain. Demands made in the name of the Churches is to have precedence over all else. Government by the people means, according to the Free Churches, the willingness of the people to carry out the "demands" of the Churches put forward as "essential to the Kingdom of Christ." Well, if it is to be a choice between government by the non-elected House of Lords and government by the Churches, we prefer the House of Lords. We have read of parliaments dominated by religious zealots, and are not anxious to see the experiment repeated.

We are not here concerned with the merits or demerits of the Licensing Bill, but only desire to call attention to the comments of so representative a paper as the *Methodist Times* on the situation. On the whole, the letters appearing in the issue of that paper for December 3 show that Nonconformists are suffering from a bad attack of "swelled head." Of course, no allowance whatever is made for conviction; it is all a question of devotion to Christ or conscious alliance with ill-concealed villiany. Most of the writers agree that the one reason for abolishing the House of Lords is, that it has opposed reforms "demanded by the Christian Churches of the country." They might oppose anything else, and live; but to go against the United Methodist Church is to commit an offence which "Methodism will never forget and never forgive." It is like the sin against the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the Lord of Hosts is with them. One would have thought that the Lord of Hosts would have done his work better had he prevented the drink evil assuming such gigantic forms, instead of waiting until the evil was done and then expressing an impotent desire for improvement—through the Methodist Church. According to another correspondent, the diabolical malignity of the House of Lords lies in their having tried to subdue "the successors of Cromwell." Oh, shade of Oliver, what successors! The religious conceit of the various writers, their stupid claim that the demands of the Churches are not to be resisted by any Chamber, legislative or otherwise, make this issue of the *Methodist Times* well worth preserving. It is a fine study in the psychology of religious egotism.

Rev. Dr. Warschauer is winning for himself a great reputation as a theological prize-fighter. He fights everybody, young or old, who does not repeat his Shibboleths. And, in his own estimation, he is victorious every time. He pounces on the Atheist, and slays him straight off. He attacks the Deist, and demolishes him with delightful ease. He wrestles with the Pantheist, and throws him down the first round. He assails the orthodox Theist, and sends him spinning in a second. What are all these fights about? They are all over the unknown and unknowable, and for the glory of the "meek and lowly" Galilean, who never "strove nor cried aloud," and whose "voice was never heard in the streets."

The *Church Times* reads Sir Oliver Lodge a nice little lecture on every man's duty to stick to his last. Reviewing his new book, *Man and the Universe*, our contemporary charges him with "slinging his words about at random," with "using theological terms in wholesale ignorance of their exact significance," and with being in theology simply "a complacent amateur." It also declares that upon "theological questions he is quite incompetent to write, and that his lofty pronouncements concerning them have no sort of value." The *Church Times* is perfectly right. And yet Sir Oliver is the man by whom the New Theologians are forever most confidently swearing. They are right, too; and so are we when we add that theology treats of subjects concerning which the *Church Times*, Sir Oliver Lodge, and the New Theologians are in a state of sublime ignorance.

Browning is made responsible for an extremely foolish statement. The great poet is represented as saying, "All things are not ill, and all things are not well, but all things shall be well, because this is God's world." That this is *God's world* is the point in dispute, and until it is settled it cannot legitimately be utilised for the settlement of any other point. And even if you *could* prove, to the satisfaction of all, that this is God's world, you would still be face to face with the question, "Why are not all things well in God's own world?"

The Woman's Liberal Federation struck a wrong note in that letter to the press on the eve of the Albert Hall meeting. The protest against the threat of the militant Suffragettes to break up the other women's meeting, was made on the

ground that "nothing could, from any point of view, be gained by such action equal to the advantage of having a Cabinet Minister's pronouncement on this burning question." This reduces the question to one of "pros" and "cons." It deals simply with a balance of advantage to a particular cause. It takes no notice of any principle at stake. But there is a principle at stake. The right of peaceful public meeting ought to be maintained at any cost. The women organisers of the Albert Hall meeting should have said to the women who threatened to break up their meeting—"We don't care who you are or what your object is. We have a legal and moral right to hold a public meeting, and we do not intend to ask your permission in any way whatever. Our meeting will be held. And if you deliberately raise disorder we shall have you dealt with accordingly."

A specially pious and devout saint prays that he may see God every day, and walk with him, and talk with him, and be his friend, in order that he may not see death, but breathe himself into heaven. Well, we can assure him that one day, ere long, in spite of all his loud professions and ecstatic experiences, he will *feel* death coming on, and *cease* to breathe, and be laid aside in a dark chamber under ground. This is an absolute certainty. All else is useless speculation, and the accompanying "seraphic rapture" must be put down as so much *wasted* breath.

We are confidently assured that "the only complete, reliable solution of the Problem of Pain is offered by Christianity." That is perfectly true; but it is equally true that Christianity offers its complete solution at a time and in a world which lie beyond all earthly tests. That is an eminently safe order and as practically valueless. It is the desperate offer of conscious cowardice. It is the feeble offer of a powerful hypocrisy. That is why intelligent men and women treat it with such masterly indifference.

We don't like jumping on a man when he is down. Without doing this, we may mention the fact, which we learn from the public newspapers, that Mr. W. H. Verinder, late secretary of the Penge Perseverance Permanent Benefit Building Society, who is charged with embezzling the Society's funds, had been "prominently identified with a religious body."

Arthur Harrison, a Willesden groom, who committed suicide by cutting his throat, left a letter in which he said that "it was only the ungodly and cowards that are afraid to die." Presumably, therefore, the deceased was godly.

It was very thoughtless of John Charles Nowbery, the sexton of St. John's Church, Horninglow, Burton-on-Trent, to hang himself in the belfry. The jury brought in a verdict of suicide while insane, but that did not do away with the necessity of a special service to purge the "desecration."

Sir Robert Hart, who spent so many years in China, seems to be still hankering after it. Judging by his recent speech at Belfast, he likes the country and its people, and he ventured to prophesy that China would be the great agent of peace amongst the nations. China, he said, was giving attention to Western science, but her people had been brought up to think so much of right as opposed to might that, even when strong, they would not be aggressive. With her vast territory, and numerous population, China would some day be the strongest nation in the world, and she would then tell the other nations that they must settle matters by reason and not by force. In other words, war will be abolished, not by the Prince of Peace and his bellicose worshipers, but by the "Heathen Chinese." What a sarcasm on the value of Christian Missions!

The other day, quite by accident, we picked up a guide-book to Egypt. The first paragraph we cast our eyes on was one that commenced: "Egypt was a great land of Christianity and persecution." And the remark was made without any attempt at sarcasm.

Amongst the 450 "lots" of forgotten luggage disposed of at auction sale lately by the Great Western Railway Company were "two family Bibles." The people who bought them must have wanted them a good deal more than the people who left them in the train. Perhaps the latter left them there on purpose. It was a simple and easy way of getting rid of the "blessed book." Freethinkers needn't burn their old Bibles any more—as the Christians picture them doing. They can leave the holy volume in the railway carriage—on the rack or under the seat.

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.

"FREESPEAKER."—(1) Your Baptist friend wants to know when Mr. Foote addressed a thousand people—the alleged number of that lady preacher's congregation. We don't see how the truth of Mr. Foote's principles can be determined by the size of his audiences. Nevertheless, he has addressed, and quite recently, some very large gatherings. There must have been a thousand people at his Liverpool lecture on Sunday, November 29—and as many at his Stratford Town Hall lecture on Sunday evening, November 22. His audience in the great Birmingham Town Hall, on Sunday evening, November 8, must have been a good deal over two thousand, and probably nearer three thousand. (2) We cannot increase the size of the *Freethinker* much as we should like to see it doubled, and raising the price is really out of the question.

F. ROGERS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

G. BRADFIELD.—Glad to hear you got your letters to the Rev. R. J. Campbell, with his funny little reply, inserted in full in the *Gloucestershire Echo*.

H. S. D.—See paragraph. Thanks.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Thanks for the reference; also for your efforts to get us new subscribers at Bristol. We note your hope that the President's Honorarium Fund will, at least next year, reach the amount appealed for.

G. HULL.—Thanks. See paragraph.

ATHEIST-SOCIALIST.—The *Clarion* is master of its own space. We can do no more, therefore, than note its inability to find room for your letter. It is hardly the thing, however, to insert the Rev. R. J. Campbell's strong compliments to Mr. Blatchford without uttering a word of protest against his silly and malicious slander of "blatant materialists."

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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.

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What use is it to hide oneself and avoid the eyes and ears of man? A good conscience challenges a crowd, a bad one even in solitude is anxious and alarmed. If your actions are honorable, let all men know; if they are disgraceful, what does it matter, if you know yourself? O wretched man that you are, if you despise this last witness!—*Seneca*.

"OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

God, Thou art pitiless—Thou dost permit
The priest to use thee as a hangman's cord—
Thou proppost up the layman's shallow wit,
Driving the beggar from the laden board—
Thou art the easy text of those who hoard
Their gifts in secret chests for death to see.
"Mighty and strong and glorious is the Lord!"
The prophet cries, gone mad for lack of Thee!
While good men dying deem thy grace a dream,
While woe on wail for Thee and men blaspheme;
A thousand forms of Thee the foolish preach—
Fair stretch Thy temples over all the lands,
In each of these some barbarous Image stands,
And men grow atheists in the shrine of each.

—Robert Buchanan.

The Secular Education Demonstration.

A Last Word.

THE Secular Education Demonstration is *not* abandoned as some people have been suggesting. It is more than ever necessary in view of the fresh failure of the rival religious parties to agree upon a "compromise." This issue of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of a good many London readers before Thursday, December 10. We beg those who do see this paragraph to make for St. James Hall, Great Portland-street (not far from Queen's Hall), and do their best to secure a big gathering. The Demonstration now will be purely for Secular Education. Lord Weardale takes the chair at 8, and the speakers are 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, Mr. Herbert Burrows, and Mr. G. W. Foote. All seats are free.

Sugar Plums.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on January 12—a day after the President's birthday. Last year's gathering beat the record, and we hope the record will be beaten again in 1909. London "saints" will please make a note of the date. Provincial "saints" who may be visiting London about that time should do ditto. There is sure to be a good entertainment, and no doubt a few good speeches. The detailed arrangements are in the capable hands of Miss Vance. Perhaps we should add that Mr. Foote is to preside, and will be "supported" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, Heaford, Moss, and other well-known Freethinkers.

Our limited space this week does not allow of our saying much about the last "social" at Anderton's Hotel, on Thursday, December 3, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. Chiefly owing to the very short notice, no doubt, the attendance was not quite as good as on the previous occasion; but those who were present seemed to enjoy themselves thoroughly. Miss Helen Foote and Master Madden played selections on the pianoforte, Mr. Arnold gave some humorous songs, and Mr. A. B. Moss gave some sketches from Dickens, which were very well received. The principal feature of the evening was a brief address from Mr. Wallace Nelson, whose visit to England is drawing to a close. Mr. Nelson, who spoke with admirable readiness and verve, said that when he returned to Australia he would be able to tell the "saints" there that the Freethought movement was full of life in the old country.

The fine Shoreditch Town Hall has been engaged by the Secular Society (Ltd.) for four Sunday evening Freethought lectures in January (3, 10, 17, 24). Fuller particulars will appear in our next issue. Meanwhile, the district and East-end "saints" generally should make a note of the fixture. Mr. Foote will probably start this course.

Mr. Joseph Bates and other local Freethinkers have long been pressing Mr. Foote to pay Boston a visit. He is unable to do so, however, before the new year; and the Secular Society, Ltd., is sending Mr. J. T. Lloyd down to stir the town up afresh. Mr. Lloyd lectures this evening (Dec. 13) at 7.30 in the Corn Exchange on "The Reasonableness of Unbelief." Mr. Bates is to take the chair. Admission is free—with a collection.

Mr. George Nicholls, M.P., speaking at Thrapston, declared that—"The secularist had got the only logical solution. He did not believe in keeping the Bible in the school and what was known as Cowper-Templeism in the day-schools. They had come to the position now that except something was done on the Government's lines they must go to the other extreme and take up the secular position." We shall probably hear a good many Liberal M.P.'s talking like this in the immediate future.

Freethought in Many Lands.

POLAND.

IN a recent article in this journal,* I gave a short account of the apostolic labors of our Polish co-religionist, Niemojewski, on behalf of Polish Freethought, and stated that he had been indicted, at the instance of a Catholic bishop, on the charge of blasphemy. His offence consisted of two articles, one being a "Commentary on the Catechism," and the other, a review of Eugene Hins' pamphlet *Que Penser de Jesus?* When my article appeared, the prosecution had merely reached the stage of committal for trial.

I now learn that on October 28, the latest prisoner for blasphemy took his trial, at Varsovia, and that the result was a triumphal acquittal.

His escape was, for Niemojewski, fortunate; as in the event of conviction, our colleague would have suffered three years imprisonment, together with deprivation of all civil rights. The Freethinkers of England will be glad to congratulate Niemojewski and the Freethinkers of Poland on this glorious vindication of the principles of Freethought. This now makes the second blasphemy prosecution in Poland during the present year—both instituted on information laid by bishops, and both ending in fiasco for the mitred mystifiers of the people.

The document in which Niemojewski's accuser invited the Governor-General of Varsovia to suppress the wicked unbeliever, is too precious a mouthful of bigotry to pass into oblivion. Its groans and lamentations are, to ears properly attuned, a rich symphony in praise of Polish Freethought and its successful labors for the intellectual uplifting of the people. The following is the pathetic episcopal wail:—

"The editor of the journal *Mysl Niepodlegla*, Andrew Niemojewski, by means of the aforesaid paper, and by divers pamphlets in which he rejects not only the Christian doctrine but the belief in one God and all religion, exercises the most evil and pernicious influence, especially amongst the young people at college. Not content with thus influencing the rising generation, he is now beginning to issue popular pamphlets for the working-classes, similar in character to his incriminated article on the Catechism. It is easy to conceive what a fermentation of doubts is thus produced in the minds of the unenlightened masses of the population, already sufficiently stirred up by political or socialist agitation. Quite recently, Niemojewski appeared in the village of Rakof, near Creastochowa, and distributed amongst the workers a pamphlet written by his pen."

Then follows a stupid insinuation that the sums necessary for these publications were furnished by "foreign freemasons," because, argued the bishop, it is known from the public press that Niemojewski took an important part at the last Freemasons' Congress at Prague! Divine inspiration had enabled the bishop to perceive that the "foreign freemasons" are Freethinkers, but had dimmed his eyes to the fact that the Congress at Prague last year was a Congress of Freethinkers, as such, and not of Freemasons. But the worthy bishop had merely "made himself a fool for Christ's sake," just in order to stir up the animosity of the Russian Government, which rigorously excludes Freemasonry from its territory, against the blaspheming Freemason and Freethinker Niemojewski, the baiter of bishops and their pet abomination.

"In virtue of all which, and taking into consideration that no government can exist without morality, and that the chief mainstay of morality is rooted in the religious sentiment of the people, I have the honor to request that the necessary measures may be taken to put a stop to the pernicious activity of Niemojewski, this leading spirit of immorality and irreconcilable foe to religion, so that in breaking the strength of his propaganda we may contribute to the reign of peace throughout the land, now torn by brigandage, robbery, and assassination."

Although the trial was conducted by Russian judges, and the proceedings heard in camera, the

blasphemer triumphed, and the bishop played his part as spy, common informer, and prize-fool all in vain. The examples, first of Spain and then of Russia will now have to shame Great Britain into the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

The influence of the work so successfully begun and continued by Niemojewski in Poland has now overleaped the seas and penetrated into Brazil, where the Poles established in the province of Parana have recently taken a decided step in the direction of Freethought. This new awakening is owing to a fresh influx of their countrymen from the scene of Niemojewski's struggles. Some of the new arrivals engrafted themselves upon the editorial staff of the paper founded by the colony—*Polak w Brasilji*—and converted it from a colorless organ of nondescript views into a firm supporter of rationalist ideas. It is satisfactory to know not only of the emergence of Freethought in such unlikely circumstances, but that the change of policy in the paper—one of the newest accessions to the growing ranks of Freethought journalism—is receiving support and encouragement from the old subscribers throughout the province.

The revival of Freethought in Poland is of considerable historic and social interest. Early in the sixteenth century a priest, called Pastoris, resident in Poland though a native of Belgium, attacked the "mystery" of the Trinity as being inconsistent with the unity of "the Supreme Being." Count Krasinski states (*Sketch of the Religious History of the Slavonic Nations*, p. 129) that the doctrine startled people at that time, and caused them to believe that such a proposition would lead to the subversion of revealed religion. The new doctrine, however, was adopted by many in Poland, and it laid the foundation of Socinianism, which, though relatively harmless in character, was far more savagely attacked than Secularism has been in our own days. About the same time the works of Servetus had a considerable circulation in Poland; Laelius Socinus, who visited the country in 1551, had undoubtedly propagated the same opinions; and a learned Italian, Stancari, Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cracow, (a sort of sixteenth-century R. J. Campbell), contributed to the same end by maintaining that the mediation of Jesus Christ was made only according to his human, and not his divine, nature. The celebrated Faustus Socinus settled in Poland and became the leader of the heretical school associated with his name, and, of course, fell the victim of religious violence stirred up by the unscrupulous hands of the pious. Mob law was put in motion against him; he was dragged from his house, his library burnt and his manuscripts destroyed. One of the humors of the situation was that the indiscriminating ruffians who set upon him destroyed, amongst other things, a treatise composed by him in refutation of Atheism! During Socinus's lifetime some more daring members of his sect proceeded to deny revelation altogether; as, for instance, Budny, whose translation of the Old Testament is (p. 168, op. cit.) considered to be one of the most correct that ever has been made, but whose commentaries on these Scriptures, as well as on the New Testament, caused him to be deposed from the ministry as an infidel.

Towards* the end of the Middle Ages Poland in the East was, like Holland in the West, one of the few places of refuge available for the hunted heretics of the Continent. Streams of heretics came from Germany, Bohemia, Italy, France, and Spain, and left their impress on the national character. The long list of early Polish Freethinkers is led by a woman of eighty years of age, Katarzyna Waiglova, who, in the year 1539, perished in the flames at the hands of the Polish Inquisition for the crime of asserting, in her cryptic sort of way, that God is one, and, being immortal, he cannot have any children, for, properly speaking, we are all his offspring; but, mortals as we are, who rise again only

* Based on Niemojewski's speech at the Congress of Varsovia, 1907.

in the person of posterity, we imagine from our human point of view that God has children divine. Another Polish Freethinker, Karimierz Lyscynski, was in 1689 condemned to the stake for Atheism. After having horribly maltreated him and torn out his tongue in expiation of its impious offence, King John Sobieski, having a tender heart and unable to witness the further martyrdom of the poor victim, ordered his head to be struck off and his body to be burnt to ashes.

After the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries had spent their fury in religious commotions and unscrupulous persecutions, the eighteenth century arose with the philosophical speculations of the Encyclopædia, and brought Freemasonry to Poland with the Freethought and anti-Christian implications with which it had then lately become identified in France. The intellectual movements which preceded or accompanied the French Revolution had their influence upon Poland, as seen (from 1807 to 1835) in the secularisation of marriage and the institution of civil divorce. No wonder the pious and Imperial Vultures of Austria, Prussia, and Russia swooped down upon Poland, and by the middle of the last century had squeezed the life-blood out of the body of Polish nationality. True to its parasitical character, Polish religion, in its varied forms as Catholic, Greek Church, and Judaism, took sides with the foreign oppressors against the national movement, and quite naturally the trinity in unity blended their forces with the Government against the rising power of Freethought. The proximate cause of the revival of Freethought in Poland in our own day is the spread of Socialism, which, at any rate, detaches men's attention from the Bread of Heaven and fixes their longing eyes on a pabulum more earthly, secular, and substantial. And, anterior to the Socialist movement, the cherished traditions of Polish nationality (submerged in a sea of blood by the combined brutalism of Catholic Austria, Holy Russia, and Protestant Prussia) became transfused with intellectual sympathy for the principles of the French Revolution, and so kept alive the old flame of Polish Freethought. Finally, at the International Freethought Congress in Paris of 1905, over thirty delegates attended from torn and dismembered Poland. The return of the delegates from Paris happened at the time when the reaction in Poland had reasserted its utmost virulence consequent upon the failure of the revolutionary struggle against the murderous régime of the Czar. The clergy not only proclaimed war against Freethought, but against every social institution of a purely secular character. The result was, perhaps, not altogether foreseen by the men of God. The Polish nationalists who up to that time had walked hand in hand with the clergy against the common enemy—Socialism—now declared that they would not suffer the priests to control the institutions they had founded, and accepted the struggle against the Black Army in full recognition of the fact that, after all, Gambetta's *mot* was eternally true: "*Le clericalisme c'est l'ennemi!*"

One of the chief results of the recent revolutionary movement in Poland has unquestionably been the awakening of the public conscience to new conceptions of life and duty based on Freethought considerations. Driven off the political arena by the whips of the Cossacks, the masses applied their battering-rams against the theological castles in the air, and dislodged the metaphysical entities who lived there. The Freethought propaganda seems now to be the one most prolific of results in the country. It does its work, too, without organisation, by the sheer force of its intellectual appeal through the press and on the platform. Prosecution and episcopal denunciations have only served to deepen the public interest in the movement and promote a feverish sale of its books, pamphlets, and newspapers. A singular characteristic of Polish Freethought is that it was initiated and continues without making any appeal for funds or subscriptions from its members, with the exception of the fee of one penny per member, which it binds itself to pay

to the International Federation of Freethought at Brussels. In spite of this, it has, this year alone, passed scatheless through two blasphemy prosecutions, and still keeps the flag flying. For a movement scarcely three years old its activities and achievements are remarkable. A learned Freethinker, Professor Radlinski, already holds a Chair at the Free University of Varsovia, where he delivers a course of lectures on the History of Religions. Many anti-religious pamphlets also are in circulation, written by an ex-priest, Kucharski. In addition, there are two organs of Freethought at Varsovia, the first being *Prawda* (*Truth*), directed by the Positivist philosopher, Alex. Swietochowski, president of the "Society for the Promotion of Secular Schools," and *Mysl Niepodlegla* (*Independent Thought*). Both these journals, as our readers* are aware, have been prosecuted for blasphemy. In Galicia, too, where the Catholics control the system of education, all the scientific professors at the universities are described as rationalists, and the Free University of Mickiewicz is entirely anti-clerical. Evidently, then, a vigorous Freethought movement is growing in the country, and let us hope that many more men like Niemojewski will arise to win for Poland—and for mankind—that precious jewel of intellectual liberty without which no other liberties can avail for the permanent enrichment and well-being of the race.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

When Did Jesus Live?—IV.

(Concluded from p. 774.)

15. "THERE are good reasons," Mr. Ball says, "for believing that the reference in Josephus to the death of James 'the brother of Jesus who was called Christ' is genuine," and, if such be the case, the date of Paul's interview with James (which is referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians) must have been before that event; that is to say, prior to A.D. 62. This, it is needless to say, is perfectly correct, provided the reference in Josephus is genuine; but the authenticity of the passage must first be placed beyond all question—and that is not such an easy task as some imagine. Let us see, then, how the case stands.

After the publication of the *Antiquities* (about A.D. 93) that work came to be much read by the Christians, probably because it contained an excellent synopsis of Old Testament history. Many of these believers were, no doubt, surprised at not finding an account of the miracle-working Jesus of the Gospels or his disciples, and these omissions were set down to "Jewish prejudices," as was done in the case of another Jewish historian, Justus of Tiberius, who was equally silent. After the *Antiquities* had been in the hands of the Christians for more than a century two passages were found in it relating to "James, the brother of Jesus that was called Christ"; while after the lapse of another century a third passage was discovered relating to "Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man." Two of these passages, if not all three, are undoubtedly Christian interpolations. Setting aside the paragraph referring to "Jesus, a wise man," which has repeatedly been shown to be spurious, I will confine my animadversions to the two relating to James.

The first of these passages (which is given in italics in the following extract) has been quoted by various Christian writers from the time of Origen (A.D. 250) downwards. The last-named writer says ("Against Celsus"):

"The same Josephus, also, although he did not believe in Jesus as Christ, when he was inquiring after the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the demolition of the temple.....says: '*These miseries befell the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus that was called Christ, because they had slain him who was a most righteous person.*'"

* *Freethinker*, July 26, 1908.

Next, Eusebius, who wrote about A.D. 330, referring to this passage, says (Ecl. Hist., ii., 28) :—

“Josephus also has not hesitated to superadd this testimony in his writings: ‘*These things,*’ he says, ‘*befell the Jews in order to avenge James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus that was called Christ,*’” etc.

Jerome, who wrote about A.D. 400, quotes the same passage; Georgius Syncelus, about A.D. 790, quotes it in identically the same words as Origen. Ten centuries later Whiston, the translator of Josephus, commenting on that historian’s alleged testimony to James and Jesus, says :—

“Thus, when Josephus, with other Jews, ascribed the miseries of that nation under Vespasian and Titus, including the destruction of Jerusalem, to the barbarous murder of James the Just, we must remember, etc..... And when Josephus declares that he himself was one of those who thought the terrible miseries of that nation effects of the vengeance of God for their murder of this James, we may easily see those opinions could only be the opinions of converted Jews or Ebionites.”

Thus is Josephus proved to have been a Christian. As a simple matter of fact, however, that historian never wrote the passage quoted relating to James. He attributed all the “miseries” that came upon the Jewish people during the siege of Jerusalem to God’s displeasure at the abominable wickedness of the Jewish cut-throats called “Zealots,” who slaughtered the law-abiding citizens, pillaged the city, polluted the temple, and, in every conceivable way, acted like maniacs. This opinion is plainly expressed in *Antiq.*, xx., viii., 5, in *Wars*, iv., v., 2, and several other places. It is not very surprising, then, that many years after Whiston’s time it was seen to be impossible to retain the passage quoted respecting James without excising several paragraphs in Josephus which proved it to be an interpolation. The passage was thereupon removed, so there is now one forgery less in our present copies.

The case, so far, stands as follows: two out of the three passages found in the *Antiquities* which refer to Christian “history”—one relating to James and one to Jesus—are unquestionably Christian interpolations; the probability is, then, that the second passage referring to James, which still remains in the *Antiquities* (xx., ix., 1), is of the same character. That passage reads :—

“So the high priest Ananus assembled the sanhedrim of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned. But those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [*i.e.*, Agrippa II] desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent,” etc.

In consequence of these accusations, if we believe the story, the new procurator, Albinus, “wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done,” and king Agrippa “took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months.”

Supposing such an event as that described to have actually occurred, it would be very unlikely indeed that the Jews would have complained to king Agrippa and the procurator Albinus of the action of the sanhedrim in this affair; for, even in the story, it was the whole body of members, and not one man, who had passed sentence. Nor is at all likely that Albinus, before he had entered the province of which he had been appointed governor, would have written a threatening letter to the high priest—and that on mere hearsay—without investigating the matter himself. Moreover, such a small matter as the punishment of a few Christians could have no interest for either of the authorities named, while most of the orthodox Jews would probably have

considered such an action meritorious, rather than otherwise.

The earliest tradition respecting the death of this James was contained in a work by Hegesippus (about A.D. 170) which is preserved by Eusebius. According to this tradition, James, who was named “the Just” on account of his piety, was asked by the scribes and Pharisees to “persuade the people not to be led astray by Jesus,” and was placed upon “a wing of the temple” to address them. Instead, however, of denouncing Jesus, he bore testimony to that reputed teacher’s divinity; whereupon some of the Jews who were near cast him down from the temple, and, being still alive, “one of them, a fuller, beat out his brains with the club that he used to beat out clothes.” Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 198) gives substantially the same account. In this story only James himself is stated to have been killed; no other Christians are mentioned.

Which of these two accounts of the death of James are we to consider historical? In my humble opinion, neither; both appear to me to be Christian fabrications, and the account in Josephus an interpolation. One of the principal reasons for this conclusion is the fact that no Christian writer before the time of Origen (A.D. 250) appears to have seen any of the three passages. The two relating to James are first mentioned by the last-named “father”; that referring to “Jesus, a wise man,” by Eusebius (A.D. 330). We have evidence that Christian writers prior to these dates were constantly on the look-out for anything in non-Christian works that might be twisted into evidence of the truth of the Gospel “history,” and also that several of them were acquainted with the writings of Josephus. Amongst these may be mentioned Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, whose complete silence calls for some explanation.

Theophilus of Antioch (A.D. 180) wrote a series of letters to his friend Autolytus in order to prove to him the truth of the Christian religion, and effect his conversion. In four of these letters (iii., xx., xxi., xxii.) he quotes, or takes his subject-matter, from Josephus, and in two of them he mentions that historian by name; but he makes no mention of any of the passages relating to James or Jesus, though they would have been the best evidence he could possibly have adduced for the purpose he had in view. The only reasonable inference is that these passages were not in his copy.

Irenæus (A.D. 185), in his work on “Heresies,” mentions Josephus by name, and refers to a narrative respecting Moses recorded in the *Antiquities* (ii., x., 2), but not found in the Old Testament. He makes no reference to any of the passages relating to James or Jesus.

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 198) cites the *Antiquities* as to the number of years between the time of Moses and that of Josephus; but he does not refer to any of the passages relating to James or Jesus.

Tertullian (A.D. 200) refers in his “Apology” to Pliny’s Epistle to Trajan and to Pilate’s Report to the Roman emperor respecting Jesus Christ, as evidence proving the truth of the Gospel “history.” He also names “the Jew Josephus, the native vindicator of the ancient history of his people”; but he makes no reference to the alleged testimony of that historian to James or Jesus. The inference again is that these passages were not in his copy. That he would have referred to them, had he seen them, there can be no reasonable doubt. Speaking of the Book of Enoch, he says: “But since Enoch in the same scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord [*i.e.*, Jesus Christ], nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us” (*Female Dress*, i., iii.). Needless to say, Enoch does not refer to Jesus Christ.

With regard to these four writers, the only reason that can fairly be advanced for their “conspiracy of silence” is that the three interpolated passages in Josephus referring to James and Jesus had not then been written, and so were not found in the copies in use in their days.

The result of this inquiry may be summed up in a few words. The Jesus of the Gospels is a purely imaginary personage, his biography having been made up from so-called Old Testament "prophecies," and his sayings manufactured from pre-existing writings. The Book of the Acts, which continues the fictitious Gospel "history," is also a work of fiction. Bearing these facts in mind, it would be simply ridiculous to suppose that the historical Jesus known to the "pillars" of the Nazarene Church, James, John, and Cephas, lived at the time mentioned in the Gospels, or that Paul and these apostles were engaged in propagating the Christian religion at the period represented in the Acts—with out a single scrap of corroborative evidence.

Setting aside, then, these unhistorical New Testament books, we find that a primitive form of Christianity—from which Paul made up a gospel more suitable for Gentiles—was first preached by the "elders" of a new sect of Jewish Christians (the Nazarenes) some time after the destruction of Jerusalem—say, A. D. 70-75. From this position we can look back upon a real, live, historical Jesus—the Jewish fanatic who cried "Woe, woe to Jerusalem"—who was regarded by the sect as a prophet and "faithful witness," who had "overcome" the world, and was said to be then seated on a throne in heaven—ready to intercede with the Father for all members of the sect who were faithful unto death. "The effectual supplication of a righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16).

ABRACADABRA.

ROOSEVELT'S THANKSGIVING.

President Roosevelt's Thanksgiving proclamation, which took effect on November 26, is a platitudinous production containing some history and some preaching. After speaking of national prosperity, which is a tiresome theme, he goes on to say:—

"The things of the body are good, the things of the intellect better, but best of all are the things of the soul, for in the nation as in the individual in the long run it is character that counts. Let us therefore as a people set our faces resolutely against evil and with broad charity, with kindness and good will toward all men, but with unflinching determination to smile down wrong, strive with all the strength that is given us for righteousness in public and in private life."

We should like to see a treatise by Mr. Roosevelt differentiating "the things of the intellect" from "the things of the soul" and pointing out exactly why the latter are "the best of all things." We would like also to ask him whether he agrees with the New England editor who said recently that an election was held to choose a President and not a minister, and whether when a President is chosen he has any call to turn high priest and advise the people who elected him to cease from their daily work, and "in their homes or in their churches meet devoutly to thank the Almighty for the many and great blessings they have received in the past and to pray that they may be given the strength so to order their lives as to deserve a continuation of these blessings in the future." Is it the function of a President, or that of a minister, to appoint sabbaths and exhort people to attend church and hold family prayers? Can anybody in this age soberly believe that going to church or holding services at home will make the slightest differences in the crops or the industries upon which the prosperity of the country depends, or that persons who follow his directions will enjoy or deserve more "blessings" than those who do not? In the name of common sense it is time to make an end of humbug and pretence and to realise that blessings do not come at the beatings of tom-toms and the indulgence in mummery and incantations. Rational Americans must protest against being annually committed by their President to a view that belongs to the age when the head of the group was the medicine man.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Our rationalised Christianity is simply the higher philosophy of Paganism, with a different phraseology of course, but the same in substance with that which was taught and preached in the Roman Empire by Stoic, Platonist, and Pythagorean, in the days before the fanatics, who miscalled themselves Christians, drowned the sound reason of the world in the torrent of their all-overwhelming ignorance.—*J. A. Furrer.*

A Chesterton Alphabet.

(WRITTEN AFTER READING "ORTHODOXY.")

- A's Adam and Apple, whose tale "G. K. C."
Swallows down without choking—no infidel he!
- B's the beer-drinking, beef-witted, boisterous Briton,
In whose praise "G. K. C." so much piffle has written.
- C's for Christ and for Christian, and Chesterton too,
The faith that contents *him*, why shouldn't it you?
- D's the Doctrine that since the world suits "C." so well,
It's a good enough Eden, and nothing like Hell.
- E is the Epigram seeming so clever,
Which yet has no meaning or point whatsoever.
- F's the Fallacy frequent in Chesterton's prose—
How he'd get on without it, the Lord only knows.
- G's for God and for Gabble and Garrulous too—
Ah! Mr. Chesterton, how do you do?
- H is the Half-truth "C." deals in so freely,
Till he's heeded no more than was Dr. Kenealy.
- I is the Imp full of mischief and fun,
Who prompts all the queer things by Chesterton done.
- J is for Juggins, and if that's your name,
You'll be spoofed by "G. C."—for spoofing's his game.
- K's the Knot which "C." never will stop to untie,
And so he can never the plain truth descry.
- L is for Language, which "C." has in plenty;
If that's what you want he can always content ye.
- M's for Monotheism—but one God for "C."
Will not do—he likes better the family three.
- N's the Nonsense with which "C." for ever o'erflows,
And for ever reels out both in rhyme and in prose.
- O's the Object which "C." ever has in full view,
I think I can easily guess it—can't you?
- P is the Paradox seeming so clever,
Which when analysed turns out a mere truism ever.
- Q is the Quibble which "C." makes such play with,
The false coin which instead of true sterling he pays
- R's the Ruse of evading the argument when [with.]
A plain answer refuses to flow from your pen.
- S is for Sciolist—ask you his name? [same.]
You can guess it in once—yes, you're right—it's that
- T's the new-old Theology "C." has invented,
With truly Gilbertian conceits ornamented.
- U is the Uction with which "C." confesses
That the Gospel of Christ matches well his own guesses.
- V's for the Vagaries of Chesterton's wit,
Poured out without care if they miss or they hit.
- W's the Warfare "C." wages 'gainst reason,
Which with him is a thing that is never in season.
- X may stand here for Christ—I mean Chesterton's Savior,
Who is very much like "G. K. C." in behavior.
- Y's the Youth "G. K. C.," who will ne'er grow to man,
Unless he should happen these verses to scan.
- Z's the Zest he will feel when he reads them, since they—
Though they may some plain speaking—no rancor display;
They are careless and casual, like Chesterton's own,
And if some of his faults I have frankly upshown,
My verses will do him some good if they show him
That he writes very oft what is far, far below him,
And that to compose in such furious haste
Is to let his fine talents run sadly to waste.

TOUCHSTONE.

Correspondence.

AN OLD READER IN AMERICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although I have not been in this land of the free very long, I have had plenty of time to miss my weekly *Freethinker*, and should be very pleased if you would forward it to the value of amount enclosed. As of course you know, we lack the spiritual guidance of an established church, but the country is infested with a very noxious type of the advertising dissenter variety. That hoary, arch-hypocrite Booth is also represented; his minions pursue identically the same tactics as in the old country—drums, tamborines, screeching servant girls who guess they were real down and out, you bet yer, before they were washed in the "blood"—*War Cry's*, and, of course, incessant, insistent cadging. I wish that you could spare the time to flash the searchlight of truth on these harpies. Hoping to hear one of your rousing addresses once again.

Washington, U.S.A.

C. D. MORGAN

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, a Lecture.

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, J. T. Lloyd, "The Reasonableness of Unbelief." Musical selections.

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

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Concert by the Oldham Adult School Handbell Ringers.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, R. F. Bell, "An Innocent Abroad." With lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Buildings, 113 Islington): 7, Eurika, "Christianity and Reform." Members' meeting after lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, S. Wollen, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, December 17, at 8, Mrs. Harrison Bell, N.U.W.S.S., "Woman as Citizen."

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LEEDS (Town Hall Square): Thursday, December 10, at 8, H. S. Wishart, "The Necessity for Secular Education."

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