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Human progress consists in a continual increase in the number of those, who, ceasing to live by the animal life alone and to feel the pleasures of sense only, come to participate in the intellectual life also, and to find enjoyment in the things of the mind.—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The Milton Centenary.

Milton's the prince of poets—so we say ;
A little heavy, but no less divine. —BYRON.

LITERARY, religious, and political circles have been celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Milton. Municipal dignitaries have even toasted his memory. Many foolish things have been said, and some wise ones; the most notable utterance being George Meredith's poem, which we hope to see printed in full very shortly. The fragments we have seen show it to be a remarkable production for a writer over eighty years of age.

Dissenting orators and journalists have, of course, delivered themselves copiously on the subject of John Milton. He was a Puritan, and the only notable poet that the Puritans can put forward. They declare that Puritanism produced him. It did nothing of the sort. It rather spoiled him. His great epic shows the Puritan ossification of his genius. One half of his poetic genius, as Mark Pattison observed, was left behind with *Lycidas*. The gracious promise of his earlier poems was never fulfilled. We may say that his genius was dehumanised. A cry of the heart would sound strange in the austere music of *Paradise Lost*. And this fact alone speaks volumes against its permanent hold upon the human mind.

This statement may be considered the blind partisanship of a militant Freethinker. But I am sure it is not. I doubt if any taste in literature is more catholic than my own. Yet, as this is a personal declaration, I will back up my view of Milton's epic by authorities that are beyond suspicion. Take, first, the following weighty passage from Mark Pattison's monograph on Milton—and it should be remembered that this critic was a clergyman of the Church of England:—

"It is losing its hold over our imagination. Strange to say, this failure of vital power in the constitution of the poem is due to the very selection of the subject by which Milton sought to secure perpetuity. Not content with being the poet of men, and with describing human passions and ordinary events, he aspired to present the destiny of the whole race of mankind, to tell the story of creation, and to reveal the councils of heaven and hell. And he would raise this structure upon no unstable base, but upon the sure foundation of the written word. It would have been a thing incredible to Milton that the hold of the Jewish Scriptures over the imagination of English men and women could ever be weakened. This process, however, has already commenced. The demonology of the poem has already, with educated readers, passed from the region of fact into that of fiction. Not so universally, but with a large number of readers, the angelology can be no more than what the critics call machinery. And it requires a violent effort from any of our day to accommodate their conceptions to the anthropomorphic conceptions of *Paradise Lost*. Were the sapping process to continue at the same rate for two more centuries, the possibility of epic illusion would be lost to the whole scheme and economy of the poem."

Mark Pattison wrote that some thirty years ago. He did not know then how rapidly the belief in the credibility of the Jewish Scriptures would decay. Two centuries were not needed. A quarter of a century has settled the Old Testament for educated people. And what educated people think to-day everybody will think to-morrow.

Paradise Lost really rests upon the most discredited part of the Old Testament—the stories of the Creation and the Fall. What follows from this was well put by Matthew Arnold:—

"To call *Paradise Lost* a theological poem is to call it by too large a name. It is really a commentary on a Biblical text,—the first two or three chapters of Genesis. Its subject, therefore, is a story, taken literally, which many of even the most religious people nowadays hesitate to take literally; while yet, upon our being able to take it literally, the whole real interest of the poem for us depends. Merely as a matter of poetry, the story of the Fall has no special force or effectiveness; its effectiveness for us comes, and can only come, from our taking it all as the literal narrative of what positively happened."

Decently informed people cannot take Milton's poetical machinery with any seriousness nowadays. Battles of angels and devils, even with gunpowder thrown in, are simply comical. Fighting the Almighty is an uninteresting business, for we know how it must end; and the said Almighty getting alarmed at the boldness and vigor of his enemies is ludicrous. How is a poet to make Omnipotence act? How is he to make Omniscience talk? Milton was bound to fail over such a task. He failed lamentably. God the Father is a solemn old bore, and God the Son is a solemn young prig.

Suppose we turn to a critic belonging to a nation that was never under the incubus of Protestant theology,—a nation whose intellectuals have long left both Catholicism and the Bible behind them. M. Scherer sums up his criticism of Milton's epic in this way:—

"*Paradise Lost* is a false poem, a grotesque poem, a tiresome poem; there is not one reader out of a hundred who can read the ninth and tenth books without smiling, or the eleventh and twelfth without yawning. The whole thing is without solidity; it is a pyramid resting on its apex, the most solemn of problems resolved by the most puerile of means. And, notwithstanding, *Paradise Lost* is immortal. It lives by a certain number of episodes which are for ever famous. Unlike Dante, who must be read as a whole if we really want to seize his beauties, Milton ought to be read only by passages. But these passages form part of the poetical patrimony of the human race."

I agree with all this. *Paradise Lost* subsists, and will subsist, not because of its subject, but in spite of it. The poem has great beauties and great sublimities. No one admires them more than I do. But the beauties are all in Eden, with its fated pair; and the sublimities are all connected with Satan. He is indeed the hero of *Paradise Lost*. He is not omnipotent; he has fought and suffered, and in the deepest ruin his courage is undaunted; he struggles against overwhelming odds, and matches his wits against the wisdom of his Creator; therefore he commands our sympathy,—as he really commanded the poet's, for whenever Satan appears upon the scene the genius of Milton dilates to its utmost grandeur. And is it not curious that the one spark of tenderness amongst all those supernatural per-

sonages is placed in Satan's heart? As he watches the happy pair in Eden he admires their beauty and pities their fate in becoming pawns in the game between himself and his great antagonist:—

"Thank him who puts me loth to this revenge
On you who wrong me not for him who wronged.
And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
Honor and Empire with revenge enlarged,
By conquering this New World, compels me now
To do what else though damned I should abhor."

But there is more in *Paradise Lost* than beauties and sublimities,—in spite of its failure as a complete poem. There is in it, as in all Milton's work, the constant mark of a consummate stylist. "He is our great artist in style," Matthew Arnold says, "our one first-rate master in the grand style." It is what M. Scherer calls an "unfailing level of style." Milton seems to have felt where his strength lay. His distinctive power of style was elevation. The way in which he sustains it is perfectly amazing. For that reason Milton will always be a delight to the students of poetry. But it is absurd to praise him, as Matthew Arnold does, at the expense of Shakespeare. Milton may have been the "organ-voice of England," as Tennyson says, but Shakespeare used every resource of the orchestra.

Russell Lowell praised one aspect of Milton's genius very finely:—

"In reading *Paradise Lost* one has a feeling of vastness. You float under an illimitable sky, brimmed with sunshine or hung with constellations; the abysses of space are about you, you hear the cadenced surges of an unseen ocean; thunders mutter round the horizon; and if the scene change, it is with an elemental movement like the shifting of mighty winds."

This is splendidly said, and I believe it is true. Milton's elevation applied to more than his style. He soared above the world and all its interests. Puritanism, as I have said, dehumanised his genius. And he pays the penalty for this with posterity. Shakespeare was happier in every respect. He lived and died before the civil war of the seventeenth century divided England into hostile camps, and filled it with tumult and bitterness. He did his work before the Puritan wave swept over the nation. His genius found its proper place and proper scope. He was a Humanist, and he took Humanity as his province. His matchless imagination did not waste itself on Chaos and old Night; it never went "ruining along the illimitable inane." Not schemes of life, but life itself, formed the material of his magnificent productions. And that is why they are deathless. For schemes are but fantasies, they come and go, but life abideth for ever. The one thing perennially interesting to man is man himself.

When the poet of *Paradise Lost* was a little boy playing in the street near his father's house, the poet of *Hamlet* and *Lear* and *Othello* and *Macbeth* probably passed now and then through that very street on his way to the "Mermaid," which was quite near. The boy may have seen the man, the man may have seen the boy. And the day may yet arrive when that fact will be the most striking and memorable concerning John Milton. When the boy grew up, his first published poem was the sonnet on Shakespeare printed in the second folio of 1632. One might almost regard it as a subtle and prophetic stroke of Fate.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

It is necessary for us to will and work, not only for ourselves, but also for others. We want to help others, to give a lift to the coach which toilsomely draws humanity along; in any case, we buzz round it. One of the inferior forms of this need is "ambition," which must be recognised, not merely as a desire for honors and for fame, but as a thing which is also and before all else a need of action or of speech, an abundance of life under its rather coarse form of motive power, of material activity, of nervous tension.—*Guyau.*

Religion and the Schools.

THE fourth Education Bill of the present Government is now a thing of the past. Although that short-lived proposal did not accomplish all that its creators wished, its appearance on the scene may well have served some useful purpose. From the point of view of mere tactics, the passing of the Bill into law might have been of great public service. Its shameless surrender of all principle, its creating for the first time a compulsory religion for all schools, with its generally retrogressive character, might easily have given rise to so violent a reaction that complete Secular Education would have been the result. And the mass of the people respond so slowly to any appeal on behalf of an abstract principle of justice, that it would seem a violent measure of reaction will be alone adequate to drive the electorate into acting with justice and common sense.

Still, even as it is, the proposed measure will have done good service. It has shown all who are capable of appreciating the situation that none of the great religious bodies in the State are at all inclined to act with fairness or consideration towards their opponents. Each one is concerned with getting all it can and preventing its rivals from getting more than is positively unavoidable. It will also have served to still further discredit the pose of Nonconformity as the guardians of England's righteousness and the fearless champions of conscientious conviction. It may be that Nonconformists, with Dr. Clifford at their head, always act in accord with their conscientious convictions, but it is quite clear that their conscience is of that convenient variety which readily adapts itself to that which is, for the moment, the most profitable. At present they are crying out against the sordid and unscrupulous attitude of Churchmen. But Churchmen do at least act upon some principle in the matter. They do believe that a properly-ordered State should be concerned with the religious training of its members, and only agree to a limitation of the State's activity in the religious sphere under sheer pressure of circumstances. Nonconformists are simply without any principle worthy of consideration. They have shown over and over again that they are in the market, ready to be bought, provided the purchase-money suits them. As they sold the country in 1870, so they were prepared to again sell the country in 1908. The Ethiopian does not change his skin; the leopard retains his spots.

The truth is that Nonconformists no more believe, as a body, in the separation of religion from the State than does the Anglican. Circumstances drove Nonconformists into adopting a battle-cry they had no belief in, and to profess a principle they have never appreciated, and so have never sought to put into practice. When Nonconformists shouted for the separation of Church and State, they really wanted the abolition of the present State Church, or the equal patronage by the State of all the Christian Churches. Of course, here and there the cry has proved educative, and individual Dissenters have really desired that the State should stand quite aloof from religious questions; but in the main Nonconformity has ever welcomed all the State patronage it could get, and cried out for more. It has always supported the State in passing laws that obstructed or prohibited criticism of Christianity; it has agitated for stringent enactments in favor of Sabbatarianism; it takes all it can in the shape of relief from payment of rates, while protesting against "Rome on the rates"; its leaders welcome a seat in the House of Lords in virtue of their representing religious organisations; and in a hundred and one ways it proclaims that it stands for no principle whatever—unless opportunism be dignified by that name.

During this controversy Nonconformists have worked their hardest to elevate "Simple Bible Teaching" into a principle. Sometimes they want it because of its ethical value or literary qualities,

with the added hypocrisy that they want the Bible in the schools merely as a piece of literature. As though any other piece of literature is given a special forty-five minutes, and as though any Christian teacher could teach from the Bible as he would teach from an ordinary book. And all the while they want the Bible in the schools as a book, they are claiming that it possesses qualities which raises it above all other books, thus creating a special category in which it stands alone. At other times they want the Bible in the schools because it provides the greatest common measure of Christian belief, thus shamelessly denying to non-Christians the least consideration. But at all times they want "Simple Bible Teaching," without in the least troubling to say what "Simple Bible Teaching" means. For the humorous side of the situation is that no one—except, perhaps, the Freethinker—does know what it means. Christians are not in agreement as to when the Bible was written, who wrote it, why it was written, or what it teaches. Eliminate all that Christians disagree on concerning the Bible, and all that is left is just—the Bible. They agree in nothing except the bare name, and the use of this they claim will provide a common ground on which Christians can exploit the rest of the nation.

"Simple Bible Teaching" should mean, in any honest use of the phrase, the plain teaching of the Bible without gloss or comment. But this is not only impossible, it is the last thing that Christians desire. It would develop in intelligent children a healthy contempt for a large portion of the Bible long before they were able to appreciate its value either as literature or as a treasury of folk-lore. Sharp-witted children who read the Bible stories of witchcraft, or of angels visiting human beings, would not be slow to link these stories, with the other fairy-tales met with in their reading in other directions. Children who are taken to the doctor to have their aches and pains removed would not, in the absence of special teaching to the contrary, be impressed by a book which attributes all disease to the agency of good or evil spirits. The slave code of the Bible would, again in the absence of special teaching, not fill them with admiration for the humanity of the book. It is to prevent these results that "Simple Bible Teaching" never has been given to children either in church or school. It is Bible teaching interpreted in accordance with the tenets of this or that sect, or with contemporary Christianity as a whole. It is Bible teaching with some things left out, others put in; it is Bible teaching that involves the prostitution of the teacher's intellect, the plunder of the public purse, and the abuse of the confiding innocence of the child.

Churchmen have exclaimed against Bible teaching being left in the hands of Freethinking teachers, and Nonconformists, in spite of their protests against tests for teachers, do their utmost to keep such teachers out of positions of responsibility. Yet Freethinking teachers are really the only ones who could teach from the Bible without the introduction of sectarianism. For they would have nothing to hide, nothing to defend, nothing to excuse. It would be possible for them to take up the Bible as a book—it is never possible for a Christian to do so. The beliefs of the Bible, absurd in the light of present knowledge, could be used to illustrate the long and illuminating story of mental development. The phases of social life there depicted could be used as adjuncts to a lesson on social evolution. Under such conditions the Bible could be used, and with profit. At present the child has it placed before him in quite a different light, with the result that subsequent years tend to develop in him either a feeling of dislike for the book, or a superstitious veneration that forbids its use.

Assuming that the government measure had become law, and that Cowper-Templeism had been legally established in all the State schools, it might have been necessary to give Christians a lesson as to what "Simple Bible Teaching" really means. A wholesale distribution of leaflets giving selected

passages from the Bible, with references to other passages that even Christians are ashamed to quote, might do a deal to educate the public on this topic. Another set of leaflets specially prepared for distribution among children would do still more. Freethinkers would be loth to adopt the latter course. Children are, to them, something more than mere pawns in the game of sectarian grab; but it is well to remind Christians that the resources of the attacking party are not by any means exhausted. And there would be a certain grim humor in finding Freethinkers charged with debauching the public mind by distributing excerpts from a book without which, Christians assert, a perfect morality is impossible.

One thing is certain. No religious party that has the opportunity to gain its own ends will be deterred from doing so by any consideration of justice. It may be that they will not perpetrate injustice out of pure malevolence, but it will be perpetrated all the same. It is of the nature of religious conviction to outweigh all other considerations, and to that extent make the end justify the means. The present education trouble is but one application of this truth. And it will be brought to a close only when a sense of justice is sufficiently active among the people to make citizenship rest actually, as well as technically, upon exclusively social considerations. C. COHEN.

Jesus of Nazareth.

AT this season of the year the thoughts of Christendom are specially directed to the subject of Jesus and his relation to the world. Of all subjects this is the most difficult to contemplate uninfluenced by prejudice and passion. Jesus is scarcely ever approached in a spirit of critical disinterestedness and complete intellectual honesty. Most of us are at the mercy of our prepossessions, which rule us with a rod of iron. Historical facts and logical arguments are wholly lost upon such people. For example, one man lives in perfect horror of Unitarianism. The very word is an abomination in his sight. Insinuate that he has Unitarian leanings, or suggest that between his position and that of the generality of Unitarians there is no appreciable difference, and forthwith he threatens to take legal proceedings against you. Such is his sensitiveness that he must often write to the newspapers to assure the public that the poisonous leaven of Unitarianism is not in him. As to preaching in a Unitarian chapel, he would rather die than commit such a heinous sin. In a word, Unitarianism is to him what a red rag is to a bull. Another man is equally touchy on the subject of Arianism, or Nestorianism. He has a wonderfully keen scent for heresy as to the composition of the Redeemer's person. He can tell you exactly where Nestorius and Eutiches respectively went wrong, and how necessary it is to be on our guard against their insidious errors. He is for ever quoting the Athanasian Creed and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* (Book v., chapter 52), and warning people against being led astray by any popular preacher who is not sound on the doctrine of the Trinity.

During the present season the various theological prepossessions and prejudices will doubtless be in full play. Each school of Christology will be sitting in stern judgment upon, and delivering severe sentences against all the other schools. Between them all Jesus, if he ever existed, is completely lost, and can never be recovered. What Christendom has now is not Jesus, but a cluster of theories about Jesus. Before the world had a chance of making his acquaintance at all, Jesus was made an offering to the metaphysicians, with the result that we seek for him in vain. Mr. Campbell claims the glory of having re-discovered him. Beneath huge piles of metaphysical and psychological speculations he came upon his great find—the *real* Jesus, whom Mr. Bernard Shaw is said to regard as entirely credible.

But Mr. Shaw's blessing on Mr. Campbell's Jesus is in reality the severest curse. Mr. Campbell tells us that the Jesus he preaches is the Jesus who once verily lived a man among men; but Mr. Shaw declares him to be mainly a fictitious character, with very little, if any, real history at the back of him. The truth is that the Jesus of the New Theology is, for ordinary people, vaguer, less personal and get-atable than the orthodox Jesus. Whence, then, did Mr. Campbell derive his Jesus? Out of his own head; he manufactured him out of his own brain, and now offers him to us as the Jesus whom Nazareth and Jerusalem both knew and rejected. We beg to differ from the distinguished preacher, and to characterise this Jesus as one "that never was on sea or land."

A moment's reflection will clearly show how utterly unhistorical all existing versions of Jesus of Nazareth really are. We are not sufficiently audacious to assert, in so many terms, that Jesus of Nazareth never lived, but we have no hesitation whatever in affirming that, if he ever did, no biography of him had the good fortune to see the light. All existing documents depict an impossible and, consequently, unhistorical character. The four Gospels are a collection of fairy-tales, not one of which, however beautiful, can be accepted as literally true. When told of a man who turns water into wine, feeds five thousand people on a couple of small loaves, and raises the dead, we know we are dealing with a character in fiction, not with a man of flesh and blood like ourselves. Legends may be exquisitely beautiful, and we are second to none in our admiration of them; but their beauty departs the moment they are mistaken for facts. As a figure in mythology the Gospel Jesus is full of charm and beauty; but the charm vanishes and the beauty fades as soon as we clothe him with the attributes of reality. That is why the Churches hail him as a supernatural Being, and worship him as their Lord. On any other terms he is excluded from the category of the actual, while on these he is admitted only on sufferance.

To believe in any Jesus of Nazareth known to us is an act derogatory to our reason and insulting to our common sense. Take the Jesus of orthodoxy, and you will realise how very true that is. This passage from Hooker will serve as an illustration:—

"If the Son of God had taken to himself a man now made, and already perfected, it would of necessity follow that there are in Christ two persons, the one assuming, and the other assumed; whereas the Son of God did not assume a man's person into his own, but a man's nature to his own person, and therefore took *semen*, the seed of Abraham, the very first original element of our nature, before it was come to have any Personal Human subsistence. The Flesh and the Conjunction of the Flesh with God both began at one instant; his making, and taking to himself our flesh, was but one act; so that in Christ, there is no Personal subsistence but one, and that from everlasting."

Such was Jesus of Nazareth, the celebration of whose virgin birth is once more at the door, as portrayed by the Church, and being such he is, from the historical point of view, both impossible and unthinkable. Being impossible and unthinkable, he has always been represented as an object of faith, and not of direct knowledge; of ardent worship, not of rational admiration. If we ask an ordinary disciple whether Jesus is comprehensible to him, he will instantly answer, "Jesus comprehensible to me? Certainly not. He lives and moves and has his being in an atmosphere of impenetrable mystery; but though I cannot understand I love him with all my heart." Well, such is Jesus of Nazareth as perfected by theology, and of *him* we can confidently say that he never lived, but is the speculative creation of his own Church.

Now, while it is customary to speak of Jesus as the founder of Christianity, it is more correct to describe Christianity as the founder of Jesus. This will become clearer if we substitute Church for Christianity. As a matter of fact, Christ and Christianity are synonymous terms. Christianity, we are

informed, "is a vast and complicated system and historical process." So is Christ." The history of the Church is, for the first fifteen hundred years, but the story of the making of Christ; and all students know too well what a melancholy and humiliating story it is. The theologian was ever a fighter with fist and spear and sword as well as with angry word and phrase. There were always several mutually hostile Christs in the making; and it depended almost exclusively on the numbers of their respective champions which of them gained the ascendancy. The curious fortunes of Athanasius and Arius may safely be taken as typical of the methods and results of the cruel and brutal Christological controversies throughout. The reigning Christ, in every instance, reached his throne through rivers of controversial blood; and it is well known that his throne never rested on an impregnable rock. There have always been partially defeated pretenders moving surreptitiously about, calling him a wicked usurper, and skilfully intriguing for his downfall. The process is still going on quite as vigorously as ever, though by somewhat modified methods.

Thus we see that Jesus, in all his forms, is a creation of the Church, and that here there is no long-abiding city for any single type. The consequence is that Christianity is almost exclusively and at once a theoretical and emotional religion. Its sole objects of belief are specific hypotheses, speculations, theories, and the belief in these produces corresponding emotions most of which are practically worthless. In science, theories are often of inestimable value, because they get verified by actual discoveries. In theology, however, hypotheses are worse than worthless, because the only products of faith in them are feelings, certain pleasurable sensations or ecstatic experiences that usually lead to no practical benefit, being nothing but so much wasted breath. "But," an evangelical enthusiast exclaims, "it is to Jesus we owe the great twin-doctrines, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Are not these ineffably glorious truths to which it is infinitely worth while to cling?" Well, supposing they are, what then? Historically, the brotherhood of man as held by Christian people has never been anything but a dead letter. The stereotyped appeal to Jesus, "Thou must save, and thou alone," has engendered in the Church a duty-shirking disposition, a sentimental dependence upon an invisible, imaginary Savior which paralyses all human effort for the world's betterment, and an attitude of cowardly indifference to existing conditions which are regarded as ordained of God and not to be interfered with save by the Divine Being himself. As a sentiment, human brotherhood is inexpressibly sweet, and people sing and pray and preach most excellent eulogiums upon it, and then go out to sweat their workers, malign their neighbors, and crucify their enemies. They put their entire trust in Jesus, lustily sing his praises, deafen his imaginary ears with passionate supplications, and then lazily wait for him to do the world's work. *And never has he taken the least notice or made the slightest response.*

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," and the world still yearns for its deliverer. "Jesus of Nazareth is passing away," and the world is beginning to realise that all its work both of demolition and of construction must be done by itself, or remain forever undone. Jesus is going, and, as a result, man is coming into his own by slow degrees.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Secular Education Demonstration.

OWING to the dropping of the Education Bill, the impression got abroad that the Secular Education League's demonstration at St. James's Hall was abandoned. All that could be done to counteract this idea, but it doubtless kept some away. Moreover, it was filthy weather on Thursday evening,

December 10; a thin incessant rain turning the streets into a most disreputable sloppiness. Nevertheless there was a very good meeting, and considering all things an *extremely* good meeting. The body of the hall was filled, and a considerable number of people were seated in the galleries.

Lord Weardale, who took the chair, had an enthusiastic reception. His introductory speech was admirably conceived and expressed; every word was to the point, and his lordship was as straight as a die on the principle of Secular Education. His speech was brief and distinguished, the intellectual quality being predominant, yet a note of passionate sincerity sometimes broke through the general suavity of his address and elicited loud cheers from the deeply attentive audience.

The resolution—there was only one, protesting against the Government's waste of time over another "compromise" between rival sects, and declaring that the only way to honorable peace lay through the "secular solution"—was proposed by Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., in a most excellent speech. It seemed at first that the filthy weather had affected his voice, but it improved as he went along, and he soon had the audience "hanging upon his lips." Sound in argument, and intensely earnest in tone, with many moments of real eloquence, Mr. Stewart's speech deserved all the applause which broke forth when he concluded his fine peroration. He spoke as a Nonconformist of Nonconformists, and boldly denounced his co-religionists for "selling" the great principle of religious liberty and equality for a paltry mess of political pottage.

Lord Weardale announced that Mr. G. W. Foote was down to second the resolution, and the meeting greeted the statement with a storm of cheers. They had to be told, however, that Mr. Foote had "kindly consented" to let two Labor members of parliament speak before him, as it was highly necessary that they should be back at the House in time to vote on the Eight Hours Bill. Both these gentlemen pointedly thanked Mr. Foote for his "great courtesy." Mr. Ramsey Macdonald captivated the audience with his eloquence, and all his points were eagerly caught up. He could hardly have wished for a more appreciative hearing. One of his satirical points—depicting an Englishman looking back on his Board or Council school training in Bible religion, and saying to himself "Thank God for my religious teaching in the dear old school! If I had not known that David was king of Judah I might have been a thief"—brought down the house. Mr. F. Maddison's style was different from Mr. Macdonald's, but it was very earnest and more skilful than it looked on the face of it, and it warmed the meeting up in capital fashion. His concluding sentences on the three great merits of Secular Education were really first-rate, and the audience showed that they thought so.

Mr. Foote had a great reception, and had the meeting with him from first to last. Even the reporters were deeply attentive, but they took nothing down, in obedience to the tacit conspiracy of silence on the part of the newspapers against the wicked editor of the *Freethinker*. That his speech was tremendously applauded didn't matter; or rather it *did* matter, for the bigots hate him all the more on that account. If he were a shuffling, halting, broken-winded speaker, they would say "Poor devil!" and give him a bit of a report. But as it is they deem it policy to let their readers know as little as possible about him—or even of his existence; which, of course, is a high compliment—in its dirty way.

The next speaker was Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., who revealed himself in quite a new light. His speech bristled with good points, and was irresistibly funny. Every time he looked at his watch and said he would have to finish, the audience cried "Go on." Mr. Greenwood sustained Secular Education with keen argument and smothered all the rival systems with laughter. Last of all came "Father" Hogg, a High Church clergyman of the hard-working saintly pattern, and with the look of it on his face. The meeting took to him immediately—perhaps all the

more because he had been sitting snugly by Mr. Foote all the evening. He also developed quite a humorous vein, in the midst of his seriousness, and threw the meeting into a convulsion of laughter. When he finished by saying that there were at least some clergymen in favor of justice for all, including Freethinkers, and that it was not *every* clergyman who was simply looking out for all he could get, the meeting generously cheered him again and again.

Lord Weardale put the resolution and it was carried unanimously. In a few well-chosen words, he hoped that the fine successful meeting they had held that evening would be the beginning of a serious and effective campaign in favor of Secular Education. Then the meeting melted away amidst handshakings and congratulations.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has been writing in the *New Age* "On Miracles." The article is nearly three columns long, and he never once says what he means by "a miracle." We doubt whether he knows it himself. It looks very much as though he has spoofed the public so long that he has ended by spoofing himself. Look at the following passage, for instance:—

"The world is full of miracles. Consciousness, for instance, is a complete miracle. Birth is a miracle; life is a miracle; and death was a miracle until quite recently..... Anyhow, there are lots of miracles about."

Yes, and Shaw is one of them.

We beg to remind Mr. Shaw that, in religious discussion, and therefore in philosophical discussion, the word "miracle" has a specialised meaning. It is not simply something that you wonder at, because it was unexpected or because it is inexplicable; it is an act of supernatural (or superhuman) power, deliberately performed for a specific purpose. Mr. Shaw means by "miracle"—if he means anything—no more than a phenomenon, and even a very common phenomenon, which cannot yet be scientifically explained. The theologians and mystery-mongers of every species have always flourished in that obscure region between the light of knowledge and the darkness of ignorance, and it appears that Mr. Shaw is minded to pitch a Punch and Judy show there.

Mr. Shaw must try to pardon us for saying that he is talking downright nonsense when he declares that "Professor Tyndall would not believe in spontaneous generation on any terms." Tyndall went into the question scientifically. He discussed the experiments that were made, and pronounced them inconclusive. Spontaneous generation was "not proven." Huxley held the same view. But both of them believed that spontaneous generation had occurred on this planet in earlier conditions of its history, and in the natural course of evolution.

There was a very funny thing in the last number of the *British Weekly*. It was a double number with an "Illustrated Fiction Supplement." Right under that bold headline on the front page of the supplement appeared "Twenty Coming Events Within Ten Years Ending in 1929-31." This bit of fiction, for such it must be under such a title, turned out to be a fresh prediction of old Prophet Baxter's. All his previous prophecies have been falsified by the events, and he is now working another which is doubtless just as correct. But this time he puts the great catastrophe twenty years ahead. By that time he will probably be dead or retired from business. This is wiser than fixing a date at which you may be proved a—false prophet.

According to Baxter's latest sporting tip, a Socialist Emperor is going to arise, who will gain world-wide power, and stamp "666" on the foreheads of all who buy or sell, and kill those who refuse. The "Last Day" will be either on Thursday, May 2, 1929, or Thursday, April 9, 1931. Baxter finds this in the same Bible which gave him the old dates that were all wrong. He is not sure of the month or the year, but he is sure of the Thursday. We suggest April 1 as an appropriate date. Either year would do.

How some people agree! There is a body calling itself the Education Settlement Committee. It doesn't appear to represent anybody in particular, but it is going (if it can) to do what the Government, with its great majority in the House of Commons, failed to do. At a general meeting of this wonderful body, held at Caxton Hall, Lord Cromer, who

was in the chair, quite superfluously said that "he was very strongly opposed to a secular system of education." It was more to the purpose when he said that "if this dissension continued people would be unwillingly driven to acquiesce in such a solution." But a later speaker, Mr. Alfred Lyttleton, M.P., declared that "the events of the last few weeks had shown the secularists to be an insignificant minority." A still later speaker, however, the Rev. J. Shakespeare (Baptist), drew attention to "the fact that the Church were a minority amidst a floating mass of indifferentism and sentiment." Thus they were all at sixes and sevens with each other. But we believe the Rev. J. Shakespeare is entirely right, and that the other gentlemen know it, only they don't think it prudent to advertise such a disagreeable truth.

Between the Friday afternoon when Mr. Asquith announced that the Education Bill would be dropped and the Monday afternoon when he asked leave of the House to withdraw it, a letter was written to him by the Bishop of North Queensland, who must have been a long way "off his beat." This gentleman begged him not to withdraw the Bill. He said that it embodied a policy which had worked well in New South Wales. But his principal point was this: the dropping of the Bill would "have a disastrous effect upon a movement in Queensland to escape from a rigid secularism to practically the very position desired by Mr. Runciman." It appears that there is to be a Referendum upon the subject very shortly in Queensland, and the Bishop was naturally anxious for something to happen in England that might help those (no doubt the clergy) who were seeking escape from "a rigid secularism"—in other words, from Secular Education. Of course we are very glad that the Queensland clergy will have no assistance from the old country. But we ask our readers to note how the men of God are always striving to get their hands or their feet, or both, into the public schools. They know what is at stake. They are fighting for their professional interests.

The Bishop of North Queensland made an observation, in the course of his letter to Mr. Asquith, on "how closely the British character is identified with Christian morals and Christian teaching." But what does he mean by "Christian morals"? The once famous Dr. Sewel wrote a book on that subject, but many things were set forth in it which present-day Christian advocates would almost universally reject. Where, then, are we to look for *bonâ fide* Christian morals? We know that there are moral maxims in the New Testament, but they are not portions of a definite system. It appears to us that Christianity took over from the ancient world certain moral ideas and added nothing practical of its own. Certainly it added "Christian teaching," but we believe it will be found that the "teaching" and the "morals" have usually been in opposition to each other. It is all very well, for instance, to say "Blessed are the merciful," though it had no merit in the shape of novelty; but the value of this text was destroyed by the doctrine of a vengeful God who plunged most of his own creatures in hell-fire for ever and ever. The "mercy" of such a doctrine was worse than the mercy of human torturers and murderers.

Mr. J. A. Pease, the chief Liberal Whip in the House of Commons, addressing a public meeting in the Town Hall, Saffron Walden, said that the death of the late Education Bill was due to "the grasping greed of the clergy"—just as though there were any real difference between putting Church of England religion on the taxes and Free Church religion on the rates! But the orator's next remark was one with which we heartily concur. "I have longed to see religious education maintained in the schools of this country," he said, "but the only solution which now appears upon the horizon is that we shall have to abolish religious instruction altogether from our schools." To which we say "Hear, hear!" Liberal Whips talk good sense occasionally.

Mr. Pease went on to say that the Government meant to redress the grievances of Nonconformists. Grievances! Why, these people rule the roost at present. And they know it. One can hardly help laughing—only it has its tragic side—at the way in which the Nonconformists regard the Education "compromise" in Mr. Runciman's Bill as a bargain between themselves and the Church of England. Speaking at Whitefield's Tabernacle, while the Bill was still living, the Rev. George Hooper, sitting as President of the Metropolitan Free Church Federation, said that—"Nonconformists must make it clear that in this compromise they had stated their lowest price." The cheek of these people! They are running the Education business. Even the old Established Church has to make a bargain with them. The nation takes a back seat.

One of the funniest things in connection with the debates on the late unhappy Education Bill was the frequent reference by the Liberal newspapers to Mr. Balfour as "the wrecker." The phrase caught on, and the Liberal journalists worked it for all it was worth—and a lot more. Evidently they looked upon the Liberal party's Education Bill as something sacred. They were so full of (well-paid) zeal for their own cause that they forgot that Mr. Balfour was an outsider. It was no part of his duty to help along a Liberal Bill. On the contrary, as both sides agree that the business of the Opposition is to oppose, it was his proper job to kill the thing if he could.

Last week's *John Bull* had an Open Letter to the Right Hon. Walter Runciman, M.P., Minister for Education, in which sympathy was tendered to him in the late disappointment to his "hopeful and perky temperament." The following passage will interest our own readers:—

"Undenominational instruction, as it is called, is equally repulsive to the Roman Catholic and the Secularist. Never thought of the Secularist, by the way, did you? Yet he pays rates and taxes, you know—and given the Right of Entry to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Father Vaughan, how can you exclude Mr. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society?"

Mr. Runciman was advised to go in for "a practical secular curriculum" and "throw Cowper-Temple teaching and all the rest of it to the ecclesiastical dogs."

Canon Hensley Henson cannot bring himself to believe that "the self respect of the teachers will finally acquiesce to a conception of their noble profession which would exclude from their concern the highest faculties and most enduring interests of the children they are to teach. A low toned trades unionism introduced into the educational sphere, where trades unionism at its best is wholly out of place, may for the time lead them to advocate so degrading a policy, but reflection and experience cannot." All this because a growing number of teachers are speaking out in favor of Secular Education in State schools. One would think that teachers were advocating a curriculum *à la* Fagin. As a matter of fact, it is just those teachers who have the highest conception of their profession who are openly in favor of Secular Education. They do at least risk something by their advocacy. But what does Canon Henson risk, or what has he ever risked by his advocacy? It is sheer impertinence for this well paid clerical official to lecture others because of their lack of self-respect, in not agreeing with him. We may point out to Canon Henson that it is the conduct of men of his "superior" profession that is mainly responsible for the anxiety of teachers to sheer clerically managed schools. They know that their own interests and the interest of the children are best where the influence of the clergy is reduced to a minimum. And all the stupid talk of a lack of "self respect" and a "low toned trades unionism" will not alter the lesson of their experience.

Canon Henson also quotes with approval an unnamed, but, of course, "intelligent" observer, who says, "All moral instruction given without the sanction of, and appeal to, more sacred claims than those of duty to the community or to self is quite inadequate for its object, namely, the formation of individual character and the foundation of national virtue." But so far as the appeal to experience can be made, the verdict is in quite the opposite direction. Character building on a basis of religious instruction has hitherto been the rule. And if the results from this are satisfactory, why on earth is there so much dissatisfaction expressed by all well wishers to education? Anyone but a clergyman would be able to see that it is the very breakdown of education on a religious basis that has brought the matter before the public notice. The impossibility of basing an adequate education on secular grounds is sheer nonsense. We have never tried it, save in individual cases, and if these have been unsatisfactory, Freethinkers should figure in the police courts more largely than they do. At any rate, John Stuart Mill will not be a bad case to commence. If Canon Henson means that the sense of duty to the community is not adequate to bring Christians up to the scratch, he may be right, although we doubt it. But if he is right, it says very little for the character of Christians or for the influence of Christian training. And if Canon Henson wants a case in point we advise him to take Japan, where duty to the community—which involves duty to self—is the basic principle of the whole system of education.

All sorts of people have been praising Milton lately,—including, we dare say, many persons who never read twenty lines of him. Milton tercentenary meetings have been held east, west, north, and south; and, of course, one was held at Birmingham. It was under the auspices of the District

Evangelical Free Church Council, as if Milton specially belonged to Nonconformity, whereas all he wanted was to get rid of the Bishops in the Church of England. The chief speaker at this meeting was Sir Oliver Lodge, who said very little about the poet, and a great deal about the Education controversy. He regretted that the quarrel of sects was "propelling us straight towards an era of secularism." This was a great danger and he wished the Churches would recognise it. His own proposal was that "the teachers should be given liberty to teach what they themselves believed." But this is running away from Secular Education into the arms of Anarchy. We regard Sir Oliver Lodge's proposal as the most unhappy that has yet been made, and we wonder if he is really serious.

Sir Oliver Lodge is a recognised authority in physics—and worthily so. This fact forms the only basis for the respect paid by certain people to his opinions on religion. Due importance is, therefore, attached by the *Christian Commonwealth* to Sir Oliver's testimony that "the clear perception of the essentials of religion [at the City Temple] and the manifest activity of the Holy Spirit among all sorts and conditions of men at the present time, are most striking." We greatly admire that "manifest activity." Doubtless Sir Oliver's researches in electricity and the nature of the ether, has enabled him to detect traces of the Holy Spirit with the certainty of a chemical experiment. There is nothing like bringing a scientific method to bear on these questions.

Judging from the advice given to a number of young preachers by Mr. J. L. Rodger, of Aberdeen, the business of preaching is rather more complicated than we had imagined. In mounting the pulpit, the budding preacher is cautioned that he should walk up the steps so that the foot away from the congregation should be the first to alight in the pulpit. Then follows the rather cryptic advice, "In sitting down this same rule should be adhered to." We gather from this that the preacher must sit down first with the foot that is away from the congregation. It would be a breach of decorum to sit down with both feet at once. In going forward, the final step should be taken by the left foot, and he must stand with the left foot a little in advance of the right. Evidently, in preaching, much more depends upon the feet than upon the head. Then, again, the preacher is cautioned against performing the menial office of closing the pulpit door. No doubt this is to give his congregation the impression that his mind is too full of spiritual things to attend to such petty details. He must beware of looking round the church. "The eyes should look, not gaze, in front." The distinction is most subtle. He must not clutch at the sides of the pulpit, or tamper with the embroideries. The reason given is the absence of repose, which "is often the cause of so many open eyes during devotion." Really, we thought the complaint was, usually, that eyes were *not* open enough. The body should be kept erect, as leaning forward "often causes that pained expression which plays on the face of the one engaged in prayer." The preacher is also warned "against making grimaces." Comment on the last two pieces of advice would be cruel. We never thought preaching was so complicated an affair.

Mr. R. J. Campbell thinks it most remarkable that no reference to the ministry of Jesus should be made in the literature of the period. We agree; and the explanation is an easy one—only Mr. Campbell would not accept it. He also marvels that we know so little of the life of Jesus, and says that we "vainly try to fill in the gaps." But this is not quite true. Some of the gaps are filled in. If Mr. Campbell will turn to the collection of writings known as *The Apocryphal New Testament*, he will find many of the gaps he notes filled in. Of course, Mr. Campbell may reply that these writings are condemned by their title, and are rejected by Christians as spurious. This, however, is beside the point. They were accepted as genuine, and were believed in by many. They are not inherently more absurd than our canonical gospels. The Church saw fit to reject them, but they might as well have rejected others. Anyway, the life is there, and there is no reason whatever for rejecting these and accepting others, except for the convenience of Christians. Like other *Christian* critics, Mr. Campbell accepts what suits his purpose, rejects what does not, and then persuades himself he is practicing scientific criticism.

Mr. R. J. Campbell is wholly mistaken in the statement that those in the Græco-Roman world "who worshiped the sun were worshiping something beyond the sun all the time." Plato tells us that "the earliest inhabitants of Greece, like many of the barbarians, had for their gods the sun, moon, earth, the stars and heaven, and that these were called gods

because they were always 'running about.'" Believed to be alive, such objects were originally regarded as supreme beings controlling human destiny. Symbolism is a growth of civilisation, not an inheritance from primitive, savage ages. Gods as invisible beings are inferences of the imagination. Savage man knew nothing of anything "beyond" or "above" what he saw. Symbolism is always a later development. Mr. Campbell himself is a symbolist, and so, possibly, to some extent, is Mr. William Watson; but neither the one nor the other has a right to put their own metaphysics into the mouths of the "earliest inhabitants of Greece," and other barbarians.

Preachers seem getting fond of "profane" dinners. Rev. R. J. Campbell dined with the "Vagabonds," and the Rev. Prebendary Carlile, of the "Church Army," has since dined with the Sphinx Club at the Cecil. Responding to the toast of his health, he said that he was a confirmed believer in the spiritual uses of advertisement. Of course. So is Dewar, and so is Buchanan. Mr. Carlile referred to his catch, or scratch, sermon on "Holbein's Big Swim." "If," he said, "I had just announced in the ordinary way a sermon, say, on Jonah and the whale, I should probably have had a congregation of two or three old ladies. As it was, the place was crowded three-quarters of an hour before the service began." Exactly. When the reverend gentleman preaches from the Bible he gets an audience of three at the outside—one for each person of the Holy Trinity; when he preaches on the sensational event in the week's newspapers, he gets a crowd. Could anything show better how the Bible is played out?

Holbein came to hear Mr. Carlile's sermon. There would probably be a bigger crowd if Jonah would only turn up to hear the sermon on himself. Mr. Carlile might think it over.

Any number of Bishops can be had in England. Episcopal incomes run high here. Capetown wants an Archbishop and can't get one. Church dignity after Church dignity has declined the job. The salary offered is only £640 a year. South Africa will have to learn that Bishops, much more Archbishops, don't work at that price.

A pious writer remarks that "the birth of Jesus was of supreme interest to the poor." All we know is, that the teaching of Christianity on the subject of poverty is mainly responsible for the abject condition of the poor in Christendom. Jesus pronounced his first beatitude on poverty, and the Church has shown its high appreciation of the blessing by invariably pandering to the rich and keeping the poor in quiet subjection with the smooth promise of ample compensation hereafter. The truth is that Christianity has been a curse to the poor by assisting in the perpetuation of their deplorable conditions.

The same Sunday-school writer observes further that "the birth of Jesus was of supreme interest to the whole world." Does this religious teacher forget that even to-day only a small fraction of the world has ever heard of such an event, and that in practice Christendom itself ignores it? To the world at large the birth of Jesus has made no difference whatever, while in Christendom it has been the source of more harm than benefit.

We are also assured that "the birth of Jesus was of supreme interest to heaven." As the writer in question knows no more about heaven than we do, and we humbly confess that we know nothing, comment would be superfluous. Yet Christians talk and write as if they had already spent half a lifetime in the promised *post-mortem* home of believers.

Mr. Rattenbury continues to regale his great audiences at the Lyceum Theatre in quite a royal fashion. On a recent Sunday he told them all about the dying thief who, unlike Jesus, richly deserved his doom. He had been a notorious criminal, the terror of whatever neighborhood he happened to visit. But all of a sudden he recognised in Jesus, who was hanging beside him, the Divine sin-bearer, the Savior of the world, and in the twinkling of an eye

"His chains fell off,
His heart was free."

Before anybody could say Jack Robinson, the black-hearted robber became a white-souled saint, with his title clear to mansions in the sky. Wonderful! Prodigious! And yet—and yet the thieves are with us still, and the world teems with miserable sinners, hardened and unsaved. Hence Mr. Rattenbury's profession and—success.

London is a Christian city, and the *Christian Commonwealth* is a zealous champion of the Christian religion according to the New Theology. In its last but one issue, our spiritual contemporary is sorely puzzled as to which is socially and morally the worst place, Paris or London. The majority of the public men who were asked to express an opinion on the subject are inclined to give the biscuit for wickedness to London. Both cities are bad enough, in all conscience; but, on the whole, London is the deeper-sunk in the mire of ungodliness and iniquity. We do not wish to challenge that estimate; but does it not occur to the *Christian Commonwealth* that the admitted existence of such a London bears irresistible and irrefutable witness to the total failure of Christianity, and forms the strongest possible argument against its divinity?

Mr. Silas Hocking, the pious novelist, however, assures us that "London, for its size, is the most moral city in the world." All we can say is, God pity the other cities; which, alas, he clearly never does. If Mr. Hocking is right—and we all know what London is—the argument against God the Redeemer is even stronger than we had imagined, and it is being forged by his own official defenders and servants.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, in an eloquently severe denunciator of what he calls superstition; but is not the whole of supernatural religion essentially superstitious? "J. B." pronounces many doctrines about God eminently superstitious; but is not the belief in a Supreme Being of any kind, as well as the faith based on that belief, equally superstitious? Credibility is a relative term. What is credible to a Catholic is incredible to a Protestant; what is credible to an orthodox Protestant is incredible to a New Theologian; and what is credible to a New Theologian is incredible to a Secularist. The latter regards all faith in the supernatural as credulity. "J. B.'s" theology is every whit as evidentially groundless and unverifiable as are "the hell-predestination creeds" which he condemns and ridicules with such fervor.

"It is a wonder God has not struck you down long ago," said an exceptionally saintly lady to a Freethought lecturer. So it is, if God exists. On the other hand, if God did exist, there would be no Atheists. The fact that there are Atheists, and that they are never Divinely reprov'd, or struck down dead, is a strong argument in favor of their teaching. God's men would close their mouths fast enough if they only could, and as they always did when they had the power.

A Jewish member of the London County Council brought an action for libel against the *Jewish Chronicle* for saying (in Yiddish) that he had eaten pork. Holy Moses! What a use to put English courts of justice to! Surely the Jews ought to settle the "pig" question amongst themselves. We shudder to think of what may happen if this sort of libel action is encouraged. Some leading Vegetarian will be claiming damages from a fellow citizen for suggesting that he coquetted too openly with a beef-steak, or claimed a close friendship with a fried sole. Perhaps a Christian Scientist will sue someone for stating that he was seen on a doctor's doorstep or in a chemist's shop. A Liberal may want £1,000 damages for the wicked allegation that he was seen wearing a primrose, and a Conservative may claim a higher figure on account of his being maliciously accused of wearing a red tie. There is no end to the libel actions that may be started if Jews are allowed to bring "pork" suits before the judges.

"Beginning at Jerusalem," was the text of a recent sermon; but the preacher did not think it expedient to mention that for many centuries Jerusalem has not been a Christian city, nor Palestine a Christian country. This fact becomes most significant when we bear in mind that the Jews were heaven's elect, and that for countless generations they were Divinely trained and disciplined with the one object of preparing them for the advent of Christ. And yet when Christ came these God-taught people would have none of him. This is an exceedingly curious fact. The nearer Jerusalem you get the less Christianity you find. The river is dried up at its source, and it cannot be long before it ceases to flow altogether.

The Rev. Dr. McAdam Muir, of Glasgow, believes that Jesus Christ, when on earth, miraculously fed thousands of hungry people. If he did so, why did he ever throw up the job? If he came to London now and undertook to provide food for the starving children, and thus relieve the County Council of its responsibility, it would be the making of Christianity. And if he is a Divine Being, as his followers say, he could do it with such amazing and delightful ease. But he cometh not, nor ever appeareth on Highgate Hill to weep over the metropolitan hunger-wail.

Rev. Dr. K. Anderson, of Dundee, tells us that "Christmas Goodwill" really means the "Rooting out of Dislikes." If that is so, the New Theologians have a fearfully tough task in front of them. So extreme is their dislike of Atheistic science and Freethought, that they can never refer to either without grossly misrepresenting them. Let them lay their own lesson to heart, then, and remember to apply their own maxim: "If you dislike any person [or system], you do not know that person [or system]." The right application would be so very pat.

The Bishop of Birmingham has discovered that the Bible is against "sweating"—that is to say, against getting needy people to work for cruelly low wages. But why was this not discovered before? Because the wickedness of "sweating" was not perceived until recently. The Bible will always be found to condemn whatever it pays to condemn, just as the Bible always supports what it pays to support.

Bishop Gore (he really ought to get that name changed) is quite comical when he says that God is going to punish "sweaters." When? When they are dead. Few of them mind a punishment so remote—and so uncertain. As long as they escape in this world they cheerfully take their chance in the next.

Carlyle was a great man, and Goethe was a much greater. Neither of them was a Christian, yet both said many wise and weighty things about the art of living. But the Rev. J. H. Jowett, of Birmingham, who is not a great man, though an exceedingly popular preacher, declares that when a man is in trouble he must not turn to Carlyle or Goethe for the necessary comfort, but to a minister of the Gospel, who is far and away more competent to deal with such a case than are the greatest men that ever lived. Illimitable is the conceit of little men, especially if they happen to be men of God. The whole Universe is in glad subjection to them!

Good old "Providence" again! A recent typhoon off the coast of Japan drowned 350 fishermen. No doubt the sharks have held a Thanksgiving Service.

More "Providence." Twenty-seven persons were killed by a landslide at Monte Pale, in Italy. "He doeth all things well."

Mr. Frederic Moore, in the *Daily Chronicle*, tells how "Commissioner" Railton, of the Salvation Army, addressed a mixed meeting of Turks, etc., at Constantinople. The narrator says—"It was a diplomatic talk: speaking always of God, and never of Christ." Poor Christ! Right out of the show when it is necessary for business!

"Honesty asks what is true. Courage faces the facts." These two sentences concluded our recent reply to Mr. Bernard Shaw. They were quoted, with due acknowledgment, in *London Opinion*. They are also quoted, without due acknowledgment, in the *Hartlepool Advertiser*. They are printed at the top of a column of editorial notes,—within inverted commas, it is true, but omitting the author's name. Did the editor think it wouldn't do to let his readers know that the editor of the *Freethinker* could write such a motto? Anyhow, to quote a man's words, and suppress his name, is bad journalism and worse manners.

The Rev. Mr. Tweddell, of St. Paul's, Camden-square, says that "hundreds of men and women live perfectly useless lives." Very probably; but what is the standard of usefulness? There are some people, of no mean judgment, who do not hesitate to affirm that preaching is by no means one of the useful occupations, and, indeed, that the world would get on much better without its preachers. How would it fare without its farmers and manual laborers?

It is astonishing what a number of religious people, and even clergymen, get into miserable scrapes. Here is the Rev. Edward Rhodes, for instance, a Church clergyman, charged at Cardiff, together with a poor woman, with improper behavior in a lane near Roath Park. The magistrates "after a prolonged consultation" decided to convict both defendants, and fined them each 10s. and costs, or fourteen days. The reverend gentleman gave notice of appeal against the conviction. The woman, who made no defence, and asked no questions, went to prison.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 3 and 17, Shoreditch Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—January 17, Belfast.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 3, Leicester; 10, Failsworth; 17, Greenwich. February 14, West Ham.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £283 15s. 8d. Received since.—G. B., 10s.; Sydney Smith, 5s.
- F. HOXY.—Will answer you next week.
- T. V. WILLIAMS.—We have given it a brief paragraph. Thanks for address and good wishes.
- H. G. (Manchester).—Glad you enjoy the *Freethinker* and find it "stimulating and instructive"—also that you find "Abracadabra's" articles "full of interest and instruction." Miss Vance sees to the rest of your letter.
- A. HINDLEY.—There is something in your suggestion, if it could ever be carried out, which is doubtful. As to the Birmingham of to-day, the less said the better. Thanks for your compliments and good wishes.
- G. B.—It is not so "small." If all who could afford it did as much, there would be less trouble and worry. Your suggestion shall be considered. Pleased to note your high appreciation. But don't fear for the movement. It will go on, whatever happens to us. Great ideas find instruments or make them.
- ALFRED POPE.—Order handed to shop manager. Pleased to hear from so old a subscriber, and one who finds his Freethought principles more than ever true and satisfactory.
- W. W. GUNN.—Thanks for your appreciative and encouraging letter. See "Acid Drops" *re* enclosure.
- G. S. (Bolton).—We really cannot tell you "the number of alterations or corrections of the Authorised Version of the Bible in the Revised Version," but they must be many thousands. An edition published at the Cambridge University Press gives the text of both Versions, with the different readings printed to catch the eye; so that they could be counted, if anybody would take the trouble. Our own life is too short.
- T. CAREY.—Sent as requested. Thanks for good wishes.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for welcome cuttings.
- F. W. WALSH.—The *Freethinker* was prosecuted for "blasphemy" in 1882-1883 on account of its letterpress as well as its illustrations. It suits the Christians to overlook this fact. You should never believe even the best of them when they make statements about "infidels." Your personal compliments are too flattering, but we should be glad if all your good wishes were realised.
- AMBROSE KINGS LYNNE.—Sorry to hear that some Christian Evidence hooligan has been using your name on a postcard to us. We don't at all mind such fellows—high or low—referring to us as an "ex-jail bird." Some of the most famous persons in history have been in prison. Jesus Christ was in prison. He was also executed as a criminal.
- JOHN DINGLEY.—We hope we have got your name right. Shall be sent as desired. Glad to hear your copy is always given away when read and "travels round doing damage to superstition."
- W. AINSLEY.—We understand that hundreds of "replies" to Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses* appeared in America, but we never saw one of them, and we believe they are all forgotten now.
- J. W. REITON.—(1) The best report of the Secular Education demonstration appeared in the *Morning Post*—a high-class Conservative paper. We did not expect decent reports in the "Liberal" papers, and we were not disappointed. The *Daily News* was an exception for once. (2) Henry the Fifth's piety is not Shakespeare's.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance gratefully acknowledges a parcel of cast-off clothing from A. J. Fincken. Further help in this direction is greatly needed.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

East and North-East London Freethinkers will please note that the Secular Society (Ltd.) has secured the fine Shoreditch Town Hall for four Sunday evenings (3, 10, 17, 24) in January. Mr. Foote will deliver the opening lecture of this course; other lectures will be delivered by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. The full program will appear in our next issue. We appeal to the "saints" to do their utmost to make these meetings thoroughly successful. If they only help the advertising—by letting their friends and acquaintances know of the meetings, and by circulating neat printed announcements which can be obtained of Miss Vance—the hall should be crowded each evening.

There ought to be a specially strong rally on the opening night at Shoreditch Town Hall. Starting triumphantly is half the battle. It stirs up enthusiasm and helps all through the course. Mr. Foote intends to make the first lecture as attractive as possible to Freethinkers as well as to the "unconverted."

Freethinkers ought really to do more missionary work than they have been performing lately. It is not enough to hustle round in times of excitement. The most important work is done *between* such times. Of course it is harder and less exhilarating, but if Freethinkers would only do it more readily they would soon come to do it more cheerfully. We invite some of the backward ones to give it a trial.

We beg to call attention again to the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, which takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 12. The tickets are, as usual, only 4s. each, which covers the dinner and the rest of the evening's entertainment. We hope there will be a record gathering on this occasion, so that the New Year's work may be inaugurated gloriously. A hearty welcome will be extended to any provincial "saints" who may be visiting London at that time. Mr. Foote will take the chair, and nearly "everybody who is anybody" in the Freethought movement in London will be present, including Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, Heaford, and Moss.

January 11, the day before the Annual Dinner, is Mr. Foote's birthday. If it were a shiftable anniversary, like the deathday of Jesus Christ, it might be worked in with the dinner as long as he (Mr. F. not J. C.) is President. Another interesting point, perhaps, is that 1909 is the twentieth year of Mr. Foote's presidency. It was in February, 1890, that Charles Bradlaugh passed over to him the president's hammer. Whatever else may be said of him, it must be admitted that he has done a lot of work in the nineteen years, and those who appreciate it might make an effort to attend on January 12 and give him a "good cheer!" for the twentieth.

The Secular Education League's demonstration at St. James's Hall would not have been the success it was without the vigorous aid of the National Secular Society. Miss Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, did a great deal of hard work in connection with it, and was well assisted by many of her colleagues, including several members of the Executive. It may be added that the Secular Society (Ltd.) contributes handsomely to the cost of the demonstration.

It was a pity that Mr. Herbert Burrows and the Rev. Dr. Warschauer, who were on the printed list of speakers at St. James's Hall, were unable to attend, in consequence of their inability to free themselves from pre-engagements. Both sent sympathetic letters, but their presence would have been better. They represent important sections of the Secular Education movement.

The Camberwell Borough Council is making an exhibition of itself. It has gravely been discussing whether its meetings shall be opened with prayer or not. On the whole, we should say it is past praying for. We are glad to see that Mr. A. B. Moss, who kept his seat on the Council while so many Progressives lost theirs at the last elections, did his utmost in opposition to this silly proposal. His bold action has won for him the praise of many liberal-minded persons in the borough, and the bitter hatred of the local bigots.

Mr. Lloyd seems pleased with his lecturing visit to Boston. He noted the zealous propagandist spirit of the members, and the business spirit of the "strong and pushing committee." "Boston," he says, "is ripe for a Freethought harvest."

The God-Mongers.

BY J. P. BLAND,

Lecturer at Paine Memorial Hall, Boston.

IT is still a common saying that we live in a wonderful world, and this after 2,500 years of more or less careful observation of its phenomena. But if the world is still wonderful to us, what must it have been to the unintelligent and uncivilised of ages past? How puzzling to them must have been its movements, such as the blowing of the wind, where but a moment before the air was still, the swelling of the sea where so recently it was calm, the leaping of the lightning and the pealing of the thunder from the hitherto silent sky; as also the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies, and the regular sequence of the seasons. Now, all these and a thousand kindred phenomena led our far-back forbears to the conclusion that the forces of nature were caused and controlled by personal powers like to themselves, and these they called gods, and they naturally appealed to such for guidance and support, offered to them prayers, sang to them praises, danced for them dances, brought to them sacrifices.

But the man of old could not always attend to these duties, neither did he always feel that he was just the kind of person to acceptably do so, and so there naturally arose that most striking of all the figures that history presents to us, the priest or God-monger; the man who claimed he could move the power that moves the world, that he could appease the Almighty's anger, that he could gain his favoring smile. And there is no habitable part of this fair earth that has not known him and felt his influence. The smoke of his sacrifices and the sound of his supplications have arisen from millions of altars, and his message has been spoken in every tongue. In the earth's darkest places, and in its dreariest wastes, by the banks of the Nile and the Ganges, in the city alike of the violet crown and of the Cæsar's, within Canossa's chastening castle as on the Vatican's gorgeous throne, the priest, and the priest triumphant, has ruled and led. And what a power he has both claimed and wielded, for has he not told us that he holds the keys of all the kingdoms of both the seen and the unseen worlds, and that he holds them not in vain? Has he not told us that through him nations have arisen, flourished, and decayed; that through him the blind have seen, the deaf have heard, the dumb have spoken, and the dead have been raised to life again; that through him the very elements changed their natures and forgone their wanted ways, that the stars have fought in their courses, that the sun and moon have paused in their orbits, and that our whole round globe has reversed its motion till the shadow on the dial of Judah's king has gone backward ten degrees? And all these things are possible, are probable, and, in fact, are entirely normal, if we but admit the priest's premises on this matter, if we but allow that his teachings on it are true. For what, in the main, are they? They are to the effect that our world and all its doings are within the guiding grasp of a personal god or gods, that this god or these gods can be influenced, and that the priest has this influencing power. Now if we admit these teachings, if we grant, as is claimed, that the race here is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but rather to God who giveth the victory, and that this God gives ear and heed to the priest, then does his vocation become not only a rational one, but also one of great possible beneficence to us. Admitting the hierophant's premises, we see why the sick man, as the Bible directs, should send for a priest instead of a doctor, why plagues, as in bygone days, should be fought with prayers, pestilences with pious processions, sorrows with sacrifices, wrongs with relics, and comets with papal pellets. But are things here really as the priest affirms? Are the affairs of this world really

in the hands of a personal God, and of one who, as in the case of Jacob and Esau, is constantly, and more or less capriciously, advancing one man and abasing another; is this God a persuadable one, and has the priest got any pull on him? Let us inquire.

We began by saying that the idea of God was first suggested to man by his inability to otherwise account for the facts that nature presented to him such as the wind, the storm, the seasons, and their kindred phenomena, and that he attributed these things to the direct agency of a personal God or gods, and to such having a nature or natures like his own. What, then, is man's nature as a personal being? It consists essentially of two things—namely, his self-consciousness and his apparent self-determinism. What, then, in the next place, are these? They are forms of consciousness, and, as such, are parts of the many modes that the universal substance or energy can assume. Where do they have their origin? In the brain of man so long as it is normally connected with his living body, and, in so far as we know, they neither originate, nor can they exist, apart from these causes. But the implication of all this is very clear, and is to the effect that there can, to the best of our knowledge, be no personality like our own, except where is a physical organism like ours. Has, then, God got such; and, if so, where is the proof? The priest of our day tells us that God is a spirit, and we in reply tell him that there can be no spirit where there is no living body and brain to produce it, and vainly call on him for rational reply, and ask him to either show his God or cease the affirming of his existence. But it is frequently claimed that while there may be no personal God extraneous to the universe, yet is there one who is immanent in it. If, however, what I have just said is true, there can be no personal God immanent in the universe as a whole, unless this universe, as a whole, is a living and organic structure like our own, which clearly it is not. Moreover, great nature as a whole, as we know beyond all reasonable question, is utterly impersonal, except where personality has been attained by the highest forms of her known life, and as the result of known causes. Her every movement and transformation are but the expression and result of natural and inviolable law, each and all of her happenings being but the inevitable outcome and effects of their natural antecedents, and the like causes of what follows. This is what is meant by evolution, which is simply natural and continuous uniformity of procedure, without any supernatural aid or interference of any kind whatever. This is what Spencer means where he speaks of the persistence of force, and of the persistence of the relations of forces. It is what Haeckel means when he speaks of "the law of substance," and defines it as "the law of the constancy of matter and force." And such is not only the practically universal teaching of all modern science, but it is also the one universal fact or postulate upon which this science rests, and without which it would be impossible. For the science of our day is but the observing, the testing, the co-ordinating, and the systematising of the facts and phenomena that the world and man present to us; all of which would be impossible if these facts and phenomena did not occur after some invariable method or order, and after one which could be both discerned and predicted. And these facts, we repeat, demonstrate the truth of nature's impersonality, save as already exceptionally noted. But nature is really all that we know or have to deal with here, and with the elimination from her of all supernatural and interfering personality, God wholly and entirely disappears; and when God goes, the priest can no other than follow. And it is thus that the knowledge of our day has left the God-monger stranded, stripped and stung, high and dry on the boundless shore of the infinite sea of changeless and inviolable law, there to slowly but most surely die.

But a great and demonstrated truth, and more especially when opposed by great and powerful

interests, usually wins its way but slowly. Let us take for example the heliocentric doctrine. That doctrine was scientifically proved in the early part of the seventeenth century, and at that time, too, it was denounced and repudiated by the Church as a most dangerous and damning error, its teaching being forbidden in all Catholic institutions of learnings, and this ban not being removed till more than 200 years after its issue. We thus see that it took this now universally accepted doctrine more than two centuries to mount from its dungeon to its throne. Now it is after that manner with the Church and its God-doctrine to-day. Every Christian minister is still in part a priest. In every Christian church there still arise the offerings of praise and prayer, and in not a few there rises, too, the smoke of the altar's incense, as the priest offers up his sacrifice of God to God. In fact, the whole Church still obstinately and even doggedly persists in retaining its God, and continually and strenuously insists upon the supreme importance of the world doing likewise. Thus, only last Sunday Bishop Hamilton, preaching here in our city, spoke as follows: "There never was a time when the world would be in greater stress without God than to-day." But if, as the Bishop and his kind assert, there really is a good God, then why is our world in any stress at all? Why does this omnipotent and benevolent Deity of his, in and by whom we are said to live and move and have our being, so fearfully crowd us with such foul and repulsive human wreckage? Why does he send us such hosts of priests and Levites, and such mere handfuls of good Samaritans, such a flood of Jezebels, and such a frost of Josephs, such an army of the tribe of Judas, and such a corporal's guard of the family of Nathanael? thus keeping the broad road ever full, and the wide gate ever thronged, while the strait and narrow way forever remains so sparsely and so reluctantly trod. And to this question the bishop and all his kind have no real answer, so from their standpoint there can be none. And it is not only from clergy of the orthodox church, but it is also from ministers of churches that the orthodox regard as more or less heretical, that we are getting teaching of the bishop's sort. Thus, we had one of the Liberal Christian preachers here not long ago, and one, too, who had been especially selected by his denomination for the work in hand, and here is a sample of his goods: "It is the belief in God that makes all human morality possible." This reminds one of the more recent declaration of Cardinal Gibbons, that there can be no morality without religion, and no religion without God. The hand of the ignorant or careless preacher and that of the ignorant or careless prelate, here stretching across the surging sea of their separating differences, and clasping in acclamation of that to which history clearly gives the lie. No morality without God, say you? What, then, of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Haeckel, Ingersoll, and that innumerable host of doubters or unbelievers who have passed through life practically blameless and undefiled, and at its close have peacefully and unresignedly gone down to their final rest? No morality without God? What, then, of Buddhism and Japan? And, too, would it not be at least as true to say that there is no morality with God? Let us see. Israel had what these clerics call God, and her people held to and worshiped this God with an almost unique tenacity and fervor. But did this belief in God morally save them? Did it? Read their history as told by themselves, and more especially from the time of Moses to that of David, and you will see that this belief in God not only left them but little better than a horde of brutal and disgusting beasts, but that it positively very largely made them such. And the same is partly true of Greece, Rome, and Christendom, as of every civilisation that has arisen weighted with the withering blight and curse of its belief in some god or gods. For it is self evident that whether the god belief of any people is to them a moral help or a moral hindrance will depend chiefly upon what kind of a god it is in whom they believe; and amid

the numberless gods that the brain of man has created, it is among the most difficult of all things to find a morally decent one; the God of Christianity being, in some respects, the most fiendishly repulsive of them all. And this preacher of whose statement I have been speaking, was followed by another, who thus spake: "The brotherhood of man has no vitality save through the fatherhood of God." But has it much of any with this alleged fatherhood? Let the fierce and brutal industrial battle in which all Christendom is now and everywhere engaged give answer. Let its enormous and ever-growing standing armies, its huge and ever-increasing war navies make reply. Let the fact that after more than eighteen centuries of the preaching of the fatherhood of God, the Christian nations of this world are now more largely and thoroughly equipped for mutual slaughter than at any other time in their history, stop all further schoolboy palaver of this sort. The brotherhood of man does not depend upon either his belief in, or his disbelief of, the fatherhood of God; but upon man's love of his fellows, upon his desire to deal justly and kindly with such; and these virtues have no necessary connection with the belief in a God of any kind whatever, and are at least as likely to flourish without such as with it. But, ladies and gentlemen, did you ever ponder on the fearful burden that this doctrine of the fatherhood of God puts upon deity? Did you ever think of the appalling responsibility that must rest upon such an one, in view of the earthly hell in which our race as a whole has thus far lived? Paul has told us that the whole creation ever groaneth and travaileth together in pain, and a much better authority than Paul, John Fiske, has also told us that nine-tenths of all the conscious life our world has held has been wholly brutish and fiendish; and in face of this ever-present, world-wide, and sickening tribulation, is it not at least as reasonable to speak of the fiendhood of God as it is of his fatherhood? It certainly seems so. Then, too, such unspeakably piteous things are so continuously happening at some place or other, and the priest's great hair-counter never shows up to stop them. Here is a sample. Not long ago there was a dreadful fire in one of our neighboring cities, some sixty poor people were burnt to death, and this is what one of the God-mongers there said to his kind and heavenly father about it: "O Lord! no accidents occur with thee. The flames could not have leapt out, and the havoc could not have been wrought, without thy permission." Can any blasphemy greatly surpass that? I know of but one, and it is that most horrid of all blasphemies, which represents man's heavenly father as forever forsaking and rejecting him, and dooming him to the scorching confines of an endless hell. And yet this preacher, and thousands of his co-believers, ask us to join with them in believing in, and worshiping, a God of this kind. It were as reasonable to ask us to worship the Devil.

Now there is much more that one might profitably say on this theme if only time permitted. One might point out that the priest of our day, unlike the priest of our sacred Scriptures, does not make good. He neither proves, nor attempts to prove, in any even approximately effective way, his assumed prevailing power with God. It is not thus recorded of the days of old. Not so with the men who turned rods into serpents and rivers into blood, who brought down fires from heaven and stood unharmed mid those of earth, who miraculously replenished the meal and oil, and fed ten thousand with less than would have given an old-fashioned family its Thanksgiving dinner. These men, as reported, made good their calling as priests or God-mongers by practically bringing on their God to vouch for them. Are any of our priests doing this? Did even the Pope attempt it when France kicked him from her saddle the other day? Then, too, there is one more word that I want to say on the plea that the priest is for ever making that there can be no morality without belief in God, while he always neglects to state that if morality is commonly connected with God in the

minds of the people it is because of his erroneous teaching. He has steadily and persistently taught that morality consists in obedience to God's will, instead of as steadily teaching that it has nothing whatever to do with either gods or devils, but consists in living in harmony with man's highest or best good. So that when his followers learn, as they constantly are learning, that there is no such God as he has led them to believe in; then such morality as they had is quite often more or less destroyed; and this, simply because their entire moral training has been foolishly and erroneously bound up with that with which it has no necessary connection, and from which it should have been kept entirely apart. And the only remedy for this state of things is to keep both God and morality where they really belong; God in the dungeon of an ignorant and superstitious faith, morality in the clear daylight of man's beneficent reason.

And now let me say in closing, that I have not the least desire, now or at any time, to unduly belabor the priest. We are all aware of the perfectly natural origin of his calling, as also of its present equally natural uselessness; save as the minister to ignorant and superstitious needs, that his priestly ignorance and superstition have created, and that such are ever seeking to keep alive. To-day, however, along with whatever of seeming good he may still be doing, he unwisely stands for two great, clear and unmistakable evils, namely, those of supernaturalism and of super-moralism. In the first named of these he presents an utterly false and misleading conception of the nature and government of the world to which we belong; a conception which has no correspondence or agreement with either the world within us or the world without us; and one which if acted upon, and which in so far as acted upon, can eventually bring only disappointment and disaster. And so tenaciously is this God-delusion held to by him, that it sometimes seems as if he would never bring himself to tell the truth in this matter, would never learn to substitute impersonal and inevitable nature for his personal and capricious God, Huxley's chess player, for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; while in super-moralism he presents to man a duty which he claims is higher than any moral duty, a duty to God which he represents as being altogether more important than any which man owes either to himself or to his fellow man. No language can too severely condemn all teaching of that kind, and no good can come from its acceptance, for if there is any one thing more than another which the knowledge of our day reveals to us, and which its best conscience insistently urges upon us, it is the clear and certain truth that our highest known duties are to ourselves and to our race, and that all other duties are relatively unimportant. What, then, in this matter, above all else, we wish to do, is to kill the priest and to make alive the mental and moral teacher and inspirer; and the quicker it is done, the better will it be for us all.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Death of an American Freethinker.

WHEN I was in America, at the end of 1896, I made the acquaintance of Mr. D. A. Blodgett at Grand Rapids, Michigan. He invited me and my travelling companion, the late Charles Watts, to Grand Rapids, where he engaged the Opera House for us to lecture in, paying all the expenses of hall, advertising, and lecturers, himself. Mr. Watts addressed the afternoon meeting, and I the evening meeting, on a Sunday; and I recollect that the audiences were large and enthusiastic. We spent some days at Grand Rapids and Mr. Blodgett showed us the sights of the place. We visited his home and were introduced to Mrs. Blodgett, who was quite a beauty, and a very interesting beauty, too, just then, as she had just presented her husband with a baby boy and was still in the nurse's hands. Mr. Blodgett was a

proud father, for he was over seventy years of age, but more active and alert than most men of fifty. I exchanged letters with him occasionally after my return to England, but I have heard no news of him for several years, and I now see that he is dead. His demise occurred on November 1. It was naturally recorded in the local press, and I make the following extracts from the obituary notice in the *Grand Rapids Review* :—

"In religion Mr. Blodgett was an Agnostic. He was a personal friend and a great admirer of Robert G. Ingersoll and of Charles Watts, the great English lecturer. At his own expense Mr. Blodgett brought both to Grand Rapids several times to speak. He was an Agnostic to the end, with no thought of wavering, no hint at a change. Though he had no faith, Mr. Blodgett had works to his credit, and many of them. He gave freely to churches to aid them in building or for their activities when he believed their cause was worthy. He was especially kind to the Catholic and colored churches, but he did not draw the line at any denomination. He was equally kind to all provided always the cause for which they asked support stood the test.

Although an unbeliever he was not a scoffer. He had his own opinions, and conceded to others the right to their opinions. His highest desire was that the churches and the world be tolerant.

Mr. Blodgett was a free and frequent giver to charity, but his benefactions rarely became known unless of such a nature that concealment was impossible. He was a generous contributor to the hospitals and organized effort. The Blodgett Children's Home will stand as an enduring monument to his memory. His gift originally was the old Clark home, which served excellently in the early days of the work. When the old home became unsuitable as a home for the orphans he announced his intention to build a new home. This building is now nearly completed and is one of the most beautiful in the Grand Rapids. It represents a cost of about \$150,000 and will be furnished complete when finally turned over to the association. It was one of Mr. Blodgett's regrets as he realised that the end was drawing near that he would be unable to see the building completed."

The funeral took place on November 5. It was attended by many prominent citizens, including two Senators. The funeral address was delivered by Mr. John Roberts, of the Church of This World, Kansas City,—whose eloquent Freethought lectures have sometimes been reproduced in the columns of this journal, and have been highly appreciated by many readers.

It is foolish to talk of grief when an intelligent and generous man dies at a ripe old age. "Nothing is here for tears." Yet the widow and children, bound by intimate personal ties to the deceased, must feel the pain of separation, which is the real sting of death. Should this meet their eyes, I beg them to accept the expression of my sincere sympathy.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Triumph of Secularism.

THE Christian superstition is crumbling. Everything eventually crumbles which is not true. Never was there so little religion, never so much Secularism, as at the present day. Never have men attended churches and chapels so little; never have they attended hospital and charity meetings so assiduously. Christianity is going, and Secularism is rising higher and higher. Christianity can no longer satisfy. No faith can satisfy which is based upon lies. At the beginning of the twentieth century the mind of man is vigorously bestirring itself. Scepticism means approach to the truth, and truth cannot consort with the lying superstitions of the past. Men nowadays no longer accept upon mere trust the religious misbeliefs of their remote ancestors. Over the pulpits of the fast-emptying churches is inscribed "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past. Secularism sounds the triumphant note of the future, "To the service of man." For nineteen weary centuries the Churches have been praying

"Paternoster," and the day of human brotherhood is still afar off. Secularism does not pray, but it works for the ennobling service of man for man, which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the Christian superstition and the glorification of humanity. Christianity is now put forward as the religion of love: but the verdict of history falsifies this hypocritical pretension. From the time Christianity had power it has left one long, hideous trail of suffering, torture, and blood behind it. From the time of the murder of Hypatia by a Christian rabble until our own day there is a continuity of hatred and persecution. The story of the Crusades is one of the bloodiest stories in the world's records. Cast your eyes over the pages of history and see the Pope's Legate urging on the attack against the Albigenses, with the cry, "Slay all!" See the holy inquisitors piling the faggots around unbelievers. Look at the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day and the driving of half a million Huguenots from France. Watch the horrible persecutions of the so-called witches in America. Read of the treatment meted out to Freethinkers under the damnable Blasphemy Laws. Watch the Christians murdering Jews in Russia in our own day.

Such a religion must inevitably be discarded. Based on fables, supported by brute force, trading on ignorance, it will find the conscience of the race rising above it. Christianity has long enough darkened the earth and separated man. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which marches to certain victory under the banners of Liberty and Fraternity.

M.

Paine Ignored Through Religious Prejudice.

BY JAMES B. ELLIOTT.

THE City of Philadelphia, the home of Thomas Paine for eight years and his literary birthplace, and the State in whose defence he enlisted in the Continental Army in 1776, and became Aide-de-camp to General Nathaniel Green, Secretary of Congress in 1777, and of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1779, and who headed a subscription list with \$500 to aid Washington's deserting army quartered at Morristown, which induced Blair McClenaghan and Robert Morris to subscribe \$10,000 each, which enabled his army to get supplies and march to victory at Yorktown; the editor of the first magazine published, and the author and publisher of the greatest thought-provoking pamphlets of the Revolution—*Common Sense* and *Age of Reason*. The one who was chosen by Colonel John Laurens to go with him to France, and with him succeeded in securing from Louis XVI. the gift of 2,500,000 livres of silver and a ship loaded with military stores, which was given in his charge to bring to Boston, and which he safely delivered from the ship *Resolve*, commanded by Captain John Barry, a Roman Catholic, whose statue is now in Independence-square. He also commended the purchase of the Louisiana Territory by President Jefferson.

This city decided to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the charter of the State by William Penn, and appropriated \$100,000 to make the commemoration a success. The directors in charge announced that the great men who did something towards the development of the city and State would be personified and live again before the people improved in Art, Morals, Literature, Mechanics, etc. That Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Robert Morris, Stephen Girard and Lincoln, Captain John Barry and Paul Jones would be represented.

I naturally wondered if the name and services of the Author-Hero of the Revolution had been overlooked, or "interred with his bones" at New Rochelle. I was told that I was too late to personate Tom Paine, that he drank too much, and that "his services were only nominal and called for no special presentation in the Historical Pageant."

I reminded the Chairman that the University of Pennsylvania conferred upon him the degree of A.M., that the Philadelphia Society honored him with membership, and that Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, and Robert Morris honored him with their friendship. But he was deaf to all my appeals. I asked him if it was religious prejudice. He said no, and referred to several infidels in the pageant. I then asked why he opposed Paine. He said that he admired Alexander Hamilton and preferred him to Jefferson

or Paine, and appeared surprised that I had resurrected so many good things that Tom Paine had done, but said it was too late.

I then paid a visit to the Committee for Marking Historic Sites, and demanded to know why the graves and homes of so many traitors like the Rev. Jacob Duche, Joseph Galloway, and Benedict Arnold were marked, while patriots like Thomas Paine and Blair McClenaghan were neglected. He informed me that they had three hundred signs printed, and they were overlooked.

Believing with Ingersoll that "Hands that help are better far than lips that pray," I could not rest until I had resurrected from the dust of the century the name of Thomas Paine, and ordered at once, at the cost of our Association, suitable signs to mark the residence of Thomas Paine, where his *Common Sense* and *Crisis* were printed, the garret that Dr. Wilson and I visited some years ago, and the office he occupied while Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I called on Mr. J. C. Hannon, and together we proceeded to the grave of Robert Morris in the rear of Christ Church; we were shocked to find his tomb next to the privy, where in all likelihood his bones have been devoured by rats. Mr. Hannon's eyes filled with tears at this gross neglect of the last resting-place of Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution, and he exclaimed, "How soon we are forgotten when we are dead!" While we were thus musing, we were invited by one of the deacons, in a full dress suit, to step inside and see the pews of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. Mr. Hannon was irreverent enough to ask if Tom Paine was buried there. The deacon replied he never heard of him, nor did he want to.

We next proceeded to St. Paul's Church and found the grave of Blair McClenaghan had not been marked, but that the Rev. Dr. Duche's house and church, likewise St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and Commodore Barry's grave had been covered with flowers, while on Robert Morris's tomb there was but a faded wreath.

Signs were painted and placed upon Paine's garret where he wrote *Common Sense*, where *Common Sense* and *Crisis* were printed, and his office when Secretary of Committee on Foreign Affairs.—*Blue Grass Blade* (Lexington).

THE CITY OF LIGHT.

Have you heard of the golden city
Mentioned in the legends old?
Everlasting light shines o'er it,
Wondrous tales of it are told,
Only righteous men and women
Dwell within its gleaming wall;
Wrong is banished from its borders,
Justice reigns supreme o'er all.

We are builders of that city;
All our joys and all our groans
Help to rear its shining ramparts,
All our lives are building-stones.
But a few brief years we labor,
Soon our earthly day is o'er,
Other builders take our places,
And our place knows us no more.

But the work which we have builded,
Oft with bleeding hands and tears,
And in error and in anguish,
Will not perish with the years.
It will last, and shine transfigured
In the final reign of Right;
It will merge into the splendors
Of the City of the Light.

—Felix Adler.

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A great mind that truly respects itself does not revenge an injury, because it does not feel it.—*Seneca*.

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.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, J. Robertson, "The Origin of Christianity." Thursdays, at 8, Discussion Classes.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, F. Armour, "Unemployment: Its Cause and Cure."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Buildings, 113 Islington): 7, Mr. Finucane, "The Rogues' Gallery; or, Some Men of God."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Dr. A. Young, Medical Officer of Health for Whitefield, "The House We Live In." With lantern views.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Hedley Café, Clayton-street): 3.30, Members' meeting; important business. French and German classes in Sunday-school at 3.

OUTDOOR.

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

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