

THE Freethinker

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And all these philosophers, and truth-telling men, who have fallen victims to the stupidity of nations, the atrocities of priests, the fury of tyrants, what consolation was left for them in death? This, that prejudice would pass, and that posterity would pour out the vial of ignominy upon their enemies. O posterity, holy and sacred! Stay of the unhappy and of the oppressed, thou who art just, thou who art incorruptible, who avengest the good man, who unmaskest the hypocrite, who draggest down the tyrant, may thy sure faith, thy consoling faith, never, never abandon me! Posterity is for the philosopher what the other world is for the devout.

—DIDEROT

God In Italy.

THAT very pious statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, used to launch a Christian essay, article or letter upon the British public on the eve of a general election. He wanted to stand well with the religious part of the nation, which was the majority, and therefore of chief importance to politicians. Now in one of those documents, which were always so pompous in style and without the slightest saving grace of humor, the Grand Old Man remarked on the benevolent way in which "Providence" had prepared and fitted up the earth for man's habitation. He wrote thus as an Englishman, living in a country where nearly every noxious animal had been extirpated. Yet he knew that there was a great dependency of England's, called India, inhabited by three hundred million people, some 25,000 of whom were killed every year by wild beasts, and another 25,000 by poisonous or constrictive reptiles. Mr. Gladstone could take a safe walk whenever he pleased, but the mild and contemplative Hindoo might saunter forth, like one of Mr. Kipling's "absent-minded beggars," and meet a "royal Bengal" looking for a meal, and feel how beautifully "Providence" had prepared and fitted up the earth for the tiger's habitation.

Here in England we know practically nothing of earthquakes. Occasionally there is a tremor which sets the cups and saucers jiggling, but nothing of a dangerous character. Other parts of the world, however, are much less fortunate. Even in Europe there have been serious volcanic eruptions within the historic period, and earthquakes that have destroyed human beings by myriads. The famous earthquake at Lisbon is a classical instance. South Italy has frequently suffered from these "acts of God" as they are still called in bills of lading and in the verdicts of coroners' juries. The latest of these disasters seems to have been on a large scale. We write as this journal goes to press, and have only Tuesday's reports before us, but they leave little room for doubt that many thousands of people have perished.

These thousands of victims were suddenly overwhelmed. Not so much notice was given them as all civilised nations give to the worst criminals who are sentenced to execution. "Providence" does not trouble about such niceties. Neither does it condescend to the least discrimination. Just as the Lord sendeth his rain alike upon the just and the unjust, so he tumbles houses in his earthquakes over the heads of philosopher and fool, saint and sinner,

honest man and thief, bawd and matron. All fish are welcome when the great sportsman spreads his net.

This is not, of course, the Atheist's view of the matter. He does not place will and intelligence behind nature; he accepts what happens as inevitable, not because it was designed, but because it was necessitated. He wastes no breath in complaints; he knows that even regrets are foolish. He takes the world as he finds it, and makes the best of a not too brilliant bargain. He studies instead of screaming, and reflects instead of wailing; and eventually, as he gains a deeper knowledge of nature's secrets, and a greater mastery over her forces, he learns to foresee evils and takes precautionary measures against them.

Christians say that there is a God over all, and that "he doeth all things well." The same "Providence" sends fine and bad weather, floods and drought, fine harvests and blighted crops. It is "Providence" that saves Smith's precious life (ask Smith!) in a railway accident, and it is the same "Providence" that smashes poor Jones to bits. And surely if "Providence" gets the credit of the one performance, it should get the discredit of the other.

There is a natural disinterestedness in human nature. There is also a natural malignity. And if, as we are told, man is the image of his Maker, there must be cruelty as well as benevolence in the Deity. From a certain point of view, the God of the Christians—the God of *all* Theists—is a Moloch. We put it to any believer who has read the tale of the earthquake in Italy,—“Would you have done this deed?” You repudiate the idea; your cheek flames at the thought that you could be guilty of such wickedness. You would rather soothe the dying and reverently bury the dead. Why then do you worship a Moloch who laughs at the writhings of his victims and drinks their tears like wine? See, they are working and playing—at business and pleasure; here toiling to support the loved ones at home, there sitting with them in peace and joy. And lo the mandate of Moloch goes forth and “his word shall not return unto him void.” Swifter than thought calamity falls upon the gay and busy scene. Hearts that throbbed with joy now quiver with agony. The husband folds his wife in a last embrace; the mother gathers her children like Niobe; the lover clasps the maiden no longer coy. Homes are shaken to dust, halls fall in ruins, the very temples are shattered. Brains are dashed out, blood flows in streams, limbs are twisted, bodies are pinned by falling masonry, cries of anguish pierce the air, followed by groans, and at last by silence. Moloch then retires to his inmost sanctuary, sated with death and pain.

Is it not better, Christian friend, to defy Moloch than to worship him? Is it not better still to regard this deity as the creation of fanciful ignorance? Is not existence a terror if "Providence" may suddenly swoop upon us with inevitable talons and irresistible beak? Does not life become saner and sweeter when we see no cruel intelligence behind the catastrophes of nature?

These questions may be shirked, but they can only be answered in one way. And it is shirking to put the problem of evil aside with the cry of "Mystery!" He who rests his head on the soft pillow of Faith dreams away his Reason.

G. W. FOOTE.

“Watchman, what of the Night?”

It is the constant boast of the Christian apologist that ecclesiastical statistics are always misleading, that it is impossible to tabulate the results of true spiritual work, and that there are thousands of genuine Christians outside all churches and chapels. It is when the statistics are unfavorable that special attention is called to their unreliableness, and people are warned against being unduly influenced by them. It is doubtless true that even ecclesiastical statistics cannot always be regarded as an accurate index of the real position of the Christian religion at any given time. It is quite possible that there are more Christians in the country than the various communion-rolls would indicate. At the same time, it must be admitted that when a man becomes a Christian disciple he has every inducement to identify himself with some church or other, because the Church, according to the teaching of the Bible, is a Divine institution, and membership in it is almost, though not quite, essential to salvation. The likelihood, therefore, is that few, if any, believing Christians would long remain unattached to some branch of what is declared to be the Church purchased with the precious blood of Christ. Indeed, there is apostolic authority for the exhortation to Christians not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” but to diligently wait upon the Lord in his own house. To be outside the visible Church is an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ, of which no sincere follower would willingly be guilty. Consequently, it is a natural inference that practically all Christians are connected more or less closely with the various sects or denominations.

But with Freethinkers the case is entirely different. Secular Societies are not soul-saving institutions, nor is membership with them necessary to salvation. Freethought need not organise itself unless it likes, nor is the absence of organisation punishable with everlasting damnation. Freethought organises only in order that it may all the more successfully destroy the degrading tyranny of superstition. The consequence is that the strength of Freethought in the country is by no means to be measured by the number and strength of the Secular Societies. And yet because the Societies are comparatively few and feeble, there are those who declare that Freethought itself is a negligible quantity. Many clergymen stoutly maintain that, at bottom, the bulk of the people are profoundly religious. Only the other day a zealous follower of the Lamb asserted that there are no Atheists now. The cold Materialism that flourished thirty years ago is quite dead to-day. There is to be met with everywhere an insatiable hunger for God, and we are said to be on the eve of the mightiest spiritual revival the world has ever seen. But it is easy to see that such talk is nothing but bluster. There is not a shadow of truth in it. Take London as an example. It is well known that out of five millions of people barely one million can be claimed as in any sense associated with the churches, while probably not half a million can be described as active Christians. What about the other four millions? Is it not safe to affirm that at least the majority of them are non-Christians? And is it not probable that the majority of the non-Christians are Sceptics? Well, what is true of London is more or less true of all other centres of population. In every large city and town, the masses of the people have totally lost touch with the churches. Is it not the universal complaint that Sunday is being rapidly secularised, that the fear of God is dying out, and that the things of God and eternity are being sadly neglected? But is it reasonable to suppose that the people who forget God and secularise Sunday are yet, at bottom, profoundly religious?

The decay of Sunday observance, the increasing falling off in church and chapel attendance, and the serious lack of interest in religious movements, so loudly lamented by the pulpit, are but symptoms of

the silent growth of the spirit of Secularism in our land. And what is Secularism but another name for what the theologians falsely call Materialism? Now, is it not fair to infer that the majority of those who live without religion do so because they do not believe in it, and that the majority of those who do not believe in religion may be set down as Freethinkers? We do not wish to count heads, but we do mean to assert that the decadence of religion is largely the result of the triumph of Freethought. At the beginning of a new year this fact should serve as a source of strong encouragement to those who have the cause of Secularism at heart. We really gain in proportion as the churches lose. Such is our answer to those who are anxious to know whether or not Freethought is progressing.

The transition from Supernaturalism to Naturalism cannot but be attended by some temporary danger and loss. It involves a readjustment of moral sanctions and incentives. The man who is good simply because he fears or loves God, or because he dreads hell and hopes to win heaven, may undergo a moral fall when he loses his belief in God and a future life. Having hitherto observed the law of morality from a religious motive, his temptation, now that his religious faith has fled, is to neglect his moral duties. Thus the linking together of religion and morality is apt to result in serious injury to the latter when the former disappears. It is not at all surprising, therefore, to find that the loss of religion is often accompanied by a corresponding lapse from morality, not because the death of faith renders the man less morally inclined than he was before, but because, properly speaking, his moral sense has never been developed. That is to say, a truly religious man is moral from a non-moral motive, and, consequently, his sense for morality seldom comes into play. The religious life does not favor the cultivation of a fine moral sense. To do everything for God's sake is to blind the mind's eye to the native dignity of human life. It is this that makes the passage from Otherworldism to Secularism so fraught with risk and loss, and it is this also that justifies the Secularist attack upon religion. A strong religious sense may enable a man to live a moral life, but it enables him to do so without creating in him a moral sense. Religion and morality are two radically different things.

It follows that the strongest argument against religion, after all, is a moral one. We have it on the authority of an eminent clergyman that instruction in religious knowledge does not produce “moral backbone.” Nothing can do that but ethical training. What children need, above all else, is to have engendered within them a strong and healthy moral sense, which is wholly distinct from the religious sense. The moral sense is the sense of responsibility, not to God, but to the community; the sense of solidarity blossoming into sympathetic attitude and loving conduct. This is the sense which, when fully grown, makes life in society an ever-new song of sweet delight. It is the development of this sense that we regard as the main business of education. Morality is a mental attitude translating itself into beneficent social behavior; and as thus understood, morality is the harvest of the seed sown at school, ripened by actual contact with the world. As yet, scientifically, ethical training is a thing of the future; but there are numerous signs that the time is not far off when it will be in full operation in all our educational establishments. Then Secularism will be its own justification in the eyes of all men everywhere.

There is a vast amount of hard work still to be done. Ministers of religion are doing their utmost to safeguard the interests of their own profession by ridiculing the objects and methods of Secularism. “Banish God,” they cry, “and you will cut the throat of morality; get rid of religion, and you will sink deeper and deeper in the mire of sin and wickedness.” But they are mistaken, as the recent history of France, and the experiment in secular education in the United States clearly testify.

France has been rising in the moral scale during the last fifteen years, and an Episcopal clergyman from the States assured his hearers at the Pan-Anglican Congress that secular education has inflicted no injury upon the character of American youths. There are some who venture to express the conviction that Japan is morally even superior to the best European country, although she persistently rejects Christianity, and has adopted a system of entirely secular education. But although the parsons are thus given the lie direct by the facts, they are determined to continue their denunciation of Secularism by wilfully ignoring the truth and distorting the facts. It will take a long time to undermine their work, and to convince the public that they are wrong. The path of the intellectual emancipators of our race is not strewn with fragrant flowers, but with stinging nettles, piercing thorns, and formidable boulders, and the only satisfaction they have is derived from the consciousness that they are the servants of truth, and that sooner or later the truth shall prevail. Sustained by this consciousness they brace themselves up afresh for the conflict, and begin another year of warfare, confident that the day of humanity's release from the depressing bondage of superstition is drawing nigh.

There is no room whatever for discouragement. During the latter half of the nineteenth century scientific Freethought sounded the death-knell of supernatural religion. The people who believe now have become laughably apologetic. The man who accepts the whole Bible as the Word of God acknowledges that he is old-fashioned: he prides himself upon being out of date. His comrades are few and far between. Even the Church of to-day would have been beheaded by the Church of yesterday. And this is the fruit of Freethought propagandism. The work of the brave and faithful few has impregnated the tabernacles of the Lord with rational seeds. If this revolutionary process continues throughout the present century there will be no need of the militant Freethinker at the commencement of the twenty-first century. It is true that the divines are already predicting that within the next hundred years Christianity will have gathered the whole of mankind under its banner. Their prophecy, however, rests on nothing more substantial than their own faith, while ours is solidly based on the history of the immediate past; and our prophecy shall be gloriously fulfilled if the past and present trend persists.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Seer.

SEERS in old days, such as Samuel the Hebrew prophet, or the oracle at the temple of Apollo at Delphi, were gazers into the occult world who gave messages from gods to men for the direction of health and fortune. They had a due place in evolution, if only in emphasising the faculty of prevision,—the power to calculate the forces that affect the future. The ancient seers prophesied with a right motive. They were defective in their instruments and knowledge. No doubt they were occasionally fraudulent; but so also are persons whose instruments and knowledge are far more accurate and scientific. I regard the primitive rain-makers, medicine-men and seers as forerunners, ill-equipped indeed (are we not all ill-equipped?), of the Greek, Arabian and modern observers and theorists in the realm of natural phenomena. A type of these observers is Galileo. I propose to give an outline of his life and activity in order to express appreciation of his quality as a seer,—an enthusiastic watcher of natural things and events. Such men are not, in my view, the first-rank types. "Science is a ladder, not a dwelling." The dwelling is the healthy and fraternal life in the household and the civic sphere. Therefore I render first honor to the social reformer and constructor who applies science to

human welfare. But as ladder-man, so to speak, the scientific seer is entitled to our gratitude and admiration.

Galileo was born at Pisa, in North Italy, in February, 1564. He was a square, well-built man, with a fine forehead, reddish hair, a sociable expression, and large, brilliant eyes. Often he suffered from rheumatism, and at a quite early age he had trouble with his sight. Milton once visited him. Both he and Milton,—both seers, each in his own way,—died blind.

Galileo went into Pisa Cathedral to pray, and he also saw with the eye of the seer. An attendant lit a lamp that hung from the roof, and left it swinging. Galileo,—now about 20 years old,—felt his pulse as he watched the oscillations of the lamp, and remarked that the swings, whether longer or shorter, took the same lengths of time. Here was the principle of the isochronism, the equal time-lengths, of the pendulum. The pendulum clocks of the world to-day tick their homage to the intellectual alertness of the student of Pisa. It was the joy of his life to note the real, the useful, the certain, the precise. And as figures are a way of expressing what is exact, and geometry measures the exact by its lines, triangles and circles, Galileo had a mathematical passion. Moved by such passion, he disputed with the doctors in the academy,—men who read books, much as our University professors and leader-writers do to-day, rather than studied nature and man. His fellow-students at Pisa called him the Wrangler. Galileo was not a mere wrangler. He saw; and he insisted on telling mankind what he saw. The rate and manner of falling objects was debated. Pedants dogmatised on the subject from old literature. Galileo ascended the Leaning Tower of Pisa, dropped things, and measured the results; and any text-book of physics will record the verdict in his favor as against the mere verbalists. The merchants of Venice, being a practical community, discovered this precise young man, and appointed him Professor of Mathematics in the University of Padua,—a city then in the Venetian territory. Two thousand students from all parts of western Europe attended his lectures.

Copernicus, the Prussian priest, dying in 1543, had left a message to the world to the effect that, in the solar system, the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn wheel about the central fire. Galileo accepted the message, turned it over in his mind, and, as a born lover of the real and precise, would inevitably discuss it with the world. Meanwhile, he fashioned the first rude thermometer, with water or spirits of wine in its tube. His enthusiasm for exact measurements inflamed his disciples, and one of them, Torricelli, constructed the barometer. In 1608, a Dutchman constructed a toy by fitting two glass lenses in such a way that, on looking through both at once, the eye saw things larger. Galileo brooded over the report of this device, like the mighty spirit of God that brooded over the dark waters in the myth of the earth's beginning. He put lenses in a tube and, through this first telescope, spied at earth, sea and the infinities. The discovery became the rage in Venice. Noblemen and merchants climbed tall towers in order to peep through these glasses which would make an enemy's fleet, fifty miles off, appear but five miles distant. This was practical science. The Venetian republic raised Galileo's salary.

But he, good soul, having higher thoughts and a purer vision, sat solitary at his glass by nights. He turned it towards the remote silver globe of Jupiter, and saw, what no mortal eye had yet seen, four little moons that circled round that vast planet. He saw the broken landscapes of our moon. He saw the changing phases of Venus. He saw the misty patches of the Milky Way break into uncountable sparkling stars. The day also had its new marvels; for he saw dark spots in the golden radiance of the very sun. Society talked of these wonders, and folk asked each other for the latest news of the stars. Galileo was opening the universe, as the magician

revealed to Aladdin the jewels on the trees in the Enchanted Garden.

Growing confident in his acquisition of precise and real knowledge, he visited Rome in 1611, and dared to talk approvingly of the Copernican theory. Priests murmured. Five years later, the Church definitely ordered silence, and, for seven years, Galileo said not an open word on the heretical subject. In 1632, he rashly published a dialogue on the *Two Systems*,—the old sun-going-round-the-earth system, and the radical and revolutionary idea of Copernicus. The book was read in Italy, and beyond Italy. Galileo was trying to make the Copernican idea run, as Huxley afterwards made the ideas of Darwin run. The Church acted decisively. In June, 1633,—a crowd of clericals looking on,—Galileo put his name, as he knelt, to a document that denied the astronomical truth, and affirmed that the earth was a fixture in the rolling heavens. The story that he rose and whispered "And yet it moves," at least expresses the thought that shouted in his brain, though it may not have passed his lips.

Condemned now to a genteel form of imprisonment, forbidden to assemble social groups at his house, bereaved by the death of a favorite daughter, and losing, by the plague, five relatives who came to share his dwelling, he might well cry, with the patriarch Job,—

"Have pity, have pity on me, O my friends!
For the hand of God hath smitten me;
Why do ye persecute me like God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?"

Persecution is vile, whether religious, social, or political. But it is right for us who do not believe in the utter badness of the human heart, to ask, Why should the priests try to silence a man who taught that which was, to him, real, precise, certain, useful? These priests had in their charge the souls of thousands and millions of ordinary men and women whose faith was built on the Bible-theology and Bible theory of the cosmos. To shake these ideas was a grave matter. Multitudes of people would feel the foundations slipping from their feet, and lose hope in sickness or in dying. Of course, we can see the better way. We can see what the Church ought to have done. It ought to have been willing to learn from the seer, and taken the people into its confidence, and shown them that, even if the old ideas did not hold good, the great essentials of love, duty, and service remained. But that would have meant a progress which the priests of the vanishing gods have never understood. I am prepared to pass a more lenient judgment upon Galileo's opponents than the Freethought world usually pronounces. Nevertheless, the doom arrives inevitably. The Catholic Church and Christianity itself must go, because theology has refused to accept the evidence presented by the scientific seers.

The last thing Galileo observed before his sight was ruined was the libration of the moon. As most of us know, we see only one side of our satellite. The other half is for ever averted from human vision. But there is a motion of the moon by which a slight portion at the edge is revealed in addition to the usual face, and we catch just a glimpse of the other side. Thus, Galileo's last act of science was to do what we are all doing in our cleverest and most learned efforts,—just catching a glimpse of the infinite facts of nature. Then the darkness fell. The aged astronomer dictated letters to scientific correspondents. His mind still brooded. He was still a lover of the real, precise, certain, useful, as when,—in eager youth,—he watched the lamp swing in the cathedral of Pisa. Towards the end of 1641, he suffered from an attack of low fever, and experienced much weakness of the heart. He lay ill for two months. On New Year's Day, 1642, he died. He was buried in the noble city of Florence, the city of the poet Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* he delighted to read. Dante dreamed of other worlds. Galileo, through his telescope, saw them.

Nearly a hundred years passed before a monument was placed over his tomb. To-day he is regarded by

the civilized world as the founder of the science of physics. He was an honest, patient, generous man; not saintly, not heroic; but one who gained the love of many disciples, and who, in his day and generation, served humanity by his passionate devotion to the facts of Nature, and by his free and genial willingness to tell to all what he had learned in the pages of truth.

F. J. GOULD.

The Truth About Free Will.—I.

FROM time to time during the past twelve months I have received requests from readers of the *Freethinker* that I would deal with the question of Free Will versus Determinism. I have also received recently a copy of the Rev. Frank Ballard's *Popular Determinism*, accompanied by the wish that I would deal with that gentleman's presentment of the case. I have, as some of my readers will remember, dealt with the question of Determinism on more than one occasion, but it is one of the drawbacks to journalistic writing that it is apt to be buried and forgotten. One reaches a larger circle of readers by this method, but it has its drawback in the fact that a book or pamphlet endures longer. These must be my excuses, to the old readers, for dealing again with a fairly well-worn subject, while an ample justification will be found in the fact that the *Freethinker* is, fortunately, always acquiring new readers, while for those and for others one is compelled to meet constant criticism with constant replies.

Some time since, in dealing with Mr. Ballard's *The True God*, I gave the readers of this journal a taste of his quality. This must serve as my chief reason for only dealing with him incidentally in treating of Determinism. Philosophically, Mr. Ballard is next to hopeless. His easy dogmatism doubtless imposes successfully upon a religious audience, who must, I fancy, often be as confused as to his real meaning as he is, probably, himself. That there are good grounds for speaking of Mr. Ballard as "philosophically hopeless" readers may judge from one or two selected specimens from *Popular Determinism*. This book, I may point out, is made up of replies to questions asked at the close of his lectures.

One question runs, "Is not the material brain necessary to enable the mind to think? If so, how can you separate them?" I do not agree with the form of this question; but let anyone note carefully the reply, which is, "Just as easily as we separate music from the violin, or organ, or any other instrument which is necessary to its production." Now, this reply may be "smart," but it is almost miraculously ineffective. For you simply cannot separate music from the instrument necessary to its production. If you could, it would not be necessary; if it is necessary, the separation cannot be effected. Put "the conditions" in place of "instrument," and anyone may see how ridiculous the reply is. Evidently Mr. Ballard is under the impression that music is a thing in itself quite apart from determining conditions. But without conditions—in this case organ or violin—music, as music, ceases to exist. The raw material of music is aerial undulations. It is the conditioning effect of the instrument that gives us a musical note. If the brain is as necessary to thought as an instrument of some kind is to music, the greatest materialist need not ask for further concession.

A batch of questions is concerned with the difficulty of harmonising the lecturer's belief in "Free Will" and "Divine foreknowledge." Mr. Ballard explains that "What God knows is that you will act in a certain way. That does not in the least imply that you must so act." So that, although God sees that at a given moment I shall act in a certain way, it does not imply that all the circumstances bearing upon me at that moment will result in my so acting. Then, in the name of all that is sensible, what does it imply? If my character and circumstances were

different, would not the result be different likewise? Does not the statement that "God" knows how we shall act carry with it the belief that he can so read character and the course of events as to be able to say what will happen at any given time? Mr. Ballard himself says "from the standpoint of the assumed Divine foreknowledge it [the act] has been committed or else it would not be foreknown." Again: "Foretelling is simply foretelling, not fore-compelling.....There is no asserting that anything is to happen to anyone."

Could anything be more hopelessly confused? Foretelling is knowing what will happen; nay, Mr. Ballard explains that to Divine foreknowledge the thing really has happened. Yet it does not assert that anything is to happen; and, as there is not compelling, it may not happen at all. Therefore, foreknowledge is being aware of something that will happen that is not bound to happen, and actually seeing something happen that may never occur at all. I think readers will agree that to call a man philosophically hopeless who writes or talks in the manner indicated is treating him with almost culpable leniency. One could excuse a man saying these things at the close of a lecture, in answer to a casual question; but to repeat them in cold blood, to actually *print* them—I had better leave it to others to fill in the hiatus.

Over and over again Mr. Ballard repeats the statement that Determinism, if true, destroys morality. I deal with the statement from a general point of view only, as it will be dealt with in detail later. Of course, if Mr. Ballard only meant that our idea of morality would undergo an alteration if Determinism were consciously accepted, then the statement might be permitted to pass. But he really implies that Determinism would abolish morality, and one wonders why it should be supposed to have that effect. One might even suggest that the problem of Determinism is not necessarily an ethical one at all. Of course, if we regard morality as something that only exists as a concept, a changed conception of the workings of the human organism might profoundly modify that concept or even destroy it altogether. But morality is surely something more than a mere concept. The fundamental basis of morality is not theory, but practice. If we put it that a moral theory is a generalised expression of modes of social health, we shall not be far from the truth. For all morality is implicit in practice long before it is explicit in theory. Philosophy adds nothing to morality, any more than Newton, by his statement of the law of gravitation, added to the physics of the solar system. Philosophy merely generalises upon the data furnished by experience.

Now whether Determinism be accepted or rejected cannot affect in the least the fact of morality. The justification for reprobating dishonesty and praising honesty is quite unaffected by any theory as to the motives or circumstances governing the human organism. The theory of Christian Science may lead one to take a particular view of the value of medical attendance, or the cause of disease, but it does not affect the fact that there is such a thing as disease, and that health is a preferable condition. So in morals the qualities, the effects of certain actions remain what they are, independent of any psychological theory we may entertain. The fact that all the people living in a given society do, in the mass, take the same general view of conduct, should be enough to show even Mr. Ballard that Determinism, whatever else it may do, cannot destroy morality.

When, therefore, Mr. Ballard says that, "Apart from God, there could be no absolute right or wrong, moral or immoral, because there can be no moral law save as the expression of the will of a moral governor of the universe," and that if the nature of things be moral "it must come from a moral source, and there can be no other moral source than the will of a free moral Being," he proves that he is in a state of helpless confusion on the subject. *Absolute* morality we need not

trouble about. It simply does not exist. All morality must be an expression of relations, and to destroy these relations is to destroy morality itself. But when he says there can be no moral law apart from God, well, there is all experience to give him the lie. For human nature does evolve moral laws, whether there be a God or not. Rules of conduct all men have—nay, rules of conduct all animals have. Wolves hunting in packs have their rules of conduct, even though we may not credit them intelligence enough to consciously reflect upon their importance to vulpine society. Of course, Mr. Ballard may retort that this is only limited and relative right and wrong; to which one need only reply that relative right and wrong is all we know, and it will serve.

If there were only a single individual on the face of the earth, what morality could there be for him? What would be the meaning of honesty, truth, chastity, loyalty to him? Such things could have no possible meaning or value, and the existence of a God would not create a meaning for them. But introduce other human beings, and all these words have a meaning and a value. They express his relation to them, and theirs to him. Human morality thus grows, not out of man's assumed relation to a God, but out of his actual relations to his fellow human beings; and, while theories may affect or modify these relations, they can neither destroy them nor replace them.

I have, apparently, been a long while coming to the main question, but one hardly wishes to keep Mr. Ballard always in view, nor are most of these considerations quite so irrelevant as they might appear at first glance.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Paul and the Ladies.

THE great apostle troubled his poor head about the heads of women. If he lived now when the ladies affect short hair he would go raving mad. It was a subject on which he felt profoundly, To his mind a woman losing her long hair, was like an angel falling from glory. He warns the whole sex against meddling with their tresses. Men, however, are recommended to crop close, long hair being "shameful." We have a shrewd suspicion that Paul was bald. Perhaps if hair restorer had been invented a successful trial might have considerably changed his views upon this subject. Man was not created for woman says Paul, but woman for man. He is of course alluding to the old Rib Story. But a similar observation would have been as sensible about the two halves of a pair of scissors. When they meet what does it matter which was made for the other? Consistently with this view he says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . as the Church is subject unto Christ so let the wives be to their husbands in everything." Some men have tried this with no great success, and many a man thinks he is having his own way "in everything" when he is sweetly and beautifully led by the nose. Obedience is a hateful word in marriage. Its introduction makes the wife a legalised concubine. Besides, if there *must* be obedience, Paul's rule is ridiculously sweeping, for some women have more sense and judgment than their husbands. Every afflicted woman who applies to the magistrate for relief from the sot who curses her home is flying in the face of Paul. "My dear woman," the magistrate *should* say, "your request is very reasonable, but it is very unorthodox. Go home and read the fifth chapter of Ephesians where you will see that wives must obey their husbands in *everything*."

Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; Tim. ii. 11, 12) warns women to keep silence in church, for it is not permitted them to speak." Having written this line, Paul must have got up and strutted round the room like a ruffled cock. "Let the woman," he says, "learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Hear, hear! from the males in the body of the synagogue. Evidently Paul could bray on occasion as lustily as Balaam's ass.

Acid Drops.

The world *does* move. Christmas is fast losing its religious character. Boxing Day's morning papers were a proof of this. Even the dear *Daily News* gave only one column to the report of Christmas sermons and the whole back page to the report of Christmas football matches.

These newspapers, which give so much attention to Christmas football, and so little to Christmas sermons, do not appear to see the meaning of the change that is taking place. It is part of the general secularisation of human life. Yet the newspapers still repeat the parrot cry that Secular Education would ruin the country.

Christmas Sunday's newspapers, in the capital of the "most Christian country" in the world, gave chief attention to a "slogging" match between a couple of "bruisers"—one a Canadian white, the other an American negro. This great event took place at the antipodes and was attended by a bigger crowd, in all probability, than Jesus Christ himself would be able to collect if he visited that part of the world minus his miracles. This pugilistic encounter appears to have been *the* event of Boxing Day throughout the English-speaking world. What a convincing proof of the moral superiority of the Christian religion, which has produced this elevated state of sentiment in its professors in the course of nearly two thousand years.

The fight between Burns and Johnson took place at Sydney. Notwithstanding the high prices charged for admission, twenty thousand people paid to see the performance. We understand that Sydney is a very pious city.

Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., has been telling a meeting in a Nonconformist tabernacle that "he knew of nothing, outside the Bible, so helpful to the average man as the essays of Joseph Mazzini." We hope Mr. Crooks is aware that Mazzini was not a Christian.

It seems to us that Jesus Christ, if he were alive now, would run a serious risk of life-long detention in prison under Mr. Gladstone's new Act. That he would get into prison is pretty certain. He was a religious tramp, and he had nowhere to lay his head; in other words, he was a person without visible means of subsistence, with a habit of sleeping at large. What would happen to him in England may be inferred from the case of Ernest Girard, a man of education, and fond of the simple life, who has just been put away as a lunatic for constantly sleeping on Streatham Common. On the whole, it is lucky that the Prophet of Nazareth came on earth before the present age of pious respectability.

"Christ is waiting to save you," cries the evangelist; "The moment you come to him you are a saved man." But why does Christ wait? Is it not the one business of a Savior, not to wait, but to save? Fancy a humane person waiting to save a drowning man, waiting to relieve starvation. While he waits the opportunity is lost. While Christ waits to save, the unsaved die by the thousand and go to hell. To say that Christ waits to save is to admit that he is nothing but myth and never saves at all.

A man of God gave this from Juan de Avila as his Christmas message: "As soon as Christ is born in your heart take ye care to nurse him." Never was a message truer or more suitable. After all, instead of saving, Christ needs to be saved himself. His very life depends on the care taken of him. To be nursed he must, of course, first be born; and in how many thousands of people is he never born at all! These have no chance of nursing him, for he never comes within their reach. *What* a Savior to offer to a lost world!

"The Fact of Jesus" was the title of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's last printed sermon. What he has to find is "the Jesps of Fact." At present he has only got the Jesus of fiction.

Mr. Campbell's case is hopeless. Look at his latest folly. "The most pronounced agnostic or materialist in our midst," he says, "is indebted to the fact of Jesus for most of what is good in him, and for the ideals to which he seeks to adjust his life." This is mere impudent clap-trap. Mr. Campbell did not originate it; he simply repeats what thousands have said before him. But it is not true, nor even partially

true. There is nothing good and nothing ideal in the world now which was not in the world before Jesus appeared—if he ever really *did* appear. What virtue, what heroism, what aspiration can Mr. Campbell point to which the thoughtful part of the world was not familiar with long before the Christian era? We suggest that Mr. Campbell is bound in honor to reply. In the meanwhile, we venture to recommend him to think over a passage near the end of Trelawny's book on Byron and Shelley. "Certainly," the friend of both poets said, "there were men of genius before the Christian era; there were men and nations not equalled even at the present day." London, for all its size, is not the equal of Athens; and Mr. Campbell, for all his flatterers, is not the equal of Confucius, Aristotle, Socrates, or Plato.

We always mistrust men who talk about this, that, or the other affair of to-day as "the greatest the world has ever seen." These greatest things the world has ever seen generally turn out to be small matters, after all. Mr. Campbell says "we are now in the throes of the greatest social upheaval the world has ever seen." Are we? Posterity, or the historians, will decide that. Mr. Campbell won't. But let us follow him a moment. He says that "this movement began in something like antagonism to Christianity; it is still, to a great extent, outside the churches, and altogether independent of them; but, lo and behold, the cross of the Nazarene is being raised in the very midst of it, and the ideal it proposes to achieve is being proclaimed as his gospel." What a magniloquent way of saying that Christianity is nobbling Socialism!

Two Peculiar People, the parents of Phillis Bernice Hornsell, aged four, who died of measles and pneumonia, have been found guilty of manslaughter by a London coroner's jury and are committed for trial on that charge. We do not seek to anticipate the verdict of the jury at the Central Criminal Court, but in view of former prosecutions of Peculiar People we venture to say that, while these people may be guilty of an offence against civilisation, it is shocking to see them baited and punished by professed Christians. Quite recently, the Government tried to establish Simple Bible Teaching as the State religion in the elementary schools of England, and were supported in this policy by some Churchmen and nearly all Nonconformists. Why, then, do these Churchmen and Nonconformists raise no protest against the prosecution of men and women who pay the Bible the compliment of believing and obeying it? We pointedly ask Dr. Clifford why he is silent?

The "Emmanuel Treatment" is gaining vogue in America. It consists of a "judicious blending of religion and mental suggestion in the cure of disease." Rev. Henry Ross, a popular New Jersey pastor, declares that every bad habit (including wooden legs, perhaps) can be cured by mental suggestion given in homoeopathic doses while the patient sleeps. He says he has treated a hundred children "for depravity" of whom thirty-five are absolutely reformed and forty-five have greatly benefited. If this is true, the reverend gentleman should start on the clerical fraternity. Judging by their appearances in police courts, divorce courts, and Clergy Discipline courts, a considerable number of them are much in need of immediate treatment under the "Emmanuel" process; and from what we read in our American exchanges the men of God are even worse on the other side of the Atlantic.

Hector Macpherson, writing in the *People's Journal* against the "Gospel of Socialism"—with which, of course, we are not concerned in the *Freethinker*—quotes Karl Marx as declaring that "the evident proof of the radicalism of the German theory, and thus of its radical energy, is its starting-point from the decisive, positive abolition of religion. The critique of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man." We may remind Mr. Macpherson that this doctrine is axiomatic with all competent minds. We don't know exactly how *he* stands, but that is a matter which only concerns himself. It has no public interest.

Mr. Macpherson refers later on to Thomas Paine—who was not an Atheist like Karl Marx, but a Deist—and delivers himself as follows:—

"To him was largely due the spread of Radical ideas both in this country and in America. A set-back, however, was given to the progressive movement when Paine began to attack religion. His attitude towards Christianity was very much that of Socialists of the school of Marx and Belfort Bax. What was the outcome of Paine's famous attack on religion? Its effect was to stamp Radicalism with unbelief, and in doing so to bring the progressive movement into utter discredit. The philosophic Radicals aware of the harm done

by Paine kept their [views of religion to themselves. Men like Bentham and James Mill in their public utterances kept clear of religious questions, concentrating their attention upon politico-economic subjects."

There is something in this, but not as much as the writer fancies. The reaction in England after the French Revolution extended to politics as well as religion. Cobbett was a member of the Church of England, but he had to flee to America. Leigh Hunt did not write against religion, but he suffered as a Liberal. The "Peterloo" massacre was not a massacre of "infidels" but of political reformers. What Paine did by publishing his attack on Christianity was to damn himself. It put him *too much* in advance of his time, and he had to pay the penalty.

The betting slips of Horace Stearne, who was fined £10 at Willesden for street betting, were "found to contain an advertisement of a well-known religious periodical." So the newspapers report. We wonder which it was.

Christianity is now eighteen hundred years old, and yet its devotees are still endeavoring to convince the world that they are not fools, that they are not the victims of "weak mentality," or that by professing it they do not give "evidence of a low grade of intelligence." Are they not aware that the people who are forever asserting their own superior mental balance are usually the maddest of all? There is something seriously wrong with the man who is always desperately anxious to prove how very sane he is. His very anxiety is itself a form of insanity.

The Rev. Thomas Phillips admits that on the subject of education "the danger of us Baptists is to believe that no one has a conscience but ourselves." That is a serious fault; but is it not a fault characteristic of all the Free Churches? Is not the Nonconformist conscience invariably represented as the only conscience worthy of consideration? That it is a conceited, selfish, and irrational conscience, no sane person can doubt for a moment, and that it is a historically inconsistent and self-stultifying conscience is equally beyond question. In other words, had the Nonconformist Conscience continued loyal to its original self, secular education would have been adopted many years ago, and we should now have been enjoying educational peace, instead of the present sectarian wrangling which is not only demoralising in itself, but a shocking disgrace to our modern civilisation.

We endorse all that Mr. Phillips says on the question of education, and are delighted to record the fact that, in the name of simple justice, he pronounces secular education the only possible solution of the bitter controversy. He says: "I don't believe in the Nonconformist who protests against Church teaching being imposed upon himself, but who has no scruple in imposing his views upon the Unitarian and Agnostic. Many of us who are secularists have kept quiet because we long for an end to this stupid squabbling between Church and Chapel." That is good sense, and our hope is that the genuine friends of the secular solution will keep silence no longer. Now is the time for plain speech and strong united action.

Dr. Robertson Nicoll says there is no "great mystery about conversion." That depends on how you look at it. If it be a supernatural act, it is the supreme mystery of the world why some are converted while others are allowed to continue in unbelief, and why, in all cases, conversion amounts to so little. But if it is a human act brought about by purely human agency, why, there is no mystery about it all. As religiously understood, conversion is the biggest humbug extant.

"Help us to know that there is but one supreme will," prayed a saint, "and that our business is to discover what that will is." If there was a supreme will in the universe it would not take long to find it out, for such a will would instantly assert itself and render all opposition impossible. The fact that such a prayer can be made proves there is no such will.

The London Missionary Society—one of the hungriest in the world for cash—has started a new financial appeal, this time for a Million Shillings Fund. We are rather pleased to see the announcement that this fund "is not making rapid progress." Up to date there was only £907 15s. received at the Mansion House, representing 18,155 shillings. This is a poor show, and we hope it will remain so. For the London Missionary Society is, from our point of view, one of the most useless Societies in England—which is saying a great deal.

We read in a London newspaper of the wonderful feats—perhaps we ought to say the "magical" feats—of Mr. Fred Foskett, a machinist, of Orange, Massachusetts, who can pour a quart of alcohol into a basin, light it, and wash his hands for ten minutes in the burning fluid, besides throwing it over his arms and face. Stories of this kind are common in the East. Of course there is wilful or unconscious deception somewhere, but critics with a large and inflamed bump of wonder are talking of some new "psychic force" which enables the Yankee gentleman to counteract the laws of physics and chemistry. It is gravely stated that his feats have "been witnessed by Professor James, of Harvard, and other men of science." Ordinary people who read this will imagine that Mr. James is a professor of some science that has relation to alcohol and combustion. But the truth is that he is a professor of philosophy, and has no more special qualification for investigating the Yankee gentleman's performances than is possessed by any casual man in the street. And when we read that these performances are "engaging the attention of the American Society for Psychical Research" we know what to think of them.

Lord Kinnaird, as President, tells the members of the National Union of Y.M.C.A.'s that "their testimony, both in behalf of Christian union and fidelity to Biblical and Evangelical truth, is distinctly a growing, and in no sense a diminishing, necessity." We agree with him.

A gentleman writes to the *Daily News* from Settles-street, Commercial-road, London, E., against Sunday newspapers. He says they are "a disgrace to Christian England," they do no good and they are "violating Sunday." The gentleman's name is Cohen.

Christianity is glad to get a leg up from anybody. Arthur Bridgett, the well-known professional football player, of Sunderland, was billed to address a congregation in a large Wearside Nonconformist church last Sunday on "Reason and Religion." It is difficult to see what special acquaintance he has with either R. But a fact like that wouldn't prevent his drawing a big gate—which is the main thing.

Principal Forsyth says that the Churches are "sacrificing the Christian brother to the human neighbor." If that is true, which we doubt, it is a most hopeful sign. Hitherto, however, they have done the very opposite, and that is largely what accounts for their present impotence. Principal Forsyth is correct when he states that the distinction between the Christian brother and the human neighbor is "very marked in the New Testament." So it is, and its being so is, to a large extent, the explanation of the moral mischief which Christianity has done in the world, and also of its present conspicuous failure and disintegration.

Phillips Brooks, the famous American preacher, once wrote as follows to his brother who was travelling in Egypt: "If you see the veritable Rameses, with the magnificent head, tell him I salute him, and am quite sure that those Hebrews must have been terribly exasperating and disagreeable people. How strange it does seem that out of them should have come the world's religion!" It is stranger still that educated Christians should write in this way, not in public where they have to keep up the game of make-believe, but in private correspondence where they should be able to get within measurable distance of the truth. As a matter of fact, there is not the slightest historical proof that the Jews ever were in Egypt as the Bible relates. No trace of them exists in the Egyptian stone records. We may assume, therefore, that they never troubled Rameses. And as to "the world's religion" coming out of those said Jews, that is as imaginary as all the rest. There is no world's religion, to begin with; Christianity no more rules the world than does Brahmanism or Buddhism or Mohammedanism. Neither is it true that Christianity itself "came out of" the Jews. Its fanatical and persecuting spirit did, but most of its doctrines are of Gentile origin, including the Incarnation, which is flat blasphemy to orthodox Jews.

"Hail, Mary!" was the heading of some pious doggerel printed in the editorial part of the *Daily Chronicle* on Christmas Eve. Just look at the first verse:—

"She who bore
In travail sore,
The only Son of God,
Laid her head
On a straw bed
A stable her abode."

Did you ever read such stuff, and such rhymes? Fancy calling this poetry! But the *Chronicle* "poet" improves as

he goes along. He makes an effort at poetry, if he doesn't succeed. He refers to Mary's "bosom cream." That is fine. We have heard of mother's milk before, but mother's cream is a decided novelty. The last verse of this exquisite carol—or whatever it is—takes the cake:—

"Let us hail
This virgin pale,
Whose pure and hallowed womb
Let Him in
Who conquer'd sin
And triumphed o'er the tomb."

This is so very elegant. The physiological allusions in such exquisite taste. "Let Him in!" Well, well! Only piety is equal to these things.

"Ashington" is reckoned the largest colliery community in England, if not in the whole world. We see by the *Morpeth Herald* that a religious census has just been taken there, and that it reveals "a most painful and depressing state of affairs." Of the 22,000 inhabitants only 3,322 attended divine worship on Sunday, December 6. This includes men, women and children. Three in twenty of the whole population went to church or chapel. Ashington is thus worse than London, where God's houses have so many counter attractions on Sunday. The collier's piety seems a disappearing quality.

Canon Barnett, President of Toynbee Hall, in the annual report, notes that "East London and East Londoners are not as they were." "Sunday amusements," he says, "take the place of Sunday worship." This is one of the most important changes. We might put it that "Let us play!" succeeds "Let us pray!"

Rev. A. F. Forrest, of Glasgow, preaching on "Signs of the Times," drew a sad picture of the religious indifference which has fallen upon godly Scotland. What the Church needs, he says, is a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. We are afraid that the only spirit that the Church of Scotland is likely to buck up on bears the "Buchanan" or "Dewar" or other well-known brand.

The Dean of Ripon calls the citizens of that town to new year's prayers for "a quickening of Christian piety, more regular attendance, and greater love for the Bible." What an optimist Dr. Fremantle is!

The *Daily Chronicle* couldn't report the recent Secular Education demonstration at St. James Hall, though Lord Weardale was in the chair, and several influential members of parliament were among the speakers. But it found room a few days afterwards for a yarn about a phantom dog, and invited its readers to forward "similar experiences" to a lady who was "collecting authenticated cases." The glorious free press!

"Early Christian Relics" was a heading in one of Monday's newspapers. The "early" turned out to be the seventh or eighth century. Professor Sayce, who is at present at Khartoum, reports the discovery of some Christian remains—real or imaginary—at Wad-el-Hadad, on the Blue Nile, which are "probably" of that date. But as that date is subsequent to the rise of Mohammedanism, it is easy to judge the evidential value of these "Christian Relics."

People sometimes wonder that the *Freethinker* is not a good property. They forget that it owes its continued existence mainly to the efforts and sacrifices of one man, that it is the thorough-going advocate of an unpopular cause, that it represents no material interest, that its appeal is purely intellectual, and that it cannot trade upon the sensationalism which appeals to the vulgar instincts of all the great classes of the community. No journal devoted to the promotion of "advanced" ideas can expect to succeed on a commercial basis. To pay its way is the utmost that could be reasonably hoped, and even to do that involves exceptionally favorable conditions. Charles Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* was supported by him for many years. When the great parliamentary struggle was forced upon him, and his name became a household word, the paper benefited by the advertisement and for some years it paid fairly well, though there was never an Under Secretary's salary got out of it even at the very top of Bradlaugh's notoriety. When the great struggle was over, and the excitement died away, the circulation of the *National Reformer* dropped and dropped, until it was only just paying its way at the time of Bradlaugh's death. His daughter tried to carry it on, with the editorial assistance of Mr. J. M. Robertson, who certainly worked hard enough for success. But it could not be achieved; after several

warning notes, the paper had to be discontinued. There never have been many men who could keep a Free-thought paper going in England. Bradlaugh himself kept the *National Reformer* going. "Saladin" kept his paper in existence for a considerable number of years, but its circulation was small, it did not pay its way although it was conducted so economically, and it was really subventioned by the subscribers to his annual Birthday Fund. Bradlaugh carried on the *National Reformer* for about twenty-eight years. Mr. Foote has carried on the *Freethinker* for about the same time—and is "still going strong." During the period thus covered—about forty-seven years, allowing for overlapping—these two Free-thought weeklies were the only ones that had any strong vitality. They lived. Other enterprises half-lived or soon perished.

Openly or otherwise, money was sunk in Bradlaugh's paper as it has been in the *Freethinker*. But the amount thus sunk—independently of the editor's personal contributions—is very small in comparison with what has been expended even on religious journals. Thousands of pounds have been spent on some that we saw born and saw die. We see that the *New York Independent*, which is now sixty years old, and was edited at various times by Beecher and other eminent Christians, lost no less than £16,000 in the first ten years of its existence. We take the figures from the last *British Weekly*.

Why He Agonised.

ROBERT EDESON, the actor, hurried to his hotel to find relief in slumber from the exhausting fatigue of an automobile tour through five consecutive weeks of one-night stands.

He had finished undressing and was ready to retire when his attention was attracted by the sound of violent sobbing from the next room, as if the occupant thereof was in great pain or quite overcome by grief. That the voice was that of a member of his own sex only increased Mr. Edeson's wonderment. As the sobbing and weeping continued with increased vigor, the actor, thinking he might prove of service to a stranger in distress, dashed into the hallway. Loud rapping on the door failed to elicit any response, although the sounds as of a great sorrow did not abate, and, after a moment's hesitation, Mr. Edeson, fearing he might be too late, burst into his neighbor's room.

There he confronted, in a blaze of light furnished by a full complement of incandescents, a man of stalwart height and build, weighing over 200 pounds, who, fully attired, knelt beside the bed, and, while tears streamed down his cheeks, sobbed as if his heart would break.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Edeson, going to the grief-stricken giant, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion, but I simply could not go to sleep while you are in such great anguish. Can I not aid you? Just what is the matter? Are you in pain?"

"I—I—I dunno," replied the stranger, looking questionably and blinking at the actor, "I—I'm so damned drunk that I can't remember my prayers."

PROPORTION.

In college life it would appear
Eleven kick and thousands cheer,
But life itself is found more drear;
While thousands kick, eleven cheer.

ACCOUNTED FOR.

Sunday-school Teacher: "Now, Johnny, what was the miracle of the loaves and fishes?"

Johnny: "The fish became as big as the men who caught them said they were."

AN UNEXPECTED VERSION.

A devout Chicago couple taught their five-year-old son to sing religious hymns. Having persuaded him to sing for company, imagine their astonishment when he rendered a well-known verse thus:—

"Onward, Christian soldier,
Marching as to war,
With the cross old Jesus
Going on before."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 3, Shoreditch Town Hall, 7.30, "Christ and Christmas."

January 17, Shoreditch Town Hall; 31, Manchester.

February 21, Glasgow; 28, Birmingham.

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; 24, Shoreditch Town Hall; 31, Birmingham Town Hall. February 14, West Ham; 28, Glasgow.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £285 16s. 8d. Received since.—H. E., £1 1s.; J. Pearson, 1s. 6d.; Robert Stirton and Friends, Dundee (quarterly), £1 13s. 6d.

R. D. T. (Liverpool)—Greetings reciprocated.

A. A.—Thanks for good wishes. The lines are apt.

F. G. PORTSMOUTH.—Pleased to have the wife's good wishes as well as your own.

J. SCOTT.—Thanks.

D. MCLEAN.—Cuttings have been useful. Thanks.

P. L. YORK.—(1) Thanks for the old Talmage reply to Ingersoll (1882). We knew it was a high falutin' stuff, like all Talmage's productions, but on looking through it again we find it to be utterly beneath contempt. We don't believe there is any Church in the world that would stand sponsor for such rubbish to-day. (2) Pleased to have your thanks "for many hours of interesting reading" in the *Freethinker*.

C. D. STYRING.—See paragraph. Thanks.

W.—Sorry we cannot find room for the verses.

A. D. M.—May find it useful. Thanks.

G. BRADFIELD.—Too late for this week; will deal with it in our next.

F. H. CHANDLER.—Glad you found Mr. Heaford's article on Servetus so interesting and helpful. We cannot say whether the book you refer to is likely to be translated. Thanks for cutting.

J. R. SANCTUARY.—We cannot pay for verses.

W. SUTCLIFFE.—All we have of Ingersoll's works are in the catalogue. We quite understand that price is a consideration.

W. P. BALL.—Pleased to begin the new year with a fresh acknowledgment of your valued batch of cuttings.

JESSE JOHNSON.—We reciprocate your good wishes for 1909.

J. PEARSON.—The figures are from Gibbon and Lecky. It was common knowledge that the late Sir R. Cremer was not a Christian, but we cannot point to any public confession on his part.

E. GOODSON.—(1) Russia did not accept the new calendar adopted by the rest of Europe to correct the accumulated inaccuracy of the Julian (Julius Cæsar) calendar. That is why Christmas under the so-called Greek Church in Russia falls twelve days behind Christmas in the West. (2) Dating from the Birth of Christ—the Christian Era—was not thought of until eight hundred years after that alleged event. It became legal in Europe during the course of the next five centuries.

G. DAVEY.—Much obliged. Your suggestions shall all be carefully considered. We fear the "accidents of commerce," at any rate in regard to the business we are in with the *Freethinker*, are not likely to transform us into a "millionaire." Our only chance of the smallest approach to that giddy height lies in the remembrance of our appreciators, either in making their wills or in finding that they have money to spare while they are living.

A. J. R.—Shall be formally acknowledged next week.

HARRY BOULTER informs us that he has sold 2,504 copies of the *Freethinker*, and several hundreds of our pamphlets, during 1908. He thanks us for "kindness personal and official" during the year, and wishes us "health and strength" for 1909.

ROBERT STIRTON sending quarterly contribution from self and friends to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I am still managing to extend a little, and all of it is cheerfully given."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £3 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

East and North London Freethinkers will remember the opening to-night (Jan. 3) of the course of Sunday Evening Lectures at the Shoreditch Town Hall. Mr. Foote is the lecturer, and his subject is the seasonable one of "Christ and Christmas." Special reserved seats for persons who want to be sure of one without hurrying are a shilling each, the tickets being obtainable beforehand of Miss Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. All other seats in the fine great hall are free, with a collection, of course, in aid of the expenses. The "saints" should bring their less heterodox friends and acquaintances along to this meeting.

Next Tuesday week (January 12) the London Freethinkers Annual Dinner takes place at the Holborn Restaurant under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. The tickets are 4s. each, as usual; this price covering the dinner and the subsequent entertainment. Mr. Foote presides and will be "supported" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, Heaford, Moss, etc. Metropolitan "saints" are invited to rally in strong force, and provincial "saints" who happen to be in town on business or pleasure, or both, will be very welcome. This is always a most enjoyable function, and starts the New Year in a pleasant manner.

Mr. Lloyd pays his annual visit to Leicester to-day (Jan 3) and lectures in the evening in the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate. He should have a good audience and a hearty reception.

We expect to publish the new (1909) circular *re* the President's Honorarium Fund in next week's *Freethinker*. A copy of the circular will be posted, as usual, to subscribers. Some of them may prefer not to wait for it before sending in their new year's subscription. The President's birthday is January 11, the day before the Annual Dinner, and several friends have expressed their intention to remit by then, so that he may start as hopefully as possible on the work of a year which (owing to recent changes) brings with it greater burdens and responsibilities for him than ever. It will be noticed that the £300 asked for was nearly subscribed in 1908. Perhaps it will be reached, or even passed, in 1909.

Mr. Foote has been trying to get a little extra freedom from work during the Christmas time, partly in order to get rid of the relics of a nasty cold he caught during his visit to Liverpool, and which was the only thing he brought back with him, as the enforced "free admission" destroyed his chance of earning anything (beyond expenses) by his lectures. Fortunately, he has nearly got rid of his unwelcome guest, in spite of the cold snap on the heels of Christmas Day; but the effort prevented his making this number of the *Freethinker* all he intended. Better luck next week.

Messrs. Whitehouse & Co., who are advertising in this week's *Freethinker*, have sent us samples of the boots they offer for sale, and we are bound to say, without posing as an authority on such matters, that they seem to us extremely good value for the money. This firm wishes to help our paper forward, and suggests that other firms should give it a trial.

We have already said that the best advertisement the *Freethinker* can receive, and certainly the most effectual one, is that which is given to it by its readers, who recommend it to their friends and acquaintances, or to persons they meet in the various intercourses of life. We appeal to our readers to do all they can to aid us in this way during

the new year. If they put a little extra energy into this kind of missionary work, the result will be felt in the paper's circulation. And in improving the paper's circulation they help forward the Freethought cause quite decisively, besides making the struggle less arduous for ourselves—which is a consideration of growing importance with every fresh year now added to our life.

Those who cannot afford to take more than one copy of the *Freethinker* weekly, may pass it on when they have done with it. Thousands of people would buy the paper regularly if they only knew of it. The difficulty, of course, is to reach them. Every copy placed in fresh hands is a step in that direction. There are some readers, of course, who can afford to take more than one copy weekly. They might take two, or three, or more copies, and make a point of introducing the paper to as many fresh persons every week. We ask them to make the effort.

We are as ready as ever to send the *Freethinker* gratuitously and post-free for six consecutive weeks to any person whose name and address are forwarded to us. We do not want names and addresses at hazard, but only of persons who are considered more or less likely to become regular subscribers if they are brought acquainted with the paper. Much good has been done in this way, and we hope for more.

We take this opportunity of repeating that orders for the *Freethinker* can always be placed at Messrs. Smith & Son's railway bookstalls, or at their shops in places where the railway bookstall is not in their hands. Occasionally a difficulty may arise, but if it is brought to our notice we will soon have it removed. This is a matter of the greatest importance.

Mr. Harry Snell, Secretary of the Secular Education League, showed Mr. Foote a letter lately received from a Primitive Methodist minister, who is a "whole-hogger" on the League's program. The following extract from this letter will interest many of our readers:—"The sneer 'Secularist Education' has no terrors for me. Personally I would a hundred times rather have Mr. Foote as President than the Archbishop of Canterbury. . . Unless Free Churchmen speedily make their choice of the two paths the battle will be fought (and won) by the men and women outside all religious organisations. This may delay the issue but cannot prevent it."

We quote the following from the *Educational News* of December 11—a bit late, but better late than never:—

"At a meeting of Hawick School Board, the Committee recommended that, seeing the curriculum at the Higher Grade School for three years had been passed by the Education Department without provision being made for religious instruction, the Board should not now include religious instruction in the curriculum. Mr. Hall contended that it was a pity that they should have one school in which there was no religious instruction, seeing it was given in all the others. Mr. Lawrie moved, as an amendment, that they approve of the Committee's report. He held that secular education was the most equitable way of solving the religious difficulty. Mr. Wilson, in seconding, said the catechism and other matters should be left to maturer years. The amendment was carried by 5 to 3."

Three cheers for Hawick!

"Growing Agnosticism" is noted by the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*. He says that 10,000 persons have severed their connection with the State Church during the past year. The numbers of communions, baptisms, and church marriages are rapidly diminishing. It is computed that for every five marriages celebrated five years ago in church only three are now celebrated, the other two being satisfied with a civil ceremony alone. The working classes are "bitterly hostile" to the clergy, but "the chief cause of the movement against the Church is the spread of agnosticism among all classes of the population."

Despite the fact that northern New England is a stronghold of temperance, if not of prohibition, temperance lecturers sometimes go there and encourage the faithful. One such, speaking in Keene, N.Y., reminded his hearers of the story of Dives and Lazarus. The lecturer pointed out how, when Dives was in Hades, he did not ask for beer, wine or liquor, but for one drop of water. "Now, my friends," said the lecturer, "what does that show us?" A voice from the back of the hall instantly replied: "It shows us where you temperance people go to."

Anatole France's Latest Book.

FREETHOUGHT is invariably associated with intellect. Turn where you will this is true. The greatest living English writers, Swinburne, Meredith, Hardy, Watson, and Davidson are all Freethinkers; Maurice Maeterlinck, the leading Belgian writer is an iconoclast; Gabriele D. Annunzio, the foremost of Italian authors, is as Pagan as a Greek of the classic period. Mark Twain, the most eminent man of letters in America, is a militant Freethinker. In Denmark, George Brandes, the renowned historian and critic, is an "intellectual." In France, the Freethought tradition is worthily carried on by a host of writers, of whom M. Anatole France is the acknowledged chief. Hence his books merit more than passing attention and we make no apology for introducing his latest work, the *Isle of the Penguins*, to the notice of our readers. This particular book is of unusual interest to Freethinkers as it is as full of scepticism as an egg is full of meat. M. Anatole France is a master of irony, and in the *Isle of the Penguins* he challenges comparison with the best of his predecessors. His literary forefathers are Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire, three of the most splendid names in literature. Yet M. France is no copyist, but strikingly original and modern. The only thing he has in common with these great men is his whole-hearted hatred of injustice and his power over language. M. France's enormous abilities are seen to the greatest advantage in the *Isle of the Penguins*, and the book is a masterpiece of imagination and humor. With subtle art, M. France has based his book on a Catholic legend. St. Mael, whilst sailing in his stone trough, is driven by storms to the Isle of the Penguins. Old and half blind, the saint mistakes the birds for human beings and blesses and baptises them. This regrettable incident causes trouble in heaven. God is embarrassed and a congress is summoned to debate how the birds, not having souls, could be affected by the rite of baptism. The description of the wrangle in the celestial congress is the quintessence of irony. The outcome is, that the baptism, having been correctly carried out, entitles the birds to the privileges of orthodoxy. Accordingly the birds are endowed with souls, "very little ones," and become human beings. St. Mael then embarks in his stone trough, and taking the island in tow, anchors it off the coast of Brittany.

This means the end of the simple life for the Penguins. They at once begin to act as Christians. They wear clothes, fight, lie, steal, slander those who differ from them, and turn their back on their own teachings daily. The rich oppress the poor, Anarchists make war on society, civilisation is destroyed by barbarism, and is succeeded by a civilisation as corrupt and as futile as of old.

All M. France's wide knowledge and fund of humor is displayed in the portrayal of these changes. The book teems with brilliant episodes, rich burlesques, pungent satires. Nowhere is he so happy as when he describes, in beautifully calculated language, how religions grew out of the hot-beds of ignorance, fraud and mystification. Yet M. France is never venomous. Although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift; nor like Voltaire, overflow with an adroit and subtle humor which stings like a wasp. Rather is he like Rabelais, who shifts satire into the realm of imaginative comedy, and pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was so much more tolerant than Swift. To Swift, writing in the shadow of the Christian superstition, all the world seemed a dunghill and man the most loathsome thing that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open, with all the winds of the renaissance blowing upon him, was more than a mere satirist. Under the motley of the buffoon beat as generous and kindly a heart as ever beat in the service of humanity. M. France possesses no small share of the tolerant humor of Rabelais, and at a distance of several centuries, carries on the

same splendid intellectual tradition. To the most distinguished of living continental writers we owe much of the present position of Freethought. In the far-off days, François Rabelais caught a glimpse of the dawn of liberty, and largely through his magnificent genius it has permeated all classes of society. M. Anatole France stands for the liberation of the intellect no less than Rabelais. He is like his illustrious predecessor, first and last a Freethinker, and he has the same abiding faith in the triumph of right and justice.

M.

Religious Relics in Unbelievers.

BY AUSTIN BIERBOWER.

IT is strange how unbelievers hesitate about discarding religion altogether. Most of them save certain relics and names. While rejecting all gods they use the name of God for the force in nature. There is no reason for this whatever. According to their views this force might as well be called matter or water as God. It is not conceived of as anything intelligent, and a god without intelligence is no god at all. It does not correspond to the deities of Christianity or Paganism. The deity is always alive and knowing, above nature and working as a supernatural being. To call anything else God is a misnomer and unbelievers give away their cause in keeping a god, even though explained as something wholly natural. There is no reason for retaining the name except to conciliate believers. They want to make their unbelief a kind of belief. They dislike the term Atheist and wish to get a substitute. If unbelievers repudiate the idea of God they have no reason to keep the name, which implies an intelligent and living being. There is no use for God in any other sense, and no need of one in the idea that nature is all and that the laws are universal. God is wholly different, and if he is discarded no divine functions are needed.

So unbelievers retain the word religion as applied to various moral, artistic or ambitious ends. Religion has to do with the supernatural and with a revelation. Its meaning is fixed in our language and cannot be changed. To call anything else religion is like calling turnips or memory religion. We can call anything by its name, but cannot get usage for the term, nor is there any reason for it. They who do not pray or have any ceremonies of God, who do not believe in the supernatural, have no need of anything called religion. When they reject everything religious they err in claiming that they have the thing. This word never means culture or art or anything else but what has to do with the supernatural, and to force the meaning of the term into something else is not to serve any purpose. Unbelievers are here stealing from believers. They must think there is good in religion if they take its name and pretend to have the substance. They give away their case in their unwillingness to be known as irreligious. They want a religion for purposes of deception, holding to popular opinion which they hope to satisfy with a term. The unbeliever, to be honest, must call himself an Atheist and unbeliever. He can reject the name of Infidel, as it seems to imply some faithlessness, but he ought to adopt words which principally designate him. If he is a Rationalist he will want no substitute for prayer, religious ceremonies, God, or anything pertaining to the Church.

So the unbeliever retains the name of "sacred" and claims to observe all the proprieties of religion. His use of the word merely confuses the public. He may call marriage or contracts sacred, and he usually does, and the word carries with it something pertaining to God or the supernatural. There is nothing sacred to the unbeliever, but everything is secular. There being no God or supernatural there is nothing which implies them. Other terms express the character of the bond which unites men and

women in marriage, and other terms express duty and everything moral. No need exists of using sacred by persons who do not believe in sanctity. These terms imply so much religious that they cannot be used to designate the absence of all religion. Unbelief needs a terminology. It has hitherto made itself too dependent on religion for its words, having borrowed the believer's language. There is nothing good, in the unbeliever's view, in anything pertaining to religion. All practical good is conceived as issuing from unbelief, so that there is no reason for any of the words, any more than for the things, which are used by the believers. There is the same reason why unbelievers should have clearness in their views as believers, and if they have not a language which expresses their opinion they should get it. It is not honest to use words which imply the opposite of their meaning, and it is not politic to use words in one sense when their meaning is taken in another. No one can hope to change the sense of words by using them differently from the common people. We can, at the same time, have a secular and a sacred set of things, and we should keep the terms apart, and the meaning distinct.

—*Humanitarian Review* (Los Angeles).

THE INVISIBLE KING.

Heaven was invented in the East, and in the East to be a courtier has always been regarded as the supreme felicity. The feelings of men towards their god, in the period to which we have now arrived, are precisely those of an Eastern subject towards his king. The oriental king is the Lord of all the land: his subjects are his children and his slaves. The man who is doomed to death kisses the fatal firman, and submits with reverence to his fate. The man who is robbed by the king of all that he has earned, will fold his hands and say, "The king gave, and the king taketh away. Blessed be the name of the king!" The man who lives in a distant province, who knows the king only by means of the taxes which are collected in his name, will snatch up his arms if he hears that this sacred person is in danger, and will defend him as he defends his children and his home. He will sacrifice his life for one whom he has never seen, and who has never done him anything but harm.

This kind of devotion is called loyalty when exhibited towards a king; piety when exhibited towards a god. But in either case the sentiment is precisely the same. It cannot be too often repeated that god is only a special name for king; that religion is a form of government, its precepts a code of laws; that priests are gatherers of divine taxes, officers of divine police; that men resort to churches to fall on their knees and to sing hymns, from the same servile propensity which makes the Oriental delight in prostrating himself before the throne; that the noble enthusiasm which inspires men to devote themselves to the service of their god, and to suffer death rather than deny his name, is identical with the devotion of the faithful servant who, to serve his royal master, gives up his fortune or his life without the faintest prospect of reward. The religious sentiment, about which so much has been said, has nothing distinctive in itself. Love and fear, self-denial and devotion, existed before those phantoms were created which men call gods; and men have merely applied to invisible kings the sentiments which they had previously felt towards their earthly kings. If they are a people in a savage state, they hate both kings and gods within their hearts, and obey them only out of fear. If they are a people in a higher state, love is mingled with fear, producing an affectionate awe which, in itself, is pleasing to the mind. That the worship of the unseen king should survive the worship of the earthly king is natural enough; but even that will not endure for ever; the time is coming when the crowned idea will be cast aside and the despotic shadow disappear.

—*Winwood Reade, "Martyrdom of Man,"* pp. 175-176.

There is no Other World; there never was anything that man has meant by Other World; neither spirit nor mystical behind the veil; nothing not ourselves that makes for rightousness, no metaphysical abstraction. Time is a juggler's trick of the sun and moon. There is only matter, which is the infinite, which is space, which is eternity; which we are.—*John Davidson.*

The World of Books.

Mr. Bertram Dobell is writing in the *Bibliophile* a series of articles on James Thomson ("B.V."), the poet of the *City of Dreadful Night*. Two articles have already appeared, in the November and December numbers, and more are to follow. We mention the fact for the sake of Thomson's admirers, who are more numerous, of course, among Freethinkers than among other sections of the reading public. They will turn to these articles with much interest, for Mr. Dobell is qualified to write on this subject with both sympathy and authority. We propose to say more about the articles when they are concluded. In the meantime we may note that Mr. Dobell "hopes to publish shortly an extended biographical and critical study of the poet of pessimism."

* * *

Mr. Dobell refers, in a footnote, to a curious circumstance. He states that in a recent notice of the volume of Selections from the poems of Francis Thompson "the reviewer took occasion to observe that the book does not contain the author's most famous work, namely, the *City of Dreadful Night*." Mr. Dobell adds that "this appeared, not in an obscure paper, but in the leading journal of the northern part of the Kingdom." Francis Thompson was a true poet, but he died only last year, while James Thomson died in 1882; he was a Catholic, while James Thomson was an Atheist; and he was Thompson with a "p"—a thing which James Thomson, like all Thomsons without the "p," abhorred.

* * *

We repeat that Francis Thompson was a true poet. We may add that he was a fine poet. We intend to say something about his poetry before long, and also about his remarkable article in the *Dublin Review* on Shelley. For the present, we desire to say only this: that James Thomson had the head of a thinker, while Francis Thompson had the head of an emotional dreamer. This was their essential difference. James Thomson's best poetry had an architectonic quality, in which decoration was subordinate to structure. Francis Thompson's best poetry was more fruitful in flying imagery and verbal felicities, but the constructive power was much lighter. It was enough for Francis Thompson to find rest for his heart. James Thomson was compelled to find rest for his brain; not the rest of self-surrender, but the rest of conviction.

* * *

Messrs. George Allen and Sons send us a copy of Mr. Andrew Carnegie's *Problems of To-day* (2s. 6d. net) dealing with "Wealth, Labor, and Socialism." Such subjects are beyond our purview in this journal. We may state, however, that Mr. Carnegie writes vigorously from his own point of view, and presents a number of interesting facts and figures. He is opposed to Socialism, naturally, but that is no reason why he should not be heard, for even a millionaire may have something to say worth listening to, and answering. Mr. Carnegie's position is that of the old Radicals. He would tax wealth heavier and heavier, and prevent its descending to children and breeding hereditary idlers. Finally, we may regard this book as a sign of the growing sensitiveness of the social conscience. The evils of society are no longer taken for granted; remedies must be found, and what they should be is the crux of the discussion.

* * *

The January number of the *Positivist Review* contains some interesting and important articles. Professor Beesly contributes a strong article on "Security from Invasion," Mr. Frederic Harrison writes sympathetically on "Andrew Carnegie's Gospel," and Mr. Philip Thomas on "Positivism and Unemployment." Mr. Frederic Ryan, whose name will be familiar to our older readers, has "An Open Letter to the Young Turks," written from the point of view of the Young Egyptians. The editor confines himself this month to the paragraphs. We congratulate Mr. Swinny on beginning the new year well, and we hope his circulation is increasing.

The Latest Find in Archæology.

WONDERFUL DOCUMENT UNEARTHED BEARING OUT THE BIBLE STORY OF THE FLOOD.

(From the "Nineveh Churchman.")

WHILE workmen were engaged in removing rubbish in the excavations now being carried on by the eminent archaeologist, Prof. Bologna, a corner-stone in one of the ancient ruins below the present city was broken. It was found to contain a number of very interesting relics. A copy of the

Pope's latest pronouncement regarding heretics, a December address of a mayoralty candidate of Nippur, a package of seed from the tree out of which the cross was made, an American half-dollar of the time of Tiberius, a crock of sauer-kraut, a copy of Treasurer Coady's first request for a raise, and lastly a slab of stone bearing closely written or engraved characters in an unknown tongue. The professor knew that it was a valuable find and proceeded to decipher the writing. Employing the hit-or-miss principle that has given such satisfactory results in the translation of ancient writings, he invented a key, and within a week had the story written in German, French, English, and Bostonese.

The story of the Flood and of the building of the ark are told with greater detail than in the Mosaic account. The reference to order to build is after this manner:—

"And the Lord spake unto Noah and said: 'What is the state of religion in your township?'

"And Noah said: 'The people are a bad lot. I don't know a single man I can trust. There are no really orthodox or saintly persons in the whole country outside of our own family.'

"'Just what I thought,' said the Lord. 'By my hali-dome, are not the rags and bones in a thousand lanes mine? I will go for them; therefore, make thou an ark of gopher wood,' etc.

The historian—who seems to have been a lineal descendant of Noah—makes a marginal note here to the effect that the proof of the ark having been built is supported by the fact that "the gopher is common in Asia Minor to the present day."

Noah had his troubles. Gopher wood of good quality was worth \$25 per thousand board measure and money was tight. He called a council of war and asked his sons what could be done.

"I tells you, Vader," said the first-born, "vat we do. It vill take more as von hundred year to build this big boat. So much beezhness takes monish. Ve starts a bank unt a lumber company; you vill president be unt I vill take for scribetary unt treasurer unt cashier unt all like dose."

The thing got under way after a bit, and a fire-proof paint company and a fire insurance company were added. People who would not sell their timber to Noah without the cash, would and did buy shares in Shem's flotations and paid cash for them. The ark would require about 10 000 000 feet of lumber, which was a nice order for a start; then the insurance on the ark at 5 per cent. compounded for 100 years would pay for half-a-dozen arks: it would all come out of Noah and his backer. It was easy money for the shareholders, and they made off with the line so fast that the reel got overheated and almost spoiled the rod, which had cost Shem "more as feefy cent."

The bank and other companies paid 10% the first year and 15% the second year, and stock became scarco. Shem began buying in the open market, and paid about 200 for a few Noah's Bank, Lebanon Lumber, Tophet Fire, and Hell Proof Paint. Then prices soared to 1,000, and when the smoke of battle cleared Shem did not hold a share beyond what was necessary to qualify as manager. He complained about being hard up, but was frequently heard singing, "Der Lord is mine shepherd"; and one day he was heard to mutter in his office, "I haf der wool mit me, und der hides on der door barn nailed is."

When the ark was completed to the second deck, it became so rotten that a coating of Hell Proof paint was applied on the outside. One night, however, a fire occurred—Shem proved by his wife and little Ike that he was sick in bed at the time—and in the morning the ark was only a shell of paint, but stronger than the timber, and H. P. P. stock was up again, as was the voice of Shem in a song of praise to the God of Mercy, who had put the necks of his enemies under his feet.

When the animals were coming to the refuge prepared, there was much confusion in trying to identify the different species, so that there should be no duplication or admission of unclean for clean beasts; but after they had secured a copy of Settin Earnest Thompson's book, *Wild Animals I Might Have Met*, with illustrations by the author, they got along nicely.

One animal gave them some trouble, but at last they thought it was like the illustration, "A Gorilla from Guelp," and asked the creature if their guess was correct.

"Not on your life," said the Thing.

"Why is your fur so worn in patches?"

"Toronto city taxes."

"Why are you so flat and thin?"

"Squeezed between Consumers' Gas, Bell Telephone, and Toronto Railway."

"Here, Ham, this is a human—bounce him and let him drown; or—wait. This Thing is only the remains of a man. Put him in the junk room; he'll come in handy for the freak section of 'The Greatest Show on Earth,' which we'll put on foot when this is over."

Another animal that arrived with his wife proved by its presence that God provides for all his creatures. It was very deliberate in its movements, and Noah, turning to the leaves of the animal book, said:

"You are not in *Animals I Might Have Met*."

"No; but you'll find me in *Animals I Might Not Have Met*."

"Name, and where from?"

"Sloth, Brazil."

"How did you come?"

"Beat it to Seattle, mail boat to Nome, Behring's Straits (only a creek then), tramped to Vladivostock, Pekin, Lhassa, Kabool, Teheran and Bagdad Railway."

"Heavens above! When did you start?"

"Soon's I heard of it, 110 years ago to a day. Missionary come, told us all about you; allowed you was the most powerful preacher what ever slammed a book; rainin' hard when I left."

"My good land!" said Mrs. Noah; "the water must be six mile deep by now."

Noah said, "You're all right, Mr. Sloth. Show the missus into my private parlor and tell her to take off her things."

We have only room for one more incident. A tiger from Bengal stopped on the gang-plank to investigate a load of venison that was on a truck, and Noah shouted:

"Ham, you black rascal, twist that fellow's tail and make him move along."

But Ham, who had a watermelon under each arm, replied:

"'Fore de good Gawd, dad, I'se a good Baptis' an' b'long of the W. C. T. U. an' de human sassiety, an' I wouldn't hurt nuffin' from a fly down to a Royal Bengal tiger. Ef y' aint too busy, yo' mought twist dat tail yo'sef."

The whole story is useful, as whatever is not entertaining is as true as the Mosaic account.

—Mad Murdock, "Secular Thought" (Toronto).

The Confessional.

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their...all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha!" quoth the father; "much I blame
The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
Nay, I will turn this love of thine
To lawful love, almost divine.

VI.

For he is young and led astray,
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
To change the laws of church and state;
So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
Who, ere the thunder breaks, shall roll
Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

For, when he lies upon thy breast,
Thou mayest demand and be possessed
Of all his plans, and next day steal
To me, and all those plans reveal,
That I and every priest, to purge
His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

The father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
The one spot from his soul away!
To-night he comes, but not the same
Will look!" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night: on the after-morn
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market place:
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block...God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed...

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall hear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

—ROBERT BROWNING.

MY APOLOGIA.

When in my songs I name the name of God,
I mean not Him who ruled with brazen rod
The ruler of the Jew; nor Him who calm
Sat reigning on Olympus; nay, nor Brahm,
Osiris, Allah, Odin, Balder, Thor
(Though these I honor with a hundred more),
Menu I mean not, nor the man divine,
The pallid rainbow lighting Palestine,
Nor any lesser of the gods which Man
Hath conjured out of Night since Time began,
I mean the primal mystery and light,
The most unfathomable, infinite,
The higher law, impersonal, supreme,
The life in life, the dream within the dream.

—Robert Buchanan.

This is an age of slavery and an era of Revolt. I will wear the bonnet rouge, and can only pray to the Fates not to permit me to become a sansculotte, for the sake of "Public Decency," which is now a god and sits with the Cæsars. Our books have a primary dedication to this divinity, this Lord Chamberlain of propriety, and an Index Expurgatorius awaits offenders against the Borgnese Pope, who is poisonous to truth. Originality is ostracised, and commonplace is King. Nudity goes shamed before the modern dancers. The Advocatus Diaboli was napping when the voice of the people was beatified. We should go through the saintly register on an errand of destruction.—Morley Roberts.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

SHOREDITCH TOWN HALL: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christ and Christmas."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Lower Hall of People's Picture Palace, Woodgrange-road): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Curse of the Cross."

COUNTRY.

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

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Concert by the Failsworth String Band.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Buildings, 113 Islington): 7, Sidney Wollen, "Life, Death, and Immortality." Members' meeting after Lecture.

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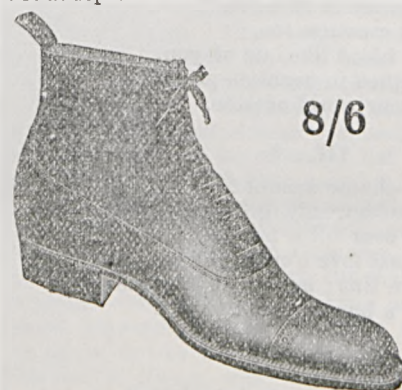
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