

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Mightier far
Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest, [breast.
And though his favorite seat be feeble woman's*
—WORDSWORTH.

The Challenge of Secularism.—III.

CANON STREATFEILD appears to have hopes of Mr. Blatchford. I believe his hopes will be disappointment, but this is a free country, at least for Christians. The reverend gentleman hesitates, even now, to "class Mr. Blatchford with the Secularists." "I doubt," he adds, "whether secularists pure and simple would acknowledge him as their colleague." Nor is that all:—

"At this very time there is a somewhat acute difference between the editor of the *Clarion* and Mr. G. W. Foote, the editor of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote's quick and watchful eye has detected, in recent utterances of the *Clarion*, a loophole by which the Christian religion (not many years since held up to scorn by Mr. Blatchford) may creep in and regain its lost authority. Whatever rights socialism may claim, it has no right, in Mr. Foote's opinion, to be Christian; and, until the *Clarion* clears itself from the suspicion of holding out the olive leaf to any form of Christianity, it will smart beneath the lash of the *Freethinker*."

The reverend gentleman must try to forgive me for saying that this is somewhat fantastic. Certainly it is so as far as the "lash" is concerned. I have in no wise complained of Mr. Blatchford's general attitude towards Christianity since he began to tell his readers that he at length understood it, and disbelieved it, and challenged it as an enemy of liberty and progress. I have smiled occasionally at his fondness for using the word "religion," as though he thought that, without a religion of some sort, he would be too much like the tailless fox in the fable. But that is, after all, a weakness into which greater thinkers than he have fallen. Where I have gravely complained of Mr. Blatchford is in relation to the theory of Determinism. He has blundered in ways which I hardly thought possible to a man of his intelligence. He understands the question clearly enough up to a certain point. The moment it enters into the region of psychology he is lost. His sagacity fails him from that moment onwards. The farther he goes the worse is his confusion. He destroys the very possibility of ethics. He throws morality away, or rather he makes a present of it to the enemy. I consider this a serious mischief to a cause which I have some right to represent. And if I have not hurried to deal at length, as I have promised to do, with Mr. Blatchford's blunder, it has been mainly because I wanted to eliminate the personal equation. It might have been thought that I was in haste to attack his book and discount his influence. Such an idea is attractive to malicious people, who are far more numerous than optimists imagine; for the world has really not altered so very much since the days of La Rochefoucauld or of Chamfort. I have therefore waited until Mr. Blatchford's book on Determinism has had a full opportunity of being read and digested. Minds are calmer now than

they were when the book was in the first flush of its success; and what I have to say, presently, will stand a better chance of being listened to on its merits. But I was bound to let my dissent be known from the first; otherwise I might have laid myself open to another taunt—namely, that I had taken a very long time to find out the flaws in Mr. Blatchford's presentation of Determinism. Beyond this, however, I do not know what can lend any color of justification to Canon Streatfeild's words about the "lash" of the *Freethinker* being applied to the *Clarion*.

After referring to *Club Life* and *Reynolds's Newspaper*—which, by the way, is in fresh hands and rapidly changing its character—Canon Streatfeild passes on to what he evidently regards as the wickedest paper in England:—

"The *Freethinker*, edited by Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society, from its first page to its last, never leaves any doubt as to its aim. That aim, from its inception, was, in the words of the editor, 'to wage relentless war against superstition in general and the Christian superstition in particular.' It avows a bitter hatred of Christianity, and, as one reads its pages, one involuntarily thinks of our Lord before His accusers—mocked, buffeted, spat upon. From indecency, in the sense of obscenity, the *Freethinker*, so far as I know, is happily free; and in this respect compares favorably with French journalism of similar aim. Short of this the *Freethinker* stops at nothing. In its ribald comments upon Scripture, its imputation of motives, especially of avarice, to ministers of religion, its bitter contempt for everything that the Christian, or even the theist, holds sacred, it would be impossible to outbid or outdo Mr. Foote; whilst his books and pamphlets are on a par with the worst of his work in the *Freethinker*. As an illustration of the old saying, *corruptio optimi pessima*, it may be noted that amongst Mr. Foote's ablest colleagues on the editorial staff are an ex-Presbyterian and an ex-Baptist minister."

It will be observed that the reverend gentleman is fond of the word "bitter." Mr. Blatchford is "bitter" and I am "bitter." Well, I am *not* bitter. I treat Christianity with more disdain than bitterness. I say little about the personality of Christ, because I consider it fictitious. I am surely as free to speak of the legendary and mythological elements in the story of Christ as Canon Streatfeild is to speak of similar elements in the stories of heathen "Saviors." I am sorry he thinks of me as mocking, buffeting, and spitting upon his "Lord." It was religious people who treated Jesus in that way, and I have no desire to imitate them. It is pleasant, however, to see that Canon Streatfeild cannot bring himself to utter the common Christian lie about the "indecency" of the *Freethinker*. Not that I believe he is fair to "French journalism of similar aim." He fails to allow, I think, for the greater freedom of expression so usual in French literature. The English mind seems bent on leaving the Bible a monopoly in this direction. As for my "ribald comments upon Scripture," the phrase simply means that my clerical critic does not like them; for the word "ribald" strictly means the very quality from which he has just allowed that I am "happily free." With respect to the motives of the clergy, I have held that they go into the Church for a living. I speak of them in the bulk; of course, there are high and honorable exceptions. I honor a Newman as much as I despise those of the same profession who amass big fortunes

in preaching the gospel of poverty and renunciation. It is notorious what the clergy of all the Protestant Churches in this country regard as a true "call." I do not accuse them of exceptional avarice. I simply say that their motives are, in the main, as "worldly" as those of men in other walks of life. And I say, besides, that they belong to a profession which has been the most unscrupulous in the world in upholding its power, privileges, and profits. Does the reverend gentleman deny this? If he does, I will set about proving the truth of my statement. Finally, I beg to ask him who is the "ex-Baptist minister" amongst my "ablest colleagues" on the *Freethinker*? The "ex-Presbyterian" is Mr. Lloyd.

The passage I have just criticised is not all that Canon Streatfeild has to say about the *Freethinker*. He continues in the following manner:—

"It would be a great mistake to describe the contents of this publication as so much literary garbage. Large portions deserve no better title; on the other hand, many of the more serious contributions evince no little erudition and acumen, as well as considerable power of literary expression. To Mr. Foote himself it is impossible to deny the two qualities which give to the *Freethinker* much of what popularity it enjoys; no one can doubt that he has the courage of his opinions, or that he has an exceedingly forcible way of expressing them."

In this passage the reverend gentleman's good and evil genius struggle together for the mastery, and the result is lamentable. In his anxiety to get in the word "garbage," without committing himself too deeply, he places himself in a very false position. What are the portions of the *Freethinker* which may justly be called "literary garbage"? I suppose my clerical critic would indicate "Acid Drops." But, as a matter of fact, the paragraphs under that heading are, and always have been, written by the best pens on the paper. Up to May, 1898, they were all written by my sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, or myself. Mr. Wheeler's death at that date left me with a terrible burden of work. For several years I wrote all the "Acid Drops" with my own hand. During the last two or three years I have had some assistance in that department from Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. Now I want an answer to this question. How is it that writers who "evince no little erudition and acumen," as well as "considerable power of literary expression" in their articles, become producers of "literary garbage" when they turn their hands to paragraphs? There is no garbage in the *Freethinker*. I am sure of that. And I am also pretty sure that I understand why Canon Streatfeild employs that term. In the first place, he cannot please his own side without saying something disagreeable; in the second place, the paragraphs in "Acid Drops" sting, and when people are stung they are apt to cut capers and use expletives.

I have the courage of my opinions. Canon Streatfeild admits that. And, if I may say so myself, the fact is really too patent for denial. I have been accused of many faults, but never of cowardice. Now courage is the very salt of literature as it is the very salt of life. The productions of genius are a striking proof of this. When a writer fears the dear long-eared public, when he thinks of what people will say, when he bows to the composite ghost at his elbow of all the critics in newspaper offices or elsewhere, he will never do anything worthy of the world's attention. Fear paralyses. Courage heightens a man's powers. For my own part, and without wishing in the least to force myself into the company of my betters, I believe that whatever vividness may be in my writing is chiefly due to the fact that I wrote because I had something to say, and that I never cared a straw as to what anybody would think of it. I have always written to please myself, and I have frequently failed in the attempt, for I believe I am the severest critic of my own work. But I have always done my best at the time. I have never scamped a piece of work in my life. I have that virtue if I have no other. And I may add, while I am in the confidential vein, that I have always respected the individuality of my contributors as much as my own. I should be

ashamed to "doctor" the articles of men like Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. I leave them absolute freedom to express their own views in their own way, and I am quite sure that they write all the better in consequence.

Canon Streatfeild is good enough to say that I have "an exceedingly forcible way of expressing" my opinions. Well, I am glad I make that impression. I detest what is called "fine" writing. I do not want my readers to say "how beautiful!" I want them to say "How true!" I don't want them to think of me at all. I want them to think of what I am saying. This is one of the secrets of terseness. You say what you have to say,—no less, and no more. My style, such as it is, is therefore my own. But I may take the opportunity of saying that, while I have imitated no one, and been ever myself, I have benefited by reading—*really* reading—the best literature of all the ages. And as the best literature is, finally, the literature with the most *life* in it, that has no doubt helped me to be "forcible." Canon Streatfeild may, or may not, pardon me for saying that I have got some good in that way out of the men of genius in his own Church. They are all dead, of course; there are no men of genius in it now, and there never will be again. But there were once. I think Newman was the last of them,—and he had to clear out. I remember when I was a lad, browsing without a guide in the fields of literature, I came quite accidentally across the "judicious Hooker." I opened him, read his first sentence, drew a deep breath, and said to myself, "This man could write." I know Taylor, Barrow, South, Leighton, and many obscurer men of genius (such as old Thomas Adams, who had brains enough for anything) in the Church of England. I think Paley was a time-server, but I humbly endorse Coleridge's praise of his masculine composition. I have enjoyed the whole of Sydney Smith, including his sermons, although it has been said that "his jokes were sermons" and (very foolishly) that "his sermons were jokes." As for Newman, I have read and re-read him for nearly forty years; and when he died I wrote an article upon him in the *Freethinker*, which was included in a Catholic collection of tributes to his memory. Perhaps the Rev. Canon Streatfeild will understand me a little better now. And while I am on this subject I may inform him that I know the writings of Martin Luther tolerably well, and that if he wishes to make a collection of "literary garbage" he will find as much as he wants on "the dunghill" (as Lowell calls it) of the great "Protestant Reformer."

And now I desire to say that I can very well afford to laugh at orthodox insults. Defenders of the faith hate what they dread. They scowl at me because I am *not* harmless. I flatter myself that I have never won their praise. They may say pleasanter things about me when I am dead, and out of the way; not while I am in the thick of the fight against them. I assure them I quite understand. And I recollect a certain passage in *The Borderers* of Wordsworth, which hardly anyone knows nowadays. Oswald, in that powerful though abortive drama, says:—

"I had been nourished by the sickly food
Of popular applause. I now perceived
That we are praised, only as men in us
Do recognise some image of themselves,
An abject counterpart of what they are,
Or the empty thing that they would wish to be
I felt that merit has no surer test
Than obloquy; that, if we wish to serve
The world in substance, not deceived by show
We must become obnoxious to its hate,
Or fear disguised in simulated scorn."

In my own poor way, I have tried to serve the world in substance. I have not been deceived by show. I have paid no regard to what Emerson speaks of as "that bloated vanity called public opinion." And I have, not incurred, but *won* obloquy. The Christian world, at least, hates me; but when it professes to scorn me, I recognise that the scorn is simulated,—it is the disguise of fear.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Christianity and the Social Conscience.

THE other week some Wesleyan Methodists held a conference in Wesley's Chapel, City-road, on Unemployment. The Conference opened with prayer and ended with the Doxology. That is, after detailing all the misery and widespread evil that follows unemployment, the meeting sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." As is usual at such gatherings, "the Christian conscience," "the Christian Church," etc., etc., was all over the place. Christians were called upon to do this, that, and the other, and one would have imagined from the speeches that no one but Christians were alive to the evils of unemployment, and that no one but Christians would ever put an end to them. All this was doubtless immensely gratifying to the Christians present; it enhanced their sense of their own importance to the community, even if it was not clear in what way it would help to solve the problem under discussion.

One of the speakers, the Rev. Harry Bisseker, remarked that it was the duty of the Christian Church to create a social conscience—a sentiment that reminds one of a deliverance by Ruskin. Someone had said to Ruskin that in many places the clergy were the only friends the poor man had. Ruskin replied that this might be true, but if so it was the very hardest thing that had ever been said against them. For, said he, the clergy have been the directors of the public conscience for so long that you are saying they have done their duty so badly that they have failed to give to people in power a proper sense of responsibility to those around them. One may repeat this of Mr. Bisseker's statement. We have had the Christian Churches for many centuries, wielding a power and an influence such as no other single institution has ever possessed or is ever likely to possess. And at the end of this period one of its accredited representatives, without any apparent sense of the censure he is passing on Christianity, calmly remarks that the duty of the Christian Church in the future will be that of creating a social conscience. Then what has it been doing all along? And what amount of confidence does it inspire for the future?

Fortunately for everybody, the statement that we need the Church to create a social conscience is not true. A social conscience is not something that can either be made to order or established by a mass meeting. A social conscience is one of the cardinal facts of human history; it is, in fact, implied in the very expression "human history." For man, as we know him, is an embodiment of what we mean when we talk of a social conscience. Sufficiently alive to the common welfare man has not always been, but the tribal sense has been ever moulding his nature to wider and more permanent issues. It is, indeed, only in the light of the evolution and influence of this sense that man becomes an understandable problem. The ignoring of this has been one of the most fatal of Christianity's many blunders, just as the remark that it has to be created by the Christian Church proves the utter incapacity of the clergy for social leadership.

The social sense does not need creating, but it does need developing. At present the sense of a community of interest is manifested, on any general scale, only in its lowest form. In the case of war, which appeals to the less civilised side of human nature, there is manifested a sense that the members of a society irrevocably share in the good and evil fortune of society. In other directions, it is conspicuously absent. When, at the late Queen's Jubilee procession, some attempt was made to give the people an object lesson in the greatness of the British Empire, three things monopolised the stage. Soldiers and sailors, representing the brute force of the Empire; representatives of various colonies and dependencies, indicating the extent of our acquisitions, and the leaders of the prominent religious sects. Force and cunning were the two things to the front. Art, science, literature, even commerce, were treated as

negligible quantities. Yet, if history teaches one thing conclusively, it is that neither militarism nor religion can maintain a people in a state of efficiency, and that a nation is never so near its fall as when it counts its greatness in terms of either brute force or mere wealth of religious conviction. The greatness and decline of Rome, Venice, and Spain is never understood until we learn this lesson from their experience.

The Church has taught that people should *fight* for the State, and so far the lesson was good, if had it taught with equal insistence that people should think for the State, and work for the State, the necessity of fighting would not be imminent, and the evils of poverty would not be now what they are. "It is singular, nay, portentous," says a writer in the *Christian World*, "that in the protest of the social conscience against war, the religion of the question should so often find itself outside the Churches." The word "religion" is evidently dragged into this sentence in order to cover an ugly and inconvenient fact. And this is, that with the exception of the Society of Friends, the strongest opponents of militarism have been found among those whose sympathies with *Christianity* were of the weakest, or whose opinions were actively hostile to it. No religion, not even Mohammedanism, has done so much to consecrate war as has Christianity, nor has any other religion been responsible for so many conflicts. Mr. Fielding Hall relates how, when the Burmese took up arms against the British occupancy, the Buddhist priests told them that no one, no matter how necessary the act, could take life without paying the penalty in the degradation of their own natures. It was the Christian priests who blessed the arms of Christian soldiers in an unjustifiable war, just as it was our Christian pulpits—with a rare exception here and there—that sang the praises of militarism during our still more unjustifiable South African campaign.

Consciously or unconsciously matters little to the question; the *fact* remains that the influence of Christianity has been in the direction of a distortion instead of a development of the social sense. It has identified the welfare of society with the dominance of a particular creed, and often with the dominance of a particular sect. In this way the social sense has been restricted in its development and application, and the very intensity of its application to sectarian affairs has caused it to often operate as a cause of social disruption. An extreme instance of this is found in our midst in the person of the Rev. R. F. Horton, who calmly suggests that all who do not believe in a future life should be ostracised from human society. Without the active influence of Christian sectarianism, the social sense would have operated over the whole of its legitimate area; but by confining it to a sect, its development has been frustrated, and its application circumscribed. Nor is it without significance that it is only with the weakening of religious sectarian barriers that there has been a marked development in the sense of community of interest as the condition of social well-being.

Nor is this all. Religion has really been maintaining a parasitic existence at the expense of the social sense. Feelings that have been claimed as religious, such as those connected with concern for others, are really socially in both their origin and expression. In early societies religion and the social sense work together with less harm than is the case later, because the range of religious belief is co-extensive with the tribe. It is at a later period when religion has narrower limits, when it claims the social feelings as its own, and interprets them in terms of its own supernaturalism, that the evil commences. How religion plays the parasite on the social feelings can be seen if we study closely the case of conversions. For these nearly all occur during the years when young men and women are experiencing the growth of those organs and feelings that are properly and directly connected with the development of a larger social self. Then we see enacted on a smaller scale what has taken place historically. Young people are

taught that these feelings are due to the striving of God within the soul, their expression is directed to this or that supernaturalism, instead of the opportunity being seized to consciously and finally relate them to the general well-being.

The truth is that instead of the social sense needing Christianity either for its creation or development, this end is best served when Christianity stands on one side, and its place is taken by systematic and rational training. As it is, the social conscience is compelled to operate under every possible disadvantage. Much of its energy has, of necessity, to be given to the task of humanising religion. And the result of this is seen in precisely such gatherings as those noted at the beginning of this article. The speakers at that Conference imagined it was their religion that led them to discuss a purely social problem. This was quite a mistake, and was, in reality, putting the cart before the horse. It is the very strength of the social conscience that is forcing preachers of religion to deliberately face questions they have hitherto regarded as outside their province. Some take up such topics willingly, in virtue of their strong human sympathies; others because they are sufficiently acute to perceive the tendency of the times, and that, unless they modify their creed in accordance with the spirit of the age, they and their religion will soon be left far in the rear. All the various attempts to read modern social and secular ideas and theories into the New Testament represent merely the pressure of modern opinion on ancient religious beliefs.

Those who look at the matter historically are at no loss to trace the nature and stages of the process. First we get the pressure exerted on the most objectionable forms of religious belief. Later the beliefs themselves are attacked, and are surrendered one after the other. Finally, we have the spirit of the religion questioned, and then we reach the beginning of the end. For to-day it is not merely this or that teaching of Christianity that is called into question. It is the spirit of historic Christianity that is challenged. There is a growing conviction that, come what may on the other side of the grave, this world gives us the real sphere of human interest and duty. The modern social sense declines to regulate life by any kind of supernaturalism, and although the vested interests of the latter lead to a certain amount of modification on both sides, each surrender to the modern spirit only makes further conquest easier and more certain.

C. COHEN.

The Moral Sense.

FROM the Secularist point of view, the subject of the moral sense is as clear as noonday, and needs no further elucidation. To an intelligent non-religious person nothing is more obvious than that the moral sense is exclusively the sense of right and wrong between man and man. It signifies the consciousness of what ought to be, and what ought to be avoided, in social conduct. It is a sense more or less shared by all gregarious animals. Mr. Blyth, a friend of Darwin, "saw Indian crows feeding two or three of their companions which were blind"; and Darwin himself tells us that he knew of "a dog who never passed a cat who lay sick in a basket, and was a great friend of his, without giving her a few licks with his tongue, the surest sign of kind feeling in a dog." Even wolves hunt in packs, and help one another in catching their prey. Prince Kropotkin informs us that the shores of countless lakes in the Russian and Siberian steppes "are peopled with myriads of aquatic birds, belonging to at least a score of different species, all living in perfect peace—all protecting one another." The baboons live in communities and observe rules of social conduct; and whenever they go out in search of food, one of their number invariably occupies some elevated

point and utters loud cries to warn them of any approaching danger. In Abyssinia, some years ago, a troop of them was observed crossing a valley. As they were ascending a mountain, they were attacked by dogs, and instantly those who had climbed the mountain rushed down again to the help of their brethren. Their shrieks frightened the dogs away. Later, when all the baboons had ascended the mountain, except a young one, the dogs returned to the attack. Seeing his danger, the little one called loudly for aid, when one of the largest males came down again, and, after much coaxing, persuaded the youngster to accompany him into safety. Prince Kropotkin, in his *Mutual Aid*, gives numerous instances of the display of the moral sense among animals.

It may be objected that animals are guided only by instinct when they render one another any service. That is very doubtful; but, even if it were the case, it would only show that some animal instincts are highly moral, and lead to heroic action, while others are the opposite. All we are anxious to maintain is that the moral sense, whether instinctive or otherwise, is common to all social animals, including man. Now, it will be readily admitted by all that, until we reach man, no religious element enters into this moral sense. It arises naturally as the result of associated life. If it begins as an instinct, it is, at any rate, as a moral instinct that it begins; and it is a question whether it is not as an instinct that it often exhibits itself in human life also. When a man who cannot swim jumps into the water to attempt the rescue of a drowning person, is it not unintelligent instinct that impels him? And it may be further questioned if all moral action should not be more or less instinctive. But as to the identity in nature of the moral sense in men and in animals there can be no doubt whatever. It is universally admitted, however, that all animals are alike in that they are non-religious. There is nothing to indicate that birds and baboons possess any religion or engage in Divine worship. And yet most theologians treat the moral sense in man as if it were a religious sense; almost as if it were a gift of Christ to the world, and had never existed before his time. "Morality," they say, "is eternal and immutable in the mind of God, and it was a part of Christ's mission to reveal it to mankind." The merest tyro in the knowledge of history can bear witness to the utter falsity of such a statement. Morality is neither eternal nor immutable. It has had a beginning, and its evolution in history can be distinctly traced. Jesus made no contribution whatever to the world's moral code. This is conceded even by some Christian writers. Mr. S. H. Mellor, although convinced that Christian morals are the only perfect morals, yet describes them as "the new ideals which the apostles and fathers of the Christian Church built up out of the ideas set forth in the Old Testament and later Jewish ethics, read in the light of the life and words of Jesus." The truth, however, is that whatever was new in the Christian code was not true, and whatever was true was not new. Nor can it be truly said that Jesus introduced a new spirit into morals, for the gospel of love which he is reported to have preached and acted had been both preached and acted many centuries before he was born. Different moral codes are only registers of specific stages in the evolution of the world's moral sense.

Primarily, religion is not concerned with morals, but with the relations between individuals and God. A man may be profoundly religious while atrociously immoral. That distiller was very pious whom Beecher represents as remonstrating with his minister for talking about drink: "Attend to your own business; preach the glorious Gospel; preach the doctrines of grace. What have they to do with liquor? Leave that to us, and keep to your God-given mission." Whether that was good advice or not, its being given by a Christian man proves that, in his opinion, religion and morality were two different things. As a matter of fact, the Church

of yesterday did not exercise itself much in the realm of morals. It applied itself almost exclusively to the business of individual soul-saving. Its ministers were mediators between God and men; and the salvation they trafficked in was for the world to come. Hell-worthy souls received, on certain conditions, tickets for seats in heaven. Morality was always kept in the background. But the Church of to-day, at least the Protestant section of it, having reached the end of its days as a soul-saving agency, is beginning to take up and monopolise the work of social reform. After proving a dismal failure on the old spiritual lines, it is now resolved to achieve magnificent success as a regenerator of society. "Soul-saving was but a miserable business at best," it says, "and now I have found out that my Divine Lord and Master founded me that I might be the savior of society. Henceforth I intend to concentrate my efforts upon the creation of a social conscience." Jesus Christ, we are now told, was a social reformer, and it is he alone, working through his appointed agents, who is capable of bringing about the reconstruction of human life. Yes, it is added, at last the Church has rediscovered itself and its secret, and "a generation will not have passed before it will have made a new world for our children to live in."

Is the Church likely to be a greater success on the new lines than it proved to be on the old? Can a social conscience be developed by supernatural means? Can a Divine cause produce a human effect? Our answer is in the negative, and our reasons for it are cogent and conclusive. In the first place, let us examine the modern conception of Jesus. The claim on his behalf is that he was "God manifested in the flesh," that he was in some special sense or degree a Divine Being, that either physically or spiritually he rose from the dead, and is now both omnipotent and omnipresent as the Eternal Christ. Well, on the assumption that such a super-human personage came into the world on purpose to reorganise society, how are we to account for the fact that two thousand years later society is still unreformed? What has the Eternal Christ been doing during that long and weary interval? Were all the millions of men who stood before their fellows as his specially called messengers a pack of hypocrites and liars? Or were they the unconscious victims of vain delusions? Whatever we may think of them, it is a certainty that there never was the slightest evidence of any active connection whatever between them and any Eternal Christ, because the work which he is said to have entered the world to accomplish and to have always most at heart, is still undone. And yet we are assured now that "a generation will not have passed before it [the newly discovered Church of Christ] will have made a new world for our children to live in." Such prophesying is easy and cheap; but it is as false as it is easy and cheap. In different words and forms every age has indulged in it, and nothing has ever come of it.

In the second place, the moral sense cannot flourish on empty dreams. Before it can grow its roots must lie deep down in genuine soil. Imaginary soil will not do, and judging by all the facts at our disposal, the supernatural—Father, Son, and Spirit—exists only in the imagination of certain people. That is why the social conscience has been so slow in coming. Instead of setting vigorously to work to produce it, Christian people have been waiting for the Eternal Christ to create it. Nothing has ever been so fully demonstrated as the fact that God, if he exists, has never done anything towards bringing into being a social conscience. It is true that the moral sense is gradually evolving, but it should be borne in mind that its evolution is proceeding on several anti-Christian lines. The social conscience "is bent, amongst other things, on conquering poverty," but the Christianity of Christ pronounces its first beatitude on poverty. "The social conscience is also an æsthetic conscience"; but the Christianity of Paul declares that "God chose the

foolish things of the world that he might put to shame them that are wise," and that "God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are," with the object "that no flesh should glory before God." Jesus knew nothing of society, took no interest in economic problems, never dreamed of such a thing as the solidarity of the race, but believed and taught that the present world was on the eve of its final dissolution, and that in the world to come he would reign as king over those who accepted his teaching and bowed to his will. A social conscience in this world was not among the things he contemplated.

We believe in the social conscience, but only as the product of social life. It will come, not in answer to prayer, nor by singing hymns in church and chapel, but as the outcome of long training and experience. It will come only by the method of evolution guided by self-conscious and enlightened men and women whose one passion is love of their kind. Jesus is reported to have said that his kingdom came not by observation, while in point of fact it has never come at all. The social conscience cometh not by observation, nor yet in response to a mere wish, but only by means of daily application to the supreme business of living a true and useful life. The moral sense signifies a right social attitude, from which alone comes right social conduct. It is the lack of this that is the cause of all our social sufferings and sorrows. Its advent will heal our wounds, wipe away our tears, and fill our life with peace and prosperity.

J. T. LLOYD.

"The Exodus from Houndsditch."

CHRISTIANITY has passed out of the position of serious drama into that of rollicking farce. The transformation has not only been bloodless, but it appears to have been wrought with the complete unconsciousness of the actors.

The late-lamented Archdeacon Farrar seems to have been one of the prime movers in this silent revolution. With quiet persistence, he persuaded a very large number of his co-religionists that hell, contrary to belief, was slightly less monotonous than heaven, and that everlasting punishment meant only an eternity of almighty unpleasantness. After that came the deluge, which has brought upon its flood undogmatic religionism and the rest of the blatant nonsense which now passes for the religion of Christ and Him crucified. This dilution of dogma has had its disintegrating effect upon all the churches. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by pleasant Sunday afternoons. String bands and soloists take the place of leather-lunged preachers. Labor Members of Parliament and other publicists threaten to oust the parsons from their pulpits. Even this is only the beginning of the end. A short time since, at Whitfield's Chapel, London, a well-known actor and an equally notorious contributor to *Punch* both occupied the pulpit in order to pronounce eulogiums upon a world-renowned Freethinker.

There has never been seen such a scene before, "Charley's Aunt" was sober tragedy compared with it. The great *queue* of people outside the Tabernacle gave the finishing farcical touch. It was magnificent, but it was not Christianity as taught for twenty centuries.

The Prayer Book itself has suffered. Changes have been suggested in the hallowed volume, and among other matters, the newspapers gravely inform us that the "strong language" in the Marriage Service will be toned down. "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" If this sort of thing goes on, the Holy Bible and the *Winning Post* will be the only publications untouched by the blue pencil of the censor.

All these straws show which way the wind is blowing. Christianity is no longer a serious religion. It is not even comedy. It is now passing from farce into the region of harlequinade. And the sooner the man in the street realises this the better it will be for everybody.

VERDANT GREEN.

Acid Drops.

General Booth takes the cake as a lusty indiscriminate beggar. He cadges all over the country from door to door. One of his Self-Denial Week begging-letters was left at our private address, with an envelope to receive our contribution, and an intimation that the "Army Representatives" would call for it. This was a rare joke, considering how the final paragraph of the appeal set forth that at least £150,000 a year was needed "to maintain all this great work for the NEEDY and IRRELIGIOUS."

"William Booth," who signs this appeal, begs us to "assist" him "cheerfully" by "helping the Self-Denial Fund." "I believe you will," he concludes, "and God will reward you." William Booth is mistaken.

We noticed last week the fact that the *Daily News* had opened its columns to a financial appeal by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. It has since done the same for the Rev. C. Silvester Horne. This gentleman wants to raise several hundreds a year more for Whitefield's Tabernacle from outsiders. He says that the Tabernacle business—we beg pardon, work—has never been so successful or its prospects so bright, but "never has our need of help been so urgent." So the whole of London and the provinces are called upon to contribute—in the name of the Lord and his Horne.

The *Daily News* is going to be impartial for once. It allows the Bishop of Southwark to join in this begging-letter business. His lordship wants £540 for three men to be trained at Cambridge University, £200 for a promising young student to enter Oxford, £340 for four men to be educated at King's College, and £330 for four men who offer themselves for foreign service—which is presumably another name for missionary work. His lordship doesn't want much, does he? That £1,410 would have made the first preachers of Christianity "rich beyond the dreams of avarice." But things have altered since then. Poor devils once preached to poor devils the glorious gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." Now it is preached by men who get hundreds, and even thousands, a year.

The offering of a grateful country to a man like Alfred Russel Wallace is one hundred and fifty pounds a year; to an Archbishop of Canterbury it offers fifteen thousand. Decidedly we are a practical people.

We were pleased to see a lengthy and straightforward letter in the *Times* from Professor Ray Lankester, *apropos* of recent misrepresentations of Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. In a long and very ill-informed article, the *Times* referred to the "undermining" of Darwinism by the work of De Vries and other more recent workers, and to the assumed fact that the Darwinian hypothesis is losing its hold on men's minds. Close students of the subject know that this is quite false, and that a modification of a theory in the light of fuller knowledge is a very different thing from its disproof or its rejection. Natural Selection remains as true as ever, and the *Times*' statement that the denial of the transmission of acquired characters is fatal to Darwin's theory is properly characterised by Professor Lankester as "devoid of foundation." Professor Lankester also adds, *apropos* of the abuse of terms by the writer, "The layman of science may well plead, in excuse for his misconceptions, the ambiguity of a technical term; but the writer who addresses the public with the purpose of showing that the work of a great man is discredited cannot readily be forgiven for basing his attack on such want of understanding."

The *Times* article was, as is usual, anonymous; but the truth is that it appears to be only one of a series of misrepresentations that have been systematically disseminated for some months. In both London and provincial papers we have noticed for some time paragraphs and leaderettes describing the breakdown of Darwinism by recent investigations. These mostly bear a common impress, and appear to emanate from a common source, modified only by the genius of the particular newspaper office. And as the average

newspaper man is about as well-informed on biological matters as is the average reader, the task of misrepresenting is a fairly easy one. As a matter of fact, many of those responsible for the modifications in the Darwinian theory are more Darwinian than was Darwin himself.

One brilliant criticism of Darwin appears in the *Christian Commonwealth*. The writer suggests that Darwin made a mistake in calling his work *The Origin of Species*, because, he says, it does not explain the origin of anything. But, as a matter of fact, the first portion of the title of Darwin's book *does* exactly express the scope of the work. It is an explanation of the *origin* of species; and if the theory be sound, the work is done. Probably the writer is confused between the origin of variations, the origin of life, and the origin of species—three quite distinct, although related, questions. The only questionable part of Darwin's title lies in the phrase "Natural Selection." This has misleading connotations, and religionists have made the most of them. Curious, that while accepting what is wrong, they should question what is right.

Mr. Rhondda Williams says that, had Darwin continued to read the Bible and to pray, he would have remained a Christian to the end. No one in his senses would ever dream of doubting this. The real question, however, is, *Why did Darwin stop praying?* and the answer is, Not because he did not think about religion, but because by *thinking* about it he lost his faith in it. He became an Agnostic, or, as we would say, an Atheist, not because he neglected God, but because the facts forced him into a disbelief in his existence. Atheism is not the outcome of thoughtlessness, but of hard and honest reasoning.

England is a Christian country. Who can doubt it? Just look at the facts. Here is one of them. A laborer named John King, aged fifty-six, living at Sheerness, had been out of work for several weeks. He got a job at last and did a day's work on Tuesday, February 23. The same evening he died from heart failure brought about by cold and lack of nourishment. The poor fellow and his wife had been subsisting on scraps of food—sometimes a potato, sometimes a carrot—given them by neighbors. When he got work it killed him. The jury's verdict was "Death from natural causes"—which was true, but ironical. John King's case is typical of thousands this bitter February. England knows it quite well, but England is busy discussing *Dreadnoughts*. Yes, England is a Christian country.

There is another big row on amongst the Christians at Jerusalem, and Turkish troops are guarding all the churches and other religious establishments to prevent the rival Christites from knocking them to pieces. The Turkish Government has appointed a special Commission to deal with the matter and restore order.

Dr. R. S. Storrs knows all about it. As if dealing with mathematics, he assured those who listened to him that God's presence "amid and throughout" the creation is both immediate and constant. Then he went into details concerning the effects of such a presence in various parts of the world. Both "the desert and the peak are consecrated by it." Can any sane person tell us what is meant by the "immediate" presence of an invisible being? The very terms are a contradiction.

Another man of God professes the same belief in God's universal presence, specially his presence in church on Sundays; but he confesses that very few people in the pew share the belief. Then, on this point, as on most others, the pew is in advance of the pulpit; and, at last, the time has come when the pulpit cannot put a check on the progress of the pew. When the latter is thoroughly awake, the former shall be heard of no more. Then both pulpit and pew, like God, shall be sought for in vain.

The Holy Ghost is marvellously careful not to show favoritism. He is omnipotent, of course, but he "will not allow one who possesses him to so treat his power as to convey the impression that the possessor is spiritually superior to his brethren," or even to the people of the world. How eminently considerate of him! It is very true that Christians are not superior to non-Christians, on the average; but the true inference is, not that the Holy Ghost does not wish to wound the feelings of the non-Christians, but that there is no Holy Ghost to grant any superior power to his own people.

There is no end to wild theorising about Jesus. Principal Griffith-Jones tells us that Jesus had a religion which was

not Christianity, and that he engaged in worship. That is the Jesus in whom many people believe and to whom they give reverence, but not worship. But there is another Jesus, who founded the Christian religion, who is himself an object of worship, and whose Cross is the objective ground of salvation from sin and hell. The two Jesuses have their champions within the Christian Church itself, and there is a vehement controversy between them as to which Jesus should be chosen and followed. Principal Griffith-Jones is a believer in Jesus the Christ, and having praised him as in every respect superior to Jesus of Nazareth, he calls upon his hearers to make their choice. Well, while the theologians are wrangling as to which Jesus is the worthier, we are content to live without either. We are not convinced, from the slender evidence offered, that Jesus of Nazareth ever lived; and if there never was a Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God has not a leg to stand upon.

A minister bewailed the unspirituality of his young people. They never felt inclined to pray, neither did they realise their need of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ. But they were honest and upright and loved to do good. In their moral character he could not detect a single flaw. Yet he grieved beyond measure because they were still unsaved! And such ministers are surprised that thoughtful people give up going to church and chapel.

Does it never occur to Christian divines that their exhortations about seeking and finding God are ineffably absurd? Do children ever have to seek their human parents? Does a father ever remain in hiding from his offspring until by diligent search they find him, or in response to earnest and long-continued prayer he reveals himself to them? Much less would a perfect Heavenly Father refuse to reveal himself to his children until they deafened his invisible ears with their agonising cries for him. Indeed, Mr. Phillips' sermon on the use of the five spiritual senses for the discovery of God should be welcomed by Freethinkers as an eloquent justification of unbelief.

Rev. F. C. Spurr has been a good while considering whether the invitation to the pastorate of Collins-street Baptist Church, Melbourne, was a true "call." We guessed he would find it so eventually. The size of the salary was the basis of our calculation. We see that the *Daily News* refers to Mr. Spurr as "one of the strongest antagonists of Mr. Blatchford in the *Clarion* controversy." He may have been the best of a poor lot, but if he *was* the best what a sackful of rubbish the rest must have been! The fact is that Mr. Blatchford had only one real antagonist, and that was Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who apparently knew he had a bad case to defend, and therefore spent most of his time in smart fencing, which Mr. Blatchford took too much as a serious duel.

William Hall Verinder, late secretary of the Penge Perseverance Permanent Benefit Building Society, was sentenced at the Kent Assizes to six years' penal servitude for forgery, embezzlement, and falsification of the Society's accounts. He had been carrying on these nefarious practices for many years, and large sums of money were missing, which he professed to be unable to account for. Mr. Justice Bucknill, in passing sentence, said that "It was all a sad story of a terrible course of conduct for a man like the prisoner, who was a religious person—a religious light, so to speak, in his own community." We hope his lordship was not astonished at this. It is so common an incident in the history of such crimes.

Calculated piety sometimes over-reaches itself. "May God be good to his own, and send you to join us; we need you badly"; ran Mr. Keir Hardie's message to the unsuccessful candidate at Taunton. The "we" in the message may refer to God and Keir Hardie, or merely to the other members of the Labor Party. In any case, either Mr. Smith was not God's own, or God, Keir Hardie, and Mr. Smith were overcome by the power of the Conservative vote. Mr. Smith and Mr. Hardie may recover the shock, but it is exceedingly unpleasant for the other member of the trinity.

Mr. Birrell says that in the House of Commons religion is a subject that cannot be discussed, and that this gives to the debates a somewhat unreal form. He adds that religion cannot be discussed because of differences of opinion. There is an unconscious humor about the last expression. Debates are usually held *because* there is a difference of opinion. Apparently in religious matters one cannot debate unless there is complete agreement—and, therefore, nothing to debate. The real reason why religion cannot be debated in the House of Commons is not that there are differences of

opinion, but because religion is such an explosive force that a friendly discussion is almost impossible. But the elimination of religion from parliamentary debates does not make the discussions on social reform unreal; it only proves religion to be unnecessary. Political common sense finds that it contributes nothing of value, and so it is set on one side. The expression that the State should have nothing to do with religion really covers the belief that, from the point of view of the welfare of the State, religion is unnecessary.

Mr. Birrell also advised his audience not to bother about Jonah and the whale, but to study their own hearts. Then they would find a justification for their religion. It might be far more useful for Mr. Birrell and his hearers to study their stomachs or their livers. Besides, Jonah and the whale really does go to the root of religious belief, looked at properly. Whether this particular whale swallowed this particular Jonah is, we admit, of comparatively small importance. But the story, as a story, involves the question of miracle, of a particular providence, of supernaturalism; and these go to the root of all religion. Settle Jonah, one way or another, and you have really settled all religious questions. The form in which a belief is cast matters little; it is the belief itself that is all-important.

To say that books on the history of the ancient Roman Empire, when written by Christians or for Christians, need carefully checking or revising, is to make a statement that few competent students will question. Unfortunately, misrepresentations on this subject have become so common, and so deeply rooted, that they are difficult to remove. Here, for example, is Canon Hensley Henson, who refers to Christianity coming into being "in an epoch of despondent and exhausted Secularism," with the evils of the times resulting from a disbelief in immortality. The statement is wholly untrue. Rome itself was never so religious—in the Christian sense of the word—as it was at the time of the establishment of Christianity. Quite a number of the Eastern religions had firmly established themselves, while the old domestic religion of the Romans was proportionately weakened. Mithraism, with its very definite belief in immortality, and its striking resemblance to Christianity, was strongly established; so strongly, that Renan said that it was a choice between that and Christianity as to which should take supremacy. Indeed, it was the very growth of the ranker and more anti-social forms of religious belief that paved the way for the establishment of the Christian faith. Christianity, in fact, only represented a more conclusive inrush of that Eastern superstition which for many years had been undermining the virility of ancient Rome. The Secularism of the time was represented by some of the best of the Roman names that have come down to us, but they neither became Christian nor were they able to save their country from the evil influence of Eastern superstition.

With one expression of Canon Henson's we agree. "Men do not," he says, "go to the Gospel for the services which they may better hope to receive from the men of science, the economists, the statesmen. For all that may beautify the place of their earthly sojourn, men do not turn to Calvary, but to Athens, or Florence, or Rome." This is only saying, in other words, what we have often said, that whatever may be the value of Christianity elsewhere, it is at least of no *earthly* value. For everything useful to us here we depend upon scientists, economists, men of letters, and men of affairs. But we spend millions of money, and support an army of men merely to speculate upon a subject which, when all is done, they can only add ever increasing proof of their irremovable ignorance.

The Stage Censorship is a disgrace to England. It really looks as if John Bull would stand anything. Many plays appealing to thoughtful intelligence have been refused an opportunity of public presentation, but silliness and vulgarity have always had an easy entrance. We once saw a private performance of Shelley's *Cenci*—the greatest play written in English since the Elizabethan age—the Lord Chamberlain having refused his license for a public performance. But the latest act of the Stage Censorship fairly takes the cake. The military and conscription party are booming a play called *An Englishman's Home*, in which the most foolish of foolish ideas, a German invasion of England, is the animating idea. This party is apparently to have a free field for its propaganda under the Lord Chamberlain's protection. That ridiculous official has not only refused to license a skit upon this much-puffed play, but has actually intimated that "no skit" upon it will be "licensed for representation." A nation of any spirit would squelch the Stage Censorship in five minutes.

Sir E. P. Wills, who gave £15,000 to clear off the mortgage on the Bishop of Bristol's residence, is the local controller of the Imperial Tobacco Trust. We see by last week's *John Bull* that the 6,000 or 7,000 female workers under this Trust are paid 3s. a week on entering at the age of 14-15, and 10s. a week at the age of 21. And there they stop. We are obliged to agree with our contemporary that Sir E. P. Wills had better have spent the £15,000 in "improving in some small way the position of the work-people in his tobacco factories." But we don't expect the Bishop to take the same view.

"They have in Des Moines a precious aggregation of ministers called the Preachers' Aid Society. The purpose of the Society is to cheat widows and orphans by influencing men with money to make wills in its favor. They did this in the case of a decedent named David Francis. The court has decided a suit for the disputed property in favor of the family. The *Des Moines Leader and Register* says: 'In a vivid word picture Judge McHenry presented old man Francis alone in his little home, blind, an imbecile, a religious fanatic, and of unsound mind. Gathered around him, the court pictured the agents of the society, preachers and lawyers. With their eyes on the property they brought undue influence to bear, played upon his vanity, told him it was the work of a faithful servant of the Lord, and that his name would go down for all time as a generous man and a giver to the greatest cause. And as they gathered about this old man and won him, their eyes were always on the property.'"—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Rev. T. E. Ruth, of Liverpool, understands the subject of apologetics to perfection. "If Christ is not the Christ of the whole world," he says, "if Christ is not universal Savior and universal Sovereign, his saviorhood and sovereignty can have no vital meaning for me, or for any individual church, or for any country." Then, in the name of common sense, why doesn't Mr. Ruth throw up his job? That "Christ is not the Christ of the whole world," the merest fool with half an eye can see in half a second. Can Mr. Ruth read history, and take a glance at the world of to-day, and honestly say that Christ has won even one-half of the human race? All Mr. Ruth has to do is to bring to bear upon his own Savior-God the same canons of criticism that he employs in dealing with other Savior-Gods, and he will discover how they all stand or fall together.

William Rowell unfortunately lost his life in the West Stanley Colliery disaster. Up to November, 1907, he "had spent his life in the ways of sin." He was a notorious drunkard and gambler. But a little more than a year ago, he was completely reclaimed "by the power of the Spirit of God." Now the puzzling question is, why did "the power of the Spirit of God" allow this poor man ever to become an abandoned character? Or why did "the power of the Spirit of God" hesitate so long before coming to his rescue? The *Methodist Times* lets the cat out of the bag thus: "He came into one of our Saturday night meetings." That explains everything. It was human sympathy and love and care that wrought the glorious transformation: all the rest was illusion and hallucination.

Particulars of the great earthquake which visited a remote part of Persia on January 23 show it to have been a more violent and prolonged shock than the one which destroyed Messina and other places in Sicily. Fewer people were killed because the population was so much scantier. The loss of life is estimated at from 5,000 to 6,000. But sixty villages have been wholly or partially destroyed, and several completely engulfed. Those who put forward the theory that Messina was destroyed to punish the irreligious section of its inhabitants, should kindly tell us the object of this later catastrophe.

Christmas Football seems to have come to stay. The Church party at Maidstone, however, are trying to draw the line at Good Friday. A resolution has been passed against it at a public meeting, those present pledging themselves "to do all in their power to discourage the same"—which we fancy won't be much. We see by the report in the *Kent Messenger* that some of these people objected to Sunday concerts last summer and withdrew their subscriptions to the Athletic Ground, but their defection doesn't appear to have made any serious difference.

"Bibles That Lie" was a sub-heading that caught our eye in the *Daily Chronicle*. We smiled. Just as if there were Bibles that didn't! But, looking into it more closely, we found that our contemporary was not letting the cat out of the bag after all. The Bibles that lied were only family

Bibles, that couldn't be trusted for the real ages of the people whose names were inscribed on the blank front page.

Sir John Benn, who, we understand, is a Dissenter, is anxious to have an old prayer against bad landlords restored to the Prayer Book. We hope he doesn't really believe that this would have any effect on the agricultural system of England. A little judicious practical agitation is worth all the prayers in the world—and more.

The Russian government wants Maxim Gorki, who does not feel inclined to leave Capri for St. Petersburg. "They accuse me," he says, "of holding up to ridicule the orthodox religion and certain of its observances." An offence of that kind is punishable by three years' imprisonment or exile to Siberia. Gorky is not going back to Holy Russia for such a treat.

Messiah Campbell has said something fresh. Addressing a meeting of the Fabian Society, he said: "I don't object to the King. King Edward is a very good worker in the State, and probably the first thing Socialists would do would be to raise his salary." We begin to understand Christian Socialism.

Raising the King's salary might be the first step under Messiah Campbell's millennium. But surely the second step would be to shift up Messiah Campbell's own salary a bit. He might also want a new motor-car.

Tom Paine's Jawbone.

LAST week we published a Note asking if anyone in Brighton knew of the whereabouts of the skeleton of Tom Paine. The inquiry was made on behalf of Mr. Van der Weyde, of New York, who is preparing a series of articles for the Paine Centenary, and who believed that a Mr. Bartlett, of Brighton, knew of the whereabouts of this skeleton.

This week Mr. Homewood, art dealer, of Ship-street, Brighton, has submitted to us a letter he is sending to Mr. Van der Weyde in answer to the inquiry in the *Herald*. Mr. Homewood states that in 1832 his grandfather, a widower, married a Mrs. Wilkinson, the widow of a Liverpool Excise officer. During the time that her late husband had held office, Tom Paine's bones in a cask were landed at Liverpool, but the British Government refused to allow them to remain in this country. So that the captain of the ship had to take them on board again; but he gave Mr. Wilkinson the jawbone as a relic. This, says Mr. Homewood, came into the possession of his grandfather when he married Mrs. Wilkinson. About this time his grandfather was appointed schoolmaster at Eglwysbach, Denbighshire, North Wales. His mother (a daughter of his grandfather by the first marriage), thinking it was sacrilegious to have any portion of a human body in the house, took the jawbone one day and reverently put it into an open grave in the village churchyard, where a few moments afterwards the body of a youth was interred according to the service of the Church of England.—*Brighton Herald*.

THE TRIUMPHANT PENNY.

"My friends," announced the Hyde Park preacher, after a vain appeal for a liberal collection, "here is a parable." He produced two coins, a five shilling piece and a penny, from his pocket and held them up before the assemblage.

"These two coins fell a-talking one day. Said the five shilling piece to the penny, 'Oh, you're a poor thing! I'm worth sixty of you.'

'That may be,' replied the penny, 'but there's one respect in which I beat you easily.'

'What's that?' asked the five shilling piece contemptuously.

'Why,' replied the penny, with much complacency, 'I go to church far oftener than you do.'

SARCASM.

One day, when Eve, in joyful mirth,
Perambulated on this earth,
She gazed at Adam's scant array
Of fig-leaves—two or three, they say—
And said, as only woman can,
"It's a good thing clothes don't make the man."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, March 7, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham Place, London, W.; at 7.30, "The Second Death of Christ."

March 14, Queen's Hall, London; 21, Woolwich.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—241 High-road, Leyton.—March 7, Woolwich; 14, Aberdare; 21, Forest Gate.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 7, Manchester; 14, Woolwich.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £140 4s. 6d. Received since.—J. W. Ives, 10s. 6d.; Secular Educationist, 10s. 6d.; H. M. Ridgway, £1; W. S., 5s.; F. W. and G. G., 5s.; E. A., £2 2s.; Wm. Rowland, 5s.; H. Silverstein, 10s.; H. A. Lupton, 10s.; P. M. W., 10s. 6d.; R. Wallis, 2s. 6d.; G. B. Taylor, £2; C. Masson, 3s. 6d.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. G. ROYSTON.—We note that you and a friend cycle thirty miles each way to hear a Freethought lecture whenever there is one at Aberdare. There is a Branch at Cardiff, but it is not in an active condition. We suppose there are difficulties in the way.

A. E. MANDER.—You may be a "sixth sense Englishman," but if you waste any more postage stamps on us we shall put you down as wanting the first sense.

A. COODE.—You must have been very sanguine if you expected "Major" Russell, or any other Salvation Army officer, to answer a straight question in public. What he said about the dead body of the "General's" wife was absolutely untrue.

JOSEPH BRYCE.—Glad to hear you have lately seen the *Freethinker* in newsagents' windows, where you had not seen it before, and where you little expected to see it. In answer to your inquiry, we are just holding our ground in this time of depression, which is virtually equivalent to an increase. Of course we are mainly dependent on the good will of our friends to advertise this journal and to promote its circulation in that way. By lending or giving it to others, by putting in a word for it as opportunity arises, by sending in the names and addresses of persons to whom we could post six consecutive weeks' issues gratuitously; by these and other means our friends can render us real assistance. If half our present readers could only get us another reader during 1909 we should be in a very much improved position.

S. L. PACE.—Passed over to our shop manager. Glad you are so fond of the *Freethinker*, and thanks for your very good wishes.

E. D. VOSS (Cape Colony).—Thanks for cuttings.

W. FAGG.—See paragraph. Thanks.

YOUNG SCIENCE STUDENT.—We are obliged to you for the newspaper cutting, but a few lines of report can hardly do full justice to Professor J. G. Frazer's lecture; and, as he is a thinker of such distinction, we prefer to reserve our criticism until the lecture is published in a book form, with other lectures, according to a literary announcement.

E. A.—Glad you wish us "every success." Nothing pleases us more than to receive such encouragement from members of your sex. It is of the highest importance that Freethought should win adherents amongst thoughtful women. The long fight begins to draw perceptibly nearer its end when their sympathy and support are enlisted.

ALCHEM.—Too late for this week.

G. KEMP.—We had noticed it. But thanks.

H. S. WISHART.—Pleased to hear from you, but why will you send such matter here by Tuesday, which is too late for anything but Lecture Notices, except in real emergencies?

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

C. A. BRIGG.—Tuesday morning is too late.

G. B. TAYLOR sends his annual subscription to the President's Fund, and "an extra £1 to make it warm for the Camberwell bigots." Captain Taylor is thanked for his interesting and encouraging letter.

E. KIRTON.—Perhaps next week; too late for this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers this evening (March 7) the first of two special lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd. No posters or handbills of these lectures are being issued; we are trusting entirely to press advertisements and the publicity given to the lectures by our friends throughout London.

Mr. Foote had grand meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday. It was a record afternoon audience; in the evening the hall was packed, and the whole proceedings were immensely enthusiastic. Mr. Fathers, the Branch president, was chairman on both occasions. A vote of thanks was passed to the new Lord Mayor for granting the use of the Town Hall again for four Sundays next winter. Mr. Foote observed, for his part, that it seemed a good deal easier in such matters to get on with a man than with a committee, and the big meeting, with much laughter and more applause, seemed to agree with the observation.

Monday morning's *Post* broke through the foolish old conspiracy of silence against the Secularist meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall. Its report wasn't much—less than a dozen lines—but it was a beginning, and the "large meetings" were noted.

A longer report of Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture appeared in the *Evening Dispatch*, under the heading of "Sir Oliver Lodge Criticised," dealing with the portion of the lecture devoted to Sir Oliver Lodge's religious observations on the earthquake at Messina.

A course of Sunday evening lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., is taking place in March at the Co-operative Institute, Parson's-hill, Woolwich. Mr. Cohen opens this evening (March 7) with a lecture on "Christianity or Secularism?" He will be followed by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and Mr. Foote will wind up the course on March 21. Admission is free to all parts of the hall. The nearest station to the hall is Woolwich Dockyard.

Mr. Lloyd lectures this afternoon and evening (March 7) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. South Lancashire "saints" generally should give him a hearty welcome.

Advertisers in the *Freethinker* are once more reminded that Monday morning is the latest their insertions can be received at our publishing office for the next issue.

The Secular Education League's annual meeting took place in the large hall of the New Reform Club on Tuesday evening, February 23. There was a good attendance, and some discussion on the report presented by the Secretary, Mr. H. Snell, mainly relating to the question of the possible and impossible use of the Bible in the schools. Lord Wardale, the League's President, who occupied the chair, delivered an admirable, statesmanlike address; after which brief speeches were made by Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Sir Harry Cotton, M.P., Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., and Mr. G. W. Foote. The general feeling was that the Secular Education League had done all that could be expected, and that it was bound to do good work in the immediate future. Lord Wardale accepted the presidency for another year.

Bishop Colenso, whom the orthodox party tried in vain to turn out of the Church of England for writing his famous

critical examination of the Pentateuch, was a man of fine character as well as keen intellect. Some of Ruskin's readers will remember the noble tribute he paid Colenso. The good Bishop's daughters seem to have inherited some of his best qualities. They have spared neither energy nor money in their efforts "to save the Zulu nation from moral and physical destruction." Miss Colenso and her sister have completely impoverished themselves in this way. No less than £1,600 has been expended by them quite lately in connection with the present trial of Dinuzulu—about which we might have something warm to say if this were a political journal. We are glad to see that a Committee has been formed to raise money to purchase an annuity for these two ladies. Subscriptions may be sent to the Honorary Treasurer of the fund, Lady Schwann, 4 Prince's-gardens, London, S.W.

WORDS OF A MAN.

As for my religious sentiments, they are expressed in opposition to the advice and wishes of several literary friends, and of the publisher, who have urged me to alter certain passages which they do not like, and which they believe will provoke against me the anger of the public. Now, as a literary workman, I am thankful to be guided by the knowledge of experts, and I bow to the decisions of the great public, for whom alone I write, whom alone I care to please, and in whose broad unbiassed judgment I place implicit trust. But in the matter of religion, I listen to no remonstrance, I acknowledge no decision save that of the divine monitor within me. My conscience is my adviser, my audience, my judge. It bade me write as I have written, without evasion, without disguise; it bids me go on as I have begun, whatever the result may be. If, therefore, my religious opinions should be condemned, without a single exception, by every reader of the book, it will not make me regret having expressed them, and it will not prevent me from expressing them again.—*Winwood Reade, Preface to "Martyrdom of Man."*

Facing Towards the Light.

The Soul of Dominic Wildthorne is the title of one of Mr. Joseph Hocking's recent novels in which pure and unadulterated *Atheism* plays a part in the climax of the story that is probably unprecedented in religious fiction—a climax that utterly ignores the authoritative apostolic dictum, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what communion hath light with darkness?" It appears, according to Mr. Hocking, that the great Apostle was mistaken with regard to the fellowship of "righteousness and iniquity," and that they can, contrary to the inspired veto, have sweet familiar intercourse, and "live happily ever after," conformably to the usual custom of story-book lovers. The "darkness" with "its face towards the light" may now become the accepted lover and prospective husband of a daughter of the Christian faith.

Briefly, the story is that of a poor boy who is found in a grief-stricken condition at the gates of a cemetery on the evening of his father's funeral, by a rich Methodist and his daughter, who happen to be driving past on the way home. While they are questioning the boy they are approached by a man in the garb of a monk belonging to an Anglican order called the Community of the Incarnation, which has a bachelor house in the district. The priest agrees to give the boy food and shelter at the monastery in return for the performance of some menial duties—a post that had just become vacant. Ultimately, the boy becomes a fully ordained priest, and is entrusted by the Superior of the Order with the delicate mission of teaching Romish doctrines under the guise of Anglicanism. Becoming dissatisfied, however, with his false position, he decides to seek admission into the Romish priesthood, and join the true Mother Church. With this object in view he visits Rome with letters of introduction from a Jesuit priest, whose acquaintance he had made on a preaching tour. But, as the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley, so this visit to Rome results in an intellectual upheaval of an extra-

ordinary kind. It opens his mind to the vast difference between the ideal and the actual of the Church of Rome; and he not only discards the intention of entering its priesthood, but the revulsion of feeling is so great that he throws over all religion and boldly declares himself an Atheist.

It is not our purpose to deal with the artistic or other defects of the story, but to the student of mental conditions and development, such instantly matured views, such pronounced and clearly defined conclusions, appear rather as a product of the novelists' magic wand than as the result of any adequate antecedent causes. Mr. Hocking's notion of the nature and progress of mental changes has evidently been derived from the emotional phenomenon of "conversion"; but the suddenness of such an emotional effect is not also a characteristic of intellectual progress. The same evidence of superficiality is noticeable at the beginning of the story. When, as a boy, Dominic Wildthorne enters the monastery to do the menial work of the establishment, he shows neither religious inclination nor intellectual promise. But as the result of reading some books which Father Trouville, the priest, put in his way, we are told that at the end of five months he developed "a new and large conception of life." As a matter of experience, mental development is a slow and gradual process, and we suggest that the acquisition of "a new and large conception of life," in any reasonable meaning of the words, by a backward boy with only the smattering of a village school education, in the space of a few months, is a psychological improbability, not to say impossibility. Besides, the books that a Romanising Anglican priest was likely to put in a boy's way, would assuredly not be of the kind to effect any such result. If mental progress were such a rapid process, and papal manifestoes and religious superstitions and ceremonies sufficient to convert even priests into Atheists, the clerical additions to the ranks of Freethought would be very numerous indeed. However, without seeking to explain the psychological feats of the novelist, we accept his assurance that the hero, like Old Mother Hubbard, in her famous journey to the cupboard, "got there"; but, unlike her, the opening of the intellectual cupboard revealed a wealth of enjoyment and satisfaction.

The final cause of his changed attitude towards ecclesiasticism is the Pope's Encyclical in reference to the Modernist movement. Some reported miracles in the vicinity—a minor edition of Lourdes—which he personally investigates, somewhat disturbs his faith, and leads him to meditate upon the degradation of religion. Gradually, we are told, it dawned upon him that:—

"The Church, according to the Pope, was a great juggernaut to crush out all individuality, all independent thought. It would have no mercy on those who dared to think outside the beaten track of Mediævalism. This was the Catholic Church.

What it had been in the past, it was still. In the Dark Ages it had endeavored to punish free inquiry and reform by the thumbscrew, the rack, the dungeon, the faggot. The spirit was still the same.

The Church was nothing but a tissue of fables; Christianity an out-worn creed; religion itself only a vague longing of the heart. Priestcraft, masses, sacraments, prayer, faith, all were as useless as thistledown. God, if there was a God, was a great eternal force at the back of things, unknown and unknowable. Jesus Christ was simply a man who lived nineteen hundred years ago—if he ever lived at all.

What was the God he had been taught to worship? It was a God made in the image of man. In this respect the Protestant God differs not from the Catholic God—they are both man-made. What was the Church? It was a huge machine to create a miserable uniformity, and to terrorise men into obedience. And all the while nature, truth, history, and the eternal longing of man laughed at its claims.

He was an atheist, or, if not an atheist, an agnostic; but it brought him no sorrow. It only meant freedom, life, love.

Let who would trouble about the millinery of religion, he had broken with it for ever."

And so, freed from the restraints of religion, according to accepted Christian tradition, he ought to have plunged into degradation and vice. Instead of which, we find him developing wide literary tastes, and finding a delight in the beauties of nature that he had never before experienced while his mind was bound by impossible theological dogmas. As an ecclesiastic covertly making love to the daughter of Fletcher Yorke, contrary to his vows of celibacy, the character of Dominic Wildthorne is despicable in the extreme. As an Atheist, freed from the false and irksome position, he is an honorable gentleman.

While our hero is still an Anglican monk he is apprised by a firm of solicitors that he is the lawful heir to some estates in Cumberland, to which he succeeds in due course, changing the "cloth" for ordinary attire. As a country gentleman and man of the world, he seeks the hand of Maggie Yorke, the heroine of the story; and when he declares his love and his Atheism at the same time, the rich Methodist's daughter does not, as might be expected, hold up her hands in horror and shrink from him as from a leper. Being assured by him that "the old faith, with its chains," had gone, she makes reply, "But the faith, the true faith, will come again; it always does to those whose face is towards the light. And your face is towards the light, Dominic." And so, gazing lovingly into the depths of his eyes, with all a chaste maids yearnings, she accepts him—Atheism and all.

It is very pretty, of course, but one cannot help thinking that "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" must be in a sad state of disintegration. All that is left of the once proud and powerful creed is the vague belief that there is "eternal truth at the heart of things"—a phrase that lends itself to quite a variety of interpretations. According to this widely read religious novelist, Atheism means "freedom, life, and love"; and the experience of Dominic Wildthorne, has been, more or less, the experience of all those who have ascended to the same intellectual position. The mental freedom and light consequent upon an honest acceptance of the logical interpretation of the facts of nature and of life, cannot be counted as one of the blessings of religion; it is only after "the millinery of religion has been broken with for ever" that man progresses towards his full mental stature.

The whole tone of the story is a sign of the altered temper of the age. It may not represent the attitude of the pulpit whose business it is to keep alive the old hatred and prejudice against the unbeliever; but if such sentiments can be submitted to the rank and file of Methodism, it shows that the pulpit no longer has the power to shape and direct the thought and sympathies of the pew.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Life and Opinions of Darwin.—VII.

(Concluded from p. 140.)

WRITING to Dr. Asa Gray (May 22, 1860), Darwin put a strong objection to Theism very pointedly:—

"I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the ichneumonidæ with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working of what we may call chance. Not that this notion at all satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect."

The latter part of this extract about "designed laws" is modified by a subsequent letter, already quoted, to the same correspondent. The first part is the one to be dwelt upon in the present connection.

Dealing with the same subject sixteen years later in his Autobiography, Darwin gives his opinion that happiness, on the whole, predominates over misery, although he admits that this "would be very difficult to prove." He then faces the Theistic aspect of the question:—

"That there is much suffering in the world no one disputes. Some have attempted to explain this with reference to man by imagining that it serves for his moral improvement. But the number of men in the world is as nothing compared with that of all other sentient beings, and they often suffer greatly without any moral improvement. This very old argument from the existence of suffering against the existence of an intelligent First Cause seems to me a strong one."

Darwin is perfectly conscious that he is advancing no new argument against Theism. An age of microscopical science was, indeed, necessary before the internal parasites of caterpillars could be instanced; not to mention the thirty species of parasites that prey on the human organism. But such larger parasites as fleas and lice have always been obvious, and the theologians have been constantly asked why Almighty Goodness prompted Almighty Wisdom to provide humanity with such a sumptuous stock of these nuisances. It may also be observed that while cholera, fever, and other germs are modern discoveries, such things as tumors, cancers, and leprosy have always attracted attention, and they are more telling instances of malignant "design" than the ichneumonidæ in caterpillars, as they immediately affect the gentlemen who carry on the discussion.

Darwinism does, however, present the problem of evil in a new light. It shows us that evil is not on the surface of things, but is part of their very texture. Those who complacently dwell on the survival of the fittest, and the forward march to perfection, conveniently forget that the survival of the fittest is the *result*. Natural Selection is the *process*. And if we look at this more closely, we discover that Natural Selection and the survival of the fittest are the same thing, the *real process* being the *elimination of the unfit*. Those who survive would have lived in any case; what has happened is that all the rest have been crushed out of existence. Suppose, for instance (to take a case of artificial selection), a farmer castrates nineteen bulls and breeds from the twentieth; it makes a great difference to the *result*, but clearly the whole of the *process* is the elimination of the nineteen. Similarly, in Natural Selection, all organic variations are alike spawned forth by Nature; the fit are produced and perpetuated, while the unfit are produced and exterminated. And *how* exterminated? Not by the swift hand of a skilful executioner, but by countless varieties of torture, some of which display an infernal ingenuity that might abash the deftest Inquisitor. Every disease known to us is simply one of Nature's devices for eliminating her unsuitable offspring, and a cat's playing with a mouse is nothing to the prolonged sport of Nature in killing the victims of her own infinite lust of procreation. Place a Deity behind this process, and you create a greater and viler Devil than any theology of the past was capable of inventing. Accept it as the work of blind forces, and you may become a Pessimist if you are disgusted with the entire business; or an Optimist if you are healthy, prosperous, and callous; or a Meliorist if you think evolution tends to progress, and that your own efforts may brighten the lot of your fellows.

Darwin put the case too mildly in his first great work.

"When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy and the happy survive and multiply."

Professor Huxley, in his vigorous and uncompromising fashion, has put the case with greater force and accuracy

"From the point of view of the moralist the animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show. The creatures are fairly well treated, and set to fight—whereby the strongest, the swiftest and cunningest live to fight another day. The spectator has no need to turn his thumbs down, as no quarter is given. He must admit that the skill and training displayed are wonderful. But he must shut his eyes if he would not see that more or less enduring suffering is the meed of both vanquished and victor."

Dr. Wallace, on the other hand, argues that the "torments" and "miseries" of the lower animals are imaginary, and that "the amount of actual suffering caused by the struggle for existence among animals is altogether insignificant." They live merrily, have no apprehensions, and die violent deaths which are "painless and easy." Really the picture is idyllic! But Dr. Wallace's optimism is far from exhausted. He tells us that "their actual flight from an enemy" is an "enjoyable exercise" of their powers. This reminds one of the old fox-hunter who, on being taxed with enjoying a cruel sport, replied: "Why, the men like it, the horses like it, the dogs like it, and, demme, the fox likes it too."

Darwin was, of course, a naturalist in ethics, holding that morality is founded on sympathy and the social instincts. There is no more solid and satisfactory account of the genesis and development of conscience than is to be found in the chapter on "The Moral Sense" in the *Descent of Man*. I do not think, however, that he had given much attention to the relations between morality and religion, but what he says is of course entitled to respect.

"With the more civilised races," he declares, "the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity has had a potent influence on the advance of morality." He speaks of "the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God," and again of "the grand idea of a God hating sin and loving righteousness." These are casual opinions, never in any case elaborated, so that we cannot tell on what grounds Darwin held them. One would have liked to hear his opinion as to how many people were habitually swayed by this "grand idea" of God.

"My views are not at all necessarily atheistical," wrote Darwin in 1860 to Dr. Asa Gray. In the same strain he wrote to Mr. Fordyce in 1879:—

"What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to anyone but myself. But, as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates.....In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind."

Similarly, he closes a lengthy passage of his Autobiography—"The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic."

Let us here recur to the conversation between Darwin and Dr. Büchner, reported by Dr. Aveling. Darwin "held the opinion that the Atheist was a denier of God," and this is borne out by the extract just given from his letter to Mr. Fordyce. His two guests explained to him that the Greek prefix *a* was privative not negative, and that an Atheist was simply a person without God. Darwin agreed with them on every point, and said finally, "I am with you in thought, but I should prefer the word Agnostic to the word Atheist." They suggested that Agnostic was Atheist "writ respectable," and Atheist was Agnostic "writ aggressive." At which he smiled, and asked, "Why should you be so aggressive? Is anything gained by trying to force these new ideas upon the mass of mankind? It is all very well for educated, cultured, thoughtful people; but are the masses yet ripe for it?"

Mr. Francis Darwin does not dispute this report.

"My father's replies implied his preference for the unaggressive attitude of an Agnostic. Dr. Aveling seems to regard the absence of aggressiveness in my father's views as distinguishing them in an unessential manner from his own. But, in my judgment, it is pre-

cisely differences of this kind which distinguish him so completely from the class of thinkers to which Dr. Aveling belongs."

This is amusing but not convincing; indeed, it gives up the whole point at issue. Mr. Francis Darwin simply confirms all that Dr. Aveling said. The great naturalist was not aggressive, so he preferred *Agnostic* to *Atheist*; but as both mean exactly the same, essentially, the difference is not one of principle, but one of policy and temperament. Darwin prided himself on having "done some service in aiding to overthrow the dogma of separate creations." Had he gone more into the world, and seen the evil effects of other dogmas, he might have sympathised more with the aggressive attitude of those who challenge Theology *in toto* as the historic enemy of liberty and progress. This at least is certain, that Charles Darwin, the supreme biologist of his age, and the greatest scientific intellect since Newton, was an Atheist in the only proper sense of the word; the sense supported by etymology, the sense accepted by those who bear the name.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Science Murders.

BY AUSTIN BIERBOWER.

SHOULD Christian Science healers have the same rights that medical practitioners have? They are recognised as humbugs by the whole medical profession. They have not yet cured or helped anybody in the opinion of scientists, or of those who are accustomed to examine evidence. Their pretension at cures is not different from that of faith-healers, chief of which are the Mormons. Ought we to make an exception of them in requiring practitioners to undergo a scientific examination? They prey on the health of the public, especially of children. They have been the cause of many deaths by not calling competent physicians. They may believe that their incantations work physical cures, but the rest of the world does not believe any such thing. We require an examination for the lawyer, for the apothecary, and for others who deal in a scientific way with the rights of their fellows, and should we not require such an examination of Christian Scientists?

Too much humbug under the name of religion is foisted on the public. Religion seems to be a covering for all unscientific procedures. In no other branch of activity is there such laxity. Many think they can get favors by claiming to follow religion. The Christian Scientists do not pretend to have a knowledge of medicine, they rather depreciate it. Their "cures" are in defiance of medical science, or at least without it. The pretensions of Christian Science have often been exposed; and while others know the falseness of its claims, the dupes themselves do not know it. They pretend to be affected by the processes recommended in *Science and Health*, a book of nonsense. But the question is whether the rest of the world should be compelled to act as if they believed it. We are too tender to humbugs on religious grounds. Many think they must be silent on this subject, especially legislators who are mostly politicians, and want the votes of religionists. There is no reason why Christian Science should be treated differently from other false pretensions. That it is merely a delusion all believe who have a knowledge of science. Other religions can produce testimonials as numerous as the Christian Scientists. All who get well are supposed to be cured by the remedies applied. We know not what cures in many cases. If nature were left alone there would probably be cures, and Christian Science may leave its victims alone more than do some systems of medicine. All alike can point to medical science as making mistakes. No medical practitioner claims that all are healed by their appliances. The science of medicine is an uncertain

one, which accounts for the numerous quacks that have cure-alls. Many claim that religion heals whether applied according to the tenets of Christian Science or any other faith. The absence of alcoholic drinks, tobacco, tea, or coffee is sometimes thought to cure. The taking of no medicine has likewise this effect in many minds. Diet, bathing, and other remedies are supposed to have good effects. There is nothing that, in the opinion of somebody, does not cure; and because some have made a religion of particular cures, is no reason why they should be favored.

It is the duty of the health officers to protect the health of the people, whether by sanitation or by licensing the proper class. If Christian Science healers want to follow their occupation they should qualify themselves by a course in medicine. Ignoramuses should not be allowed to prey on the public health any more than on the rights of the people; and if a religion sanctions the stupidity of the healer the religion should be condemned.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Now, if Christianity and all other religions were blotted out, no "great darkness" need ensue, for human society would remain almost exactly as it is, regulating itself—as it does now—according to its knowledge and its needs. If it needed a religion—a creed by which to express its highest aspirations for human betterment—it could soon evolve one; but it is difficult to believe that in our day even the body of orthodox preachers would formulate such a barbarous creed as that which involves the eternal torment of the vast majority of mankind—a creed which would have disappeared ages ago had it not been for its supposed supernatural origin. For it is man himself who makes his own religion. The fashion of ascribing a supernatural origin to a religion was adopted to give it weight and authority with the uncultivated. This is clearly shown in the case of Mormonism, and it was anciently practised to gain the respect and obedience of semi-barbarous and ignorant peoples. So the "plucking" of the sun from the firmament is not quite analogous to the extinguishing of the "light" of Christianity, which does not shine on one-fourth part of mankind.—*Sir R. D. Hanson*.

President Roosevelt's prompt defence of Taft's right to a religion, although it be that of an Unitarian, has given, as the *Christian Register* shows, the chance for an apt retort that reminds the President of the most regrettable phrase he has ever written—the one written long before he was President, in which he characterised Thomas Paine, the man who said, "I believe in one God and no more, the world is my country, to do good is my religion," etc., as "a filthy little Atheist."—*Unity* (Chicago).

For as soon as we have clearly understood that individual life and action form only a small fragment of the great, eternal life of mankind, and that it is only by partaking in the latter that the individual man really lives, and as may hope, lives forever,—striving for the general good no longer appears a duty hard of fulfilment, but a necessity of our nature which we are the less able to resist the more we have recognised the true essence of things. And in truth it is the sentiment of such a relation that is the great source of all noble and good efforts. Neither the fear of eternal damnation, nor the hope of individual happiness, can really serve as truly saving ideas to raise man to a higher existence, even when we leave out of consideration that each of these two fundamental doctrines of the vulgar dogmatism really places only a refined selfishness as the lever of its ethics.—*J. Bleek*.

When Reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Shall silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

—*Shelley*.

Humanitarian Proverbs.

BY SINGLETON W. DAVIS.

THE "Providence" that is to be trusted is well-directed labor.

The "Devil" that is to be feared is ignorance of the relation of effect to cause.

The "Ghost" that comes to men as a "comforter" is the ghost of ancient error which lulls their intellect into the hypnotic spell of contentment with primitive ideals and practices and puts to sleep the desire for mental advancement.

The "Savior of the World" is he who devises and propagates means whereby mankind may be relieved from suffering, physical and mental, and supplied with health and happiness.

The "Heaven" that is realisable and worthy to be sought for, is not far away above our heads in another world after death, but within our minds, right here in *this* world and in this life.

The "Hell" that is to be shunned and "saved from" is not a literal lake of fire and brimstone below us into which the physical body may descend after death to be eternally "consumed," but a mental condition of suffering here and now caused by wrong-doing.

The "Wrong doing" which causes the sufferings of a real "hell" are simply acts not adapted to securing human welfare, individual and social.

Right and Wrong are terms not designating positive evil entities, but relative acts which are right or wrong because they cause, on the one hand, human welfare, and on the other human woe.

In nature there is nothing that is either positively "good" or positively "evil"; things are only relatively good or evil, accordingly as they effect human life beneficially or detrimentally.—*Humanitarian Review*, Los Angeles, Cal.

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN.

Whatever the wage of the world may be
At the close of the toiling day,
For a task too slight for the world to see,
As it measures men's work for pay.

He is rich in the tribute of rarer lands
That reckon world's wage above—
In the touch of a woman who understands—
In the thought of a woman's love.

—*Charlotte Louise Rudyard*.

Question with firm speech all institutions, observances, customs.—*Horace Greeley*.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEB. 25

THE President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were Also present: Messrs. A. Allison, J. Barry, E. Bowman, W. H. Baker, S. Bloomfield, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, J. T. Lloyd, W. Leat, J. Marshall, Dr. R. T. Nichols, J. Neate, C. Quinton, R. Rossetti, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstien, T. J. Thurlow, F. Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

The President read correspondence from Liverpool, and made a statement. This was accepted, and it was formally moved that the matter be left to him to conclude.

The meeting to be held as a protest against the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Camberwell Public Libraries was reported, and several members volunteered to act as stewards. The Secretary was instructed to send out the usual circular to Branches re the Annual Conference, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

Obituary.

ON Saturday last, in Lincoln, Constance Violet, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mann, was laid to rest. She had died suddenly, from consumption, after bearing bravely and uncomplainingly a long illness. Mr. H. S. Wishart, of Leeds, read a Secular Service at the grave, at which there were many watching the first Freethought burial in Lincoln.

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.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Second Death of Christ."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, F. Jay, "Christianity, Secularism, and Socialism." Songs by Mr. Barry Lindon.

WOOLWICH (Co-operative Institute): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity or Secularism: Which?"

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, A. Paul, "Gospel Absurdities."

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Mr. Chadderton on "English Part-Songs and Glees." Concert by Oldham Clarion Vocal Union.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Humanism of Shakespeare"; 6.30, "The Centenary of Charles Darwin."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The Darwin Centenary"; 6.30, "God, Man, and the Devil." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Hedley's Café, corner of Clayton and Blackett streets): 7.30, Councillor Johnston, "The Bottom Dog."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7, Proposed Lectures.

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