

THE Freethinker

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Solemnity is of the essence of imposture.
—SHAFTESBURY.

Swinburne as a Freethinker.—II.

IN the course of my introductory remarks on Swinburne's genius I said that "his lyrical work is what he will have to be judged by." This view has since received the sanction of our greatest living master of English literature. Mr. George Meredith, in a letter of condolence to Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, wrote as follows:—

"That brain of vivid illumination is extinct. I can hardly realise it when I revolve the many times when, at the starting of an idea, the whole town was instantly ablaze with electric light.

Song was his natural voice. He was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the world's, I should say, considering what a language he had to wield."

This fine tribute may be taken as practically settling the question.

We will now resume the consideration of Swinburne's attitude towards the God idea. And first let us take the concluding lines of the "Hymn to Proserpine":—

"For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death, and death is sleep."

The second line versifies a thought from Epictetus, and is therefore most appropriate in the mouth of the Pagan speaker. But was it Swinburne's own conviction? We may see that it was by referring to *Songs Before Sunrise*. In that striking poem "On the Downs" the poet reflects on the injustice, cruelty, and misery of the world, and asks where is God? why does he permit these evils? Then he asks the final question, "Is there no God?" And this is the answer:—

"With all her tongues of life and death,
With all her bloom and blood and breath,
From all years dead and all things done,
In the ear of man the mother saith,
'There is no God, O son
If thou be none.'"

Again in the beautiful and melodious "Prelude," he sings:—

"Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will
Across the waves of day and night,
To port or shipwreck, left or right,
By shores and shoals of good and ill;
And still its flame at mainmast height
Through the rent air that foam-flakes fill
Sustains the indomitable light
Whence only man hath strength to steer
Or helm to handle without fear.
Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
Across birth's hidden harbor-bar,
Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead;
Save his own soul he hath no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide."

Could there be a cleaner sweep of supernaturalism?
Man himself is the only God; in other words, man's

only sane and worthy ideal is Humanity. This idea is definitely expressed in the soaring close of the "Hymn of Man." The poet apostrophises the Deity and his priests in the spirit of Elijah's address to the priests of Baal. After a long and splendid passage in which they call upon their God to make his being and power manifest, the poet turns upon them with words of derision, and then upon *him*:—

"O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.
They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward,
whose faith is as flame;
O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God, by thy name.
By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,
Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy death is upon thee, O Lord.
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings—
Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things."

What a magnificent trumpet blast of Atheism! And what a splendid closing salute to the Religion of Humanity!

One paper—I think it was the *Daily News*—suggested that Swinburne was posturing in these Atheistic utterances: that it was not passionate poetry but heated rhetoric. Criticism of this sort is only too easy; the only qualities it demands are impudence and recklessness. Swinburne could hardly have sustained a mere pose for fifty years of strenuous poetical life. He was perfectly consistent in the expression of his leading ideas from the choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*, the work of his young manhood, to the august "Altar of Righteousness" which he contributed three or four years ago to *Harper's Magazine*. I do not see how any man in the least degree fit to comprehend them could read the rushing verses of "Mater Triumphalis" without feeling Swinburne's passionate sincerity breathing through the heroic music. Just listen:—

"I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!
All my strong cords are strained with love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
Wrestle the wind and the reluctant sea.

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;
The graves of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;
But thou from dawn to sunset shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine."

No man with heart and brain could mistake the special note of that last verse, even if he felt any doubt about the rest. Posturers and rhetoricians do not hit upon such ideas of self-surrender. "If the truth live, I live," exclaimed an old seventeenth-century pamphleteer. It was a noble and profound saying. And it was this idea, which never yet visited an insincere man, that Swinburne sang in those magnanimous lines.

I do not say that Swinburne ever called himself an Atheist. I only say that he sang Atheism. And I remember his approval of Shelley's writing himself

"Atheist" in defiance of a sentimental clergyman who had written some pious ejaculations in the visitors' book of a Swiss hotel where the poet of "Queen Mab" happened to be staying. I remember, too, Swinburne's defence of the word "God" as the one dropped out (by editorial hands) of that tremendous indictment in the "Ode to Liberty." I remember, likewise, a scornful passage in Swinburne's early Introduction (dated Christmas: 1865) to that little volume of Byron's selections. Southey had attacked Byron with an unfair weapon. "A poet by profession," Swinburne wrote, "he had assailed with feeble fury another poet, not on the fair and open charge of bad verses, but under the impertinent and irrelevant plea that his work was an affliction or an offence to religion and morality—the most susceptible, as the most intangible, among the creatures of metaphor." The creatures of metaphor! Could philosophical contempt go further than that?

Swinburne was an anti-supernaturalist at every point of the compass. He no more believed in a future life than he believed in any other part of the popular faith. In "The Pilgrims" he represents an enemy asking the soldiers of liberty and progress what they expect to gain: what light do they expect to see after death? if the world fares the better for their sacrifices will they know it? if man triumph who will tell them when they are in their graves? The answer is swift and decisive:—

"Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man:
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day."

Or as he puts it elsewhere:—

"Men perish, but man shall endure; lives die, but the life is not dead."

In one of the loveliest choruses of *Atalanta* he sang of man:—

"His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep."

The same idea is grandly expressed in the last stanza of the majestic threnody on Charles Baudelaire—which is not unworthy to rank near "Adonais" itself:—

"For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobe's womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoever, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore."

The strange haunting music, as of a great funeral march, gives this poem a place apart in later nineteenth century literature. Not that it is at all deficient in thought. Take the following lines, for instance, which express so consummately love's longing for the dead, and death's refusal to give so much as a hint in response:—

"What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foil'd earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes."

Swinburne would certainly not have objected to call himself a Freethinker. He did so by implication in his noble book on Shakespeare. Referring to Hamlet's soliloquy on reason and resolution, which is rejected by the actors as peremptorily as it might be by a convocation of priests, Swinburne says that both on philosophical and poetical grounds it eclipses the famous monologue on suicide and doubt. He calls it "The one especial speech, if any one such especial speech there be, in which the personal

genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth"—and "the noblest pleading ever offered for the rights of human reason." Then he writes this passage:—

"That Shakespeare was in the genuine sense—that is, in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term—a free thinker, this otherwise practically and avowedly superfluous effusion of all inmost thought appears to me to supply full and sufficient evidence for the conviction of every candid and rational man. To that loftiest and most righteous title which any just and reasoning soul can ever deserve to claim, the greatest save one of all poetic thinkers has thus made good his right for ever."

"Freethinker" being, then, the loftiest and most righteous title that even Shakespeare could claim, it must necessarily have been acceptable to Swinburne.

I cannot close this article without noticing the scandalous circumstances of Swinburne's interment in the family burial-ground at Bonchurch church-yard. He desired his bones to rest there. He also ordered in his will that there should be no religious ceremony at his funeral. Yet the rector, the Rev. J. F. Andrews, started the Church of England burial service, although he did not continue it, and offered some pious reflections of his own afterwards. Some of the mourners cried "Shame!" It was a cry of righteous indignation. Yet the blame does not rest entirely on the clergyman. Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton carries his share of it. Legally, under the last Act, he could have compelled the rector to accept a silent funeral. But he shilly-shallied in what we fear is a characteristic manner. Instead of informing the rector that Swinburne ordered "no religious ceremony," he appears to have informed him that there was to be no "formal service," thus leaving the man of God a loophole of which he took the fullest advantage. Mr. Andrews, indeed, rather boasted of it on the following Sunday morning. He read a letter from "a distinguished layman," congratulating him on "holding aloft the banner of the Savior of the world"—for Swinburne's opinion of whom (including "crucified carrion") see the lines "Before a Crucifix."

Carlyle called Dean Stanley an old body-snatcher, on account of his fondness for burying distinguished men—even "infidels" like Darwin—in Westminster Abbey. Mr. Andrews belongs to the same fraternity. No doubt he remembers the text, "Compel them to come in."

But we blame Mr. Watts-Dunton most of all. It seems another case of "Save me from my friends." What was the use of writing that it was "incongruous that England's great nature-worshiper should have any kind of formal burial service read over his grave"? That was not enough to arrest the Christian charity of the rector of Bonchurch. Swinburne's "friend" and sole executor should have written "religious" instead of "formal." He should also have stood upon his legal rights—and ordered the reverend gentleman, with all his paraphernalia, away from the funeral party. So much he could have done, and he betrayed his dead "friend" by not doing it.

And now for a final word. It is really not strange that Swinburne should be a Freethinker. It is indeed quite natural. There has been no great Christian poet since Coleridge. Wordsworth was rather a Pantheist than a Christian—whatever he might have thought himself. Byron was a confirmed sceptic. Shelley was a convinced Atheist. Browning and Tennyson were nominally Christians, but they were far from being orthodox. Arnold held not a shred of Christian doctrine. Thomson was an aggressive Atheist. George Meredith and Thomas Hardy are Freethinkers and Humanists. Swinburne, like his friend Morris before him, was simply in the broad current of modern thought. Christianity no longer attracts men of genius—and that is its doom.

G. W. FOOTE.

Does Science Degrade Man?

THE nineteenth century will always be pointed back to as pre-eminently the century of scientific discoveries; and some of the discoveries were of so fundamental and vital a character that they were bound to revolutionise all men's thoughts and convictions concerning the Universe and their own relation thereto. The most important of these discoveries became public property less than fifty years ago. The first edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species* only appeared on November 24, 1859, while the *Descent of Man* did not come out till February, 1871. Thus we see that the theory of evolution, now almost universally accepted, is barely half-a-century old. It is true that at the very commencement of the century Lamarck and Geoffrey Saint Hilaire had expressed their belief in the mutability of species; but they attributed all variations to the operation of purpose and will. Darwin and Wallace were the first naturalists to discover the great law of Natural Selection as the preserver and perpetuator of the variations produced by the Struggle for Existence among plants and animals. They made this discovery independently; but when they compared notes they found that they were in fundamental agreement.

It is well known how fiercely the Church attacked the new doctrine during the first two or three decades of its history; and nothing is clearer than that the bitter opposition was wholly justifiable. It is self-evident that Christianity and Darwinism cannot both be true. That is why Darwin himself renounced the Christian Faith and ended his life as a pure Agnostic. The Bible and the modern theory of evolution are eternally irreconcilable. The conflict between Scriptural theology and Science can only terminate with the downfall of one or the other.

In the *Origin of Species* observant minds could plainly discern the germs of the *Descent of Man*. It was inconceivable to such clear thinkers as Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist, that all species of plants and animals, with the solitary exception of the human species, had been evolved from lower forms. Such earnest students postponed their acceptance of the teaching of the *Origin of Species* until they could conscientiously apply it to man. It is a highly significant fact, in this connection, that Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature* was published nearly ten years prior to Darwin's *Descent of Man*, although in the *Origin* itself Darwin had intimated that its principles would throw light on the origin of the human race. About the same time appeared Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*. Both books were roughly handled in the *Athenæum*. Writing to Lyell, Darwin said:—

"Did you ever read anything so wretched as the *Athenæum* reviews of you, and of Huxley especially? Your object to make man old, and Huxley's object to degrade him. The wretched writer has not a glimpse of what the discovery of scientific truth means. How splendid some pages are in Huxley, but I fear the book will not be popular."

The first question to be considered is, of course, whether the doctrine of evolution, in its application to man, is true or not. If true, how can it be degrading, though it contradicts the testimony of theology? If the truth of the scientific account of man's origin can be established, theology of necessity falls to the ground, and man's glory, if glory there be, consists in the fact that he has risen. Bishop Wilberforce's faith in the Bible was so unshakable that during the famous debate at Oxford he chaffed Professor Huxley savagely, insolently saying, "I should like to ask Professor Huxley, who is sitting by me, and is about to tear me to pieces when I have sat down, as to his belief in being descended from an ape. Is it from his grandfather's, or his grandmother's side that the ape ancestry comes in?" Huxley's retort, Professor Fawcett informs us, "was so justly deserved and so inimitable in its manner, that no one who was present can ever forget the impression that it made": "I should feel it no shame

to have risen from such an origin; but I should feel it a shame to have sprung from one who prostituted the gifts of culture and of eloquence to the service of prejudice and of falsehood."

Now, if the Bible is true, Science *does* degrade man; but if Science is right, it is the Bible that degrades him. So numerous and irrefutable are the evidences of man's descent from lower forms that the bulk of present-day theologians have been obliged to surrender Genesis, and many of them Paul as well. But the sacrifice they have made only enhances the awkwardness and difficulty of their position. As long as they believe in God, it is inevitable that they should be constantly hurled from one horn of a dilemma to the other, and back again, without end. God is at once their supreme need and their fatal snare. On the assumption that God exists man's history is an inexplicable puzzle. The one contradicts and denies the other; and the theologian has no choice but to believe in both. This is extremely awkward, and the consequence is that the divines have split up into several opposing factions. There are still a few who accept Genesis and Paul without demur. There are others who are evolutionists as far as man's physical nature is concerned, but who regard his soul or spirit as a special gift bestowed upon him by a special creative act. But there are those who are thoroughgoing evolutionists all the way, only they regard the evolutionary process as having been from the beginning under the directive control of infinite wisdom and love. These three schools, however, are confronted by the same insuperable difficulty; namely, how to account for the indubitable fact that God's masterpiece is so shockingly imperfect. The first two schools aver that the man whom the perfect Creator made in his own image miserably fell. But how could an absolutely perfect creature ever fall? This question is variously and conflictingly but never satisfactorily answered. The third school maintains that man's nature got polluted on its way upward through the vegetable and animal kingdoms, so that the first man did not become sinful because he sinned, but sinned because he was sinful.

To prove that this third school of theology actually exists it is only necessary to make a quotation from one of the latest defences of the Biblical doctrine of man. In his *Christianity: Its Nature and its Truth*, Professor Peake, of the University of Manchester, says:—

"Man came into being with a sinful nature which woke to rebellion at the touch of the law. Till the law came he was innocent, but once there dawned upon him the consciousness of the moral order, the life of innocence was broken up, the sinful nature found expression in the act of trespass, and innocence gave place to guilt. And as God looked upon it he saw the whole character of humanity clearly displayed, pronounced all men sinners, and imposed the penalty of physical death."

The book from which that extract is made was written for the express purpose of helping young people to meet successfully Atheistic assaults upon their faith. In reality, however, Dr. Peake's interpretation of the dogma of Original Sin furnishes the strongest argument imaginable against the moral perfection of the Deity. It is declared that throughout its whole course evolution has been under the infallible control and supervision of an infinitely good and powerful God, and yet we are coolly assured that when man arrived he had a nature so sinful that he fell at the first breath of temptation, for which unpreventable fall his Maker holds him responsible, and inflicts punishment upon him. *Who can believe in such a God? Or who, believing in him, could ever honestly worship him?*

Is it not incontrovertible that the theological doctrine of man, in whatever version considered, is an insufferable affront to our moral sense, as well as an intolerable insult to our reason? No such man as the divine portrays could ever cherish a single shred of self-respect, while he could not help hating and despising his Creator. Like Job, he would violently curse the day of his birth, and yearn with

unspeakable longing for the silent sleep of the tomb. Now, Science presents man as the highest and noblest of the animals, as the finest product of the evolutionary process, and as having within him the possibilities of yet further growth and development. To Science, the theological commodity called sin is utterly unknown. The moral sense is simply the sense of social responsibility, which is shared, in a greater or lesser degree, by all gregarious animals. Man's greatness, or superiority, results from the extraordinary quantity and quality of his brain. Sir Oliver Lodge is everlastingly expatiating upon the necessary immortality of moral values; but moral values have no meaning outside of society. Mr. Campbell is quite right when he says that "we are seeing a new dignity in man by regarding him, not as the rebellious and helpless subject of an omnipotent Sovereign Judge, but as integral to the universal life itself," only it must be borne in mind that for us the universal life is confined within this world. We know of nothing beyond it, nor do we need anything beside it. We believe in the unity of all the life known to us, from the lowliest plant and animal to the most brilliant human genius; and it is undeniable that the difference between top and bottom is merely one of degrees and purely metaphorical.

Science, then, does not degrade man; it simply assigns him his place in the natural order, and tells him what is expected of him as occupier of the summit of terrestrial existence. It does not flatter him, neither does it cover him with self-contempt; but it encourages him to know himself and his relationships, in order that his life may become richer and fuller, a source of strength and comfort to the community as well as to himself. Surely there is nothing degrading in such a conception of human life. On the contrary, it is an elevating and ennobling conception. As Euripides says:—

"Happy he, on the weary sea
Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven.
Happy whoso hath risen, free,
Above his striving. For strangely graven
Is the orb of life, that one and another
In gold and power may outpass his brother.
And men in their millions float and flow
And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;
And they win their Will, or they miss their Will,
And the hopes are dead or are pined for still;
But who'er can know,
As the long days go,
That To Live is happy, hath found his Heaven!"

J. T. LLOYD.

Monism and Christianity.—II.

(Concluded from p. 244.)

IN sharply contrasting the Monistic and the Christian view of the function of the individual, Dr. Warschauer really raises the old question of the relations of the individual to society. And although Dr. Warschauer does admit the influence of certain social conditions on individual character, his main position commits him to a species of sociological atomism. He would agree with those writers who argue that society is a mere aggregate of individual human beings. On the other hand, one may submit that, while society is an aggregate of individuals, it is yet something more than is given in any cluster of individuals merely added together. The strength of an army is not the mere sum-total of the strengths of the individual members composing it; it is that plus the addition of what results from combination. The product of a chemical compound is not to be discovered by adding together the properties or qualities of its constituents. Some quality is given in the combination not to be found in its constituent parts. And in the same way no amount of adding together of individuals can give us all that we find in a social structure. We cannot, try how we may, derive society from the individual. We can, as will be seen, derive the individual from society.

I am not claiming the existence of some mysterious social ego presiding over society, as theologians conceived a soul dominating the organism. My point is that just as I am made up of the various parts of my organism plus the combination of these parts, and that just as the relations between these parts are as real as the parts themselves, so there develops a social force which expresses the relations existing between all individuals, and which is as real as the individuals themselves. And this is strictly analogous to all that we know, scientifically, of other forces. The law of gravitation, the laws of heat, light, and sound are the expressions of a relation, and have no existence apart from the relations between atoms of matter. And it would be as absurd to deny the existence of gravitation, because it cannot be shown apart from matter, as it is to deny the existence of this social force, because we cannot separate it from the individuals that comprise society.

It is perfectly true that, apart from individuals, society has no existence, but it is equally true that, apart from society, the individual ceases to be. Society is no more an abstraction than is the individual. When we speak of society it is true that we are expressing the totality of individual actions, but it is also true that when we speak of the individual we are expressing the result of a whole complex of social forces. Take from the individual all that society gives him in the shape of language, beliefs, clothing, institutions, take away the relations existing between him and his fellows, and the individual, as we know him, has ceased to exist. One view of the case is certainly as true as the other; and when such opposing conclusions can be logically reached, it is highly probable that the truth lies between the two, or in a combination of both. The truth is that either aspect alone represents a one-sided view of the subject. Neither individual nor society can, or ought to be, considered separately. Both are aspects of the same fact. The individual is a concrete expression of social forces; society is a generalised expression of individual activities. Society is an organism precisely because, like all organisms, one cannot understand aright any one of the parts without considering its relation to the whole, and because one cannot appreciate the whole without understanding the nature and function of each of the parts.

One may reach the same conclusion by another method. Much is often made of the statement that the end of social action is the production of strong individuals. This is true; but individuation is the product, biologically, of a differentiation, and this, instead of making the part less dependent on the whole, really involves a greater coherence and a more profound inter-dependence of parts. In the animal organism the taking on of specific functions by certain groups of cells involves the performance of other functions by other groups; and thus, while in view of a specific function a particular cell group may be said to acquire a greater individuality, from another point of view its individuality is an expression of the organised cell life of the entire organism. With equal truth this generalisation holds good of the individual in relation to society. Social action necessarily results, not in the production of individuals who are above social forces and who control them, but in the production of individualities that express the highly elaborated social forces behind and around them. There is positively no other source of their existence. An individual cannot create new forces; he can only utilise those already existing. And unless he is the exact equivalent of all the forces that preceded him, neither more nor less, we have in the individual something that is impossible of explanation, and which cuts the ground from under all scientific and all coherent thinking. The very feeling of the individual that he is controlling social forces is a trick of the imagination, which ultimately expresses the deeper truth I have indicated.

The most striking apparent exceptions will be seen to enforce this truth. Probably in thinking of strong, almost lawless individualities, many would light upon

those "money kings" whose actions seem to be fettered by no consideration of social service. And yet, putting on one side that we are here dealing with the old predatory instincts modified to meet new conditions, the fact remains that the most lawless of the group are as dependent upon social forces as any others. For these men hold the wealth they have, and pursue the methods they employ, wholly in virtue of the social discipline—respect for private property, for freedom of action, habits of obedience, etc.—the people have been subjected to, and to the laws—expressions of the same social discipline—which protect them from assault. So that, paradoxical as it may sound, the very people who imagine themselves freest from the control of the social forces, are those who are most dependent upon their existence and operation.

We can now, I think, see more clearly the futility of Dr. Warschauer's remark that "the smallest and forlornest actual slum baby appeals to our sympathy immeasurably more than a vast dim aggregate of indistinguishable items called the Race." Naturally, because we have here a concrete illustration of a universal fact, without which the general fact would not be appreciated. But the very sympathy which is excited is race-born, is an expression of the race solidarity which Dr. Warschauer apparently thinks of so little value. And sympathy, while immediately directed towards the individual, is ultimately directed towards race-welfare. The love of the mother for her child is nature's method of securing race-preservation; and the sympathy of one person with another is nature's method of securing that social co-operation and efficiency without which human life would cease to exist. It is always good not to lose the particular in the general, but it is also good not to lose sight of the fact that the particular is only what it is because of its relation to the general.

If what has been said be correct, what, it may be asked, becomes of the individual? Well, the individual is as much there as ever; we simply realise his true worth and function in the social organism. The individual is no more doomed than an analysis of the laws of light destroys the beauty of a sunset. We are as able as ever to appreciate the individual, but it is an intelligent appreciation that comes from a perception of his true nature and of his relations to humanity as a whole, in place of the unreasoning and helpless wonder of a disguised supernaturalism. The individual stands, not as the chance product of incomprehensible powers, but as the necessary result and expression of social forces always in operation.

That this conception robs us of the incentive to progress I do not for a moment believe. In the first place, progress itself is not such a chance thing as to be dependent upon the voluntary co-operation of any one person or of any group of persons. Those who study carefully the history of ideas and of progress in general will see the truth of Spencer's statement that human progress is all of a piece with the unfolding of a flower and the development of a planet. It is not an accident, but a necessity. All ideas are born of the past operating upon the present; and although ideas cannot run without feet, they must find a particular human vehicle for their expression, yet it is much nearer the truth to say that these find their vent in individuals than that individuals create the ideas themselves. Flattering to self-esteem as is the notion that ideas depend for their existence upon this or that individual, it is one that is quite devoid of scientific foundation.

Secondly, it is largely a question of how we are to set to work. If the individual originates social forces, our efforts must be concentrated on individuals, or, as Dr. Warschauer puts it, "We must take care of the individual and leave the race to take care of itself." If, however, the individual is the expression of countless social actions and reactions, then the line of effort must be in the direction of modifying social conditions so as to make for a more desirable manhood. And if we are to be guided by experience, one need have no hesitation in declaring for the latter method. For all experience testifies to the

futility of our expecting ideas and beliefs to flourish in an unsuitable environment. Moral teaching is equally futile unless the general environment is such as gives it countenance. To do Christianity justice, one must admit that there has never been with it any lack of mere moral instruction; but there has been a fatal neglect of the conditions that would give the moral instruction force. A people is always what its environment makes it; only we must be careful to count in the environment the biological and psychological forces along with the purely material ones.

Finally, there is the question of inspiration. This is ultimately a question of imagination. Dr. Warschauer thinks the slum baby more effective than anything else. Others there are who find little inspiration in particular individuals, who may be quite unattractive objects. To them the story of human progress appeals far more powerfully. They feel that, unlovely and undesirable as certain individuals may be, their unloveliness and undesirability are atoned for by the worthiness of humanity as a whole. It is not that they multiply nothing to get something, or that they hope by a multiplication of ugliness to get beauty, but that the conception of a slowly-developing humanity compensates for the partial failures and for the marred beauty of isolated instances. And surely there is in this human story, from cave man to poet, philosopher, and scientist, enough inspiration to fire the most sluggish imagination. There is enough to make one feel that, whatever our failures may be, they are neither eternal nor irremediable; that the course of evolution has loaded the dice in our favor; and that even though as individuals we are mere links in the chain of beings, as links we still play our parts, and so serve to provide a finer metal out of which may be formed the links that follow.

C. COHEN.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Edgar Wallace is a novelist. We state this "from information received"—for we are totally unacquainted with his productions. Perhaps it is because he is a novelist that he is allowed to write in the *Sunday Chronicle* on Religion. What he writes is "For Young Men Only." We may be permitted to hope, therefore, that the young women of Manchester and the district are not expected to trouble themselves about his utterances. Mr. Wallace starts by saying that "a young man without religion is a young man without reverence, and a young man without reverence is an unpleasant and unnatural object." This gentleman seems to think that reverence depends upon religion, whereas the truth is that religion exploits reverence. Reverence is a natural human quality, and Freethinkers have at least as much of it as religionists, only they apply it to different objects. They can revere the genius of Shakespeare, even when they do not revere the genius of the author of the book of Jonah. They can revere the heroism of a Bruno, even when they do not revere the heroism of the "martyr" who cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" They can revere the beautiful motherhood in a Raphael Madonna, even when they do not revere the blasphemous absurdity of "the Mother of God." Freethinkers, in short, give their reverence to the natural and Christians to the supernatural. That is the real difference. All the rest is pious fudge.

A young man without reverence is certainly apt to be an unpleasant person. But this only means that all men, young or old, who are devoid of love, and admiration, and instinctive respect for what is true and good and beautiful, and equally instinctive deference to intellectual and moral superiority,—are apt to be unpleasant persons. There are myriads of them, alas, in England, in spite of the religious education they have all received in elementary schools and elsewhere. Mr. Edgar Wallace, although a novelist, surely does not mean that all the frivolous, and flippant, and ill-mannered youths in England come out of the Freethought camp. It is really not religion they want. That has been all around them from infancy. What they want is better mental and moral training. If they had only been taught good manners and correct speech, instead of the Life of King David and the Virgin Birth of Christ, they would have been far better worth living with,—for, after all, you can't smother or shoot them, disagreeable as they are.

We quite understand Mr. Edgar Wallace's advice to his "young men only"—"Do not be drawn into speculation or argument on religious matters." That way danger lies. The young man who thinks is lost. Let him read Mr. Edgar Wallace instead.

"Young men only"—it would be no use teaching *this* to young women—are warned against giving "expression" to their religious opinions, as "the expression of them will hurt somebody's feelings." But why does not the teacher practise his own precepts? He gives expression to *his* religious opinions. He says, for instance, that "You can be a Christian without believing anything except God is Love." Now this is only Mr. Edgar Wallace's opinion. And it is a highly controvertible one. We doubt if there is a single Christian clergyman in England who would endorse it. Here, then, is a man who proclaims a religious opinion which is in flagrant opposition to the teaching of every Christian church in the country, and who yet warns his readers to keep their religious opinions entirely to themselves lest they should "hurt somebody's feelings." This is a climax. Enough of Mr. Edgar Wallace!

Sir Oliver Lodge has been discoursing in a Walsall chapel on "Life and its Meaning." His lecture was full of assertions which he appears to regard as arguments. He fails to see that when he says, "I believe this"—"I do not believe that"—he is simply talking personalities. His belief, about anything, is of no earthly importance to anybody but himself. The only thing of any real importance is what he *knows*,—and on the subjects on which he is so fond of lecturing he knows absolutely nothing. He plainly told the Walsall audience that he did not know what Life was, yet he was quite cocksure as to its Meaning,—which, as our old friend Euclid says, is absurd. He talked about "the Spirit of Life" as if he was in communication with that personage by telephone or wireless telegraphy from Birmingham University. All through the report in the local *Observer* we note that Sir Oliver Lodge was applauded every time he patted Christianity on the back. But in doing that he is not speaking as a man of science at all; he is simply speaking as a distinguished citizen who wants to stand well with the great sentimental, fat-headed majority.

Sir Oliver Lodge told his audience that they could all help God. This was very flattering to their vanity, and they accepted it with great cheerfulness. What the Almighty thought of it is a very different question. But the learned lecturer tried his hand at jocosity, and the effort was not exactly successful. He reminded his hearers that the text "The Lord hath need of him" was said by the Lord himself of the donkey with which he proposed to ride into Jerusalem; and "that showed that no one is so lowly, insignificant, and unimportant as not to be of use." The moral is that if you can't be anything else, you can at least be a donkey for somebody else to ride. But is there any need of accentuating that old lesson? The multitude have always cheerfully played the part of donkey, and the priests have ridden them with the greatest ease and assurance. They have even taken their friends up behind them, and the donkeys have bucked up every time the load was increased.

There may be another moral to Sir Oliver Lodge's illustration. The Lord had need of an ass when he went into Jerusalem; and judging by a large number of his representatives he has had need of many an ass since.

The Church Army has paid £12,000 for the old "Yorkshire Stingo" public-house and brewery in the Marylebone-road. The inspired newspaper announcement says the place has "fallen into the hands of the Church Army," and that by acquiring it "the Army defeated an attempt at purchase by a well-known firm of distillers." We hope nobody is quite foolish enough to suppose that this will injure the brewing trade or lessen by one glass the consumption of beer or spirits. The real object of the purchase is obvious to all sensible people who read that £16,000 more is required to fit the premises for "spiritual purposes."

Blackpool Beach has been a happy hunting-ground for gypsy fortune-tellers, who could make £10 a day in the season—according to the police. But the corporation has ordered them off, and the chief constable is bringing lingers before the "beak." We are not pleading for them, but we do say that gypsy fortune-tellers are quite as honest as Catholic priests who take money to hurry souls through purgatory. They are quite as honest, for that matter, as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Taking money for saying what

you don't know is the same business whether it is done for sixpence or for six thousand pounds.

Dr. Clifford was bound to have something to say about the declaration of Mr. C. Hole, President of the National Union of Teachers, in favor of Secular Education. He is allowed to occupy a whole column of the largest type in the *Daily News*. Of course he is at his old tricks from beginning to end. Once more he asserts, with Mr. Hole, that the "State must disendow all sectarian teaching." He takes no notice whatever of the fact that it has been pointed out to him a hundred times by Catholic, Anglican, and Freethinker, and even by straightforward Nonconformist, that the "simple Bible teaching" which Dr. Clifford affects is just as "sectarian" as any other form of religious instruction. He goes on repeating his old shibboleth as if nobody had ever said anything against it—as if it held undisputed possession of the field. That is one regular trick of his. Another is pretending that he is himself in favor of Secular Education, if you understand it as he does. What he means is—to use a phrase of his own—Secular Education *plus* the Bible; which, as we told him some time ago, is very much like being in favor of Vegetarianism *plus* Beefsteak, or Teetotalism *plus* Whisky. Dr. Clifford knows very well that the Bible could never be anything else than a book of religion in the hands of teachers and scholars in the public schools. And for that very reason all who understand that Secular Education simply means the exclusion of religious education are utterly opposed to the Bible being placed in the hands of the children at all during school-hours.

Being one of the craftiest old sophists in England, and therefore in the whole world, Dr. Clifford tries to confuse the issue by giving four—yes, *four*—different definitions of Secular Education. We give his own words in order that there may be no mistake:—

"So far as I can see, there are four classes of advocates of 'secular' education:

(1) Those who would not allow any use whatever of any part of the Bible in State schools. They are very few; and I have never heard of a teacher amongst them.

(2) Those who would simply read the Bible.

(3) Those who would read the Bible and give what Dr. Angus called 'lexical' explanations—*i. e.*, such as would be given by a teacher in the use of Milton or Bunyan.

(4) Those—and they form the vast majority—who stand for the use of portions of the Bible suited to the capacity of the children, such use to be literary, historical, ethical, and spiritual; but never in any way theological or ecclesiastical. Sure as we are men, that last is the just way, and the way the nation has to go."

Now there is only one honest definition of Secular Education, and that one Dr. Clifford always avoids. Amongst his many pretences is that of being ignorant of the existence of the Secular Education League, which includes Christians of nearly all Churches and non-Christians outside all Churches. The one principle they hold in common is very simple; it is that the State shall not teach religion at all in the elementary schools—that religious teaching of any kind shall not be given during school-hours or at the public expense. This principle rules out Dr. Clifford's "spiritual" teaching as much as Dr. Bourne's or Dr. Davidson's. In using the word "spiritual," indeed he has given himself away at last. The friends of Secular Education, if they win, as they seem likely to, will take precious good care that "spiritual" teaching does not lead to "theological or ecclesiastical" teaching. They will keep it out altogether; then it will not lead to anything.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in the following Saturday's *Daily News*, made mincemeat of Dr. Clifford's foolish letter. With regard to using the Bible as "literature" Mr. Chesterton wrote:—

"Can the Koran be treated as literature? Yes, anywhere except in Islam. Can the Bible be taught as pure literature? Yes; anywhere except in a Protestant country."

We have always said the same thing. The Bible in England is not a book of literature, but a book of religion. It is only a book of literature amongst people who do not accept it as anything else. Mr. Chesterton puts another point very neatly:—

"Either the Bible must be offered as something extraordinary or as something ordinary. If it is offered as something extraordinary, that is certainly unfair to the agnostics and doubters. If it is offered as something ordinary, that is grossly and atrociously unfair to the theologians and the believers."

Mr. Chesterton blandly tells Dr. Clifford that his Bible compromise "is false both to the civic idea of liberty and to the Protestant idea of the Bible." The poor man is wrong every way.

Rev. Thomas Phillips goes the length of advocating stealing for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. "We ought to

have the daring," he says, "to claim all that is good in everything for Jesus Christ." There are movements outside "organised Christianity" which this reverend gentleman recommends the Churches to seize and appropriate at once, in order that "the front place in the social reform van, the thick of the firing-line, may be occupied, not by the Socialists, but by the Christian Church." And yet we are told that the Christian morality is the noblest, the most self-sacrificing the world has ever seen.

In the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* particular attention is called to the fact that Christianity has fallen on evil days. The article entitled "Credo" closes in a lament. Present-day Christians are said to be worshipers of "a note of interrogation"; they are described as victims to "the timidity which dare commit itself to nothing," and as having "a half-hearted religion which negotiates for its status and proposes a perpetual parley with Doubt, Sin, and Death." This is only a polite way of saying that Christianity is dying, and that its defenders know it.

Rev. P. D. Thomson, M.A., of Glasgow (Kelvin-side U. F. Church), admits that "even where the Gospel of Christ has gone national and racial antagonisms remain," and that "Christian peoples are the worst offenders." Very naively the man of God adds: "This does not prove that Christ is not able to reconcile the nations, but that the nations are imperfectly Christianised." That is to say, Christ would reconcile the nations if only he could Christianise them.

Oliver Wendell Holmes is quoted as answering the question if he did not think Christianity had proved a failure thus: "I rather think that it has never been tried." That answer is at once true and false. As an ecclesiastical organisation, as a hierarchy grounded in superstition and modelled on the Roman Empire, Christianity has been an enormous success; but as a moralising agent and a harmoniser of nations it has been a lamentable failure. In the latter capacity, it has not even been tried, and this because from the very character of its teaching it is not *triable*.

As a sign of the diminished interest in Foreign Missions, it may be mentioned that there was a decrease of £3,400 in last year's income of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and that the total amount of the Society's debt for the same period is between £6 and £7. And yet Christ reigns in Christendom, and is on the eve of mounting the throne in Heathendom! To complete his triumph all that is wanted is more money.

The *Christian World* rebukes a South Australian clergyman for saying that "Colenso exposed the mistakes of Moses," asking, "Was he confusing Bishop Colenso with Mr. Ingersoll?" But surely our contemporary must be aware that Colenso wrote many large volumes, the one object of which was to expose the mistakes of Moses, and that he was led to the study of the Pentateuch by objections to its authenticity and inspiration raised by the Zulus among whom he worked? Colonel Ingersoll issued his *Some Mistakes of Moses* in 1879, while Colenso began to publish on the subject in 1862. Our religious contemporary must be really more careful.

Mr. W. Bramwell Booth, Chief of the Staff of the Salvation Army, was the last person in the world who should have been engaged by a big London daily to sing General Booth's praises on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. This gentleman celebrates his father's "disinterestedness." "What he is to-day," the son goes on to say, "we have known him to be throughout his whole career." Mr. Bramwell Booth's zeal runs away with his chronology—unless he watched his father's career before they were first acquainted in this world.

We have Mr. Bramwell Booth's word for it that General Booth is still "a devoted and sincere follower of the Bleeding Lamb." If we had said so it would have been called swearing. In the Chief of the Staff of the Salvation Army it is Christian piety.

"Holy Saturday in Mexico," the *Daily Chronicle* says "is devoted to the vilification of Judas Iscariot. On Good Friday morning booths are erected in every part of Mexico City for the sale of the most grotesque effigies of the betrayer, and these are bought by persons of all ages and both sexes. The city on the following day is transformed into a vast place of executions. Ropes stretch across the streets from house to house, and from every rope hangs an atrociously ugly Judas, filled with straw and gunpowder. The inhabitants devote the morning hours to hurling curses

and insults at these images; but the cursing ceases a few minutes before 12, and the crowds line up the streets, and listen for the noonday chimes. As soon as the cathedral bells ring out, the images are torn down amid frantic yells, and cast into bonfires. There they explode, and each explosion is greeted with renewed curses, as representing the soul of Judas fleeing into hell." This is very rough on poor Judas. Without him, apparently, there would have been no Crucifixion—and therefore no Atonement and no Salvation. Disraeli and De Quincey were more just to Judas. The former suggested that Christians ought to erect a monument to his memory.

We are told that Christ has "robbed death of its sting." He has not. The sting of death, the Bible says, is sin; and it is well known that even the brightest Christian complains to the very last that his heart is full of sin, so that when death comes it finds in him a great abundance of that, which enables it to sting him with a vengeance. It is Freethought, by annihilating sin, that robs death of the power to sting. It is the Atheist who faces death without a tremor, because it is he alone who understands what death is and does.

It is a highly significant fact that at the advent of death Christians experience more poignant sorrow and are more hopeless than Freethinkers. The reason is that the former are victims to that "dread of something after death" which "puzzles the will," and which, acting through a morbidly developed conscience, makes cowards of them, while to the latter death is merely the inevitable, and not always unwelcome, end of life. And for the same reason the Freethinker's outlook upon life generally is serenely and wholesomely than that of the Christian. The *British Congregationalist* is simply romancing when it says that the Christian life is "a glad and unshadowed" Festival. It is nothing of the kind; at best it is but a perilous pilgrimage through "a waste, howling wilderness" to an imaginary feast in an imaginary paradise.

The Bishop of Southwark has been saying some funny things, though they were meant to be serious, about Christianity and peace. He lamented that so much of "the best forces of wealth, statesmanship, and energy were drained off into the provision of colossal armaments"—after nearly 2,000 years of Christ's "glorious gospel of righteousness and peace." But he still looked forward to a better state of things in the sweet by-and-bye. There would yet be a "many-sided life, full of kindness and full of peace, full of the accomplished purpose of God, which must be the desire of His heart." His reverend lordship did not appear to see the tremendous joke he was perpetrating. God Almighty cherishing the desire of his heart for nearly 2,000 years and being no nearer its accomplishment now than he was at the beginning! Is it possible to go beyond that in a farcical direction?

In the Third Collect for Good Friday the Lord is requested to "have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics." The friends of Turkey want the "Turks" left out in future, and the Archbishop of Canterbury has promised to see what can be done for them. No doubt the "Jews" and "Heretics" will want to be left out also, and the "Infidels" will remain in solitary glory. Perhaps the Lord will then show mercy to the "Infidels" by instructing his worshipers to slander and libel them a little less. That would do very well for a beginning.

A morning newspaper has been telling the story of a Scotchman who habitually absented himself from kirk, and pleaded his dislike of long sermons. "Deed, man," said the minister, "if ye dinna mend, ye may land yersell where ye'll no be troubled wi' mony sermons either lang or short." "Weel," said the absentee, "but it mayna be for want of ministers."

This reminds us of the story of the parsons and the village natural. There had been an assembly of parsons, which broke up too late for them to get home, and they had all to stay the night at the village inn. It was cold weather, a big fire was blazing in the large public room, and the parsons were all gathered round it. Presently the village natural entered the room and tried in vain to get near the centre of warmth. A villager said that the "natural" was given to dreaming, and one of the parsons asked him what he had been dreaming lately. "Oh," he said, "I dreamt I died the other night and went to hell." "And what sort of a place was it?" asked the man of God. "Oh," said the poor fellow, "it was very much like this. You couldn't see the fire for parsons."

There is a delicious paragraph, headed "Strange Effects of the New Turkish Constitution," in *Life and Work*, the

Church of Scotland magazine. It appears that "a serious crisis has arisen in connection with the Syrian Protestant College" at Beyrout. Of the 850 students in the College, 120 are Moslems and 70 Jews—the rest being Syrian and Greek Christians. The rule has been that the College day begins and closes with "a gathering in the College Hall for Scripture reading, praise, and prayer." But now that religious liberty is secured by the new Turkish Constitution, the Moslem and Jewish students decline to attend College chapel or to be present at classes for Bible-reading. They also declare that they will resist any attempt at expelling them. The Committee, however, have instructed the Principal that "no child, of whatever race and religion, can be exempted from religious instruction." This shows what the Mission is really after. Proselytism is the real object, and education is only the bait to fish with.

The Rev. H. S. Woolcombe, who has been head of the famous Oxford House in Bethnal Green for nearly eight years, tells a *Daily Chronicle* interviewer that the East-end of London is generally painted much blacker than it is. "Religious workers" even, he says, "often exaggerate the sin and squalor, in order to raise funds. I know of a case where a certain rich lady, who took up slum work, had a special class of very dirty boys selected for her, so that the needs of the district might be brought more clearly before her." This is a point on which the reverend gentleman may be regarded as speaking with authority. But when he says, "I see signs that secularism is weakening," it may be regarded as a case of the wish being father to the thought. If the reverend gentleman will walk round to Victoria Park any Sunday afternoon or evening, and stop at the platform of the Bethnal Green N. S. S. Branch, he would soon see that the weakening of Secularism is imaginary. He might have seen it, too, during the winter at the fine Freethought meetings that were held in the Shoreditch Town Hall.

Lord William Cecil, whose special qualification for the task is not obvious, has been engaged to write in the *Daily Express* on the future of China. He hopes that successful efforts will be made to bring the four hundred millions of China into the Christian fold. Well, let him hope. We should be sorry to interfere with his personal enjoyment. We do desire, though, to correct his incidental observation that "modern science is the product, and religion the creator, of Western civilisation." By religion, of course, he means the Christian religion; and this Christian religion destroyed the old Western civilisation in gaining ascendancy, and nearly destroyed the new Western civilisation in trying to maintain its ascendancy. Christianity and Civilisation are essentially antagonistic. One must destroy the other. The champions of Christianity saw that clearly enough under the Roman Empire, and again at the time of the Renaissance; and it would be well if the champions of Civilisation recognised it with the same thoroughness.

There is a remarkable article in the current *Hibbert Journal* on "The Insufficiency of Social Righteousness as a Moral Ideal," from the pen of Principal Forsyth, of Hackney College. At the very beginning of it, the writer makes one highly sensible admission—namely, that the Cross, the Atonement, like the Christ, is not historical. Jesus and the crucifixion, he assures us, are historical facts, but Christ and the redemption through him are the creation of theology. We are in substantial agreement with Dr. Forsyth, the only differences between us being that he is quite sure of the alleged facts while we are not, and that he treats the inventions of theology as if they were veritable facts, while we relegate them to the region of useless and injurious myths. That Christ died to save a lost and ruined world is not a fact, but an excrescence that has unnaturally grown out of a fact, or a supposed fact, and the sooner we get rid of it the better.

Dr. Forsyth's object is to discredit all ethical teaching that is not rooted in theology. The social conscience on earth cannot stand without the support of an infinite, Divine conscience in heaven. Man's conscience, to be of any value, must be able to swear by God's conscience. No man can live a truly good life unless he knows that he is "planted before the ineffable presence of one who is for ever fed from within with all the moral strength he needs, and is therefore the centre and fountain of the universe—the changeless, self-sustained, absolute, and Holy One." We hold, on the contrary, that the presence of so impossible a being would hopelessly complicate all the puzzling problems of human life. We cannot conceive of Holy God murdering his equally Holy Son in order to grant social righteousness to mankind. The struggle for existence is difficult enough to understand even for the Atheist. To an honest Theist it would be wholly unintelligible.

It was to be expected that the *Catholic Herald* would spit its venom over the dead body of Swinburne. "Of genius," it says, "he had not a spark." This is enough for any person, whatever his beliefs, who has any literary taste and judgment. "To the present generation," the Popish paper says, "he is but a name, and to the next he will be but a meaningless echo." This is a meaningless metaphor, but we can guess at the meaning of the prophecy. Not that we are going to discuss it for that would be a sad waste of time, and the best way of answering a prophet is to prophesy the opposite. We may point out, however, that the Popish paper discounts its opinion by showing its animus too plainly. It declares that "such little influence" as Swinburne exercised "was entirely antagonistic to morality and religion." Antagonistic to religion, yes. But morality? What on earth does the *Catholic Herald* know about morality? Morality is one thing—and religious prescriptions, seasoned with falsehood and malice, are quite another.

The *Methodist Times* informs us that Swinburne "missed the highest rank because of his utter failure to grasp the meaning of the Gospel of Christ." As a matter of fact, Swinburne *did* "grasp the meaning of the Gospel of Christ," and in consequence indignantly rejected it.

The *Morning Post* of April 17 printed an astonishing letter from Walter Watkins Pitchford, dated from Lamport Rectory, Northampton, claiming Swinburne as a good Christian. "At all events," he said, "if you think the information of interest, Mr. Swinburne was a reverent communicant when staying in a village where I was curate some few years since." We really wonder at the *Morning Post* publishing such a ridiculous letter. Either the reverend writer has confused the dead poet with some other Mr. Swinburne or he ought to be contributing to the *Daily Mail*. Swinburne's non-Christianity was notorious, and he left instructions in his will that there was to be no religious ceremony at his funeral.

A paper of the standing of the *Morning Post* ought to feel some responsibility with regard to the reputation of a great English poet. It ought to have asked Walter Watkins Pitchford for the place and date of Swinburne's alleged appearance as a Church of England communicant, and also for some corroboration of his extraordinary statement. To print a letter of that kind without the slightest investigation was hardly an act of good journalism.

Religion and love go so well together. The Mayor of Velardena, in Mexico, tried to stop a religious procession. The result was the burning of the mayor's house, the looting of a Chinese hotel, a fight with police and troops in the streets, and the death of some forty people, besides a large number of wounded.

Canon Hare, vicar of Docking, King's Lynn, had an apoplectic seizure at the Norwich Diocesan Conference, and died in a few minutes. This would have been a "judgment" at a Freethought meeting.

Another poor Christian gone to God. Rev. Sir George Henry Cornewall, of Moccas Court, Hereford, left £162,641.

Freethought in Lincoln.

ON Easter Monday, Mr. Joseph Bates, accompanied by some Boston friends, visited Lincoln and gave an open-air lecture in the afternoon—the first, so far as we are aware, ever given in this city. A large audience soon gathered round the lecturer. There was some interruption, caused by some holiday makers inspired by spirits—of the bottle order; but when these had returned to their libations the audience became very attentive to Mr. Bates's very able and earnest address, and when the lecturer was answering the numerous questions the crowd became so deeply interested that there was quite a crush round the lecturer to hear the Gospel of Freethought, and a good number of *Freethinkers* were disposed of.

Considering that the lecturer attracted, and held, an audience of over two hundred people without previous notice, he scored an unqualified success. Several inquired when Mr. Bates was coming again; and his next lecture, with previous notice, should draw a much larger audience. Lincoln seems a very promising field for Freethought propaganda. Mr. Bates has promised to return shortly, and we are looking forward to his "second coming" with pleasurable anticipation.

W. MANX.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, April 25, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, W.; at 7.30, "The Religion of Shakespeare." (Anniversary Lecture).

May 2, Liverpool; 9, Aberdare.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 25, Greenwich.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £174 12s. Received since.—W. W., 5s.; R. Stirton and Friends (supplementary), 5s.; J. A. T., 5s.

G. BRADFELD.—See paragraph. Thanks.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Glad you are "able to enjoy the *Freethinker*." We hope the more genial weather will set you up again.

H. M. BEATTIE.—Pleased to hear you "could not think of missing the *Freethinker* for a week." We believe our readers can do the most to promote our circulation. Their motto should be "Pass it along." Placing it in fresh hands is the all and end all of the problem.

A. HAYWARD.—It does not appear on what ground the subscriptions were refused. Without knowing that, it is impossible for us to offer a criticism.

H. H. S.—Thanks for report of Sir Oliver Lodge's lecture at Walsall. We are surprised at his addressing "men only." That is all very well for the men of God, who must be up to any and every device for doing business, but it seems a long way below the proper level of the Principal of Birmingham University.

F. W.—You send us 5s. and ask us not to print a number after your name. Don't you see that this would leave 4s. unaccounted for? We must acknowledge every penny we receive. Our only course, therefore, is to insert the number and omit your name. You will recognise the initials. Thanks for your very good wishes.

B. B.—The Bible has no text expressly saying that the world is flat. The idea is rather involved in the general view of the writers. When, for instance, the Devil took Jesus up a hill and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, the implication is that by going up high enough the whole world could be seen at once, which is inconsistent with its rotundity. There are texts which might serve the flat theory, such as 1 Samuel i. 8, and Psalms cii., 25; but these might be construed as metaphorical.

T. McCLURE.—Never mind the size of the Easter Egg. We want the rank-and-file of the party to contribute. The good old story of the widow's mite is none the worse for being found in the Bible. To give what one misses is the most sterling form of generosity. We should have said "charity" but that fine word has got so badly abused.

W. A. YATES, sending a further Easter Egg for Freethought, says: "I most sincerely wish it were a hundred times more, as I consider it immeasurably small compared with the immense satisfaction and enjoyment I have derived from reading my beloved *Freethinker*." He thinks there must be hundreds like himself in this respect, and hopes to see them in the list of acknowledgments.

E. DAWSON.—You and your friends do us an honor by reading our articles so carefully. The punctuation might possibly be misleading to readers of absolute ignorance, but surely not to those of even moderate information; for "the greatest of these is love," or "charity" as the Authorised Version has it, is a classic quotation from St. Paul, which everybody may be presumed to know. Of course, the verses (quatrains) throughout the article were Omar's.

B. ADAMS.—Glad you were pleased with that reply, and glad to hear from another member of the same household. So you remember our announcing—all those years ago—that the *Freethinker* was going to appear and would be "a lively little cuss." "It has been that," you say, "and something much more." All my family join in sincere appreciation of your great services to the cause, and hope most earnestly that the Easter Offering will be what in justice to yourself it ought to be. Thanks.

ELECTRIC says: "I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have contributed something as a slight acknowledgment of the debt I owe you."

W. H. HICKS wishes us many years of health for what he is good enough to call our "good and noble work for the benefit of mankind."

W. J. RAMSEY.—Thanks for the full report of Mr. Hole's speech. wishes.—Mr. Foote is keeping well, and appreciates your good "np" in time for Shilling Month.

J. J. HARRIS.—See our reply in "Acid Drops."

V. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. T. WHITEHEAD.—See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." Glad to have your personal letter, and to know that you and your wife derive pleasure and instruction from the *Freethinker*. As for the bigots, they seem as sweet, amiable, and benevolent in your locality as they are elsewhere.

S. LESON.—We are sure you do wish us "long life and success."

A. G. LYE.—A very interesting letter. Could you get permission to let us publish the principal facts of the case?

E. HIRST says: "I have read the *Freethinker*—not merely taken it—for about ten years, and so far am I from tiring of it, that it seems to me to be getting better than ever."

Two private soldiers send a shilling each for Shilling Month and think every one of our readers should do the same at least. They thank us for "the benefit derived" from the *Freethinker*.

G. LANGRIDGE.—We quite understand that heaps of people hate the trouble of getting postal orders and writing letters. You yourself got your postal order weeks ago and have only just roused yourself to send it on. Of course it would be better if subscriptions could be collected personally, but our friends are so scattered that this is only possible in some places. Mr. R. Stirton acts as voluntary collector for the President's Fund at Dundee, for instance, and he forwards a respectable sum every quarter. Thanks for your hearty good wishes.

W. W. writes: "I bought a copy of the *Freethinker* last summer on Parliament Hill Fields (the day you spoke there). Since then I have never missed it, and find myself looking forward for every fresh issue."

JOHN WILCOX.—Pleased to hear from one who was a preacher of the gospel until he began to think and met with the *Freethinker*, of which he is now "a devoted lover." Very glad that your wife has become a Freethinker too. Thanks for your taking six copies of this journal weekly and giving them to persons who will read them. Your effort is bound to bear fruit. Shall be pleased to meet you at Aberdare.

R. STIRTON.—Sorry for the delay.

W. MOMBY.—N. S. S. sub. handed to Miss Vance. Thanks for letter, cuttings, etc. We will deal with the burial question as you desire, as soon as possible.

R. CROWTHER says: "I have taken the *Freethinker* ever since the cowards put you in prison, and the older I get the better I like it."

C. BROOKS.—Thanks for letter. Will notice in next week.

F. E. MONKS (Wigan).—You will find many South Lancashire "saints" present if you do attend the Liverpool lectures next Sunday.

M. E. CHAPMAN.—We have no particulars of Mr. Lloyd's lecture at Greenwich.

E. J. JONES.—Too late for this week. Next.

E. A. HAMMOND.—Mr. Foote is pleased to shake hands with any "saint" after his lectures. Introduce yourself.

EVAN JOHN.—We predicted the clerical nobbling of the Socialist movement more than fifteen years ago. It was bound to happen as soon as it promised to pay. Glad you liked our Swinburne article.

T. M. MOSLEY.—Will answer next week.

N. J. EVANS.—Our function is to insert Lecture Notices that reach us. We take no further responsibility.

J. G. AND E. SHEPHERD.—Your kind letter is too flattering.

MISS VANCE, Secretary, Secular Society, Ltd., acknowledges 10s. from F. N. W. and 10s. from Dovre towards the expenses of the Course of Lectures at St. James's Hall.

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.

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.

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.

Shilling Month.

FROM the day when this number of the *Freethinker* is actually published—Thursday, April 22—there is just a week and a day to the end of the month. This affords ample time for all who have not yet subscribed to respond to the present appeal. The rank-and-file of the Freethought party are not responding as they should. Hundreds of them could easily send a shilling or two—and some, of course, more. What I am asking myself is, Why don't they do it? I should be sorry to say, They don't because they won't. Yet, in the case of the majority of them, what am I to think? Apart altogether from the money, it will ease my mind, and encourage me in my work, if I see that they do care for the good of the cause; that, having been emancipated from the thralldom of superstition themselves, they are ready to help in knocking mental fetters off the minds of their less fortunate fellow-men. G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

There was a larger audience than ever at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening. A considerable number of people availed themselves of the "paid" seats in the balcony. Many strangers were present as before, and a gratifying proportion of ladies, who were not the least interested auditors. Unfortunately there was no music before the lecture, the lady pianist having suddenly been taken ill. Happily the lecturer was in fine voice and first-rate form. Mr. Foote's discourse on "God and Humanity" was followed with deep attention and enthusiastically applauded. Mr. V. Roger, who acted as chairman, successfully invited questions and discussion. Mr. Foote replied to several questioners and one lady opponent.

To-night's (April 25) lecture on "The Religion of Shakespeare" winds up the present St. James's Hall course. It is as near as possible to April 23—the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth and death. There ought to be a bumping audience. Mr. Foote will be lecturing on the greatest genius in the world's history, and he will do his utmost to make the lecture worthy of the occasion. Those who appreciate his dramatic readings will be glad to hear that he will render many illustrative selections from Shakespeare.

St. James's Hall has been secured for the Thomas Paine Celebration on June 8—the hundredth anniversary of the great reformer's death. This meeting is being organised by the National Secular Society, but it will be made as representative as possible, and various speakers have been invited to the platform. Their replies will probably furnish us with material for a fresh announcement next week. Meanwhile all London Freethinkers are requested to make a note of the date. St. James's Hall should be crowded on June 8.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held on Whit-Sunday at Liverpool. The business sessions, morning and afternoon, will take place in the Alexandra Hall. The evening public meeting will be held in the Tivoli Theatre. Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be sent in to the general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C., by May 8 at the latest. The financial year closes on April 30. Branches of the N. S. S. should be making arrangements to be represented at the Conference. Individual members from any part of the country will also be very welcome.

Mr. Foote lectures for the newly reorganised Liverpool Branch next Sunday (May 2). He hopes to see at the Alexandra Hall a big rally of the local "saints" bent on union and harmony under the old flag, and on a vigorous fight against superstition beneath its folds. He ventures to make a personal appeal to all in Liverpool who have any regard for him to join in this new movement of amity and enterprise. Mr. Foote's subjects will be: "The Moral Failure of Christianity" and "A Searchlight on the Bible." Alexandra Hall is not as large as the halls he has been lecturing in lately at Liverpool, so that those who want to secure seats at these lectures should provide themselves with tickets of admission (there can be no charge at the doors) forthwith. These are obtainable (1s. and 6d. each) of the Branch secretary, Mr. Chas. Daw, 57 Sunbury-road, Anfield; also of D. Spiers, 24 Kensington; T. Green, 202 Molyneux-road; G. Crooks, 153 Islington; D. Jones, 49 Grove-street; W. Johnson, 123 Empress-road; and J. Hammond, 99 Belmont-road.

We are asked to state that tea will be provided between Mr. Foote's afternoon and evening lectures in the Alexandra Hall at 8d. per head, for the convenience of visitors from a distance, who, by the way, should secure attendance tickets beforehand.

On the Saturday evening before Mr. Foote's lectures at Liverpool the new Branch is having a dinner at the Bee Hotel, St. John's lane. Time, 6 o'clock. Tickets 2s. 3d. each. Also obtainable of Mr. Daw. The dinner is a complimentary one to the President of the N. S. S., who will travel down earlier than usual in order to attend. There is also a prospect of Mr. F. Bonte being present as a guest.

"Saints" are applying for tickets for this dinner from all parts of South Lancashire, and as the limit of accommodation is 100 those who delay application may find it too late.

The West Ham Branch held a very successful "social" on Saturday evening, April 17, at the Forest-gate Public Hall. From 8 to 12 a large and happy party enjoyed songs, dances, games, recitations, and instrumental music—all contributed by members and friends.

Mr. Richard Green, the honored Mayor of King's Lynn, an open Freethinker, and an Englishman of the type that constitutes England's real greatness, sends us a cheque for the Shilling Month fund. Such a man's "best wishes and esteem" compensate us for a lot of the opposite sort of stuff.

The *Daily News* admitted, after Swinburne's funeral, that he was a Freethinker. It described him as "a singer matchlessly using a matchless language," and also as "rebellious, destructive, and pagan in his greatest days." Rebellious, destructive, and pagan are, of course, other words for Republican, Freethought, and Humanist.

The same number of the *Daily News* let the cat right out of the bag with regard to the trouble in Turkey. "We are in the presence," it said, "of no subtle or complicated movement, but simply of an uprising of the old-world, uneducated Turk against these free-thinking, Western-minded young men from Paris. That is why the clergy in the Chamber detested their Positivist Speaker, Ahmed Riza, and that is also why the Constantinople garrison imprisoned all the officers who had had a staff college education." Freethought reigns amongst the Young Turkey party. No wonder it astonished the world with its bloodless revolution—its wisdom, self-restraint, and large toleration.

A. D. M., an Australian "saint," writes: "I have just received my budget of letters and papers from 'down under.' One of the letters is from a small settlement on the River Murrumbidgee, about three hundred miles inland and far on the road to what the Antipodeans call 'the Never-Never Land.' The writer says: 'The Freethinkers you send are as welcome as a shower in drought-time. Out here in the back blocks it is the only news I ever get of what is going on in the Freethought world.' Another correspondent, a Welshman, who lives about eighty miles from Sydney, also expresses his keen appreciation of the *Freethinker*. He adds, rather pathetically: 'I often look back from this far-off place to poor old Wales, and wonder how she is getting on and when she is going to get rid of parson and Bible.' Perhaps our circulation is a good deal wider than many people imagine.

Mr. F. Bonte, author of that capital propagandist pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, which we should like to see even more widely circulated than it is, sends us a new view of a certain point. "I have noticed," he says in a letter to us, "some suggestion about cutting and stitching your paper. I prefer it as it is. Two can now read it together." This is an undesigned compliment. It implies a certain eagerness in getting at the contents of the *Freethinker*.

We have received several letters concerning the matter dealt with in the article on "Socialism and the Churches" in our last issue. We have no room for them this week, but we hope to print them all in our next issue.

Shilling Month.

FOURTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Figures after the names of subscribers indicate the number of shillings they send. No number means one shilling.

George Payne, 60; L. Himmel, 2; E. A., 2; A. D., 2; C. Masson, 2; T. McClure, 2; R. McKenzie; Richard Green, 20; B. Adams, 10; W. A. Yates, 2½; W. H. Hicks, 10; R. D. G.; Electric, 2½; H. S., 2; E. F. B., 20; F. W., 5; Samuel Deane, 2; H. M. Beattie; R. J. Henderson, 2; John Reid, 2; W. W., 5; J. J. Clark, 2; D. Cruickshank; John Wilcox, Senr., 5; Mrs. Wilcox, 2; John Wilcox, Junr.; Jos. Wilcox; Martha Wilcox; W. Davies; D. Williams; W. Coleman; B. Jones; E. Hirst, 4; G. Langridge, 8; A. G. Lye, 2½; T. N. Watts, 2½; W. Nuttall; T. Stringer; E. J. Baskerville, 5; W. D. Moore; S. Leeson, 5; A. J. R., 4; F. Bonte, 20; J. Chick, 21; Olive Bennett; A. Lea, 2; J. Chamber; J. R. 4; F. E. Monks, 3; (Miss) C. Brooks, Mother, and Brother, 3; Mrs. Robertson; S. Roberts, 2; R. Crowther and Friend, 2; J. B. B.; T. M. Mosley, 2½; E. A. Hammond, 2½; V. McLaren, 2; W. Mumby, 10; David Wild, 2; W. Bean, 2; H. Baker, 2; J. Thackray; B. Thackray; J. G. and S. Shephard, 5; M. Christopher, 2; Three Welshmen, 3; H. A. Lupton, 5; E. L. S., 10; R. Harrison, 2; "A Round Robin of the Fincken Family," collected by "Alec," 13.

Fighting the Enemy.

THE motion to exclude "the Authorised Version of the Holy Bible" from all the Public Libraries of Camberwell, appeared on the Agenda as a rather mysterious kind of resolution. It read as follows: "Notice of motion by Councillor Moss; Town Clerk to report." Well, a notice of that kind might mean anything or nothing, as it stood; but it certainly implied that there was something behind it that the Town Clerk did not want expressed in plain, cold print without first of all getting the sanction of the full Libraries Committee. To this, of course, I made no objection; indeed, I was quite willing to let the motion appear as the most "mysterious affair" possible, so that it might excite and startle the imaginations of my colleagues as much as possible. On Monday evening, February 15, the motion was duly reached, after all the other business was disposed of; and I opened fire by asking the Town Clerk to be good enough to read a letter I had addressed to him in relation to the notice of motion I had sent. He did not seem to relish the task, but he read it through carefully and deliberately, and when he had finished, I asked him how many chapters and verses I had quoted in order to demonstrate my point that the Bible contained passages which were either "immoral, indecent, or obscene, and the reading of which was calculated to corrupt and demoralise the minds of old and young alike." He would not commit himself to any definite number, but when I suggested that there might be fifty such references, he said it was quite possible that there might be such a number.

Permission having been given to me to move my resolution, I proceeded to open my case by the declaration that as that Committee had only recently excluded the *Freethinker*—a perfectly pure publication—from the tables of our Libraries, they could not wonder at my proposal to exclude the Bible, which contained such obviously indecent passages as those I had enumerated. In solemn tones, I informed them that if any person printed and published separately, apart from the Bible, the passages I had referred to in my communication, they would be liable, in this country, to fine and imprisonment under the present law. In America, I said, it had been decided that some of the passages in the Bible were obscene; and I told the story how a man, in order to test the question, had sent a number of postcards through the post containing some of these passages, and for his pains had been sent to gaol and fined heavily for the offence. And serve him right, too! I exclaimed. A man had no right to shield himself behind the Bible when he wanted to say things which were grossly indecent. Now, if they were prepared to admit that the Bible was an ancient book, written nobody knew when, where, or by whom; written, too, in an age of ignorance, and giving expression, often in very coarse and offensive language, to such ideas as were believed to be true in that age, then I could excuse much that I found in that volume; but if they maintained, as most of them did, that the Bible was the inspired word of a good God, I could find no excuse, but rather loathing and disgust, for such language as that which was to be found in various parts of this so-called Holy Book. In fact, there was a danger in circulating broadcast such a book as the Bible in its present unexpurgated condition, especially in putting it into the hands of children as a text-book in our public schools in order to give them "Simple Bible Teaching." Even the plays of Shakespeare were not published as they were written; many coarse passages were left out altogether, and when they were played the stage manager used the blue pencil pretty freely, so that no expression was used that would offend the sensitive tastes of the most fastidious amongst the audience. The writings of Shakespeare—which were purity itself compared with some passages from the Bible—were a little over three hundred years old, and yet we would not allow his

works to be circulated in an unexpurgated condition; then why should we allow the Bible, which was much older, and contained a multitude of the most grossly indecent passages, to be circulated broadcast, and also to find an important place in all our public libraries? It was ridiculous to suppose that young people did not know of these passages and read them; any of the members of that Committee who had attended Sunday-school in their youth must be aware of the fact that these were the very passages which some of the young men made it their business to search out and make known to others.

Well, that was the danger of putting the Bible into the hands of young people in its present unexpurgated condition. In conclusion, I called upon the clergyman member of the Committee, who was among the first to condemn the *Freethinker*, and who was a paid representative of Christianity, to defend this so-called Sacred Book from the grave charge I had brought against it. He did not do so, however, when he had an opportunity. He simply remained silent and let these passages go undefended.

My motion, having been duly seconded, was then thrown open for discussion, but there was not a single Christian among all the members present who was prepared to defend the "Holy Bible" from the very serious charge that it contained passages which were either "indecent, immoral, or obscene," and which were "calculated to corrupt the minds of all who read it—old or young." I had deliberately left out all mention of the Douay version of the Bible because I had hoped to get the support of my Roman Catholic colleague to my motion; but all sections of the Christian faith unite when their religion is attacked, and I was, consequently, not much surprised to find that my Roman Catholic friend and colleague was the first to rise and move "that we proceed to the next business," directly I sat down. The effect of this action, of course, was that my motion was not discussed at all, and that the Committee almost unanimously voted that we should "proceed to next business," which was that we should say "good evening" and go home.

Thus we see that while Christians are prepared to cry out that Freethinkers are indecent when they merely venture to criticise a coarse passage from a daily paper, they are not prepared to defend the coarse and grossly indecent passages contained in their own book—the so-called sacred volume, the Bible. My next step to get the Council to express "its emphatic disapproval of the high-handed and bigoted action of the Libraries Committee in excluding the *Freethinker* from all the libraries," was reported at the time accurately, and at some length, in these columns. The matter was also fully reported in four local journals, which circulate over the whole length and breadth of South London. And so, from the point of view of publicity, everything was done to let the public know what the fight was all about and to show there was one Borough Councillor at least, in London, who was prepared to defend a Freethought journal from injustice at the hands of Christian bigots, even though he had to fight against overwhelming odds. Naturally, some attributed my action to very paltry motives; others, on the other hand, gave me credit for good intentions. The *Camberwell and Peckham Times* said:—

"Councillor Moss had what Americans call "a boss chance" at Wednesday's Council, and took it with both hands. The impassioned orator, demanding freedom of thought, sacred or secular, proved himself a first-class advertising agent, and has probably assured a record sale for a journal which, in the ordinary way, is not in overwhelming demand at the bookstalls."

This writer, however, knows nothing whatever about the demand for the *Freethinker* at the bookstalls. For all he knows to the contrary, the *Freethinker* is in as good demand as any other publications of the same price at the bookstalls; and if it is not, it is not because the articles it contains are not written by brilliant writers, and are not full of excellent matter and trenchant criticisms—it is because the people, on the whole, are too ill-informed, and their

minds are so worm-eaten by old prejudices and superstition that they have not the courage to purchase a copy to test its value for themselves. The main thing, however, is the fact that the *Freethinker* is to be found on the bookstalls,* as one day, I hope, it will be found on the tables of all Public Libraries; and I sincerely hope the day is not far distant when the masses of the people will be enlightened enough to read this journal and study the origin and evolution of religious beliefs, and that careful thought and just reasoning will ultimately lead to the emancipation of their minds from an ancient and cruel superstition. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Father Dooley on "What Every Woman Knows."

HECH, mon. Ah've weetnussed tha pairforrumance, whatever.

Eh, what? Ye can't make out what I'm talkin' about? I'm spakin' Scots, begorra.

Ye don't understand Scots? To tell ye the plain truth, neither do I; but it's to the Duke of York's Theatre that I've been; and after listening all the evening to the broad Scots, I come back to the English "wi' deeficulty."

Ye're surprised that a religious should attend a theatre? But it's a special dispensation that Father Rooney and I have got, so that we may study the wickedness of the age at first hand. Father Rooney said we must see a play by J. M. Barrie, called *What Every Woman Knows*; because it was the latest production of the kail-yard, or coal-yard, school of literature, and because he was informed it contained an entirely new interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Sure, it's myself that has no wish to learn what every woman knows, except in the proper way of confession; and it's myself that isn't concerned with interpretations of Scripture that are not given out by the Blessed Catholic Church; so I asked Mr. Pelissier what every woman knows, and he replied that it was how to keep her hat on straight; and if I wanted any further information I had better take a jar of his potted plays. But it's mistaken he must have been, for when I put the same question to Mrs. O'Hara she said: "Fudge! What every woman knows is that the way to a man's heart is through his Little Mary." Therefore Father Rooney and I had to go to the theatre to find out all about it.

Was it an exciting play? I should think it was. The first thing we had was a burglary. The burglar climbed in through the window of a Scotch house, lit the gas, took a book out of the bookcase, bent the covers back so as to break the binding, laid the thing flat on the table, put his dirty paw upon it; and then drew out a sheet of paper and began copying the details of the life-history of the *papilio machaon*, or swallow-tailed butterfly.

What d'ye say? A queer sort of burglar? Ye're right. But he wasn't a real burglar. He was a Scottish student of divinity.

Ye needn't repeat after me "A Scottish divinity student," for I see ye don't understand the manners and customs of the Scots nation. It seems that in Scotland when a man feels a call to prepare for the Protestant ministry he doesn't waste his time and money by going to any college. He finds out which of his neighbors has the best library. Then he climbs into his neighbor's house at midnight, turns on his neighbor's gas, and studies his books until the morning. So that the neighbor pays for the books, and pays for the gas as well. Sure, it's a real canny way they have of doing things in bonny Scotland.

Ye'll observe that all this is done in strict accordance with the Sacred Scriptures; for if ye turn to

* This is unfortunately not true. We wish the *Freethinker* were on the bookstalls. If it were, we should not care twopence—that is to say, financially—whether it were in the Free Libraries or not.—EDITOR.

the tenth chapter of the Blessed Gospel of St. John, ye'll find that the True Teacher comes in at the door; but the False Teacher climbs over the wall and gets in at the window; and that was exactly what John Shand did, because he intended to preach the schisms and heresies of Protestantism, instead of the true doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church. Therefore he came in as a thief and a robber, whose own the sheep are not.

But on this occasion the student for the ministry got found out by the Wylie family, who were the owners of the house; and at first they were angry. However, after putting him through the Westminster Catechism, and learning what minister he sat under, and the Sabbath-school he taught in, they called for whisky and drank his health, and offered to strike a bargain with him. In fact, they offered to advance three hundred pounds to pay the expenses of his education, provided he married their daughter Mahggie at the end of five years. Ye could see it was a hard struggle; but John Shand had a good look at Mahggie, and decided to take the risk. Then her father said: "Ah maun tell ye wan thing about Mahggie. She's thairty-five." And before John Shand could reply, Mahggie jumped up and added: "Ye'll no' be mahrying me oonder onny fau'se preetences, John. Ah'm no' thairty-five; Ah'm thairty-seex." Yet after the two lovers had gone out, to say good-bye under the doorstep (which it appears is the custom in Scotland, as well as in England and Ireland), the one brother remarked to the other: "It was richt noable o' Mahggie to oan oop ta bein' thairty-seex; boot Ah aye thocht her thairty-saiven." (Curtain.)

I asked Father Rooney if he knew what the studies of the Scotch heretics consisted in; because the book that John Shand was studying was all about butterflies.

"How did ye know it was about butterflies?" queried Father Rooney.

"I could see the pictures in the book," said I.

"It's the keen eye ye have, Misther Dooley," remarked Father Rooney; "ye should have been a recording angel, and not a simple priest at all. But while ye're talking, the time is passing; and we shall be losing our refreshment."

So we walked into the bar, and I called for Irish whisky, and they brought us Scotch; but Father Rooney wouldn't hear of their changing it; for he pointed out we were witnessing a Scotch play, and it was only a polite compliment to Scotland to drink Scotch whisky.

When the curtain went up again, it appeared that John Shand had changed his mind; and instead of going in for the ministry he had gone in for politics. He began with being a burglar, and ended with being a politician.

What's that ye say? Ye can see no moral difference between a thief and a politician? Neither can I, my son—neither can I. But let me get on with my story. It was six years since the last scene; and it was the night after the election in the borough of Cowcuddles; and John Shand had made up his mind to marry Mahggie immediately after the result was announced; for he had been running for Parliament as a Woman's Suffrage candidate. Presently we heard a great shouting and running. The doors burst open, and in burst the crowd, yelling out: "Hooraw! Hooraw! Hooraw! John Shand's elaicit wi' a majaurity o' twa' hundred an' aichty-fower. Hooraw! Voats far weemen. Hooraw!" They demanded a speech from the successful candidate, who jumped up on a counter, and began: "Fellow-cetizens o' Cowcuddles: Tha graundest wurrd in oor common Scots language is the wurrd LEE-BARTTY. (Loud applause.) Leebartty has been tha preevilege o' aivery Scotsman sin' the graun'day whan ma glorious ancestor, King John, signed the Mahgna Charrata ahint tha Bannockburrin. (The-mendous applause at the mention of Bannockburn.) Boot Ah hav' somewhat ta tell ye. Ah'm about ta lose ma leebartty. (Never, never!) It's true, ma fren's; far Ah'm a-goin' ta be mahried. (Loud

cheers, and cries of 'Whaur's tha leddie?') She's sittin' amang ye the noo." And then, with frantic excitement, they raised Mahggie on a chair. She seized John's right hand with her left; and while the shouts went up, the curtain came down.

We had some more Scotch whisky, and I said to Father Rooney: "It's a great play, but I can't see any fresh interpretation of the Holy Scripture, nor any explanation of what it is that every woman knows."

"Ye're such an impatient gossoon," said Father Rooney. "I expect ye'll have to wait until the last scene, and then ye'll know as much as anybody."

The next thing we saw was John Shand at his fine house in London, where he had become the mouth-piece in Parliament of the Imperial Association for the Promotion of Woman's Sufferings.

What d'ye say? Wasn't it Woman's Suffrage? Ye're right. It *was* Woman's Suffrage. I'm obliged to ye for correcting me.

Now, John had acquired a reputation as a great orator; but, like most great orators, his speeches were all made up at home beforehand. He thought they were all his own; but, as a matter of fact, the best parts in them were composed for him by Mahggie on the typewriter. Unfortunately, however, John had fallen in love with one of the Suffering Ladies—I mean, one of the Suffrage Ladies. (It's a most distressing thing that they cannot keep such incidents out of stage-plays.) He was just explaining to this lady how much he loved her, and how she inspired the best parts in his speeches, when who should come in but old Wylie, his father-in-law; and then there *was* a row. Old Wylie told him, among other things, that he would have no chance in politics if he got mixed up with any scandal.

"Ye'll ruin your caree-err. Ye'll naiver be re-electit far your auld consteetency," he said.

"What do Ah care far ma auld consteetency?" responded John. "They canna keep *me* oot o' Pairlament. There are hoondreds o' consteetencies, boot on'y *wan* John Burrans."

But Mahggie behaved very nicely about it. She said she was quite ready to go back to Scotland with father, only she could not start yet, because the washing hadn't come home. So she suggested that John should go into the country for a fortnight to prepare his great speech, for he had a scheme to raise a big debate on Woman's Suffrage with a rousing speech that should bring the Government to its knees—at least, that was what the world was to think. As a matter of fact, however, it was all a got-up job between John Shand and the Cabinet. The Government of the day wanted to see whether the time was ripe for Female Suffrage, and therefore John Shand was to bring his motion to a division, and find out how many members were prepared to vote with him. If there was a good number, the Government was to bring in its own Bill; but if the Female Franchise got little support, then the Government would know that it was quite safe to drop it. Therefore, John Shand went off into the country for a fortnight to revise and prepare his great speech, and he took the Suffrage Lady with him to inspire the thrilling passages.

"It's giving away the Cabinet secrets they are," said Father Rooney, as we had another Scotch whisky together. "The silly public doesn't realise that all these sudden political crises that are sprung upon it have been carefully planned and arranged between the leaders of the parties weeks before."

Accordingly, the last scene showed us a house in the country, where Mahggie had come down to see how John was getting along with the Suffrage Lady. They hadn't got on. After ten days' association, each one loathed the other. And as for John's great speech, that was in a hopeless condition, in spite of the Suffrage Lady's inspiration. Mahggie had rather expected this, and so she had come prepared with a carefully typewritten speech of her own composing; but, by some mistake, the speech got

first into the hands of a Cabinet Minister who happened to be staying in the same house.

John was rather glad to see Mahggie again, and immediately started on the subject of that speech of his. For ten days he had labored at it, but all his old ability had deserted him. The Cabinet Minister who was staying in the same house said he had never read a flatter or duller oration than the one submitted to him. It did not contain a single brilliant line or a single spark of humor, and would never arouse the slightest enthusiasm in the House of Commons or out of it. But just as he was in the deepest despair, who should rush in but the Cabinet Minister, with Mahggie's edition of the speech in his hand.

"I congratulate ye, Mr. Shand. I felicitate ye. Ye have surpassed yourself. Your genius has soared again into his own ethereal bounds. Ye have improved your speech out of knowledge. It has all the old masterly touches that thrill us in Parliament. If I hadn't seen your first draft I could never believe it to be the same speech. See how much better everything reads now. Take your simile about the flowing tide. In your first draft it ran: 'Gentlemen, we are told we are in face of a flowing tide. Then we are bound to get wet.' Why, sir, that was piffle—absolute piffle. But how do you put it now? 'Gentlemen, we are told we are in face of a flowing tide. I say *Dam* the flowing tide.' Excellent, sir! Excellent! After such a speech as that I am bound to offer ye a seat in the Cabinet; and if ye can continue to deliver speeches like that, there is nothing that can stop ye from rising to be the Prime Minister of England."

John Shand, very naturally, was dumbfounded; and, after the Cabinet man had gone away, Mahggie had to own up, and confess that it was she who had been in the habit of sandwiching in the finer passages of John's speeches, and leading him to believe that he had invented them himself; and so there was nothing left for him to do but acknowledge that he'd been a great idiot, and that he would be obliged to give Mahggie her proper value in the future.

"There's on'y *wan* mair thing ye can do far me, Mahggie," said he, "and that is to explain to me why it is that a Scotsman can naiver see a joke."

"Ah!" she said, "That's a secret. The reason is hidden from man, but it's *what every woman knows*."

"But won't ye tell it me, Mahggie? Ye know that there are two great laws of nature. The first is that no woman can keep a secret, and the second one is that no Scotsman can ever see a joke."

"Then I'll try and make ye perceive a joke for the first time in your life," says she. "Of what was the first woman made?"

"I've read in the Book of Genesis," said John Shand, "that she was made out of the rib of the man."

"That's where ye have the wrong interpretation," says Mahggie. "The Rev. John Tuckwell, has discovered that the Hebrew word does not mean 'rib,' but it means 'funny-bone.' So that explains why it is that the man can never see a joke."

"But why?"

"Because he has lost his *humerus*."

John Shand pondered earnestly for several seconds. Then a new light broke on him. He could actually see the joke; and he fell flat on the stage and laughed till he fairly roared. And the curtain descended for the last time.

What's that ye're saying? Ye don't think it was much of a joke? Perhaps not. Perhaps the Irish mind cannot rise to the subtleties of the Scottish joke.

There's one awful thing that I'd point out to ye, however, and that is that the modern Scotchman actually makes jests at Holy Writ. It used to be said that Scotland had given up worshipping God, and had taken to worshipping the Bible. But ye see that nowadays even the worship of the Bible is being abandoned; and infidelity will soon be the sole religion of the Scottish people.

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.

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, W.). 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Forest Gate Public (Lower) Hall, Woodgrange-road): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Beyond the Grave—What?" Selections by the Band.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, R. H. Rossetti, "Christianity before Christ."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15, J. Marshall, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Christian Foreign Missions. An Exposure of a Gigantic Swindle."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "A Picnic of Blackguards in the Kingdom of God."

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (the Mound); 6.30, a Lecture.

JOSEPH BATES' EAST ANGLIAN MISSION.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Bargate Green, Sunday, April 25, at 3.30, "God's Imprint: or, Does Nature Substantiate the Design Argument?"

KIRTON: Near the Church, Tuesday, April 27, at 7.30, "Tempora mutata Nos et mutatur in Illis?" ("What has the Immediate Future in Store?")

SKEGNESS: Thursday, April 29, at 3, "The Revelations of the Bible versus the Revelations of Science."

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