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Unhappy is the man to whom his own mother has not made all other mothers venerable.—RICHTER.

DEATH OF GEORGE MEREDITH. And Smaller Matters.

My readers and I are on friendly terms. I do not write for the British public, for I am not interested in the things that delight its soul. I write for a small circle of readers whom I can address in quite a personal way when necessary. And such an occasion now presents itself.

After seeing last week's *Freethinker* through the press I set about fulfilling an old intention to secure a little rest and change before tackling the N. S. S. Conference, which always throws a lot of extra work upon me. The winter has been a long one, and I have found it full of labor; moreover, mine is a seven-days-a-week task, and the only leisure I get is what I make; so I determined to get right away from the office, and also from home, where my books and papers are, and where work is always awaiting me. Accordingly I made tracks for Brighton, which is just near enough to London to be accessible on Tuesday, and just far enough away to deter one from running up on any other day. Happily I had my best friend with me—my wife; for the very first thing I did after leaving home was to catch the most abominable cold I have had for many years. It made me feel mean and miserable; it stupefied me. I was good for nothing except the crematorium. I wished I had never left home; and, indeed, I would not have done so if I had known that winter was coming back with such sudden violence.

Having succeeded in getting that abominable cold a bit under control by Monday, I was looking forward to attacking Tuesday's special work with a somewhat revived interest, when I experienced a throw-back at seeing the newspaper report of the serious illness of George Meredith. He was an old man, and he was bound to die some time; of course I knew that, as I am well acquainted with many other platitudes. But the world will never be quite the same to me again, with George Meredith out of it. Some may think I am not a philosopher to say so. Well, I never aimed at that dignity. I prefer to be human. I know what I love, and I feel what I lose. Some who knew what my feelings were towards George Meredith will understand that Tuesday morning's news of his death is not a tonic for me in my present condition. They will also understand that I am not in a position to write the article I should write on the passing of so great a figure; a lofty genius, a consummate master of the English tongue, a Freethinker from first to last, and in the best and highest sense of the words a poet of Humanity—with his face over turned, not sadly but gladly, to the dawn of the new day of human reason and earthly hope.

No, I cannot write as I should for this week's *Freethinker*. I cannot write it to-day. I am not well enough, as I have said; and all my books and papers are at home, which I shall not see again until

the end of the week. Besides, I am not in the desperate hurry of a hired journalist. I am not bound to splutter observations over George Meredith's dead body before it is in the coffin. What I have to say should be said with care—and it shall be said so.

It is curious how things happen in this mutable world. Only three weeks ago, in a letter to George Meredith, I said that I promised myself the pleasure of doing a series of articles on his works, and especially on his poems, during the early summer. I should have liked him to read those articles, and I believe they would have given him pleasure; for they would have come from the head and heart of one writing not merely as a literary critic, but as a fighter for liberty and progress who had found nourishment and stimulus in the Master's writings.

The daily papers, and in their turn the weeklies, will be printing endless articles on George Meredith. They never understood him, but they were obliged to admit his greatness,—or at least his size. Not a word will they say (any more than in the case of Swinburne) about his Freethought. It would pain their writers, as well as their readers, to state that he put Humanity in the place of God, and the life of mankind in the place of personal immortality. It would be absolutely shocking to state that he actually sent a cheque, a few weeks ago, towards supporting the "wicked" *Freethinker*. I happen to have his letter in my pocket-book. It was dated April 23 (Shakespeare's Day!), and I daresay it was one of the last things he wrote with his own hand. Even the address on the envelope is in his own writing. It was a matter he thought it best to see to himself. His name, he told me, as well as his cheque, was at my disposal. For which I was both glad and sorry: sorry because it might be made an annoyance to him by the bigots,—and glad because of the high calm courage he displayed in ignoring them. For, after all, it will be admitted, some day or other, I am perfectly confident, that the greatest living master of English literature did an intrepid thing in associating his name with that of one so truly hated and so affectedly despised as myself. It more than compensated for a thousand insults and outrages. A line, a word, from George Meredith, set in one scale; and all the calumnious falsehoods about my life and work in the other,—including my illiteracy and my "garbage"; and the one scale falls promptly to the ground, while the other dangles ignominiously in the air.

There was a postscript to that last letter from Mr. George Meredith (I have had others) which referred to the action of Mr. Watts-Dunton in regard to Swinburne's funeral. I had reminded George Meredith that he might not agree with me, and Mr. Watts-Dunton was a personal friend of his, which involved the possession of good qualities; but his action in regard to Swinburne's funeral was a public matter on which I had a right of public criticism. George Meredith replied: "Watts-Dunton, as I have to suppose, was ill and feeble at the time of the funeral." Evidently something had to be supposed. But the worst is that Mr. Watts-Dunton's illness and feebleness have persisted. He has thanked the vicar of Bonchurch for the "magnificent" way in which he obtruded pious nonsense at an Atheist's burial.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and Psychology.—II.

(Continued from p. 307.)

THE utter uselessness of taking any person's version of his or her mental experiences as affording any proof of a supernatural influence, is clearly indicated in the case of witchcraft. Here we have a once universal belief, and on behalf of the reality of which as much evidence has been furnished as has been forthcoming for any item of religious belief. The wisest have testified to its reality. The accused themselves have admitted their intercourse with diabolic powers. Others have been "bewitched" into various disorders, and manifested the symptoms usual in such cases. Yet to-day, amongst educated people, the belief is dead beyond the possibility of a resurrection. Religious people accept the purely scientific explanation of the existence of the belief, and account for the self-conviction of people as being due to mere suggestion acting on uninformed minds in an unenlightened age. If the general belief of people concerning certain cases of alleged diabolic possession can be shown to be wrong, why should we place any greater reliance upon their belief in theocratic possession? May it not be that just as they were mistaken in the one instance so we are to-day attributing to "divine influence" the operation of purely physiological and psychological processes?

I do not mean by this that all religion begins with, and rests upon, the same basis as the self-accusation of a "witch"; the religious belief must, in fact, be in existence before such interpretations of mental states—normal and morbid—can be given. But once we have the religious interpretation of nature in existence, then it is unquestionable that it is kept alive, in the teeth of advancing knowledge, by a misreading of subjective phenomena as well as by those of a purely physiological character. And even when certain special phenomena, hitherto associated with religion, have had their real nature explained, religious belief is still left the gainer by the long association.

Dr. Cutten properly divides the psychological phenomena associated with Christianity into the normal and the morbid; but the full influence of morbid states on religion in general is not nearly sufficiently recognised. Let us consider, for instance, the full value of the fact that, with unenlightened people, insanity, epilepsy, and nervous disorders in general are assigned a spiritual cause. So long as this belief obtains there is a patent, indisputable proof before all. Even of so developed a people as the Greeks Emanuel Deutsch says:—

"There is a peculiar something supposed to inhere in epilepsy. The Greeks called it a sacred disease. Bachantic and Chorybantic fervor were god-inspired stages. The Pythia uttered her oracles under the most distressing signs. Symptoms of convulsions were even needed as a sign of the divine."³

Dr. Howden, for some years medical superintendent of the Montrose Lunatic Asylum, points out the close connection between epilepsy and religious exaltation; and Dr. Ireland, in his interesting work, *The Blot upon the Brain*, has gathered together an instructive collection of instances showing the same connection. How easily a religious interpretation may be placed upon mental states that have their basis in epilepsy is to be seen by Dr. Maudesley's description of its characteristic symptoms:—

"The state of the blood has a most direct affect upon the functions of the sensory ganglia. Too much blood, as is well known, gives rise to subjective sensations, such as flashes of light before the eyes and roaring in the ears; but it is not so generally known that when the abnormal action reaches a certain intensity, movements responsive to, or sympathetic with, the hallucination, may take place.....The patient's senses are possessed with hallucinations, his ganglionic central cells being in a state of what may be called convulsive action; before the eyes are blood-red flames of fire..... the ears are filled with a terrible roaring noise.....the

smell is perhaps one of sulphurous stinging, and the desperate and violent actions are the convulsive reactions to such fearful hallucinations."

I need hardly point out how inevitably, with an environment that suggests a religious interpretation of phenomena, the uninformed mind will translate such experiences as being due to supernatural influence.

The degree to which a mistaken interpretation of disordered physiological conditions has bolstered up the sense of divine or diabolic influence could be illustrated by hundreds of cases from St. Paul to Evan Roberts. A very striking case is, however, furnished in the case of Martin Luther. When quite a young man he complained of frequent attacks of earache, toothache, giddiness, and a feeling as though "there was some wind tearing through my head." He explains that "the Devil had something to do with it." He complains that the Devil drives him from his bed, makes noises through the night to keep him from sleeping, enters into long discussions with him, and in his old age explains that the cause of his decay is due to "the blows of Satan." It is surely not straining the case to say that in Luther's case, as in the case of many others, the sense of his being under the direct guidance of God was not a little due to his mistaking a purely pathological condition for a supernatural influence. Maudesley has well said:—

"The supernatural powers which were thought to possess and constrain the mind are.....plainly no more than its natural nervous substrata engaged in disordinate, abnormal, or, so to speak, unnatural functions.....The painstaking researches of pathology tend steadily to supersede an awe-stricken and impotent admiration of the supernatural in this its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that, in the extremest ecstasies, there is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of the possession of the individual by an external power. What there truly is is a *psycholepsy*."

And Dr. Cutten properly says:—

"Since we are able both to produce and cure demoniacal possession in our laboratories, it hardly seems necessary to invoke the aid of demons to furnish an explanation, especially when we can give a better one without it. The disaggregation of consciousness, or a split in personality, with an insistent idea in the secondary consciousness, is all that science needs to-day to furnish a case of demoniacal possession as wild and fiendish as the most fastidious could wish."

Quite so; one can only regret that Dr. Cutten is not equally clear and informing upon the belief in theocratic possession. For both rest upon exactly the same basis. In each case we have a misreading of normal or abnormal mental states in terms of religious belief. The belief that man is influenced by demons no longer exists because the belief in demons is dead in educated circles; the belief that man is influenced by the "spirit of God" still exists, even though it rests upon no better or stronger foundation.

Dr. Cutten's chapters on Revivals, Religious Epilepsies, Conversions, and Sex, may be taken together, since they are all connected, and will all serve to illustrate the same aspect of the subject. At this point, too, one may raise a protest against the author's irritating habit of speaking of "religious forces," as though they were distinct from others. This, of course, assumes the whole point in dispute. Personally I deny that any "religious forces" exist. There are physical forces, biological forces, social forces, etc.; but what are the "religious forces"? What examination shows is normal and natural forces given a religious cover and a religious explanation. This is all; and one may say of this as Dr. Cutten does of demoniacal possession, there is no need to invoke the aid of religion to furnish an explanation of a particular phenomenon, especially when we can give a better one without it, and when we see the same phenomenon unconnected with religion. It has already been seen how much of the sense of communion with a supernatural is due to mental states induced by fasting, obsession by a particular

³ *Literary Remains*, p. 83.

idea, or by simple suggestion. What remains to be seen is that the phenomena of religious conversion is in the same way a distortion of normal social feelings that may, by misdirection, often become abnormal.

First of all, it is obvious that a great deal of the phenomena of revivals and of conversions may be put down to the simple power of sympathetic suggestion. In his *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, Hecker calls attention to the influence of imitation, not merely in religion, but in other directions as well. The famous Dancing Mania of the Middle Ages is a case in point. Here we have large numbers of people, children as well as adults, who traversed the entire length of a country, dancing until they sank into a state of exhaustion, the movement taking all the characteristics of a disease. In another case, cited by Hecker, a girl employed in a cotton works in Lancashire was thrown into a fit caused by another girl having placed a mouse in her bosom. She continued in the most violent convulsions for twenty-four hours. By some means the idea was aroused that the girl was the victim of a disease introduced by the cotton. The next day several more girls were seized with convulsions. Then the patients became more numerous, until it was ascertained that the complaint was in nowise connected with the cotton, when it subsided as quickly as it had arisen. In another case a woman was seized with an epileptic fit while in church. At once several people began to complain of palpitation, faintness, and passed into a motionless and apparently cataleptic state. Here again the attacks assumed the nature of an epidemic. Medical records are filled with such cases, although when they do not appear in direct connection with religion they are treated for what they are. Change some of the circumstances, let the exciting cause be of a religious order, and causes of exactly the nature will provide us with the sense of religious conviction and all the attendant paraphernalia of evangelical religion.

In more recent years Gustave Le Bon has added to our understanding of the subject by his study of the psychology of crowds. He has pointed out that with crowds certain elements of suggestibility are brought into strong operation, that with individuals are held in abeyance. A crowd is impulsive, mobile, and irritable. All the more primitive qualities of human nature, good and bad, are brought into operation. It is quick to receive and act upon suggestions, even of the most ridiculous character. Its imagination is excited, while its reason is depressed. In a crowd the individual may be raised above, or depressed below, his normal level. All depends upon the nature of the suggestion to which he is exposed. But in general,

"he possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images—which would be entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd—and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best known habits."

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The Intellectual Plane.

THE brain is a most mysterious structure, and the more thoroughly we investigate it the more inscrutable it becomes. Physiologically it is simply the culmination of the nervous system, the largest and most important nerve-centre, while functionally it is the organ of sensation and thought. At first the brain was only so much skin which, enveloped by the other cells, gradually developed into a feeling and thinking machine. How it feels and thinks we cannot tell. All we know is that apart from it intelligence does not seem to exist. If this is true, it follows

that the notion of an independent entity called soul, or spirit, or mind cannot be entertained. It is the testimony of both experience and observation that the nervous system is the seat of self-consciousness, and of all vital manifestations. Plato regarded the "conscious soul" as a foreigner imprisoned in the body for a season; as a musician doomed to play upon a wretchedly imperfect instrument, in punishment, no doubt, of some sin committed in a previous existence; as a thinker whose "intercourse with the body" hindered him "from gaining truth and wisdom." To understand the real nature of the soul, said that greatest of metaphysicians, "we must look at it, not, as we are now doing, after it has been marred by its association with the body, and by other evils; but we must carefully contemplate it by the aid of reasoning, where it appears in unsullied purity; and then its surpassing beauty will be discovered." But all this is pure speculation absolutely insusceptible of verification. Not only is there no proof that the soul existed prior to its alleged union with the body, there is not even the shadow of evidence that soul and body are two distinct entities living together in temporary wedlock.

When we say that man has a mind, or an intellect, all we mean is that he is an intelligent, thinking being. All knowledge must reach him through his bodily senses, and all wisdom is gained by experience. Locke's famous saying, "There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses," is as true to-day as it was two hundred years ago. Leibnitz imagined that by ingeniously adding, "except the mind itself," he finally discredited Locke's philosophy. But in the light of later science the addition to the original dictum looks ridiculous. What Locke meant was that there are no such things as innate ideas. We are not born in possession of knowledge of any kind. There is nothing in the brain except the capacity to receive and reflect upon communications from the senses; and all the senses are purely physical. As far as knowledge, ideas, and judgments are concerned the brain of an infant is like a sheet of white paper.

In a sermon that appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth* for May 12, Mr. Campbell dwelt on "Life's Unanswered Questions." According to him the unanswered questions are these three, Whence? Whither? and Why? "The truth is," said this preacher, "that of the sources of your being you know nothing." Then he took the future and said:—

"As you get older the list of those whom you have known and loved who have passed into the great silence becomes longer and longer. Where have they gone? You cannot tell. Is that the end of them and of the joyful fellowship so rudely interrupted? Some say, Yes, and some say, No; but united, unequivocal testimony there is none."

Then he turned to the possible reason for existence, and observed:—

"Why is it? Here we are as much at fault as ever. There are many voices trying to tell us what men feel, guess, or speculate as to the purpose, if purpose there be, of this ceaseless flux of worlds and living beings; but has the last word been spoken yet? Has even the first been spoken? Have any or all of our moralisings, religious and philosophic systems, teachers, preachers, and seers succeeded in laying bare the goal of this stupendous output of energy? Are there not many minds filled with the misgiving that, perhaps, after all, there may be no goal whatever, that the Universe is but a shapeless hulk drifting through raging storms upon a limitless ocean, with no harbor to steer for and no hand to steer? Yes, there are, and such minds are not the least worthy of their kind. The mightiest thinker that ever lived can throw no light upon the existence of a black beetle or a cobra, much more upon the cosmos itself or the destiny of the individual man."

Those two extracts might have fallen from the lips or the pen of a Freethinker or Secularist. The preacher frankly confessed that no one has any knowledge whatever to impart on the mysterious subject of existence. We cannot tell whence it came, whither it goeth, or why it is at all. What has become of the Bible revelation? What has happened to the

Christian Gospel? In the above extracts they are utterly ignored, as they so richly deserve to be. "Upon the intellectual plane," admitted the preacher, the problems of the Universe are absolutely insoluble. Then he quoted Omar's impressive lines:—

"There was the Door to which I found no key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see;
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME."

"In the way of positive knowledge upon the intellectual plane," the preacher told his hearers, "the great majority of you would have to say, Not proven." But is there any other plane upon which positive knowledge is obtainable? In the sermon under consideration Mr. Campbell mentions none, although in the last half of it he speaks as if he actually possessed such knowledge. He refers to God in familiar terms, and to Jesus's doctrine of God, as if he really believed it. Indeed, he talks as if he positively knew what he declares "the mightiest thinker that ever lived" neither did nor could know. Are we to infer from this that the minister of the City Temple claims to be the proud possessor of a positive knowledge which has been consistently withheld from the world's mightiest thinkers? Logically, no other inference is possible; and from other sermons and books of his we learn that he does pretend to be able to explain the whence, whither, and why of all things. He declares that God made the Universe, and that his object in making it was to express himself. He also implies that God's attempt at self-expression must have been at least a partial failure, for he adds: "God is getting at something, and we must help him." He even proclaims his faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, and avers that physical science implies it. "Perhaps this would be news to Professor Ray-Lankester, and such as he," naively he adds: "but I think I could convince them that I am right if I had them face to face." Even in the discourse now under review we come upon this strange utterance: "Whence came you? Let us leap to the highest and answer, 'From God, who is our home.' Whither go you? Towards that which you have never left." He is equally positive in dealing with the "why." "Why, but that God has set you to work out what you are, and return to that whence you set out, bearing with you the fruit of your pilgrimage." If that is not positive knowledge, it is reckless speculation and rank folly. That it is not knowledge is clear from the following: "Our ears have been stopped and our eyes closed for a little while to the beauty and glory of heaven, only let us be faithful to what that heaven is whispering to our hearts." That may be high mysticism, but it is a contradiction in terms, and disgusts the lovers of clear thinking.

We confidently assert that there is no plane upon which knowledge is obtainable other than the intellectual. Knowledge is understanding, information, intelligence, and it can be acquired only by the reason. Now, the New Theologians assume the existence of an immanent and transcendent God of Love because they discern the presence of Good Will in mankind. The position of orthodox divines is perfectly intelligible, however irrational. They fall back upon the authority of a Biblical "Thus saith the Lord" in defence of their otherwise impossible creed. As the late Dean Mansel said, in effect: "Theology is contrary to reason; but we have the infallible Word of God for it, and must believe it." The New Theologians, however, simply infer their doctrine of Eternal Love from the by no means universal exhibition of Good Will among men. Mr. Campbell went down to Brighton and met a dying old man who walked a long distance, and waited two hours for an opportunity merely to wish the great preacher well. Mr. Campbell is fully aware that there are thousands of British Christians who cherish anything but Good Will towards him, and who take positive delight in villifying Freethinkers. Indeed, we are sorrowfully obliged to confess that in the human world Ill Will is almost as common as Good Will. Would it not be as reasonable for us to assume

the existence of a Malevolent Being, well-nigh omnipotent, as it is for Mr. Campbell to see in the Good Will of his admirers a token of an all-loving God?

In reality, the Good Will, of which so much is made by sentimental divines, is a social asset slowly acquired during a million years of evolution; and there is by no means a sufficient amount of it yet. There is so little of it in the City of London that twenty thousand policemen must be constantly employed to keep order. There is so little of it between Germany and Great Britain that each is doing its utmost to be in perfect readiness to devour the other at the slightest provocation. There is Good Will, but, as yet, like Christian charity, it is a rarity under the sun. In the River of Life it is even now but a struggling current that can be traced back to its source in the breasts of the mammalian mother. A token God? Then God must be pronounced a stupendous failure. His so-called attempts at self-expression are a perfect fiasco. And standing on the intellectual plane, which is the only scientific plane, and upon which alone knowledge is possible, it is quite impossible to maintain, on a single ground of reason, that the Universe is either indwelt, brooded over, or governed by Infinite Intelligence or Boundless Benevolence.

J. T. LLOYD.

Watching and Waiting.

AFTER the rejection of my motion to exclude "the Holy Bible" from all the libraries of Camberwell, I made yet another move in the Council with the object of getting the Libraries Committee to consider the advisability of excluding the *Daily Chronicle* from the libraries on the ground that it was that journal that was the real offender, and not the *Freethinker*, which after all only made reasonable comments on an absurd poem; but though I fought strenuously, and with as much argumentative force as I was able to command, I failed most disastrously to convince my opponents. It is not my intention, however, to let the bigots win without a further struggle. The question is, What should be my action in the future? In my judgment it would be unreasonable on my part, because I cannot get my own way, to move for the exclusion of the great works on science and philosophy by such master minds as Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, George Henry Lewes, Haeckel, and many others, in order to demonstrate that the Libraries Committee would only be carrying their action to a logical conclusion by so doing. It must be acknowledged, when all is said and done, that the *Freethinker* contains the same kind of matter as the works of the illustrious men whose names appear above; though, perhaps, the language of the *Freethinker* is more popular and direct, and therefore more easily understood by the masses of the people. It would also be absurd on my part to ask the Committee to exclude the publications of the Rationalist Press Association, for these works are very valuable to Freethinkers, and I am afraid that some of the members of the Libraries Committee are so narrow-minded that they might take such a suggestion seriously and vote for the exclusion of such publications. Nor would it serve any useful purpose to move for the exclusion of the works of all the great Freethought poets, although some of these works I feel sure would shock the minds of the more religiously minded gentlemen who somehow or other think themselves just the right persons to be members of such a Committee, and who, if they were really acquainted with the lines of such poets as Shelley, Byron, Burns, Swinburne, or of James Thomson, would only be too glad to consign such works to any dark place of obscurity where the timid and bigoted in matters of daring thought and literary taste never venture to go. There remains, therefore, only the Christian journals and magazines for me to deal with. Over fifty of these are taken by the various libraries in Camberwell, and

although I could find in them many statements to which I am entirely opposed, I am afraid I should be regarded as narrow-minded, from a Freethought standpoint, if I were seriously to move for the exclusion of any one of them, unless I could find some real cause of complaint.

But what I may not do seriously, I may do from the point of view of tactics, or in order to ruffle the feathers of my saintly opponents. If, for instance, the *Christian Commonwealth* were on the tables of the libraries—but unfortunately it is not—I might amuse myself and astonish my opponents by calling attention to some of the remarkable statements made in the sermons of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and if I could only manage to get the old number that contained the startling address of the reverend gentleman wherein he declares that “evangelical Christianity” presupposed two kinds of Gods—one of which was a “sort of old woman,” and the other of which was “a fool”—and I might satisfy the Committee that the *Freethinker* was not the only “blasphemous” publication before the public.

For several years past I confess that I have not been a very diligent reader of purely Christian journals; when I did read them I derived very little amusement or instruction from them. Besides, as I get older, I find that life is all too short to waste time in reading matter that is not likely to prove of value to me in the way of furnishing useful information of some sort or other. If, however, I must read them, in order that I may see what they contain to which I may seriously object, I will resign myself to the task with becoming fortitude, and if any Freethought friend can assist me, I shall be grateful. If, for instance, any of these journals were to repeat President Roosevelt's libel on Thomas Paine, wherein he referred to the illustrious Englishman as “a dirty little Atheist,” I should be delighted to move for the exclusion of such a journal. Or, if any of these journals published slanderous statements about living Freethinkers, that also would furnish good grounds for action on my part. For the present, however, I am “watching and waiting” my opportunity. In the meanwhile, there are several ways in which my friends may render useful assistance. At the Central Library, in the Peckham-road, there are a very large number of works dealing with Religion and Ethics from a purely rationalistic point of view. Freethinkers residing in Camberwell should make it their business to take these books out and read them as much as they can. At the Livesey, the Nunhead, the North Camberwell, and the Minet Libraries there are perhaps fewer of this class of work, but if the readers were to make frequent application for them the number would soon be increased. Every time the reader goes to the library he should also make a point of asking for the *Freethinker*, and of seeing the librarian, or his assistant about it. I am on friendly terms with all the librarians, and I am sure they would be glad to furnish any information to Freethinkers, residing in the borough, relating to books and journals taken by the various libraries. The more often the *Freethinker* is asked for the sooner it is likely to be reinstated.

No librarian could afford to ignore a general demand on the part of ratepayers for a particular journal to be placed on the tables of the library. He would have to report such a demand to the members of his Committee, and in the end the persistent ratepayers would be certain to triumph. For over fourteen years I have served the ratepayers on the Camberwell Council. Although I am a strong party man—a Progressive of the most pronounced type—I am a Freethinker first and foremost: I put the question of the emancipation of the human mind from all superstition before all other questions. Indeed, that was the reason why, from the very first, I did my best to become a member of the Libraries' Committee. I always felt that if the people could only have an opportunity of reading the right books the many barriers to human progress would be gradually broken down. The process, I know, is a very slow one; but, slow as it is,

it is sure. Once we get the mass of the people to read the works of the great masters of Freethought, the rest will be easy. Superstition can only succeed while the people remain in ignorance. Knowledge of the facts of life will set the people free.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Poets and Death.

PRIESTS, in all ages and in all countries, have ever sought advantage from the fact that man is mortal. They have taught men that death was the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theology could gather from savage nations were added to increase the horrors. Priests invariably tried to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear.

The advent of Christianity deepened this terror. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world. To visionaries like Catherine of Siena or Emanuel Swedenborg it may have been different, but to the masses death has been and is the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Marcus Aurelius and Socrates would have scorned. These great Pagans gave dignity to death, but Christians fear death as children fear the dark.

Founded on the desire for personal happiness, the keynote of Christianity cannot be lofty. The jewelled streets of the New Jerusalem are just as materialistic as the houris of the Mohammedan Paradise. Incited by the celestial bribe, Christians are the most hypocritical of religionists. From being a serious conviction, Christian formulas have sunk to the level of a parrot's recitative.

Most of the great poets have been Freethinkers, and it is gratifying to turn for a few moments from the paltry paradises and horrible hells of the priests to the sublime ideas of the poets. Lucretius, the greatest Roman poet, writing, be it remembered, twenty centuries ago, tells us that death is dreamless rest.

“Thou not again shall see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go;
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store.
Thou hoardedst for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired is gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away.”

Omar Khayyam, the most splendid poet whose lyre sounded under the Mohammedan Crescent, was a Freethinker. Listen:—

“Oh, threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing, at least, is certain—This life flies;
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies,
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.”

Shakespeare, the supreme genius of the world's literature, tells us—

“We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.”

Shelley, in the opening lines of his atheistic “Queen Mab,” sings of death and sleep being brothers. Most of all this great poet looks on death with longing and audacity in his immortal dirge, “Adonais.” Matthew Arnold introduces pure Secularism into his language concerning death. In his monody on Arthur Hugh Clough he tells us—

“Bear it from thy loved, sweet Arno vale,
For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
Their morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale.”

This feeling assumes at times tones of irony, as in his fine lines on the death of a favorite dog, entitled “Goist's Grave.” Byron did not believe in immortality. How finely he apostrophises the longing for a future life:—

“Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe,
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies,
That little word saith more than thousand homilies.”

Swinburne had quite a materialistic view of death.

In his superb "Ave Atque Vale" he strikes the keynote:—

"Content thee, howsoe'er, 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."

William Morris was contented with an earthly paradise. He never shrank from advocating his views, and his Freethought comes out clearly in his treatment of death:—

"Rejoice, lest pleasureless ye die,
Within a little time must ye go by;
Stretch forth your open hands, and while ye live
Take all the gifts that Death and Life can give."

Meredith is a Freethinker in the highest and noblest sense of that term, and his Secularism constantly appears in his verse:—

"Earth your haven, earth your helm,
You command a double realm;
Laboring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set;
Leaving her the future task,
Loving her too well to ask."

As to death, he sings, with a fine touch of stoicism,—

"Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall."

No poet peers with such audacity as that "tan-faced poet of the West," Walt Whitman, into the "superb vistas of death." Whatever else may be said of Whitman's poetry, it must be conceded that he has treated this eternal theme with new power and significance. The awful dreams that priests say may come in that sleep of death have no existence for this poet. According to Whitman, death is a friend, is "lovely and soothing," is the "dark mother always gliding near with soft feet," and the body, weary with life, turns like a tired child nestling in the bosom of its mother.

Freethought everywhere destroys the fear of death, and the Freethinker is aware of this truth. He refuses to allow the tomb to cast its chill shadow over the pleasures of life. He rejects the "lie on the lips of the priest," and living without hypocrisy he dies without fear,—

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

VERDANT GREEN.

The apostle Paul informs us that he was not an orator. He could not boast of any "excellency of speech," or tricks of eloquence, and he attributed his success as a preacher to "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The men of God still pretend to be the mouthpieces of the Lord; but somehow the Lord is no longer impartial in his bestowal of favors upon them. Dr. Campbell Morgan says that "Christ always attracts the crowds." That is not true. Christ never draws the multitudes except by means of clever, eloquent speakers, which is tantamount to saying that he never draws them at all. The Lord's partiality and favoritism are such that no one who honestly faces the fact can believe that he has anything to do with either the success or the failure of ministers and churches.

At a prominent anniversary service held in London last week, one of the most popular preachers of the day declared that "Jesus Christ has transformed the world." In verification of that stupendous statement he invited his hearers to compare the moral condition of Christendom to-day with that of the Pagan world as depicted by Paul in his *Romans*. If the great preacher is at all familiar with the literature of the Pagan world in Paul's period and prior to it, he knows that the apostle's portraiture is a monstrous misrepresentation, and that the suggested comparison is shockingly unfair. Paul either wickedly wrote in total ignorance, or deliberately produced a caricature. In either case, the preacher's invited comparison completely loses its point, and his confident claim is nothing but a groundless assertion, and a false witness against Paganism.

According to the *Catholic Herald*, it is the intention of Mr. William O'Brien to take up his residence permanently in Jerusalem. We believe the Irish party wish him to go to Jericho. But we are not taking sides in the quarrel.

Acid Drops.

Rev. Beauchamp Walter Stannus, of Arrow Rectory, Alcester, Warwick, left £33,025. Not a bad lump on the camel's back to go through the needle's eye. We fear the reverend gentleman is on the wrong side—and will have to remain there.

Another clerical camel, with a smaller lump, but sufficient to keep him from threading the needle, is the Rev. Storor M. Lakin, of the Close, Salisbury, who left £15,790

A soul-saver in Dundee has been entertaining his audience with a story of Ingersoll's having written a "recantation" (in verse!) shortly before his death and had it printed in *Munsey's Magazine*. Of course, the story is an absolute falsehood. One of our Dundee readers quotes the alleged Ingersoll verses and asks if we can indicate their source. We are writing away from our home and library, and cannot do more than say that the verses have a distinct seventeenth century air, and might have been written by half a dozen poets of that period. We may as well quote them—as they may be heard of again:—

"O vanity! vain creature I that thought the Godhead to defy,
And from my soul sought to efface God's presence and His saving grace;
Yet when in darksome ways I trod, reviling Christ, denying God,
High heaven's empyrean fire burned in my soul a new desire
For holy truth; and now within my soul rejoiceth free from sin,
From sin of unbelief,—the worst for which man unbelieving's curst.
All men behold, I stand confest, of God the Father manifest."

Anybody who believes Ingersoll wrote those verses, or that they were written by anyone else at the end of the nineteenth century, is past praying for from a literary point of view. But the shortest way to pin this Dundee soul-saver down is to ask him to produce the copy of *Munsey's Magazine* in which the verses appeared, with the signature of Robert G. Ingersoll after them. We advise our Dundee friends to do that at once.

The Bishop of Manchester, preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral, and reported in the *Daily Express*, said: "There is a marked decline both in the attendance at Sunday-schools and in the number of Sunday-school teachers." Truth leaks out occasionally, even from Bishops. The signs of the decadence of Christianity are, indeed, so numerous and flagrant that it is quite impossible to conceal them.

"Things are not altogether well with us," said the Rev. J. D. Jones in his address from the Chair of the Congregational Union, and, in vacating the same Chair, Dr. Wardlaw Thompson plaintively confessed that he felt "a profound sense of need pressing upon us all." The truth is that all Churches are face to face, not only with "arrested progress," but with "progressive disintegration." In spite of the most desperate efforts to prolong its life, Christianity is most surely dying; and its would-be perpetuators know it.

The Rev. Weaver Evans, a great missioner, complains of the "increasing difficulty that besets" evangelists in their work to-day. That is only one of the signs of the growing intelligence of the people. We are confident that such work will, ere long, become so forbiddingly difficult that it will have to be given up altogether. The Church can only thrive on ignorant credulity and cowardly fear.

The *Christian* remarks that "no candid observer can fail to note that not only are the working-classes conspicuous by their absence from places of worship, but the seats formerly filled by persons of the more educated middle-class are likewise increasingly found empty." And on this it asks the pertinent question, "Have the theological concessions, which so many ministers have made in recent years, had the desired effect of winning—or even holding—the intelligent young men and women for whose sake these concessions were made?" We agree with the *Christian*, although for different reasons, that these concessions have been decided failures. They do not keep intelligent people in the churches because, after seeing so much conceded, they are led to inquire whether what is retained rests on any better foundation than what has been given up. Moreover, the intelligent persons note that these concessions are avowedly made under compulsion. It is the fear of losing their congregations that makes preachers admit truths they would

otherwise deny. Preachers do not lead religious thought, they follow it—and as far in the rear as is profitable. And really intelligent persons are apt to marvel, not at what religious preachers surrender, but at what they retain.

The Rev. J. Mountain says: "The facilities now offered for Continental travel are sapping the moral fibre of multitudes of British people." Poor British people! Their moral fibre is, apparently, of so poor a quality that it can only be kept uninjured so long as it is kept in a strictly British atmosphere. Otherwise it degenerates to the deplorable level of the French, Germans, or Italians. The outlook is most depressing.

The Bishop of London is to be congratulated on possessing all the qualities of his defects. A man of greater intellectual ability would not say the many silly things he is reported as saying; but, on the other hand, he would not so plainly expose the real inwardness of modern religion as does our worthy prelate. Thus, addressing a fashionable gathering at Grosvenor House, called in aid of the Bishop of London's Fund for building churches, etc., he told his audience, "If you left a million or two of poor people without the restrictions of religion, you West End people would not take it so quietly as you do." Admirable! Nothing could be plainer; nothing could be better. Another man would have wrapped up the warning in a cloud of moral platitudes or religious commonplaces. The bishop comes straight to the point. It is the "restrictions of religion," he says in effect, that conserves extreme wealth at one end of the scale and extreme poverty at the other. But for our careful policing of the poor you wealthy would not have nearly so easy a time as you have. It is possible, even, that White-chapel might visit Park-lane—with disagreeable consequences to the latter—instead of quietly waiting until the West-end relieves the tedium of its days by going a-slumming. "Therefore, says his lordship, shell out. The laborer is worthy of his hire; and do not grudge us our reward for seeing that the blessed text "The poor ye have always with ye" receives daily illustration in these latter days. Again we say, admirable bishop! May the Lord send us more bishops like F. Winnington Ingram.

The Rev. Professor Inge, of Cambridge, says that "naturalistic ethics are unpopular," but he makes the candid and humiliating admission that the attitude of "naturalistic ethics" to Christianity "is really the most sure mode of attack, because it touches our weakest side." It is highly significant that such an admission should come from a gentleman who is at once an ordained clergyman and a Professor of Divinity. Even he grants that Christianity is weakest where it ought to be strongest.

Dr. Inge believes in Christianity, of course, but cannot justify it at the bar of reason. He finds fault with Browning's famous line, "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world," and substitutes for it, "God has come to us on earth, because all was wrong with the world." Well, is all right with the world now? By no means. "The problem of evil was faced, though not solved." Then God might as well have stayed on in his heaven, and left the world to its fate. Evil is still with us, says this man of God, but he believes that some day in the dim, distant future, it shall cease to be. Thanks; but really we prefer to jog along in the light of our "naturalistic ethics."

The editor of the *Christian World Pulpit* is a wonderfully clever man. "Amid the clatter of arms" he recognises "the brooding of the Spirit." "God can make even the wrath of men, the jealousies and ambitions of nations, to serve him." We have heard all that before; men were saying it two and three thousand years ago; but there is nothing in it, "Chaos and Old Night" being still in strong evidence.

The Rev. Canon Baillie, rector of Rugby, has mistaken his vocation. He ought to be Professor of Logic at some great University. Preaching to the Burton-on-Trent Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, a few days ago, he said that "every one of those whom he addressed knew that there was something wrong, that there was in the world a great deal of unhappiness, misery, and suffering of all kinds." Probably all who heard that statement fully agreed with it; but the next statement must have staggered them considerably. According to the report of the sermon in the *Burton Daily Mail*, Canon Baillie proceeded to "emphasise that the ruling of the world was in the hands of an all-wise and all-mighty Creator, who regulated the conditions of men's lives upon eternal laws, just as he regulated the conditions of Nature on eternal laws."

The two statements taken together are not excessively complimentary to the "all-wise and all-mighty Creator."

The *Herald* informs us that when the late Catholic Bishop Wilkinson was studying for the ministry of the Established Church, "he was suddenly caught up by a wave of Divine Grace, which was then flooding the land, and borne into the bosom of the Catholic Church." The riddle is why there are other Churches than the Catholic, and why Providence permits any man to enter the ministry of those false Churches. Why does not that "wave of Divine Grace" not always flood the land, and bear all into the bosom of the one true Church? Unless the *Herald* comes to our help, we must give it up.

The Rev. J. Morgan Jones, of Aberdare, is getting on. He says that in the New Testament "we have before us a natural, human, historical growth—a distinctly human product. These books are human documents." Is not Mr. Jones aware that in thus speaking he is merely echoing the teaching of the *Freethinker* during a quarter of a century? The only difference between the reverend gentleman and ourselves is, that we are consistent and he is not. Having given up a supernatural Bible, he still keeps up the farce of preaching a supernatural gospel. Let him take another step.

We were under the impression that the growth of non-religion was one of the indisputable facts of modern times. Even when it does not express itself under the uncompromising form of Atheism, or the more "respectable" name of Agnosticism, we imagined its growth could be discerned in the weakening of religious doctrines and the transference of attention from religious to social problems. But according to the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, this is all a mistake. We are, in fact, witnessing "a great reaction against Agnosticism." True, no one except Mr. Williams and his kind are able to perceive this reaction, but we presume it is one of the be numbing results of Agnosticism that Agnostics are unable to perceive how completely discredited is their position. Mr. Williams' proof consists in a statement from Henry Sedgwick to the effect that humanity would never acquiesce in Agnosticism, and a similar assertion from himself. But an assertion, no matter how often repeated, does not constitute a proof, and the statement that "no intellectual demonstration could make humanity acquiesce in a godless world," is a mere pitting of inherited sentiment against the conclusions of reason. And we happen to have enough faith in human sanity to believe that, in the long run, sentiment will accommodate itself to a conclusion that all sane reasoning converges to demonstrate.

Mr. Williams says, that look where we will, we find men striving to understand God. Quite so; and it is by striving to understand God that men have outgrown God altogether. For when it is understood God is seen to be nothing more than a magnified image of man himself. And when this is realised, man gives up the task of wasting his energy in chasing nightmares and devotes himself to the more important problem of understanding that which gave all the gods their being.

The Rev. J. G. Greenhough is another one of those far-seeing gentlemen who discern that Secularism in Great Britain is quite dead. Apparently, Mr. Greenhough thinks the vitality of any set of ideas must be tested by the number of buildings owned in their name. For our part, we are more inclined to ask what evidence there is, if any, that the ideas in question are influencing the lives of the people. Measured by this or by any other really rational test, Secularism was never so widespread and so influential as at present. The mere fact that even in the Churches the value of human life is measured in terms of this world, instead of in terms of the next, proves this. The development of interest in social questions, the marked weakening of doctrinal preaching, are again indications of how deeply the secular view of life has influenced people. The strength of any particular Free-thought organisation, or the number of buildings devoted to specific attacks on Christianity, are tests that appeal to superficial thinkers or to those who are interested in misrepresenting matters. Both are more or less symptomatic of the strength of religion rather than of its weakness. When religion is active and bigoted and strong, the strength of the action will be proportionately. It is just in proportion as religion weakens, that the energies of many are directed into social channels, while the advocacy of abstract principles is left to those who are sufficiently above the average to devote themselves to the work.

The London Missionary Society seems to be going from bad to worse. The Board has resolved to reduce expendi-

ture by £5,000 this year, and by £10,000 or even £15,000 next year. The accumulated debt appears to be over £40,000; in spite of large legacies during the past few years. Another sign of "the dying faith."

Protestant missionaries are crying out against the policy of the French in Madagascar. Education is being secularised, and this interferes with the Protestant school system, by which Christianity is disseminated amongst the native population. Some people are never pleased unless they have all their own way.

The Christian charity of Nonconformity is a rare virtue. Speaking at the recent meeting of the Liberation Society, the Rev. Justin Evans said he "longed to see the Welsh Church buried, and buried face downwards." And, according to report, Mr. Evans was "the most popular speaker of the evening." Of course!

The Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, invites his hearers and readers to "get out of the drizzling mist and blinding fog" of unbelief. We would reverse the exhortation by saying to Christian believers, "Come out of the drizzling mist and the blinding fog of superstition into the clear light of Reason and the warmth of natural affections." Mr. Phillips says that "goodness is another name for Christ." Well, we prefer goodness without the slightest mythical alloy.

The following Reuter telegram is worth preserving:—

"St. Petersburg, May 9.—An extraordinary trial will be shortly held at Mohileff.

Forty peasants from the village of Sysoevo are charged with the murder of a two-year-old boy who was proclaimed as Antichrist at a communal meeting.

One of the oldest peasants first addressed the gathering, and ascribed the chronic bad harvests to the presence of Antichrist in their midst.

The child was then denounced, and, with the consent of the father, it was decided to kill it.

The mother was the only person to protest against the murder, but her pleading was unheeded, and the child was trampled to death by the peasants."

This is what good old unadulterated religion comes to. What a frightful book might be written on the curse of superstition! But a man would need nerves of steel to write it.

The Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews reports that at Rotterdam 6,000 Jews called at the mission during the year, while at Amsterdam two "Inquirers" were baptised. We confess to a little curiosity as to why the 6,000 Jews called, and what they took away with them. The expenditure of the Society during the year—exclusive of local funds, we presume—amounted to £46,512.

Sir Andrew Fraser, K.C.S.I., speaking at one of the missionary meetings, gave the zenana missionaries a timely word of warning. "Do not for a moment suppose," he said, "that the ladies in the zenanas are there because they are despised, because they are thought little of, or because they wish to be out. As a rule these ladies do not want to come out; they believe in the zenana system, they believe it makes for dignity and purity; and unless and until the ladies of India have changed their minds about that, it would be a terrible mistake to try and force open the doors of the zenanas." These are weighty words from one who knows India, but we do not expect they will have any effect on the circulation of highly colored missionary stories. For the subscriptions must be raked in, and the unvarnished truth about missionary work in general would have a terribly depressing effect on missionary income.

We read in the *Advance*, the organ of the West London Mission, that Mr. Rattenbury's services at the Lyceum Theatre are an unqualified success. Every Sunday evening between three and four thousand people assemble for the gladsome worship of the Lord; and every month the *Advance* is privileged to report "triumphs which gladden the preacher's heart." The profligate, the drunkard, the gambler, the man who is "stony-broke," or "down on his luck"—they are all there; and "all these have found help and blessing at our services." More than that; "occasionally one meets with young fellows saturated with the rationalist literature of the day, who have read Haeckel and one or two other writers of kindred spirit, and who fancy that the negations of these men have shattered the Christian position." And now comes the supernatural miracle: "To such, the appeal of Christ and the revelation of the Father's love is irresistible, and they discover that the weapons thought so powerful and destructive turn out to be nothing but catapults and peashooters."

Such fulsome, turgid reports are "things acquainted and familiar to us"; and they are as misleading as they are common. But we should like to know something more about these "young fellows saturated with the rationalist literature of the day," who find Mr. Rattenbury's preaching so "irresistible." We should be delighted to have the names and addresses of a few of them, just to test the accuracy of the report. It would be interesting to learn from themselves how thoroughly saturated with Freethought they were. Hitherto, reports of such easy conversions have, on investigation, turned out to be more or less dishonest.

A series of shilling reprints of religious books is announced in the *Christian World*. One of them is Wesley's *Journal*, "tactfully abridged." "Tactfully" no doubt means that all the sharpest salt is left out—so that Wesley may appear a twentieth, instead of an eighteenth, century Christian.

"J. B." of the *Christian World* talks of the "weird journey that mortals take from one world into another." He confesses, however, that "the strangeness of it is that none of the myriads who have trodden this way comes back to tell us about the new scenery or the new company." Shakespeare put it better—"the bourne from whence no traveller returns." That is death. And the only evidence of any life beyond it is a guess. But that guess is good enough to keep all the mystery-mongers going.

We wish success to the effort to abolish that part of the Coronation Oath which makes the sovereign of Great Britain and Ireland "damn and blast" the Catholic religion. We believe it deserves denunciation, but the King is not the right person to do the job. He ought to be impartial. He should curse all the religions of his subjects, or bless them all, or, preferably, pay no attention to any of them. As for the Protestant bigots, who clamor for the preservation of their luxury of insulting the Catholics, we have no respect for them whatever. They are just as ready to insult and oppress Freethinkers. Look at what they have just done in Camberwell. Look at what they are just doing in Liverpool.

Mr. William Redmond has our best wishes for the success of his efforts to get the abolition of that royal Curse of Catholicism through the House of Commons. But why did he say that he had never been anything of a bigot himself? Has he forgotten that he rose in the House of Commons in 1881 and asked the then Home Secretary (Sir William Harcourt) what steps he would take against a "blasphemous" paper called the *Freethinker*? Mr. Redmond may forget. We don't. We never forget a friend—or an enemy.

The *South London Press* calls the Rev. A. J. Waldron "a muscular Christian." We have seen him described so before, and we understand that he is rather proud of it. But we have never heard of any reports of his physical prowess emanating from anybody but himself. The only person he certainly did tackle, to our knowledge, was a feeble elderly man selling the *Freethinker* in the street. Mr. Waldron does not resemble Jack Falstaff in some things—in wit, for instance; but it would seem that discretion is the better part of his valor.

"Mr. Waldron," we are told, "routed the Atheists in Brockwell Park last summer." This is news indeed—to the Atheists. Equal success is confidently looked forward to this summer. No doubt. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. What we should like to see, though, is the name and address of any Atheist whom the reverend gentleman has brought to Christ.

Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, of Westminster Chapel, bewails the religious apathy of flat-dwellers. Fifty thousand of them, within a radius of three-quarters of a mile of his church, are untouched by religious influences, never attend places of worship, and never read religious literature. Yet the reverend gentleman who makes this ignominious confession "pleads eloquently" for money to send missionaries to the "heathen" in foreign lands.

Parliamentary government has its dangers, and one of them is bribery. According to a Press Association telegram from Tokio, thirteen members of parliament have recently been arrested in connection with "the Sugar Scandal." Two members of the party they belong to have already found their way to prison; one of them being Mr. Yokoi, who is so well known among foreigners, having gained notoriety some years ago by turning Christian. Religious journals in England should please note.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Whit-Sunday, May 30, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: N. S. S. Annual Conference.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £193 8s. 6d. Received since.—Llansamlet "Saints," 5s.; M. C. T. (Paisley), 5s.; Greeves Fisher, 5s.; Edward Bower, 2s. 6d.; Fred Collins, 5s.; Edward Oliver, £2 2s.; Kimberleyite (2nd. sub.) 15s.; W. Lancaster 4s.

W. JENKINS.—Glad you and your friends "thoroughly enjoyed" yourselves at Aberdare. Thanks for your and their good wishes.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Am away from home and without your address, so must reply here. Did you have the apparatus? It was no good without that. Thanks for cuttings.

JOSEPH BIRBY (Liverpool).—You will have to try our advertising columns if you wish to see your ideas on such subjects in the *Freethinker*.

EDWARD BOWER, a reader of this journal for ten years, likes and admires it more than ever. "Many of my former journalistic and literary 'gods'" he says, "have been buried without a tear or a sigh of regret, but my appetite for the *Freethinker* becomes keener with the advancing years."

COSMIN JACKY.—Sorry it was overlooked; cannot help now. Thanks for all your trouble.

J. BERRILL.—Thanks.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

FRED COLLINS.—Quite right; we do like the fight, however uphill; otherwise we shouldn't have been in it; for there is no press-gang, and no conscription, connected with this warfare.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

C. T. SALDANHA (India), subscribing to Shilling Month, says he is late, but "If I did not contribute I should be guilty of ingratitude to one who is doing so much, at a considerable personal sacrifice, to destroy the greatest curse of mankind."

ALFRED GALPIN (U. S. A.).—Being sent as directed. It is pleasant to find one so distant interested in promoting the circulation of this journal.

EDWARD OLIVER.—The subscription is bettered by the wish that it were more.

C. E. HEARSON.—Yes, as you say, if we work the guns others ought to provide the ammunition.

T. SHORE.—Thanks for the reference.

W. LANCASTER.—Glad you look forward to the *Freethinker* as a "treat."

T. H. ELMOR.—We intend to notice the book, and shall not overlook the debate.

H. IRVING.—Thanks for letter and enclosure. Of course the matter is of interest to us. Mr. Stead acted nobly, but nothing could have been done if Mr. Foote had not taken the initiative. Don't take the matter too much to heart, though. Torrey's hash was settled, and Paine and Ingersoll were vindicated. That satisfies us.

W. A.—Duly received.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shilling Month.

EIGHTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Figures after the names of subscribers indicate the number of shillings they send. No number means one shilling.
R. Young, 5; A. Clarke, 5; U. Dhammaloka, 4; C. T. Saldanha, 5; C. E. Hearson, 21; Kimberleyite, 5; J. Halliwell; R. Lloyd, 5; M. Christopher, 2; R. C. Catford, 2; L. H. W. Mann, 11.

Sugar Plums.

St. James's Hall ought to be crowded on Tuesday evening, June 8. Even bad weather ought to make no difference. The occasion is unique. The meeting is to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine. It is being organised by the National Secular Society, but the list of speakers is being made as comprehensive as possible. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. Herbert Burrows, and Mr. Harry Snell represent Rationalist, Ethicist, and other elements. The N. S. S. speakers include Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. F. A. Davies, and Mr. G. W. Foote. All seats at this Paine Celebration will be free, but tickets for reserved seats can be obtained (by ladies, elderly persons, and persons coming a considerable distance) by applying to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

The N. S. S. Annual Conference takes place next Sunday (Whit-Sunday) at Liverpool. The business sittings, morning and afternoon, will take place at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. The evening public meeting is to take place in the Tivoli Theatre. A luncheon is arranged for delegates, visitors, etc., at the Bee Hotel, St. John's-lane, at 1 o'clock. The Conference Committee-room will be at the Alexandra Hall.

In connection with the Conference there is to be an excursion on Whit-Monday to Llangollen, a very beautiful part of Wales, forty miles from Liverpool. Saloon carriages will be provided, and the total cost of the trip, including railway, dinner, and tea will be about 6s. 6d. Those wishing to join the excursion should communicate with the N. S. S. secretary as early as possible. The President has promised to make one of the party on this occasion.

The Birmingham Branch is arranging a party to meet the Conference excursionists at Llangollen. Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, will be pleased to hear from Birmingham or district friends who wish to join the party. The return fare will be about 4s.

Rev. U. Dhammaloka, Tavoy Monastery, Godwin-road, E. Rangoon, Burma, sends a contribution to the "Shilling Month" Fund. He represents the Buddhist Tract Society. "It is a pleasure," he writes, "to read your articles in the *Freethinker* every week. I trust that you may be spared many more years to carry on the grand work of Freethought and mental liberty. We all regret to see another great soul pass away—the editor of the New York *Truthseeker*." Buddhism, of course, in its original form, is rather a philosophy than a religion—in the Western sense of the word.

"I like your article on 'Pious Murderers' very much," writes the veteran J. W. de Caux. "It would do much good could it have a wider circulation." Our old friend is still making it warm for Sabbatarian and other bigots in the Yarmouth press. The *Mercury* prints a lengthy letter of his on "Sunday Golf Playing," which cannot be pleasant reading for the Rev. G. P. Tonge. But the unpleasantness only lies in its force and effectiveness. We do not wonder that the person who signs himself "Inquirer," and accuses Mr. de Caux of "controversial Billingsgate," declines to reveal his identity. He professes to be afraid of Mr. de Caux, and we believe he is, though he does not assign the real reason of his apprehension.

NONE IN HEAVEN.

It is alleged that a learned judge once divided witnesses in civil actions into three classes: liars, d — d liars, and expert witnesses; and there is rather a nice story going about to-day with regard to the latter.

It came about that there was a hole in the floor of Heaven which annoyed St. Peter very much, for the small angels would go fishing in the infernal regions instead of attending to their proper duties. St. Peter sent for the Devil and told him to repair this hole. "Indeed I shan't," said the Devil; "You're the superior landlord." "Well, you have overheated the flues, said St. Peter, "and it is all your fault." They discussed the affair "argy-bargy" for some time, and at last the Devil said: "Will you refer the matter to arbitration?" "All right," said St. Peter. "Very well," said the Devil; "Monday morning at 11." Monday morning came, and the Devil was there with an imposing array of solicitors, counsel, and expert witnesses; but St. Peter was absent. After a time he came in hurriedly, saying: "Look here, the arbitration's off." "It cannot be," said the Devil. "It must be." "Why?" "Well, I have been up and down the whole of Heaven and I cannot find a single solicitor or expert witness."—*Fifty Years of Failure* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.; 1905).

The Early Life of Thomas Paine.—II.

Social, Political, and Religious Reformer.

BY W. G. CLARKE.

(Continued from p. 317.)

CHAPTER II.

HIS ANCESTRY.

Some three miles from Thetford, in the county of Suffolk, is the pretty village of Euston, a place of much historic interest. Here in the sixteenth century dwelt the well-known family of Rookwoods, one of whom, Edward, entertained Queen Elizabeth on her visit there in 1578, but was subsequently imprisoned in Bury Gaol as a Recusant. He died in prison, and the estate was afterwards purchased by the Earl of Arlington, a member of the "Cabal" ministry, who rebuilt the hall, church, and bridges, and laid out the gardens, park and ornamental water, availing himself of the advice of John Evelyn, the diarist. During his ownership, Charles II. was a not infrequent visitor, and after the King's death in 1691 his Queen lived for a time at the Hall, her Confessor, Father Diaz, recording in his diary that "Her Majestie lives content here with her familie; the place is very pretty, and hass all the conveniencys that wee can desire, except that there is no cows." In 1672 the only daughter of the Earl of Arlington was married to Henry Fitzroy, a natural son of King Charles II., she being twelve and he sixteen. He afterwards became the first Duke of Grafton, saw naval and military service, and was killed at the siege of Cork in 1690. The Duchess laid the foundation stone of the new church at Euston, which has the inscription: "Isabelle, Duchesse of Grafton and Countesse of Ewaton, layed this stone, 21st day of April, 1676."

In this church Thomas Paine's parents were married, the entry in the register for the year 1734 reading: "June 20th. Joseph Pain and Frances Cocke were married." The Norfolk Paines, Pains, or Paynes—the spelling of surnames at that time was of the most uncertain character—were a good family, frequently referred to in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thomas Paine, Gent., was appointed a trustee for the Lady Elizabeth (afterwards Queen) in 1553; Mary Paine, widow, was married at Great Dunham in 1576; there was a Thomas Paine, of Itteringham, Gent., in 1571; and in Swaffham Church there is a memorial to Katherine, wife of William Steward of Ely, maternal grandmother of Oliver Cromwell, and one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Thomas Paine of Castleacre. His arms were: Azure, a fesse between three leopards' faces or, and crest: At the bottom of a dead tree, a broken spear in saltire. She died in 1590. William Paine, Gent., held a part of East Beckham in 1617, and in 1674 the manor of Morley was sold to Sir Joseph Paine, Kt., who was a Sheriff of Norwich in 1654 and Mayor in 1660, and is buried in St. Gregory's Church in that city. Which particular branch of the family Joseph Pain belonged to is not known. The Cockes were also a well-known family in Norwich and Norfolk, but there is no necessity to go outside Thetford for the ancestry of Thomas Paine's mother. In 1629 John Cocke was Deputy-Recorder of Thetford, and in 1688, Robert Cocke, M.A., had a licence from Richard, Bishop of Norwich, permitting him to teach the art of grammar within the village of Thetford.

Frances Cocke was born at Thetford in 1697, and was the daughter of a Thetford attorney. From the fact that her marriage took place at Euston, it may be inferred that she had been residing in that parish for some time previously. She was maliciously described by Oldys, probably with as little foundation as many other of his statements, as "a woman of a sour temper and an eccentric character." Dr. Conway has, however, noted that her son's writings

"contain several affectionate allusions to his father, but none to his mother."

Joseph Paine's father was a farmer, and probably an early member of the Society of Friends, although his name does not appear in the persecutions which befel the Society in Thetford in the seventeenth century. He is described by Oldys as "a small but reputable farmer." Joseph was born at Thetford in 1708, and on April 18, 1737, was made a freeman of the borough, signing the register with a final *e* to his name. He is stated by Oldys to have been "a reputable citizen, and, though poor, an honest man." He was a Quaker, and his wife a member of the Church of England. "By thus taking his wife from the Church," says Oldys, "Joseph Pain was by his own act, and the rules of the Quakers, at once expelled from their community. But neither this irregularity nor this expulsion prevented that benevolent sect from pitying his distresses through life, and relieving his wants as they were seen. The father and mother both lived to know their son's vices, to pity his misfortunes, to hear of his fame, but to partake little of his bounty." This is a sample of the malicious falsehood that was circulated about Paine by bigoted and unscrupulous enemies. As a matter of fact, Joseph Paine was throughout life a member of the Society of Friends at Thetford, and was buried as a Quaker; his son's vices existed only in his enemies' imagination; and whatever clash of temperament there may have been between mother and son, he maintained her in her old age, and stayed with her at Thetford for some time when she was 91 years of age.

Their son Thomas was born on January 29, 1737, and in the register of St. Cuthbert's parish, Thetford, is the following entry relating to a daughter: "Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Payne and Frances his wife, of this parish, was born August the 29th, 1738, baptised September ye 20th, 1738." There are no records of other children, nor do we know anything further of the life of Paine's parents, though in 1787, as appears in a letter from father to son, both belonged to the Quaker Meeting. His father was buried in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard in 1786, the entry in the register being: "Joseph Payne (a Quaker), aged 78 years, Nov. 14th." His mother was also buried there in 1790, the entry being: "Frances Paine (widow), aged 94 years, May 18th."

CHAPTER III.

HIS BIRTHPLACE.

His earlier biographers simply mentioned that Paine was born at Thetford, but gave no indication as to street or house. The first definite information obtainable is an entry in the diary of Clio Rickman, a friend of Paine. He wrote: "On September 12th, 1805, I drove with Mr. Capel Lofft to Thetford from Troston Hall, and there visited the house and sat in the chamber in which Thomas Paine was born. This was in Bridge-street, Thetford." In a plan of Thetford drawn by Thomas Martin about 1740, and now in the possession of Mr. Walter Rye, the present Bridge-street and White Hart-street are jointly marked as "Bridgagate-street." In 1809 G. B. Barrrell gave a list of "Remarkable Events" in his *Charities of Thetford*, and under date 1737 entered: "Thomas Paine, the celebrated Author of the *Lights of Man*, born in the house now occupied by Mr. Noah Baker, January 29th." When Dr. Conway published his splendid *Life of Thomas Paine* in 1892, he said: "The house was in Bridge-street (now White Hart), and has recently made way for a pretty garden and fountain." Tradition always indicated the top of the west side of White Hart-street as the site of the house in which Paine was born, but the fountain to which Dr. Conway referred is on the east side, and he subsequently admitted that this was a mistake.

On the other hand, there was an impression that the actual house was one of several which were

* *Norfolk Church Collections, Drawings and Sketches*, vol. 1, p. 133.

pulled down about 1886 to make a garden on the west side. In a review of Dr. Conway's "Life," Mr. F. H. Millington, J.P., said: "The house stood near the top of White Hart-street, and, although pulled down, it is said that the room where Paine was born still remains." It was to one of these houses that pilgrimages were paid by Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, George Jacob Holyoake, and others; and when Mr. Holyoake visited Thetford in 1882 he had this portion of the street photographed. His daughter, Mrs. E. Holyoake-Marsh, has kindly lent me the photo, and on the back, in Mr. Holyoake's writing, it is noted that "the house of the white streak is Paine's birthhouse. G. J. H." The old "Fleece" inn then stood at the bottom of Croxton-road, facing White Hart-street, and the photo was taken from the southern end of the house now occupied by Mr. G. O. Read. On the west side of White Hart-street the photo shows, firstly, a wall with lime-trees behind it, then a house with a porch on two pillars (still standing). Then (on the space now occupied by Mrs. Tyrrell's garden) is a cottage, then a house with a shop window, and beyond it one with a gable slightly higher than the one preceding, and showing a white streak. This house had three bedroom windows, two windows on the ground-floor, and a porch with one step, immediately adjoining Mrs. Tyrrell's house to the southward, but now pulled down. The gable was some feet lower than that of her house, and no part of it is incorporated in the present building.

From the evidence hereafter adduced it is certain that the house indicated was not the one in which Paine was born, and not the one in which Noah Baker lived. It is certain that this Noah Baker—who was one of the Commonalty of the Borough in 1778, and therefore in a fairly good position—lived in a house which now forms the northern part of Mrs. Tyrrell's residence, and was built with its gable to the street. It is so marked in G. B. Burrell's "Plan of the ancient Town of Thetford" (1807) and in J. O. Browne's "Map of Thetford" (1837). In the former map the houses north of the wall in the middle of the street are colored blue, indicating that they formed part of St. Cuthbert's parish, and the same parochial boundary is also shown in the latter. That the Paines lived in this parish is shown by the fact that all the entries relating thereto are in St. Cuthbert's registers.

The best evidence as to the authenticity of this house is derived from the annals of the Tyrrell family. Mr. George Tyrrell, who was born towards the end of the eighteenth century, and married when about 44 years of age, purchased this house—then called "The Mansion"—from the representatives of Noah Baker, about 1830. His daughter, the present Mrs. Tyrrell, was born in the house in the very room which was known to her father by tradition as that in which Paine was born, and which was always known among the family as "Tom Paine's room." In 1832 her father pulled down the gable end abutting on the street, leaving the remainder of the house standing, and building a new frontage to the street. In the north gable of this is a tablet inscribed "G. T., 1832." Further alterations were made by Mr. George Tyrrell Tyrrell about 1886-8, and the front part of the house was pulled down; but the back part (and apparently, from the date, the north gable) was preserved and incorporated in the new house. The two houses which adjoined to the southward belonged to the Fisons, and not to Noah Baker, and it was these—including the one indicated by Mr. Holyoake—that Mr. Tyrrell pulled down to make the garden of which Dr. Conway speaks.

The house in which Noah Baker lived was certainly one of some pretensions, but Joseph Paine, from the fact of his marriage with an attorney's daughter, and his position in the Society of Friends, was probably a master, having one or more men and apprentices working for him. He was a leather staymaker, making stays of a kind of wash-leather similar to that now used for gloves, and would occupy a position similar to that of a saddler. Being in a somewhat

better position than the ordinary workman, he would live in a somewhat larger house, and use a portion as a workshop. This house would be in a very suitable position for such a purpose.

The room is now the third from the White Hart-street gable, with a window to the north and a door to the south leading into a passage. In Paine's time the passage formed part of the room, which had a fireplace in the middle of the west side, no window on the north, but a pleasant window on the south, with a broad sill on which Paine doubtless spent many of his boyhood's hours, looking down into the garden. The mantel-piece is a typical Georgian specimen of oak, and is probably the one which was there in Paine's childhood.

Thomas Paine appears to have mentioned his boyhood's home but once in his writings. In the *Age of Reason* he says that when he was about seven or eight years of age he heard a sermon read by a relative of his (probably his Aunt Cocke) who was a great devotee of the Church, and after the sermon was ended, he "went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot)" revolted at the recollection of what he had heard. This was written in France in 1793, so that his memory of the little garden in White Hart-street (which from its situation on a double slope would most likely contain steps) was still very keen.

"It arose probably from the tenets of his father and the eccentricity of his mother," says Oldys, "that our author was never baptised, though he was privately named, and never received like true Christians into the bosom of the church, though he was indeed confirmed by the Bishop of Norwich owing to the orthodox zeal of Mistress Cocke, his aunt, a woman of such goodness that though she lived on a small annuity, she imparted much of this little to his mother, while he neglected his aged parents, amidst his cares for mankind." This is an example of his early biographers' venom and inaccuracy. The idea that he was not baptised arose from the fact that his name did not appear in the register of St. Cuthbert's parish. Not finding an entry relating to him, Oldys falsely assumed that in after life Paine himself had looked through the register, and not finding the record of his birth and baptism, had torn out a page of the register, so as to render reference impossible. An examination of the register shows how absurd is the theory, for it is quite obvious that there has been no mutilation. The necessary entries were, however, neglected by the incumbent in the years 1735-7, doubtless owing to a change of ministry that took place at that time. In a letter to Mr. Millington, Dr. Conway further points out that it is fair to assume that Paine was baptised like his sister, as otherwise the Bishop would not have confirmed him. He continues (under date December 18, 1898):—

"But how did the Church ladies obtain the consent of the Quaker Joseph Paine to his Confirmation? It is evident to me that Joseph knew the brightness of his son and wished to give him the best education Thetford could offer. And is it not likely that some connection with the Church was a condition of admission to the Grammar School in the middle of the last century? Paine on arrival in America regarded himself as a member of the Church of England."

Dr. Conway's surmise is probably correct, as the masters of the school were usually Church of England ministers; in 1660 the new gallery in St. Peter's Church was set apart for the master, usher, and scholars; and even at the present day—though the conditions are vastly different—the Church of England Prayer-book is used at the beginning and ending of school each day.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS SCHOOLDAYS AND YOUTH.

Thomas Paine received his early education at the Thetford Free Grammar School, which was founded by Sir Richard Fulmerston, Master of Horse to the Duke of Norfolk, who benefited largely by the dissolution of the monasteries, and by his will dated

1566, left lands on which a "free Grammar School" was to be erected. In 1610 it was built on the site of Bishop Herfast's cathedral—Thetford being the head of the diocese from 1078 to 1094—the church of the Holy Trinity, a Cluniac priory, and a house of Black Friars. Built into the Grammar School of Paine's day, as of the present, was one of the four basal arches of the tower of the church of the Holy Trinity. At the rear were also ivy-covered walls and fragments of windows, probably of the cathedral. After 1612 the school was divided into two departments, one being in charge of an usher, and the other of a master, the latter alone teaching Latin. Though during the greater part of the seventeenth century it was one of the most important schools in East Anglia, at the beginning of the eighteenth century it was reduced to one scholar—Thomas Martin, F.S.A., the historian of Thetford, who was born in the Preacher's Chamber of the Free School House on March 8, 1696-7. He was educated at the school, "where for a considerable time he was the only scholar; he attended, however, constantly every morning, stayed the usual hours, and at night locked the door, of which he was entrusted with the key, and returned home, sometimes not seeing the master for several days."

Prior to 1880, when the old school and school-master's and usher's house were pulled down and rebuilt, the latter was a long low structure flush with the path on the left side of London-road going southwards. In the grounds of this house stood the ancient yew, still a prominent object at the junction of Bury and London roads. From the plate in Martin's *History of Thetford* (1779) it will be seen that the old school building had one chimney-stack near the north gable, four dormer windows in the roof at the east side, and three windows high up in the walls, with an entrance porch. This porch was a curious structure with an open iron door, in a very low doorway, and in the angle above it two worked stones, one having the motto "Loialte me oblige" (*Loyauté me oblige*—the Norman-French motto of Sir Richard Fulmerston who founded the school) and above it two griffins with their tails interwoven. This porch was approached by a gateway with triangular pediment, immediately adjoining to the south the house now occupied by Dr. A. G. Minns. Beyond, the school grounds were bounded by a low wall within which was a row of trees. The interior of the school, as shown by a water-color painted in August 1878 and preserved in the Norwich Free Library, had the canopied master's desk at the south-end, above it being a four-light Jacobean window. The centre of the school was bare, and down each side were old-fashioned desks, backed by wood paneling, above which were rows of pegs. The floor was of stone paving.

In Paine's schooldays, when the number of scholars was probably but few, there appears only to have been a master—the Rev. William Knowles—and no usher, for in 1738 the Rev. Thomas Eversdon, who had been usher, was promoted to the head mastership, acting as usher as well. Paine says (*Rights of Man*, Part II.): "My parents were not able to give me a shilling beyond what they gave me in education, and to do this they distressed themselves." In the *Age of Reason*, he adds:—

"My father being of the Quaker profession it was my good fortune to have an exceeding good moral education and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the Grammar School I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school. The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged as leading too much into the field of imagination."

In the same book he said: "As to learning that any person gains from school education, it seems only like a small capital, to put him in the way of begin-

ning learning for himself afterwards." "It is only in the living languages," he further states, "that the new knowledge is to be found, and certain it is that in general a youth will learn more of a living language in one year than of a dead language in seven; and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself." Here there is probably some echo of his days at Thetford.

Oldys says:—

"The expense of young Paine's education was defrayed in some measure by his father, but chiefly by the relations of his mother. He was deemed a sharp boy of unsettled application, but he left no performances which denote juvenile vigor, or uncommon attainments. His tuition was directed by his expectations to what is useful, more than to what is ornamental; to reading, writing, and cyphering, which are so common to tradesmen rather than to classical knowledge, which is decorous in gentlemen."

Cheetham summarises the matter by stating that "his education was merely and scantily English." A more friendly biographer in the *Deists' Magazine* for 1820 says that he "gave very early indication of talents and strong abilities, and addicted himself, when a mere boy, to reading poetical authors; but this disposition his parents endeavored to discourage."

When eight years of age, he composed the following epitaph on a crow which he buried in the garden:—

"Here lies the body of John Crow
Who once was high, but now is low;
Ye brother Crows take warning all,
For as you rise, so must you fall."

At an even earlier age he composed some lines on a fly being caught in a spider's web, and when editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* wrote some very passable poetry.

As previously stated, Paine's father was a stay-maker in business for himself, and at the age of 13 Thomas was removed from school "to be taught the art and mystery of making stays." "The business of a stay-maker," says Oldys, "he never liked, or, indeed, any occupation which required attentive diligence and steady effort. He, however, worked on with his father, fitting stays for the ladies of Thetford during six years, except for a short while that he labored with a cousin in making bodices for the girls of Shipdham, in the county of Norfolk." Dr. Conway says that he was nearly five years with his father. Dr. Stanley Hall has pointed out that Paine had the itch for adventure, which comes to most boys at adolescence. In the *Rights of Man* (Part II.) Paine says:—

"At an early period, little more than 16 years of age, raw and adventurous, and heated with the false heroism of a master (Rev. William Knowles, master of the grammar-school of Thetford, in Norfolk) who had served in a man of war, I began the career of my own fortune, and entered on board the Terrible privateer, Captain Death. From this adventure I was happily prevented by the affection and moral remonstrances of a good father, who, from his own habits of life, being of the Quaker profession, must begin to look on me as lost. But the impression, much as it affected me at the time, began to wear away, and I entered afterwards in the King of Prussia privateer, Captain Mendez, and went with her to sea."

The first adventure appears to have been in 1758, and the second in 1756.

After attending the revival of Gipsy Smith, the evangelist in St. Paul, Minn., one man, entirely nude, perched himself upon a tombstone, there to await the arrival of Christ, and another attempted to walk from the second-storey window of his home into heaven. Both men were held for examination as to their sanity. Smith, the immediate cause of their lunacy, refused to discuss the matter with a local reporter further than to say that "no man loses his mind by contact with God." Unless the evangelist is admitted to be mad, this does not touch the question, for these men were crazed by contact with Smith.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Rabbits are Foolish, but Men are Wise!

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH L. TUPY.

The Contrast Drawn in a Fable by Charles Pelant, the Bohemian Author.

HEAR, O people, you kings of all creatures, you prudent and perfect beings, members of the genus *Homo sapiens*, what happened in a certain rabbit-stall.

In the corner of a large stall, a crowd of rabbits, young and old, males and females, listened to a large rabbit, unusually fat and with an impressive voice, who dwelt in the trough, from whence he preached. His stoutness was caused by the good pieces of carrot and tender leaves of cabbage which were delivered to him by the other rabbits for the sermons and the stretching of his paws over them; for this rabbit claimed to be very learned and that he had an especial gift or grace of daily communicating with Pfrax.

People, you evidently do not know what is a Pfrax; but be comforted, for neither did the rabbits know. Never in their lives had they seen him; there was no trace of him anywhere, and still they comprehended naught else, because, since youth, they were taught that there exists a Pfrax, and furthermore, because his existence was proven to them very learnedly by the fat and reverend rabbit; and therefore the entire stall believed it; and woe to him who should have dared to claim that Pfrax did not exist! The rabbits would have eaten all his cabbage and drank all his water, so that he would perish of hunger, and even then he would have to creep closely into a corner so that they should not let him feel their gnawing teeth!

Nevertheless, ideas of this kind did appear among the rabbits at different periods of time. Then the fat and reverend rabbit, manager and intellectual leader of the stall, would summons his community before the trough and preach to them thus:—

"Dear fellow rabbits! With grief I note that amongst you have appeared rabbits who dispute the existence of Pfrax, and who deny my right to speak in the name of this most high rabbit conception.

I ask you, can you believe such villains? For indeed, if you look about, everything speaks to you of His existence; look at this fine stall in which such remarkable and excellent darkness prevails. Not only that; adjoining us, as we have perceived through the fissure, is a new stall where the reverend rabbit preaches to rabbits of another race—of course, with views varying from ours, and therefore totally false. Who created this stall? Who caused the beautiful darkness in it? Who put such an abundance of straw in it? Who put this fine trough in it? Your rabbit-sense must say: That must have been Pfrax, and no one else! Ha, three times a day grass and brushwood appear in the trough for you, and pieces of carrot and clover for me; it is true that Pfrax, who wants to see whether the rabbit is sufficiently patient to endure suffering, and whether he will prove to be ungrateful for His unlimited goodness, and whether he will growl. And then the existence of your rabbit-soul proves to you that there must be something great in the likeness of which it is created. Do you mean to deny your rabbit-soul? Do you not move and think? Just look: as soon as a young one is brought into this world a soul is at once evident in it; and then do you not eat, drink, and multiply? Is that not evidence that you are created in the likeness of Pfrax? These are all proofs of the existence of your rabbit-soul, which scoundrels amongst you deny, as likewise that there is no Pfrax! But those who are so audacious should be damned, and at once shoved into the dark hole there in the corner! Let them ponder over what it is to insult opinions which our forefathers have approved sacred, and which it is your duty to defend. Or can you imagine that a stall, in which resided no belief in Pfrax, could exist for any length of time? Do you think that rabbits could keep on eating, drinking, and multiplying if they should deny the existence of Pfrax? It is impossible; war would arise between one set of rabbits and another, everyone would attempt to get to the trough, and also want to eat clover and carrots; anarchy, which we so bravely rebuke and destroy, would ensue; we, the preachers of Pfrax, would disappear—and that decidedly cannot be. The belief in Pfrax can under no circumstances be taken away from rabbits!

Pfrax, then, is! I tell you so, and other preachers also do. And through him are we, who are nearest to him, and in constant touch with him, authorised to act here, in his name. That you, common rabbits, have not seen him nor ever heard from him, that you do not understand him, is the most convincing evidence of his existence, for Pfrax is more than a rabbit can comprehend, as the most intellectual rabbit is only a wretch compared to Him. That is exactly the sacred secret that you do not understand and must not understand, because

even reasoning about it is a sin. But when you release yourselves from the chains of your rabbit mind, when your brain ceases to exist, He will at once be shown you even more brightly than daylight. You will some day disappear from the stall, as did all the rabbits heretofore. Whereunto those so-called rabbit scientists lie to you; but we know better; they claim that you will be devoured by worms or something; they speak of indestructible matter and unceasing change of form, but that is not true. The truth is that after your disappearance from here you will find yourself in a large meadow where only parsley, fresh cabbage, and lettuce grow, and this you will eat forever, without surfeiting yourself or tiring of it; at the same time you will look at Pfrax, who has prepared all this for his faithful rabbits. But you must obey me, his representative, and give me all the tender leaves, clover, and carrots; and those who do not believe and are disobedient will after their disappearance find themselves in a meadow where only thistles and nettles grow, and there they'll eat forever without pardon and without a single look at Pfrax.

As you have committed many wrongs, for example eaten, drank, and gambolled, each one will give me one-fifth of his feed to reconcile Pfrax. And now—hey, you, Miss Blackie there in the back, what have you been doing? Have you not had a desire to taste that nice lettuce belonging to me? Have you not jumped around merrily and made fun of the bellies of the reverend rabbits and disturbed their authority? Have you not lovingly eyed the young and gay rabbits, which is sinful and immoral? Come here behind the trough that I might ask you of these things more closely and forgive you in the name of the most high Pfrax, if you will obey all my orders! And the rest of you must not look behind here nor grumble when I ask her about all these things; that would be blasphemy, which as you know is punishable by the loss of the beautiful meadow I have told you about. Miss Blackie, step forward!"

But just then, one board of the stall disappeared and some unknown higher power caught the fat rabbit by the ears and pulled him out; the hole closed up again.

"Gone to the Great Meadow," whispered the rabbits secretly. "It is necessary that we elect a new fatty who will dwell in the trough and preach Pfrax to us; for without him, our rabbit morality and society cannot exist. The deniers of Pfrax would increase woefully and our warm and dark stall would fall apart."

And the rabbits elected a new reverend, to whom they went for sermons and to whom they send their maidens behind the trough for him to ask about their sins, and to whom they gave in abundance of all the best that, as they thought, Pfrax had thrown into the stall. This they did because they were entirely stupid animals, whilst man is the king of all creatures, a sensible and perfect being, a member of the genus *Homo sapiens*!—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I thank you very much for opening your columns to this important question. I, too, as a member of the I.L.P., have experienced the same thing. Christians have a free hand; Freethinkers receive the cold shoulder. I make no secret of my hostility to Christianity, and have consequently been boycotted. As I am absolutely certain it will lead eventually to disaster, and the usual channels in the Socialist movement are not open to us, we are grateful to you for the opportunity you are giving in the *Freethinker* for the subject to be ventilated.

You will remember, sir, that I had a correspondence with the Rev. R. J. Campbell on this self-same subject, a few months ago, when he advised me "not to be a fool" after intimating to him that Freethinkers in the movement did not intend to be silenced.

GEORGE BRADFIELD.

How oft, when young, my friends I would defame
If our religious faith were not the same,
But now my soul has travelled high and low—
Now all save love, to me, is but a name.

A church, a temple, or a Kaba stone,
Koran or Bible or a Martyr's bone—
All these and more my heart can tolerate
Since my religion now is love alone.

To all humanity, O consecrate
Thy heart, and shun the thousand sects that prate
About the things the little know about—
Let all receive thy pity, love, or hate

—*Abu'l Ala* (Arabic poet).

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.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, W. J. Ramsey, Lectures.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road). 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "If I were God."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30 and 6, C. Cohen, Lectures.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11, Arthur B. Moss, "New Age of Reason."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. Beresford-square: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, E. C. Saphin, "Christianity and Its Christian Critics."

COUNTRY.**OUTDOOR.**

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Durdham Downs): 7.15, B. G. Brown, "The Failure of Christianity." Tuesday, May 25 (Haymarket), at 8, B. G. Brown, "How Man makes Gods."

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LEITH (Foot of the Walk): Wednesdays, 8.15, a Lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Conference Agenda and Delegates.

JOSEPH BATES' EAST ANGLIAN MISSION.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Bargate Green, Sunday, May 23, at 6.30, "God and Nature."

SIBSEY: Wednesday, May 26, at 7.30, "Religion and Humanity."

PETERBORO' (Jubilee Fountain): Thursday, May 27, at 6 o'clock, "Cogito ergo sum."

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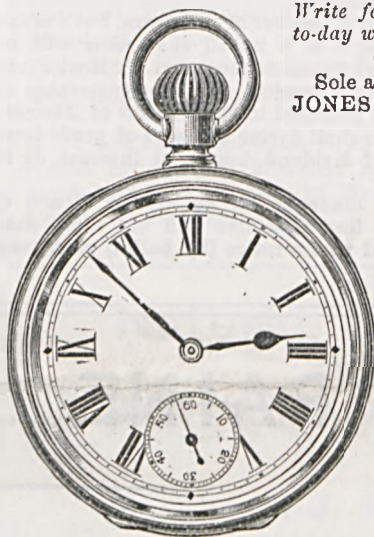
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