

THE Freethinker

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Do we want to be strong?—we must work. To be hungry?—we must starve. To be happy?—we must be kind. To be wise?—we must look and think.

—JOHN RUSKIN.

“Blasphemy” Again.

My readers will recollect the “blasphemy” case of the early part of last year. Mr. Harry Boulter was prosecuted under the Common Law of Blasphemy on account of open-air lectures delivered by him at Highbury Corner. He was in no way connected with the National Secular Society, but the Society assisted him as a matter of principle. Besides paying all the costs of his defence, it helped him in various other ways by its interposition. As President of the N. S. S., I took as much trouble over the case as if it were my own. The Society refused, as I refused, to consider the question raised by others as to the good taste and value of Mr. Boulter's propaganda. That was not the real question at issue. Mr. Boulter was prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws, which were designed by Christians for the oppression of Freethinkers, and never had any other object. Under those Laws, Christians claim the right to punish a Freethinker for criticising their creed in a way that they choose to consider displeasing. To concede them that right, theoretically or practically, is impossible to any self-respecting friend of Freethought. The principle involved was perfectly clear. If the man prosecuted for “blasphemy” were the meanest or worst man in the world (I mean no offence to Mr. Boulter), the principle remained the same. He was attacked by Christians and as a Freethinker, under a law designed for that purpose. The duty of the N. S. S. was therefore as plain as daylight. Every application of the Blasphemy Laws had to be resisted; not this or that application, but every application. Bigotry and persecution are not things to be held terms with. They must be opposed at all cost. That was the principle on which the National Secular Society acted. And I say now, as I said then, that the principle is unassailable.

“Blasphemy” prosecutions have seldom failed. Mr. Boulter was found guilty. Mr. Justice Phillimore, however, instead of passing sentence, exacted an undertaking from Mr. Boulter not to repeat his offence. Mr. Boulter signed a document expressing regret for the language he had used, and promising that he would not use such language again. While that undertaking was being fixed up Mr. Boulter was not in any sort of communication with me. He was under lock and key. The undertaking was his own act. I said at the time that it was not an heroic act, but I also said that I had no right to blame a man for not being a hero.

That undertaking was a noose round Mr. Boulter's neck, and some day or other it was pretty sure to be

pulled tight. For he was obviously not a very careful or dexterous speaker, and was tolerably certain to get into trouble again if he went on lecturing. I am only astonished that the police have given him so long a run. But they have pulled him up at last.

Mr. Boulter was served with a notice to appear at the Central Criminal Court on Tuesday, June 8, at 8 o'clock in the afternoon, with a view to receiving sentence, in consequence of his having violated his undertaking. He was also served with what purported to be verbatim reports of his speeches at Highbury Corner and Clapham Common during May. He surrendered on Tuesday before Mr. Justice Darling, who postponed the case until the following afternoon. Thus the case is *sub judice* while I am writing, directly after leaving the court; and I must confine myself to a statement of my own action in regard to it.

I was asked by Mr. Boulter for advice, and I gave assistance. No doubt the N. S. S. Executive will endorse my action; if not, I am prepared to bear the responsibility. My view is that every “blasphemy” prosecution must be frustrated if possible. I am ready to do anything to that end. Accordingly I placed the matter in the hands of Mr. Harper, the solicitor who acted for us before, with instructions to engage counsel. When the case opened on Tuesday, it was arranged that Mr. Frank Shewell Cooper should represent the defence on points of law, and that the rest should be left to Mr. Boulter himself. This was done at Mr. Boulter's wish.

I felt obliged to do something more. I gave Mr. Boulter a written promise that, if he were sent to prison, his wife and family should not suffer materially during his absence. That promise I shall fulfil, if necessary, and in no niggardly spirit; and I am confident that the Freethought party will support me in fulfilling it. Not that I wish to do this as a personal act. I desire it to be done through the Society.

What will happen to-morrow (the reader will remember that I am writing on Tuesday afternoon) I do not know, and I shall not prophesy. But this I know: that I have to do my own duty, and that no other Freethinkers have to do theirs, and that no one can be excused from doing his duty because it is not exhilarating.

It will be understood that I am not acting in any dictatorial spirit. One cannot stand upon mere punctilios in a serious emergency. It was impossible to summon a meeting of the N. S. S. Executive. Action had to be taken at once. I took it as the President of the Society, the chief guardian of its interests and its honor, and the only person who could act decisively in such a crisis. Nor do I think the N. S. S. wants a dummy President. I should have no ambition for the post if it did.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and Psychology.—V.

(Concluded from p. 355.)

THE perversion of the sexual nature in the interests of Christian belief, unconscious though it may have been, has led to some curious results in the history of Christianity. The complete history of the many curious sects among the Christians of the first few centuries will probably never be written, but there is enough evidence to prove that peculiarities of sexual customs, to use a mild phrase, played a large part in their formation. As the Rev. S. Baring Gould says, "That there was, in the breast of the new-born church, an element of antinomianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact." Unfortunately, this did not die out with the early Church. It has persisted in Christian circles down to our own day, as is seen in the case of the notorious Piggott. In his curious work, *Spiritual Wives*, Mr. Hepworth Dixon has given a long account of these sexual aberrations in Christian organisations from St. Paul onward. And it is interesting to note that he connects such movements as that of the Pietists in Germany, the Bible Community in America, and the Princeites at Spaxton—all associations formed within the last sixty or seventy years—directly with the state of mind produced by religious revivals.

To-day, Russia presents perhaps the best field for the study of a form of religio-eroticism that was once much more widespread than is now the case. From a description of several Russian sects described by Mr. Heard in *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent* I select the following account of the Khlysti:—

"They meet secretly at night, the leader chants the prayers, commencing in a low monotonous tone, gradually increasing in rapidity and loudness, and with the growing excitement of his hearers, he begins a slow jumping movement, modulated on his song, and becoming more and more violent as his voice rises higher and the chanting quickens; the audience, arranged in couples, engaged to each other in advance, imitate his example and join the strain; the bounds and the singing grow louder and faster as the frenzy spreads, until at its height, the leader shouts that he hears the voices of angels; the lights are extinguished, the jumping ceases, and the scene that follows in the darkness defies description. Each one yields to his desires, born of inspiration, and therefore righteous, and to be gratified; all are brethren in Christ, all promptings of the inner spirit are holy; incest, even, is no sin. They repudiate marriage, and justify their abominations by the Biblical legends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like."

The Skopsi and other sects described by Mr. Heard exhibit the same erotic extravagances, and serve to remind the informed reader of a phase of Christian history about which the average believer knows next to nothing. Deluded by the myth of the purity of primitive Christianity, and treating all such accounts he comes across as of an anti-Christian character, he quite fails to realise that while the conditions for these sexual aberrations were from the first contained in Christian doctrines, the habit of explaining all obscure and ill-understood impulses as of divine or diabolic agency supplied the condition for their active manifestation. There is, indeed, something morbid in that exaggerated self-consciousness of the presence of sexual instincts which has been so prominent a feature with so many Christian preachers and writers. To be forever dwelling upon sexual vice is not evidence of a clean mind, but of the reverse. Sex covers a deal of life, but it is not the whole, and of the region that it does cover Nature has cunningly cloaked it with a number of secondary and tertiary feelings that it is perhaps not the wisest policy to strip on one side. If Christian preachers have dwelt so strongly and so persistently upon sexual vice, this has not been due to extra purity on their part, but because the sinful nature of the sex impulse is part and parcel of the Christian creed. "Madam," said Dr. Johnson to an abbess, "you are not here from

love of virtue, but from fear of vice." Not cleanliness, but uncleanness, was the parent of the impure virtue of celibacy. A perfectly healthy mind is not filled with doubts and misgivings concerning the normal functions of human nature; and when there does exist this morbid condition of introspection, it is the physician, not the priest, who is most needed.

In dealing with conversions, I pointed out that this was almost entirely a phenomenon of adolescence, in which normal and healthy feelings were treated as proof of supernatural influence. But, in addition, we have a distinctly pathologic aspect that is well in evidence. In his epoch making *Primitive Culture*, Professor Tylor, with rare perspicacity, boldly affiliated the phenomena of revival meetings with his descriptions of what took place among the lower races. He rightly says that the description one reads of in connection with Christian evangelistic efforts,—

"carry us far back in the history of the human mind, showing modern men, still in ignorant sincerity, producing the very fits and swoons to which, for untold ages, savage tribes have given religious import. These manifestations in modern Europe indeed form part of a revival of religion, the religion of mental disease."

The fitness of the phrase, "the religion of mental disease" is well seen when we take descriptions furnished by competent observers on the subjects of various revivals and conversions. A medical observer of some of the earliest Methodist revivals thus describes the general symptoms attending these "divine" seizures:—

"There came on first a feeling of faintness with rigor and a sense of weight at the pit of the stomach; soon after which the patient cried out, as if in the agonies of labor. The convulsions then began, first showing themselves in the muscles of the eyelids, though the eyes themselves were fixed and staring. The most frightful contortions of the countenance followed, and the convulsions now took their course downwards, so that the muscles of the trunk and neck were affected, causing a sobbing respiration, which was performed with great effort. Tremors and agitations ensued, and the patients screamed out violently, and tossed their heads from side to side. As the complaint increased, it seized the arms, and its victims beat their breasts, clasped their hands, and made all sorts of strange gestures."

And this from Southey's *Life of Wesley*:—

"At Everton some were shrieking, some roaring aloud.....The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled gasping for life.....Great numbers wept without noise; others fell down as dead. I stood upon a pew-seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew—an able-bodied, fresh, healthy country man; but in a moment, when he seemed to think of nothing else, down he dropped with a violence inconceivable. I saw a sturdy boy about eight years old, who roared above his fellows.....His face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid his hand turned either very red or almost black."

"On whom God laid his hand!" Is there a physician alive, worth his salt, who would fail to diagnose such symptoms? Allowing for differences of dress and language, what is there to differentiate such scenes from what occurs amongst savages to-day? Mentally, such people are still in an uncivilised state; their religion is, as Tylor rightly calls it, "the religion of mental disease."

The same general fact meets us in considering the cases of conversion collected by Dr. Starbuck. On the purely physiological side 39 per cent. of the males experienced loss of appetite or of sleep, general nervousness, affections of the sight or hearing or of the muscular sense, preceding or during conversion. And, psychologically, the symptoms were on the same plane. I give a few of the cases, with the ages of the converts in brackets. "I thought something terrible was about to happen" (14). "I couldn't eat; I would lie awake at night; I was excited" (19). "I was very wicked; my heart was black; I experienced nothing but unaccountable sadness" (19). "I had visions of Christ saying to me, 'Come to me, my child'" (15). "Just before con-

version I was walking along a pathway thinking of religious matters, when suddenly the word H-E-L-L was spelled out five yards ahead of me" (17). "I fell on a bench and tried to pray. Every time I would call on God something like a man's hand would strangle me by choking.....And the last I remember at that time was falling back upon the ground with the same unseen hand at my throat. When I came to myself there was a crowd around praising God" (18).

There is really no need to go amongst savages for illustrations of the uncivilised human mind. It is here in our midst, to a much larger degree than most people imagine. Every now and then we see it cropping up in isolated cases of witchcraft and other crude superstitions, and it is always to be met with in the lower circles of the religious world. And, let it not be forgotten, it is upon these lower religious phases that the higher ones are built, and with no other or better foundation. Our "religious consciousness" is a heritage from the past, and has been elaborated on a basis of senseless beliefs and exploded superstitions. The results of fasting, maceration of the body, the influence of drugs, the mistaken interpretation of epilepsy, insanity, and of both normal and abnormal nervous states, have all contributed to build up the belief in human communion with a supernatural world. If a belief died at once when its bases were destroyed, religion would have long since disappeared from civilised communities. But this is not the case. It is one thing to show that religion has been built upon fraud, delusion, and wrong belief. It is quite another to get people out of the old ruts and induce them to walk in a new path. We no longer accept that view of nature and of man which gave religion birth, but we still retain an interpretation of both that is admittedly based upon a false foundation. Those who care may, as I have pointed out, take every one of the phenomena classed as religious and explain them upon purely naturalistic lines. We do not deny religion, we explain it; and in the long run this is the deadliest form of assault. Our assault is directed from the vantage-ground of a higher view of man, and from that of a more comprehensive synthesis. Religion holds no mystery for the Freethinker; it only presents him with the problem of how best to make its real nature plain to the mind of a too-long-befooled public.

C. COHEN.

Second-Hand Morality.

PRINCIPAL A. E. GARVIE, D.D., of New College, Hampstead, is a scholar of distinction. He studied at Edinburgh, obtained first-class honors in philosophy at Glasgow, and first-class honors in theology at Oxford, and gained other high distinctions both at Oxford and Glasgow. Of his great learning in certain directions there can be no doubt whatever. But great learning is no guarantee of deep and sound thinking, nor does it serve as a barrier against narrow-mindedness and prejudice. Principal Garvie is, first of all, a theologian of the orthodox type, an evangelical preacher, and by profession a trainer of candidates for the Gospel ministry. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Christian Evidence Society a fortnight ago, he furnished a practical illustration of his inability to do anything like justice to the claims of non-Christian people. Of the literature of unbelief he had no good word to utter. Much of it was certainly beneath contempt, only it should be borne in mind that it was not contemptible in the estimation of the uncultured men for whom it was written. Of course, Dr. Garvie himself speaks only to the cultured in a highly cultured style, and all he utters deserves careful consideration. Christianity, in his opinion, is "a power which makes for the full development of the whole personality." Nothing else is, or can be, such a power. Non-Christian morality, at its very best, is a wretchedly poor thing, the filthiest of filthy rags. "Such moralities could

not have such lofty ideals as the morality that drew directly from the faith itself. There were finer graces of life that could only spring up when man was in a close relationship with God as well as with man." Indeed, "many non-Christian moralists were living a Christian life at second-hand." According to the *Daily News* report, he gave expression to a somewhat different sentiment—namely, that "men who lived a moral life without professing Christianity lived it 'second-hand,' helped by their Christian environment." But whatever the exact words employed may have been, it is incontrovertible that, in Dr. Garvie's opinion, morality is an exclusively Christian product, and never rises to its highest save in the Christian religion.

Now, inasmuch as this doctrine is taught by the overwhelming majority of Christian divines, and inasmuch as this fresh expression of it by so eminent a gentleman as Principal Garvie is calculated to exert a powerful influence over many minds, it behoves us to examine it with critical care. In the first place, it is an absolutely undeniable fact that morality antedates the oldest religion. It is as old as social life itself. Darwin hesitated to regard gregarious animals as moral beings, because by a moral being he understood "one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving of them"; but the great thinker's hesitation was due to the fact that he had adopted a false definition of a moral being. In reality, a moral being is one who is capable of performing moral actions; and this is more or less true of all social animals. The difference between their morality and man's is simply one of degrees. In the second place, human morality was originally unconnected with supernaturalism. The most ancient religions were not ethical. As Mill says, "Among the Greeks generally social morality was extremely independent of religion." In Confucianism, man's duty towards God is treated as in every way subordinate to his duty towards his fellow-man. In Buddhism, the whole emphasis is on morality; nothing else matters in the least. Sir Monier Monier-Williams and Professor Rhys Davids declare that early Buddhism was wholly Atheistic; and yet it inculcated the noblest type of morality. In the third place, it is historically verifiable that the most brilliant ages of faith were by no means the most exalted ethically. During the Middle Ages "doubt as to the reality of things divine was an infrequent intruder, and when it came it was repelled as a messenger of Satan"; but this unclouded faith co-existed with the most flagrant wickedness. Even Dean Milman admits that Christianity acted beneficially on a few superior minds "rather than on the mass of worshipers." Everybody is familiar with the hideous corruptions and immoralities of the notorious tenth century; but investigation reveals the mournful fact that the thirteenth was not one whit better. Theologically and religiously this century was indeed a golden age, but morally it was an age darkened by deeds of violence, fraud, and impurity on a scale almost inconceivable to us. The clergy were far more depraved than the laity. In the opinion of the people, Christianity was a soul-saving, not a moralising, religion.

Nothing can be more firmly established than the fact that a profession of Christianity does not make people moral; and nobody knows this better than Dr. Garvie. On what ground of fact or of reason, then, does he maintain that the morality of non-Christians is second-hand? John Stuart Mill was the son of a vigorous unbeliever. His Freethinking father was his only teacher, and readers of his *Autobiography* are aware on what strictly secular lines his education, from first to last, was conducted. And yet this Freethinker's son, who was himself a Freethinker throughout his life, is acknowledged to have been ethically superior to the average men and women of his day. There was absolutely nothing in the Christian environment to account for the exceptional elevation and purity of his moral sentiments and actions. But in case Dr. Garvie

may still plead that his morality was second-hand, in that he lived in a nominally Christian country, let us consider the moral position of the Chinese. China is a non-Christian country, and yet it is incontestable that the Chinese are, on the whole, the most highly moralised people under the sun. Their sense of justice is of a very fine quality and their honesty is transparent. Their word is their bond. In commerce they are eminently trustworthy. Their family life is almost ideal. It is the unequivocal testimony of one who has lived among them, on terms of closest intimacy, for many years, that there is among them a vast deal of quiet, happy, domestic life. Now, even Dr. Garvie must admit that Chinese morality owes nothing to Christianity, but is a purely home-growth. It is beyond all doubt that the Confucian moral code is second to none in the world, and that the Chinese approach their ideal more nearly than almost any other nation.

Second-hand morality! Nobody will deny that in the history of Rome the century preceding the accession of Vespasian (70 A.D.) was morally as dark and corrupt a period as the Roman people had ever experienced. It was an age of vulgar ostentation, enervating luxury, and desolating profligacy. At the same time it was by no means so deep-sunk in unmentionable vices as Christian writers generally allege. But Vespasian inaugurated numerous reforms and ushered in "a period of upright and benevolent administration and of high public virtue," as well as "of almost unexampled peace and prosperity." This period lasted a hundred years; and all students are fully convinced that Christianity had positively nothing to do with it. It was the product of a revived Stoicism, and it came to an end with the last Stoic emperor. Then commenced that slow but sure disintegration of the Roman Empire which never stopped until the final catastrophe occurred. It is a significant fact that from 180 A.D. the Empire decayed almost in proportion as Christianity grew in popular favor. The decay was political, moral, social, and intellectual. In the latter half of the fourth century Christianity became the State religion. Now Lecky tells us that "the two centuries after Constantine are uniformly represented by the fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice," and that the established religion "proved itself altogether unable to regenerate Europe." A magnificent moral reformation had been effected under Paganism, which lasted from 70 A.D. to 180. When this golden period closed Christianity was rapidly acquiring influence and power, but it was utterly incapable of checking the downward trend. When Christianity became the official religion its one object was, not to moralise the people, but to exterminate Paganism. Morality it shrewdly relegated into a distant background. What it loved and worked for was power, and this it obtained not by moralising society but by undertaking to insure individual souls for the world to come. Dip into Church history at whatever point you please and you are confronted by frightful examples of the sad ascendancy of the forces of evil. Milman, though a firm advocate of the Divine origin and power of Christianity, accounts for its undoubted moral failure by the shockingly inconsistent statement that "evil was too profoundly seated in the habits of the Roman world to submit to the control of religion." In another place he explains it on the ground that Christianity itself had become hopelessly corrupt. The only rational explanation is to be found in the fact that Christianity is not true. And the curious thing is that this pretentious religion never put its supreme emphasis upon morality until the belief in its truth began to wane. And yet whenever its ministers are obliged to admit the existence of beautiful morality beyond its pale they speak contemptuously of it as a second-hand commodity, produced indirectly under its shadow, and doomed to perish without its protecting care.

The truth is that morality was at a frightfully low ebb in the ages of faith, that Christian apologists never laid stress on the alleged moralising power of Christianity until the confidence in its truth was

seriously shaken, and that the present passion for morality displayed by Christian ministers is a child, not of Christianity, but of the Humanism which Christianity suppressed on its assumption of political power, and which now, in its turn, has inaugurated the process of extinguishing Christianity. It is what is called Christian morality that is second-hand. Christianity stole most of its morality from Nature and arrayed it in supernatural garments. Now, Nature is gradually getting her own back again, and stripping it of its false supernatural character, with the result that Christianity, relieved of its stolen property, is dying a natural death. Such are time's revenges.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Betrayal of George Meredith.—II.

IDEAL chiefly with Meredith's view of a future life because everything turns upon it. Without that doctrine, theology becomes an academic question. Man is thinking of himself all the time that he is apparently thinking of God. In the beginning he worshiped the gods out of fear; afterwards he worshiped them partly out of thankfulness; but both the fear and the thankfulness were egoistic emotions. James Thomson wittily said that God was the dot to complete the Christian's "i." Just in proportion as men think less of themselves and more of others, just in proportion as they become less egoistic and more humanitarian, the idea of a future life ceases to be of overmastering importance, and finally ceases to be of any practical interest. To put the teaching of ethnology in a nutshell, religion began in animism, and ends with it. When man gives up belief in his own "ghost" he is at the beginning of the end. His abandonment of belief in all other "ghosts" is only a matter of time.

Now it is perfectly clear that Meredith rejected the doctrine of a future life. He dismissed it with a certain contempt, as belonging to inferior stages of human culture. This fact is noticed by Mr. G. M. Trevelyan in *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*. In the third chapter on "The Philosopher and Moralist," he notes that while Meredith speaks of Faith as necessary to life,—

"his Faith is not belief in this or that fact as to the mechanism of the Universe, this or that view of the questions of God or Immortality in the narrower sense. His Faith is an attitude of trust and joy in the good elements of the world which, whatever optimist or pessimist may say, clearly contains both good and evil. This Faith of his is tinged with humorous impatience against that prying temper which he calls,—

'Unfaith clamoring to be coined
To faith by proof.'

These words are directed, first against those who preach to us that unless certain 'revealed' facts are true, the human race is without hope or motive for life; and secondly, against those agnostics who wail over their own doubts and negations, and shiver because they have not knowledge of the unknowable. The details of the mechanism, certainly beyond our knowledge and probably beyond our comprehension, do not interest Mr. Meredith. His Faith, as he himself confesses, is not due to proof. It is rather due to temperament. But that temperament is the right one for men above whose heads is drawn the curtain of the unknown."

This is a long statement—I do not say unnecessarily long—of the simple fact that Meredith was not a Theist but a Humanist.

Mr. Trevelyan, in the same chapter, after pointing out that Meredith was an evolutionist, believing that man, both in body and in spirit, is a natural child of Mother Earth, touches upon his attitude towards the life after death:—

"He objects on moral grounds to the cry for eternity of individual life and love as a claim established upon the Universe, which it must pay us under pain of our displeasure with the sum of things. Security for the continuance of good is a hope that 'touches present' and on that score, fortunately, Faith can bid us be of good cheer, since reason and observation are at least

not against us. But the craving for the perpetuation of self and its treasures in their separate form, fails morally, because it does not recognise that we are parts of a whole. Our individual separateness is but a means of progress, not an end in itself."

All this and more I intend to show from Meredith's poetry. But before I begin that task, or rather resume it at the point where I left off in my previous article, I had better refer to the very explicit statement made by Dr. Robertson Nicoll in last week's *British Weekly*—and it must be remembered that this is a Christian journal and its editor a Christian minister. Dr. Nicoll says that in one of his interviews with Meredith the poet read aloud a striking passage from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and what followed shall be told in the journalist's own words:—

"The last quotation led him to talk about personal immortality. 'You believe in it?' he said. 'But, for my part, I cannot conceive it. Which personality is it which endures? I was one man in youth and another man in middle age.' He then moved his stick in the ground and said, 'I have been this and this and this. Which is it that is immortal?' I ventured to remind him of what John Stuart Mill said about the persistence of the ego. He said, with some vehemence, 'I do not feel it. I have never felt it. I have never felt the unity of personality running through my life. I have been'—this with a smile—'I have been six different men: six at least. No,' he said, 'I cannot conceive personal immortality.' This is the teaching of his writings."

Dr. Nicoll adds that he believes Meredith had "glimpses" of something better, but what is the value of the pious journalist's belief in face of the poet's peremptory disavowal? "I cannot conceive personal immortality" were Meredith's words, and he surely knew his own mind on the subject. Moreover, as his confession to Dr. Nicoll is also "the teaching of his writings," the question is really closed.

Perhaps this quotation from one Christian should be followed at once by a quotation from another Christian. Dr. John Clifford, the famous champion and guardian of the Nonconformist Conscience, made the death of Meredith the theme of his Whit-Sunday sermon. What this reverend gentleman said on such a subject is of no intrinsic importance. But nature has endowed the species of men he belongs to with a keen and accurate nose for heresy, and we may accept without demur the following passage (I quote from the *British Weekly* report) in which the preacher spoke of Meredith's unfortunate defects:—

"One is that he does not help me to think of the Eternal, of the Infinite, in the sweet and tender and wholesome and, as it seems to me, sane way that Jesus Christ does. He does not help me to think of God, the Eternal, that he so often speaks of as Nature, law, and earth, as the Father. And the other thing I miss is this. He does not make so much use of the man-loving Nazarene as I should like him to do. He refers to Him and speaks His thought and preaches upon His work, but he does not make the Christ, the Eternal Redeemer and Eternal King of men, so dominant in his thought and life as I would have been glad if he had."

What is this but saying that Meredith was not a Christian? Dr. Clifford would so much like to have had him somewhere in the tabernacle, if only near the door, but he has to bewail the fact that Meredith was right outside.

Some of my readers may be saying "Confound Dr. Clifford! What does he matter?"—and be saying to me "Leave off your damnable faces and begin." Well, I will.

First of all, I take a fine passage from the "Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn" which appeared in the *Modern Love* volume of 1862, and is not easily accessible now:—

"And O, green bounteous earth!
Bacchante mother! stern to those
Who live not in thy heart of mirth;
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

In *A Reading of Earth*, published in 1888, there is

a poem called "The Thrush in February," which is full of Meredith's essential philosophy. The following passage states his view of the life and destiny of individual man:—

"Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.
With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.
Naught else are we when sailing brave,
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern
Across the river of the death
Their close."

As for the "morality" of the doctrine of a future life, the following couplet from the same poem shows what Meredith thought of it:—

"The loose restraint of wanton life,
That threatened penance in the ghost!"

So much for the threat of hell as a safeguard of ethics. Nor is that all. In reply to those "of shrinking nerves" who look upon Nature, in the light of their personal hopes and fears, as a terrible Mother, devouring her offspring, the poet says:—

"A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best:
She reaps them as the sower reaps.
But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at a cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious might."

It is in the life of the race that we must find our consolation. Nay, if we throw ourselves into the life of the race we need no consolation.

The finest and completest statement of Meredith's convictions is to be found in "A Faith on Trial," in the same volume. The trial came through Meredith's loss of his wife. The poet goes forth from home on a May morning, while his wife was under sentence of death:—

"I mounted our hill, bearing heart
That had little of life save its weight:
The crowned Shadow poisoning dart
Hung over her: she, my own.
My good companion, mate,
Pulse of me: she who had shown
Fortitude quiet as earth's
At the shedding of leaves."

What follows is an intimate expression of personal feeling. Love is face to face with the Destroyer. We are in the holy of holies. And the voice of grief is not only that of a suffering man, but that of a great poet. The sincerity and beauty of it are wonderful. Often as I have read this noble poem, I cannot read it even now, after the lapse of twenty years, without being deeply moved.

The poet, as he continued his walk—an exercise in which Meredith delighted—

"champed the sensations that make
Of a ruffled philosophy rags."

Earth had become "a Mother of aches and jests." Presently he is met by the "small fry" with their maypole, who take his gift and go off "chatter, hop, skip" to the "next easy shedders of pence."

"Why not? for they had me in tune
With the hungers of my kind.
Do readings of earth draw thence,
Then a concord deeper then cries
Of the Whither whose echo is Whence,
To jar unanswered, shall rise
As a fountain-jet in the mind
Bowing dark o'er the falling and strewn."

It was the thought of his kind that brought "the peace within"—a peace that remained until "the dividing knife" struck its last blow, and the dear hand that "never had failed in its pressure" to his "hung slack."

The lesson suggested by the children came through no supernatural or mysterious channel:—

"But in myself did I know,
Not needing a studious brow,
Or trust in a governing star."

The rest of "A Faith on Trial" works out the philosophy of bereavement. You call in your passion of grief upon Nature:—

"Weep, bleed, rave, writhe, be distraught,
She is moveless. Not of her breast
Are the symbols we conjure when Fear
Takes leaven of Hope. I caught,
With Death in me shrinking from Death,
As cold from cold, for a sign
Of the life beyond ashes: I cast,
Believing the vision divine,
Wings of that dream of my Youth
To the spirit beloved: 'twas unglazed
On her breast, in her depths austere:
A flash through the mist, mere breath,
Breath on a buckler of steel."

Nature gives no endorsement to the dreams of religion. Man may revolt at her laws, but she will not alter them. His sentimental vanity may induce him to believe that he is acting loftily in yearning for reunion with the loved and lost, but the poet remorselessly notes that—

"If we strain to the farther shore,
We are catching at comfort near."

The attitude of Nature to man and his claims upon her may be severe, but it is the severity of unalterable law:—

"Not she gives the tear for the tear:
Harsh wisdom gives Earth, no more;
In one the spur and the curb:
An answer to thoughts or deeds;
To the Legends an alien look;
To the Questions a figure of clay."

In an eternally mutable universe man clamors for what he loves or desires to be unchanging:—

"Cry we for permanence fast,
Permanence hangs by the grave;
Sits on the grave green-grassed,
On the roll of the heaved grave-mound.
By Death, as by Life, are we fed:
The two are one spring; our bond
With the numbers; with whom to unite
Here feathers wings for beyond:
Only they can waft us in flight
For they are Reality's flower."

Again, it will be seen, the poet returns to his old text. Man finds all his strength, and comfort, and consolation in Humanity. His true ideal is "Just reason based on valiant blood." Reason is Earth's dearest daughter, with the clear sight and the warrior heart:—

"Reason, man's germinant fruit.
She wrestles with the old worm
Self in the narrow and wide:
Relentless quencher of lies.
With laughter she pierces the brute;
And hear we her laughter peal,
'Tis light in us dancing to scour
The loathed recess of his dens;
Scatter his monstrous bed,
And hound him to harrow and plough.

Not least is the service she does,
That service to her may cleanse
The well of the Sorrows in us;
For a common delight will drain
The rank individual fens
Of a wound refusing to heal
While the old worm slavers its root."

Opposed to Reason are the Legends of the ignorant and superstitious past:—

"The Legends that sweep her aside,
Crying loud for an opiate boon,
To comfort the human want,
From the bosom of magical skies,
She smiles on, marking their source:
They read her with infant eyes."

The "opiate boon from the bosom of magical skies" (the sweet promises of revelation and priestcraft) is a foolish thing to Reason. It is the result of reading Nature with "infant eyes." And one may observe that what was childlike in an earlier stage of man's growth is childish in a higher stage of his development.

Meredith's reason conquered the revolt of his egoism in that tempest of grief. It enabled him

to stand firmly by his well-grounded conviction that love for the dead can only express itself faithfully in service to the living. And the climax is seen in the following superb passage:—

"I bowed as a leaf in rain;
As a tree when the leaf is shed
To winds in the season at wane:
And when from my soul I said,
May the worm be trampled: smite,
Sacred Reality! power
Filled me to front it aright.
I had come of my faith's ordeal."

The poet's philosophy had stood the test. Heated in the fires of grief, it had been cooled again in the fountain of wisdom, and was henceforth as strong as steel.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

Between three and four hundred members of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry attended "divine service" at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, May 30, and heard a sermon by the Rev. J. H. F. Peile. The preacher seems to have quite forgotten the character of these special members of his congregation. He ought to have explained to them the chemistry of Jesus Christ's wine-and-water trick at that marriage feast in Cana of Galilee; how he produced out of a simple liquid like pure water such a complex liquid as drinkable wine. A sermon on this subject would (or should) have been very interesting to those Applied Chemists. But the reverend gentleman sailed off on another tack. He indulged in a lot of general remarks on the harmony between Christianity and science, and wound up with the edifying statement that "Christians had practically ceased to regard those who made impartial study of the facts of life or of doctrine as enemies of their faith." This reminds us of the man who went about boasting that he had left off beating his father. Why did he begin it? And why did Christians ill-use those who studied nature? The only possible answer is that their religion prompted them to do so. And why do they leave off their foolish intolerance? Not because their religion has changed, but because the times have changed—and they are obliged to change with them.

Over two hundred of the Applied Chemists attended High Mass at Westminster Cathedral—where they witnessed what can only be done by priests in a church and never by men of science in a laboratory. They saw a bit of baked flour and water transformed into the very body of Christ. We suppose we ought to congratulate them on their *nil admirari* attitude.

The *Evening News* of June 2 contained the following report:—

"After delivering a speech in Victoria Park, a Freethinker named Sullivan Abrahams, aged sixty-six, of Bonnor-road, Bethnal Green, fell dead from heart failure, said a doctor at the inquest."

Such is news—in the *Evening News*. The man was called Solomon Abrahams, he did not fall dead, and he was not a Freethinker. He was an orthodox Jew, and he had opposed the Freethought lecturer, Mr. W. J. Ramsey. While Mr. Ramsey was replying, his opponent became ill and sat down on the platform, where he presently died, Mr. Neate, the N. S. S. Branch secretary, holding his hand all the time.

The Bethnal Green Coroner has had occasion to say something about veracity. "We are all brought up as Christians," he said, "not to tell untruths, but I am afraid that a great many of us do. Christianity is only skin deep." But is not the Coroner mistaken on the matter of fact? Are Christians brought up to tell the truth? Veracity was one of the chief virtues—if not the chief virtue—with Pagans; but Christians have never paid it much attention, and when a lie was told for the glory of God they accounted it a virtue. Is it astonishing, then, that they accounted it no less a virtue when it tended to their own advantage?

The Earl of Denbigh has provided a miniature rifle-range on his Newnham Paddocks estate, to keep the village lads from loafing about the roads and playing cards under the hedges on Sunday. This has called forth a protest from the Rev. W. E. Jackson, vicar of Monk Kirby (Warwickshire), who says that "nations which can no longer do without pleasures on the Sabbath day are falling nations." His lordship, however, refuses to close the rifle-range. He declines to help the vicar to turn Sunday "into a day of penance and boredom."

A Cardiff steamer, the *Duffryn Manor*, was wrecked on an island of Minikoi, four hundred miles from Colombo, on April 19. She was loaded with rice, and the natives, who were pinched with famine, soon shifted the cargo. They appear to be as pious as any missionary could wish them, for they held a day of thanksgiving for the wreck. We presume the captain and crew held aloof from the celebration.

"Ghosts" have been having a beanfeast in the hold of the steamship *Moncenisio*, while halting at Palermo en route to New York with a cargo of pumice stone from the Lapari islands. These stowaways kicked up such a diabolical row that the crew refused to go any further until they were ejected. The Palermo police made a thorough search for the intruders, who were wise enough to lie low and escape being run in; but as soon as the gentlemen in uniform left the ship the ghosts made more noise than ever, and kicked the pumice stone about like mad. It was a mistake, of course, to call in the police at all. A priest should have been summoned. He would have "laid" all the ghosts in the biggest ship in the world for a "fiver."

The central section of Texas has been swept by a cyclone. One town is completely wiped out, and several others greatly injured. Many people have perished, and hundreds are homeless. Good old "Providence"!

A *Morning Leader* reviewer refers to "Tom Paine" as "politically rather crude and loud than profound." Our Stonecutter-street contemporary is a fairly "advanced" journal, but it is still a hundred years behind Paine's *Rights of Man*. So much for the "profound." As for the "loudness," we hope our Stonecutter-street contemporary doesn't suppose its articles are couched in such fine English as Paine wrote.

Lord Rosebery does not improve with age. He used to have a great deal of human nature, and it differentiated his best speeches from those of most other statesmen. But he seems to be turning sour. He has just written against the inauguration of a Sunday train and steamer service for the Clyde by the Caledonian Railway Company—and written to the Secretary of the Sabbath Protection Society! "I quite agree with you," he says, "in regretting the new departure in Sunday trains, and I doubt if the railway directors have fully appreciated the strength of the feeling in Scotland on that subject." Anyone would think from this that the Railway Company proposed to *make* people travel on the "Sabbath," whereas it only proposes to provide for those who wish to travel. All the rest are at liberty to stay at home. Nor is that all. It would be interesting to learn how Lord Rosebery spends his own "Sabbaths."

Glasgow clergymen are naturally much concerned over the Caledonian Railway Company's intention to run extra trains to the coast on Sundays. The Rev. D. M. Ross says the clergy are face to face with a very serious situation, which is, we suppose, quite correct from this gentleman's point of view. As Mr. Ross says, he has "to reckon with the effect of the proposal on the religious life of the country." But its effect on the mental and moral well being of the country is quite another question, although Mr. Ross quite naturally treats the two as identical. The day of rest minus opportunities for legitimate occupation and recreation we have had for many generations, and the result has been drunkenness and general ill-behavior. The day of rest with opportunities for other things than the Church or public-house, could not easily be more disastrous to the public welfare than the other method has been. Mr. Ross says that "this new departure is inspired by a desire for an increased dividend." Well, this is a perfectly natural desire, and its satisfaction involves bringing thousands of people from grey Glasgow to the beautiful scenery of the Clyde; everybody will be benefited. And the Directors might easily retort that, if their desire is to fill their trains, Mr. Ross's desire is to fill his church; and one desire is certainly as laudable as the other. The difference is that the Caledonian Directors haven't yet developed the art of professional interest under the disguise of concern for the welfare of the nation. In this direction Mr. Ross and his colleagues could teach them a lesson.

A "special correspondent" of the *Daily Chronicle* concludes that the "May Meetings must be wended or ended." They are "on the wane." The principal speakers and chairmen "belong to the second and third-rate order," and this year's speeches "have been singularly barren of thought." "The attendances were thin. Women and middle

and old-aged men predominated; men—working, professional, bright, active men—were conspicuous by their absence." There was "no enthusiasm," and "many of the societies are in a state of decrepitude." This is sad news for Christians—but full of comfort for Freethinkers.

Rev. James G. Street, of Shrewsbury, addressing the National Unitarian Temperance Association, stated that Dr. Knox, the Bishop of Manchester, at the consecration of a new church, discovered that unfermented wine had been used in the Communion, and stopped the service until fermented wine was procured from a neighboring hotel. The temperance audience cried "shame!" But do they suppose that Jesus Christ used unfermented wine at the Last Supper, which is regarded as the inauguration of the "holy communion"? If they do, they are very much mistaken. And how about the conversion of water into wine at that marriage feast in Galilee? That it was good strong stuff is obvious from the text of the narrative. Dr. Knox may be a bad man, from a teetotal point of view, but from this particular point of view he is a good Christian.

The Rev. E. J. Hardy says that European merchants in China, instead of abusing missionaries, ought to help them in every way, for the reason that they are so many unpaid commercial travellers who open up a market for English goods. This is not quite so original a piece of information as Mr. Hardy imagines. First the missionary, then the merchant, then the machine gun, has for long been a short method of summing up the process. But the admission that merchants on the spot do not think much of missionaries is worth noting. The truth is merchants discover that missionaries are so potent a cause of friction and ill-will, that the good done to them by the opening up of a country is more than compensated by the bad feeling generated. This is particularly true of China. The Chinese had no objection either to trading with foreigners, or to receiving visits from them, until missionary activity created ill-feeling towards foreigners in general. Commercial men may be trusted to know on which side their bread is buttered. If merchants in China think so poorly of missionaries, it must be because of what has been said above of their influence.

The Bishop of Rochester says the changed attitude of men of science towards Christianity is one of the most hopeful of present-day signs. It is idle work bandying names, and we may point out, for the benefit of the Bishop, that the main point is not so much the attitude of men of science, but the meaning of scientific teaching. Does this lend any countenance to Christian doctrines? What science is it that supports the belief in the fall of man, in the incarnation, in resurrection, in miracles, or in a special providence? Is there any science that even supports the belief in a God or in a future life? If scientific men no longer discuss these things with the energy that some scientists discussed them a generation ago, it is because the advance of thought has made it next to impossible to discuss them with gravity, and also because scientists no longer care very much whether their discoveries agree with religion or not. Moreover, the attitude of certain scientists towards Christian Churches is more of a social phenomenon than an intellectual one. Intellectually, the churches are next to defunct, but they still enjoy a social *prestige*, and exert a social influence. And some scientific men, like many who are not scientists, are not quite strong enough to fight against this. Finally, one would like to learn from the Bishop of Rochester how many scientists who are coquetting with the churches are Christians in any honest sense of the word. How many of them would sign a set of Christian doctrines without reservations and qualifications? The truth is that when they talk about Christianity they usually mean religion, and what they mean by religion is a non-miraculous, non-supernatural theory that is not really religious at all. A few years ago, gentlemen like the Bishop of Rochester would have denounced such supporters as Atheists in disguise. But times have changed, and Christian Churches are now glad of support from anyone and from any quarter.

At dinner-hour services in the Sacred Trinity Church, Salford, a leading part of the program was "Prayers for a Revival of Trade"—in Lancashire. Other counties might look after themselves. The parson of that church has a keen eye for business. We suggest that, if he works the oracle successfully at Salford, he should carry it round the country. People would pay him handsomely for securing a real revival of trade.

What "face" these Christians have! The *Christian Commonwealth* calls itself "the Organ of the Progressive Movement." There is only one progressive movement in

the world; and R. J. Campbell is its oracle, and Albert Dawson is its scribe.

"The Organ of the Progressive Movement" should pay a little more attention to its grammar. It announces that Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., contributes "an exclusive article every week" to its columns. What is an "exclusive" article? What is meant, we presume, is that Mr. Snowden contributes an article every week exclusively to the C. C.

Here is a bit of up-to-date New Theology—taken from an article in last week's C. C. :—

"The conclusion seems inevitable that liberal theology, in postulating a unique, ideal Jesus as the founder of Christianity, has lost itself in a labyrinth from which it cannot escape. The theory of the uniqueness of Jesus is involved in a profound ethical difficulty which liberal theology cannot solve. So long as it clings to the dogma of an ideal figure, which at the same time was a historical reality, as the explanation of the rise of Christianity it cannot explain the New Testament nor Christian history. Such a notion is out of line with all the analogies of history as of human life."

Evidently the New Theology ought to have sent somebody to represent it at the Paine Centenary Celebration. Those who owe Paine so much should make him an occasional acknowledgment.

Rev. Mr. Rattenbury, oracle of the West London Mission, has written a little book (the *Christian Commonwealth* calls it a "little booklet") on *The Great Career*, based upon the "first eleven verses of the Second Epistle of Peter." The New Theology organ praises its "direct and interesting style," but adds sarcastically that—"It would have been no whit the worse if the authorship of the Epistle by the Apostle Peter had not been so naively taken for granted in the teeth of modern criticism." This is getting your own back.

Rev. R. J. Campbell, being asked for "evidence of the continued existence of human individuality after death," does not answer from the Bible or from the alleged teaching of Christ. He turns to modern Spiritualism for a reply—which shows that his New Theology is already played out, at least in relation to this problem. "I feel bound," he says, "to say explicitly that I believe there is evidence of the survival of individual self-consciousness after the change called death—evidence of an objective character which would come within the categories of scientific proof, if it were always available for scientific scrutiny, which it seldom is—but I myself have no first-hand acquaintance with it." All the "evidence" he can point to, then, is hearsay. This may be quite good enough for the City Temple. Serious inquirers want something more satisfactory.

The "First Church of Christian Scientists" at Boston, despite its belief that all affections of the body are purely mental, seems to neglect no material precautions that will allay bodily discomfort. The church is admirably ventilated, and in warm weather the air, which is supplied from a pumping station, is treated so that it may be free from dust. In addition iced water is supplied from a fountain at the door. The most materialistic people could not take more effective precautions, and under the conditions we are quite prepared to believe that this church is really a comfortable place to sit in.

Even the most scholarly divines occasionally, though quite unintentionally, give their show away. That distinguished divine, the Rev. Dr. Beet, told the inhabitants of Nelson, the other day, that the wonder was, not that their churches were so empty, but that they were so well filled. People attend church, he said, "not for profit, nor yet for amusement, but to hear about One whom no human eye had seen, and to talk about things beyond all human vision." A truer remark was never made, and we wish to congratulate Dr. Beet on giving expression, however inadvertently, to the plain truth.

But Dr. Beet did not really mean what he said, for he proceeded to assure the Nelsonians that "among all the religions of the world one religion stood alone in a position of unique superiority," and that "all the foremost nations were Christian nations, while all the other nations stood on a lower level." Wherein does the superiority of these Christian nations consist? In what respect is Russia, "the most backward of Christian nations," higher than the foremost non-Christian nation, China? According to Dr. Beet, Russia has roads and doctors and machinery and art and literature, while China has none. Think of it. Roads, doctors, machinery, art, and literature are Christianity's best gifts to a country. Dr. Beet did not tell his hearers that China

is morally superior to the most advanced Christian nation, nor did he mention the fact that the Chinese are a peculiarly happy people. Is Dr. Beet quite sure that the people who have roads, doctors, machinery, art and literature are on that account the best? But we deny that even these things are the gifts of the Christian religion.

It is generally acknowledged that Japan is one of the foremost nations of the world, though it is by no means Christian. Dr. Beet's explanation of this fact is ridiculous in the extreme. In cold blood he informed his audience that Japan awoke from the sleep of centuries and leaped to the front rank, in consequence of the visits of American steamers to Yokohama. It was "the rush of Christian civilisation that had completely changed Japan." But the reverend gentleman cannot be ignorant of the fact that Japan adopted the civilisation of Europe, and formally rejected its Christianity because of its moral failure. The truth is that Dr. Beet entertained his Nelson audience with nothing but Munchausen tales.

The Ladies Home Mission Union of the Church Pastoral Aid Society held its annual meeting at Westminster on June 2. One of the speakers, the Rev. Robinson Lees, said that: "He had lived amongst Mohammedans and heathen, and he had not found such depravity in a heathen or Mohammedan country as he found in the New Cut district of London." We can quite believe him—and there are worse parts of London than the New Cut. The fact is that there are no braggarts on earth like the followers of the "meek and lowly" Jesus. They are perpetually boasting of their moral superiority, yet they show more vice to the square yard than any "heathen" part of the world does.

The *Shanghai Mirror* refers to the case of some "Chinese gentlemen" who went to "evangelistic services held in the Lyceum Theatre" and were "compelled to sit in the gallery" on account of their skin. "If a Chinaman," our contemporary says, "is good enough to go to the same Heaven as white men he should be permitted the same privileges and means of grace while still in this vale of tears.....If this kind of thing goes on, one need not be surprised ere long to see the Chinese, in self-defence, refusing to be saved at all, and even to organise a boycott against heaven itself."

Even the Unitarians are conscious of the slump in religion. Mr. John Harrison, in his presidential address to the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, deplored that—"Public profession of religion was becoming unfashionable, and the neglect of the duty of public worship appeared to be the rule rather than the exception."

The German Anarchist Conference at Leipzig passed at least one sensible resolution—namely, that the members of Anarchist Societies ought not to belong to any Church or religious sect.

Mrs. Besant is lecturing later on in June on "The Coming Christ." What, another one? Good Lord deliver us!

The Rev. Charles Brown, ex-president of the Baptist Union, "believes the British nation to be the most religious nation in Europe to-day." He is justified in that belief, by the facts. Now, the British nation is Christian only in name. Not one in ten of the people is really interested in Christianity. To all intents and purposes the Christian religion is already dead in our country. Its influence upon national and international affairs is nil. But if Christianity is at such a discount in "the most religious nation in Europe, how utterly non-effective it must be in the rest of Christendom!"

The Bishop of Oxford addressed a large meeting of the local clergy recently on Modern Thought. He assured them that "Materialism" had to a great extent lost its power, and no doubt his hearers were comforted. But it may occur to a few of them to ask what authority the Bishop had to give them such an assurance. His lordship went on to illustrate the way in which Modern Thought is backing up Christianity by appealing to Dr. Illingworth's book on Personality. But the fact is that Dr. Illingworth is such a Christian priest, and what is his testimony worth in such a case? Nothing could be more ridiculous than quoting distinguished Christian writers to prove that Christianity has nothing to fear from Modern Thought. If the clergy the Bishop of Oxford was addressing had any sense or humor they would have laughed in his face. And if they had done so, he would probably have joined in the laughter.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND:** Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £202 15s. Received since.—G. B. Taylor, £1; W. Croxton Vale, £5; An Old Worker, £1 1s.; D. F. Gloak, R. Ogilvie, and R. Martin, 4s.; F. Rich, 2s.; J. Barry, £1; G. B., 10s.
- W. J. GAINES.**—The address was not worthy of more than the paragraph we have given it. Pleased to see your pen is at work occasionally in the local press.
- W. H. JACKSON.**—Thanks for the cutting from the *Melbourne Age*, but the writer is of no importance, and he and the paper are too far off for useful criticism in our columns.
- G. B. TAYLOR.**—Thanks for your breezy letter, etc. The idea of a sea voyage with you is tempting. But—!
- W. P. BALL.**—Thanks for your weekly batch of valued cuttings.
- D. F. GLOAK.**—You will see what we have had to do.
- AN OLD WORKER.**—Sorry we overlooked it last week in the bustle of the Conference.
- F. RICH.**—Thanks for letter, etc., and good wishes.
- F. J. VOISEY.**—Thanks for copy of the *Western Daily Mercury* with references to George Meredith's support of the editor of the *Freethinker*. The same references, evidently supplied by a press agency, have appeared in many newspapers—and will help to open the eyes of the public a bit.
- CHARLES RUSSELL.**—We are not going to soil our pages by noticing the scandalous article marked in the "dirty Australian paper" you send us, though we thank you for your trouble and endorse your description.
- P. POLDING.**—The matter of your cutting has already been dealt with in "Acid Drops."
- I. X. B.**—We suppose the enterprising tradesman prints "Tom Paine" for shortness; but we are not going to give him a free advertisement.
- W. HILL.**—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- T. ROBERTSON.**—We desire to participate in the expression of sympathy with the Turnbull family, and in particular with Mrs. Turnbull, the sorely tried wife and mother, who has shown such noble fortitude.
- G. B.**—Pleased to read your encouraging letter. Some day, perhaps, you will find in the "wills" what you so much desire to see, that a wealthy man has left us "a rare good wedge."
- N. LUKY.**—Glad you had a successful meeting, and ample support against the rowdies, at Dalkeith.
- LETTERS** for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES** must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS** for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- THE FREETHINKER** will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

We were only able to write one hurried paragraph last week on the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, and may well add something this week without boring our readers. First of all, we may observe that the bad times (commercially speaking) kept several persons from the Conference. Branches of the N. S. S. are mostly poor, and the expense of sending delegates to a distance is often prohibitive. This is a disadvantage, of course, but it is not fatal; for the main object of the Conference, after all, is twofold: first, to continue the official personnel of the Society.—second, to bring leading Secularists from all parts of the country into vital contact with each other. From this point of view, we venture to suggest that the Glasgow Branch really ought to send a delegate (or two) every year. We hope it will see its way to be represented next year.

The social functions in connection with the Conference were very enjoyable. The good luncheon at the Bee Hotel, between the morning and afternoon sittings, was so tempting to sociability that some of the delegates were a bit late for business. The excursion to Llangollen on Whit-Monday was largely attended; in fact, all the tickets were sold out before the close of Sunday evening's meeting. Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Davies, Mr. Moss, and Miss Vance (secretary) all went with the party. The rain spoiled the first half the day, but it cleared up in the afternoon, and the excursionists were thus enabled to walk amidst the beautiful scenery. Ample justice was done to the "feeding" provided at the Eivion Hotel.

Owing to the bigoted action of the police and the licensing magistrates who, between them, closed the Tivoli Theatre, which had been engaged for the evening public meeting,—and the securing of the Picton Hall, by courtesy of the Libraries and Art Gallery Committee, only just in the nick of time—the posters were on the walls but a few days. In spite of this serious disadvantage there was a capital attendance, about a thousand people being present; a very good class of people, well-behaved, attentive, and mentally alert, catching all the speakers' points with the greatest promptitude. As for the speakers themselves, they all did extremely well, every one of them being in his very best form. The President, who occupied the chair, was probably the best listener in the hall. It was one of his few opportunities of seeing how his younger colleagues were getting on. Others spoke in the anteroom of the rain during the meeting: the chairman did not hear it,—he was too deeply occupied. It would be invidious to single out any particular speaker, nor is there any need to, for each rose fully to the occasion. The President, while pronouncing the benediction, said that the fine speakers around him on the platform had enabled him to fulfil the promise he made to the meeting at the outset; the auditors had enjoyed a treat which they could hardly have had elsewhere in any part of England. This observation was enthusiastically applauded.

Not one of the Liverpool papers gave a word of report of the Picton Hall meeting, but two of them were base enough to insert malicious paragraphs written by a representative of the Anti-Infidel scums who were distributing what they call "literature" outside the building. To insert things like that, as if they were impartial editorial reports, is a very base form of journalism. Another paper, of a more respectable type, printed a letter from "An Indignant Ratepayer" who had not the courage to sign his name to a demand that his Secularist fellow citizens should be debarred from the use of public halls in Liverpool. He was admirably replied to by Mr. H. Percy Ward, on behalf of the N. S. S. Branch, who pointed out that the Secularists had no sort of control over what went on *outside* Picton Hall, where parties of all descriptions were giving away, or trying to sell, various printed matter. The "Indignant Ratepayer" came up again, still forgetting to give his name. This time he had the impudence to say that "the language of the speakers at the meeting was such as to cause several gentlemen to leave the building." This is an absolute falsehood. A few people had to leave at a late stage of the meeting in order to catch trains to distant places, which are not too convenient on Sunday evenings. Mr. Ward's reply to this contemptible creature's second letter disposed of him satisfactorily. The *Courier* is at least to be thanked for its fair-play in relation to this correspondence.

Mr. Foote's re-election as President suggests the reflection that he has entered the twentieth year of his occupancy of the presidential chair. That is the consecrated expression, but it is pretty well known that Mr. Foote has been far from sitting in a chair during those years. He has done a big spell of work—whatever its value: and twenty years make a big slice out of any man's life. The future, as the old Greeks would say, is on the knees of the gods; but the past is known, and stands for ever. Looking back over the past, the President may say: "I have lived, I have worked, I have fought." His worst enemies (and a man in his position is bound to have enemies) will not deny that.

We hope to notice at greater length, presently, Mr. Adam Rushton's *My Life*. We have only had time to take a hurried glance at its pages yet, but we have seen enough to be aware that it is a book of singular interest. So interesting is man to man, that it is difficult to make any autobiography absolutely uninteresting, but this book has special merits which prompt us to commend it to our readers' attention. Mr. Rushton has been a reader of the *Freethinker* ever since its prosecution for blasphemy in 1882. The present volume gives an account of his life as farmer's boy, factory lad, teacher, and preacher. Another volume is to follow some day,—not far distant, we hope; and in the list of its projected contents we note that a chapter is to be devoted to "Charles Bradlaugh and George William Foote." The present volume is dedicated to "All Sinners, All Saints, All Angels, and All Gods." The publisher is S. Clarke, 41 Granby-road, Manchester, and the price is 3s. 9d. net. Readers who cannot afford to buy it should ask for it at their local Free Public or Co-operative Libraries. We wish they would. They will not be disappointed.

We have important articles by Mr. Gould, Mr. Mann, and other valued contributors, standing over, which our readers may look forward to in our next issue. The Conference Report, the finish of the Meredith articles, and the sudden demand of the "blasphemy" case, make a big demand on this week's space.

The Narratives in Genesis.—I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN we turn to the opening chapters of the first five books in the Old Testament we find from the superscriptions that they are, all five, ascribed to Moses as the author and composer. We read, for instance, over the first of these chapters: "The first book of Moses, called Genesis." This statement, there can be little doubt, is firmly believed by nearly all church and chapel goers. Moses, we know, is represented in some of the books as being in direct communication with the Almighty—"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying," etc. It was therefore perfectly natural for an orthodox believer to infer that he had received a knowledge of past events from that deity, and wrote the early history of the world under the imaginary influence of what is called divine inspiration.

Moses is stated, according to Bible chronology, to have been leader and law-giver of the Israelites from 1491 to 1451 B.C.; consequently the five books of the Pentateuch, if written by that legislator, would be in existence in 1450 B.C. We find, however, plenty of evidence contained in the books themselves—Gen. xxxvi. 31-43 being an example—that they could not have been written until long after the Israelites had been settled in Canaan, nor, in fact, until the period of the kings. But, apart from the last-mentioned fact, we have internal evidence, drawn from the language, style, and phraseology of the narratives, that the compositions of no less than five different writers are preserved in the first six books of the Bible (the Hexateuch); for the same characteristics mentioned are also found in the book of Joshua.

These writers are the following; but the exact period when they wrote is somewhat uncertain:—

1. The *Jehovist* or *Yahvist*, who speaks of the Jewish God as "Jehovah" or "Yahveh," and wrote probably about B.C. 850 (early period of the kings).

2. The *Elohist*, who in naming the Hebrew deity uses the term "Elohim," and wrote probably about B.C. 750 (later period of the kings).

3. The *Deuteronomist*, who composed the main portion of the book of Deuteronomy; that is to say, all except chapters i. to iv., xxvii., and xxix. to xxxiv. The original Deuteronomy was the "Book of the Law" found in the temple in the reign of King Josiah, B.C. 621 (2 Kings xxii. 8).

4. The composer of the *Law of Holiness* (Lev. xvii. to xxvi., both chapters inclusive), who wrote during the Exile in Babylonia.

5. The writer and compiler of the *Priestly Code*, who lived after the Exile; which code is supposed to have been brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 458 B.C., and publicly read to the people in B.C. 444 (Neh. viii.). It includes 11 chapters in Genesis, 19 chapters in Exodus, 28 chapters in Numbers, 17 chapters in Leviticus, and a considerable portion of the book of Joshua.

Of these five writers we have the compositions of three preserved in the book of Genesis. These are: The *Jehovist* or *Yahvist*, the *Elohist*, and the *Priestly* writer. And here we may strike out at once the name "Jehovist"; for there is no "Jehovah" in the Old Testament. The appellation so translated is YHVH (omitting the vowels). The ancient Hebrew alphabet consisted of 22 characters or letters—all consonants. The vowel-points and accents were added by a committee of learned Jews some time between the 2nd and 6th century of the Christian era. After this emendation the name of the Jewish God was given as YeHoVaH; but the latter title is known to be incorrect. We find, for instance, a shorter (or abbreviated) name of the Hebrew deity used in three of the Old Testament books. This name is Yah. The latter appellation, besides being found in Exodus and Isaiah, is employed no less than 38 times in the Psalms. The following are examples:—

Ps. lxxviii. 4.—"His name is Yah; exult ye before him."

Ps. lxxvii. 11.—"I will make mention of the deeds of Yah."

Ps. cxviii. 5.—"Out of my distress I called upon Yah."

Ps. cl. 6.—"Let everything that hath breath praise Yah."

In the majority of the passages "Yah" is translated "the Lord," and when given is written "Jah." The word "Hallelujah"—"Praise ye Yah"—is found in the Psalms more than 20 times, and in this word custom has given the correct sound; for there is no letter in the Hebrew alphabet which represents that of the English J. Other considerations, which it is unnecessary here to discuss, concur to show that the original name was either YaHVeH or YaHUaH—the character represented by the V being invariably employed to indicate the long sound of "u" or "oo" (in the amended Hebrew with a dot near the centre). The second of these alternative names can be shown to be the correct one. Hence, we can easily imagine an army of ancient Hebrews, accompanied by their sacred ark, rushing to meet their enemies in battle, and rending the air with deafening cries of "Yahoaah." It may safely be said that no other nation in Old Testament times had such a terror-striking war-cry to herald them to victory. Furthermore, the Israelites derived their later name from the god "Yahuah" (see Jer. xiv. 9; Dan. ix. 19; Isaiah lxiii. 19, etc.). The Jews in their own Scriptures are called the *Yehudim*; that is to say, *Yahudim*. The story connected with the name "Judah" in Genesis xxix. 35 is pure fiction, and the derivation given there fanciful.

Returning to the authorship of the compositions in the book of Genesis, it had often been noticed that in some of the narratives the writer spoke of the Hebrew God as *Yahveh* (for the sake of uniformity the two recognised terms "Yahveh" and "Yahvist" will be here employed) while in others that deity is referred to as *Elohim*—God. The word "Elohim," as will be seen by its termination, is a plural noun, like cherubim and teraphim, and really means "the gods"; but in the Old Testament books it is applied as a singular noun to the god Yahveh. In the first Creation story (Gen. i. 1—ii. 3) the common name *Elohim*, translated "God," is used thirty-five times, and never once the proper name *Yahveh*. In the second Creation story (Gen. ii. 4-25) the name *Yahveh Elohim*, translated "the Lord God," is used eleven times, and never once *Elohim* by itself. The term "Yahveh Elohim" simply means "the god Yahveh." The *Yahvist* writer was, of course, acquainted with the name "Elohim"; but, as a rule, he employed only the proper name "Yahveh," translated "the LORD"—in capitals. The exceptions in Genesis are chapters ii. and iii., in which both names are employed. In chapter iv. and the remainder of Genesis the *Yahvist* uses only the name "Yahveh."

There are, however, really two *Elohistic* writers in Genesis; for the composer of the *Priestly Code* also employs the name *Elohim*, besides occasionally the term *El Shaddai*—"God Almighty." The first chapter of Genesis is from the pen of this *Priestly* writer, whose style can easily be distinguished from that of the *Elohist* so called. Chapter xx. (except the last verse) is an example of the composition of the last-named writer.

Setting aside, for the moment, the *Priestly* writer, it is thought that after the *Yahvistic* and *Elohistic* documents had been in existence for some time, say a century, the two sets of narratives were combined, the compiler adding a few connecting lines wherever required, so as to make the "history" read continuously—or appear to do so—from the Creation of the world to the Conquest of Canaan under Joshua. The principal narratives of these two writers, to the end of Genesis, are the following:—

The second Creation story (Y)—the Story of the Fall (Y)—Cain and Abel (Y)—the Story of the Deluge (Y)—Noah's drunkenness (Y)—the Tower of Babel (Y)—the Call of Abraham (Y)—Abraham's wife in Pharaoh's house (Y)—Abraham and Lot in Canaan (Y)—Yahveh's promises to Abraham (Y)—Sarah, Hagar, and an angel (Y)—Yahveh and two angels entertained by Abraham; the latter's inter-

National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

THE National Secular Society's Annual Conference was held on Whit-Sunday at Liverpool, in the Alexandra Hall, the local Branch's meeting-place.

The following is a list of the delegates who attended, with the Branches they represented: A. Stanley (N. London), W. Davey (Kingsland), J. Howeth and G. Collins (Blackburn), J. G. Dobson (Bury), T. Horsman, J. Fothergill and R. Chapman (S. Shields), T. Deardon and D. Reynolds (Wigan), J. H. Ratcliffe and W. Throup (Nelson), J. Crompton (Manchester), R. G. Fathers and J. Terry (Birmingham), M. J. Charter and T. H. Elstob (Newcastle-on-Tyne), and J. Ross and H. Percy Ward (Liverpool).

Members of the Society present, other than delegates, included C. Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, E. M. Vance, A. B. Moss, F. A. Davies, T. J. Thurlow, and R. T. Nichols (London); R. Johnson, C. Pegg, M. E. Pegg, and S. L. Hurd (Manchester); G. Fisher, A. H. Fisher, and H. S. Wishart (Leeds); J. T. Embleton (Ewell); W. A. Holroyd (Blackburn); J. W. Gott and W. Kay (Bradford); G. Dodd (Cannock); and J. Hammond and G. Roleffs (Liverpool).

MORNING SESSION.

The business began at 10.30 a.m., when the President (Mr. G. W. Foote) knocked with the historic hammer upon the table in front of him. After a few introductory words from the chair, it was proposed, seconded, and carried that the minutes of the last Conference, which were printed in the *Freethinker* last year, be taken as read.

The Secretary (Miss E. M. Vance) then called the roll, after which the Executive's Annual Report (which appeared in the *Freethinker* of last week) was read by the President.

Mr. W. Davey moved, and Mr. Hurd seconded, that the Report be accepted.

Mr. H. P. Ward proposed as a rider:—

"That the Report be adopted on the understanding that it be printed in pamphlet form along with the Principles, Objects, and Rules of the parent Society, and particulars of the Society's Branches; and be circulated among the Branches within one month from the date of the present Conference."

Mr. J. Ross seconded.

Mr. Wishart considered that the Report was not fair to those who had carried on missionary work in Lancashire.

The President, in reply, pointed out that Mr. Wishart had overlooked the fact that the effort in Lancashire was mentioned in last year's Report. In stating that the Lancashire experiment had failed there was no reflection upon Mr. Wishart or anyone who had worked with him. The Report was then unanimously adopted.

The next item on the Agenda was the Financial Report. As each member present had been provided with a copy of the annual balance-sheet, it was not necessary for the Secretary to read it out.

Mr. Fathers moved its adoption, and asked that in future the balance-sheet be forwarded earlier to the Branches, in order to give them ample time for discussing it. Mr. Pegg seconded, and suggested that the Society's financial year close earlier, so that the balance-sheet could be printed sooner. The Secretary stated that the delay in preparing it was due to Branches not sending up their subscriptions by the close of the financial year.

No questions were raised on the balance-sheet itself, and it was unanimously adopted.

The Conference then proceeded to the election of its President for the following year. There was only one nomination; the Kingsland, North London, and Liverpool Branches having placed the following motion on the Agenda:—

"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."

Mr. Foote temporarily gave up the occupancy of the chair to the only vice-president on the platform, Mr. Cohen. Mr. Ross moved Mr. Foote's re-election and stated that as one who had been many years in the movement he most heartily endorsed the motion on behalf of his Liverpool colleagues. Mr. Davey seconded, and said that for some nineteen or twenty years Mr. Foote had filled the position of President well; in face of that fact surely there was nothing one need add. "Nothing to add except to elect," remarked Mr. Cohen in supporting the motion. The post was not one, he added, to be sought by a man who loved comfort. There was no need for them to go round hunting for a President. Even were they to do so it would be very difficult to find one other than Mr. Foote. He (Mr. Cohen) cordially supported the motion. The motion was then put and carried unanimously.

cession for Sodom (Y)—Lot, his wife and two daughters, and two angels at Sodom (Y)—Incest of Lot's daughters (Y)—Sarah in the house of Abimelech (E)—Hagar and her son sent away: assisted by an angel (E)—Abraham commanded to sacrifice his son; his hand stayed (E)—Abraham's servant sent to seek a wife for Isaac (Y)—Birth of Esau and Jacob (Y)—Yahveh's promises to Isaac; covenant between Isaac and Abimelech (Y)—Jacob deceives his father and obtains the blessing (Y)—Jacob's ladder, pillar, and vow (E)—Jacob meets Rachel and enters the service of Laban (Y)—Rachel and Leah give their maids to Jacob; several sons born (E)—Jacob's crafty method of gaining cattle (Y)—Jacob's flight from Laban; covenant between them (E)—Jacob wrestles with an angel (Y)—Meeting of Jacob and Esau (Y)—Jacob buries his household idols under an oak (E)—Joseph's two dreams (E)—Judah, Er, and Onan; Judah and Tamar (Y)—Joseph in Potiphar's house (Y)—Joseph and Potiphar's wife (E)—Joseph favored by keeper of prison (Y)—Joseph interprets butler's and baker's dreams (E)—Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams (E)—Joseph governor of Egypt; years of plenty and famine (E)—the cup in the sack; Judah's grand oration (Y)—Pharaoh invites Joseph's family to Egypt (E)—Joseph extorts the Egyptians' money, cattle, and land (Y)—Joseph with his two sons visits his sick father (E)—Jacob blesses his sons before dying (Y). From the foregoing it will be seen that we are indebted to the Yahvist for twice as many legendary stories as the Elohist.

We come now to the Priestly writer, who also employs the name Elohim in Genesis. Respecting the compositions of this author our highest authority, Professor Driver, says: "If the parts assigned to him be read attentively, even in a translation, and compared with the rest of the narrative, the peculiarities of its style will be apparent. Its language is that of a jurist, rather than a historian; it is circumstantial, formal, and precise." Amongst other peculiarities, he employs "a class of stereotyped formulæ," has "lawyer-like circumlocution," and devotes much attention to numbers, chronology, and genealogies. The following are two examples of his style:—

Gen. v. 1-4. "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: and the days of Adam after he begat Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters."

Gen. vii. 11-16. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.....In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; they, and every beast after its kind, and all cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind, and every fowl after its kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded."

See also the paragraphs commencing "These are the generations"—"These are the names." The chief portions of Genesis composed by this writer are the following: Gen. i.—ii. 3; v. (omitting v. 29); vi. 9-28; vii. 11-21; viii. 1-5, 13-19; ix. 1-19, 28-29; x.; xi. 10-32; xvi. 15-16; xvii. 1-27; xxi. 2-5; xxiii.; xxv. 7-20; xxvi. 84-85; xxviii. 1-9; portion of xxiv.; xxxv. 9-29; xxxvi.; xxxvii. 1-4; xlvi. 1-27; xlvii. 5-11, 27-28; xlviii. 3-7; xlix. 29-33.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Reformation is a hospital in which the new philosophy exhausts its strength in nursing the old religion.—Ingersoll.

Mr. Foote's re-occupancy of the chair was greeted with hearty applause. He said that he would follow their example and be brief. There was never occasion for a lot of talk of a formal character when old friends met. They had known each other now for more years than he cared to count. Anyone in his position was subjected to a good deal of criticism. He who tried to please everybody would be disappointed. When one had a duty to perform the only one to please was one's self. He had always tried to do his best and would continue so to do as long as he held the office. When Charles Bradlaugh passed the chairman's hammer on to him he (Bradlaugh) hoped to live to thank him for years of useful service. He thought if Bradlaugh had lived he would have been able to mingle some thanks with whatever criticism he might have felt bound to pass. The names of Carlile, Watson, and Bradlaugh were on the chairman's hammer. Next year he completed the twentieth year of his Presidency when, he felt, he would be entitled to have his name inscribed thereon. (Applause.)

The election of Vice-presidents was next proceeded with.

Mr. Foote formally moved, on behalf of the Executive, that the following be re-elected:—

J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Mrs. Fathers, Léon Furnémort, T. Gorniot, John Grange, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, J. Marshall, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McGluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, G. Roleffs, S. Samuels, F. Schaller, W. C. Schweizer, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Charles Steptoe, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood, G. White.

Mr. Moorcroft seconded. Objection was made to one of the names and some discussion followed. Eventually the motion was carried, with four dissentients.

The President further moved, on behalf of the Executive:

"That Mr. A. B. Moss and Mr. W. Heaford be elected Vice-Presidents."

Mr. Pegg seconded the motion and it was carried. Mr. Moss thanked the Conference for his election and paid a tribute to the zeal of his colleague, Mr. Heaford, who, unfortunately was unable to attend.

On behalf of the Birmingham Branch, Mr. Fathers moved, and Mr. Davies seconded:—

"That Mr. C. J. Whitwell be elected a Vice-President."

This was carried.

Mr. Davey moved, and Mr. Thurlow seconded, in the name of the Kingsland Branch:—

"That Mr. E. Bowman be elected a Vice-President."

This, too, was carried.

Mr. Ward moved and Mr. Ross seconded for the Liverpool Branch:—

"That Mr. F. Boute and Mrs. Roleffs be elected Vice-Presidents."

This also was carried.

Mr. H. Farmer and Mr. S. Saville were re-elected Auditors.

Mr. Pegg then proposed that the standing orders be suspended in order to place a motion on the Agenda which the Manchester Branch had sent up too late to the Secretary. A large majority was against the proposal.

Mr. Cohen moved:—

"That this Conference congratulates the English nation on the total failure of another vicious Education Bill, and regards it as a sign that a settlement of the Education question on the lines of religious teaching is utterly impossible: and this Conference calls upon the Liberal Government, which is endeavoring to Disestablish the Church in Wales, to bring in a Bill to Disestablish every form of religion in the public schools of England."

The Government had got into the bad habit of annually introducing an Education Bill. The last was the worst of all. If it had been carried it would not have been a settlement, but only a temporary peace. The Government were trying to perform the impossible task of sharing out among the religious parties what each party wanted all to itself. In talking of a compromise between the sects, the Government unjustly ignored the growing body of opinion outside the religious bodies—that of the Secular Educationists. The quarrel would go on until the State washed its hands of religion altogether. Sooner or later, Secular Education was bound to come. The only question was, How soon?

The Conference then adjourned for luncheon.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

At 2.30 p.m. the Conference re-assembled, when the President read out a telegram which he had received from the

Congress of Freethinkers assembled at Puy, sending a message of philosophic fraternity in the war against all superstition. The telegram—in French, of course—was signed by Gustave Hubbard, President and the Secretaries. It was received by the N. S. S. Conference with acclamation.

The discussion on Mr. Cohen's motion was then resumed, it being seconded by Mr. Ross.

Mr. Moss said that, in dealing with the education question, our policy should be: principle first, then tactics. When our efforts to obtain Secular Education failed, we should try to enforce the impracticable parts of Liberal Education Bills, and so make Secular Education inevitable. If the right-of-entry proposal had been passed, it would have made the Bill unworkable. Not only would Churchmen and Nonconformists enter the schools, but Freethinkers could go in too, and that would add to their importance. The Liberal Bills were a step nearer to the final goal. They must go along the line of least resistance.

Mr. Davies differed from Mr. Moss. Step by step was a good method, but the question was whether the others were going in our direction. Mr. Chapman said that the most we could hope for was that our opponents would differ so widely as to make Secular Education the only remedy.

Mr. Thurlow considered that there was a time when the boldest attack was as much a method of tactics as Fabianism.

Mr. Cohen, replying to the discussion, said that the Trades Union Congress was almost solid for Secular Education, and in a few years it would be the stereotyped policy of the National Union of Teachers. In view of these facts, he could not agree that to-day was the time for us to adopt less-direct tactics. Mr. Moss had said that Liberal Bills went part of our way; but by going a little way in our direction they might stop us going all the way.

The Conference then carried Mr. Cohen's motion in conjunction with that placed on the Agenda by the Kingsland Branch, which read as follows:—

"That this Conference demands that the Government introduce a Secular Education Bill, to put an end to the religious squabble which retards real education, and places England behind our Colonies."

The following two motions *re* Peace were taken together:—

"This Conference profoundly regrets that Great Britain is devoting more and more of its energies and resources to preparations for war, and regards the ever-growing distrust and antagonism between European nations as a proof of the complete failure of Christian civilisation."

"That this Conference deploras the present outbreak of the war spirit in this Christian country; declares itself an ardent friend of international peace; and affirms that the substitution of arbitration for war is the only rational method for the settlement of disputes between nations."

The former was submitted by the Executive, and the latter by the Liverpool Branch. Mr. Ward moved their adoption, and Mr. Chapman seconded, suggesting that the references to Christianity be deleted.

The President said that Mr. Chapman's suggestion would be very comforting to Christians. Opposition to Christianity was a main object of the Society's very existence. The most warlike nations were Christian. Christian wars had been the bloodiest. To delete from the Motions all reference to Christianity was to delete, from their standpoint, the most important part.

Mr. Wishart objected to the motions on the ground that they contained no constructive plan for the prevention of war.

The motions were then adopted as they stood. Mr. Thurlow moved:—

"That in order to create and sustain a lively interest in the propagandist work of the N. S. S. all Branches having permanent indoor places of meeting should afford all possible facilities to their members to take part in public discussions of questions germane to the anti-religious propaganda of the Society—in the intervals between the visits of special lecturers."

Mr. Pegg seconded, stating that the Manchester Branch had for some years successfully practised the method indicated in the resolution.

The motion was carried.

Mr. Ward, on behalf of the Liverpool Branch, moved:—

"That this Conference, whilst expressing neither agreement nor disagreement with the principles and objects of Socialism, strongly warns the Labor and Socialist organisations of this country against the recent interest the clergy have suddenly professed to take in industrial, social, and political questions, upon the ground that the history of the Christian priesthood justifies the opinion that the main motive animating

ting the 'Christian Socialist' priests of all denominations is the advancement of ecclesiastical, not labor, interests."

Priests were exploiting the Socialist and Labor movements, not because they had become more just, but because they had grown more popular. Christian Socialists were more anxious to fill the empty collection-plates of the Churches than the empty pockets of the workers.

Mr. Moss seconded the motion.

Mr. Chapman spoke against it on the ground that if its object were to defend Socialism it was out of place, and if its object were to advise Socialists it was impertinent.

Mr. Wishart also spoke against the resolution. More than once he was called to order for introducing irrelevant matter regarding Socialism. He considered that the motion made us look ridiculous in the eyes of Christian Socialists.

The President remarked, amid laughter, that that was hardly an argument against the motion.

Mr. Cohen stated that the resolution was simply a warning against the discussion of political questions on a theological basis. The motion was then carried, three only voting against it.

The President then briefly moved the following resolution which stood in his own name:—

"This Conference desires to place on record, a hundred years after the death of Thomas Paine, its admiration of his genius and character, and of the marvellous courage and disinterestedness he displayed in fighting against superstition and tyranny; and this Conference rejoices to see that the great cloud of calumny with which his name was surrounded by the sinister interests he attacked is now slowly, but surely, lifting and dispersing, so that he is beginning to shine forth to the world at large as one of the noblest and most effective of modern soldiers in the war of the liberation of humanity."

The motion should be passed, not in honor of Paine, but in honor of ourselves.

Mr. Moss seconded, and Mr. Fathers supported, the resolution, which, of course, was unanimously carried with applause.

The President then formally proposed, and Mr. Hird seconded, the following motion in the name of the Executive:—

"Considering the present scandalous state of affairs, under which Freethinkers' funerals are so often, and against their express wish, and even directions, carried out with Christian ceremonies, this Conference is of opinion that its Executive should take special steps to see what can be done to frustrate this gross abuse of power on the part of relatives and executors; and this Conference likewise calls upon the Government of Great Britain to pass a short Bill securing civilised respect for the convictions of deceased persons in connection with their interment."

Mr. Pegg and Mr. Davies spoke in support.

The President stated that at law dead bodies had no rights. If a man lived as a Freethinker he should be buried as such. A Parliamentary Bill should be introduced and carried to make this possible and inevitable. It was scandalous that priests should be permitted to tell lies over the dead body of a man who, all his life, had detested priestcraft.

Mr. Fisher opposed the motion on the ground that he opposed any addition to the statute law.

Mr. Chapman also spoke. The motion was then put and carried, two voting against it.

Mr. Ward proposed the following in the name of the Liverpool Branch:—

"That in view of the present 'Votes for Women' agitation this Conference expresses the opinion that universal adult suffrage is the only reform of our complicated electoral system worthy of the political energy of the democracy."

Mr. Hird seconded.

Mr. Cohen, Mr. Chapman, and Mr. Wishart, whilst not opposing the motion as individuals, considered it outside the special province of the Society.

The President said that the women interested in the suffrage question differed among themselves as to the way in which the existing law should be altered. Surely the Conference could not commit itself to a judgment as to whether one set of women or another deserved the support of the N. S. S.

Mr. Pegg moved, and Mr. Fisher seconded, that the Conference pass on to the next business, and this was carried.

The Secretary (Miss Vance) expressed her great disappointment, as an adult suffragist, at the decision of the Conference.

The President then moved that the best thanks of the Conference be tendered to the Liverpool Branch for the arrangements it had made for their meeting and for the way they had beaten the bigots and obtained the Picton Hall. To celebrate the occasion he had pleasure in proposing that Mr. J. Ross and Mr. J. Hammond be put back on the list of vice-presidents. Their names had been dropped from the list owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding which, he hoped, was now ended for ever. The President's proposition was carried with cheers.

Mr. Hammond, in responding, said that it had been a pleasure to the Branch to once more organise a Conference. He felt sure that they would prosper more in the future even than in the past. He thanked the Conference for the honor they had bestowed upon Mr. Ross and himself and, through them, upon the Branch.

The President then declared the Conference closed.

THE DEMONSTRATION.

In the evening, a Freethought Demonstration was held in the Picton Hall, about a thousand persons being present. Before the meeting began several songs were well rendered by Mr. Grif Owens, who was ably accompanied by Mr. W. T. Hebron.

Mr. Foote who, of course, occupied the chair, was greeted with loud cheers when he rose to address the meeting. He referred to the deaths during the year of three poets—Davidson, Swinburne, and Meredith—a trinity of unbelievers. A few weeks before his death Meredith sent him (Mr. Foote) a cheque towards the support of the *Freethinker*. The sympathy that blossomed into action was infinitely more significant than that which confined itself to mere words. Within a few days the N. S. S. would be celebrating the centenary of the death of Thomas Paine. Paine lived to recognise that if the "Rights of Man" were to be won there must first dawn the "Age of Reason." That had been the policy which had continuously governed the Freethought movement in this country since Paine's time.

Mr. A. B. Moss, who was warmly applauded, dwelt upon the decay of Christianity and the growth of scepticism. Darwinism had destroyed the foundations of faith.

Mr. H. Percy Ward, who had a very hearty reception, spoke upon Secularism as being the religion of this life, the gospel of humanity. Other worldism was one of the greatest hindrances to human progress.

Mr. C. Cohen was loudly cheered on rising, and showed that Christianity, by persecuting the intellectually independent who differed from its dogmas, had produced a low mental type of man.

Mr. F. A. Davies, who met with a hearty greeting, pointed out that Christianity was a religion of gloom. A face stamped with sadness was generally an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd was received with loud applause and devoted his speech to a criticism of the Christian argument that an unbeliever's moral conduct was due to his religious environment. If man was religious by nature it was curious that priests invented and employed so much ecclesiastical machinery to make him religious.

The Chairman then dismissed the fine audience—fine in both quantity and quality—with an Atheistic benediction, thus bringing to a close a red letter day in the history of Liverpool Freethought.

Obituary.

It is with sincere regret that I have to record the death, at the comparatively early age of 30 years, of Mrs. Andrew Wilson, youngest daughter of Mrs. Robert Turnbull. Mrs. Wilson had been ill for some time past, and she died somewhat suddenly on the 1st inst. Mrs. Wilson, like the rest of Mrs. Turnbull's family, was closely identified with the work of the Glasgow Secular Society. Possessing an exquisitely sweet voice, her singing will long be remembered by the Glasgow friends. She was a gentle and kindly woman, esteemed by all who knew her; unswerving in her principles, and constant in her attachment to the Society. She leaves two little boys and her husband, for whom much sympathy is felt. The heartfelt sympathy of the members will also go out to her mother, who, in the declining years of her life, has had to sustain domestic affliction and loss far exceeding common measure—affliction borne with the quiet bravery of a noble nature. A short secular address was delivered on the day of interment by one who held her in the greatest esteem.

T. ROBERTSON.

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, C. Cohen, Lectures.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, Miss K. Kough, "Does Christianity Uplift Women?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, F. A. Davies, "Reconciling the Scriptures."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward, 3, "The Age of Reason and the Rights of Man"; 7, "Thomas Paine and His Work for Humanity."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Christianity and Science."

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward, "Christian Lies About Thomas Paine."

DALKEITH (High-street): Saturday, June 19, at 7, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: Leith Links, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LEITH (Foot of the Walk): 6.30, Mr. Stuart, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Edge-hill Church): Wednesday, June 16, at 8, H. Percy Ward, "Keir Hardie and Jesus Christ."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Annual Meeting—Conference Delegates' Report and Election of Officers.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market-square): Monday, June 14, at 8, H. Percy Ward, "Keir Hardie and Jesus Christ."

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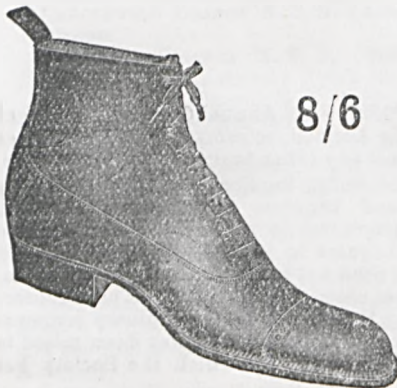
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