

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXIX.—No. 37

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1909

PRICE TWOPENCE

I have always felt by instinct and perceived by reason that no man could conceive of a PERSONAL God except by crude superstition or else by true supernatural revelation; that a natural God was the absurdest of all human figments; because no man could by other than apocalyptic means—that is, by other means than a violation of the laws and order of nature—CONCEIVE of any other sort of Divine person than man with a difference—man with some qualities intensified and some qualities suppressed—man with the good in him exaggerated and the evil excised.—A. C. SWINBURNE.

We Beseech Thee.

THIS has not been a good year for the farmers of England. Nipping frosts were too common in what we must call the spring, and there has been a great deal too much rain, and far too little sunshine, all through the summer. Of course we import a large quantity of our food from abroad, but we have not yet become so entirely a manufacturing nation, and so utterly divorced from all natural conditions of life, as to be independent of the produce of our own soil. A bad year makes a considerable difference, not only to those engaged in agricultural pursuits, but also to every other inhabitant of this country.

Some years we have too little rain, but this year we have had too much. Perhaps the average quantity is all right, but it is badly distributed. There is certainly room for great improvement in the management of the weather; indeed, people have always been saying so, substantially, from time immemorial; still no alteration for the better is perceptible, yet they go on thanking the "upper powers," or "heaven," or "providence," or whatever it is called, just as though everything were ordered for the best, and this were the best of all possible worlds.

Now, if religion be true, there is no reason in the world, or anywhere else, why this state of things should continue. According to the inculcations of our religious teachers, it is not only right to thank "the Lord" for what we receive, but also right to ask him for more. The duty, as well as the usefulness, of prayer is frequently enjoined in the Bible. "Pray without ceasing," says the Apostle; and "whatsoever ye ask believing, that ye shall receive," said Jesus Christ. We are informed that one prophet, who put this teaching into heavy practice, prayed so fervently and effectually on a certain occasion that he kept the whole world without rain for the space of three years. Evidently, therefore, the weather is modifiable, if we only set about the business in the right spirit and in the proper manner. Something less than three years' drought would satisfy the English farmers. They do not require as much wet as obtained in the time of Noah, nor as much dryness as obtained in the time of Elisha. Something less extreme would be more suitable; something which, while preserving a pleasant diversity in the weather, would also secure the farmers a fair return for their labor and expenditure, and a

reasonable plenty of meat, bread, vegetables, and fruit for the whole population.

This can be secured, if religion be true; and it ought to be secured, since we keep thousands of costly praying-machines, in the shape of priests, clergymen, and ministers. They are of all sorts of denominations, and should be able to effect this object between them. For hundreds of years they (or their predecessors) have been carrying on this particular business, and long practice should have given them proficiency. But, somehow or other, they make no more impression upon the weather now than they did a thousand years ago. Either they do not believe, or they do not pray hard enough, or they have for some reason incurred "the Lord's" displeasure. Whatever be the reason, the fact is certain. The prayers of our mystery-men are as efficacious as bawling into the ears of the Sphinx. All their prayers, from the first of January to the last of December, do as much good in their flight upward to the throne of grace as a sixpenny rocket sent up into the sky.

It is high time that these Kingdom-Come gentlemen (they don't admit *women* into the business) were sternly told to do their work better or to clear out altogether. Certainly we have a right to issue such an order in the case of the Church of England, whose archbishops, bishops, canons, deans, rectors, vicars, and curates are all supported by national revenues. In the Prayer Book of that Church there are special forms of supplication, for rain when it is too dry, and for fine weather when it is too wet. The farmers should insist on these prayers being duly offered, and if there is no result—say in five years—the Church revenues should be applied to more practical purposes.

In the Litany of the Church of England there is a constant refrain of "We beseech thee." It is said through the nose Sunday after Sunday, but it produces not the smallest effect. Would it not be an act of prudence, just by way of a trial, to turn for once to Old Nick, and say "We beseech thee"? It might, at least, do in a climate like ours; for, if Old Nick exerted himself, he would be likely to give us more dryness and warmth.

So far as the people at large are concerned, it may be said that there is only one supplication which they should offer up in the language of the Prayer Book—"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord." It is a wonder that such a prayer ever found its way into such a book. Were the people's darkness only *lightened*, they would see things as they are. It would be all over then with the men of God who subsist upon the ignorance and credulity of mankind. They would have to redeem their promises, at least as they apply to *this* world. We must die to find out the truth of what they tell us about the *next* world, but we can test them *here*, and they should be made to abide by the result. It is their universal declaration that God answers prayer; they should therefore prove it in practice to our satisfaction. But they know they cannot do it, which is the reason they fight shy of all honest inquiry. And this being the case, we hope (if there *should* be any efficacy in prayer) that the people will offer up that one appropriate supplication—"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord."

G. W. FOOTE.

The Arbitrament of Criticism.

IT is a distinction of the Catholic Church that it positively refuses to recognise the claims of criticism. Criticism implies doubt, and a possible vindication of doubt. A critic is a judge who weighs evidence for and against, and declares what the result is. Clearly, criticism and faith cannot co-exist: they logically shut each other out. It is sheer folly to imagine that there can be what the theologians describe as a *believing, sanctified, or reverent criticism*. The only function of criticism is to sit in judgment and announce the verdict without fear or favor. Unfortunately, this is a truth which the divines obstinately decline to recognise. In an important article in the *Christian World* for August 26, Principal P. T. Forsyth seems to labor under the delusion that, in order to be sound and reliable, criticism must be "evangelical," resting safely on "a Gospel basis." What is called "advanced criticism" he denounces in no measured terms, because it daringly "claims to be arbiter of the Christian situation." To prevent misrepresentation we will quote the reverend gentleman's own words:—

"There is criticism and criticism. There is an evangelical criticism and rational. There is criticism as master and criticism as servant. There is the criticism of Luther and that of Lessing. Luther dealt somewhat freely with the New Testament, applying Christ and his salvation as the standard. He rejected certain things because they did not put Christ, or 'ply Christ,' as he said. They did not serve the Gospel. Lessing and all his successors reject many more things, including Luther's Christ, by taking for a standard the natural reason instead of the supernatural revelation and its evangelical experience."

Now, it should be borne in mind that by "advanced criticism" Dr. Forsyth does not mean criticism *per se*, but simply criticism of the orthodox position by heterodox believers, or criticism based on a semi-rationalised version of the Gospel, such as is now offered to the world by men of Mr. Campbell's school. Mr. Campbell is condemned because he has the temerity, in the interest of his own version of the Gospel, to criticise that championed by Dr. Forsyth. These two men are severe critics of each other's Gospel; but they are both *Christian* critics, in that each criticises in defence of his own brand of Gospel; and, consequently, each is a biased, prejudiced, unreliable critic.

It is evident that the difference between Luther and Lessing is only one of degree. They both believed in the supernatural, and they were both in a sense Christians. Naturally, neither of them could have been an absolutely free critic. The Protestantism of which Luther was the chief initiator originated in criticism, not of Christianity itself, but of its seat of authority in the Pope. Luther criticised, not the Gospel, but what he declared to be a fatal perversion of it; not Christianity, but certain Romish doctrines and practices which had corruptly crept in and were anti-Christian. Pure Christianity and undefiled was now to be found in the Protestant Church alone. Furthermore, when the various Protestant sects fell to criticising one another, what was criticised was never Christianity, but some hurtful corruptions which illegitimately bore its name. It is the same to-day. The Gospel itself, once discovered, is in no sense whatever criticisable. The Old Theology criticises the New, and the New the Old, on the plea that Christianity is not in it. Times out of number has Mr. Campbell asserted that organised Christianity has been and is both a sham and a failure; and now we have Dr. Forsyth levelling precisely the same charge against the alleged Christianity of the New Theology. The Principal waxes exceedingly angry, and thus characterises it:—

"It is not the rejection of orthodoxy, but of Pauline Christianity; nor of Pauline Christianity alone, but of all apostolic Christianity. It is a total revolution. It is another religion. Make no mistake that that is the issue, however honestly it may be disguised for the unwary in spirituality, fraternity, devotion, and all

the pieties of an age bound in its own subjectivity and lost to salvation in mere religion. We are really dismissing the Apostles' interpretation of Christ, which means of course dismissing the New Testament, except as a document for a crucible."

We are by no means challenging the accuracy of this characterisation of the work attempted by advanced criticism. What we wish to point out is that the New Theologians dismiss the Apostles' interpretation of Christ because they believe it is wrong, and substitute their own for it, which they believe to be correct. In other words, they are simply standing up for the right of private judgment, in so far as it serves themselves; but the right for which they thus stand is a right that may be equally claimed by all. This is the central principle of Protestantism, though it has been repudiated in practice by all orthodox Protestants. Dr. Forsyth objects to advanced criticism because it "cuts Christianity off from the Apostles, from the first and normative Church, from the evangelical element in Catholicism, and from what we Protestants have always held to be the real apostolic succession, through men like Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Wesley"; but advanced critics reject orthodoxy because its doctrines are unbelievable, being contrary to reason, and because in practice it has been barren of good and fruitful of evil. Thus, the New Theologians make a magnificent application of a great principle; but they forget that a similar application of it may be made against themselves. Their doctrines may be fewer in number than those of orthodoxy, but they are not one whit more believable, nor are they likely to prove more beneficently effective.

Let us watch the principle in operation. If it was right for Luther to differ from the Pope, Lessing had an equal right to disagree with Luther. If Lessing had a right to repudiate Lutheran dogmas, Free-thinkers have a right to refuse credence to Lessing and his successors. To throw any supernatural beliefs overboard because of their incredibility is to open the door for the flinging away of all for the same reason. As to unbelievability, all supernatural dogmas occupy exactly the same position. For the reality of the supernatural there is absolutely no evidence, and to believe in the absence of all evidence is to act in defiance of reason, which is our highest faculty. Orthodoxy says, "You must read human nature by Christ, who is God sojourning in flesh"; but the intellect says, "You must read Christ by human nature, because there is no other way." Dr. Forsyth affirms that the standard of judgment is "Christ and his salvation," or "supernatural revelation and its evangelical experience," but he omits to inform us by what means such a standard was established. As a matter of fact, it has never really been set up at all, except gradually and through endless controversy in the Catholic Church, and to that standard the Principal himself does not conform. As a theologian, Dr. Forsyth stands very much alone, even in the Protestant Church. His theory of "Christ and his salvation" is shared by very few even among those who are generally accounted orthodox. Indeed, the different and conflicting views concerning "Christ and his salvation" are such a countless host, as the Principal well knows, that to regard any one of them as the infallible standard of criticism is the very acme of silliness. What is gloried in as the "positive and final revelation in Christ" is so obscure that scarcely any two people are agreed as to what it is; and the interpretations of it are so widely divergent that to speak of it as a revelation at all is a contradiction in terms. What have we to fall back upon, then, but the "natural reason" so eloquently abused and reviled by Dr. Forsyth? To be in the least degree sensible, criticism must be totally untrammelled. No credal fetters must cripple its action. It must be free as the air. Now, it is incontrovertible that in the enjoyment of perfect liberty it invariably pronounces against infallible documents and the evidential value of so-called "final revelations and their

evangelical experiences." It puts the Bible in its proper place among the numerous and most interesting mythological writings of the world. It treats it with the same freedom as it treats the Vedic hymns or Homer's *Iliad*.

The criticism which Dr. Forsyth denominates "advanced" is by no means free. It still hops about in theological chains, and within a painfully restricted area. Nevertheless, it has rendered incalculable service already. It has enlarged the natural sphere, and correspondingly diminished the supernatural one. It has shown the Bible to be a human product, although still illogically clinging to it as a revelation from heaven. The New Theology, which is its first direct harvest, is the most inconsistent and self-contradictory system ever framed, and it cannot endure. The New Theology is merely a passing phase. Dr. Forsyth is of opinion that "advanced criticism" has created "in the public mind a state of things in which the only refuge is Rome." He also declares that it "means the surrender of the Protestant citadel," which undoubtedly it does mean, as the only alternative to the complete surrender of the Christian faith in every form. The choice of the immediate future must lie between Catholicism and Secularism. But the Principal is certainly mistaken in thinking that to "rationalise religion is, in the end, to Romanise it." It is a way of escape from Rationalism that Rome provides. Rationalism cannot live in her atmosphere. Her supreme word is Faith—unreasoning, unquestioning, blind faith. When Newman went over, he took the step to prevent his clear intellect from making him a confirmed Atheist; he subjected his reason to the cruel bonds of superstition to save his soul. In other words, he sacrificed his intellectual faculties that his highly developed religious emotions might have full play. The only rational goal of an honest critic is Atheism. It is true that "Jesuitism began by utilising the best culture of the age, and went on by promoting it"; but the culture so utilised and promoted was slavishly at the beck and call of the most debasing superstition. To say that Jesuitism was "the most liberal movement in the Church of its time" is to exhibit the Church in the worst possible light. In the Church of Rome liberalism, modernism, or rationalism is a natural impossibility. The natural trend of "advanced criticism" is in the direction of pure unbelief, while it will be found that entirely free criticism is almost exclusively Atheistic or Agnostic. Its arbitrament is cheerfully given in favor of No-godism and No-Christism.

Is it any wonder, then, that Freethinkers look upon advanced Biblical critics and New Theologians as valuable allies in disguise? Voltaire and Thomas Paine were the advanced critics and the New Theologians of their times, and the Atheists of to-day are their legitimate descendants. So, likewise, the liberalists of to-day, who are still semi-supernaturalists, will be the entirely emancipated Freethinkers of to-morrow.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Nature of Religion.—II.

(Continued from p. 563.)

LEAVING for a time the question of how religion actually does arise, we may turn to that class of writers who define religion in terms of ethics. To some the essential characteristic of religion is its moral teaching, the inculcation of certain duties due from man to man. It may be granted that so far as the later developments of religion is concerned considerable emphasis is laid upon morality. But we can only include this in any exact definition of religion either by expanding the term morality to cover everything, or by contracting it so as to exclude all the lower forms of religious belief. The first method robs our definition of all value, while the second makes it a grossly inaccurate one. Any definition or description of religion that does not embrace all its

forms is so far admittedly imperfect. It is not a question of defining the higher in terms of the lower, or of defining the lower in terms of the higher; it is simply the necessity of so defining religion that our definition will cover both high and low, and thus emphasise the essential in both.

There is one sense in which religion may be said to include ethics, and that is in the sense in which during primitive times religious beliefs dominate the whole of life. The fear of unseen intelligences being one of the most powerful features of primitive life, the necessity for conciliating them arises always. The religious ceremonies connected with eating and drinking, lying down and rising up, with sowing and reaping, with disease, hunting, and other occupations, all show how widespread this influence is. Differentiation arises slowly, and one after another various branches of life and knowledge shake off religious influences. Ethics may, therefore, be said to commence under the shadow of religion, as does most other things; but in no exact sense can it be said to owe its origin to religion. As a matter of practice, morality is independent of both moral theory and religious belief; and as a matter of theory the formulation of definite moral rules is as much an assertion of independence of religion as is the growth of a scientific conception of natural force. Indeed, the conflict between a growing moral sense and theory and religious belief is as large a fact in human history as is the conflict between religion and physical science.

In its earlier stages religion is non-moral; it only becomes otherwise in its later phases because of the reaction on religious beliefs of a socialised morality. Early religion is not concerned with the morality of its teachings; nor are the worshipers concerned with the moral character of their deities. We cannot even conceive man ascribing ethical qualities to his gods until he has become sufficiently developed to formulate certain ethical principles and to desire their exemplification in the conduct of his fellow-man. The savage has no moral reverence for his deities; they are magnified men, but not perfect ones. He worships, not because he admires, but because he fears. Professor Leuba fully admits the origin of religion in fear, but reserves the possibility of man being occasionally placed in such favorable circumstances that fear is not often present. We may admit the possibility, but it remains a possibility only. At present the evidence goes to show, in the words of Ribot, that "The religious sentiment is composed first of all of the emotion of fear in its different degrees, from profound terror to vague uneasiness, due to faith in an unknown, mysterious, impalpable Power." And if we admit the power of this element of fear, we can hardly find in it the origin of morality.

How strong is the desire to find a moral function for religion is well shown in the writings of a man like Dr. Morris Jastrow. In his *Study of Religion* he points out that with primitive religious beliefs "ethical questions are not at all involved," and he adds:—

"The various rites practised by primitive society in order to ward off evils, or to secure the protection of dreaded powers or spirits, are based primarily on logical considerations. If a certain stone is regarded as sacred, it is probably because it is associated with some misfortune, or some unusual piece of good luck. Someone after sitting on the stone may have died; or on sleeping upon it may have seen a remarkable vision, which was followed by a signal victory over a dangerous foe.....In all this, however, ethical considerations are conspicuous by their absence.....Taking again so common a belief among all peoples as the influence for good or evil exerted by the dead upon the living and the numerous practices to which it gives rise.....it will be difficult to discover in these beliefs and ceremonies the faintest suggestion of any ethical influence. It is not the good but the powerful spirits that are invoked; an appeal to them is not made by showing them examples of kindness, justice, or noble deeds, but by bribes, flatteries, and threats."

After this, one looks in vain for any justification of the same author's statement that "Religion repays

the debt it owes to ethics by stimulating the ethical sense of man," and that "the ability of the modern social reformer to appeal to the sense of right, pure and simple, existing in a community, is equally a direct outcome of the education of the race through the divine sanction established for the right and the good, for purity and justice." On the face of it, Dr. Jastrow has shown that religion does exist apart from ethical sanction and influence. And in the phrase "It is man's ethical sense that exerts an influence upon his beliefs, and not *vice versa*," he also admits that ethics is independent of religion. Further, when he states the almost obvious truth that it "is necessary to bear in mind that the advance in religious thought begins with those members of the community who are intellectually superior. It is they who first recognise the contradiction between standards of conduct evolved in a natural way and views held about the gods, and who bring about an ethical transformation, more or less effective in their beliefs," it would seem he has fully demonstrated that it is not religion which purifies man, but man that purifies religion. One can only ascribe the author's opinion of the moral value of religion—an opinion quite at variance with the author's facts—to the desire to find, at any cost, a useful function for a discredited set of beliefs.

What writers who take up the position criticised overlook is the vital fact that while religion, as such, commences in a reasoned process, morality is firmly established before mankind becomes conscious of the need of a theory to account for its existence. Religion is essentially a theory that exists to explain a given set of phenomena. Morality, on the other hand, takes its rise in those feelings and instincts that are developed in human and animal nature by the struggle for existence. The affection of the animal for its young, of the human mother for her child, the feeling between male and female, the sympathy that binds members of the same species together, these do not rest upon any theory, or upon an intellectual perception of their value. Theory tries to account for their existence, reason justifies their being, but they are fundamentally the outcome of associated life. And it is precisely because morality is the necessary outcome of associated life that it has the effect on religious beliefs described by Dr. Jastrow. A society living under a purely autocratic government finds nothing repulsive in the idea of a God who damns or saves at his own pleasure or caprice. Where slave-owning is an accepted social fact the slave code of the Old Testament excites no disapprobation. When a change in the constitution of society occurs, the autocracy of God is modified and slavery is denounced as contrary to "true religion." At one time the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," receives the support of all believers. In a little while the growth of knowledge, by disclosing the real cause of demoniacal possession, wipes it out of the minds of religious people. Heresy-hunting, once regarded as a solemn service man owes to God, becomes more and more objectionable under changed conditions. So, too, with the doctrine of eternal damnation. In every direction we may trace religious beliefs becoming humanised and socialised by a changing and developing moral sense. And on the reverse side it is not at all difficult to show that, far from ethics having received any assistance from religious belief, this has always been at once the most powerful agent in distorting the moral sense and the greatest obstacle to its orderly development.

If we are to arrive at a proper understanding of the nature of religion, we can therefore no more assume morals to be an essential ingredient than we can medicine, or any of the special arts or sciences. It will not do to even define religion, with Mr. W. H. Mallock,* as the belief that the Universe has been made, and is sustained, by an intelligence external to, and essentially independent of it. This is a perfectly sound definition of

theism, but *theism* is only one of the phases of religion, while the idea of a creator or of an intelligence independent of the Universe is one quite foreign to religious belief in its early stages. And to deny the right to the name of religion to primitive beliefs is to put oneself on a level with that almost extinct type of Christian who declined to call any superstition but his own a religion. It is, therefore, impossible to agree with Professor Leuba when he says that "the idea of a creator must take precedence of ghosts and nature beings in the making of a religion." If by precedence the order of importance is taken from the standpoint of later and comparatively modern forms of religion, the statement may pass. But if the precedence claimed is a time order, then the reply is that instead of the idea of a creator taking precedence of ghosts and nature beings it is, as will be seen later, from these that the idea of a creator evolves. It is true that Professor Leuba holds that "Belief in the existence of unseen anthropic beings is not religion. It is only when man enters into relation with them that religion comes into existence." But so soon as man believes in the existence of ghosts and nature beings he believes himself to be in relation with them, and a large part of his life is spent in making these relations of an amicable character.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

The Devil and the Roses.

THE smoke of war had cleared away, and the Emperor, victorious and complacent, sat in the tent of the defeated monarch, and prepared to grant lands—in the style of William the Conqueror or Alexander the Great—to his faithful lords.

The aristocratic candidates for spoil entered, and smirkingly received the imperial gifts and honors. Finally, an archbishop appeared with the happy suggestion that the place where the battle was fought should be consecrated by a new cathedral, many-towered and sweetly belled,—a sort of Battle-Abbey.

Agreed. Exit grateful prelate.

A moment afterwards, his Grace returned, and hinted that appropriate revenues might be set apart for the clergy of the as-yet-unbuilt house of God.

Agreed. Exit grateful prelate.

A moment afterwards, his Grace again returned. With humble demeanor, he murmured that it would be convenient to the Church to take over the rents from a large estate now covered by the sea, and bestowed by the Emperor upon a not-over-respectable person (if he might venture to say so) named Faust.

"But," replied the amazed Emperor, "the land is all under water! Is it possible the Church can desire to draw increment that is not only non-earned, but non-existing? The demesne in question had better be drained first."

Not agreed. Exit prelate.

The Emperor supposed that the archbishop would next demand the whole Empire,—for the good of the Cause.

The incident just narrated may not be recognised by most of my readers. It is taken from a play, the first part of which is continuously popular, the second part (here cited) not much read, it being, perhaps, too imaginative. I mean Goethe's *Faust*.

What Goethe signifies by the scene just sketched is, I take it, the decline and fall of two historic forces,—the twin colleagues, Militarism and Theology. The Emperor's war, indeed, is burlesque,—not the burlesque of a raw youth, or a cloistered scholar. Goethe had seen the gigantic tide of Napoleon's power roll by, and he had seen its ebb at St.

* In spite of the enigmas, this Second Part should be studied by all who love to brood over the riddles of Man. It is included in the cheap editions of *Faust* issued in Dent's *Everyman's Library* and Cassell's *People's Library*.

Helena. With all those great memories in his brain, he nevertheless coolly planned the ignominious end of war. As a matter of fact, the Emperor's foes were old suits of armour, and the like, animated for the occasion by Faust and the half-fool, half-handyman, who once had been the awful Mephistopheles. The whole campaign was an illusion, played upon the Emperor in order to induce him to give away land to his loyal supporters,—Faust obtaining an immense holding of foreshore. The foreshore is a symbol of the Future. And as Faust stands for Man the Searcher and Developer, one perceives that Goethe is here intimating that Humanity will exploit for all sorts of fruitful purposes that realm of the future now—

“O'erwhelmed by ocean vast.”

Theology, in the person of the Archbishop who asks and asks again, puts in a characteristic claim for possession to-day and for ever; and makes exit, not feeling certain of its economic destiny.

However, the uncertainty is cleared up in the Fifth Act.

The Act first discloses an open country near the sea,—the estate rescued from the sea by our industrious Superman or Faust. The landscape smiles in sunny peace and fertility. Militarism and its noisy Napoleons having vanished (except for three quaint survivals to be presently noted), industry performs its perpetual miracle of changing the wilderness into a garden.

But Conservatism lingers in a cottage, where an aged couple, Baucis and Philemon, quaveringly regret the good old times, and put their trust in the God who is still commemorated by a congregation of one or two in the moss-covered chapel hard by. A wanderer arrives. Many years ago, he had been shipwrecked on this spot, and saved by the charitable hands of the couple who were then young and active. The scene of Salvation is now a scene of Cultivation; and how this change has been realised by the magic of Faust's skill is told to the wanderer as he sits at table with Baucis and Philemon in the garden. As to the future, they tremble in senile doubt.

“This godless man,” exclaims the dame, “covets our modest cottage; and calls himself our neighbor, forsooth!”

“But he offers a better homestead in its place,” says Philemon.

Baucis,—Tory-like,—prefers the Customary,—

“Trust not land that late was water;
On the high ground keep thy stand.”

That is, the high-and-dry “Impregnable Rock,” superior to the Higher Criticism!

The old man, not without a suspicion of sulkiness, responds,—

“Move we onward to the chapel,
The last sunbeam to behold;
Kneel, and with the bell make music,— [Exeunt.
God our refuge, as of old.”

Faust, now extremely old, looks out at sunset from the terrace of his garden, and scans the fair campaign which he has created out of the waste. Theology has contributed nothing to the result, except to obstruct the view with its dilapidated church and the cottage of its sole surviving adherents. The evening bell tinkles, and its sound, once rich in meaning to wide realms and populations, now strikes the ear of Faust as an obsolete irritation. While he meditates in the garden, a beautiful barque well-laden with foreign produce arrives by way of the canal. Mephistopheles and the three ancient militarists—Have-quick, Speed-booty, and Hold-fast—leap from the argosy, greet the lord of the manor, and disembark the cargo. Militarism and the Devil play a very subordinate part compared with their past flamboyant and imperial style. The cargo is Faust's; and when Mephistopheles learns that the theological relic was a distinct blot on the estate, he very obligingly goes off to delete it from the face of the earth. Besides, he is not unwilling to pay off old scores incurred in the Bottomless Pit and elsewhere.

A sudden blaze reddens the night-sky, and Faust sees sparks rising in volumes from cottage and belfry.

A few moments later, the Devil and the Three War-men return at a run, announcing that destructive criticism has accomplished its mission. The Conservative inmates of the cottage, and the Wanderer, have all perished. The estate is now all Humanity's own.

It is time for Faust to die. Goethe does not, by this, hint at the dissolution of our race. But just as Addison, fearing some awkward imitation might spoil the glory of his good old Sir Roger de Coverly, cried, “By God, I'll kill Sir Roger!” and forthwith concluded his famous sketches of that English country gentleman, so Goethe gives artistic ending to his dream by killing Faust at the point where imagination can no longer make useful play. It is enough for us to-day to foresee a pacific and industrial Utopia; we cannot legislate for thousands of years ahead. So the Superman of the poet can now “wrap the drapery of his couch about him and lie down to pleasant dreams.”

Four grey women approach Faust's door, three of them—Poverty, Crime, Agony—menace him, and retire. The fourth is Care, a pale spirit that will never be eliminated altogether from human experience. She enters, and breathes upon the old man's face.

Faust is blind.

Like Samson, he feels for the posts that support the house; but not to pull the building down. The constructive enthusiasm throbs in the veteran's heart. He stands at the gate, and turns his sightless eyes towards the commonwealth he has made out of chaos. There is a swamp in a distant quarter of the estate. He has begun to drain it. Multitudes of laborers will, day by day, joyfully engage in the task of evoking sweetness and order from foulness and confusion. His last thoughts are of progress.

“Love for principle, and order for basis: progress for end.”

Faust lies dead. Livid, thin, ghostly Lemurs flit about the corpse, and the uncanny gleam of their spades throws flashes over the grave which they are making for the body. The soul will be disposed of by the Evil One. Not without some difficulty, however, can the soul be extracted. Mephistopheles even grumbles at the delay in the emergence of the spirit of Faust.

“Times are changed,” he sighs. “I used to secure a soul immediately on the decease. But nowadays, there are so many new inventions for saving souls, and trade is depressed.”

After a pause,—

“Demons! prepare. Open one of the mouths of Hell.”

It opens on the left-hand side of the stage, and Mephistopheles blandly observes (across the footlights to the audience) that this is only one of the entrances. There are admission doors for all classes, especially the upper.

At this point, we become aware (if we were not aware before) that Goethe is ridiculing the whole paraphernalia of Devil-myth. The Satan who owed us so overwhelmingly when he called upon the Spirits to sing the song of Enchantment in Faust's study is a modern laughing-stock. And he will not get the little soul—the delicate winged Psyche—of which he looks for the appearance from the dead man's breast.

A light of glory fills the air, and the Heavenly Host musically proclaim their purpose to bear away the Life-essence of Faust. Need one stay to interpret? Is it necessary to explain that Goethe,—in producing from the ether his sparkling crowd of angels, cherubs, saints, Mary Magdalene, Virgin Mary, and Margaret,—is but using ancient Catholic symbols to signify the forces and affections that will impart splendor to the Future of Humanity? Must one tell in detail how, just as the reclaimed foreshore means the social possibilities of ages to come, so Mary and her shining companions are emblems of

the Womanhood that will constitute the flower of our evolving race?

The Psyche,—the soul,—that is to say, the Energy of Love, Order, Progress,—the Genius of Man which, in forms perpetually renewed, will increasingly beautify and ennoble our Planetary Home,—issues from the breast of Faust, and rises amid the celestial choir; and the choir drop roses,—roses of genial, magnanimous, smiling, musical disdain and pity,—upon the heads of the Devil and the lesser devils. These fat and lean devils, these straight-horned and crooked-horned devils (I merely copy Goethe's descriptive notes in the play) and their Captain once represented the forces of Disease, War, Pain, Tyranny, Anarchy, and were enthroned as India has enthroned its incarnations of horror in Kali dripping with blood, or Siva the Roarer with his necklace of skulls. And now they have degenerated into ganzy and unsubstantial imps, who set the children laughing in the nursery.

The lesser devils hurriedly vanish into their fatherland through the mouth of Hell.

Their bewildered Captain, half-buried in roses, gazes aloft at the radiant cherubs and saints. Almost, he says to himself, he is persuaded to love these charming enemies who pelt him with flowers. And meanwhile, the winged Psyche,—emblem of continuous advance towards the ideal,—follows its queens,—

"All we see before us passing
Sign and symbol is alone;
Here, what thought could never reach to
Is by semblances made known;
What man's words may never utter,
Done in act,—in symbol shown.
Love, whose perfect type is Woman,
The divine and human blending,
Love for ever and for ever
Wins us onward; still ascending."*

The gods who read Goethe's *Faust* have had many warnings, and they, taught by experience, will know that this is one of the most significant.

F. J. GOULD.

THE VALUE OF SCEPTICISM.

If I were a young man endowed with literary powers, and about to begin my career, I should adopt as the work of my life the Diffusion of Doubt; for doubt dissipates superstition, and softens the rancor of religious life. Without doubt there can be no tolerance, and the history of tolerance is the history of doubt. The scepticism spread by Voltaire humanised the dogmas of the Roman Church; and we ourselves are passing through a silent, gradual, but momentous doubting revolution. What is it that has made the clergymen of all denominations in these later days so temperate in their views, so considerate for the opinions of others? It is Doubt arising from discoveries in science, and from numberless works in which religious topics have been treated with freedom of spirit. Certainly there has been a wonderful change within the last twenty years. When I lived with Dr. Chalmers in London, men spoke of these matters under their breath, but now ladies discuss them freely enough: and I have heard a clergyman of the Church of England say things in the pulpit which in my younger days very few laymen would have dared to say at a dinner party. Yet in spite of all this progress much religious persecution goes on, and bigotry abounds. The diffusion of Doubt is the only remedy for these evils; and though the hacking and hewing of old beliefs must cause much suffering, it is better that a thousand should suffer rather than that one crime of intolerance should be committed.—*Winwood Reade, "The Outcast."*

If we once fully recognise the Bible as an oriental book we are on the road to its complete comprehension. Its grossness of speech, its gratuitous reference to animal functions, its designation of males by their sexual attributes even on the most serious occasions, its religious observances in connection with pregnancy and birth, its very rite of circumcision; all this, and much more, becomes perfectly intelligible. It is in keeping with all we know of the ideas, practices, and language of the East.—*G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."*

* Dr. Anster's translation.

Acid Drops.

The Christian Evidence people, who carried on a 3 to 8.30 demonstration at Parliament Hill Fields some Sundays ago, resent our statement that, while the N. S. S. speakers on that occasion had a big crowd, the C. E. people's platform was nearly deserted. They reply to this by publishing a photographic view of their "meeting." Now we happen to know that this photograph is, in a sense, "a fake." The photographer (we know who he is, and what his original plate was) took the photograph at a point which showed a lot more people than belonged to the C. E. meeting. As a matter of fact, many people in the photograph, as it stands, are looking away from the C. E. platform. They were looking in another direction,—namely, the direction of the Secular platform. Thus the C. E. people make a crowd in their "fake" photograph by including a considerable section of the opposition meeting. This is certainly one way of making up a crowd, and we suppose we must give the Christians the credit of it.

The leaflet containing this "fake" photograph has a worthy companion in another leaflet containing two things. The first is an extract from Starkie's well-known (old) book on Libel. Starkie was a Christian, and the extract may be very acceptable to Christians. But it is mere verbiage to Freethinkers, and it was vigorously denounced as such by the late Mr. Justice Stephen. One would think that Starkie was the law of England; but he isn't, he is only Starkie. And as for A. G. Auden, who puts his name after the extract, as if it were of any importance who copied the passage out of Starkie's fat volume, he is nobody but the lawyer's clerk who wrote an impudent letter to our solicitors in reference to the Boulter case last year. The second part of the leaflet is signed by G. L. Drawbridge. This reverend gentleman (we are using conventional language) simply incites Christians to personal violence against Freethinkers. He pretends that Freethought speakers are "obscene"—just as though they fed on the beastliness of the Bible; and then he goes on to say: "If we were a little more manly than we are we should at once summon up sufficient courage to make it very clearly understood that we shall no longer allow the ears of our young sisters or children to be outraged by such language. We need not go whining to a policeman, we can put a stop to blackguardism ourselves." Such language can only have one meaning, and we strongly advise this "meek and lowly" man of God not to reduce it to practice; or he may find himself off the drawbridge and into the moat.

The worthy Drawbridge is very anxious about his "young sisters" and "children." Well, we must ask him a question. Does he give his own "young sisters" or "children," if he has any, the Bible to read? If he does, they must read there things a thousand times worse than any Freethought lecturer could possibly think of saying in public—filthy things, vile things, which would mean imprisonment for the printer if they were found in any other book. We quite admit that Christians like Mr. Drawbridge might be "a little more manly" than they are. If they were so they would not set their "young sisters" and "children" reading the stories of Judith and Tamar, and Lot and his daughters, and the Levite and his concubine, and Hoses and his prostitute wife, and other beastly Bible narratives which are too sickening to enumerate.

According to a Reuter telegram from Canea the Christians have been murdering Mohammedans. You can't trust religionists on one side or the other.

Some of the Congo natives have got even with one of their tormentors. News comes from Brussels that a white merchant (no doubt a rubber merchant—and a good Christian) has been killed, cooked, and eaten. We are glad the natives cooked him before consumption. It shows a certain refinement. A raw Christian would have been too much for their stomachs.

We see that "an expedition has been sent against the cannibal tribe." No doubt a lot of them will be killed—and mutilated. They will be taught that white Christians must be allowed to torment black Heathen with impunity. To retaliate is a most unpardonable offence.

The "Churches" are organising a demonstration against the Congo misgovernment. It is to take place on November 19. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the principal Nonconformist leaders are co-operating in this laudable effort. But it doesn't require much courage to denounce

King Leopold. The Churches don't get up demonstrations against the Czar. They don't even mention India.

Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., suggests that a stuffed landlord will be exhibited some day in the British Museum. May we suggest that the next glass case should contain a Christian Socialist?

We wonder if Mr. Ferdinand Earle, the American millionaire artist and Socialist, is a *Christian Socialist*. He seems, at any rate, to be imitating some of the Bible worthies in their dealings with women. Two years ago he left his wife and went off to Paris with Miss Julia Kuttner, whom he discovered to be his "affinity." Now he has left the "affinity" and gone off with a "soul-mate"—Miss Dunn, a militant Suffragette of Chicago. Mr. Earle may rival Solomon yet.

The *Daily Chronicle* must have a poor opinion of the intelligence of many of its readers; otherwise it would not have inserted a letter from a pious gentleman at Uxbridge suggesting a special "night of prayer" to God that he would "unveil the present mystery" of the fate of the *Waratah*. Pressmen about Fleet-street know that this is about as good as the famous pill for curing earthquakes; but they won't tell the public so while there is a shadow of danger over the process.

The pious Uxbridge gentleman winds up with a hope that the result of the answer to this "night of prayer" will be to "bring many unto His everlasting kingdom by Christ Jesus." We should say that prayer, instead of good navigation, is very likely to produce that effect. We note that the pious gentleman's first name is Nathaniel. That may account for his rural simplicity.

"Talks on Good and Evil" is a good title for Mr. J. Bruce Wallace's two columns in the *New Theology* weekly. They are certainly talks—and that is all they are. We should pity anyone who called them reasonings. Mr. Wallace, if we understand him (we are not sure that he is quite intelligible); denies the real existence of evil. God is infinitely good, he says, and God has no rival. That settles it. The poor wretches suffering horrible misery in this world, as so many of them do, are under the impression that evil is a very serious reality. But they are mistaken. Mr. Wallace, who doesn't suffer the misery, assures them so. Which settles it again.

Good and evil belong to the shifting panorama of our experience, Mr. Wallace says. But a greater than he, if he will allow us to say so, expressed the exact truth in much simpler language. "There is nothing either good or bad," Shakespeare said, "but thinking makes it so." Anybody who understands that sentence will also understand the true inwardness of Mr. Wallace's cackle about "mysteries." There is no mystery in good or evil to the Atheist. The Theist sees a mystery in evil, but it is a mystery of his own creation. It is simply the contradiction between his theory and the facts of existence.

Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, another *New Theology* champion, says that he saw Mont Blanc in the moonlight, and he is "sure that God was there." This seems to suggest that God is moonshine—which is very probable.

Rev. R. J. Campbell talks *New Theology* wisdom in the following manner. "Jesus is the light of the world," he says, "because he was the focal personality wherein the divine word tabernacled at the most momentous spiritual crisis in the course of human development." We understand now.

The Rev. Frank Ballard's apologetic tactics are not improving. Though now proudly appending to his name the suggestive symbols, D.D., M.A., B.Sc. (Lond.), F.R.M.S., etc., he is as superficial, flinkey, and irrelevant as ever. In one of his latest works, *Christ and Christianity*, in answer to the question, "Is there any historical evidence, outside the *New Testament*, proving that Christ ever really existed?" he says: "The testimony of Josephus (c. 94 A.D.), Tacitus (c. 116 A.D.), Suetonius (c. 120 A.D.), Pliny (112 A.D.), Lucian (166 A.D.), and Celsus (180 A.D.), are as unequivocal as undeniable." The truth is, however, that not one of those distinguished writers offers the tiniest shred of evidence that Jesus ever lived. Even granting that all the passages in which they are supposed to refer to or describe Jesus are genuine, which is anything but the case, the very dates supplied by Dr. Ballard himself show conclusively that, in the total absence of contemporary records, they possess no evidential value whatever.

Dr. Ballard must know that the Jesus of the Gospels is an absolutely impossible personage. With such beings mythology is crowded, but history is wholly ignorant of them. Dr. Ballard asserts that the most advanced of critical scholars, such as Schmiedel, Van Manen, and Loman, and the ablest of rationalistic writers, such as Renan, Mill, and Lecky, are at one with orthodox divines in the recognition of the historicity of Jesus; but such is not the case. The Jesus in the historicity of whom Schmiedel, for example, believes, is *not* the Jesus of the Four Gospels, but the Jesus whom he has *constructed* by rejecting certain portions of the canonical narratives. If there was a historical nucleus, it is now quite impossible to extricate it from the mythical and legendary mass in which it is embedded.

The *Academy* can't get over it. Messrs. Smith and Son still sell the *Freethinker*, in spite of our contemporary's remonstrances. It is too pathetic for words.

Rev. Douglas Philip Roper Nunn, clergyman, of Brentwood, is committed for trial on the charge of stealing money from the alms-boxes of four parish churches in that part of Essex. Prisoner admitted the fact, and attributed it to "kleptomania."

Mary Jane Mitchell, the daughter of a commercial traveller, at Bradford, addled her poor brains with "religious literature." She got the idea that the end of the world was coming, but she couldn't wait for it, and the result was a coroner's inquest with the usual verdict.

Indian Christian clergymen held a Conference at Madras on August 13 to consider the question of polygamous converts. No definite conclusion was arrived at, but some of the speakers argued that if a Hindu with more than one wife wanted to become a Christian he should be required to discharge all but one before admission. This is monogamy run mad. It takes a Christian to put forward such a proposal.

Piety is often a remarkable thing. Robert McQuilkin, against whom the coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder in connection with the death of Harry Trunkfield, the aged attendant at Kenilworth Open-Air Swimming Bath, told his wife at the police-station that he would be hanged, but he would "meet her in heaven." How sure they are!

General Booth's notions of "Providence" are as sensible as most people's. As a thinker, in fact, he is just on a level with the average man in the street; his natural advantages are energy and business capacity. When the Queen sent him a message of sympathy about his poor eyes—which, of course, are suffering from "Anno Domini"—he replied that he "welcomed the opportunity of embracing the Providence of God in the visitation with a whole-souled faith in His wisdom and love." But the whole-souled faith did not prevent his calling the visitation "a great disappointment."

We see by a newspaper review that there is a live poet called Oliver Davics, who is described as "a strong and sincere writer." We don't doubt his sincerity, but his other good qualities are less obvious. Look at this verse:—

"I limit if I know,
I shatter if I touch;
The good God made it so,
The good God keeps it such.
I sit apart and gaze,
I shut my eyes to see,
I sing aloud and praise
My God, so good to me."

We could say "My God" and "Good God" as well as Mr. Davics, but we should print a note of exclamation after them—especially after reading this wonderful poetry. Mr. Davics shuts his eyes to see; which is what religionists all do. We may be sure therefore of his piety; so we leave him with his "good God."

It is quite pathetic to read in a *Christian* weekly that the Edgbaston "Passive Resisters" have been "gradually diminishing, owing to deaths and removals." Recruiting the ranks of this foolish army is impossible. And we are glad to hear it. There is evidently a feeling amongst Nonconformists that the Passive Resistance game isn't worth the candle. We have often drawn attention to a fact which others must have noticed, for it is so obvious. Not a single Nonconformist leader has gone to prison. They have egged their followers on, but they have kept out of the more serious trouble themselves. Their cry is "Go to prison!" But the only effective cry in the long run is "Come to prison!"

Dr. Clifford has just stated that his (Westbourne Park) Chapel "aims at being a pattern church and creating pattern men and women." What a pharasaic, if not a Pecksniffian, aim! Angels and ministers of grace defend us from pattern men and women! The pattern man is like the perfect man—a perfect nuisance.

Matthew Arnold, the *Daily News* says, had a curious dislike for the hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." He thought the Deity was "displeased and disserved by men uttering such doggerel." But our contemporary is of opinion that Arnold "would find few supporters"—the hymn being so immensely popular. Our own view is that Arnold would find plenty of supporters, if they were looked for in the right direction; not amongst the mob of vulgar pietists, but amongst the minority who have poetical and other susceptibilities.

The meek shall inherit the earth. So said Jesus Christ. And the Christian nations are now discussing which of them should own the North Pole. The "meek" ones can't lose the least "inheritance." They claim it for Christ's sake. Amen.

Mr. Quiller-Couch, the novelist, in his powerful story of *Hetty Wesley*, makes the great John Wesley say that—"For aught we know the Son of God may pass along the heavens adding martyrdom to martyrdom, may even at this moment be bound to a cross on some unseen planet, surging around, one in this multitude of stars." A Cornishman in London tells the novelist that this is enough to make John Wesley turn in his grave. The idea of Jesus Christ being crucified in other inhabited worlds, as well as in this one, in order to make the necessary atonement for sin, is Thomas Paine's. It is borrowed from the *Age of Reason*. But the novelist denies that he ever read this book. Anyhow, the idea is "not an ignoble one," and Mr. Quiller-Couch says he will not expunge it from future editions of *Hetty Wesley*.

If it be really true that Mr. Quiller-Couch has not read the *Age of Reason*, he should do so at once, for to that extent, at least, his education has been neglected.

A flood in South-East Java has swept away railway bridges and done enormous damages to property and crops, besides killing 600 natives. "He doeth all things well."

Here is a pretty headline from a morning newspaper reporting the disastrous floods in Mexico:—"Helpless Spectators. Prests Blessing People as They are Washed Away." Good old "Providence"!

We understand that Professor Ferrer, the Spanish secular educationist, whom the authorities tried in vain to murder judicially a few years ago, has been arrested under the White Terror at Barcelona, and may be got rid of by means of a secret military tribunal. We hope the friends of freedom all over Europe will watch this villainous attempt to suppress a man who, by virtue of his ideas, and nothing else, is inimical to the clerical party in Spain. It is impossible just yet to lift the veil which hides the fate of the hundreds of prisoners in Montjuich and other places of confinement. What we know for certain is that the Church-and-Army party are extremely fond of torture. It is frightful to think of what is probably going on in the Barcelona prisons. Yet the hypocritical European governments (all Christians) make no representations to Spain on the matter. They spend their time protesting against cruelty by the Sultan of Morocco.

Mr. Joseph McCabe got a letter into Tuesday's *Daily News* on the subject of the Barcelona dragoonings, and of course he laid emphasis on the case of Professor Ferrer. We are glad to see him taking an interest in justice and liberty, even in a foreign country. He may in time take a little interest in it nearer home. There are so many superfine friends of freedom who never recognise any attack upon it under their noses. They reserve their indignation for other countries and other ages. Mr. McCabe, in particular, is being quoted by the Christian Evidence hooligans to show that English Freethinkers ought to be rather pleased with the Blasphemy Laws.

The Liverpool Watch Committee have decided to ask the Home Office to appoint a Commissioner to hold a public inquiry into "the recent religious disturbances" in that city. We are glad to hear it. Light ought to be thrown upon a very disgraceful situation.

Rev. Daniel Saunders Rees, curate of Chirk, near Wrexham, forgot the New Testament teaching that men—and men of God in particular, of course—should have nothing whatever to do with women. And the result is that he has to pay £200 to a parson's daughter for breach of promise.

In Melbourne the police have been prosecuting a large number of clairvoyants and spiritualists, and the spectacle has afforded unalloyed pleasure to the orthodox. The *Southern Cross*, one of the most widely circulated of the Australian religious journals, says:—

"The spiritists are apparently falling out amongst themselves. A meeting was held in the Temperance Hall in that city on Thursday night to denounce 'subtle craft or humbug Spiritualism,' and it was held, astonishing to relate, under the auspices of the Victorian Association of Spiritualists! The chairman denounced 'low-grade spiritism' and 'unscrupulous minds who, for mercenary motives, would fleece the ignorant and gullible public.' The Melbourne police have been prosecuting some advertising spiritists, and the revelations made were of the usual type. They supplied new, but quite unnecessary, proofs of the existence of many fools in the city, and of rogues who make them their prey."

But the sincere section of the Spiritualists has as much right to say that the roguery exposed is not the "genuine article" as the sincere Christians have to draw similar distinctions when a prominent member of some Church is convicted of bigamy or seduction. The truth is, Spiritualism, like Christianity, has been exposed a thousand and one times, but it still survives. Superstition satisfies a low form of mentality, and low forms of mentality are little affected by exposures. Certainly the Spiritualists have no monopoly of either the "rogues" or the "fools."

Another item from "down under." The Rev. J. G. Greenough, M.A., one of the leading Baptists of Victoria, deplores the fact that the Church congregations continue to diminish:—

"They had made the services more attractive, but the sad irony was that they did not attract. They had to face the fact of steadily diminishing congregations. They might go on serving out milk for babies, or syrup, if they liked the word better, until they lost the power of providing food for strong men, and even the babes were surfeited with the diet. They had now pleasant Sunday mornings, and pleasant Sunday evenings, not, indeed, called by that name, but the name did not alter the character of the thing. They were merely concerts, or variety entertainments, with the names of the performers prominently advertised. The preacher was graciously allowed to give a five minutes' talk to add a touch of religion to the entertainment."

And these remarks were made a few weeks after the great emotional debauch provided by the Chapman-Torrey Mission, the main object of which was said to be the consolidation and extension of Church membership. The description of some of the religious services as "variety entertainments" is refreshingly candid; but how the Melbourne men of God have always fought against outside competition in the shape of secular concerts on the Sawbath!

Mark Twain once corrected the announcement of his death. He said that the report was much exaggerated. We suppose we must say the same with regard to the reference in the *Church Times* to the *Freethinker* as "defunct." We did not know we were in that condition, but this is a world in which you live and learn—especially if you read Christian papers. Such papers, indeed, with their astonishing accuracy and preternatural veracity, enable you to understand how the Gospels made their way in the world.

The *Church Times* is wonderfully up to date. It refers to Bradlaugh as one of the "forgotten names." This is rich. Bradlaugh is bound to live in history. But who the devil is the editor of the *Church Times*?

The "defunct" *Freethinker* is referred to in a review of the Rev. A. J. Waldron's *Problems of Life*. Waldron has played many parts in his time, but Waldron as a philosopher takes the cake.

Three poor Nazarenes in Monday morning's newspapers. Rev. Prebendary Charles Walter Albin Napier, of Chichester, left £6,275. Rev. William Hutchinson Sharpe, of Amble-side, left £13,435. Rev. Edgar Sherlock, of Bath, left £14,085. Their present addresses are unknown, though the district may be spotted.

Another poor Nazarene. Rev. George Halliley Capron, of Oundle, North Hants, rector of Stoke Doyle, left £25,186. He hasn't discovered the North Pole.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 12, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of the World."—in *King Lear*, etc.

September 19, 26, St. James's Hall, London.

October 3, Glasgow; 10, Leicester; 17, 24, and 31, St. James's Hall, London.

November 7, Manchester; 14, Liverpool; 28, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £237 11s. 6d. Received since.—R. L. M., £2; Joseph Bryce, 10s. 6d.; R. Lancaster, 10s.

R. L. M.—Pleased to see your handwriting again, but should have been better pleased to see yourself. We are in good fighting fettle at present.

JOSEPH BRYCE.—Glad to have your appreciation of our "valuable labors."

F. H. W.—Rev. C. J. Whitmore, the author of that tract, has been dead many years, and the names referred to belong to the period between 1840 and 1875. The statement about Charles Southwell is a falsehood. To call the other persons "infidel leaders" is a gross abuse of language. They were nobodies. We have been connected with the Freethought movement for nearly forty years, and we have never known of an "infidel leader" being converted back to Christianity during that time. The only important defection was that of Mrs. Besant, but she did not return to the faith of her childhood. Christianity cannot convert real "leaders" like Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and Ingersoll. The very fact that the initials in Whitmore's old tract cannot be recognised at this time of day shows the actual size of the "converts."

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome cuttings.
HELLEN.—We do not know of any such lantern slides.

THOMAS WRIGHT (New York).—We should reply that two blacks do not make a white. Existing cruelties to animals should be abated and suppressed, and not made the excuse for further cruelties. With regard to the other point, would you listen to the plea of a man who had been sent to prison for a crime—that is, a grave anti-social act—that he ought not to be taxed to support prisons for the seclusion of persons of his way of thinking? If a man does a month for ill-using (say) a horse, should he escape paying his rates in consequence? We never heard of a more fantastic idea.

F. ROSS.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

M. E. PEGG, secretary of the Manchester Branch, points out that the grant of £10 from the Secular Society, Ltd., was made last October. That is true. And it may be well to add that the grant was to be followed by further help if the Branch complied with the conditions mentioned in the Board's letter.

R. IRVING.—We cannot answer your first question at present. We note your appreciation of Mr. Mann's articles, and your wish that there were "more of them"—which we share.

J. TOMKINS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

W. A. YATES.—We cannot take "Hubert" (Hubert Bland) seriously. He has to get butter for his bread—and he does it.

H. BLACK.—We have an article on the same subject already in the printer's hands. You say that our London friends "are to be envied" their opportunity of hearing our Shakespeare lectures, and hope the Manchester friends will be treated to one of them. We will see.

G. R. BALLARD.—Glad you were "more than enraptured" with the *Hamlet* lecture, and hope you will be equally pleased with the rest of the course. We know nothing whatever of the "Lloyd Passant" (apparently an assumed name) who represents himself in the *Woman Worker* as having been "an aggressive Atheist for seventeen years" and "an active member of the N. S. S." His activity has not attracted our attention.

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

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

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

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

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention. Orders for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The new course of Freethought lectures at St. James's Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., opened well on Sunday evening. Considering the time of the year, and the really fine weather, the audience was a gratifying one. It was larger than the first audience of the former course of lectures in April. It may not have looked so, but the explanation is that so many persons show a preference for seats in the balcony instead of in the body of the hall. Mr. J. T. Lloyd presided, and amongst the audience (which, by the way, included many ladies and a large proportion of strangers) were Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. Harry Snell, and the Editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*. Mr. Foote's lecture on "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in *Hamlet*, etc.," was followed with profound attention for nearly an hour and a half, and there was a great outburst of cheering when he resumed his seat. It is impossible, of course, to give any useful summary report of such a long and careful lecture.

We have no doubt that the St. James's Hall audience will go on increasing week by week. Still, it is a great pity that there should be any empty seats, especially when a certain proportion of them are free. London Freethinkers should try to induce their friends and acquaintances to attend these lectures. Mr. Foote's subject this evening (Sept. 12) is "Shakespeare's Philosophy of the World—in *King Lear*, etc." Incidentally he will have something to say about Tolstoy's and Bernard Shaw's opinions of this tragical masterpiece.

Mr. W. W. Collins, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, preaches the gospel of Freethought and edits the (monthly) *Examiner* at Christchurch, New Zealand. In the August number, just to hand, he notes the friendly reference to him in the Annual Report at the N. S. S. Conference, and eases his mind on the subject in the following manner: "Across half the world's waters we assure Mr. Foote that we are not wanting in appreciation of his thoughtful reference to our work. It may be some satisfaction to him to know that his own great and gallant fight, to say nothing of his personal sacrifices, has been watched by us with unfailing interest and unflinching confidence. The example of a brave and unyielding fighter is not only inspiring, it is strengthening, and if we succeed in accomplishing any thing of worth, it will, in no small measure, be due to the traditions of the Society which Mr. Foote so faithfully upholds."

We are happy to state—and most, if not all, of our readers will be happy to learn—that the circulation of the *Freethinker* is still improving. Some may say "Very good; better leave well alone." But that is not our motto. Neither does it express our policy. The fact that the *Freethinker* makes any progress at all in the face of such adverse conditions, shows that it would find many more readers if it were only brought to their attention and made accessible. Our friends can do something, neither difficult nor expensive, to help us. They can introduce the paper to friends and acquaintances, or to strangers whom they happen to meet in travelling or otherwise. They can also send us the addresses of persons to whom we might usefully send specimen copies for six consecutive weeks.

We reproduce, with slight alterations, this week an old article of Mr. Foote's, written not far from twenty years ago. It will be new to the overwhelming majority of our readers, and it fits into the space left open in the make-up. Mr. Foote thus gains a little breathing time after the main work of preparing the material for his course of lectures on Shakespeare.

Love is materialism; immaterial love is a chimæra. In the longing of love after the distant object, the abstract idealist involuntarily confirms the truth of sensuousness. But love is also the idealism of nature—love is also spirit, *esprit*. Love alone makes the nightingale a songstress; love alone gives the plant its corolla. And what wonders does not love work in our social life! What faith, creed, opinion separates, love unites. Love even, humorously enough, identifies the high noblesse with the people. What the old mystics said of God, that he is the highest and yet the commonest being, applies in truth to love, and that not a visionary, imaginary love—no! a real love, a love which has flesh and blood, which vibrates as an almighty force through all living.—*Feuerbach*.

Missions and Morals.

"Missionaries have always complained of the fickleness of their converts; and they must always complain of it, till they discover that some degree of civilisation must precede conversion, or at least accompany it."—SOUTHEY, *History of Brazil*, vol. ii., p. 378.

"As soon as the first flare of the new religion is over, it begins to decline, and in some cases it expires. The story of Christianity in Hawaii, in Otaheite, in New Zealand has been the same. Among the Tahitians it was crushed by the relapse of the converts into extreme licentiousness. There are no countries in which it is so easy to plant, or so hard to maintain, Christianity."—SIR CHARLES DILKE, *Greater Britain*, p. 269.

"Yes, He very good. Christian god very good, Hindoo god very good too. Two million Hindoo god, one Christian god—make two million and one. All mine; two million and one god. I got plenty. Sometimes I pray all time at these, keep it up, go all time every day, give something at shrine, all good for me, make me better man; good for me, good for my family; dam good."—MARK TWAIN, *More Tramps Abroad*.

In the *Strand Magazine* for May there is "A Symposium of Missionaries," which sheds a gleam of light upon missionary converts and missionary methods. What a tale these missionaries could unfold if they gave a true and faithful account of all their experiences!

The defenders of the Bible to-day base their defence, not upon inspiration or upon the miracles it contains, but upon its literary style; and they profess to regard the Secularist as a very ignorant and unpoetical person when he points out that the stories about the Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and all the other fables are not true. And yet, with studied hypocrisy, these same men countenance the teaching of this book to children, and subscribe to Missionary Societies for propagating it among the heathen as the inspired Word of God.

The missionary goes to the savage with all the prestige of the white man's civilisation behind him. He is the representative of that irresistible power to which every savage race on the face of the earth has at some time or another been forced to submit whenever they have pitted their natural valor against the scientific "resources of civilisation." Christian civilisation!

The missionary tells them that the book is holy; that it was sent by the white man's God; that it is by and through this book that the white man has attained his knowledge and power. He hypnotises them with the book. The savage casts away his fetishes to worship the white man's fetish. But he is still a fetish worshiper; there is no other change. The person who thinks that the savage is capable of appreciating the literary character of the Bible is so far from realising the limitations of the savage mind that it would be an idle waste of time to argue the point with him.

These remarks are borne out in the missionary article above referred to. Miss F. Klickermann, the Assistant Literary Superintendent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, illustrates what she calls "some of the curiosities of the savage mind" which are very strikingly shown in connection with the distribution of the Bible. "Certain vivid colors," she says, "appear to possess for them peculiar fascination." And the missionary works on this weakness.

"This love of vivid colors is particularly strong in India, and the Gospels which we send out for sale in the bazaars are protected by bindings of brightly colored paper. Each Gospel has its particular color, and these are selected according to the length of the Gospel. The native of India likes to get as much as possible for his money. He will buy a bulky Gospel merely for its bulk, independently of what color it is bound in; but in order to make him purchase the shorter Gospels these have to be bound in whichever of the bright crude colors are known to take his fancy most. Very large quantities of brightly colored binding-papers—green, red, yellow, and blue—are sent from time to time to various depôts in India. Quite recently, for instance, twenty tons of it were despatched in a single week to one depôt in Calcutta."

Thus it is the quantity and color which appeals to them, and not the literary contents.

Another experience of an African missionary, related in the same article, is still more to the point. This missionary was in the habit of reading to the natives from a large Bible. When not in use, the book was left in charge of his native servant, with instructions to take the greatest care of it. To keep the volume from the ravages of white ants, the servant kept it in a biscuit tin; with the following result:—

"Not long afterwards a consignment of ordinary small Bibles reached the station; but when the missionary came to distribute these he found that no one would even look at them, but insisted upon having a large volume like his own, or nothing at all. Finding it impossible to persuade the natives that the small books were just the same, he ordered a consignment of the large ones, but when these in due course arrived and were handed out they were received with great surprise and suspicion. 'Where,' asked the natives, 'are the cases for the books?'"

They would have nothing to do with the large Bibles until a supply of the same tins had been sent over to keep them in. Then it was a "strong medicine" or fetish just like the original used by the missionary.

Even when the negro has been in contact with civilisation for many generations, little or no change is observable. The negroes in America have been settled there for several generations; they have been brought up in the Christian religion; but they are in no respects more civilised than those they left behind in Africa. They have only acquired the thinnest veneer of civilisation, which only covers the primitive passions and superstitions which they share with their African relatives.

There is an interesting article on this subject in the *Contemporary Review*, September, 1905, entitled "The Religion of the American Negro." Mr. Davenport writes from actual experience; he also writes as a Christian, and with sympathy for the negro; but he does not allow this to prevent him from stating the true facts of the case. He tells us that—

"Of true mental development in the race as a race there has been little. Civilisation and savagery dwell side by side in the same spirit, and the result is often flagrant contradiction in thinking, in feeling, in conduct. According to the chance of the moment, the one or the other shows itself, with its appropriate accompaniment of utterance and act."

Mr. Davenport relates an experience he had on Lookout Mountain, in Georgia. He was listening, with a company of friends, to an old darkey's account of his religious conversion. He was known favorably to dwellers all over the mountain.

"He spoke to us on the porch of our hostess's residence, in the darkness, with only a flickering light shining in his face. He had reached the climax of the recital, was in a considerable state of ecstasy, and was very anxiously seeking to impress us all with his spiritual experience, when suddenly his dog began barking furiously just behind him, and utterly broke the continuity of his speech. I think no one of us will ever forget the dash of savagery that came into his face as he turned with flashing eye and foaming lip upon that canine intruder. It was a startling transition, revealing the crater of primitive passion just underneath the crust of religious culture and nurture."

The Church is the exclusive social centre of American negro life "in the South," says Mr. Davenport; "practically every man and woman of the race is a member of the Church." And at the "big quarterlies" and "protracted meetings" which are held in the South, we are told,—

"there are scenes of frenzy, of human passion, of collapse, of catalepsy, of foaming at the mouth, of convulsion, of total loss of inhibition, compared with the scorching heat of which the Indian ghost-dance seems at times only a pale moon. To be 'mad with supernatural joy' is with the negro the great test of supernatural presence. The influence of the demon worship of their ancestors in the African forest is still interwoven with the mental prepossessions and the nervous organisation of the race."

And not only is this influence felt, but, says Mr. Davenport, "the practice of charm and magic is

well-nigh universal to-day among the mass of the black race in the lower Mississippi Valley."

If, as the pious assert, it is impossible to be moral without religion, then the morality of the American negro who reaches to such heights of religious ecstasy should be very high. As a matter of fact, it is very low. In the country districts of Alabama, says Mr. Davenport, they practice the "Roper dance," which consists of an excited embrace of the sexes, followed by a march around a central figure, who claps his hands and shouts vociferously. Mr. Davenport was informed that "this procedure takes place at the close of the meeting, and in many cases results in gross immorality." This passing of religious ecstasy into sexual immorality is familiar enough to students of religious history. It was a feature of early Christianity, and flourished with the utmost virulence during the Protestant Reformation.

As Mr. Davenport further observes:—

"A very certain though unsavory bit of evidence of the negro's primitive state is found in the great gulf fixed in his consciousness between religion and morality. Average ecclesiastical leadership is not yet skilful enough to bridge the abyss. It was only recently that the following was published in a Southern newspaper over a negro bishop's name: 'But through His death and resurrection we may commit sins of lying, stealing, Sabbath breaking, getting drunk, gambling, whoring, murdering, and every species of villainy, and then come to God through our resurrected Christ and enter heaven in the end.'"

And as for petty theft, says Mr. Davenport, "it is so common as often to excite only humorous comment. A colored house-girl, 'seeking religion' under the guidance of a colored 'mother in the gospel,' will abstract a pound of butter from the day's churning of her employer, and carry it as a compensation to her 'mother' for helping her to 'come through,' without a glimmering of the real nature of her act."

Christianity is easily planted among the negro races, but is it worth while to pour out treasure in sending missionaries to induce them to exchange one fetish for another?

A missionary passed seven years with Lobengula, the Matabele king. "During that time," says the *Christian Herald* (March 23, 1899), "he had got through the Old Testament with the king, but he could do nothing with the New. Lobengula liked fighting. He loved the battles of the Israelites; rejoiced in leaving the enemy smitten hip and thigh. Whenever the missionary tried to interest him in the New Testament, the Matabele king grew impatient, and insisted on returning to the sanguinary records of the Bible."

Like to like, just as at school, the Bible showed most signs of wear at the most improper parts. A nice book to teach morality from!

As Herbert Spencer acutely remarked:—

"One who holds a creed as absolutely true.....does not doubt that when planted among a horde of savages it will be duly understood by them, duly appreciated by them, and work on them results such as those he experiences from it. Thus prepossessed, he passes over the proofs found everywhere that a people is no more capable of suddenly receiving a higher form of religion than it is capable of suddenly receiving a higher form of government; there will go on a degradation which presently reduces it to one differing but nominally from its predecessor."

And it must be borne in mind that it is among races low in the scale of culture that Christianity meets with its greatest successes. It makes no progress among Brahmins, Buddhists, or Mohammedans. In India, its greatest success has been among low races like the Shanars of Tinevelly, who are not Hindus at all, but one of the degraded aboriginal races, superstitious devil-worshippers. Hindus and Moslems point to the fact that native Christians are among the most degraded of the population.

It is admittedly the same in China. From the latest review of missionary work over the whole of China, compiled by missionaries from every province

in the Empire, we learn that, "speaking generally, our people belong to the lower classes, and are largely engaged in agriculture."* Indeed, Mr. A. J. Little, a recognised authority on China, says that "no respectable Chinaman would ever admit a missionary into his home."† Even the foreign merchants look upon the Chinese converts as the scum of the earth, and, as Mr. Little observes, "few foreigners in China ever employ a Christian or an opium-smoker if they can help it" (p. 309).

In Africa, Miss Kingsley tells us, the converted "Africans, who are the chief mainstay of missionary reports and who afford such material for the scoffer thereat," are "the curse of the Coast"; and, she adds, "the pagans despise him, the whites hate him. But, as she remarks, for these lying reports of missionary triumphs "the missionary public in England and Scotland are largely to blame for their perpetual thirst for thrilling details of the amount of baptisms and experiences among the people they pay other people to risk their lives to convert, or for thrilling details of the difficulties these said emissaries have to contend with."‡ In plain English, the missionary is compelled to send in lying reports to earn his salary. Judged by the moral effect on the heathen, the foreign missionary societies are nothing more or less than a colossal fraud.

W. MANN.

A New Age of Reason.

THOMAS PAINE wrote his famous work, the *Age of Reason*, at the latter end of the eighteenth century; but at the time he wrote it he certainly was not living in an age that justified the title of the book. In fact, so far as the masses of the people were concerned, it was unquestionably an age of superstition. Although a few learned men of independent type of mind and character had freed themselves from its shackles, the great bulk of the population of Europe was bound hand and foot with the grave-clothes of an ancient superstition.

But Paine's daring attack did much to weaken the belief in what is called revealed religion, as distinguished from the other kind known as natural religion. Up to that time, and for many years after, the Bible was regarded as a divinely inspired production, and anybody who dared to challenge its authority ran the risk not only of being charged with blasphemy, but being subjected to very serious persecution. Imbued with the feeling that he stood upon absolutely secure ground when he affirmed that he relied upon reason and common sense in matters of religion, Thomas Paine subjected the Christian belief to a critical examination, in which he effectually exposed its mythical character, and also proved to demonstration that the Bible was a human production, full of errors of a most glaring character, and in no sense a revelation from an all-wise and all-good God. Thomas Paine's exposure of the Christian faith was all the more startling and convincing coming as it did from a man who, in the very first page of his work, declared that he himself believed "in one God and no more, and hoped for a life hereafter."

To strike a blow at the defective character of the Christian God from the point of view of pure Theism, or Deism, was much more effective in such an age than it would have been had the assault come from one who had given up belief in God and everything else coming under the descriptive term of religion. The author of the *Age of Reason* was able to show that the Bible was written by men who knew nothing of science—who, indeed, were ignorant alike of astronomy, geology, and biology; and further, that they had depicted the Hebrew God as a savage monster, unworthy of the slightest respect of the

* Broomhall, *The Chinese Empire*, p. 59; 1907.

† Little, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges*, p. 236; 1888.

‡ M. H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, pp. 490-3; 1897.

creatures of whom he was alleged to be the Creator. But perhaps the most effective part of Paine's work was when he showed that Christianity consisted of a cleverly concocted scheme—comprising the alleged Fall of Man and his ultimate salvation by faith in the Atonement through the death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary—which scheme, the famous Englishman declared, was so contrived that one part formed the prologue of a drama of which the other was the epilogue.

During the past fifty years it is safe to say that hundreds of thousands of copies of the *Age of Reason* have been circulated in England and America alone, not to speak of translations that have appeared in other countries; and there can be little doubt that the steady circulation of this work has done more than that of any other book to undermine the faith of Christians in all parts of the civilised globe.

Many more learned and more critical works have since been published; but it is doubtful whether any of them, or all of them combined, have been more effective in sowing the seeds of doubt in the Christian mind than the clear, candid, and powerful statement of facts and arguments contained in the *Age of Reason*.

We are now approaching the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, and still many forms of religious superstition prevail among the masses. Happily, however, there are thousands of Freethinkers in every civilised country; but unfortunately there is a far larger number of persons who are absolutely indifferent on the subject of religion, and equally indifferent on Freethought. Throughout the whole of Europe the people on the whole were never better informed, and never better qualified in point of mental alertness to receive the glad tidings of Freethought than now.

Although still far from an ideal age of reason, this early portion of the twentieth century, it is nevertheless an age when there are a larger number of trained reasoners among the educated classes, and a far larger number of persons of common sense among the masses than in any previous epoch in the history of Europe. And yet among all the scholars, all the thinkers, all the reasoners, all the philosophers, where is there a man who will give to the world another such work that will stimulate thought, awaken doubt, and inspire enthusiasm in the cause of human progress like that of the *Age of Reason*? Where is the man who will, by one grand effort, transform these indifferentists into ardent seekers after truth?

The materials are already at hand. We now know by a study of the evolution of the idea of God that all the gods that men have ever worshiped, all the gods to whom he has erected temples and cathedrals, have been, in fact, but mere figments of the imagination. We know, also, that all that happens in nature is perfectly natural, and that the multitude of recorded miracles are pure fiction—ignorant errors of a credulous age. We know something, too, of the origin and evolution of the human race, something of the primitive beliefs of our early ancestors; and we know still more of the stages by which man has gradually developed from a savage state into a comparatively civilised human being. In point of fact we know that the doctrine of Evolution will furnish us with the key to the understanding of all these problems.

The great prophet, therefore, who shall awaken the minds of the rising generation will be not only inspired by the glorious gospel of Freethought, but he will be also a great apostle of Evolution.

That there are a few well-known Freethinkers living to-day who are well qualified for the task, I do not doubt; but I venture to think that there is some obstacle, or perhaps many obstacles, in the way of the production of such a work. And the first is that you cannot convert people to a new philosophy until you have first of all made them anxious about believing in something definite concerning man—his origin, his history, and his prospects of happiness in the future. The writer, therefore, of the new "Age of

Reason" must be a man who will appeal not only to the intellect and heart, but to the imagination of the rising generation. Such a man will never be found among those who deal with the dry technicalities of modern science, or with the dreary terminology of metaphysics—he will be a man of the people who will speak in the language understood by the masses, and whose language will be simple, direct, and convincing. But whoever the man may be who will arouse the rising generations from their apathy and indifference, whether he lives to-day and is only awaiting his opportunity, or has yet to be born, none can doubt that the great Freethinkers of the past and the present have played their part magnificently, and prepared by their labor the way for the new apostle of Freethought who shall liberate the minds of the great masses of mankind from the shackles of superstition and lead them by the clear and shining light of reason and science along the narrow path of truth and progress to a real and palpable paradise on earth, about which so many thousands have dreamed and so few, indeed, have ever been able to realise. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Prefix "Reverend."

I HAVE been driven to the conclusion that there are a number of Freethinkers who underrate the significance of signs, forms, badges, and names. Surely some of them forget the Titanic struggle in which Mr. Bradlaugh figured so heroically and the fruit of which was the Oaths Act. What was that struggle about? Was it about a mere form? Perhaps it may be said it was about a form—a form of words; but to qualify the word "form" by the adjective "mere" is a mistake. Forms are the evidences and manifestations of belief that enter into the very centre of social and national life. I may be told that we may retain the forms and names of things which themselves are obsolete, moribund, or dead. But we should not fall into the error of supposing that this observation applies to all forms and names applied to institutions in our midst. It is true that, by the efforts of Freethinkers, witnesses now have the option of swearing or affirming in Courts of Law. But how many witnesses take the benefit of the option by affirming? The great majority of witnesses invoke the Christian Deity before they begin to give their evidence, and in Scotland they do so in very emphatic and impressive terms. In criminal trials in the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland—the supreme Criminal Court of the country—the form of oath recited by the witnesses is: "I swear by Almighty God as I shall answer to God at the great Day of Judgment that I will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Of course, it is sometimes gabbled through in an "irreverent" manner by those who have been often in the witness-box—e.g., policemen and expert witnesses; but the fact remains that ecclesiastical domination finds its way into our national institutions, and is tacitly approved by the great mass of the people. The people who are comparatively ignorant because they have for so long been fed on lies would view with the greatest apprehension the excision from the oath of the invocation of the Deity. Some good souls are afraid of Disestablishment because they feel sure that it is just a step in the direction of removing all reference to God from our legal forms and formulae. They are certain that if you fail to formally recognise God in national life you are opening the floodgates to national vice and immorality, and are thus courting national ruin. These dear people forget the kind of revelation of God we have in the Old Testament, which they implicitly accept without consideration or investigation. God, like the king, can do no wrong. If he is reported to have done anything which, according to our established canons of justice, was not right, we are told by believers that his ways are not as our ways; or that when the wrong things were committed humanity had not advanced to the point we have reached in its conceptions of theft, murder, and adultery. Poor Christian apologists! They are in a parlous state.

What is the real significance of the prefix "Reverend"? Even in the ranks of the Reverend there are grades and classes. We have Right Reverend and Very Reverend brethren, and the serried rank and file who are entitled merely to be called Reverend. The retention of such an adjective is idiotic and anachronistic. Clerical dress and clerical titles are entirely out of place to-day. They are merely laughed at by men of the world. But we must remember that these very things, idiotic as they appear,

really mean the dependence, ignorance, weakness, and imbecility of large sections of our fellow-beings dubbed "laymen." If we inquire about the derivation of the word "Reverend" we find that it really means sane, one who ought to be respected, looked up to, and obeyed. The title is a purely priestly assumption, and it matters not what sect may use it, it is a dangerous and degrading name: dangerous to human liberty, degrading to true manhood. Men seem to sit very easily and complacently under antique frauds, without exerting themselves to take any active measures to undo the bonds that fetter humanity.

Some time ago I attended a Socialist Demonstration. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., was chairman. In calling upon the various speakers, he referred to them thus: "I have now to call upon Keir Hardie"; "I shall now ask Philip Snowden to address the meeting"; "I have now pleasure in introducing Margaret Macmillan." But it happened that the President of the London City Temple was also a speaker, and when the chairman reached him he referred to him thus: "I have now pleasure in calling upon the Reverend R. J. Campbell." Why was this distinction made, and at a Socialist Demonstration, too? Why, at a Socialist gathering, should the gentleman in the long black coat and dog collar also receive the designation which might be used appropriately enough in a gathering of clerics, but which is entirely uncalled for at a purely secular meeting, which is attended by many persons entirely sympathetic with the main objects of the meeting, but whose deepest convictions are insulted, if not violated, by any pandering to ecclesiasticism or clericalism?

In the *Literary Guide* for August, 1909, I observe that certain Rationalists have joined in doing public honor to a clergyman of "advanced" views—one of the gentlemen who carry the prefix. The *Literary Guide*, for which I have considerable respect, regards this rationalistic tribute to the rev. gentleman as a proof of breadth of view. Is it? I do not think so. Even if it is, it is a risky policy for Freethinkers to extend public recognition to the work of any man who chooses to be addressed as Reverend. "He that is not with us is against us." The only consistent, reasonable, and logical course for any clergyman who has arrived at the rationalistic standpoint is to divest himself of the distinctive dress, cut off the distinctive prefix, and come out of the sect with which he has been identified. It has been said with much truth that this is not an heroic age. The terrible fact stares us in the face—apart altogether from what our individual opinions may be—that men are compelled by existing conditions to sell their birthright, sacrifice their manhood, and surrender all personal independence for reasons of expediency. A man must live, we are told. He cannot honestly state his own convictions, which are unpopular with the majority, because that means court-ship bankruptcy and inevitably bringing wretchedness upon the heads of those who are near and dear to him. And these conditions are the outcome of 2,000 years' Christianity! Surely this should give us some idea of the essential principles of Christianity!

It is time that we heard more general protests against the policy of "half-way measures." It is too much in evidence to-day. The attempt to reconcile things that are irreconcilable not only spells futility and wasted time and energy, but it means shuffling evasion and hypocritical temporising. Let us be one thing or the other. Let us state the issues clearly. Let us endeavor to lighten up our obscurity and darkness. Let us take a definite stand. There is too much dust being thrown into people's eyes, but we have only one cause to serve and work for—the Cause of Truth. The miserable grovelling servility of these minds, which have to depend upon "Reverend" teachers and guides, ought to arouse our deepest sympathies and incite us to determined effort on behalf of all in bondage. Intellectual freedom can only be secured by intellectual exertion; and we may depend upon this: that in the struggles of the future the advance of Rationalism can only be retarded by trimming or compromising, or coquetting with the individuals or institutions distinguished by the signs, forms, badges, and names of religion.

SIMPLE SANDY.

Few people are aware of the monstrous laws against blasphemy which still disgrace our statute book. If any serious attempt were made to carry them out, prison accommodation would have to be provided for almost every educated person in the country, beginning with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Until some government with courage and character enough to repeal them comes into power, it should be kept in responsible hands and not left at the disposal of every bigot ignorant enough to be unaware of the social dangers of persecution.—George Bernard Shaw.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been a reader of the *Freethinker* since my visit to my former home in England in the spring of 1907; no doubt the following will interest my fellow-readers of your paper:—

There is an academy in Yokohama, known as the Ferris Seminary, conducted by American Protestant missionaries in the interests of Christianising Japanese girls. Four graduates of this school are personally known to me, three of whom are employed by my firm. Their knowledge of English, such as it is, is due to the teaching received in the said school. They hold themselves out to be converts from Buddhism, and have frequently expressed their regrets that I am a "wicked Atheist."

Four weeks ago, the father of one of these girls died. He also was a professing Christian.

The day after death his remains were cremated, and brought back to the house, and the funeral fixed for six days later.

The day before the burial, one of the girls asked for leave of absence in the afternoon, as she wished to attend the house of the deceased, to burn joss sticks before the casket containing the remains, in company with the deceased's daughter. She went.

The next day, Saturday, at 3 p.m., a burial service was held by the pastor of the Union Church, at the church, and was attended by some members of our staff.

From the Union Church the cortège went to the family temple of the deceased (Buddhist), where a service was held by native priests at 4 p.m. *Christian at 3 o'clock; Buddhist at 4.*

I related the facts to several fellow-members of the United Club the same day, and suggested that such antics would make a cat laugh. I was told that I was irreverent; to which I replied "Rats."

Enclosing my card, and wishing the *Freethinker* every success,

Yokohama, Japan.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

Obituary.

By the death of Mr. Alfred Wood, of Goodmayes, and formerly of West Ham, which took place on Thursday, August 26, the Freethought party has lost one who spent a long life in its service. Mr. Wood enjoyed the high distinction of having been a school-fellow of Charles Bradlaugh, and also of having been, for a time, a co-worker with that great man. He was held in such high esteem by his neighbors that he was elected three times to the Borough Council of West Ham. By his sterling character and agreeable disposition he won the confidence and affection of the whole community. He organised a Christmas Dinner Fund for the poor, which in sixteen years reached large dimensions. He was an ardent supporter of every progressive and humanitarian movement, which, by a peculiar gift, he was able to discuss with persons of all shades of opinion without giving offence. He was a great student of Shakespeare, and his appreciation of the Master's works was most keen. A Secularist from early youth, he remained loyal to the principles of Freethought throughout his life, and brought up a family of courageous Freethinkers. He died in his seventy-fifth year, and was interred, in the presence of a great multitude of friends and admirers, in the City of London Cemetery on Thursday, September 2; and, in fulfilment of his own wish, a secular service was read.—J. T. L.

THE first Secular funeral at Mountain Ash took place on Monday, September 6, when the remains of the infant daughter of Mr. George Garnett, a well-known local Freethinker, were interred, the Secular Burial Service being read by Mr. W. H. Powell. The deceased child was publicly "named" by Mr. J. T. Lloyd before one of his last lectures at Aberaman.

I DEEPLY regret to hear of the death of Mrs. Stevens, wife of Mr. William Stevens, of Rosedale, Redland Park, Bristol. She was one of the most wholesome, bright, and genial ladies I ever met; and I am proud to know that I counted her for many years amongst the most ardent appreciators of my work for Freethought. She belonged to the highest order on earth—the order of good women, who inspire and elevate all around them. Being perfectly free from superstition, she always wished for a sudden, painless death, and her wish was fulfilled. She will ever be one of my precious memories. And knowing something of the extent of their loss, I beg to tender my profound sympathy to the bereaved husband and family.—G. W. FOOTE.

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.

INDOOR.

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of the World—in *King Lear*, etc."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "My Prison Life."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

WEST HAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Is Belief the Safe Side?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park): 11.30, H. B. Samuels, "The Encyclopædia Biblica."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11.30, R. H. Rosetti, "The Sabbath." Seven Sisters' Corner: 7, N. J. Evans, "A 'Changing' Deity."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, A. Allison, "Christ is Risen"; 7.30, E. C. Saphin, "Christ the Sun."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Why Does Christianity Last?"

OUTDOOR.

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

NOTTINGHAM (Great Market, near Queen's Statue): 9.15 p.m., Meeting to consider the formation of a N. S. S. Branch.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market-square): Monday, Sept. 13, at 8, H. Percy Ward, a Lecture.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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