

# THE Freethinker

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*Liberty is not merely a means—it is an end. Without that word, all other words are empty sounds.*

—INGERSOLL.

## Ferrer's Would-Be Murderers.

WE intended to let what we said on the Ferrer case last week suffice for the present, but at the very last moment we think it best to return to the matter, and we therefore devote to it this front page, which happens to be open for the purpose.

We ended our previous article by saying that the Catholic Church may be trusted to slander and slay its enemies whenever it can. We did not mean, however, that this is a special peculiarity of the Catholic Church. It has been the common characteristic of all Christian Churches. The degrees of wickedness in practice depend entirely upon opportunities. Scratch a Christian and you find a bigot, and the strength of his bigotry depends upon the depth of his Christianity. Catholics have more Christianity than Protestants. That is the real difference between them. Consequently the Catholics are more bigoted than the Protestants. But there is Christianity enough left in the Protestants to make them persecute those who differ from them with all the bitterness of hatred and murder; and if they cannot go quite as far as Protestants it is because they are surrounded by restraining influences in the shape of science, education, and free discussion. If England were in as backward a state as Spain is, in respect to such matters, the lives and liberties of leading Freethinkers would be just as insecure as they now are in the classic land of the Inquisition. It is a total misreading of English history to suppose that Protestantism gave us any religious freedom except accidentally. One protest, of course, naturally led to more; and debate on some points of the old faith naturally led to debate on others. But this was not intended. Quite the contrary. The first Protestants used the dungeon and the stake against both Catholics and more advanced heretics. Nonconformists fought for freedom against the State Church, and joined the State Church in the brutal persecution of Freethinkers. At this moment the Blasphemy Laws are upheld by all the Protestant Churches in England.

Look at the dear *Daily News*, for instance,—the political organ of the Nonconformist Conscience, which is perhaps the most extraordinary conscience that ever strutted about this world. Our contemporary had "An Appeal to Spain" in its Tuesday's issue. So far as this leaderette was an appeal for justice to Ferrer we are thankful for it. But we cannot help being amused at our contemporary's bold attitude towards Clericalism as far off as Spain, and its euphemistic description of Ferrer's "Modern School" as aiming at education "free from clerical domination." One would think that Ferrer simply wanted to keep Catholic priests out of education, whereas he wants to keep all priests out of education. He would no more allow a Dr. Clifford to control it than he would allow a Catholic or Anglican archbishop. Nor is that all. It is not merely against Clericalism that Ferrer fights as an

educationist. He fights against Religion altogether. He goes beyond what is called Secular Education in England. The education in the schools he has established is Freethought and Positivist. It is based upon science and humanity, to the total exclusion of metaphysics and theology. One could hardly expect the dear *Daily News* to admit this, for our contemporary will not so much as drop the mildest blessing on Secular Education in its own country.

We imagine that the *Daily News* men feel a sort of "divided duty." They would probably like to be more liberal than proprietary and other commercial circumstances permit them to be; so they bow the knee to false gods at home and throw stones at them abroad. This accounts for the discreet language of the leaderette, and at the same time for the admission of an article-letter by Princess Kropotkin on "The Fate of Ferrer." The lady plainly calls Ferrer's schools "Rationalist schools." She understands their true character. They are more than non-Catholic; they are non-Christian—or, if you prefer, anti-Christian—and Humanist. It is for this reason that they are so bitterly hated. The Catholic Church sees that Ferrer's policy means a fight to a finish. There is to be no treaty and no truce. And when supernaturalism and priestcraft fight for their lives it would be very foolish to expect them to conform to civilised rules of warfare.

The object of the Clerical Government in Spain is perfectly clear. Just as they arrested Ferrer on the pretence that he was implicated in the attempted assassination of King Alfonso, they have arrested him again on the pretence that he was implicated in the Barcelona riots. He was not in or near Barcelona at the time, but what does that matter? Any pretence is good enough for a Clerical Government acting under Martial Law—which, as the Duke of Wellington said, is no law at all. A flimsier pretence than this it is impossible to conceive. Ferrer is not an Anarchist or a Revolutionist. He is absorbed in his work of School regeneration. And the proof that he is really not arrested as an insurgent may be found in the fact that all his Freethought schools in distant parts of the country—in Galicia, in Vizcaya, in Asturias, and in Andalusia—have been closed, and the teachers arrested, although none of them were in Catalonia at the time of the disturbances.

We see by the appeal of the Committee of Defence for the Victims of the Spanish Repression, amongst whose members are Anatole France, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Ernst Haeckel, that at Barcelona 5,000 prisoners are herded together at the Montjuich fortress, at the Atarasana barracks, and at the Carcel Modelo (Model Prison). There have also been 1,700 arrests at Matáro, 1,000 at Manresa, 1,200 at Sabadell, 300 at Gerone, and 400 at Anglés. The number of victims is appalling,—and they include all sorts of peaceable "advanced" men and women, who have no more idea of rioting than they have of flying. Ferrer is in the Model Prison. The authorities are busy inventing and forging evidence against him; they may also be torturing him; and unless civilised Europe protests promptly and loudly, he may be killed by the order of military officers drunk with religion.

G. W. FOOTE.



## The Nature of Religion.—IV.

(Continued from p. 595.)

DREAMS, swoons, catalepsy, and allied states suggest to the savage the existence of a double or ghost. Even in the absence of evidence coming to us in the shape of the universal belief of existing savages, the fact that the ghost is always pictured as identical in clothing and figure with the dead man, would be almost enough to demonstrate its dream origin. But there are two other considerations that carry the process a step further. The savage sees in his dreams not only the ghosts of living men, but of dead ones also. Death does not then mean the destruction of the ghost, it is merely a separation. Further, the likeness of death to sleep is so obvious and so striking that it has formed one of the most insistent features of human thought and speech. With primitive man, the likeness of death to sleep is more than a mere figure of speech. The Melaneseans put the primitive view well when they say, the "soul goes out of the body in some dreams, and if for some reason it does not come back, the man is found dead in the morning." Death and dreaming has, therefore, this in common, they are both due to the withdrawal of the double. In death, the ghost has simply deserted the body for a longer and an indefinite period. Hence we find a whole series of ceremonies intended to avert death by making difficult the departure of the double, or to secure its return. The lingering of this practice is well illustrated by a story told by Sir Frederick Treves in his book, *The Other Side of the Lantern*. He tells how he saw a Chinese mother, with tears streaming down her face, waving at the door of the house the clothing of a recently deceased child, in order to bring back the departed spirit.

Death is the separation of the double from the body; but it may return to the body it tenanted; the place it inhabited still attracts it, and the savage evidently conceives it as being far more likely to be a source of trouble than of help. Hence, care is often taken to prevent its recognising the living or finding its way back to its old habitations. Dr. Frazer has shown that the wearing of mourning is really a form of disguise. Why people wear, after a death, black in one country, yellow in another, white in a third, or disfigure themselves in a fourth, is so that the ghost will not recognise them. It is in order to avoid recognition by spirits who wish to injure them that the Tongans change their war costume at every battle. The Chinese call their best beloved children by worthless names in order to delude evil spirits. In Egypt, too, the children who were thought most of were the worst clad. In some places the corpse is never carried out through the door, but by a hole made in the side of the hut and afterwards closed, so that the ghost may not find its way back.

The ghost being conceived as in all points identical with living beings, it demands attention after death. It needs food, weapons, servants, wives. In this way originates various burial customs, performed partly from affection, partly from fear of what the ghost will do if its needs are neglected. The custom of burying food and weapons with the dead thus receive a simple explanation. Believing that everything has its spirit, the weapon is buried with the dead warrior that he may use it in the next world against his enemies. Weapons are buried once for all, but as to be fed is a constantly recurring necessity, food is not only buried with the corpse, but is placed at intervals on the grave. The modern custom of scattering flowers over a grave is unquestionably a survival of this primitive belief, although its meaning has now entirely changed. The killing or burning of a wife on the husband's grave is an indication of the same belief. Her spirit goes to attend her husband in the ghost land. In the case of a chief, we have the killing of slaves for the same reason. When Leonidas said, "Bury me on my shield, I will enter even hades as a Laceda-

monian," he was showing the persistence of this belief in classical times. The Chinese offer a further example of the same belief by making little paper houses, filling them with paper models of the things used by the dead persons, and burning them upon the grave. All over the world we find the same customs developing from the same beliefs, and the same beliefs projected by the human mind when brought face to face with the same order of phenomena.

Just as the soul of man is pictured as the exact double of the body, so the next world is more or less a replica of this—the chief distinction being a greater abundance of desirable things. Hunting tribes have elysiums where there is unlimited game. The old Norse heaven was a place filled with fighting and brave deeds. The Caribs are promised the satisfaction of all their desires. The gold and diamonds and rubies of the Christian heaven represent a stage of civilisation where these things had acquired a special value. Social distinctions are also maintained. The Caribs believe that every time they secure an enemy's head, they had gained a servant in the next world. The French aristocrat who, when threatened with hell, remarked, "God will think twice before damning a person of my quality," showed the persistence of the idea in late Christian times.

Several results of the attention paid to the dead may be noted. The ghost being drawn to the place where the body is buried, the desire to preserve the body, leads to methods being adopted to this end, and finally to the practice of embalming. Giving food to the ghost, allied with the fact that want of food would be the natural precursor of visions, leads to fasting as a religious exercise. These attentions being paid around the grave, the grave becomes a place of sanctity and of pilgrimage, and of religious observance. The grave thus gives us the beginning of the temple; and, as Mr. W. Simpson has demonstrated—as far as such a subject admits of demonstration—in his *Worship of Death*, all the churches and temples of the modern world are the consequences of the ghost worship round the grave of the primitive savage. Finally, Grant Allen has pointed out that the placing of grain and other food on the grave, together with the soil having been newly turned, would make vegetation grow better there than elsewhere. This would be clear proof to the savage mind of the beneficent influence of the ghost; and in this circumstance we have the most probable origin of tree-worship. The transference of the spirit of the dead to the tree would follow as a matter of course.

Another step or two and we shall have reached the origin of deity. Affection and fear—fear that the ghost, if its wants are neglected, will wreak vengeance through the agency of disease, famine, or accident—leads insensibly to the ghost of one's relations becoming objects of veneration, propitiation, and petition. All ghosts receive some attention for a longer or shorter period after death, but naturally special and sustained honors are reserved for the heads of families and for such as have been distinguished for various qualities during life. In this way ancestor worship becomes one of the widest spread of religious observances, and the gradual development of the great man or the deceased ancestor into a deity follows as a perfectly natural development. The principles of ancestor worship, as Tylor remarks, are not difficult to understand:—

"They plainly keep up the social relations of the living world. The dead ancestor, now passed into a deity, simply goes on protecting his own family and receiving suit and service from them as of old; the dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong."

That this deification of ancestors and great men actually does take place does not admit of doubt. The mythologies of Greece and Rome offer numerous



examples; while the deification of the Roman Emperors became an established rule. In India, Mr. W. Crooke has given numerous examples of natives who were famous during life being transformed into deities after death; as has Sir A. C. Lyall in his *Asiatic Studies*. That this distinction is not limited to natives, is shown in the famous case of General Nicholson who received the honor of deification during his lifetime. Anyone who cares to consult those storehouses of information, Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* (vol. i.), Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, and Frazer's *Golden Bough*, will find the whole of the god making process set out with a wealth of illustration and proof that can hardly fail to command the assent of an unprejudiced mind. Finally in the cases of China and Japan we have living examples of an organised system of worship based upon the adoration of ancestors. And as an example of the manner in which more civilised ideas react upon primitive beliefs, we find the better minds of both China and Japan treating ancestor worship as a worship of humanity based upon a feeling of respect and gratitude to the departed. An exactly similar phenomenon meets us here in the attempts of Christian apologists to restate Christian beliefs in terms of current morality and sociology.

It will help us to more clearly realise the evolution of the god from the ghost if we bear in mind the fact that with primitive man the gods are neither conceived as independent existences nor as creators. Even immortality is not asserted of them. The modern notion of deity is so intermingled with these metaphysical and philosophical conceptions, that there is always the danger of using "God" in the modern sense, and so either misunderstanding early beliefs, or rejecting the idea that these form the earliest stage of the god idea. Such ideas as those of creation or independence are quite foreign to the primitive mind. Savages are like children in the respect that their interest in things is primarily of a practical character. A child does not begin by asking how a thing came to be; it asks what is it for? So the prime concern of the savage is, what are certain things for? what will they do? are they injurious or beneficial? It is because he is of this practical turn of mind that he pays the attention to the ghosts he does pay, having once accepted their existence as a fact. The superiority of the gods does not consist in their substantial difference to himself, but in the greater power for good or evil conferred upon them by their invisible existence. Creation is a conception that does not arise until the capacity for philosophical speculation has developed. Then reflection sets to work; the nature of the gods undergoes modification, and that long process of accommodating earlier religious beliefs to later knowledge commences, the end of which we have not yet seen.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

### "Why Pray?"

THE above is the title of a sermon recently delivered by the Rev. Dr. Warschauer in the Anerley Congregational Church, and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for September 15. There is much good sense to be found in this discourse, and the thinking is clear and to the point. The reverend gentleman candidly concedes that this topic presents "the most acute difficulty to many thousands of modern people, especially the younger ones," and that it cannot be adequately discussed without careful thought expressed in well considered speech. That prayer is absolutely vital to religion goes without saying. It is self-evident that in the absence of prayer religion could not survive. But is it worth while praying solely in order that religion may be kept alive? What proof is there that the preservation of religion,

in its popularly accepted sense, would conduce to the welfare of mankind? Dr. Warschauer admits also that there are conceptions of God which render prayer unreasonable and absurd. Pantheism, for example, logically excludes prayer. If God be all, or immanent in all, it follows that whatever, or happens expresses his will. Strangely enough, however, Pantheistic clergymen like Mr. Campbell are frequently on their knees. It is all very well for Dr. Warschauer to assert that "the idea that God is all, and that we are identical with him, makes prayer impossible"; but the fact remains that, apparently, the New Theologians enjoy praying as much as the Old. Mr. Campbell goes the length of publishing one of his church prayers every week; and he always prays as if God were another person than himself, somewhere within hearing.

Dr. Warschauer expresses the conviction that "the more we learn of Nature's ways the more we are impressed with the orderliness and regularity that mark all her processes," and that, consequently, "we do not feel at all as if it was likely that this universal order could be modified for our particular benefit." This implies that "certain ideas of the efficacy of prayer—e. g., for rain or fine weather—have become impossible for us to entertain seriously. We think it far more in keeping with probability that in such matters God's will should be without variableness or shadow of turning; we are even sure that it is better it should be so—better that these laws should be stable, so that we may learn them, than that the Divine Will should be incalculable, to be swayed by our individual pleadings." That is sensible. "And in the same way and for the like reasons," he continues, "much of the language about what used to be called special providences has become unreal and unedifying for us." The meaning of all this is that prayer is no longer regarded as of any value in the natural sphere. Neither rain nor fine weather is now supposed to come or to cease in response to pious petitions. It is incredible that anyone should escape in a dreadful catastrophe merely because someone happened to be praying for him at the moment. In the peculiar language of the pulpit, "we are slowly learning to substitute for the idea of any kind of preferential treatment at God's hand a belief in the unchanging goodness of his decrees, in the wisdom of his counsel, in the Providence of unfailing law."

Then why pray? The rapid advance of modern science has rendered the belief in the efficacy of prayer in the sphere of Nature too ridiculous to cherish for a moment. But inasmuch as religion without prayer is unthinkable as well as impracticable, theologians have relegated prayer to the purely spiritual sphere. Into this sphere science cannot follow it; but logic can. Even here the influence of science has greatly modified the current phraseology concerning the nature and efficacy of prayer. Says Dr. Warschauer:—

"Now I want to come to something deeper, something that is habitually overlooked in the ordinary discussion of this subject. We nearly all make the mistake of identifying prayer exclusively, or almost exclusively, with petition, when, as a matter of fact, petition is only part, and perhaps only a subordinate part, of prayer, which is, in its essence, the soul's intercourse with God. I say, we vulgarise and degrade that great act of the soul by thinking of it only as importunate begging."

Unfortunately, while writing that passage the preacher forgot his text, which was Mat. vii., 7, 8, and reads as follows:—

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

It is true that Dr. Warschauer endeavored to neutralise that text by adding another that practically contradicts it: "But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Nevertheless, according to this preacher, Jesus "vulgarises and degrades" prayer by speaking of it as consisting in asking, seeking, and knocking.

\* Popular Religion and Folk Lore of Northern India, vol. ii.



We have looked at the Lord's Prayer, we have studied it clause by clause, and we have found that each clause in it is a distinct petition. Furthermore, one of its petitions, "Give us this day our daily bread," concerns itself with the natural sphere in a very comprehensive manner. It implies praying for rain and fine weather and all other conditions of a plentiful harvest. Jesus did not hesitate to say that the Father which is in heaven gives "good things to them that ask him." Again, if Dr. Warschauer is right, Jesus did "vulgarise and degrade" prayer by thinking of it as a species of "importunate begging." In Luke xi. 5-13, we find the context of the words on which the reverend gentleman founded his sermon. Someone is supposed to be disturbed at midnight by a friend who wants the loan of three loaves, because a guest has unexpectedly turned up, and he has nothing to set before him. At first, the loan is refused. Jesus said: "Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." In Luke xviii. 1-8 there are words to precisely the same effect. A judge, "which feared not God and regarded not man," was repeatedly importuned by a widow to avenge her of her adversary, without yielding. At last he did avenge her in order to get rid of her. Jesus said: "And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is long suffering over them?"

It is perfectly clear that, according to the Bible, to pray is to implore, beseech, beg. "Don't let us come before God with a mere recital of wants," says Dr. Warschauer, "battering at heaven's gates like so many persistent mendicants." Which is right, the Bible or Dr. Warschauer? The latter is anxious to be at once scientific and Biblical, with the inevitable result that he is neither. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," said Jesus, "that will I do." "Do not pray for rain or fine weather or bodily health," says Dr. Warschauer, "pray only for spiritual blessings, for the health of the soul." In the spiritual realm prayer is beyond the reach of scientific investigation. It is safe from direct attack. It is very easy to affirm that, in this spiritual realm, "there is a real answer from without—from God." "I cannot prove it," says Dr. Warschauer, "but I have had experience of it." True; but experience proves nothing except its own existence. Experience is subjective, and so is the belief that makes it possible. That anything ever comes from an Infinite Being to a finite is incapable of verification by any means whatsoever. If a fool suddenly developed into a consummate genius, if a man cursed with a naturally irresistible craving for alcohol speedily conquered it, or if a born liar became constitutionally truthful in the twinkling of an eye, in answer to fervent prayer, we would then be in possession of irrefutable evidence of its efficacy. But there are no such answers to prayer on record. There lived not long ago a young man to whom the religious life was full of rich joy. He prayed without ceasing and with ever increasing delight. He loved to talk about the inexpressible sweetness of his communion with the Lord Jesus. But there was a flaw in his constitution, an inherited weakness which periodically caused him to fall in the estimation of his neighbors. It would be impossible adequately to realise how earnestly and passionately and unceasingly he prayed for the removal of that weakness, and for spiritual strength to rise above it; but his prayer was not answered, and he went down to a premature grave a disgraced man. Thousands of similar cases might be cited. So-called communion with God is an emotional sensation the intensity of which is in proportion to the strength and vividness of the belief in him.

Why pray? What is needed is work, not prayer. To pray is to trifle with life, or to waste emotional force. Nature grants the farmer a golden harvest, not in answer to fervent prayer, but as the reward of honest labor. The old adage, *laborare est orare*, to

work is to pray, is much nearer the truth than *ora et labora*, pray and work; but truer still is the following Latin proverb, *labor omnia vincit*, work conquers everything. Prayer is a sentimental ebullition yielding only sentimental enjoyment; it is conscientious labor, the never-ceasing practice of right living, that builds up and gives stability to character. No one ever became morally strong and efficient by spending so many hours a day in prayer. Strength is morally as well as physically the outcome of exercise. The blacksmith has such a powerful arm because he constantly wields the hammer. So, likewise, a man overcomes bad habits by giving all diligence to form good ones, and eradicates evil tendencies by doing his utmost to develop beneficent ones. No amount of praying in the theological sense results in moral growth, while some of the best people among us to-day have never so prayed at all. Then why pray? Supernatural interpositions in human affairs are exploded illusions. With special providences most go Providence itself; with Providence, prayer; and with prayer, God. With these gone, man appears as "the paragon of animals," as earth's "chief expression, her great word of life," whose one business is to know and master and intelligently employ himself, which he can only do, not by looking upwards into a vacant heaven, not by calling for help to imaginary deities, but by imitating the Buddha in "relying on himself alone." What we require to get nearer to continually is, not God in any known sense of the term, but ourselves and one another in the glorious task of making life pre-eminently worth living.

J. T. LLOYD.

### A Memory.

SIR ROBERT STOUT'S visit to England will bring many memories to those Antipodeans who were in any way connected with the Secularist movement in New Zealand a quarter of a century ago. The eighties were years of vigorous propaganda all over Australasia. In Sydney, Thomas Walker, W. W. Collins, and Dr. J. L. York, an American ex-clergyman, were lecturing to large audiences every Sunday, and in Melbourne Joseph Symes was making the soul-savers very uncomfortable indeed. In New Zealand Robert Stout, of Danedin, Premier and Attorney-General, and John Ballance, of Wanganui, a member of the Cabinet, were both active workers for the cause, the latter having in 1884 edited the *Freethought Review*. At that time, too, "Ivo," of Auckland, was conducting the bright little *Rationalist* with great success. In January, 1885, Gerald Massey delivered in the Lyceum, Danedin, which was built on the site of the first church in that city, a course of lectures under the auspices of the then flourishing Freethought Society. The first lecture had a rather lengthy title, "The Devil of Darkness in the Light of Evolution, a Reply to Man Friday's Question, Why Doesn't God Kill the Devil?" The Premier occupied the chair, and both his eulogy of the poet-lecturer and the lecture itself were reported in the Danedin papers. (When shall we see an English Prime Minister taking the chair for a straight-from-the-shoulder Freethought lecturer?) "Many of you, perhaps most of you," said the Chairman,—

"have read about Mr. Massey, and many of you, no doubt, have also read some of his poems. It is, I think, something to say for that, save that we have had amongst ourselves Domett and others, Mr. Massey is the first English poet of repute that has visited this colony..... He has been known for many years as an earnest reformer, not only as a reformer in his views, but as a reformer as a poet. He has helped to forward reforms in many ways by his poems and his writings. He is, as you are aware, not only a poet,—though that is perhaps the highest distinction of humanity,—but he is a voluminous writer on other subjects."

Replying to this, the lecturer said that it was with keen delight that he spoke in a temple of Free-



thought standing where a church once stood, for he "took it to be typical and a good augury for the future." The titles of his other lectures were: "The Man Shakespeare"; "Charles Lamb"; "The Fall of Man: An Astrological Myth and Physiological Fallacy"; and "Leaves from the Book of My Life." From the report of the last lecture, and from a biographical sketch contributed to *Eliza Cook's Journal* in 1851 by Dr. Smiles, we get some interesting details of the poet's early days. He was born in 1828—the year in which another great Freethinker and poet, George Meredith, first greeted the light—in a hovel rented at one shilling per week. This—his first—abode was not high enough to allow a man to stand upright in it. His father, a canal boatman, received ten shillings a week, and sometimes, when he fell out of work, the only support of the family was the wage earned by the children, who worked at the silk mill from 5 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. For this work they were paid from ninepence to fifteen pence per week. And yet Massey was a poet of revolt! Another point of interest is the fact that George Eliot was so impressed by Massey's character and work that she took him as the model for her *Felix Holt, the Radical*. Frequent references to the conditions under which *Felix Holt* was written will be found in the letters edited by J. W. Cross.

Of all those whose names are mentioned in this short note Mr. W. W. Collins, working as hard as ever in Christchurch, N.Z., where he has for years been at the head of our movement, Mr. Thomas Walker, a member of the Legislative Assembly, West Australia, and Sir Robert Stout, are the only three now living. John Ballance became Premier of N.Z., and held the position at the time of his death in the early nineties. A few days before he died he underwent a serious operation for gastritis. The brave old Freethinker cheerfully and unassisted walked to the operating-room, mounted the table, and placed himself in position. The *Sydney Morning Herald* said it was a "wonderful instance of moral courage triumphing over physical weakness." For Massey himself the end came in 1907, and his great brother-poet has just followed him. As for Sir Robert, he is now the respected Chief Justice of Maoriland.

A. D. McLAREN.

THE ARGUMENT FOR MARTYRDOM.

Another argument for the "supremacy" of the Bible is based upon the history of Christian martyrdoms. Dr. Farrar gives several instances of Christians, old and young, rich and poor, high-placed and humble, who have died for their faith, and entered "the dark river and its still waters with a smile upon their faces." He attributes their fortitude to trust in the promises of the Bible. But he does not tell us how it proves the truth of the Bible either as history or as revelation. Millions of Jews have died at the hands of Christian bigots, and their heroism amidst torture and massacre has never been exceeded in human annals. Does this prove that the New Testament is not a revelation, and that Jesus Christ was not God. Men of other faiths have faced death with sublime courage. Mohammedans are notoriously ready to die for their religion. The Mohammedan dervishes in the Soudan never quailed before the most murderous storm of shell and bullets; they fell in thousands at Omdurman, and the Kalifa's standard-bearer, when all around him were slain, stood upright under the holy flag, with a smile of defiance upon his face, which never left it until he sank shot-riddled upon the heap of his dead comrades. Does this prove that the Koran is the Word of God? The orthodox argument seems to be this. If a Christian dies for the Bible, that proves it to be a divine book; if a devotee of any other faith dies for his Sacred Scriptures, that proves nothing—unless it be the obstinacy of wrong opinions.—G. W. Foose, "The Book of God."

What is conscience? If man were incapable of suffering, if man could not feel pain, the word "conscience" would never have passed his lips. The man who puts himself in the place of another, whose imagination has been cultivated to the point of feeling the agonies suffered by another, is the man of conscience.—Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

All sorts of "distinguished" people are interested in General Booth and the Salvation Army; and as all these "distinguished" people are Christians we are not surprised. Very likely the Queen believes the "General" is doing a great deal of good. What the Prince of Wales believes is not very important. Mr. Asquith is a pious gentleman. Mr. Balfour is—well, the Lord knows what. We don't know, although we have read his writings on religion. Mr. Balfour is "slim." Writing to a Salvation Army officer the other day, the Conservative leader said: "I have, as you know, a very warm regard for him [General Booth], and the relatively favorable news you give of his health is to me a source of very great satisfaction." We see by the *Westminster Gazette* that "Leaders of the Labor and Socialist parties have expressed an equal interest in his recovery." Unofficially, these leaders—whoever they are—may give the old Generalissimo of the Salvation Army their personal good wishes. But they know very well that he is a worse "sweater" than any "capitalist." For pious William Booth pays lower wages than any commercial employer would dream of offering, and he "sweats" under the cloak of religion and philanthropy.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's new book is not, after all, to be called *Hell on the Congo*, but *The Crime of the Congo*—which is a very mild title suitable to a common police report. Meanwhile, Sir Arthur has been interviewed by the *Christian World*, and it appears that it made him quite ill to write the book—the story was so terrible, so horrible. The following view of the matter is worth preserving:—

"My view is that other great crimes in history have been caused either by fanatical religion, which is in itself just an exaggeration of a respectable emotion, or by racial hatred, which is a perverted and exaggerated patriotism, but in the case of Belgium's criminal misrule on the Congo it has been cold-blooded and actuated by the lowest and most sordid motive of gain. For that reason, as well as the area of country involved and the duration of time over which the outrages have gone on—twenty years—I do not know any other else in history to compare with the Congo atrocities."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who, we believe, is not exactly orthodox, might have asked the representative of that pious weekly to explain why the worst savages on earth should come from a Christian country, after nearly two thousand years of Christianity. Belgium is one of the most Christian countries in Europe. The Catholic party is in power and it rules everything with a high hand. Several leading Freethinkers have protested against the Congo atrocities, but they are unable to do more. King Leopold, whose piety equals his inhumanity, and the clericals, are too many for them.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle pays a tribute to the Congo Missionaries. Here are his own words:—

"I used to be always against missionaries. I used to think that missionaries do more harm than good, but as long as I live I will never say a word against missionaries again. I shall always support them. Mind you, it is only a minority of the missionaries who have played up bravely; but, then, that any should have done so is fine, as it was done at the risk of great personal danger, and kept up, year in year out, against incessant persecution. If the missionaries had chosen to wink at what was going on, they might have had a very pleasant time. They acted like men—and splendidly. But for the missionaries we should never have sent out Consuls, and never had any information about the Belgian treatment of the natives."

This sounds to us a little hysterical. If only a minority of the missionaries acted bravely, the majority must have acted otherwise. And what, after all, did the brave minority do? They refused to wink, and keep silence, at wholesale atrocities that made a perfect hell of a country as large as Europe, with thirty millions of inhabitants. Does it, then, really require much courage not to hide up unspeakable devilries? To answer this question in the affirmative is to say that Christianity has thoroughly debased human character.

Dr. Clifford has issued another of his ridiculous appeals to the faithful Dissenters of the National Passive Resistance League. He tells them that "the oppression of conscience" by the Education Act of 1902 not only continues, but increases year by year. "Thousands of the children of Free Churchmen," he wails, "are compelled to attend Anglican and Roman Catholic schools, maintained almost to the last penny out of taxes and rates paid by the community." He says nothing about the Conscience Clause, which he evidently thinks is worth no more than a snap of the fingers. He does not see—or he will not see—that a Freethinker might retort on him his own language. "Thousands of Freethinkers'



children," it might be said, "are compelled to attend Non-conformist schools (for all provided schools are really such), maintained almost to the last penny out of taxes and rates paid by the community." Dr. Clifford recognises no injustice in this. The only conscience of any account with him is the Nonconformist Conscience.

With regard to the Johnson celebration, the Grand Old Samuel was a good lover and a good hater. We are sorry to say he was a bigot. He could see very little difference between Rousseau and Voltaire, and would have heard of their execution with cheerfulness. But there was a lot of human nature about him, after all, and you can't help liking the old bear. "Sir," he said, "the first Whig was the Devil." There is a captivating raciness about such a polemist. No poison, but straightforward savagery.

Lord Rosebery's fine speech at Lichfield contained the following passage on Johnson's services to the cause of religion:—

"Men like this are the stay of religion in their time and for those who come after. Laymen who hold high and pure the standard of their faith do more for Christianity, it may safely be averred, than a multitude of priests. To say this is not to disparage the clergy; rather the reverse, for it implies that their course is regular and habitual. But their championship is felt to be the natural result of their profession and their vows, while the conspicuous layman, who is also a conspicuous Christian, has all the honors of a volunteer. No one, I think, can doubt that Samuel Johnson and William Ewart Gladstone were priceless champions of their faith, and that their places will not easily be filled."

There is a certain truth in this; the truth, namely, that professional tributes to Christianity are of very slender importance. The rest of the passage, however, is of doubtful validity. Johnson was incapable of argument in favor of Christianity. He did not even believe it was a matter of argument. Gladstone did argue in favor of Christianity, but he did it more harm than good with thinking people. He was really not well equipped for the task, and he practised the cheapest arts of the special pleader. It was difficult at times to feel sure of his intellectual sincerity. One had to remember that he was not a thinker, in the highest sense of the word, and that he had astonishing powers of self-deception.

What a good old Pagan Lord Rosebery must be. At the bicentenary celebration of the birth of Dr. Johnson at Lichfield, his lordship made the sad confession that in times of sickness the only book that gives him comfort is, not the Bible, but Boswell's book on Johnson. That was the only work that could then "engage his languid attention."

Mr. Joseph McCabe has published a book to prove that the Church of Rome is decaying throughout Christendom. As an out and out Freethinker, Mr. McCabe is hated and boycotted by all Churches alike; but as a demonstrator of the gradual fall of the Catholic Church, columns upon columns of warm approval are devoted to him in Protestant journals. The *Methodist Times* declares that the appearance of his book is of "the utmost importance," and makes it the theme of its leading article for September 16. How ardently the followers of Jesus love one another, and rejoice in one another's prosperity. For the moment it is conveniently forgotten that the decay of Protestantism is more marked than that of Catholicism, which means that, while each of the two great Churches exults at the alleged downfall of the other, Christianity itself is becoming a thing of the past.

Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., occupied a pulpit in Blackburn recently, and he appears to have been overwhelmed by the local atmosphere. The subject of his address—or should we call it a sermon?—was "The New Spirit," but in some respects it looked a good deal like the old one. The lecturer (or preacher) dragged in Christ; he also dragged in the Devil; and the audience (or congregation) must have felt quite at home. According to the report in the *Northern Daily Telegraph*, Mr. Snowden said that—"The Devil never did a better day's work than when he convinced the Christian Church that politics and religion should not be associated with each other. They could not afford to leave politics to the direction of the Devil and his agents. They must have politics that were fit for their religion, and a religion that was fit for their politics." Such stuff as this may be loudly applauded, but it is pitiable in a speaker of Mr. Snowden's standing. What on earth can social reformers of any school want with "Christ" and the "Devil"? Both of these characters are imaginary—and social reform should deal with realities.

A writer in the *Christian Commonwealth* points out that there are in Hungary 130,000 Socialists, and also that Hungarian Socialists are Atheists. We would strongly advise Mrs. Philip Snowden to pay these people a visit. Some time back this lady said that she had never met a Socialist who was an Atheist. This is a quite unique experience, and a visit to Hungary might enlarge Mrs. Snowden's view of things.

We can well understand that the Hungarian Socialists opened their eyes when told of the alliance between Christianity and Socialism in this country. We have no doubt they quietly closed the left ones when their informant had departed. They would well appreciate what an "alliance" between the two means. It is an alliance in which one side has everything to gain and the other everything to lose, and in which neither can profit save at the expense of the other. Socialists in this country who consider themselves astute may dream of capturing the Churches, the Churches know they are capturing Socialism, and they have been so long at the game of gobbling up dangerous movements that we are prepared to back their estimate of the situation.

Mr. George Wise, of Liverpool, has been lecturing on "One of God's Great Men." We fancy the preacher would not feel called upon to travel far in search of an illustration.

Owing to the falling off in the contributions the London Missionary Society has decided to decrease its expenditure by £10,000 annually.

Since 1890 the religious bodies in America, so it is stated, have built churches and chapels at the rate of eight per day. They now have a seating accommodation of over fifty-eight millions. This is what Christians understand by progress. The important thing is, however, not the seating accommodation, but how many of them are occupied. We venture a guess that if the seating accommodation is as stated not more than a fourth is occupied on any given Sunday. Still, as every church means a parson, the figures we have are quite satisfactory in some directions.

Rev. W. Butcher is much impressed by the falling off in the number of children attending church and chapel on Sundays. Naturally he is greatly distressed thereby. And he concludes that "to let the children roam the streets and play during the hours of worship is to foster a spirit that ends in the desecration of the Lord's Day." We agree. If children are to grow up Christians, they must be carefully drilled in the faith before they are old enough to understand it. For the necessities of child nature are considered much more carefully now than was the case years ago, and it is beginning to dawn upon people that more good can be done by healthy play than by attending chapel. Besides, there is really no reason why parents should permit their children to be taught as true things which they believe, or know to be false.

"Greek and Roman history," says the Rev. E. A. Welch, "can produce more than one parallel of a Jezebel, but none of Deborah." This is a very good example of what passes with Christian ministers for sound truthful teaching. Deborah, so runs the legend, called on Barak to assemble the children of Israel and release them from captivity. But accepting the story as literal history, the records of Rome could produce a score of admirable female types for every one produced from the Bible. We advise Mr. Welch to study the accounts that come down to us of Cornelia, who kept her two sons up to the task of saving the State from the evils that beset it; of Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar and wife of Pompey; of Octavia, wife of Antony; of Agrippina, the first; and Portia, the wife of Brutus. And then let him turn to the opening sentence of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, and note that splendid character ascribing to his mother a leading influence in the formation of his character. As a matter of fact, it is Roman and Greek history that has provided writers with desirable types of female character fifty times for every single occasion they have been able to use the Bible.

Mr. Hall Caine tells the world, or such of it as reads the *New Theology* weekly, that modern civilisation is opposed to Christ. Yes, and so was ancient civilisation. Every possible civilisation is opposed to Christ. Perhaps it ought to be stated differently—that Christ is opposed to every possible civilisation. No society in the world could hold together for a month on the basis, for instance, of the Sermon on the Mount. We may add that Mr. Hall Caine—who, by the way, as a novelist, has worked Christ for all his worth—is himself opposed to Christ. He has made over



so many thousands of pounds, and we understand that he has not given his money away. But that is precisely what Christ ordered. We have to say, therefore, that when Mr. Hall Caine lives on the barest possible subsistence, and gives away all the rest of his fortune, he will be able to chatter about Christ quite honestly. And not until then.

Right under Mr. Hall Caine's long letter is a brief one from a Mr. Ernest A. Hay, denying "that Jesus advised his followers to pay taxes." That is how Christians, of a sort, read the Gospels, which tell us that Jesus actually *paid* taxes. He sent Peter fishing for the money, and Peter found the requisite half-crown, or whatever it was, in the mouth of some aquatic specimen.

Dr. C. F. Aked has gone back to New York. He may be welcomed there; he will not be missed here. We always thought him a commonplace sort of person, and his latest utterances have confirmed that opinion. He will probably sink into the position, for which nature has fitted him, of clerical wet-nurse to the infant consciences of Yankee millionaires.

Before departing Mr. Aked told a *Daily News* correspondent how "painfully impressed" he was by the change that had taken place since he left England three years ago. He might have expected that something painful would happen during his absence. Mr. Aked found "a general depression of spirits and discouragement" in Nonconformist circles. "I must say," he concluded, "that after the luxury, wealth, and æsthetic culture I have seen in America, the churches here strike me as crude, cheap, and common." What would Mr. Aked have thought of the poor first Salvation Army under General Peter? For our part, we do not quite see where Mr. Aked's "æsthetic culture" comes in, but we wish him joy of his "luxury and wealth." It is what the sentimentalists all prize—when they can get it.

The subject of the relation of religion and morals is always with us, and with a decline in attachment to doctrines, and a discrediting of fundamental religious opinions, one can appreciate religionists striving to establish a necessary connection between the two. To prove that ethics cannot exist in any highly developed form apart from religion is the object of an article contributed to the *Christian World* of September 16, and, like other articles of a similar trend, it fails to achieve its purpose. Dr. Warschauer, the writer of the article, opens his thesis with a statement that is typical of the Christian controversialist. "As a matter of history," he says, "religion has always been the guardian and fosterer of morality, and such as they are, our moral code and moral ideas are those of the Christian religion." The first part of the statement is only true conditionally; the second is quite false. Religion has been the guardian of morality in the sense that it has striven to take everything under its control. And it has fostered morality in the sense that it encouraged that form of action held to be religiously right. Apart from this, the fact that all the wider humanitarian moral ideas have been either opposed by organised religion or grown up apart from its influence, shows how false to the facts is such a statement. Nor is it true that our moral ideas and moral code are those of Christianity. There is not a society on earth that makes even an attempt to put into practice the ethics of the New Testament, and, for our own part, we consider this anything but an unadulterated evil. The moral ideas of any people are born of a number of causes, none of which are of necessity religious. The most that can be said is that religious beliefs also have their influence, and this we are not concerned to deny. Only we invite Dr. Warschauer's attention that religion has most clearly affected conduct in directions such as those of witch burning, heresy hunts, intolerance, etc.

Dr. Warschauer also says, "Whether there be a vital connection between religion and morality or no, there certainly would appear to be a close connection between irreligion and immorality in the widest sense of the word." There may be a saving sense in the last four words, but it is at least cryptic in form. For Dr. Warschauer's benefit we may point out that this is quite the reverse of the fact. The purely criminal class is, with rare exceptions, religious. Criminologists have pointed this out time after time, while the fact that religious belief does not check immorality is almost a pulpit commonplace—that is, when the occupants thereof are not "going for" Freethought. We do not suggest that there is a necessary connection between religion and immorality, but it is at least clear proof that religious belief does not prevent immorality. Dr. Warschauer asks, "How many men in a betting crowd on a racecourse, how many habitual frequenters of the drink-shop, how many of those whose life is a scorch

for material gratification are connected with any church, or profess any religious belief?" Now if Dr. Warschauer could arrange for the census to be taken, we should be prepared to abide by the result. He would find, as others have found by experience, that it is precisely the class whose ideals are of the poorest type that would repudiate the idea of being irreligious, and who would be most virulent in their opposition to Freethought.

Christian credulity is endless, and Christian imposture keeps pace with it. Someone sends us a Tract, with no name and address on it, but doubtless issued by some pious Society, containing (as historical) the fabulous letter of Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate concerning the death of Jesus Christ. Scholars have given this document up for the last hundred and fifty years as a contemptible forgery. But it seems to be still doing duty amongst the ignorant mob of believers—for the profit of the charlatans who flourish on their folly.

A man of God exclaims, "There are people who, horrified at the cruelties of life, and unable to explain the problem of evil, have denied the very existence of God, and have retired into sullen discontent." This statement is a good example of the reckless manner in which preachers trifle with words. It contains two pernicious falsehoods. Atheists are not deniers of the existence of God, nor do they dwell in "sullen discontent." Englished, *atheist* becomes *no-godist*, and *atheism*, *no-godism*. Hence, Atheists are people devoid of any doctrine of God, and who regard every such doctrine as groundless and false. Having no knowledge of God, they naturally live without him; and in this sense Agnosticism and Atheism are synonymous.

Unbelief in God, however, instead of leading to "sullen discontent," is productive of a courage that takes life as it is and endeavors to make the most of it. It is Christian Theists, believers in a God of love, who should "retire into sullen discontent," as they contemplate the cruelties of life, and the problem of evil, not Atheists.

What a word-spinning game is modern religion! Give a clergyman a word and he deduces from it—if he is let alone—a whole system of theology. Here, for instance, is the Rev. E. W. Lewis, who succeeds in deducing from modern scientific theories of the nature of matter a complete system of Christian Theism. Scientists say that the old conception of matter as inert is obsolete. Matter, in fact, is everywhere active. The ultimate fact in the universe is force or energy. On this enlarges Mr. Lewis. Energy being there, he says, it is *living* energy. A quite gratuitous assumption, since life means animal life or nothing, and science has not yet reached the point of picturing the universe as a huge animal. But if the universe is built up of energy, says Mr. Lewis, it can only exist in God; it is living energy; there is universal life. Again, if we find that the universe has a "rational base"—a perfectly idiotic but parsonic equivalent for our ability to frame an intelligible concept of the world—the world is a manifestation of universal mind. Further, science tells us that the ultimate corpuscles are in a state of motion and continually forming combinations. *Therefore* there is purpose in the world. Further still, history tells us that the universal purpose is universal love, and because we are part of the universe, *therefore* "I and the Father are one." As Dominic Sampson would say, "Prodigious!" In the ordinary way religion is absurd enough; but when it is blended with misunderstood science and spurious philosophy its absurdity almost defies characterisation.

At last, the Rev. R. J. Campbell has discovered the "real Fall." The word "Adam" stands for "the flawless humanity as it exists eternally in the mind of God." Eden was not a spot of earth, but represented the ideal sphere in which man, the image of God, existed before his descent into matter. The real fall was the hedging of this divine life, this heavenly humanity, with fleshly limitations involving a severance from eternal purity and splendor. It is true that Mr. Campbell has only rediscovered this great truth, but it comes upon Christendom with all the force of a new discovery. At any rate, the puzzling point is now finally settled, and settled in such a way that Genesis and Science may join hands and swear eternal friendship.

Mr. R. J. Campbell has flung logic to the winds and glories in being inconsistent and self-contradictory. He tells us that, in spite of limitations and maladjustments, humanity is slowly ascending "towards its goal in the universal which is God." Evidently, then, God and the universal life are synonymous terms. As everybody knows, the universal life does not exist save in the abstract, or as the sum total of



individual lives. Either way, God cannot be a person, but exists only as an idea. And yet the very number of the *Christian Commonwealth*, in which Mr. Campbell identifies the universal life and God, contains a prayer by the same preacher addressed to God as Father. "Eternal Father," he says, "it is very sweet to draw near together unto thee. ....Our Father, we entreat thee.....Our Father, we ask, etc." Fancy asking favors of an idea, or calling the universal life, or life in the abstract, or the sum total of individual lives, Eternal Father! On his feet, the City Temple oracle is a Pantheist; on his knees he always reverts to the old orthodoxy. In other words, he preaches one God and prays to another.

The following appears in "Mr. Campbell's Column" (which was three columns) in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*—the "League" meaning the new "Progressive League," of which Mr. Campbell is President:—

"AGNOSTICISM AND THE LEAGUE.

In response to questions on the subject of Agnostics joining the League, it is well to state that some time ago the Executive Committee had the matter under consideration, and unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that if any person were willing to accept the principle and objects of the League no one had any right to inquire as to his specific religious opinions. If ever the League exercises the right of excommunication it will not be on account of creed. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the League was formed for the purpose of bringing Liberal Christians together. It was not anticipated that Agnostics would wish to join us. But as apparently there are many Agnostics who are not unfriendly to religion, and who wish to be associated with us in service in a religious atmosphere, we give them welcome. As the League, however, does not exist to propagate Agnosticism, and the general spirit of the League is far removed from that temper of mind, we rely upon the loyalty of individual members not to take advantage of our platform to present views which run counter to our religious convictions."

It is wonderful what a curious lot of "Agnostics" are known to professional Christians. Some of these reverend gentlemen carry about a tame Agnostic, who assures people (through the reverend gentleman's lips) that the Christian creed, although, alas, he is unable to believe it, is infinitely superior to his own unhappy opinions. When the names and addresses of these "Agnostics" is asked for they are never forthcoming. We do not accuse Mr. Campbell of unvaracity or insincerity; we simply say that he must be mistaken. The "Agnostic" who wants to join a League of Christian superstitionists is odd enough to be exhibited in a museum.

An Orange crowd at Portadown gave the police a lot of trouble, and some of the rioters were run in. Amongst the charges laid against them was this—that they sang an Orange song, which ran as follows:—

"We are the true-born sons of Levi,  
None on earth can with us compare;  
We are the root and branch of David."

Orangemen evidently have a good conceit of themselves. The reign of the saints is coming—and they are the saints.

Rev. J. G. Lax, vicar of Stainmore, Westmoreland, was set upon by young men and lads late on Monday night, September 13, stripped naked and besmeared with tar, and "subjected to other indignities." He was then tied up to a gate, and a lady who was with him was tied up in the same way. Such hooliganism is to be severely condemned, and the reverend gentleman has our sympathy. So has the lady. But we wonder what it was all about.

The London *Star* has been busying itself about the Lax case, and we judge that there is more in it than meets the eye. We are wondering now if the reverend gentleman will welcome a police-court investigation.

What curious notions some people have of God's goodness! Here is what the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity of Cambridge thinks of it. "God," he says, "is never in a hurry. With inexhaustible patience He watches poor wilful humanity grasping its way in the dark and generally stumbling against every possible object before it finds it's true." Good God! A touch of the hand, a sound of a voice, a little guidance at the right moment, might put humanity on the right path, and so save thousands of years of suffering. But no; God watches with "inexhaustible patience" mankind blundering and stumbling along, and when it has discovered what is beneficial, expects it to go down on its knees and praise him for his kindness and forethought. A parent whose patience was so "inexhaustible" as to watch his child groping along until it fell down an open trap and so maimed or killed itself, would have some pretty

strong things said about him by a magistrate or a coroner. But "God is never in a hurry." He can sit up aloft watching the performance, and, presumably, enjoying the sport. So again we say, Good God!

Before doing anything for man God insists upon having his "utter trust," which proves him to be a sham God. A real God would win confidence by doing, instead of making confidence the one essential condition of doing.

Charles Henry Smith, a churchwarden at Walsall, is a lucky man. His thefts from his employers went back as far as 1903. A parson and other religious gentlemen gave "evidence of character" and he was let off with a month in the second division. Truly godliness is great gain.

A Rip Van Winkle correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* suggested that last Sunday, September 19, should be a day of "special prayer in all churches and chapels for the much-needed fine weather for the ingathering of the harvest." "It is a most pitiable sight," he said, "to note the corn day after day wet in the fields, and the farmer helpless in the matter." No doubt. But what a God this gentleman worships! A God who lets his children's food rot before their eyes (and his) for want of a little sunshine, and won't help them in the slightest degree unless they go down on their marrow bones and beseech him to act decently.

Professor James, the liveliest of present-day psychologists, has the "will to believe" in a future life, and he has lately been dealing with the alleged communications made by the spirit of the late Richard Hodgson, President of the American Psychical Research Society, through the mediumship of the famous Mrs. Piper. The report of these "spirit communications" seems to us most dreadful rubbish, and we scarcely understand how Professor James can treat them seriously. He admits, indeed, that they are not convincing. "If you are willing beforehand," he says, "to allow that a half-awakened spirit may come and mix its imperfect memories with the habits of the trance-automism and you apperceive the message sympathetically, what you get is entirely congenial with your hypothesis. But if you insist that nothing but knock-down evidence for the spirits shall be counted, then since what comes is also compatible with natural causes, your hardness of heart remains unbroken, and you continue to explain things by automatic personation and accidental coincidence, with perhaps a dash of thought transference thrown in." Professor James says nothing about a dash of trickery and deception, although he must know that the majority of "mediums" have been more than suspected of occasional fraud.

Anglicans and Unitarians have been at loggerheads at Buxton. They have been holding rival meetings in the market-place, and late one night a Churchman asked the Unitarians if they believed in the blood of Christ. Rev. George Street, the Unitarian minister, said: "You want to go home with your blood and make black puddings of it." Whereupon there were cries of "Shame!" and "You want drowning." "I am prepared to apologise," Mr. Street said, "but you talk about blood as if you washed in it." Well, why not? According to the Bible, you have to be washed in the blood of the Lamb to be saved; and what Christian is going to scruple at a blood bath as the price of a seat in heaven?

The beating of children ought to be stopped in English elementary schools. It is shameful for the teachers to say it is necessary to discipline when other countries are able to dispense with it. We see that the Teachers' Union defended Miss Houghton, mistress of a Willesden Council School, who was summoned for assaulting Leonard Larkin, a little boy of eight. Being withdrawn from religious instruction, he was placed in a room by himself during prayer time, and he is alleged to have thrown inkpots all over the place. He denied that he had touched them, and was camed on the hand for the "untruth." The mother said that he was ill for two or three days in consequence, but the magistrate "did not believe the punishment had been unduly severe or improperly inflicted." Well, that is his opinion, and other people have a right to differ. A little child of eight ought not to be left in a room by itself, and a lie is the natural defence of weakness against brutal strength. To beat a child on the hand with a hard object shows reckless cruelty or gross physiological ignorance. We even venture to say that teachers who cannot manage children without beating have mistaken their vocation. Is it possible that the child's being withdrawn from religious instruction influenced both the teacher and the magistrate?



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, September 26, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "Shakespeare's Testing of Religion."—in *The Merchant of Venice*, etc.

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

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

**To Correspondents.**

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 3, Manchester; 10, St. James's Hall; 24, Glasgow. December 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £242 12s. Received since.—John Latham, £1.

BLASPHEMY DEFENCE FUND.—John Latham, £1.

W. C. J.—What you say is only too true. But the sad state of things will only be altered as men see through Christianity and become serious Freethinkers. The freethinking element is the main salt of pretty nearly every advanced movement.

M. GORMLEY.—Thanks for your good wishes and your efforts to promote our circulation. You will see that Mr. Foote is lecturing at Manchester in November. Thanks also for cuttings. See "Acid Drops."

E. RAGGETT.—That the "new subscriber" is a B.Sc. and L.C.P. does not surprise us. The common outside notion that the *Freethinker* is "written for illiterates" is quite comically false. Our readers belong to the thoughtful section of all classes, trades, and professions.

A WOMAN.—You are quite right. Christian treatment of the Jews is one of the most awful chapters in human history.

W. HEAFORD.—Glad you are dealing with the Ferrer case in *Concord*. We dealt with it in our leading article last week, and do not see what more we can do, though we would gladly do anything possible.

G. CROOKSON.—You say you would find our Shakespeare lectures "intensely interesting" and wish you could hear them at Manchester, or one of them—the lecture on *Hamlet* for choice. Well, we hardly know what to say. London is an exceptional place, owing to its size, and we are able to draw an audience there even if a number of true-blue Freethinkers are uninterested and stay away. Shakespeare is not everybody's subject; indeed, we fear he is still "caviare to the general."

F. WYKES.—Quite suitable. Thanks.

C. J. P.—Thanks. Rev. J. H. Townsend, of Tunbridge Wells, shows that "D.D.'s" may be very simple persons—with very ignorant congregations.

A. LERT.—We must have overlooked your request. We "shy" at all gratuitous labels. We accept *Freethinker*, *Secularist*, and *Atheist*—which seem quite enough for one lifetime. Why should we wear as many as our friends (or enemies) choose to invent?

PAUL ROSS.—You are free to eclipse the *Freethinker* and the *N. S. S.* if you can. If you can destroy Christianity quicker than we can we shall accept the fact with great cheerfulness.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

F. WOOD.—Our readers help us, and indirectly themselves, by sending us useful cuttings.

J. WHITBY.—See paragraph. Thanks.

JOHN LATHAM (Transvaal) writes: "According to promise I enclose £1 for the Blasphemy Defence Fund. I congratulate you heartily on your action throughout."

G. B. TAYLOR.—Glad to have your manly letter. Far too much may easily be made of book knowledge. Common sense is a natural endowment, and is quite as likely to be possessed by the captain of a ship as by the greatest scholar in the world. Don't for a moment imagine that we look down on men of mere mother wit.

H. E. VOIGT.—Glad the Iconoclasts' Cricket Club (with Sunday games) is prospering. Also that your brother, who has just passed his Matriculation with honors in English literature, has heard two of our Shakespeare lectures and been "much impressed." Shelley was an Atheist (without belief in a personal God) to the last. He never called Atheists "tyrants." He did associate "tyrants" with "the priests of the bloody faith."

A. HOPKINS.—We note that you thought the *Lear* lecture "masterly." Thanks for the rest of your letter, which we may return to next week.

R. HEPBURN.—Tuesday morning is late. We will deal with your letter next week. Mr. Foote's subjects at Glasgow are "The Moral Failure of Christianity" and "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in *Hamlet*, etc."

M. E. PEGG.—With pleasure. Mr. Foote is in good form at present, and seems likely to remain so.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Glad to see your share of the correspondence, though it seems a waste of time to argue with such people. But that is not your fault.

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

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

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

**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. Foote had another good audience at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening, when he delivered the third of his course of Shakespearean lectures on "Shakespeare's View of Evil" as illustrated in *Othello* and *Macbeth*. Once more he was listened to with profound attention and enthusiastically applauded at the close. Mr. A. B. Moss acted as chairman. A good many "saints" who have not yet attended these lectures may hurry up for the last. A peculiarity of Mr. Foote's audiences this month has been the considerable proportion of ladies and strangers.

The fourth and last of Mr. Foote's lectures on "The Master's Mind" will be delivered at St. James's Hall to-night (Sept. 26). The special subject for his lecture is "Shakespeare's Testing of Religion—in the *Merchant of Venice*, etc." This is a subject that has been almost (if not quite) entirely neglected by the commentators, and we believe it will prove to be profoundly interesting.

There is something very amusing, although it has a serious aspect, in the boycott of the President of the National Secular Society by the London press. When he lectures directly against Christianity they cannot condescend to notice him. When he lectures on other subjects they find fresh excuses. He is a wicked Atheist and is therefore to be tabooed under all circumstances. Moreover, he is a man of convictions, and of honest utterance, and as such is an eyesore to the "gentlemen of the press." Even his lectures on a theme like Shakespeare, in a hall like St. James's, must not be noticed. It will not do to say that the lectures are not worth noticing. The audiences know a great deal better. One auditor, a scholar and a writer himself, in a letter to Mr. Foote says: "You have studied Shakespeare to some purpose. Your lectures are 'inspired,' by far the best I have ever heard or read. I never had greater intellectual enjoyment." Such a tribute shows, perhaps, that the common press is quite wise, from its own paltry point of view, in boycotting the lecturer.

During the first two Sundays in October the St. James's Hall platform will be occupied by Mr. C. Cohen and Mr. J. T. Lloyd. Their subjects will be announced in our advertising columns. We hope the London Freethinkers will see that the interest raised by Mr. Foote's course of lectures is sustained, and that his colleagues are greeted by good meetings, as everybody knows they deserve to be. A special effort should be made to secure excellent audiences on both occasions.

The Bethnal Green Branch is extending its open-air lecturing in Victoria Park through October, partly to advertise the St. James's Hall meetings. Mr. Cohen is the lecturer this afternoon (Sept. 26). He is a favorite there.

Mr. Foote opens next Sunday (Oct. 3) the Glasgow Branch's winter lecturing season at the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street. No doubt there will be a strong rally of the local "saints" at both lectures (12 noon and 6.30 p.m.) We hear that a good many are coming in from the surrounding district. On October 10 Mr. Foote opens the winter lecturing season at the Secular Hall, Leicester.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd opens the Manchester Branch's new lecture season with two lectures on Sunday, October 3. We hope the district Freethinkers will rally round him and give him the support he deserves. Mr. Lloyd is a man of great ability and fine eloquence, as well as sterling character.

We are far from rejoicing over the necessity for appealing for immediate help for *Justice*. We have nothing to do with its Socialism, one way or another; but we are bound to admit that any honest and earnest paper, written by men of ability, must do good in stirring up the sleepy intelligence of the average Britisher. The greatest danger to any nation is its going to sleep. But with all its earnestness, honesty, and ability, *Justice* is still not self-sustaining. Why, then, should it be surprising that the *Freethinker*, which advocates the most unpopular of all causes, is not a paying concern? We are not making any special appeal on its behalf, but we venture to point out that subscribers to the President's Honorarium Fund are helping us to maintain the *Freethinker* at its present high standard. We draw no salary for all our editorial work, and we bear the responsibility of the deficit in addition. It is a lessening deficit, we are happy to say, but it has to be borne until it disappears. We trust, therefore, that "saints" who have not yet subscribed to the President's Fund during 1909 will do so without delay.



## Hall Caine's Latest.

BERNARD SHAW once caused widespread amusement by asking "Who is Hall Caine?" at a time when the author of *The Manxman* was at the zenith of his literary career. The Shavian jest was characteristically incisive and unflattering. The gibe also contained a truth. Although Hall Caine is a voluminous author, his many works do not bear the impress of intellect. The idol of the patrons of the circulating libraries, he simply does not count in the world of ideas. This is not to say that Hall Caine has no merits. He can tell a story as well as any of his rivals, and he has a fine, if trammelled, imagination. His greatest drawback is that his stories move along the plane of the conventional and the commonplace. Whenever he tries to break away from this tendency his characterisation becomes theatrical and tawdry.

Especially is this noticeable in *The Christian*. The hero of *The Manxman* carries the sympathies of the reader with him; but the hero of *The Christian* is simply an unadulterated nuisance.

In his latest work, *The White Prophet*, Hall Caine breaks fresh ground and essays a far more difficult task than before. The scene of the plot is laid in Cairo and Khartoum, and the author has presented his readers with some realistic pen pictures of Oriental life. Whilst reading one can almost see the white-walled towns under the blazing eastern sun, the mosques and their minarets, the devout Moslems falling upon their knees with their faces towards Mecca. The story is that of a young officer, Gordon Lord, a colonel in the British Army in occupation of Egypt. He is the son of Lord Nuneham, the great pro-consul, who in the early years of his rule, won the hearts of the Egyptians by the justice of his rule. Intoxicated with power, however, Lord Nuneham surrounds himself with weak men. In his attempts to govern the country by violence and to suppress a new Mahdi, Ishmael Ameer, the Consul issues an order to his son Gordon, which Gordon thinks will lead to unnecessary bloodshed. Gordon, objecting to the seeming injustice, refuses to obey and is degraded. In the scene which follows, General Graves, to whose daughter, Helena, Gordon is engaged, is flung to the ground and dies. Gordon repents and goes in penance to Ishmael Pasha's camp. Helena, thinking that Ishmael is her father's murderer, sets herself to ruin him, and to learn his plans, marries him. Ishmael informs her of his schemes and she betrays him to Nuneham. Gordon hearing this, goes in Ishmael's place, and is captured and sentenced to death. He is ultimately pardoned and he finally marries Helena whom the prophet had divorced.

The story, it will be seen, is frankly melodramatic, and incidentally presents a considerable opportunity for pressing home Hall Caine's peculiar views of Christianity and Mohammedanism. The author's chief aim seems to be to stir in the Christian the emotionalism which he seeks to show is the leading feature of Mohammedanism. It is difficult to appreciate Hall Caine's comparisons from a Freethought point of view. Ishmael Ameer preaches that all religions, originally well intentioned, have become corrupt, and he urges a sentimental humanitarianism. The *White Prophet's* character is a medley of fanaticism and childishness, whilst his antagonist, Lord Nuneham, is the only virile character in the book. Even Gordon Lord, who is intended to represent a paragon of virtue, is only a sentimentalist with the noble firmness of the mule. In real life, such a man would necessarily wreck his career by sheer wrong-headedness, and Hall Caine has to use all his art to make the opposite conclusion plausible.

The book is worth reading alike for its picturesque setting and its suggestiveness. Some of the thoughts put into the mouths of the various characters, and the author's reflections are quite good in their way, such as:—

"Civilisation is killing religion."

"Christian civilisation is little better than an organised hypocrisy."

"If Islam for its handmaidens has divorce and polygamy, Christianity has drunkenness and prostitution."

"Christians are praying in their churches for peace yet they are increasing their armaments every day."

"He was asking himself whether, if his poor Coptic wife was doomed to hell as an unbeliever, he could ever be happy in heaven."

"The mightiest thing on earth is an outraged mother in the presence of her dead."

"Christianity is a funeral mute while Islam is a dancing girl."

"There may be picric acid in prayers as well as in bombs."

"Is there one man alive who will dare to say that he actually orders his life according to the precepts of Christ? If so, he is either a liar or a fool."

Hall Caine has written a readable novel which will delight his numerous admirers. As a serious contribution to literature the book has no claim to prolonged consideration. The psychology of the religious enthusiast seems utterly beyond the author's power. As it is, the *White Prophet* is but a sign of the times. It is the sentimentalism of the New Theology carried into the pages of the novel, and it is only Hall Caine's mastery of his art which prevents the whole thing being absurd. Hall Caine is always at his best when he keeps to the conventional and the commonplace. In such a work as *The White Prophet* he shows the limits of his powers, and this cannot add to his reputation. In so far as he has attempted a sympathetic study of the Mohammedan religion, his book is interesting; but the chief objection is that he imparts a sentimental emotionalism to that creed which is quite foreign to it.

Hall Caine makes one of his characters describe General Gordon as a "romantic person who was too fond of guiding his conduct by reference to the prophet Isaiah," and the allusion hits off the writer himself. Hall Caine is far too fond of finding Christian ideas in Mohammedanism; but as *The White Prophet* is only a melodramatic novel it does not much matter.

VERDANT GREEN.

## The Narratives in Genesis—XII.

### THE TOWER OF BABEL.

(Continued from p. 604.)

IN Genesis, chapter xi., the Yahvist writer gives us an account of the origin of the diversity of languages and of the distribution of peoples speaking different dialects to different parts of the earth. His story runs as follows:—

"And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar: and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go let us make brick.....let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

From this statement we learn that the descendants of Noah, in travelling eastward, came to a plain in "the land of Shinar"—that is to say, in Babylonia—and there they proposed to build a city which should be a rallying point or centre of union for all the people of that time. The city was also to contain a citadel "whose top might reach to heaven"—the latter phrase signifying simply "of great height" as in Deut. i. 28, and ix. 1. After building operations had commenced, the god Yahveh, sitting on his throne above the clouds, heard the noise the workmen were making. "And Yahveh came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded." [Here a sentence has fallen out of the narrative which related the god's return to heaven.] Turning to his angels or fellow gods Yahveh—who disapproved of the men's idea of a central city—said, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." This was forthwith done.



"So Yahveh scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore was the name of it called *Babel*; because Yahveh did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did Yahveh scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Here it should be noted that it was not the tower, but the city, which was named *Babel*—and the building of this city is represented as interrupted and left unfinished.

Now, the city here called "*Babel*" was no other than the great city of Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian empire. "*Babel*" is the Hebrew form of the name called "*Babylon*." Why the name should in this chapter be given as "*Babel*," and in every other place in the Old Testament be rendered "*Babylon*" is a mystery, unless it was done to hide the fact that the building of the city named in this story was not only begun, but was continued until the work was completed—notwithstanding the statement made in this veracious narrative. It may be, however, that "*Babel*," and not "*Babylon*," is employed in this chapter in order that it may be more readily perceived that the name was derived from the Hebrew *balal* "to confound." If this be so, the method adopted has failed; for it is now well known that "*Bab-el*" means, not "confusion," but "the gate of god."

In his comments upon this mythical story Professor Driver says: "No Babylonian parallel to the narrative has as yet been discovered." In the case of the Deluge he candidly admits that "there can be no doubt that the true origin of the Biblical narrative is to be found in the Babylonian story of the Flood," etc. In this case, however, he is more doubtful. He says:—

"It does seem a not improbable conjecture that some gigantic tower-like building in Babylon, which had either been left unfinished, or fallen into disrepair, gave rise to the story. The tower in question has been supposed by some to be the celebrated *zikkurat* of E-zida, the great temple of Nebo, in Borsippa (a city almost contiguous to Babylon on the S.W.), the ruined remains of which form the huge pyramidal mound called Birs Nimroud. This *zikkurat*, remarkable enough, Nebuchadnezzar states had been built partially by a former king, but not completed.....Nebuchadnezzar restored it."

As long ago as 1876 a cuneiform inscription was discovered which may possibly have some connection with the Bible story; but the tablet is so very much mutilated that it is difficult to get a clear idea of the matter recorded. This appears to be that at some unknown date a certain unnamed king commenced to build a *zikkurat* or temple mound—that is, several massive terraces, decreasing in size, built one upon another, on the uppermost of which an altar or temple was reared. This work was displeasing to Anu "the father of all the gods," apparently because "Babylon corruptly to sin went" and "the thoughts of their hearts were evil." To stop the work the god "to their strong place in the night entirely an end he made," he "confounded great and small on the mound," and "made strange their counsel" [or "speech"], and "their progress he impeded."

In reference to this fragmentary tablet Dr. Driver says: "There are no sufficient grounds for the supposition that the confusion of tongues is referred to.....for the meanings of the two crucial words rendered 'strong place' and 'speech' are both extremely doubtful." It is unfortunate that this tablet which evidently refers to a *zikkurat* in Babylon itself—"the tower of Babel"—should be so mutilated as to leave the matter doubtful. At any rate, there is no doubt as to the unhistorical character of the Bible narrative.

We now come to the origin of the diversity of tongues. According to the story in Genesis, all the different languages spoken on the earth came into existence on one and the same day. Up to the time of the building of this city and tower all the men on this planet spoke but one language; then the god Yahveh came down and confounded their tongues,

and new languages were born. On this never-to-be-forgotten day men simultaneously forgot their mother tongue which they had been speaking all their lives, and, at the same time, suddenly acquired a multitude of new and strange words which they had never heard spoken before—and they knew by intuition the exact meanings of the new sounds without ever having had the trouble of learning them. We know, of course, that a child learns a language by hearing the same words spoken over and over again, and that one born deaf is dumb also, not because of any defect in the vocal organs, but simply because he could not imitate sounds which he had never heard spoken. This old-fashioned method of learning a language was now set aside, and new dialects were acquired by the instantaneous process. This sudden change of language applied, of course, only to the men who were engaged in building the city and tower. But what about the women and children who took no part in the work, and were, no doubt, miles away from the place when the change was effected? Did these also forget their mother tongue and acquire a new one at the same time as the men? The inspired writer evidently forgot all about the existence of these people—which fact is another indication of the character of the story.

According to the narrative in Genesis, mankind were not only of one language, but of one race; but after the confusion of tongues and the people had been "scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" new and diverse races were formed. This is evident; for all the races of mankind of the present day are said to have sprung from the descendants of Noah who received their languages at Babel. The change of tongue was thus accompanied or followed by a change of race. In endeavoring to account for the different races of men known in his day, the Hebrew writer took into account only the languages. He did not know that diversity of language is dependent, in nearly all cases, upon diversity of race. Diversity of language, in fact, is not the cause, but the result, of men being "scattered abroad upon the face of the earth" And, as says Professor Sayce, "diversity of race is older than diversity of language." Ages before the date of the Biblical "confusion of tongues" (B.C. 2234) when, according to the Bible narrative, "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech," there were in existence at least three distinct races speaking radically different languages—the old Akkadian, the semitic Babylonian, and the Egyptian, and, no doubt, many more. We have thus incontrovertible evidence, if such be needed, of the fictitious character of the narrative.

When a Bible story has been shown to be untrue, one would think that it would cease to be regarded as the word of God. This, however, appears to be not the case. Dr. Driver, for instance, says of the Babel legend:—

"That the narrative can contain no scientific or historically true account of the origin of different languages is apparent from many indications.....The narrative nevertheless emphasises Jehovah's supremacy over the world; it teaches how the self-exaltation of man is checked by God; and it shows how the distribution of mankind into nations, and diversity of language, are elements in His providential plan for the development and progress of humanity."

How a story giving an account of something that never occurred can show or teach matters such as those just mentioned is one of those things that no one save a professor of theology has ever been able to discover.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Persecution is founded upon the fatal doctrine of salvation by faith. This doctrine makes the heretic more noxious than a serpent. A serpent poisons the body, a heretic poisons the soul. If it be true that his teaching may draw souls to hell, human welfare demands his extermination.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."



### Indifferentism.

THERE is a type of person frequently to be met with who is a particularly dangerous enemy to the cause of Truth. I mean the half-baked Agnostic. He is usually an accommodating and adaptable individual, who, though he professes to have embraced "advanced" and "liberal" opinions, does not hold convinced views on anything. He is an entertaining conversationalist, mildly cynical, always pleasant and smooth-spoken. His oily smile is my pet aversion. Surely those most concerned for the cause of Truth and Progress, which is the cause of humanity, would prefer to deal with openly avowed and professing Christians who are frankly hostile to the Freethought movement rather than with those individuals who have a foot in each camp. Their color-blindness makes them false teachers. Their outlook blurs distinctions between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Woe to those who put their trust in them or seek for instruction from them!

The effect of the teaching of such people is to keep ignorant people indifferent as well as ignorant. It is only by the path of knowledge men can hope to learn how best to do their duty.

The half-baked Agnostic makes himself at home in any community. He arrogates to himself the power of reconciling all differences. To the truly and sincerely orthodox, as to the real Rationalist, he can only be an object of contempt. He is one of those who cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. He is often a member of religious bodies. In his relationship with his Church he professes a wonderful catholicity, and expatiates on the power of the Spirit of God. In his relationship with those who repudiate Christianity he pooh-poohs dogma, failing entirely to realise not only that every Christian Church is constituted by rules and standards based on the most explicit dogmas, but that he himself is the veriest dogmatist. He affects to welcome all efforts to extend knowledge and to encourage the exercise of individual judgment on all matters affecting man's origin and destiny, while he mumbles prayers and creeds which contain unqualified condemnation of any attempt to question certain articles of belief which are described as fundamental to the existence of the religious sect with which he is associated.

Now, oil and water cannot be mixed. And a man cannot be both a Freethinker and a Christian. People who think such a thing to be possible must be pointedly told that anyone who is a member of a Freethinking Society and also of a Christian Church is not only defeating truth and serving falsehood, but is lowering the standard of personal morality and encouraging hypocrisy, cowardice, and mental indolence. These gentlemen who try to face both ways tell us, when they come in contact with a useful and well-behaved citizen who is a Freethinker, that such an individual is a Christian without knowing it. Such a presumptuous assertion is as grotesque as it is impudent. It infringes all the canons of decent controversy. Let us consider what it involves. It undoubtedly represents the Freethinker either as an incapable ignoramus or a very stupid kind of liar. The retort is obvious, though it can be no satisfaction to a Freethinker to have to employ it. Mr. Facing-both-ways, who tries to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, may fairly be asked how he knows that he is what he professes to be.

But the man who tries to ride two horses at the same time is ultimately found out by fair-minded people. And when he is seen in his true colors he is bound to come to grief. The effects of advertisement are no doubt enduring, but falsehood and insincerity cannot be bolstered up for ever by the cleverest intellectual acrobat.

The tyranny which simple-minded persons accept voluntarily is really more disastrous, because more insidious, subtle, and subterranean in its methods, than the tyranny imposed upon people against their wills by a powerful despotism. Some Socialists who are Freethinkers have had reason to refer to the intolerance attempted to be used against them by Socialists who are Christians. But who are the more consistent: the former or the latter? Who are the more true to the essential principles of Socialism: the former or the latter? Who are the more honest in their representation of Socialism to outsiders: the former or the latter? It is to be feared that there are strong grounds for holding that Socialists who are Christians seek to enlist the sympathy, support, or co-operation of Christians who are not yet Socialists by toning down, so as to make palatable to hoped-for converts, the essential principles of Socialism. Socialists have nothing to gain by bowing to opportunism or expediency. If they believe that they are identified with a cause whose principles are righteous and true, they must have the assurance that their principles will prevail, and they will not the sooner attain their goal by trimming their sails to every popular breeze, obliterating distinctions and lines of demarcation, and adopting the policy of the proselytising

quibblers who, by making light of vital differences, or even glossing them over, seek to gain recruits. A temporary success gained by such methods will only make the ultimate disaster all the more crushing and devastating. The honest and courageous man states what he really believes the right course to be, without fear or favor. He scorns misrepresentation, concealment, or half-truths, however plausible. His search is after Truth. That is his supreme purpose: not the conciliation of those who do not think with him by telling them that his own opinions do not actually differ from theirs when he knows that they do, or by tickling their ears with blarney to the effect that Truth is not only what he believes it is, but what they like to think it is.

Are we mistaken in declaring that the great principle of Socialism is that private property is wrong, and that the great bulk of the wealth, apart from trifling personal belongings, should be public property? Surely not. Can it, therefore, be consistently or honestly maintained by Socialists that the conditions against which they so bitterly protest are of Divine ordination? But how can any Christian—be he Socialist or be he not—escape from such a position? That is the universal Christian creed. A man cannot surely be a Christian who denies that God daily intervenes in the arrangement and management of human affairs. How did the system of private property come into existence? Who appointed some men to wealth and happiness and the many to poverty and misery? The Christian Bible, far from discountenancing or condemning private property, not merely regards it with approval, but plainly declares that it is of Divine appointment. God is reported to have given the Patriarchs and Job and David and Solomon their possessions. Clerics to-day continually refer to wealthy members of religious communities as having had their wealth given to them by God. They speak and pray about kings and statesmen and magistrates as having been appointed by God. They pray at Christian weddings—at which services the silliest drivel continues to be solemnly mouthed, particularly the story of Eve having been taken out of Adam's side—that the contracting parties may be blessed in their basket and their store. Christians—both cleric and laic—daily pray for material property for themselves or their relatives or friends.

Do Socialists know these things, or do they not? And what purpose is to be served, what help is to be given to the cause of progress by seeking to maintain, encourage, and teach indifferentism towards these highly important considerations? Nothing can be gained by pandering to falsehood, however plausibly advanced, however attractively attired. Let us have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. With Carlyle we would uncom- promisingly demand "Facts, Facts, Feed me on Facts!" We have been too long ruled and obsessed by other people's opinions.

Socialists who profess to be orthodox Christians may choose either horn of the dilemma in which they are placed. But no cause is worth consideration by serious men, the leading exponents of which ignore vital differences and distinctions, with the view of attracting people who are outside. It is a weak and despicable course to follow the example of ecclesiastics and their henchmen, who put up the big umbrella and welcome all to share its shelter, without any particular inquiry as to the opinions of those to whom, with solicitous and feverish anxiety, they tearfully appeal.

In spite of all, Rationalism advances. Reason must assert her reign, notwithstanding all the forces of fear, ignorance, superstition, prejudice, and interest. Knowledge is Power. Despotism can only exist alongside of ignorance, and the true freedom—morality and happiness of mankind—can only be secured by the increase of knowledge, which must mean an increased participation on the part of an increasing number of men and women in the movement which takes for its motto: "Reason, the Superior Arbitrator." Indifferentism may be encouraged by many apparently potent agencies, and it is well that we should be alive to this danger; but its doom is sealed.

SIMPLE SANDY.

### A Few Notes on Belfast.

THE adherents of Christianity, almost from its dawn, have been past masters in the arts of cajolery and bluff. One can trace in the history of their religion a wonderful continuity of crime. Wherever it has laid its leprous hand, there bloodshed, desolation, and often most fiendish torture, have assuredly followed. When the weeds of heresy could no longer be plucked up from the garden of credulity, with any appreciable safety, by murder and pain infliction, Christian leaders practised bribery—bribery celestial and terrestrial. Coercion no longer possible, they were not long in adopting some other phase of crime, some new artifice to



attract the credulous and keep the pot boiling. In spite of their herculean labors, their bat-like hordes, and their inconceivable power, Christianity was doomed from the outset, and all efforts to save it only served to aggravate the situation and prolong the agony of decay. Christianity, like every other superstition, is the fruit of the tree of ignorance; is not true; and, like all untrue things, the inevitable fate awaits it. Although one shudders at the dreadful thought of such a religion ever retrieving its loss of power, one cannot fail to experience a sensation of pity on contemplating its ruin. It is like the last of the giants struggling in the throes of death from strangulation. One can more fully appreciate the truth of these remarks on comparing the stern methods employed by the old Church with the altogether contemptible antics of the present. In the past, Christianity crushed and trampled with merciless fury upon the slightest suspicion of heresy. It wielded tremendous power. Complete annihilation followed the innovation of new ideas. The reward of the thinker was infinite pain and death. How unutterably ghastly is the downfall! The Christianity of to-day, to feed its feeble flame, is compelled, with palsied arms, to embrace its worst enemies. So immeasurably low is it stricken that even compromise is a milestone of the past; it *truckles*.

In the *Belfast News Letter*, an Irish Protestant organ, appears a semi-review of Mr. Joseph McCabe's latest book, *The Decay of the Church of Rome*. The writer of the article—presumably the editor—accepts Mr. McCabe's statements and statistics *in toto*, and, with lavish praise to the author, doles them forth to his readers with a "smile that is childlike and bland." In one paragraph he states:—

"We have read this book through without finding in it any evidence of a prejudice in favor of Protestantism or any reason to doubt that the author's aim is to state the truth."

Another:—

"There is no suggestion [on his part] that Mr. McCabe's criticism is not as honest as it is fearless and well-informed."

Then follows almost a full column of extracts with little or no comment—certainly no adverse comment; and concludes with:—

"If it [the Church of Rome] continues to be the foe of liberty, enlightenment, and human progress, as it has been for centuries, it is doomed."

Belfast is a Protestant city; its natives speak of it as a "Presbyterian town"; the Roman Catholic persuasion are in such a minority that they are but poorly represented on the Council; yet for sheer bigotry, intolerance, and malicious opposition to all forms of religious freedom, there is not another city in Ireland—ay, in Great Britain—that can hold a candle to it. Neither Mormons, Zionists, nor Christian Scientists could, by love or money, procure a hall to hold their lectures in. Freethinkers, as will be seen, are infinitely worse off in this respect. Religious riots between Protestants and Catholics are almost weekly occurrences, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the original aggressors are the former. Pictures of King William crossing the Boyne are posted up and flaunted in the faces of the Catholics, and one can scarcely pass a street corner without observing the elegantly-painted legend, "To hell with the Pope." Such is Christian charity and love. In the face of these innumerable manifestations of Christian virtue we have the editor of a Protestant daily canting about "liberty, enlightenment, and human progress," using quotations from the work of a "notorious" Atheist to hurl as missiles into the enemy's camp, and belauding the author, whom in the depths of his heart he must necessarily hate like poison. Such conduct is repulsive in its malignity and detestable in its hypocrisy; yet it is but typical of the modern hirelings and parasites of an ancient and rotten creed. But how pitiable is the spectacle to the independent mind. Christianity has stooped to lick the feet of its enemies in a vain effort to gain respite from its doom.

FAUGH-A-BALLAGH.

P.S.—Belfast is ripe for active propaganda. A branch of the N. S. S. is in process of formation. "Saints" please note.

A PLEASANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

Ministers are proverbially absent-minded, but the members of a certain up-town church believe there is a limit. Their minister began the reading of the usual notices on a recent Sunday morning with the announcement of the funeral of a prominent member of the congregation. He read the announcement with much solemnity. Then his memory seemed to slipped a cog or two and he swung into the other notices in the usual manner. "It also gives me great pleasure," he read, "to give notice of the social to be held on Thursday evening in the chapel. I hope we can all be present."

JAMES MILL ON RELIGION.

My father's rejection of all that is called religious belief was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic and evidence: the grounds of it were moral still more than intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. His intellect spurned the subtleties by which men attempt to blind themselves to this open contradiction. The Sabœan, or Manichœan theory of a Good and an Evil Principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe, he would not have equally condemned; and I have heard him express surprise that no one revived it in our time. He would have regarded it as a mere hypothesis; but he would have ascribed to it no depraving influence. As it was, his aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up fictitious excellences—belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human-kind—and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues: but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful. I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.—*John Stuart Mill, "Autobiography," pp. 39-41.*

Intellectually the Christian religion is unfitted for acceptance by the Jews. When Christian fanatics were grovelling at the feet of images, and were flooding the country with accounts of disgraceful miracles, shrine cures, etc., the Jewish physician was studying the noble art of healing. When the Christian was taken up with the ridiculous doctrine of transubstantiation and the idea of three Gods in one, the Jewish philosopher—Maimonides—had already advanced so far as to say that the idea of deity was inconceivable altogether to the human intellect. And when there is added to the foregoing the fact that the substance of the Sermon on the Mount or Plain, and the Lord's Prayer, is contained almost word for word in the disquisitions of the early Jewish stages, it seems extremely unlikely that Christianity will be accepted by the Jews.—*Young Israel.*

The most necessary thing in life—the tolerance, patience regard, and love of neighbor, of which everyone stands in need, and which, therefore, every man owes to his fellow.—*Schopenhauer.*

EVERYBODY HAPPY.

My brother is one of the greatest philanthropists I know. He spends his time in trying to make everybody happy. Why, the other day he was passing by a church; and he saw a poor woman carrying a baby, sitting crying on the steps. My brother was touched immediately.

"What is your trouble my good woman?" He kindly inquired.

"Oh, Sir," she replied, through her tears; "I want to get my baby christened; and it costs three and six; and I've got no money."

"Oh, never mind," said my brother, cheerily. "Take this sovereign, and get the baby christened; and I'll wait out here for the change."

The woman thanked him effusively, and disappeared into the church. After some time she returned and handed my brother sixteen shillings and sixpence.

"However can I thank you for your kindness," she began "Oh, don't thank me," said my brother. "Everybody's happy. You've got your baby christened; I've got sixteen and six; and the parson's got a bad sovereign."

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**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 Testing of Religion—in *The Merchant of Venice*, etc."

**OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Christ—A Myth."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, W. Davidson, "The Last Ditch."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park): 11.30, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11.30, Mr. Rowney, "Let us Pray." Seven Sisters' Corner: 7, E. G. Saphin, "Christ the Sun."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, Miss Kough, a Lecture; 7.30, A. Allison, "False Gods."

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Why Socialists Must Be Atheists."

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