

# THE Freethinker

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*The lesson writ in red since first Time ran  
A hunter hunting down the beast in man :  
That till the chasing out of its last vice  
The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.*

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

## The Murder of Francisco Ferrer.

A PUBLIC SPEECH BY MR. G. W. FOOTE

*At St. James's Hall, London, Sunday Evening, Oct. 17.*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND FRIENDS,—I have had some melancholy duties in my life, and this is one of the most melancholy. I felt, the moment I saw that the court-martial had found Ferrer guilty, that his death was, to begin with, a foregone conclusion, and that, in the next place, he would have short shrift. In the circumstances, as indignation if expressed at all should be expressed quickly, I ventured to complicate the proceedings to-night by inviting the Freethinkers of London to come to St. James's Hall and express their indignation against one of the worst of modern atrocities. (Applause.)

Before going further, I desire to read the resolution which I have not the happiness, but the honor, of proposing:—

"Recognising that the destruction of Francisco Ferrer and his secular schools has long been sought by the clerical party in Spain, and that he has now fallen a victim to their cruel machinations, this meeting salutes his memory as that of an illustrious martyr of Freethought, stigmatises his so-called trial as a mockery of law and justice, and rejoices that the act of his murderers has raised a storm of indignation throughout the civilised world." (Loud applause.)

In one sense, the last clause is the most important. The rifle-shots that were heard in the moat of the fortress of Montjuich have reverberated throughout Europe (applause), throughout North America, throughout South America; and I shall be very much astonished if we do not hear that the reverberation has travelled eastward through Asia and reached the land in whose future we are all interested,—Japan. (Applause.)

Ferrer has been slain by the Spain of the Inquisition (applause), the Spain of Torquemada and Cortes, the Spain of Alva and the bloody massacres and cruelties of the Netherlands, the Spain of the expulsion of the Jews, the Spain of the expulsion of the Moors, the Spain which only took its hand from the racked bodies of heretics for the first time when the cannon of Napoleon's French Army—with at least the cry of liberty, whatever else they lacked—startled Spain from her contemptible repose of bigotry, cruelty, and slaughter. (Applause.)

Of course the man being dead, and the indignation of the civilised world being aroused, the murderers

must protest their innocence. They say that outsiders are ignorant of the facts, the Government knows what it is doing—which I can quite believe (applause)—and that up its sleeve, or somewhere, it has full proofs of Ferrer's guilt in respect of the charges alleged against him. Mark that the very people who say this now, after refusing him a proper trial, after giving him nothing but a travesty of a trial, are the very people who previously alleged that they had full proofs of his guilt. They are the people who kept him for twelve months in prison until they were forced into bringing him to trial in the light of day by the pressure of the public opinion of all that was best in Europe. And when he appeared for trial all the proofs turned out to be either forgeries or hearsay of the most contemptible description. ("Shame!") Why, amongst the proofs which, three years ago, and rather more, they put into the Court against Ferrer was an Anarchist letter referring to bombs, from his son. They knew that Ferrer had a son, but they had not taken the trouble to ascertain his age, and as the boy at that time was only four years old (laughter) you can see how beautifully they over-reached themselves. Now what can you believe on the word of men who forge documents like that and put them into the Court? They wanted Ferrer's destruction and they have achieved it. When the trouble took place at Barcelona they felt that there was a new opportunity, and perhaps a finally successful one, of sweeping him into the net of their revenge; and no doubt they trusted that, while the rifle shots were going and men and women, tried by court martial, were falling, one rifle shot more or less which settled the life of Ferrer would never be noticed. But they miscalculated. (Hear, hear.) We have not yet arrived at that noble condition of things which Thomas Paine foresaw when he said "The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion." We have not arrived at that state of society, but we are progressing towards it. (Hear, hear.) It is no longer possible for crimes against humanity to be perpetrated in one country without arousing indignation in others. (Applause.) Do not listen to those who say that every country should mind its own business only. It would be very much better if that maxim were carried out in a good many "imperial" affairs. But when great crimes are committed let us speak as millions in Europe and elsewhere are speaking to-day, and as you are speaking to-night. (Applause.)

Ferrer is a martyr! (Hear, hear.) We know very well what his crime was. He tried to make people think (hear, hear); he knew that education was the only way to do that (applause), and educationists are never practisers of violence. (Applause.) A man who goes in for education goes in for the slow but sure method. Education is the most terrible of all dynamite (hear, hear) when applied to tyranny, super-

stitution, and inhumanity. (Applause.) The priests in Spain knew what priests know everywhere—for nature has endowed all animals, including priests (laughter), with the instinct of self-preservation. They know that whoever spreads education and causes the fermentation of ideas is preparing peacefully, but surely, for the destruction of all priestcraft and all mental tyranny. (Applause.) And so Ferrer is slain. I am glad for my part that he is dead rather than living at the mercy of these devils. (Hear, hear.) We know, some of us, what went on in the fortress of Montjuich before. I saw with my own eyes the marks of torture on the bodies of Spaniards who were swept into the net of that fortress on a previous occasion. Those who are so fond of the bloody excitement of bullfights might very well revel in the hotter excitement of human agony. Ferrer is out of their hands. I was sorry to see the English pressmen asking for a commutation of his sentence. That is not the language to address to tyrants. The language to them is "Hands off!" (Loud applause.) They will never let a penny of Ferrer's property go out of their hands. They have uses for it. They have closed his schools, they have killed him, and why should not that be the climax? I say that if they are to have the maximum of profit it is well that they should also have the maximum of disgrace. (Hear hear.)

Ferrer, being a noble martyr, will be worth more dead even than he was living, because he becomes, through a well-known law of humanity, a light and an inspiration for future generations. For an hour the martyr's head is brought low, and then it is crowned for ever on the sun-smitten mountains of memory. (Applause.)

Ferrer died as a Freethinker. After compassing his death in the name of religion,—for that is what it means (applause),—they had the disgusting hypocrisy to press their pious attentions upon his last hours. They actually wanted him to kiss the crucifix! They wanted Giordano Bruno to do that, and in those days they made it red hot! Ferrer kissed no crucifix, and listened to no priest, but met his death like a man. (Applause.) He died in the midst of enemies with head erect, unblenching face, and dauntless eye. He did not want any mask on his face. Like a true man he preferred to die looking at his executioners. (Applause.) They would not allow that. No doubt they were afraid to look at him. (Applause.)

Well, without pressing this topic further, I am here to-night to ask you to carry this resolution unanimously. The world will hear more of Francisco Ferrer. (Hear, hear.) The Government in Spain, I trust, will fall under the execrations of mankind. Do not listen for a moment to the talk that Spain is not indignant. The press in Spain is muzzled by a most rigorous censorship. Obviously the telegrams from Spain to our own papers have been censored, and very likely doctored too. We know that humanity *must* be indignant in Spain as well as elsewhere. (Hear, hear.) We look forward to the day of real retribution. (Applause.) We do not want to stain our cause when we triumph with the foul blood of those who, when we render them weak, will be lower than our contempt. We do not mean in the day of our triumph to imitate the crimes of our enemies. (Applause.) We mean to stand by our own principles—the principles for which Ferrer, fought and died, the principles of Light, Truth, Liberty, Justice, and Humanity. (Loud applause.)

## Are We Christians?

SOME years ago there was a discussion in one of our London dailies on the topic of "Is Christianity Played Out?" The discussion was carried on right through the newspaper "silly season," and several hundreds of letters were published. As is usual with such discussions in our "Free Press," nothing of a very drastic nature was allowed to appear from the Free-thought point of view. But although the correspondence was, so far, edited, one curious result ensued. A very large number of the writers took up the position that Christianity could not be played out because it had never yet been played in. What the world had known as Christianity was a spurious presentment, a caricature of the real thing. One day the original article would appear, and, when it did, society would be transformed, and we should witness what the old lady called the "Aluminium." But they agreed that the record of Christianity had been, up to date, not such that one could exhibit with pride.

Now, from one point of view, I agree that Christianity never has been played in, in the sense of being practiced. Society has never acted upon the teachings of the New Testament, and is never likely to do so. The divorce between Christian theory and the practice of Christians is one of the most constant features of Christian history. Individuals may here and there have sought to carry out New Testament teachings, but society, as a whole, has treated them as a mere counsel of perfection quite impossible in practice. Society has never ceased to take thought for the morrow, it has never turned the other cheek when one was smitten, it has never acted upon the principle that faith could move mountains or cure disease, it has never, for obvious reasons, held to the celibate life as a practicable ideal, it has never believed that poverty was a blessing or riches a curse. Not only has society never done so, but if it were seriously proposed that it should, Christians would raise the loudest and most energetic protest. In actual life Christians turn their backs resolutely on the teachings of their "sacred" book, and for this conduct Freethinkers at least find adequate justification.

One explanation offered for this long-standing divorce between theory and practice comes to us in the form of vague generalities concerning the "corruptions" of primitive teaching by later generations of believers. In a sense this, again, is true; but what is not realised is the deeper truth that if Christianity was to live, even in name, corruption was necessary and inevitable. Thus "Resist not evil" had to be corrupted into "Do not encourage the spirit of revenge." "Give to him that asketh" had to be qualified by "if he is deserving of the gift." "Take no thought for the morrow" had to be corrupted into "Be not over anxious." In every direction Christian teachings needed "corrupting" before they became decently practicable, or in any way applicable to human affairs. Every reform in Christian teaching has involved this "corruption," has meant, that is, a more or less forced interpretation of Christianity, such as would commend itself to contemporary common sense.

Christian in belief (so far as "belief" is understood to mean assent to a number of doctrines more or less non-understandable) the world once was; but here again we are faced with the question of perpetual modification. For the interpretations set upon Christian beliefs has so perpetually varied that in speaking of Christian beliefs one needs to specify a particular century, even a particular generation, in order to get a clear idea of what is meant. The nature of inspiration, of revelation, of the nature of God, of the relations between man and deity, have all meant different things to different generations; one taking as an article of faith what another had denounced as the wildest heresy. Christianity has been, historically, a fluid thing, changing in obedience to external pressure, and about which the only constant feature is the name.

Perhaps the most absurd stage in this process is that now reached by our New Theologians. Earlier generations of believers had at least the excuse that they were largely unconscious of the modifications that took place. But here we have a number of men who deliberately break with Christianity in any definite historical form. They do not accept the special inspiration of the Bible, they reject the miraculous, they are in some doubt as to a personal deity, the resurrection is not an historical fact, even the divinity of Jesus is not accepted save in the sense that it might be asserted of all of us, although in his case it is claimed that divinity was manifested in a supreme measure. One of these writers tell us plainly, and properly, that the process of criticism that destroyed the historical character of the Old Testament stories must extend to the New Testament, and it must be recognised that "the Christ" is no historical figure. Why, then, do these people call themselves Christian? Religious they may be; they are certainly not Christian. For historically Christianity has taken its stand upon the substantial historic accuracy of the Old and New Testament narratives. And if this is rejected, all we have left is a myth, or a series of myths, that one may use as so many illustrations of social and ethical truths otherwise acquired, just as one may use the legends of Pagan Greece or Rome.

The fact is that any religion is only compatible with complete intellectual honesty so long as the general view of the universe that obtained at its origin remains. For on the intellectual side a religion is a theory of the world or of life expressed in supernaturalistic instead of in naturalistic terms. And so long as the theory of the world which existed with the people who nursed Christianity to power remained, so long did Christianity manifest signs of intellectual vitality. There were heresies, of course; divisions in the Church, and various theories of the nature of fundamental Christian doctrines. But in its essentials Christianity remained intact, and men might profess belief in it without a number of dishonest reservations, and without a sense of mental stultification.

But the world that men believed in, even so late as the fifteenth century, has now entirely disappeared. The voyages of travellers increased its size and modified its shape. The calculations of astronomers and mathematicians changed its position in the solar system, and reduced it from a primary to a subordinate position. Geologists gave it a new history. Chemists and physicists explained its nature. Botanists gave an account of its flora that accorded but ill with the "inspired" version. Biologists attacked the problem of animal life, and revolutionised men's minds in that direction. Lastly, man himself was placed under the scientific microscope; his pseudo-divinity was destroyed; he was affiliated to the animal world, just as all life was shown to be organically connected with all other terrestrial phenomena back to the point when we lose the earth in the primitive fire-mists. And in this science could allow no breaks, no gaps, no room for the miraculous or the supernatural. The old earth had indeed been rolled up and cast contemptuously on one side. A new heaven and a new earth had been given us, and it was one that was in hopelessly irreconcilable conflict with the religion that had for centuries governed the mind of man.

The reaction of these views on Christian beliefs has been profound, and all things considered, rapid. The now general acceptance of scientific teaching, the common habit we have of looking to scientific men for information concerning man and the world, blinds us to the fact that science, in a popular and general sense, is little more than a century old. Within that brief period, religion has not only been forced back from fields wherein it once stood a law-giver, it has been forced to acquiesce in its own humiliation. And in the light of this remodelled universe historic Christian beliefs became so inherently ridiculous that one after another they have been either modified or discarded altogether. Our

ancestors could see the workings of God in the world, because their minds were destitute of any other cosmic conception that could challenge its supremacy. But is it possible for us to see it? At once our minds turn to those theories of mechanical causation, of force, of matter, with which science has made us familiar, and we find we have no room for the more primitive conception of things. Christians themselves, filled apparently with the desire to commit suicide to save themselves from slaughter, point out that nature expresses invariable laws, and that no alteration in natural order is discoverable or thinkable. As a saving clause, they add that there is a God at the back of the whole process. But neither God the creator nor God the sustainer of natural processes gave rise to religious worship. People worshiped God as the constant manipulator of natural forces in the interests of mankind. A God who merely created the world and who now sits up aloft seeing it go, can no more be an object of worship than a parliament that was twelve months' in recess each year could arouse enthusiasm at the polls.

A thorough-going belief in a religiously workable deity is rapidly becoming impossible to the modern mind. A mere abstraction such as deity has become with advanced theologians, may live for a while in virtue of the existence of traditional feelings to which it appeals, but its final disappearance is a mere question of time. So, too, the same may be said of all specifically Christian doctrines. The mental atmosphere is no longer suitable to their continued existence. The truth of this is seen in the fact that in every direction the *religious* interpretation of these doctrines is replaced by social or ethical ones. To not a few Christian preachers, Christian doctrines are avowedly acceptable only so far as they can be made to square with some special sociological theory. It is no longer theology that gives laws to life; life is now laying down the conditions under which theology may be permitted to live.

We are not, then, Christians in the sense that we practice Christian moral teachings. We are not Christians in the sense that we believe Christian doctrines. We are Christian in name; perhaps, too, we are Christian in temper. The modifications in our mental outlook are too recent to have yet permanently affected our emotional nature, and we are liable to carry into life a temper that worked only too actively under the impulse of Christian belief. But for straightforward intellectual conviction, for a confession of belief in Christian doctrines without reservation or modification, one looks in vain. As a profession of belief, Christianity is still with us; expressed in powerful organisations it is still active; and it will continue in both forms just as long as the indolence of one class combines with the interest of another for its perpetuation.

C. COHEN.

### Christianity and History.

THERE is a theological school which claims to be independent of history. One of its earliest and ablest exponents in this country was the late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham. His contention was that Christians derive their knowledge of the Savior, not from history, but from experience; not from the Gospels, but from their personal intercourse with him day by day. Even if the New Testament were to be blotted out of existence to-morrow, the Christian Faith would still go on conquering and to conquer. Dr. Dale himself was a firm believer in the absolute historicity of the Gospel Jesus; but knowing that historical criticism was hard at work on the documents he was anxious to convince his fellow Christians that the testimony of personal experience was of infinitely greater evidential value than the testimony of any book. Other and more daring representatives of the same school go the

length of lamenting the intimate connection of Christianity with history, and of recommending that the alliance be dissolved as speedily as possible. "Our religion," they argue, "is built up of ideas which are independent of events in time and space, and by a timely recognition of this fact we shall safeguard ourselves against any attacks that may be made upon us from the field of historical research."

But there is another school which regards history as its main support. Intellectual assent to the evangelical faith, it is maintained, is "impossible without adequate historical basis." Schleiermacher and Ritschl were wrong when they taught that religion, in its essence, is feeling, a sense of dependence upon God and of the supreme value of the kind of life exhibited in Jesus Christ, and that, consequently, it is possible to believe in it in the absence of all the historical props usually relied upon. They were wrong, and so are their successors to-day. Whether they are called New Theologians or Modernists, their position is utterly indefensible. M. Loisy is a fervent believer, and avers that the evangelical faith stands secure; and yet he declares that "historical criticism cannot give standing-ground, let alone kneeling-ground, for it." Such a position, we are assured, and we agree, is absurd in the extreme, and intellectually impossible. The Rev. Dr. Newton Marshall, in a paper read at the recent meeting of the Baptist Union, says that "if we have any faith at all, it must be in things that, however spiritual, give evidence of themselves outside ourselves." "Just as a ray of light is one of the things necessary to sight," he adds, "so some evidence in the world of time and space is necessary to faith." This is reasonable, and Dr. Marshall illustrates the point thus:—

"The young bridegroom believes in his wife. All that he has known of her—her comeliness, her conduct at home, her attitude towards him,—has helped him to believe her a pure and good woman. He believes in her. True, he probably builds up an ideal of her that is not the actual woman as God knows her. But he has a sense of the reality of her goodness. After some time, however, he makes a sudden and awful discovery. He sees that he has been deceived. The reality is not what he had thought. He can never believe in her goodness again. Now it would be possible for some well-intentioned friend to go to this man and say: 'The historical basis for your faith in your wife is gone. But you still have the ideal. And that ideal is noble. It helps you to live, it helps you to be happy, it helps you to work. Never mind the historic basis. The intention of that was to create the ideal. Now cherish the ideal on its own merits.' It is not necessary for me to insist that men are not made that way. When once the sense of reality is taken away, the ideal topples too."

There is no need to quarrel with the substance of that passage. It is a convincing refutation of the Modernist argument. But what proof is there that Christianity is based on events in the world of time and space? M. Loisy and Dr. Percy Gardner assert that Jesus of Nazareth is in no appreciable sense a historical character. They both agree that it is "impossible to determine what the actual facts of the life of Christ were, or even to make the common rough distinction between the figure of the historic Jesus and that of the idealised Christ." These are Dr. Gardner's emphatic words: "It will probably always remain an impossibility to set forth even a brief narrative of the Founder's life which history can accept as demonstrated fact. Even the chronological skeleton of such a life cannot be sketched with certainty." Can Dr. Marshall disprove that statement? It is all very well to say that "intellectual assent to the evangelical faith can only be given to-day with the assent of history," but can the "assent of history" be legitimately obtained? Does history put at our disposal a single evidence of any kind that Jesus was a Divine Being disguised as a Jewish peasant? Instead of answering this question straightforwardly, Dr. Marshall beats about the bush in a most curious fashion. "While our sense of the supreme value of our faith," he says, "does not enable us to ignore the claims of history to speak as to the meaning of the Gospel, it does force us to

exercise the greatest caution in accepting the decisions of historians as to Gospel history. That is to say, it insists upon our becoming ourselves historians, and testing the evidence history puts at our disposal with every available means." That is bad enough, but this is worse:—

"The evangelical faith demands our assent to some historical propositions. We must, therefore, ourselves become historians. It is a matter of life and death. *We cannot allow others, unbelievers, to settle these great questions for us* (the italics are our own).....No amount of mere repetitious asseveration of our faith will help the rising generations to believe unless we can show that history justifies that faith. For historic certainty is an essential constituent of religious belief."

Having proceeded from bad to worse, Dr. Marshall does not stop until he arrives at the very worst. Surely nothing could be more despicable than the statement that the only competent critics of Gospel history are believing Christians. How on earth can believing Christians be impartial judges of the credibility of their own faith? Dr. Marshall himself admits that their one desire is to "protect their faith," which means that they are incapable of honest criticism because of their fondly cherished bias. And yet, after avowing the presence of such a motive in believing critics, Dr. Marshall goes on to say: "We cannot allow historians to put their own presuppositions forward instead of evidence." Does not the reverend gentleman know that many ardent believers are continually losing their faith in consequence of applying to Gospel narratives the same standard of judgment as is applied to all other narratives? The moment people realise, and begin to reflect upon, the fact that at the time the Gospels were written the whole world teemed with similar documents, it becomes impossible for them to accept one God-man while rejecting all the rest. Familiarity with Pagan scriptures dissipates the capacity to treat the Hebrew and Christian scriptures in any special manner.

But Dr. Marshall's argument can be turned against himself. If only a Christian is capable of adequately understanding the historic bases of Christianity, it follows that Dr. Marshall, being a Christian, has no right to sit in judgment on the historic bases of Buddhism. His Christian belief is a "presupposition" that disqualifies him for being an honest critic of any other religion whatsoever. The reverend gentleman's own logic forces him to grant that, at least. His own canon of criticism robs him of the right to declare dogmatically that Jesus of Nazareth is the only Savior of the world, because, in making such a declaration, he, an outsider, with his "presuppositions," deliberately refuses to give his intellectual assent to similar claims made on behalf of all others. His being a Christian at all, in the circumstances, is a serious violation of the law he himself has laid down.

To show that we are doing Dr. Marshall no injustice, we submit the following extract from his paper:—

"It is no use for a man to say that *history* condemns the Christian tradition because that *tradition* is miraculous, if he has already decided on *philosophic* grounds that miracles are impossible. *Historical investigation* has nothing to do with the possibility of any event."

There are those who believe, "on philosophical grounds," that miracles, in the theological sense, are impossible. But what are we to understand by "philosophical grounds"? Are they not synonymous with rational or logical grounds, or grounds of reason? Atheists do not believe in the possibility of miracles because, on grounds of reason, they have been led to abandon the belief in the supernatural; and if there be no supernatural there is no possibility of any interference with the natural order. But their reason for repudiating the supernatural is the total lack of evidence for it; and they reject miracles on precisely the same ground. Now Huxley *theoretically* admitted the possibility of miracles, but strenuously denied their actuality. Of course, *theoretically*, anything and everything is possible; but, on examining the value

of witness to the miraculous, Huxley was driven to the conclusion that miracles have never happened. What evidence is there that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? None whatever. The story occurs in a document which has been a bone of contention among theologians ever since it made its appearance. There is more evidence that the late Father Ignatius called one or more dead people back to life, and yet Dr. Marshall himself would not give credence to this tale.

To impartial critics, who have no evangelical faith to protect, the canonical scriptures of Christianity are only an interesting part of the general mythological literature of the world, and should be judged according to the same critical standard. The possession of a creed that requires protection is a radical disqualification for the conduct of honest criticism. Theologians are special pleaders, not impartial critics. They hold a brief for the evangelical faith, and to this alone do they speak.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Narratives in Genesis.—XVI.

### YAHVEH'S PROMISES. HAGAR.

(Continued from p. 669.)

THE whole of chapter xv. and nearly the whole of chapter xvi. are from the pen of the Yahvist writer. The first of these chapters commences:—

"After these things the word of Yahveh came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Then follows (in the vision) a confidential conversation between Abram and Yahveh. The former informed his god that he was still childless and that a comparative stranger was the heir to his possessions. To this Yahveh replied that Abram should have a son who would be his heir, and that his posterity should be as the stars for multitude. Upon hearing these promises Abram "believed in Yahveh," and that omniscient deity "counted it to him for righteousness." The god then repeated a promise given on a former occasion that Abram should possess and inherit the land of Canaan. That worthy patriarch, no doubt, believed this promise also—was he not "the father of the faithful"?—but he thought it as well, all the same, to ask, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Nineteen centuries later, a certain priest, to whom, like Abram, a son had been promised in his old age, was struck dumb for daring to ask this question (Luke i. 18, 20). But Abram was a personal "friend of God" (Isaiah xli. 8; James ii. 23), and though "the Lord," as we know, is no respecter of persons, he thought it better in this case to dispel his faithful servant's doubts. He therefore commanded Abram to take a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each of "three years old," and also a turtle dove and a young pigeon, and to lay them ready for sacrifice. "And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: *but the birds divided he not.*" By not dividing the birds Abram was careful to conform to the command given in Lev. i. 17. This regulation, it is true, was not made until many centuries after his time; but that is a mere detail. During the remainder of that day Abram kept watch over the divided animals, and when night came he beheld "a smoking furnace and a burning torch that passed between these pieces." This miracle, of course, increased Abram's faith in the god Yahveh, who now made to that patriarch two fresh promises, which read as follows:—

(1) "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (xv. 13).

(2) "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (xv. 18).

These promises, like many others made by the same god, were never fulfilled. With regard to the first,

the Israelites (assuming that they were at one time bond-servants to the Egyptians) were not in Egypt for half the period stated, and were not afflicted *at all* during the first seventy years of their residence there. As regards the second promise, the so-called descendants of Abram never occupied, possessed, or had dominion over a quarter of the extent of country mentioned; and during the greater portion of their time in Canaan they were tributary to their more powerful neighbors—the Babylonians, the Persians, the Syrians, the Egyptians, and the Romans.

There is one sentence in this chapter which the great Apostle of the Gentiles cites in support of his own teaching, and founds a long and tedious argument upon it (Rom. iv. 3-25). We know from various sources that the so-called apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ confined their ministry, as did their reputed master, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; and to Gentiles who desired to enter their fold they taught "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts xv. 1). But Paul, soon after he had set up as a teacher, found that circumcision was a stumbling-block to the Gentiles, and so set it aside as unnecessary (Gal. v. 1-2; etc.). Having this done, he searched the Septuagint for some plausible pretext to justify his action, and settled upon the following statement: "And Abram believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

Commenting upon this "scripture" the Apostle of the Gentiles asks: "How then was it counted? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?" To which he replies: "Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." Hence, it followed that faith alone, and not circumcision, was the one thing needful to secure salvation. And this apostolic nonsense is the great foundation-stone upon which our present Christianity rests. But for Paul and his innovations the primitive Christian religion, of which circumcision was an indispensable condition, would have died out in the early centuries A.D.

If that self-appointed apostle had read two chapters further on he would have found that circumcision was the sign of a covenant between the Hebrew god and his people, and that that deity decreed of any male who omitted to conform to the rite—"that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant." Moreover this covenant is stated to be "an everlasting covenant," the rite being binding upon all succeeding generations, including slaves belonging to other nations who had been "bought with money." This rite was never abolished. Again, there was no "salvation," in the Christian sense of the word, in the time of Abram. The rewards of the faithful and the punishment of the unfaithful were limited to this world. "The Lord" of those days knew nothing, and said nothing, respecting a future life. Paul's argument had thus not a leg to stand upon. His doctrine—salvation by faith, without circumcision—never received the sanction of "the Lord" of the Old Testament. Hence, our present Christianity rests upon no other foundation than this juggling fraud.

Coming to chapter xvi., we notice that the contribution by the Priestly writer comprises only verse 1 (first 8 words), verse 3, and verses 15 and 16—all the rest being by the Yahvist. The Priestly writer's narrative reads as follows:—

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children. [Short Yahvist narrative] And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram, her husband, to be his wife. [Long Yahvist narrative.] And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram."

This account, though short, is to the point, besides being continuous; but the compiler evidently thought it somewhat bald, and so filled in what he considered more interesting matter from the Yahvist narratives at his disposal. There is nothing very improbable in this account, unless it be the initiative having been

taken by Sarai rather than Abram. Very few women, however old, would care to give up to their husbands a young and comely bond-maid, and continue to live under the same roof with the second wife. And, if we believe the Yahvist narrative, the experiment did not work particularly well. According to this narrative, when Hagar "saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes"—a circumstance which Sarai soon discovered, and laid before her husband. "But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face."

The name Hagar means "flight"; whence it would appear that that bond-woman's godfathers and godmothers had had a premonition that the child, when grown, would run away from her mistress, and so gave her that appellation: or, upon second thoughts, the name (which was known to the Priestly writer, but not, apparently, the story of the flight) suggested to the Yahvist the incident of the bond-maid running away.

To continue the Yahvist story, "an angel of the Lord" found Hagar at a well, and, after promising her the honor of being the mother of a nation that "could not be numbered for multitude," persuaded her to return to her mistress. It would seem, however, that it was "the Lord" himself, and not an angel, that spoke to Hagar and made the promise; for "she called the name of Yahveh that spake unto her, Thou art a god that seeth."

It is scarcely necessary to say that the Ishmaelites, and the supposed descendants of Hagar, and the ancestors of the Arab tribes of to-day, were a numerous people in the Yahvist writer's time, and that the "prediction" made respecting Hagar's son Ishmael was as well known a characteristic of those nomads then as now—"And he shall be as a wild-ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him." It is not so very surprising, then, that this prophecy was fulfilled.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## Correspondence.

### BISHOP WELLDON EXPLAINS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A neighbor of mine in Manchester has sent me a copy of the *Freethinker* in which you criticise rather severely some remarks which I am supposed to have made at St. John's Church, Cheetham. But you represent me as saying just the opposite of what I really did say. I did not say that an Atheist could not be a good citizen—I said that he could. I only regretted that a particular person, who had told me he himself was an Atheist, should, by breaking the windows of a shop in Manchester, have apparently given to his own question, whether an Atheist could be a good citizen or not, an answer which I should not have given, and which I did not, and do not, give.

I should be very sorry to do injustice to the opinions or the character of anybody, however widely I may differ from him, that I hope you will be kind enough to correct your remarks and to send me a copy of the *Freethinker* in which your correction occurs.

J. E. C. WELLDON.

[We also should be very sorry to do an injustice to Bishop Welldon—or any other Christian. We quoted accurately from the report in a local paper. We are glad to hear that it was incorrect. But why do pious journals misreport Church dignitaries in this way? And why did not Bishop Welldon contradict the misreport on the spot? Had he done so, we should not have criticised what he never said. Of course we regret having been misled.—EDITOR.]

They are the elect of God, his best and most useful servants, whose lives are devoted to the improvement of their rational faculties; and the teachers of wisdom are the true luminaries and legislators of the world, which, without their aid, would again sink into ignorance and barbarism.—*The Khalif Al-Mamun.*

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., etc., has long been amongst the prophets, and he has now engaged a place for the Rev. R. J. Campbell. "Mr. Campbell," he says, "is one of the prophets of the twentieth century, and will share the prophet's fate. The stones which are being hurled at him to-day in contumely will be used to-morrow to build monuments to honor his memory." Nonsense! There are not enough of them. Besides, the "stones" hurled (we like that *hurled!*) at Mr. Campbell are very light and small as well as innumerable. He gets big gratuitous advertisements in all the papers, he is safely entrenched in the City Temple, he still drives about in a tip-top motor-car, and we have not heard that he has lost a penny of his big salary. Such is Christian "martyrdom" in the twentieth century.

Mr. George Lansbury, speaking at Rev. R. J. Campbell's recent celebration at the City Temple, perorated in the following manner:—

"It was worth the while of the religious men and women in America fifty years ago to band themselves together for the express purpose of fighting chattel slavery. They fought it and beat it out of the country because they believed it was an insult to their religion."

This gentleman's knowledge of history is peculiar. He evidently thinks that the Abolition movement, and the war between North and South, were a struggle between religionists and irreligionists. If he will take the trouble to read a little, instead of talking so much, he will find that Freethinkers, from Thomas Paine down to Colonel Ingersoll, were all against slavery, while the Christians were at least divided. The Southerners during the war were quite as good Christians as the Northerners. Christians owned the slaves that other Christians wanted to free. Some very interesting figures on this point exist in Theodore Parker's anti-slavery discourses. Presbyterians owned 80,000 slaves—Baptists 225,000—and Methodists 250,000. As for the Christian Churches, Mrs. Beecher Stowe (herself a Christian) declared that they were notoriously in favor of slavery. "Statesmen on both sides of the question," she said, "have laid that down as a settled fact."

Here is another sweet morsel for Mr. Lansbury. Fred Douglas, the runaway slave, in one of his eloquent discourses, said:—

"They have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church-members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase Bibles for the poor heathen."

Go to, Mr. Lansbury! Learn a little before you talk again about the religious liberation of the slaves in America.

Negro slavery was abolished in the United States in the midst of a civil war, as Thomas Paine predicted it would if it were not abolished peacefully. There are millions of free blackmen over there now. They are so free that few of them dare to go to the ballot box for fear of white men's revolvers. They are so free that the Christian whites will not ride in the same train or tram-car with the Christian negroes. They are so free that Christian whites will not allow Christian blacks to belong to the same church with them. Not a single Young Men's Christian Association in the whole country will admit a colored member. That is how the American Christians abolished slavery.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, speaking at the same City Temple meeting, paid his hosts a compliment. He told them: "You are religious; therefore you are dangerous." In a certain sense they are dangerous.

Another utterance of Mr. Shaw's, the New Theology organ says, elicited "the greatest burst of applause of the evening." It was this:—

"Don't say to the poor man that poverty is the will of God, which is a horrible blasphemy. Tell him in solemn scriptural language that it is a damnable thing. And then tell him that you have come to try to stop that because you are the will of God, because your will is the will of God."

If these words have any meaning at all, they are flat Atheism. Taking them in any other sense, Mr. Shaw should be invited to explain this point. If the will of the Progressive Leaguers is the will of God, whose will is the will of their opponents?

Mr. Bernard Shaw must try to pardon us for saying that it would have been much more to the purpose—from the

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point of view of his past and his principles—if, instead of joining in the City Temple exhibition, with Campbell and Hall Caine, and the rest of them, he had been concerning himself with the fate of Francisco Ferrer. It is useless for us to send letters to the press; we are boycotted,—for we are too wicked, being not only an Atheist, but a militant one. Mr. Shaw, however, is almost fashionable; the newspapers rather like having letters from him in their columns; and he might have written something hot and strong about the vile and murderous plot against the life of a man in danger of perishing through the hatred of priests. It might not have saved Ferrer, but at least it would have saved Shaw,—and that is something. Mr. Shaw will perhaps see that we pay him the compliment of thinking more about his reputation than he does himself.

Mr. Campbell admits that, on the face of it, “both classes and masses are ceasing to care about the things of the soul.” The immortality of the soul is no longer believed in, and “the question of its possibility is regarded with indifference.” True! “But,” Mr. Campbell asks, “can we go on like this?” He is “perfectly sure we cannot.” He is generally “perfectly sure.” He forgets that he has changed his mind once and may change it again. “Mankind,” he exclaims, “has not done with religion; you might as well talk of the earth having done with the sun.” This is bombastic, and the analogy is absurd. Nor is the case improved when Mr. Campbell deigns to be more explicit. He affirms that signs of a “new revival” abound. When we ask where they are, Mr. Campbell replies, “Look at my Progressive League.” God apparently is running it; and Mr. Campbell is apparently running God.

Look at the jugglery of the New Theologians. They cling to Jesus. They declare that Christ is all in all. Yet at the same time they practically turn him off the stage. In the last number of the New Theology weekly there was a long article on the metaphorical character of Bible stories. Most of the Old Testament is disposed of in this way. Then the writer warns his readers that “it will not be possible to treat the Old Testament so, and still continue to treat the New Testament as literal history. We may do so for a while, but by and by the inherent logic which is in all thought development will assert itself.” Precisely so. We have been saying it for thirty years. And the result will be, to use Thomas Carlyle's words, *Exit Christ*.

Again and again has Mr. R. J. Campbell declared that in the absence of free will religion would be an absurdity of the highest order, a contradiction in terms. Philosophically, the highest order, a contradiction in terms. Philosophically, the highest order, a contradiction in terms. Philosophically, the highest order, a contradiction in terms. Philosophically, the highest order, a contradiction in terms. Philosophically, the highest order, a contradiction in terms.

The doctrine of free will means, in the last analysis, that man is not subject to the law of cause and effect, and that he can resist and thwart the purposes of heaven concerning himself. Without possessing this power, we are told, he could not be a moral agent, nor be held responsible for his actions. Now, in its essence, preaching is an appeal to this lawless power of choice. “Resist God no longer, yield let him have his way with you from this moment, yield wholly to his holy will, hand over to him the reins of your life”—such is the preacher's message, and it is the only message that makes his vocation intelligible. He stands between God and man for the sole purpose of persuading the latter to surrender the freedom which makes him a moral agent, and let the former be supreme for the future.

We have been favored with a copy of the *Kansas City Star*, of September 24, containing the report about Mrs. Besant which we lately referred to in an “Acid Drop.” A telegram from Cleveland, Ohio, states that “intimate friends” of Mrs. Besant, connected with the Theosophical Society, had “declared here to-day” that she “had confided to them that she was a reincarnation of Hypatia and Giordano Bruno.” “She remembers all,” they say, “every day of her existence as those characters.” Very well, then; she should give us the full history of the seven years that Bruno spent in the dungeons of the Inquisition. We fear, however, it will be too great a tax on the lady's imagination. We beg pardon—her memory.

Mrs. Besant also “confided” to her followers that she “lived as different characters in the time of Confucius,” but she “cannot recall their names.” Probably because she doesn't know Chinese.

The last sentence in the Cleveland telegram about Mrs. Besant is exquisite. “She predicts,” it says, “that she will live again.” That's easy enough. Anybody can do that. We could do it ourselves—if we were in that line of business.

The President of the Congregational Union denies that mere critics are competent to express an opinion upon Christian doctrines. He says that “If a man is to judge rightly on these great verities he must be more than a critic, he must be a Christian; he must be more than a scholar, he must be a saint.” All this means, when put into plain English, that one must believe Christian doctrines before examining them, if the examination is to be agreeable to other Christians. To examine them first in order to find out whether they are worthy of belief or not is to end by rejecting them. We do not suppose this deliverance of the Baptist President will disturb the critics. It will rather prove to them the urgent need of a rational criticism of Christian beliefs.

With the exception of their laying more stress upon certain alleged social and ethical aspects of Christianity, there is little to choose between the New Theologians and their less “progressive” brethren. The Rev. W. E. Orchard sets out to deal with “The Historical Cause of Christianity,” and in the course of his treatment respects much of the nonsense connected with the Christian treatment of the subject, ending at last with some special nonsense of his own. He speaks of a new religion having, at the end of three centuries, spread over the whole of the Empire; of “a new restraint from the common licentiousness of the time,” and of the “sudden attainment of nobility of character, strength of purpose, and love of humanity.....grasped in a moment by an ignorant and a depraved rabble.” None of these statements is true; the last two are, indeed, the reverse of the truth. To all who are really conversant with the history of the period, it is a commonplace to say that the only sense in which Christianity was a new religion is in the name being given to already existing doctrines. Later Christians alone claimed originality for their doctrines. The primitive Christians never ventured on such a claim. That Christianity had spread all over the Empire in three centuries is, again, only true in the sense that some Christians might have been found in all parts of the Empire. But the Pagan creeds were still strong, and were only finally suppressed by the truly Christian argument of force.

One might safely challenge Dr. Orchard to furnish proof that Christian doctrines, whatever they were, acted as “a new restraint from the common licentiousness of the times.” Some may have found it in Stoicism, or Epicure-decent behavior, as others found it in Stoicism, or Epicureanism, or Platonism, or in any of the other creeds and philosophies that then flourished. But the new restraint is not evidenced by the records of the times, nor by Christian records. Even in the writings of Paul there is evidence of this; while Christians commonly charged one another with moral offences of the gravest description. More or less obscure sects of Christians flourished at an early period. It is admitted by Christian writers that the “love feasts” quickly degenerated into something of an extremely unsound spiritual nature; while observers like Marcus Aurelius and Pliny were struck, not by the moral superiority of the Christians, but by their obstinacy and the foolish character of their beliefs. The statement that an ignorant and depraved rabble suddenly became of sterling nobility of character and filled with love for humanity is, upon the face of it, grossly absurd. If it ever occurred it would outdo in wonder all the stories narrated of the Gospel Jesus. That it never happened outside the imagination of later Christians is as certain as any certainty we possess.

Dr. Orchard does not place any reliance upon the alleged supernatural elements in the life of Jesus. He believes the historical cause of Christianity is the moral personality of Jesus, which made a profound impression upon those who came in contact with him. Jesus must, he says, have been amazingly good, and able to make others good also. On this we have to remark that if Dr. Orchard rejects the purely doctrinal and miraculous elements in the New Testament, there is no reason whatever why he should claim any kind of originality for the ethical teaching and character of Jesus. For these as obviously antedate Christianity as do the stories of the miracles and of the Resurrection. The story of a divine being going about teaching is a tolerably ancient

and common one in the history of mythology. India and Egypt furnish instances to prove this. The contention that it needed men of supreme moral character even to invent the character of the Gospel Jesus is thus easily disposed of. For putting on one side the faults of that character, the ethical teaching was as common as the miracles; both were at hand, and had been attributed to more than one legendary or mythical character long before Christianity was heard of.

Finally, there is no evidence whatever that the followers of Jesus were greatly impressed by the moral side of his teaching. The whole of his teaching rested upon a supernaturalistic basis, and it was obviously Jesus the miraculous healer, the caster out of devils, the worker of miracles, and, later, the divine man and resurrected God who found followers. The great fact facing us with the primitive Christians is not a social nor an ethical one—it is the expected end of the world, with the partition of mankind into the saved and the damned. It is not the moral character of Jesus that forms the basis of early Christianity; it is, again, the supernatural being offering supernatural rewards and punishments. Can anyone imagine that the crowds of fanatical believers, disputing about points of doctrine, and fighting like wild beasts over differences of opinion, were primarily and profoundly impressed by the moral grandeur of Jesus? If it is replied that the moral teacher had been lost in the manufactured mythical character, the question then remains, "What could have been the value of the moral influence if it so soon became obscured and lost? The truth is that Dr. Orchard and the New Theologians are but offering the world one myth in place of another. Having rejected the only Jesus that can lay claim to any sort of historic authority, they are offering another, manufactured from a hash of modern ethical ideals and Socialistic theories.

Walter Broom was not long since released from prison after serving six weeks for obtaining goods under false pretences. He became a prominent member of the New Barnet Salvation Army Corps. But the new broom failed to sweep clean, and has now been sentenced at Barnet Petty Sessions to fourteen days for embezzling money from his employers. This will not be one of the cases General Booth will parade as proof of the saving power of the Army.

Joseph Lockwood, described as an elderly man of gentlemanly appearance, has been sentenced at the Paisley Police Court to sixty days' hard labor. He was charged with improper conduct to a girl of eleven in a house at Ralston-street, where he conducted a sort of mission. Bailie Kirk, in passing sentence, said it was the worst case he had ever come across.

A strong young man about twenty years of age was advertised for in the *Daily Chronicle*. He was not to be "afraid of work" or "long hours." He was also to be "an abstainer" and "of Christian character." And the good Christian who wanted all these qualifications in his employee offered the magnificent salary of fifteen shillings a week.

Rev. C. S. Quainton, of Holmfirth, West Riding of Yorkshire, seems to have very unappreciative parishioners. They appear to give him a beggarly array of empty seats on Sunday mornings. He says it is like "preaching to a large array of varnished pitch-pine planks, with a splash of humanity here and there," or even "like addressing a timber yard." Sad! Very sad! But why doesn't the reverend gentleman try to draw a "full house" with something up-to-date? "The old, old story" is not the attraction it used to be.

Rev. J. Hughes, of Blaengarw, should be careful of what he says, especially when he is not in the pulpit. Addressing the East Glamorgan Welsh Congregational Association, he said that "an attempt had been made to erect a boxing saloon in the valley. The churches protested against such a demoralising agency, and, as it happened, providence came to their support in the form of a high wind, which shattered the erection." Only a few years ago the roof of the reverend gentleman's own chapel was blown off. Was that the work of providence, too? And why does Mr. Hughes call boxing "demoralising"? Christians ought not to talk in that way. Does not their Bible call the Lord a man of war? Did not David bless the Lord who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight? The reverend gentleman should really think before he talks.

Allah is just as careless as Jehovah. The dome of a

mosque at Mansourah collapsed on Thursday, October 14, and eight worshippers were killed and thirteen injured.

The Prince of Wales formally opened the National Harbor at Dover, constructed at a cost of £3,500,000. Of course the old mystery-man, who signs himself "Cantuar," had to be there too,—to "bless it and approve it with a text." As the newspapers gravely put it—"The Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced the benediction." After that the structure ought to cost nothing for repairs. But every man outside a lunatic asylum knows it will. The theological mummer plays his part and takes a big salary; and the value of his services is—*nothing*. The persons of real importance are those who planned and built the structure. They are *men*. A very different class from *clergymen*. The former are the first sex; the latter are the third.

What very superior persons some of our Ethical friends are. One would almost think that they had *invented* morality. They beat the Bishops hollow. Now and then they make everyday people stare. Mr. Harry Snell, for instance, as secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies, told a *Daily News* interviewer, with respect to the Ferrer tragedy: "It is a matter of extreme disappointment to us that none of the Christian Churches in England have said a word on this matter." "Us" includes the speaker, who couldn't have meant what he was saying unless he had taken leave of his senses. Mr. Snell will surely not look anyone in the face who knows him and deliberately say that he expected the Christian Churches in England to care a bronze farthing whether Ferrer lived or died.

After the Humanitarian League has been hard at work for more than twenty years, rival organisations are starting up, manned (and womaned) by more orthodox people than Mr. Salt and Mr. Collinson, and showing how Christians follow Freethinkers, instead of leading the van of progress. One of these organisations is the Penal Reform League. Many well-known Christians are connected with it, including the too well-known Rev. A. J. Waldron. It gave us quite a shock to see Mr. J. M. Robertson's name in the same list of vice-presidents. We wish the League success, however, if it really means to work for "the reclamation of criminals by a curative and educative system." We only hope this does not include "indeterminate sentences," to which some of the League's vice-presidents are committed.

They are discussing at Madras whether Hindu polygamous converts should be baptised and admitted into the Christian Church. Dr. Harris told the general meeting of the Indian Ministers' Conference that Christ was an Asiatic, and the Indian Church wanted Asiatic Christianity. St. Paul would have allowed polygamous converts into the Christian Church. Of course he would. *He did*. St. Paul never uttered a word against polygamy; neither did any other contributor to the New Testament. There is no reason in the world why a Christian, as a Christian, should not have as many wives as he can get and keep.

"The supreme need of the pulpit," says Dr. Campbell Morgan, "is Bible exposition with passion." We should have thought it was reason. But one never knows, and Dr. Campbell Morgan may be expected to understand which pays best from the parson's point of view.

"The title of one of the lectures Mrs. Annie Besant, the theosophess, delivered in New York was 'The Coming Christ.' We find it hard to believe that Mrs. Besant, after her experience as an exponent of Secularism, knows no better than to talk such rubbish as the reappearance of Christ. The character called Christ ascended into heaven with his physical body—so says the book which tells us all we know about him, his ascension being as probable as his birth and the rest of his history. If he is 'coming' he will have to retrace the course he took in departing, and to believe in this involves the restoration of the exploded system of astronomy which made the earth a fixture and placed heaven directly and permanently overhead. To have Christ 'come' we must arrange things just as they were. He cannot be reincarnated very well, for the reason that his carnal person still exists, and using the *fleshier* part he sits on the right hand of the father. It is impossible to think of a man having two bodies; besides, a dispute would at once arise as to which was occupied by his spirit. Mrs. Besant used to be competent in logic and argument, and not easily fooled. Has she lost her faculty for reasoning and gone in out whether they are historical, mythical, or pure inventions?"—*Truthseeker* (New York).



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 24, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "Why Men Believe in God."

October 31, St. James's Hall, London.

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

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 24, Victoria Park; 31, Birmingham. November 21, West Ham. December 5, Liverpool; 12, Manchester; 19, West Ham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 24, Glasgow; 31, Canning Town (Minor) Hall. December 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £257 6s. Received since.—W. and J. Brierley, £1.

W. E. WILLIAMS.—We do not know of French translations of Ingersoll's and Foote's works.

A. F. L.—You ask "Does a Freethinker admit freewill?" The answer is "No" and "Yes." Freewill, the theological or metaphysical dogma, is absurd as far as it is intelligible. Freewill, in the sense of freedom to act according to one's own nature, always exists in a greater or lesser degree. You see the term "freewill" needs defining before any questions concerning it can be answered. There is something delightful in the way in which good easy men use highly complex terms as if they were perfectly simple.

F. R. WALDING.—The letter is all right. We note that you have "only read seven copies of the *Freethinker*" and it "has 'converted'" you. Thanks for introducing it to your friends. We agree with you that there ought to be an N. S. S. Branch at Northampton.

W. F. C.—We don't quite understand your question. Do you mean, what are the revenues of the Church of England? If so, we are sorry we cannot tell you exactly, as the Church baffles every attempt at investigation. Its revenues are variously estimated at from seven to twelve millions a year.

A. G. PHOENIX.—Glad you think so highly of Mr. Cohen's articles on "The Nature of Religion." We cannot say anything at the moment about their republication. We have written on the Ferrer case—as perhaps you saw after writing your letter.

F. HARDING.—Useful cuttings always welcome.

G. BRADFIELD.—Pleased to see your local action re the Ferrer case.

R. E. NOAKES.—We note your readiness to subscribe if a national subscription were raised to carry on Professor Ferrer's secular schools in Spain.

R. H. ROSETTI.—Glad you had such a gratifying meeting at Laidon.

N. J. EVANS.—The suggestion should be made, we think, to the N. S. S. Executive. It is not a matter in which we feel any strong personal interest.

W. G.—You did not put the pen-name to the verses, which we are sure you could much improve with leisure.

EASTBOURNE FREETHINKERS.—Glad to see your protest, but sorry we have not space to print it. It would do far more good in your local press.

J. WOBLEY.—Glad you "have not missed one number" of the *Freethinker* since you started reading it two years ago. Thanks for cuttings and good wishes.

M. GORMLEY.—Over-crowded with matter this week.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for welcome cuttings.

T. MAY.—We will deal with the Church and its Income before very long.

H. C. KELLY.—See Bishop Welldon's letter elsewhere.

W. W. MEDLEY.—The question of an International Committee to raise funds to carry on Ferrer's schools in Spain must be left to the officers of the International Freethought Federation at Brussels. Our hands are much too full to undertake such a colossal enterprise, but we would give all the help we could.

JUSTICE AND TRUTH.—Sorry we cannot find room.

O. C. WILKINS.—Your should inform your wholesale agent that we repeat what we have often said before—namely, that the *Freethinker* is, and always has been, supplied to the trade at our publishing office on "sale or return." The star on the list really means that your agent will not give you the "sale or return" terms which we give your agent. That is all. You should put pressure on the agent. It is impossible for us to do more.

J. L. WILLIAMS.—We note that the South Wales friends are going to call a Conference later on at Cardiff; also that Mr. Ward had appreciative audiences, though not large, owing to the weather.

R. P.—It is for you to decide whether your children should be baptised. What status have we in the matter? You know what our views must be on such a question. Professor Huxley's children were all born, we should imagine, long before he became an Agnostic.

F. KENTON.—What does it matter if the Rev. J. Thompson admits the existence of Atheists or not?

M. E. PEGG.—Glad that Manchester N. S. S. Branch passed resolution of protest against the murder of Ferrer, but why was it not sent to the local press?

A. AND F. MARSHALL.—Glad you were so pleased with Sunday night's meeting and lecture. Mr. Foote is none the worse for the heavy exertion. Work never did him much harm. It is worry that upsets.

J. HECHT.—Glad to hear a strong resolution on the Ferrer case was carried at Edmonton. Of course you understand that the N. S. S. is neither for nor against Socialism. Its work is quite independent.

C. JACOBUS.—Thanks for the curious enclosure; also for your tribute of "admiration" for our "long, unwearied, and noble fight," as you are good enough to call it. The *Lear* extract is very appropriate.

S. HARTLEY.—You say you are "looking forward" to our Ferrer article this week. We hope it will satisfy.

H. BLACK.—Tuesday is too late for letters.

W. AND J. BRIERLEY.—Mr. Foote is keeping well.

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

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

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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 occupies the St. James's Hall platform again to-night (Oct. 24). His subject will be "Why Men Believe in God." Incidentally he will reply to Mr. W. T. Stead's article in the October number of the *Review of Reviews*, in which Mr. Foote is pointedly referred to. It must be understood, however, that Mr. Foote reserves the right to devote a portion of his time to any new development of the Ferrer case. He is certain to have something to say on the matter, especially after its being raised in the House of Commons.

It was a happy inspiration of ours to call the London Freethinkers to St. James's Hall on Sunday night. We felt sadly certain that Francisco Ferrer would be shot, according to the sentence of the court martial, for the court martial itself must have had its secret orders from the clerical government, and King Alphonso is a mere tool of the priests and reactionaries. We therefore ventured to arrange for a Freethinkers' protest at St. James's Hall, and we are glad to say that the place was packed with a most orderly, yet most enthusiastic, crowd. It was a splendid sight, and everything passed off splendidly. Mr. A. B. Moss, acting as chairman, explained that the first half of the time would be devoted to the death of Ferrer, and the second half to Mr. Foote's advertised lecture on "False Gods." Mr. Moss made a brief introductory speech on the Ferrer case, vigorous and pointed, and eliciting warm applause. Mr. Foote, who had a great reception, then moved the following resolution:—

"Recognising that the destruction of Francisco Ferrer and his Secular Schools has long been sought by the clerical party in Spain, and that he has now fallen a victim to their cruel machinations, this meeting salutes his memory as that of an illustrious martyr of Freethought, stigmatises his so-called trial as a mockery of law and justice, and rejoices that the act of his murderers has raised a storm of indignation throughout the civilised world."

The great audience was profoundly stirred by Mr. Foote's speech. Mr. W. Heaford seconded the resolution in a forcible speech which was much applauded. The resolution itself was then put, the meeting standing up at the show of hands. When the chairman asked for "on the contrary" there were two dissentients, and they turned out to be Roman Catholics.

After the tempest of excitement in which the first half of the proceedings had passed it was tame work settling down to a mere lecture, and only a very practised speaker could have held the meeting at all. Mr. Foote managed to get through his task all right, but he had to be shorter than usual, and it was not exactly the lecture he meant to give. In that sense, therefore, he did not do the justice he intended to the subject, although the audience seemed thoroughly satisfied. Curiously enough, a lot of questions were asked, and the lecturer's answers wound the meeting up to another high pitch of excitement, which reached an extraordinary climax during his reply to a Roman Catholic opponent. All things considered, it was a great evening.

The available free seats at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening were all occupied, but the great bulk of the audience

paid for their seats, and the financial result will be very welcome to the Secular Society, Ltd., which has been bearing the cost of so much lecturing work in London. As we explained last week, the big audience made not a farthing difference to Mr. Foote.

There were plenty of police outside St. James's Hall. They evidently thought there might be trouble. Miss Vance told the inspector that there would be nothing of the kind. "This is a Freethought meeting," she said, "and we never have any disorder." And of course she was right. As a matter of fact, nothing was more strongly cheered than Mr. Foote's declaration that when Freethought triumphed over its enemies it would not pay them the compliment of imitating their evil example, and would condemn the idea of staining itself with bloodshed or injustice. Another remark loudly applauded was that the most certain and successful explosive against tyranny and priestcraft was education and ideas.

We have to thank the *Star* for its generous announcements of the St. James's Hall demonstration against the murder of Francisco Ferrer. No thanks are due elsewhere that we know of. Several reporters were present at the meeting, but all we saw in the newspapers was two lines in the *Daily News*, stating that the meeting took place on Saturday, and the full publication of the resolution in the *Morning Post*.

The organisers of the Trafalgar Square demonstration on Sunday afternoon invited the N. S. S. to co-operate, but the invitation arrived too late on Saturday to be of any avail.

The National Administrative Council of the Independent Labor Party is organising a Ferrer demonstration to take place at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, on Thursday evening, October 21. The co-operation of the N. S. S. has been invited, and Mr. Foote will be one of the speakers. No doubt this paragraph will meet the eyes of many of our readers in time.

Mr. Cohen had most successful meetings at Glasgow—the largest he has ever had there—on Sunday. At the evening meeting a resolution condemning the execution of Professor Ferrer was carried unanimously.

Mr. Cohen winds up the Victoria Park lecture season this afternoon (Oct. 24). We hope the local "saints" will make a big rally on this last occasion.

Mr. Lloyd had very good meetings at Liverpool on Sunday. A resolution condemning the murder of Ferrer was passed after the evening lecture.

Glasgow "saints" will have an opportunity of welcoming Mr. Lloyd to-day (Oct. 24). He delivers two lectures in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street. We hope he will have the large audiences he deserves. Mr. Lloyd lectures at Falkirk on Monday.

Mr. Ivan Papperno, who has lectured a good deal for Freethought in London during the past ten or twelve years, has met with misfortunes, and some of his friends are organising a Bohemian Concert and Entertainment on his behalf. It is to take place at the Horseshoe Hotel, Tottenham-court-road, on Thursday evening, November 11, with Mr. A. Hyatt in the chair. Tickets, 1s. each, can be obtained of Miss E. M. Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., or of Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

Another social party, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, will be held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, London, on Thursday evening, November 18, at 8 o'clock. Members of the N. S. S. will be admitted free, as before, and will also have the privilege of introducing a friend. London readers of the *Freethinker*, who cannot attend in either of those two ways, can apply for an admission ticket to the general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

The Birmingham Town Hall has been secured by the local N. S. S. Branch for four Sundays during the winter, by courtesy of the Lord Mayor, and the lectures will be engineered financially by the Secular Society, Ltd. The first Sunday is October 31, when Mr. Cohen will deliver two lectures, in the afternoon and evening, as usual. Mr. Foote could not open the course this time, but he takes Sunday, November 28. District "saints" will please note the dates. We may add that Mr. Lloyd follows with two lectures in January.

## Francis Newman.

IN the Memoir of Francis W. Newman, by I. Giberne Sieveking, lately published by Messrs. Kegan Paul, an attempt is made (as might have been expected) to represent Newman as having returned in his old age to Christianity. We desire to speak with all courtesy of the biographer, who is, we believe, a lady; but we must say that the assertion which she makes in regard to this matter is not supported by an atom of real evidence in her book.

It is admitted by Mrs. Sieveking that Newman was an Agnostic for forty-five years, from 1834 to 1879, after which period, according to her statement, "he sloughed off the old garments of Agnosticism and came back to the Christian faith professed by him in early childhood." What proof is there of this?

1. The biographer quotes the Rev. J. Temperley Grey, who visited Newman in his last illness, and reported him as saying, "I feel Paul is less and less to me, and Christ is more and more." That a preference for Christ's character to Paul's should be interpreted as an avowal of a belief in the doctrines of Christianity seems to suggest that in the search for evidence of Newman's conversion the smallest contribution has been too thankfully received!

2. In a letter written to Miss Anna Swanwick, when he was ninety-two, Newman is stated to have said that he wished again to take "the name of Christian." But, as it happened, he added his definition of that name. "Asked what is a Christian, I reply, one who earnestly uses in word and substance the traditional Prayer of Jesus, older than any gospel—this supplants all creeds." On Mrs. Sieveking's own showing, it is perfectly evident that the poor old man had not in any way changed his belief, but was simply changing the definition of the term "Christian" in order to be able to include himself in the same category with his pious and unfortunate friends. His last letter to Miss Swanwick makes it clear that he did not believe in immortality, as even Mrs. Sieveking has to admit. Here is his description of his talk with the Rev. James Taylor, whose purpose can readily be guessed:—

"He asked me my own belief concerning known immortality, and I replied that the Most High never asked my consent for bringing me into this world, yet I thanked him for it, and tried to glorify Him. In like manner He never asked my leave to put me after my death into any new world, and if He thought fit to do it I am not likely to murmur at His will. But not knowing His will, nor what power of resistance He allows me, I do not attempt to foresee the future."

The man who wrote this had been trained, we are told, "as a strict Calvinist." What are we to think, then, of his biographer's statement, that "he came back to the Christian faith professed by him in early childhood"? Her own book proves this statement to be absolutely untrue.

3. The last piece of evidence is much the flimsiest of all. It is this. Mrs. Sieveking was told by Mr. William Tallack that he had been told by Mr. Garrett Horder that he had been told, "when Martineau that Newman had written that, 'when he died, he wished it to be known that he died in the Christian faith.'" No letter from Newman to Martineau is produced, but the evidence is verbal and at fourth-hand, all four of the witnesses being persons who were anxious to believe what they reported. Yet on authority such as this, the assertion that Francis Newman died a Christian is going the round of the press!

What sort of qualification Mrs. Sieveking possesses for the biographical or critical function may be judged from the following passage, in which she explains why she says next to nothing about Newman's long years of Agnosticism:—

"I touch on these religious opinions but briefly because of my own strong impression, since I have been writing this memoir, that in that next chapter of existence upon which Newman has now entered, he may not

impossibly be nearer the Light, the religious truth which he here so earnestly sought, but mistakenly; and that in his regret for his own phases of religious unfaith, now cast aside, may not wish them to be recapitulated anew."

This takes one's breath away. It is enough to make Francis Newman turn in his grave. Is it not a scandal that a critical paper like the *Saturday Review* should commend the writer of such a book as having "done her work well," and should quote her unproved, and indeed disproved, story of Newman's return to the Christian faith? It is true that it adds: "There are, we believe, well-informed people who gravely question this"; but the general impression is conveyed that the story is correct.\* It is not too much to say that if a Freethinker were to support his views by such reasoning as that to which we have referred, he would receive (and quite rightly) very summary castigation at the hands of the *Saturday Review*.

The truth, no doubt, is that Francis Newman was neither a convinced Christian nor an avowed Freethinker, but one who, having discarded all belief in Christian doctrine, still hesitated to drop the Christian name. He disliked the views of his Papist brother, the Cardinal; but he disliked still more those of his freethinking brother, Charles, whom he describes, absurdly enough, as morally ruined by Robert Owen's "atheistic philosophy." A pioneer of many advanced causes, Francis Newman was not a pioneer of advanced Freethought, and Freethinkers can have no wish to claim him for more than his worth. If Christian biographers, in like manner, could be content to state facts, without trying to shape them to the convenience of their creed, the cause of Truth would be better served, and even the cause of Christianity could not fare worse than it does by its present association with so much dishonest advocacy.

We ourselves have a letter written by Francis Newman in his ninetieth year, in which he speaks of "peace with Islam" and "a common religion, all mankind in one family," as the dream of his earliest youth, the "devout hope" of his old age, and the thought which would give him "joy in death." These are hardly the words of one who had returned to the Christian fold.

S.

### Faith and Filth.

"Pagan classic times, no doubt, cherished a cult of the body which involved a high regard for physical purity. That is the very reason why such purity has never been a Christian or modern virtue."—HAVELOCK ELLIS, *Affirmations*, p. 233; 1898.

"The aspect of a genuine anachoret was horrid and disgusting: every sensation that is offensive to man was thought acceptable to God; and the angelic rule of Tabenne condemned the salutary custom of bathing the limbs in water, and of anointing them with oil."—GIBSON, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 605; 1830.

"The cleanliness of the body was regarded as a pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of cotted filth. St. Athanasius relates with enthusiasm how St. Anthony, the patriarch of monachism, had never, to extreme old age, been guilty of washing his feet."—LECKY, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 110; 1902.

"Out of the Orient had been poured into the thinking of western Europe the theological idea that the abasement of man adds to the glory of God; that indignity to the body may secure salvation to the soul; hence, that cleanliness betokens pride and filthiness humility. Living in filth was regarded by great numbers of holy men, who set an example to the Church and to society, as an evidence of sanctity."—WITTE, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. ii., p. 69; 1896.

The Pagan Greeks and Romans, before the establishment of Christianity, were great believers in bodily purity. The Greeks had an abundant natural supply from the streams fed from the hills; but Rome was not so favorably situated, Rome itself being built upon seven hills, therefore the water had

to be conveyed from a distance by means of aqueducts. Ludwig Friedländer, the historian of Roman life and manners, whose work has lately been translated and is well worth studying, observes:—

"But perhaps ancient Rome's proudest decoration was the multitude and beauty of her water-works, which were also invaluable for the health of the inhabitants, and compensated many disadvantages of site and building. The mountain-springs were conducted into the city in underground pipes or on mighty arches (under Nerva, comprising a length of 300 miles), and poured down in waterfalls out of artistic grottoes, or spread out like ponds in broad and richly decorated reservoirs, babbling up in gorgeous fountains, whose cool fragrance freshened and purified the summer air. A consideration of the mass of the water diverted to public use for baths, ponds, canals, palaces, gardens, suburban country houses, of the distances traversed, of the mason work of the arches, the hills bored through and the levelled valleys, would, says Pliny, convince any man that nothing more wonderful had been made on earth."\*

Nine of these aqueducts were in use before the establishment of Christianity: three of them still supply the modern city. 1. The Aqua Vergine, built by Agrippa 27 B.C., still supplies daily about 13,000,000 cubic feet of the best water in Rome. 2. The Aqua Trajana. 3. The Aqua Marcia, constructed 146 B.C. The noble arches which stretch for six miles across the Campagna are a portion of this aqueduct.

"There were no fewer than 850 baths in Rome at one time, and some of these accommodated thousands of bathers. It will give some idea of their extent and magnificence to quote from Fergusson's *Handbook of Architecture* the following: 'St. George's Hall at Liverpool is the most exact copy in modern times of a part of Caracalla's baths.' The bath became such an institution with the Romans, that apparently they could not live without them; and, wherever we find Roman remains, we find traces of a bath as well."†

Only those who have seen St. George's Hall—a grand Corinthian building 500 feet long, with columns 40 feet high—will be able to appreciate the comparison made by Fergusson. The baths of Caracalla provided accommodation for 2,000 bathers.

The public baths—which were often decorated with works of art—were frequented by all classes, and latterly even by the Emperors themselves. The price of a bath was a *quadrans*—about half a farthing of our money.‡ Besides these, there were a great number of free baths. The Emperor Agrippa himself provided 170 of these for the use of the community; and he was not alone in this form of benevolence, for Professor Dill, in his fine work on Roman society, tells us of the profuse liberality of the leading citizens—not only of Rome, but of the hundreds of cities and communities ruled over by the Roman Empire—in providing public buildings, colonnades, aqueducts, pavements, and, above all, "new baths or the restoration of old ones, with perhaps a permanent foundation to provide for the free enjoyment of this greatest luxury of the south." And he adds the stinging remark:—

"We may well believe that the man who, in the second century, built a bath or a theatre for fellow townsmen might possibly, had he lived in the fifth, have dedicated a church to a patron saint, or bequeathed his lands to a monastery."§

This is just what the superstitious Christian of the Middle Ages did do. Far from providing for the comfort, health, and well-being of his fellow-men by bequeathing public buildings and baths for their use, he thought such things were only a snare and a hindrance to salvation, in that they drew men's attention away from spiritual things. His idea was to buy his entrance into heaven by gifts to the Church for the performance of masses for the repose of his own selfish soul.

In the fourth century Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, and the welfare of the soul took the place of the welfare of

\* *Roman Life and Manners*, vol. ii., p. 11; 1908 (Routledge).

† *Chambers' Encyclopedia*, article "Bath"; 1904.

‡ *Newnes' Oracle Encyclopedia*, "Bath."

§ Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 226-232; 1904.

\* It is, however, only fair to mention that the *Saturday Review* has since published a letter by "Criticus," in which the absurdity of the "evidence" is pointed out.

the body. The saints set the example. As Professor White observes:—

"Living in filth was regarded by great numbers of holy men, who set an example to the Church and to society, as an evidence of sanctity. St. Jerome and the Breviary of the Roman Church dwell with uncton on the fact that St. Hilarion lived his whole life long in utter physical uncleanness; St. Athanasius glorifies St. Anthony because he had never washed his feet."\*

And he adds: "For century after century the idea prevailed that filthiness was akin to holiness."

Lecky tells us that St. Abraham the hermit never washed his face or his feet for fifty years! and his biographer somewhat strangely remarks that "his face reflected the purity of his soul." The same historian also tells us that—

"St. Ammon had never seen himself naked. A famous virgin named Silvia, though she was sixty years old, and though bodily sickness was a consequence of her habits, resolutely refused, on religious principles, to wash any part of her body except her fingers. St. Euphrasia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns who never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath."†

But the Saint who achieved the highest distinction in this filthy and repulsive mode of life was St. Simeon Stylites.

"It would be difficult to conceive a more horrible or disgusting picture than is given of the penances by which that Saint commenced his ascetic career. He had bound a rope around him so that it became embedded in his flesh, which putrefied around it. 'A horrible stench, intolerable to the bystanders, exhaled from his body, and worms dropped from him whenever he moved, and they filled his bed.'"‡

And this sickening object was held up to the veneration of the world as an embodiment of every virtue and the highest ideal to which man could aspire.

"From every quarter pilgrims of every degree thronged to do him homage. A crowd of prelates followed him to the grave. A brilliant star is said to have shone miraculously over his pillar; the general voice of mankind pronounced him to be the highest model of a Christian saint; and several other anchorites imitated or emulated his penances."‡

Lecky gives many details of the revolting habits of the saints and hermits, and observes that the examples he has cited "are but a few out of many hundreds, and volumes might be written, and have been written, detailing them." With the establishment of Christianity came the apotheosis of filth.

The magnificent baths were destroyed, and the material used to build churches with. Lanciani, the greatest authority on the monuments of ancient Rome, tells us that the basins and bath-tubs of rare marble, beautifully carved, with which the warm baths of Caracalla and Diocletian abounded, were used by the churches to hold relics. Pope Leo II. buried some under the high altar of St. Vibiana "in a basin of oriental alabaster of oval shape, twenty-five palms in circumference, with heads of leopards [carved] in high relief." In the year 816 A.D. Pope Stephen V. used "a basin of porphyry" for the same purpose.§

Such being the teaching and example of the Church, the people naturally carried it into practice. All through the Middle Ages, as Draper remarks—

"Personal cleanliness was utterly unknown; great officers of State, even dignitaries so high as the Archbishop of Canterbury, swarmed with vermin; such, it is related, was the condition of Thomas à Becket, the antagonist of an English king. To conceal personal impurity, perfumes were necessarily and profusely used. The citizen clothed himself in leather, a garment which, with its ever-accumulating impurity, might last for many years. He was considered to be in circumstances of ease if he could procure fresh meat once a week for his dinner. The streets had no sewers; they were without pavement or lamps. After nightfall the chamber-

shutters were thrown open, and slops unceremoniously emptied down, to the discomfiture of the wayfarer tracking his path through the narrow streets, with his dismal lantern in his hand."\*

When Christian Spain conquered the Moors in 1492, the historian tells us that "the very baths—public buildings of equal ornament and use—were destroyed because cleanliness savored too strongly of rank infidelity."† Knowing the intimate connection between dirt and disease, we can understand the frequent outbreaks of plague in Europe. "Shall we wonder," says Draper, "that, in some of the invasions of the plague, the deaths were so frightfully numerous that the living could hardly bury the dead?" Hecker, in his history of *The Black Death*, estimates that a fourth part of the population of Europe were carried off by the plague, and it may be assumed "without exaggeration that Europe lost during the Black Death 25,000,000 of inhabitants."‡ It is now known that this fearful scourge is conveyed by means of rats, and carried from them to man by means of fleas; another proof of the verminous condition of the population of the Middle Ages.

Baths and shirts were unknown in Europe until the Crusaders learned the use of them from their more civilised enemies, the Mohammedans. Professor Max Müller tells us that "Shirts were an invention of Crusades, and the fine dresses which ladies and gentlemen wore during the Middle Ages were hardly ever washed, but only refreshed from time to time with precious scents."§

Another frightful pestilence, also communicated by vermin, is typhus fever, otherwise known as gaol fever, or spotted or putrid fever, now unknown in this country (typhus is clearly distinguished from typhoid fever). It was not always so. Sir E. Ray Lankester, our leading biologist, tells us that—

"A hundred years ago it was as dangerous to the life of an unhappy prisoner to await his trial in Newgate as to stand between the opposing forces on a battlefield. Gaol-fever attacked not only the prisoners, but the judge and the jury and the strangers in the court. . . . The inexorable ministers of justice who, seated high above the common herd, and clad in their ancient robes of office, were about to deal shameful death to the guilty wretches brought from the prison cells, were themselves struck down by the Angel of Death moving invisibly through the court. The 'black assizes' were not isolated, but repeated occurrences in our great cities."||

There was a paralysing mystery and horror surrounding it. Men fled in terror, business was arrested, and the dying abandoned to their misery when it appeared.

"There was a feeling that some deadly unseen power was present, irresistible and malignant. It is only to-day, and, in fact, within the last few weeks, that we have learnt what that unseen power was. The Angel of Death which moved through the Old Bailey Sessions House in bygone days was, indeed, a real, tangible, living thing. It had no wings, but it could crawl. It was actually neither more nor less than the clothes louse, the *pediculus vestimenti*. The filthy, crowded condition in which the prisoners were kept, and (let us well remember and reflect thereon) the personal want of cleanliness of judge, jury, barristers, and ushers rendered the existence of the little parasite and its effective transference from man to man possible. . . . Gaol fever was due to dirt; its infecting germs were distributed by loathsome insects."

Among the filthy and poverty-stricken population of "Holy Russia" typhus is still common; indeed Sir Ray Lankester tells us that during the first six months of last year twenty-four Russian medical officers died of typhus, contracted in attendance upon cases of that fever.

As Mr. Havelock Ellis truly remarks—

"wherever the influence of Christianity has spread there has been on the whole an indifference to dirt,

\* Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*; pp. 264-5; 1876.

† Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Moors in Spain*, Preface.

‡ Hecker, *The Black Death and the Dancing Mania*; p. 50; 1894.

§ *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1885.

|| "Science From an Easy Chair," *Daily Telegraph*, October 2, 1909.

\* *The Warfare of Science with Theology*, vol. ii., p. 69.

† Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 110; 1902.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 112.

§ Lanciani, *The Destruction of Ancient Rome*; p. 116; 1889.

which is indeed not uncommonly found among degraded peoples untouched by Christianity, but is certainly nowhere else found in association with a grade of culture in most other matters so high. To the Roman the rites of the bath formed one of the very chief occupations of life, and to this race it has happened, as probably to no other ancient race, that their baths have often survived their temples: Rome holds no more memorable relic than the Baths of Caracalla. For the Mohammedan the love of water is part of religion, and the energy and skill with which in its prime Islamic civilisation exploited the free and beautiful use of water are still to be traced throughout southern Spain. In the fine civilisation of Japan, again, the pursuit of physical purity has ever been a simple and unashamed public duty, and 'a Japanese crowd,' says Professor Chamberlain, 'is the sweetest crowd in the world.' How different things are in Christendom one need not insist.\*

There were no public baths in England before the year 1842, when one was opened at Liverpool, followed by London and Edinburgh in 1844. And our Christian millionaires have yet to reach the public spirit of the wealthy Roman citizens by building free baths for the use of all.

W. MANN.

### The Seal Butcher.

THE publication of Mr. Joseph Collinson's little work, *The Fate of the Fur Seal*, may possibly have the effect of attracting public attention to the "revolting cruelties" practised in the procuring of sealskin. The use of this article of dress is a thing which ought certainly to be discouraged by humane people. The humanitarian contention is that fur seals are frequently skinned alive, which is based on the testimony of celebrated circumpolar explorers like Captain Borchgrevink. "As a rule," writes Captain Borchgrevink,

"the slaughter and skinning of seals were most barbarous, bloody, and hideous—unnecessarily so. Specially cruel is the task when seal-pikes are used. Only rarely does a seal die from one or two blows of the pike, and if it is not dead it is generally considered 'all the better,' for it is easier to skin a seal while it is half-alive. In the utmost agony the wretched beast draws its muscles away from the sharp steel, which tears away its skin, and thus assists in parting with its own coat."

The driving and killing of seals overland is scarcely less repulsive. We are told that these highly sensitive and intelligent animals are driven and forced onward, panting and helpless, over rough and stony ground which it must be a torture for them to traverse, to the killing grounds, where Aleut Indians, armed with heaving weapons, crush in the skulls of those that are wanted. Dr. Gavitt, a leading American authority, describes the scene: "The flying of the eyes of the struck animal, the crash of the skull, the flow of blood, the sobs of the dying, and the brutality of the heartless and careless men were awful."

Sir Conan Doyle is also quoted; he says the butchery of the seal is "brutal work." Surely the wearers of sealskin garments cannot be aware of these terrible facts, otherwise they would not dress themselves in what has been procured at the cost of such unutterable agony to a harmless and defenceless animal.—*Communicated.*

### HALF-WAY HOUSES.

You are the only man of the Unitarian persuasion whom I could unobstructedly like. The others that I have seen were all a kind of half-way-house characters, who I thought should, if they had not wanted courage, have ended in unbelief, in faint possible *Theism*; which I like considerably worse than Atheism. Such, I could not but feel, deserve the fate they find here; the bat fate; to be killed among the bats as a bird, among the birds as a bat.—*Carlyle, Letter to Emerson.*

\* *Affirmations*, pp. 233-4. Mr. Arthur Diósy says. "Rich and poor alike, they boil themselves—for so it seems to the Occidental, unaccustomed to a bath at a temperature of about 110° Fahrenheit—once, at least, daily, merely for the personal satisfaction of being clean." An example to the millions of Occidentals and semi-Oriental millions of Russia, 'the Black People,' as they are called from their abominable state of dirt." He adds that they walk through an English or Scotch manufacturing town, a Welsh village, or a London back-street "will reveal horrors of personal uncleanness that sicken the heart. Go into the thick of a British crowd on a hot day; the experiment will not encourage repetition. In a Continental crowd the effluvia would be still worse." But in Japan, poor "as their scanty clothes may be they cover bodies that are scrupulously clean" (*The New Far East*, pp. 53-4; 1904).

### The Death of Ferrer.

ONCE more the Priest claims deadly victory:  
Once more the Atheist renews the vow  
To fight against the Church the harder now,  
Because of this black deed. Now utterly  
Respect and pity for the Church leaves me,  
And henceforth I will only study how  
I, too, may help to make this monster bow  
Beneath the flashing sword of liberty.

Ah, noble Ferrer, thou shalt be avenged!  
The dying Church shall curse the accusing blood:  
Thy life and death inspire us all again.  
O murderous priests, defiant and deranged,  
Beware the rising of a mighty flood:  
The world must cleanse itself from this foul stain.

JULIAN ST. OREY.

### A Spring Tragedy.

THE sun, the breeze, the snow-white clouds, all were calling to me one morning to quit the town of bricks and mortar, and get nearer to Nature.

Nothing loth to obey her gentle voice, I went.

It was Sunday—yes, truly Sun-day, for fiery King Sol was blazing in all his splendor, and the earth, unpolluted by tenements, factories, and warehouses, was good and wholesome to look upon.

On such a day as this, even though it was appropriated by the lord high fakirs and their lesser fry, one could not associate one's ideas with dogmas, religious snarlings, or with the "two-and-seventy jarring sects confute."

I had reached the summit of a hill which led on to a lovely common—an ideal place of beauty—the gorse in full bloom, and the hawthorn just timidly putting on its bridal veil.

From a church near to the wayside I saw a vision of youth emerge—English girlhood that would have gladdened the heart of any artist. Happy, winsome girls they were, that refreshed one's eyes after seeing the stunted childhood of the city. And yet the snake in the grass was there.

They walked in pairs, and each carried a prayer-book—that essence of incomprehensiveness. The healthy mind revolted to think that these fair young things were being tainted by the pernicious doctrines of the religion of devils.

To this one with the golden hair streaming over her shoulders "Thou shalt do no murder"; to this one with the violet eyes wide open and as innocent of guile as a newborn babe "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; to that one who looked like a daughter of the goddess Diana the puerilities of the Tenth Commandment.

Verily it would be a screaming farce if human lives and human destinies were not concerned in it. "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean." Yes, and what of the victory? The bloody rags which hang sickly on the walls of your cathedrals are your paltry trophies; the skulls, the ears, the tongues of these your vile creed murdered are your spoils; the bodies of those whom your teachings drove mad, these and the victims of your political machinations shall be heaped so high to "make Ossa like a wart."

Leeches, vampires, blackbeetles that you are, is not fair childhood's mind too sacred for you to tamper with? Is not the maudlin rubbish in your hymns fit only to be sung by the insane? Then why prey on little children to use their sweet voices for such nonsense? Their young lives should be one glad summer day, for time will fly too soon. Like early winter you creep along and shrivel all you touch.

There is no grander achievement than a free woman who has cast away the superstitious trappings of the doctrine forced on her during a time when the mind is most impressionable; such women are the beacon lights of the Free-thought movement; it is to them that the moulding of the young mind must be left as a sacred duty, and not to priests.

Let any man reflect on his younger days, when his youthful mind, with the priest's influence, conjured up God and more devils than a lifetime can destroy, and then his efforts will be to save the children through the parents.

And an increasing number of the fair sex who join our ranks is a healthy sign.

The rustic piper Wordsworth, if he lived in the present, would better say, "Shelley, England has need of thee now." From our shores thou shouldst never fly persecuted and misunderstood; the glorious banner of freedom and liberty, once unfurled, would never be deserted by thy warriors.

And I went on; the sky was blue and smiling, the scent of the bloom delicious, yet my heart ached.

J. W. R.

**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, "Why Men Believe in God."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity Before Christ."

**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, "False Gods."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon), Sidney Cook, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Spouters' Corner, 11, N. J. Evans, "The Prophet of Nazareth." Seven Sisters Corner, 7, N. J. Evans, "Christ the Exemplar."

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): T. J. Lloyd, 12 (noon), "Buddha and Christ—A Striking Contrast"; 6.30, "New Light on Materialism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Earl Russell, "Darwin and Darwinism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Murder of Ferrer: an Impeachment of the Jesuit Government of Spain."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, John R. Ferrey, Miscellaneous Dramatic Recital.

NOTTINGHAM (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, G. Watts, "Science and Faith."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Ante-room, Co-operative Society) 3, Important Business meeting.

**OUTDOOR.**

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (The Mound): 6.30, a Lecture.

**BUSINESS CARDS.**

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Secretary—Miss E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

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