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Liberty is not a condition of rest ; it is a condition of vigilance, just as life is not sleep, but wakefulness from which death only can absolve us.

—JOHN HENRY MACKAY.

The Utility of Falsehood.

“What error leads must err.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

MR. W. T. STEAD used to have the old Puritan horror and hatred of the theatre. He kept religiously away from “the Devil’s house” until he was long past the top of the hill of life and was looking down the slope that leads to the grave. But a few years ago, for some reason or other, he made up his mind to pay the theatre a visit and see what it was really like. He rather enjoyed the experience, and he seems to repeat it pretty frequently. It is natural that he should go to see *False Gods*, and just as natural that he should read it upside down. M. Brioux is a Freethinker, and that fact, of course, is the key (if a key be wanted) to his play. Mr. Stead is—well, we hardly know what he is ; but he is not a Freethinker like M. Brioux ; so he deduces a moral of his own from the Frenchman’s play,—an English moral, at bottom a Nonconformist Protestant moral, and we are bound to say a somewhat stodgy moral.

Mr. Stead’s view is that the world cannot get on without religion. M. Brioux’s view is that the world will some day get on very well without it. Hurrying the process of its dissolution—which is not a very easy process, by the way—is sure to lead to reactions, because man’s weak and superstitious nature cannot be strengthened and enlightened in a generation, or a few generations, up to the level of a self-sustaining secular civilisation. Evolution is a slow process. We admit it. We do not need to be reminded of it. On the contrary, we beg to remind those who remind us that, slow as it is, evolution works now through human agency, and that the policy of always looking to the past and never doing anything for the future is a great deal worse than attempting to do too much. For, we repeat, it is not easy to do too much, while it is extremely easy to do nothing at all.

Satni, the young hero of *False Gods*, is a militant Atheist. During his journey abroad he has imbibed sceptical notions, and when he returns to Egypt he is in an aggressive mood against the gods. Instead of keeping his scepticism to himself—which is the English method, and, as we gather, Mr. Stead’s—he tells the people around him what he thinks. Finally, when circumstances force him into a decisive act—almost an act of desperation—he flings the principal god into the Nile, and the poor ill-used deity makes not a sign of protest ; whereupon the crowd join in the iconoclastic sport, and soon reduce all the gods of Egypt to a heap of rubbish. When the reaction sets in the gods are restored to honor and worship ; but one must suppose that the recollection of the fact that the whole Pantheon had been scrapped, without an act or a word of resentment on the part of the deities, or the slightest harm having accrued to their destroyers, must have been an active germ of scepticism in the minds of the more thoughtful people.

Mr. Stead’s sympathies are all with the reaction in favor of the old gods. They may be entirely imaginary personages, but they are so tremendously useful in practice ; while your Satni, even when he is quite right theoretically, is such a dreadful nuisance, upsetting simple people, and opening doors to all sorts of moral and social mischief.

Let us hear Mr. Stead on the subject of aggressive Atheists :—

“For the good, zealous, iconoclastic Satni is always at work amongst us, exceedingly righteous in his own eyes, raging with fury, diabolic or divine, against the lying superstitions whereby the priest enslaves the people, and everywhere the same result follows. The practice of flinging the baby into the gutter with the soapsuds is one which seems to have infinite attractions for many men and women. The fact that there never was a lying superstition or preposterous fetish in the whole wide world which was not created to supply some human want or social need your Satni always forgets. When the reformer has something better with which to replace the gods whom he assails, as was the case with Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Luther, and many another of the great founders of the world’s faiths, well and good ; but the pure negation preached by Satni is further from the essential truth of things than the worst superstition against which he rails.”

Now in replying to this forcible but not very discriminating outburst, we have first of all to quarrel with Mr. Stead’s language about “pure negation.” Nature is an eternal process of creation and destruction ; each half of the process is natural, and one is impossible without the other. Waste and repair go on constantly in our own organisms, and when that ceases they cease. We are all under the universal law and have no means of withdrawing ourselves from its operation. Mr. Stead is under it like the rest of us. And just as we wear out so do our political, social, and religious institutions wear out. Our dead bodies get buried or cremated out of the way, but our institutions cannot be dealt with as easily and promptly. There comes a time when the old is the enemy of the new, the dead the enemy of the living ; and when that time comes the most useful service to the world is sheer iconoclasm. Mr. Stead calls it “pure negation,” but it is only so technically. Neither affirmation nor negation is good or bad independently of conditions, and the one readily passes into the other. If you affirm a lie you negate a truth, and if you affirm a truth you negate a lie. Moreover negation, in the technical sense, must in the very nature of things precede affirmation. Destruction must often precede construction. If a condemned building is pulled down, the object and intention of those who make and execute the order is really positive, in spite of its negative form. In a crowded city you are obliged to pull down old premises, even when they are still serviceable, if you want to make room for something better. Timid, lazy, old-fashioned, finicking people object to the noise, the dust, and the discomfort ; and the more progressive people are not exactly in love with these things, but they put up with them for the sake of the coming improvement.

It appears to us that Mr. Stead has really not taken the trouble to think this matter out. We wish he would do so. We expressed the same wish some time ago, but it seems no nearer realisation now than it was then. We are sure he has the brains, if he will only find the leisure, to perceive

that it is no use denouncing any man's ideas on any other ground than their falsehood. In the long run, falsehood involves every other evil, and truth every other blessing.

Continuing our criticism, we may observe that Buddha should be eliminated from Mr. Stead's list. He was one of the greatest of all "negationists." He made a clean sweep of all the gods. His philosophy was purely Atheistic. Jesus, Mohammed, and Luther are left. And why does Mr. Stead reverse them? We suspect because they were partial reformers; that is, he respects them for what they left, instead of for what they destroyed. Yet what they left was only a shade less pernicious than what they destroyed.

We must be pardoned, if Mr. Stead can manage it, for stating our opinion that the last clause of the last sentence in the passage we have quoted is unmitigated nonsense. Mr. Stead has contracted a habit of talking in that way. How the negation of a superstition can be farther from the truth of things than the affirmation of a superstition is like the peace of God in the Church Service—it passes all comprehension. We fancy that Mr. Stead's real meaning, only he failed to express it, is that the falsehoods of superstition are more useful than the truths of scepticism. That is arguable, of course; in fact, it is the substance of more than half the prevalent dialectic in favor of religion; and we shall reply to it in the course of this article. But that is not what Mr. Stead contrived to say; and we repeat that what he did say is sheer folly.

We have next to remark that Mr. Stead is utterly wrong in his idea that superstitions and idols are created to supply some human want. This is the reverse of the idea quite ignorantly or foolishly attributed by Christian divines to the Atheist,—that religion is an invention of priestcraft. Priestcraft develops religion, systematises it, and makes use of it; but religion itself must exist before priestcraft is possible. Superstitions are not invented at all. They grow up as naturally as a tree grows up from a seed in the ground. They are the blunders of man's ignorance. He cannot help forming ideas, and he forms them wrongly when he does not know enough. When he is ignorant of the true nature of a thunderstorm, for instance, he inevitably sees in the lightning the flash of a great being's anger, and hears in the thunder the roar of its wrath. A properly instructed person sees and hears nothing of the kind. All the priests in the world could not make him credit the fable. But if he were ignorant enough to be superstitious on this point they would have little difficulty in persuading him that the god of the lightning and thunder was wild with him for some particular offence—perhaps for not obeying and supporting the priests with sufficient docility and liberality.

Superstition, therefore, was not invented to supply a human need, for the simple reason that it was not invented at all. Neither were deities invented for benevolent purposes. Superstitions and gods are fundamentally the same thing. Gods are supernatural beings that men make like unto themselves because of their ignorance of the natural. Superstition is (so to speak) the raw material and gods are the finished products. Both existed before they could be worshiped—or exploited. What really happens is this. The mystery-men lay their hands on everything. Nothing can be done without their permission. The same truth is more learnedly expressed by saying that in thoroughly superstitious societies every institution, every rule of life, is placed under a religious sanction. Thus the weekly day of rest which Babylon devised for economical reasons was dedicated to the god whose name is preserved in the word Sabbath. Ultimately the fiction was imposed upon the people that the god designed the whole thing. And this fiction, as well as the day of rest and the name of the god, was afterwards adopted by the Jews, who were the great borrowers of the ancient world as they are the great lenders of the modern world.

(To be concluded.) G. W. FOOTE.

Christo-Mania.

In the course of an interview by a representative of an Australian religious paper, Sir Albert Spicer, the well-known Nonconformist, remarked that, during the last two or three general elections in England, "it has been a distinct advantage for a man to proclaim himself a Nonconformist." I am not in a position to say whether Sir Albert Spicer is correct or not in making this assertion, but there are at least indications that the statement contains some truth. Religious rivalry has driven the Nonconformists into politics, and the attempts to get a form of religious teaching in the State schools that is agreeable to Dissenters has resulted in the conversion of scores of chapels into so many training schools for politicians—of a kind. The last election certainly had a very pious air about it, while the duty of Nonconformists to support a long list of Nonconformist candidates was urged both in places of worship and in the columns of religious newspapers. On the whole, the evidence seems to indicate—to an outsider—that Sir Albert Spicer is fairly correct in the above-quoted statement.

It is also to be observed that since the general elections the appearance of certain Cabinet Ministers in Nonconformist pulpits has not been an infrequent spectacle. Among those who have so disported themselves has been our present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George. To do him justice, he has not, in his political addresses to English audiences, mixed up his professed religious opinions with his politics, and it would be well did he remember that this rule is a good one to follow in his native country. But the air of Wales seems to exert a fatal influence; or it may be he agrees with Sir Albert Spicer that it is "a distinct advantage for a man to proclaim himself a Nonconformist." At any rate, once over the border, Mr. Lloyd George, the Nonconformist, becomes at times *too* prominent; and the fact that as Chancellor his constituents embrace others beside Nonconformists is forgotten. Of course, Mr. George might reply that he rates his Nonconformity higher than his Chancellorship; and he has, indeed, said that he values the honor of being President of the Welsh Baptist Union more than he does that of being Chancellor of the Exchequer. This may be so; but it is doubtful if he would have been elected to the former post had he not filled the latter position. One may safely assume that the Welsh Baptists place a higher value upon the Chancellorship than does the present incumbent of that office.

The other day Mr. George paid a visit to South Wales, and, addressing a meeting at Treorchy, he is reported as saying:—

"Surveying the battle-field where oppression and despotism are so grimly entrenched, I can see no hope for the democracy except in Jesus of Nazareth. It is under the influence and the inspiration of the Son of the Carpenter that democracy continues its march century after century until ultimately the manacles will be struck off, the fetters loosened, and its high destiny realised."

Mr. George has the reputation of not being over-gentle towards those with whose opinions he differs, and this expression of opinion certainly seems unnecessarily offensive. He belongs to a Cabinet in which there are at least two Agnostics—probably more; he is a member of a Chamber which contains numerous Freethinkers and Jews; as Chancellor of the Exchequer he stands for a nation composed of all sorts of religious people, and of a growing number with no religious opinions at all. And to all of them he says there is no hope against oppression and despotism save in Jesus of Nazareth. Such language may be quite suitable to a mission-hall or a Welsh chapel, but a Minister of the Crown might certainly be engaged in better work than perpetuating such sectarian superstitions.

For the statement is so obviously untrue. Purely democratic development is but a recent thing in modern

history, and when one looks back at the part played in that development by Freethinkers, Jews, and other non-Christians, there is something almost humorous in being told that democracy has marched, "century after century," under the banner of Jesus Christ. There is no more truth in the statement if we go farther back in European history. For quite sixteen centuries after the appearance of Christianity on the scene, the organised representatives of that faith did what they could to keep the forces of "oppression and despotism" secure in their high places. Luther's counsel that it was the Christian's duty to submit, and that they who rebelled against their masters ought to be killed like mad dogs, expressed the real spirit of historic Christianity. Church and Crown, vested interest and chapel, have always been fast friends; and the timid whispers of revolt to-day are far more concessions to outside pressure than a real desire for separation. The decline of serfdom, the rise of the free towns, of a free trading class, and later of a discontented working class, the extension of the franchise with the spread of political power over an ever widening area, have really no more to do with Jesus of Nazareth than with the man in the moon. One may trace substantially the same phenomena in Mohammedan Turkey and in "heathen" Japan. Our statesmen are provokingly parochial in their outlook. Their horizon seems bounded by their church or chapel or party. British religion or British ideals, at most, are the standards by which everything is measured. That there exists social and economic forces which transcend all superficial differences of political constitution or religious belief, is a conception which, if it exists with them, is carefully hidden from the public view.

Of course, Mr. Lloyd George is not alone in thus dragging Jesus into the political arena, and it may be assumed that, as a successful politician, he appreciates the influence of cant terms on the emotions of the crowd. For this talk of Jesus as the inspirer of social reform is sheer cant, and not always honest cant. Preachers use the name because it is part of their stock-in-trade, and because their profession neither demands nor encourages clear thinking. And the people—unthinking as ever in the mass—easily rise to words and phrases with which they are familiar. Thus we find all sorts and conditions of men, Socialist and Catholic, Radical and Conservative, Mr. Lloyd George and his good friends "the Dukes," using the name of Jesus as a sanction for widely different and ever contradictory teachings. Each one reads into the teachings of Jesus exactly what he wishes to find; each refers to what Jesus intended, as though one could discover what he said and meant with absolute certainty. Each one constructs an ideal Jesus that is, when brought into contrast with the New Testament character, as false as the existence of the miraculously conceived, miracle-working, resurrected Christ is impossible. A real service to the democracy would be performed by teaching the people to think clearly and accurately; but our elected and self-elected guides unconsciously emphasise the evil of democratic rule by constantly pandering to its prejudice and making more confused its already confused intelligence. And as action and reaction in nature always operates, the lack of clear thinking among the people neither calls for, nor encourages, clear thinking among the people's leaders.

Unsaved by a sense of humor, Mr. Lloyd George and his kind see nothing absurd in placing twentieth-century ideals in the mouth of a first-century Jewish peasant. And, having resolved that we ought to find in the teachings of Jesus all we require, the power of faith is demonstrated by the success of their investigation and the nature of the proof offered to the unbelieving. If it is pointed out that Jesus said nothing against specific social evils, such as slavery, and even encouraged passive obedience to the State, the reply is that credit is due to him for attending to the larger and deeper issues of life. If it is, then, pointed out that, in taking a broad and comprehensive view of life, Jesus

was surpassed by many non-Christian teachers, it is replied that his greatness was shown by the manner in which he entered into the ordinary life of the people and kept himself free from philosophical speculations. If it is said that his teaching concerning the function of riches—as in the story of Dives—is absurd, the answer is that he was dwelling upon the abuse of wealth—although there is no hint to that effect in the parable. If we say that his teachings concerning the relations of the State and the individual, or the payment of labor, are vague and unsatisfactory, and may be accepted by all parties without affecting the conduct of any, the reply is that he was content to lay down broad spiritual principles and leave these to work their influence in reforming things. If we say that Jesus, as God, should have known better than to encourage the fetishistic theory of disease, the answer is that he was man also, and subject to human limitations. But if we say that his cursing the fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season shows folly or spleen, the theory of his divinity is fallen back on, and we are told that, as God, he had a right to do as he pleased with his own. If it is pointed out that his teachings concerning non-resistance are so impracticable that people simply cannot reduce them to practice, we are informed that we have misunderstood these teachings, which are simply a warning against revenge. And if we ask for proof of this we are told that any other interpretation makes the teaching absurd. With people who are resolved on finding in Jesus all that their fancy indicates it matters nothing to show that they only succeed in stringing together an impossible concatenation of qualities. A wall of prejudice is interposed between them and proof, and the artillery has yet to be cast that can effectually overcome it.

Of all forms of delusion, Christo-mania seems the hardest to remove. In many cases the disease is genuine enough; in other instances it is merely simulated. The name of Jesus is offered to a religiously debauched public as a means of enlisting their prejudices or arousing their feelings. Men, whom one can hardly help thinking must know better, profess the absurd belief that if we are to have orderly social progress, our social beliefs and activities must rest upon faith in a semi-mythical or wholly mythical personage, concerning the meaning of whose teachings there never has been, and is not now, anything like a common agreement. One who has really and intelligently at heart the welfare of the people should strive to lift social effort out of the morass of metaphysics and theology and ground it on the solid facts of human nature. And there are plenty if we only care to see them. Human nature is not so poor nor so helpless a thing as our religious teachers would have us believe. Feeling and intelligence may be powerful for either good or ill as they are well or ill directed. That they have often worked ill is true enough; but, on the whole, they have been productive of far more good. And one way of increasing the credit side of the account is to clear our minds of the cant developed by religious training, and which our Christo-maniacs are doing their best to perpetuate.

C. COHEN.

The Degradation of Man.

To the question, What is man? there are various and conflicting answers. It is interesting to know that Bacon defined man as "the servant and interpreter of Nature," as "a plant inverted," and also as "a spirit newly inclosed in a body of earth." The Rev. J. D. Jones, Chairman of the Congregational Union, in an article in the *Christian World* for October 21, charges Plato, Dean Swift, Benjamin Franklin, and Adam Smith with allowing "a touch of the mean and the base and the contemptible" to enter into their definitions of man. These definitions, as furnished by Mr. Jones, are mere caricatures, which were never intended to be taken

seriously. Plato says that "man is a two-legged animal without feathers"; but every scholar is fully aware that Plato's definition of man was radically different from that. So, likewise, when Dean Swift calls man "a forked, straddling animal with bandy legs," nothing is clearer than that the clergyman was indulging his love of satire. Benjamin Franklin's phrase, "Man is a tool-making animal," and Adam Smith's "Man is an animal that makes bargains," are only to be taken playfully, or as expressive of partial truths. But Mr. Jones, being a very serious-minded gentleman, and consequently incapable of looking at them in the light in which they were uttered, solemnly says: "There is a touch of the mean and the base and the contemptible about all these definitions. 'Animal, animal, animal,' so they all run." What a pity the reverend gentleman lacks the grace of humor, the least modicum of which would have prevented him from committing such a laughable blunder.

Of course, Mr. Jones's misunderstanding and depreciation of the playful and partial definitions of man referred to above lessens our surprise at his misinterpretation of a passage in the Bible. In the Book of Revelation, chapter xxi, verses 9-27, there occurs a wonderful description of the heavenly Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven from God," and being duly measured by an angel. Now, this angel measured the city with a golden reed; "and he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man—that is, of an angel." Obviously, the italicised words simply mean that, in "this matter of measure, men and angels use the same." That is to say, the height of a city's wall is ascertained in the same way by an angel as by a man. Listen, now, to Mr. Jones's interpretation:—

"There is a sentence in the Apocalypse in which the writer makes a startling and staggering identification. It is this: 'After the measure of a man—that is, of an angel.' Apparently John identifies *man* and *angel*. He uses the words as synonymous and convertible terms. There is but one book in the world that would have dared to make this identification. The Bible is a bold, not to say a very bold book, but it is boldest of all in its estimate of man. The superb boldness of that estimate is seen in this identification, 'man—that is, angel.'"

Poor old book, how horribly hast thou suffered at the hands of thy eulogisers! The book says that to both man and angel the height of a wall means the same thing, from which statement Mr. Jones derives the great doctrine of the identity of man and angel. From the mean and base and contemptible words of Plato, Swift, Franklin, and Adam Smith the reverend gentleman turns to the old Book, and here, he says, "I see man from a totally contrasted point of view. The Bible shows him to us exalted, dignified, transfigured into glory. 'Man,' it says, and then adds by way of definition, 'that is, angel.'" After this, Mr. Jones should be acclaimed the freshest, most original, startling, and staggering interpreter of Scripture the world has ever seen.

We will now drop the angel as an unknown and unknowable quantity. At best, he is only an imaginary being, and wherein lies the honor to man of being identified with such a personage we cannot perceive. There was a time when children used to sing, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand"; but, according to Mr. Jones, all children are angels already, and the sentiment of the hymn is worse than silly. Ignoring the angel, however, let us pass on to weightier matters. Mr. Jones says:—

"What a vast and measureless difference there is between the Bible view of man and the view that seems to prevail in modern literature! Man, according to the picture of him which the modern novelist, who proudly calls himself a realist, gives us, is always either brute, or beast, or reptile, or devil. Whatsoever things are mean and base and cowardly and foul are identified in the mind of the realist with the word *man*."

Does the Chairman of the Congregational Union maintain that the picture of man as drawn by the realistic novelist is not true to life? Are the men and women who live and move and have their being

on the pages of the novel pure creations of the imagination? Is it not true that in real life men and women are continually "influenced by sordid motives, living their lives under the impulse of appetite or greed or lust"? Mr. Jones seems to be extraordinarily familiar with modern fiction; but he is guilty of misrepresenting the novelist when he avers that "in the general welter of wickedness he declares he can see no trace of good." Surely, there is no work of fiction in which all the characters are bad, in which every man is a cad or a coward and every woman base or soiled. But taking the very worst picture of life ever painted by a Zola or a Tolstoy, surely it cannot be pronounced darker than the one painted by Paul in Romans i. 18-32, by an anonymous writer in Genesis vi. 1-8; xix. 30-38; or by the prophet Isaiah, i. 2-9. It is a debatable point whether the realistic novel is a wholesome production or not, whether the publication of a *Nana* or a *Resurrection* is ethically justifiable or not; but neither *Nana* nor *Resurrection* can be objected to on the ground that it is not true. Alas, such pictures of life are true, and Mr. Jones should bear in mind that they are true after two thousand years of the religion in which he glories and by which he lives. To exclaim, without authority, "Man, that is, angel," is of no avail whatever.

We shall now take the Bible view of man and compare it with that which modern science presents. The truth is that in the article under review Mr. Jones does not give the Bible view of man at all. The Bible does not "persist in defining man in terms of the angel." In the Old Testament man is found in a state of constant rebellion against Heaven. Jehovah is perpetually represented as being dissatisfied and angry with his chosen people. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," he is made to say; "but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Then follows a terrific bill of indictment against the whole nation. In the New Testament, all mankind are the slaves of Satan and enemies of God. They are not angels, but miserable sinners already damned. Job complained that Jehovah had torn him in his wrath, persecuted him, and gnashed upon him with his teeth, and John assures us that unbelievers in Christ shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them. On this point all New Testament writers are agreed. Paul describes the whole human race as being "by nature children of wrath" and heirs of perdition, and as having fallen into this nature and heirship in consequence of Adam's sin. By nature, then, ever since the Fall, every man is in a lost condition, and the only prospect of salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, who died on purpose to purchase the redemption of Satan's slaves and their conversion into willing slaves of God. Such is the Bible view of man; and it is a mean, base, and contemptible view. Nothing degrades man more than to treat him as a fallen, vile, and lost creature. Mr. Jones is seemingly fully aware of this, and by putting a false interpretation upon a wholly irrelevant passage in Revelation endeavors to construct what he considers a more reasonable view, and then brazenly speaks of it as the Bible view.

Over against the Bible view of man, which degrades him, let the scientific view be set up in bold relief, which view exalts him. It is well-known that history has completely discredited the Bible view of man. History belies the doctrine of the Fall as well as that of salvation through faith in the merits of another. History has never seen an ideally perfect man, either at its commencement or in its middle stage. Are we not, then, shut up to the view of man which pictures him as having slowly worked his way upwards from low and mean conditions, and as being still far short of perfection? And is not this the only view that is morally elevating and inspiring? To be told that you have fallen, and that the wrath of Deity abides upon you until you put your entire trust in the Lord Jesus, tends to depress and dishearten you; and besides, it lowers you in your own esteem, and wounds your dignity.

It is the knowledge that we have been rising for countless ages that kindles within us a flame of desire and determination to continue and accelerate the rising process. Mr. Jones says to us: "Of yourselves you can do nothing; you must be supernaturally born again before you can take a single step upwards; you must be made the temples of the Holy Ghost ere you can get rid of any of the undesirable and injurious elements in your constitution." The message of science is in a radically different key, and may be summed up thus: "What you stand in supreme need of is knowledge *plus* love; knowledge of self and of the conditions of a harmonious and happy social life, and a disposition to labor with all your might to secure such conditions. Your first duty is to acquire faith in yourselves and in one another, and then to combine in a grand and continuous effort to lift society out of the evils which at present afflict it." Is not this a wholesomer and more exalting message than any that has ever issued from an orthodox Christian pulpit? Furthermore, the Christian message has ignominiously failed to benefit the masses of the people; and it is a most significant fact that the cause of morality and social progress has prospered almost in proportion as the cause of supernatural religion has declined, and that the most backward countries to-day are those in which the Christian Church is strongest.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Light on Mynydduwchyrigenlwyd.

You can hardly imagine it whatever. It was a great terror for us, I tell you. It occurred at the time when Evan Roberts had set the land of Wales ablaze with revivalism. Everybody in our country was intoxicated with religion, and the most trifling thing out of the usual was quickly magnified into a most amazing marvel. We Welsh folk are an excitable and superstitious people at any time but then, when we were delirious with religious fervor, we had become astoundingly impressionable and credulous. It seemed as if Welsh men and women had nothing else to do but rake up every bogey of which they had ever heard or thought. I tell you that, for a few months, we had a very "jumpy" time indeed. So, our nerves being strained to the uttermost, you can imagine our excitement when, one Sunday evening as we were coming out of chapel, Martha Jones screamed out, "God preserve us! Do you not see a light on Mynydduwchyrigenlwyd?" Startled by her words, we all gazed above the trees on the slopes of that wild and mysterious hill, there was a light which shone like a very bright star.

What could it be? What could it mean? Our looks expressed these questions as we stared at the strange light. It continued to shine steadily, and its persistence so affected us, that we all broke into exclamation. I shall not easily forget that scene. It was a warm summer evening and the Sunday quiet was intensified by the hush which drops on the countryside at sunset. Hardly a breath of wind was moving, and overhead there was a haze which obscured the stars. In the intervening valley the shadow of night was deep save where the lamplight showed dimly through the windows of the few scattered farmhouses and cottages. The air was sweet with the scent of newly mown hay, with which was intermingled the luscious perfume of the flower gardens near the chapel. A couple of bats were fluttering and peeping in our vicinity, and the drowsy hum of insects came lightly to the ear.

Still the light shone, and its unwavering brightness so scared us that, with one accord, we all turned dreadfully away from it. Martha Jones began to cry hysterically, Maggie Howell followed her example, and the other women soon joined them. Then William Williams started to testify, declaring that this light and the other many signs which had appeared in the land of Wales were all evidence that God was angry with the people because of their wickedness. He commenced to sing the Old Hundredth, and we added our voices to his quakingly.

It was at this moment that our pastor came hurrying to us. Eagerly we pointed out the light to him and anxiously listened for his opinion of it. After a careful scrutiny, he exclaimed: "It is surely a sign. Let us pray." After praying for nearly fifteen minutes in a most heart-searching manner, he bade us depart to our homes; and this we did, casting many sidelong and apprehensive glances at the soul-disturbing light as we went.

Now, I must confess that I was, and am still, very fond of Maggie Howell. Her road home was out of my way but I had never been loth to go with her as far as the door of her house; and on this particular Sunday night I was very anxious for her safety. For some minutes we walked on slowly, glancing occasionally at Mynydduwchyrigenlwyd and whispering about future affairs in which we were both deeply interested. Presently we reached Maggie's cottage, and, for a while, we stood silently in the porch. It was then that the natural curiosity of woman rose up in Maggie's mind.

"I wonder what that light really is?" she asked. "Davy, wouldst thee dare go to the hill, to-night, to where the light is shining?"

My tongue went dry at the thought of such an adventure, but I answered as boldly as I could, "I would dare anything for thy sake, Maggie."

"Then I will await thy return, Davy, and supper shall be ready for thee when thou comest back."

Having said this, she hugged me tightly round the neck and kissed me fervently, then ran indoors where, as I afterwards learnt, she sobbingly told her mother that she had sent me to my death.

You may easily understand my predicament. Before me lay the dark, intervening valley with all its difficulties in the shape of hedges and treacherous ground, dikes, and the swiftly flowing stream through which I knew I must wade to get to Mynydduwchyrigenlwyd. But Maggie was worth all the trouble I was likely to meet with, and I knew that if I did this thing, Matthew Jones, my rival, would be as rubbish in her estimation. Therefore, quite recklessly, I scrambled down the hillside, and stumbling at the outset, fell sprawling into a bed of nettles, which stung my hands and face so severely that, in my pain, I used language which, I am very well sure, would horrify all my friends and acquaintances, with the exception of my cousin, John Jenkins, who has served in the Army.

You may be sure I proceeded very cautiously after that experience. I tell you I sincerely wished for a lantern before I had gone many yards. I got my hands and face scratched while forcing my way through the first hedge I encountered, and then I cut my left hand while climbing a dike. But I gained the swiftly running stream without further mishap, and then I knew I was three parts of my way to Mynydduwchyrigenlwyd. I paused here for several minutes feeling most uncomfortable in mind and body, for I was in a very lonely spot and my face and hands, stung and scratched, were tingling and smarting almost unbearably. It was intensely dark and the sound of the rushing water gave me a terrifying sensation of insecurity. I looked towards the hill. The light was still there, steady and bright and star-like, and quite near the summit. I calculated that it would take me nearly half an hour to reach it. What would happen when I got there? What if it were a device of the fiend to lure me to a dreadful doom! My hair bristled at the thought. I had almost decided to turn back when the reflection that I might be laughed at nerved me to desperation. Uttering a defiant shout, I ran wildly into the rushing stream, gaining the opposite bank after a great struggle in which I was nearly swept off my footing and wetted up to my thighs. For a while I stood breathing hard, then, squelching water from my boots at every step I took, I went forward up gently sloping ground which was thickly strewn with large boulders. I knocked my toes and shins against some of these boulders, but I carefully refrained from using such language as my cousin, John Jenkins, would have used in similar circumstances. Instead, I said "God be praised," every time I stumbled against a stone. Presently I reached steep ground and tall trees, and when I commenced groping my way through these latter, I could no longer see the light. Once I slipped, and but for the closely growing tree trunks, would have rolled wildly down the hillside. I was now perspiring freely, but still I struggled on. Soon I perceived a shimmering through the foliage ahead of me. I was near the mysterious light and I trembled with fear and excitement. Suddenly I was almost petrified at hearing a voice cry out, "Damnation!" This was followed by a laugh, then silence.

"Confound it!" said the voice speaking again, "I could have sworn I had that moth."

I took a deep breath. The voice was undoubtedly that of an English gentleman. Arousing all my courage, I advanced boldly and found myself staring at two men who were standing at the foot of a long, stoutly made, rod-like contrivance surmounted with a very bright, globular, acetylene lamp, round which I saw quite a number of moths and other small flying creatures. Now and then one of these men would cast at the fluttering moths with a gauze net.

I stepped into the light of their lamp and bade them "good evening."

"Who the devil are you?" they exclaimed. And certainly with my stung, swollen, and scratched face, my clinging wet trousers and muddy boots, I must have appeared a very uncouth sort of person. I told them who I was; in fact, I made a clean confession to them. They laughed heartily. One of them gave me a drink of whisky, for which I was very thankful. When I had gulped this down they told me that they were naturalists. While staying at Darjeeling, a sanatorium in the Himalayas, they had caught some splendid specimens of rare moths which had been attracted by the municipal electric lamps of that place. And they were now adopting a similar means whereby they hoped to catch a scarce British moth which they very much desired to have in their collections.

They lent me a lantern for my return journey, and this I restored to them on the morrow. But the effect of my discovering what the strange light really was was astounding. Our pastor was called to a distant and very much larger congregation, William Williams took to drinking, Martha Jones married my old soldier's cousin, John Jenkins, and has become almost as unrestrained in speech as he is. The other members of our chapel regarded me as if I were an infidel. But I didn't mind a bit. Maggie was, and still is, proud of my having dared to go to Mynydduwchyrwris-gonlwyd after nightfall. And she told me that if I were to turn Atheist—which she hopes I never will—then, even then, she would not give me up for Matthew Jones.

JAMES H. WATERS.

The Converted Atheist.

I HEARD of him first when a slip of a lad,
At the Bethel my parents attended;
His record was really uncommonly bad,
Against ev'ry law he'd offended.
He drank like a fish, like a Kipling he swore,
And of course you'll have guessed ere I say any more,
This creature depraved
Had never been "saved"—
An Atheist he, hence the way he behaved.

One dark winter's night (thus the Reverend Blogg)
The Atheist went forth to burgle.
But, losing his way in a deuce of a fog,
Dropped in the canal with a gurgle.
For fully five minutes he floundered about,
Till, grasping some rushes, he pulled himself out;
And, such was his scare,
He cried, "I declare
I'll 'chuck' unbelief!"—which he did then and there.

He sold all his burglar's tools to a mate,
He knocked off bad language and whisky.
"The Spirit that's Holy," he'd smilingly state,
"Suffices to make a man frisky."
He now is a parson, and does very well,
That man who was once on the highway to hell.
Cried Blogg, "Let us pray
That all Infidels may
Find Jesus, like this did, for oh! it doth pay."

I've heard of this man for the past twenty years
(Though sometimes the story will vary).
Sometimes he's a speaker who openly sneers
At the yarns of the meek son of Mary.
Then one of the audience rises and cries,
"O Lord, save this man who is uttering lies!"
The Infidel weeps,
The conscience that sleeps
Awakens, and back to the old faith he creeps.

Sometimes he's a bigamist, sometimes he's worse;
Sometimes he's an ev'ryday "chappie"—
A tinker, a tailor, a maker of verse,
But *always* he's glum and unhappy.
Despondent and gloomy, he walks in the dark
Till some Reverend Blogg blows the heavenly spark,
Saying, "Let there be light!"
Then, happy and bright,
A newly-fledged Christian struts forth in his might.

I've begged for his name and implored his address,
But nobody knows where he's hiding,
That well-known ex-Atheist who will confess
That now in the "Faith" he's abiding.
Some advertised specimens, true, I have found,
Converted for cash and for slander renowned;
But the species I've missed
Is not on the list—
In fact (let me whisper), it doesn't exist.

JOHN YOUNG.

Acid Drops.

Sir Robert Anderson, a sort of ex-policeman, holds a kind of Scotland-Yard theory of the universe. His God, of course, is like himself, only bigger. And opposed to this God, as London thieves are opposed to the police, is the Devil. Of this personage Sir Robert Anderson appears to have intimate knowledge. Addressing the Evangelical Alliance Conference at Caxton Hall, he declared that "the spirits at spiritualistic s^éances were not spirits of the dead; they were evil demons." Demons were all about us. They were leading the Christian Science movement. Nay, worse. "Satan and demons," Sir Robert said, "will preach Jesus and reform drunkards and debauchees." Well, after this, one may conclude that General Booth is a demon. We should like Sir Robert's candid opinion on that question.

Just as Sir Robert Anderson knows all about Satan & Co., so he knows all about miracles. He states that God's miracles ceased in Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen. In that case, the "Acts of the Apostles" is a book of lies. So we fancy there must be some mistake. Another statement is that God's miracles ceased in Rome after the enunciation of Ichabod. But when the Ichabod was that? We are as far off the date as ever. In the name of Ichabod we ask Sir Robert Anderson to explain his chronology.

Finally, Sir Robert Anderson soared on the wings of prophecy. "The New Theology, Spiritualism, and Christian Science," he declared, "were divisions in the great army which by Satan was being marshalled and trained for the terrible struggle in a later day." What times we shall have when that later day arrives! Satan and the New Theology, Spiritualism, and Christian Science on the one side, and God and the Evangelical Alliance on the other side; and Sir Robert Anderson, if he lives long enough, acting as referee. It will be worth seeing.

Mr. E. H. Pickersgill, M.P., says that the people in the East End of London "are not satisfied with their lot" and he "thanks God for it." He would have more to thank God for if that personage had given them a better lot than the one they are so dissatisfied with. But what has God to do with it, after all? And is there a God? Mr. Pickersgill might explain.

Orthodox papers are making a great fuss over the fact that John Ruskin made over 5,000 references to the Bible in his various writings. We don't know what it proves, except that he had read the Bible a great deal, which we have done ourselves. Do the Christians suppose that a deep knowledge of the Bible is necessary to make a great writer? How about the great writers of antiquity, who never saw a line of the Old Testament, and lived before a line of the New Testament was written? Plato, for instance. He was probably a much greater writer than Ruskin. But one can always trust Christians to talk folly about their faith.

Madame Hedwig Wangel, the German actress who left the stage for the Salvation Army, according to the newspapers is being sought by her father. She appears to have been rather too fond of the "Army," having eloped with a lieutenant named Carl Hess.

Father Bernard Vaughan has fallen back on an old sensation of Mr. Stead's. He is asking what would happen "if Christ came." He thinks that Christ would be very much concerned with our falling birth-rate. But what did Christ do to keep up the birth-rate in Palestine? And what does Father Vaughan do to keep it up in England? Has he not taken a vow to do nothing of the kind? We do him the honor of presuming he keeps it.

Preston Town Council is agitated over the question of the next Mayor. Alderman Myerscough is the favorite candidate, but he stipulates that he shall pay the customary state visit to a Catholic church on the Sunday immediately following his election. Protestants, of course, object to this; and it is a case of pull devil pull baker. Our sympathy is with neither side. Mayors of towns ought not to be allowed to go in state to any church. But while the Protestants do it why shouldn't the Catholics do it too? As the orator said, we pause for a reply.

The Westminster Gazette has been making a great ado over Mr. George Edwardes' notification that he won't have a play of his advertised in one column and run down in another

column. On the face of it one sees that Mr. Edwardes is a man of business. The editor of the *Westminster* pretends to be something else, but that is only one of his public playfulnesses. Everybody knows that "the glorious free press" is a mere business enterprise. The proprietors of newspapers, with the exception of a few which are obviously fighting for principles and for nothing else, keep their own ends in view, and the editors and contributors are as much hired to serve those ends as are the butlers, valets, cooks, and housemaids in "great" men's houses.

Sir Oliver Lodge, in his recent speech at the Boulton centenary service in Soho Hill Chapel, Birmingham, probably pleased his hearers by telling them that they all shared in the work of creation. God's creation was not perfect; much fault was to be found with it; but its defects gave work to free human beings, who were thus able to leave the world better than they found it,—and this was sharing in the work of creation. Which seems to mean, if we may say so, that God made a bad world in order that his own creatures might make it a good one. Sir Oliver Lodge went further than that. "If they were put into a world," he said, "where everything was quite perfect and smooth-running it would become after a time exceedingly dull, and they would all vegetate and go to sleep." Of course they would. But why? Sir Oliver Lodge must surely see the answer if he will take the trouble to look. The human race has been evolved amidst conditions of constant struggle. We are so used to the struggle that we could hardly live without it. Not all of us, but most of us, must have a hill to climb, a goal to reach, a battle to fight, a victory to win. But if the race had evolved amidst other conditions we should have been equally adapted to them. It appears to us that Sir Oliver Lodge simply puts the cart before the horse—in other words, mistakes a cause for an effect. He is a man of science, of course, but he is liable to the same mistakes as other people outside his own department.

The voice of Christ has been heard by at least one man lately—if we are to credit his personal statement. We have received a copy of the *Cape Times*, dated September 11, which contains an account of the return to the orthodox fold of the Rev. Hugh Ross, of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Johannesburg. The reverend gentleman resigned his pulpit because the old doctrines with regard to God and the Bible were slipping from his grasp. He has recovered his grasp of them, however, and also his grasp of the pulpit and stipend. He had come to the conclusion that Jesus was only the noblest of men, but one evening his scepticism left him quite suddenly. "I was sitting in my room," he says, "with no one there beside me. I was brooding about spiritual things, and suddenly a Voice spoke in my soul, which I heard as distinctly, as intelligibly, as unmistakably as you are hearing me speak to you at this moment. The voice said: 'You cannot make anything of Christ along humanitarian lines.'" Instantly, the reverend gentleman says the humanitarian conception of Jesus seemed to him "not only impossible, but ridiculous." No doubt Mr. Ross thinks he heard the voice of Christ, but he appears to have heard it at a fortunate moment. He is now back in the old church again, and going stronger than ever. His position, like a broken leg, is probably firmer for the fracture. It may even be likened to a fresh honeymoon after a bad misunderstanding.

"Prince Michael," alias Michael Keyfor Mills, the present top-man of the Jezreelites, has been evicted by process of law, with about twenty of the brethren, from the ruined "House of the New Eve," which was projected, and partly built, many years ago for the occupation of the "saints" who were to meet the Lord there at his second coming. "Prince Michael" told a newspaper man that his eviction was a sort of sacrilege. "The property," he said, "belongs to the Lord, and being held for his work and the use of his people, any opposition, or attempt to dispossess them, will bring on all parties attempting it the wrath and punishments of Almighty God, for no weapon formed against Israel shall prosper." "Prince Michael" is an American, and perhaps doesn't know that "the Lord" cannot own property in England.

Rev. A. J. Waldron setting up to teach his fellow clergy manners is a spectacle which, if not sublime, is only one step off it. Freethinkers will be immensely tickled by Waldron's new part in the comedy of his career. He has just been declaring that "the greatest enemy of the Christian Church" is "the bitterness with which we [Waldron and his brother black-coats] are split up into rival sects, squabbling over side issues." He evidently thinks the "bitterness" is a new discovery, whereas it is as familiar as the death of Queen Anne.

"Sub Rosa" Hughes had to face many calumnies in fighting the Liberal battle at Bermondsey, but the worst of all was the suggestion that he was an Atheist. It was enough to make poor "Sub Rosa" weep tears of blood. And of course he had the deep sympathy of the dear *Daily News*. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, however, had something very different to say about the matter. After pointing out that "Ferrer's friends do not call themselves Anti-Clericals; they call themselves Atheists," Mr. Chesterton went on to give "a perfect instance of the English blend of bigotry and hypocrisy." "It is stated," he said, "that my friend, Mr. S. L. Hughes, our champion at Bermondsey, has had to contradict many 'attacks on his character'; one of them is that he is 'a Freethinker.' This is obviously bigotry; but it is also humbug. For the suggestion is that a Freethinker is some kind of monster that one never meets; whereas the fact is that rather more than one half of the educated Englishmen one meets are Freethinkers." We have had our little differences with Mr. Chesterton, but we shake hands with him most cordially (if he will let us) over that bold and honorable admission.

"The Socialist candidate," the *Morning Leader* said of Bermondsey, "is one of the best-known figures at almost any religious meeting, and makes religion the basis of his whole political creed." His religion, however, did not prevent his being a strong supporter of vivisection. On the whole, the less said about his religion the better. And what on earth has it got to do with a political contest?

It is reported that, at a Dublin skating-rink during the carnival, a skater got himself up "to represent the Savior," with scarlet tunic, white gown, long hair, chestnut beard, and the letters "I. H. S." on the back of his costume. Dublin appears to be scandalised. "The Savior" does not seem to have noticed the incident.

Our Animal Friends, New York, is a paper with a good object. We are sorry to see a paragraph in an article by Elinor S. Moody in the issue dated August 28. "When I see a person maltreating an animal or a child," the lady says, "it makes me hope that the brimstone business, described in the Bible, is literally true." Just as if one inhumanity could be corrected by another inhumanity! Christians often spoil the best of causes by the follies and barbarities of their old-fashioned faith.

Catholics are proving true to their faith and Church. Having murdered Francisco Ferrer, they are now befouling his character. Amongst the forgeries used against him is one pretending to be the teaching in his schools. It is a very clumsy forgery, for any intelligent person can easily see it to be such. It abounds in the crudest language of cruelty and massacre. Just as if any man outside a lunatic asylum ever taught such stuff to children. Fortunately, the textbooks issued by Ferrer are extant; a collection of them has been placed in the British Museum; and their scientific and ethical character gives the lie to the defamatory fables circulated by Ferrer's murderers.

Another lie circulated by the Catholic Church, in order to defame Ferrer, notwithstanding that he had no connection with the Barcelona riots, is that "Ferrer's mob" murdered monks and nuns, and dug up the bodies of dead nuns and exposed them to public derision. There is not a word of truth in this story. Mr. Nevinson, representing the *Daily News* at Barcelona, reported that the rioters were curiously self-restrained in many things. They did burn several religious buildings, for they had long scores to wipe off against the Church; but they invariably took care to empty the buildings before destroying them, and mere thieves who attempted pillage were sternly dealt with. There was only one monk killed during the riots, and he had himself fired a revolver; so that he was merely paid back in his own coin.

The fact that Catholics, including men like the Irish Nationalists and true believers like Mr. H. Belloc, M.P., approve of Ferrer's execution, and are incensed at any questions being raised on the matter, shows what was the real animus against the founder of the Modern Schools. He stood in the way of the Catholic Church and was hated accordingly.

The campaign of calumny against Ferrer will continue. Slanders are not killed by reputation; they live as long as they are servicable. This is well known to Freethinkers. Look at the lies about Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and all other Freethought leaders. Such things have a most amazing vitality. They will never die while a Christian lives who finds them profitable.

M. Léon Furnemont, secretary of the International Free-thought Federation, contributed to *La Pensée* of October 24 a special article on "Ferrer Martyr." An important part of it is an extract from Ferrer's manifesto on the foundation, in March, 1908, of his International League for the Rational Education of Children. We translate it for the benefit of our readers, and for another purpose which will be stated presently:—

"If, like us and with us, you wish pacification to take the place of violence:

If, like us and with us, you believe that the most efficacious and urgent work is the preparation of well-balanced brains and robust minds in the new generations, come and join us;

Associate your efforts with ours in that work of liberation which alone will bring the world every day nearer a better future, which will lead constantly towards greater truth, grandeur, and goodness."

That is the best answer to those who accuse Ferrer of a policy of violence. And look at this passage:—

"Education given to children should rest on a scientific and rational basis, separated from every mystical or supernatural conception."

That explains the Gethsemane and Calvary of Ferrer at Montjuich. The clericals killed the man to kill his work.

Dr. Clifford, at the Ferrer meeting in the Memorial Hall, expressed a hope that Ferrer's educational work would go on, and that it would produce a new Spain. The reverend gentleman could hardly have known what Ferrer's work really was. It was rationalistic and purely secular. Dr. Clifford is opposed to that sort of teaching in England, and we don't quite see how he can be in favor of it in Spain.

Mr. J. M. Robertson's inactivity and silence with respect to the Ferrer tragedy are significant. He is reported to have remarked that he could not think of embarrassing the Government. Only very great men keep true to their Free-thought in the House of Commons. A Bradlaugh could do it; one has no right to expect it of smaller men. "These are the times," as Paine said, "that try men's souls." We fear that we must no longer regard Mr. Robertson as an asset of Free-thought.

The press boycott of Mr. Foote and the *Freethinker* is simply ridiculous. It deceives nobody, and only exposes the press to derision. With the exception of the *Star*, which we have often had occasion to single out and thank, the Liberal papers are just as bad as the Conservative papers, if not a trifle worse. The *Daily News* dismissed the great St. James's Hall meeting, which protested against the assassination of Ferrer, in a line and a half; described it as held on Saturday instead of Sunday; and entirely omitted Mr. Foote's name. Yet that was a *bonâ fide* meeting if there ever was one. Five-sixths, at least, of those present paid for their seats; which, it must be admitted, is a very unusual thing. The *Daily Chronicle* said nothing about the meeting at all. Yet there were several pencils going at the reporters' table. The explanation is, of course, that the boycott is not so much a reporters' as an editorial boycott. People mustn't be allowed to know that such a person as Mr. Foote exists. Yet he gets big meetings in spite of them.

Take the Thursday "Ferrer" meeting at the Memorial Hall. The *Chronicle* knocked Mr. Foote's name out of the list of speakers in the preliminary announcement, and omitted it again in the report of the meeting. Those who were present know how Mr. Foote was received and what sort of impression his speech made on the crowded audience. But he is a wicked, militant Atheist, and men of that kind must be treated as unmentionable. The *Morning Leader* did the same as the *Chronicle*. The *Daily News* gave a few lines to Mr. Foote's speech for once, but printed his name wrongly—just as if they didn't know "G. W. F."

Mr. Harry Snell made an excellent speech at the Memorial Hall protest meeting, and it was much applauded, but his name also was left out of the newspaper reports. Yet he is not a wicked, aggressive Atheist, but the sober and moderate representative of the Ethical Union; and we all know that the Ethicists would not hurt anybody or anything. Nothing but the most deliberate and calculating bigotry could have been responsible for the exclusion of Mr. Snell's name. He was once in the Secularist camp, and the fact is remembered against him.

Now that we are dealing with this matter we may as well ease our minds once for all. We have to say, then, that the Socialist press is, if anything, a trifle worse than the Liberal press. We say this pointedly of the *Clarion*; and we will amplify the reference if we are invited. We say the same thing, less pointedly perhaps, of *Justice*; and of the *Labor*

Leader the less said the better. Then there is the *New Age*. That journal affects to be unaware of the existence of Mr. Foote, the *Freethinker*, and the National Secular Society. Writing on the Ferrer case last week, for instance, the editor said:—

"And what about our English freethinkers and agnostics, where were they when their fellow believer was being murdered under their very eyes? There are plenty of freethinkers both in the Government and out of it. Viscount Morley of Blackburn might have been expected to wire Sir Edward Grey to intervene with Spain on behalf of a man whose only crime was to teach what Lord Morley himself has learned. And there were Mr. Haldane and Mr. John Burns, both, we believe, Freethinkers with whom Ferrer would have found himself intellectually at home: what were they doing while Sir Edward Grey was fishing in Northumberland and Ferrer was being shot? Mr. Balfour and Mr. J. M. Robertson, too, where were they? Even Mr. Bernard Shaw was too busy writing letters to the *Times* about the wretched Censorship to spare a word on behalf of the Censored Ferrer. And that doughty champion of democracy, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, was silent as Ferrer's grave. But if English silence is England's disgrace, a thousand times more disgraceful is the silence of those who possess the ear of England and the world."

Mr. Haldane and Mr. Balfour ought not to have appeared in this connection. We have corrected the *New Age's* nonsense before about Mr. Balfour's being a Freethinker. Mr. Chesterton, of course, is an opponent of Free-thought. The other names may pass. But they are not the whole Free-thought directory. It would have been more sensible, as well as more manly, if the editor of the *New Age* had recognised the protests made in the *Freethinker* before Ferrer's execution, as well as the protests made by Mr. Foote, and such of his colleagues as could be got together hurriedly, afterwards. We believe the great St. James's Hall meeting was the very first indoor protest against Ferrer's execution. The President of the National Secular Society, in fact, called the meeting before Ferrer was shot,—knowing very well that he would be shot.

Hosea Biglow sang—"I du believe in freedom's cause, ez fur away ez Paris is." That would be a very good motto for the London papers that denounce the persecution of a Ferrer (in Spain) and systematically boycott, besides winking at the persecution of, Freethinkers (in England).

The *Daily News* gave two lines to the great St. James's Hall meeting, organised by the National Secular Society, to protest against the murder of Professor Ferrer. But it gave some thirty lines to a "miraculous" cure at Sunderland. Sister Germaine, aged twenty-two, one of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who had been in bed for twelve months with tuberculosis of the foot, had been cured by a nine days' prayer party. Nothing happened until the eighth day, when we suppose the Almighty could not hold out any longer. Sister Germaine's intense pain suddenly ceased, and she is now able to walk about with a slight limp—not with the hop, skip, and jump that might have been expected after a miracle of healing. "Local priests," it is said, "confirm the authenticity of the case." That settles it!

Rev. H. F. Tracey, vicar of Dartmouth, seems to be "a character." Responding to a toast at the annual dinner of a local Swimming Club, he said that—"He had the utmost respect for those who could not accept the Christian revelation. One was brought up to think that if a man did not go to church he must be a wicked person, but we had lived long enough to know that was all nonsense, and so far as right living went those who might not go to church might be far superior to those who did." The reverend gentleman does not appear to be much fascinated by his present occupation, for he wound up by saying that, "If anyone present could put him on a soft way of retiring and earning a competent livelihood, he would be very grateful to him."

All the thoughts of man's heart are evil. So the Bible says. But the newspapers say that a poor young man, engaged about a steam-roller, fell off and was crushed to death; but with the little breath left him he begged that no blame should be attached to his mate. Was that an evil thought? We call it heroic.

A corrugated-iron church, eighty feet by forty, and weighing eighty tons, has been removed bodily from one street to another at Nottingham. Not by prayer, as the New Testament directs, but by stool rollers. It was a great opportunity missed. If the minister of that eighty-ton church had said to it, "Be thou removed hence into the other street!" and it had gone there, it would have been a triumph for Christianity. But stool rollers! Mere mechanical agencies! Oh, what a fall was there!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 31, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "The Reverend G. Bernard Shaw."

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

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 31, Birmingham. November 21, West Ham; 28, Aberdare. December 5, Liverpool; 12, Manchester; 19, West Ham.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 31, Canning Town (Minor) Hall. December 19, Leicester.
- S. V.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- G. D.—The press boycott is not over with us yet. A long way from that. It is more general than you seem to recognise. All sorts of papers share in it—even some that ought to know a great deal better. Glad you and your wife were "thrilled" by our Ferrer speech at St. James's Hall. We meant and felt what we said, and that is the only certain recipe for moving one's audience. Your suggestion *re* Ferrer is noted. Our difficulty is that our hands are too full already.
- A. L. PAGE.—Pleased to hear that the Bolton Freethinkers passed a resolution condemning Ferrer's execution. We hope you sent it to your local papers. Thanks for getting us twelve new readers. If every other reader could do the same we should soon make Freethought a mighty power in this country. With a large, paying circulation of the *Freethinker* we could do almost anything. A hundred ideas that we have long cherished would take form.
- J. D. W.—Pleased to hear that your children also, being withdrawn from religious instruction, are allowed to attend school at 9.45, without the slightest friction of any kind. Other freethinking parents might very well act in the same manner.
- J. BRINDLE.—It is only natural that those who murdered Ferrer should libel him. What they say about the teaching in his schools is utter nonsense on the face of it, and entirely in opposition to the published text-books of his that we have seen.
- R. H. ROBERTSON.—The document said to have been nailed up in every one of Ferrer's schools for the guidance of the children is an infamous forgery. And who can be surprised that murderers are also liars?
- T. FISHER.—We were obliged. Catholic journalists may be expected to support the Catholic Church.
- J. McVICAR.—Shall be sent. Thanks for your wish—"Good luck to the good old *Freethinker*."
- J. M.—Catholic priests are simply lying about Ferrer. He had as much to do with the Barcelona riots as we had. He had a good deal of money in one of the banks there, and you can understand how likely he was to urge the mob to pillage such establishments.
- J. H. LANGFORD.—Glad you are so pleased with the *Freethinker* after a year's acquaintance with it. Our shop manager is writing you on the matter of getting the *Freethinker* sold on the streets of Manchester. To stand financially just where we are, we should have to sell three times as many copies weekly at one penny; or doubling the number printed increases the cost of production, while the receipts would remain the same. Outsiders generally overlook this important fact.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- G. D.—See Luke xix. 27 for the "slaying the enemies" text. We have only said that religion and irreligion both have freedom in Japan, and that public education is entirely secular. The relation of the Government to social and political discussion is a matter on which we should wish more, or perhaps better, information than is contained in the cutting you send us. General language is so unsatisfactory. Everything depends upon what the leaflets really contained. Anarchism is tolerated in England, yet an Anarchist is now doing twelve months' imprisonment—for publishing incitements to assassination. Mere names are nothing. What are the facts? On the other point, we might say that State brothels exist almost all over Christian Europe. What is called "the State regulation of vice" amounts to that substantially. We answer your last question in the negative. No serious student of comparative religion could accept the theory that religion was invented by priests or anybody else. Priests have used religion for all sorts of base and sordid purposes; but that is a different matter altogether.
- J. DEAROX.—We can quite understand your being eight years in England without hearing of the *Freethinker*, which you value so highly now that you have made its acquaintance. We also agree with you that the paper ought to be better advertised, but the fact is that we lack the means to do much in that direction. At the same time we do not believe that lavish general advertising of this journal would pay; and as for reducing the price to a penny, you should read the paragraph in this week's "Sugar Plums." The fact is that we appeal to a very special public. Political papers, even Socialist papers, cater for a large proportion of people who are attracted to their various parties in non-intellectual ways. The really intellectual people are not a crowd, though one hopes their number is increasing; and it must be remembered that the *Freethinker* makes a purely intellectual appeal. With regard to a black

border in cases of death announcements, like that of Ferrer, is it not, after all, a mere conventionality?

F. R. THEAKSTONE.—We trust the Brockwell Park platform (see "Sugar Plums") will be well supported to-day.

H. W. P.—The article in the *Birmingham Weekly Post* on "The Ferrer Hubbub" is disgraceful; full of brutality and slander. There are plenty of scoundrels in England ready to imitate Ferrer's murderers if they had the opportunity.

J. PARTRIDGE.—All right. Thanks.

R. HARPER.—We are tired of answering questions about Musgrave Reade. We dealt with his case a few years ago, when he started the "converted infidel" business. He was connected with the Freethought movement in Manchester and Salford for a short time some twenty-five years ago. We have passed your remarks *re* the badge over to the N. S. S. secretary.

We may have something to say next week about the recent persecution on account of "improper language" under the London County Council bye-laws. We have been trying to get at the facts.

SOME answers to correspondents stand over through want of space.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 concludes the present course of lectures at St. James's Hall this evening (Oct. 31) and the "saints" should try for a full house on this occasion. The subject should be an attractive one—"The Reverend G. Bernard Shaw." Before the lecture Mr. Foote will refer to the Ferrer case and the recent events in relation to it at Paris and Madrid. This is a matter in which Freethinkers will be specially interested.

The proceedings at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening were necessarily rather tame after the crowd and excitement of the previous Sunday evening. Nevertheless there was a good audience, and Mr. Foote's lecture was much appreciated and applauded. A lady, Miss Kough, took the chair, and filled the post with grace and efficiency. A good many questions were asked after the lecture, and one critic offered opposition. But the special feature of the evening, perhaps, was the "naming" of a baby boy, Herbert John Cheshire. The function was performed by the lecturer in a way that seemed to give great satisfaction to the audience generally, and something more to a good many of the ladies.

South-Lancashire "saints" will note that Mr. Foote lectures at Manchester next Sunday (November 7), in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints. The subjects will be announced in our next issue.

Birmingham "saints" and Midland "saints" generally, will note that Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures to-day (Oct. 31) in the Birmingham Town Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., and the local N. S. S. Branch. We hope to hear of large meetings. There will be instrumental music, as on previous occasions, for half an hour before each lecture (afternoon and evening). All seats are free, but some are reserved for ticket-holders. Application for tickets must be made to Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road.

Tea will be provided, as usual, at the Town Hall between Mr. Cohen's afternoon and evening lectures, for visitors from a distance.

Mr. Arthur B. Moss is standing as one of the Progressive candidates for the Marlborough Ward in the forthcoming election of Borough Councillors for Camberwell, and those electors in North Camberwell who wish to see the *Freethinker* reinstated on the tables of the Public Libraries should not fail to give him their vote. The election takes place on Monday next (Nov. 1). Freethinkers should try to make their influence felt at this election.

We hope the local "saints" will rally this afternoon (Oct. 31) to the support of the Secular platform in Brockwell Park. Mr. Davies was lecturing last Sunday to an attentive audience when the platform was rushed from behind by a large body of Christian roughs, who were evidently there for the purpose. Mr. Davies and several friends were thrown down and trampled upon, but happily not seriously hurt. But they were determined to hold their meeting, so they put the platform up again and continued the proceedings until the time came for closing the Park. We are informed that Mr. Davies acted extremely well in a very trying situation.

Friends have asked whether Mr. Foote's speech on the death of Francisco Ferrer, which appeared on the front page of last week's *Freethinker*, was the speech as he delivered it at St. James's Hall, or whether he wrote it out from memory afterwards. We reply that the speech was taken down in shorthand by Mr. H. R. Clifton, a member of the National Secular Society, and that his longhand copy was very little altered in the revision. The principal changes were in punctuation.

Mr. F. Bonte, writing us on the Ferrer case, pays us a handsome compliment, which we print merely as a set off against the boycott of the ordinary press, which is not based upon disdain but upon bigotry. "Your speech as given in the *Freethinker*," Mr. Bonte says, "is grand, sober, noble—every way worthy of the occasion." "How rapidly," he adds, "events in Spain have followed your anticipations! I presume that now all the tyrannical doings of Maura will be reversed and Ferrer's schools re-opened, his fortune saved and his labor of love resumed. His enemies seem to have overreached themselves."

Mr. R. B. Cunningham Graham makes the following suggestion in a letter to the press:—

"In deference to the opinion of the advanced thought of Europe and the two Americas, the first act of the new Liberal Government in Spain, after stopping the disastrous war in the Riff, should be to disinter the body of Ferrer and rebury it with honor under a sumptuous monument in the centre of the Plaza de Cataluna, in Barcelona. The monument would serve as a lasting menace to the Clerical Party, and as a perpetual lighthouse to lovers of liberty."

We fear it is too good to hope for. But who knows? Who knows?

Last week's *Freethinker* ran out of print, and several orders on Saturday could not be executed. If any regular readers were disappointed, which is probably doubtful, they will be able to get copies (out of the returns) by ordering again. For the information of any such disappointed readers we may state that last week's *Freethinker* contained a verbatim report of Mr. Foote's speech at the great St. James's Hall meeting on the murder of Ferrer.

"Having received free copies of your splendid journal," a correspondent writes, "I wish to say how glad I am to have found it. I had not previously seen a copy or heard of its existence. It introduces a new pleasure into my life, and I shall not fail to make it known to my friends." This correspondent forwards the names and addresses of several other persons to whom we might send six consecutive free copies advantageously. We shall be glad to receive such names and addresses from all points of the compass. Our friends are invited to make a strenuous effort this winter to promote our circulation. If half our readers helped a bit in this way our circulation would soon double.

The long life of a journal like ours is "miraculous." We have seen so many advanced papers come and go since we issued the first number of the *Freethinker* in 1881. And some of them have had heaps of money spent on them. People who don't understand our problem tell us from time to time that we ought to drop the price from twopence to a penny. That could be done, of course, with a lot of capital behind the experiment, which might succeed in time; but with our poor resources it would only make matters worse. We see that the *New Age* is raising its price to threepence, and we infer that its conductors have had quite enough (probably too much) of the penny. A few weeks ago *Justice* had to appeal for financial aid. These are journals which appeal to a political party, yet they cannot pay their way. The difficulties of a journal like the *Freethinker* may therefore be imagined. We wish a few friends who could afford it would make up the President's Honorarium Fund for 1909 at once, and thus enable us to devote a little cash to advertising the paper at this favorable time of the year. Less than £50 is required now.

How Ferrer Died.

THINKING that our readers would like to have, and keep by them, a record of how Francisco Ferrer died, we have extracted or translated the following passages from English and Continental papers.

First of all, however, we venture to give an extract from a letter written by Ferrer to the Madrid paper, *El País*, on October 7. It shows the base and brutal treatment he received during his detention in prison:—

"I protest equally against the seizure of my clothes. They have taken away everything, from my drawers to my hat, and forced me to dress in wretched raiment and to present myself thus before the examining judge and the prison officials. The last time I saw the examining judge, I demanded in vain a suit of clothes from my home, in order that I might wear it on the day of hearing. He refused me that favor, telling me that my effects were confiscated. I could not even obtain a pocket-handkerchief.

I must protest against my detention—during the month of close imprisonment to which I have been subjected—in one of the dungeons of 'rigorous confinement,' which combines so many bad hygienic conditions that if I had not been blessed with robust health and a will superior to all human miseries, I should not have survived the ordeal."

The next item is a Reuter telegram containing an account of Ferrer's last hours from the Paris paper, *Le Matin*, of October 14:—

"After the reading of his sentence, Senor Ferrer begged the chaplain of the prison to leave, as he had much to write. 'Your presence, which I greatly appreciate,' he said, 'would disturb me. I beg you, therefore, to leave me and to excuse my apparent want of courtesy.' The priest replied that the regulations of the prison would not allow him to withdraw, adding, 'I will withdraw into a corner of the chapel, and you will be able to write in perfect peace.' Very politely the condemned man insisted on his desire to be alone. The priest then consented to withdraw, but insisted upon visiting the condemned man every half-hour.

The prisoner was then visited by a Jesuit and by a representative of the Bishop, who spoke to him of the repose of his soul, and begged him to confess.

Ferrer replied, 'Leave me to die in peace. I have my ideas and I am as firm in my convictions as you are in yours. If you wish to argue we will talk, or otherwise you may go,' and he resumed the writing of his will, upon which he was engaged from 10 o'clock in the evening until 5 o'clock in the morning.

When on his way to the place of execution he begged the Friars of Peace and Charity not to accompany him, and they left him at the edge of the moat. At the foot of the wall, Ferrer asked to be shot with his face to the soldiers and without bandage over his eyes. He was forced to place a handkerchief over his eyes, however, being told that traitors were not allowed to be shot otherwise."

The following account of Ferrer's execution is from the pen of the special correspondent of the *Daily Mirror* at Paris, and it appeared in that journal on October 14:—

"Senor Ferrer was shot this morning at nine o'clock in the prison of Montjuich, at Barcelona. He had been sentenced to death as the instigator of the recent revolutionary outbreaks at Barcelona.

Last night at eight o'clock the governor of the fortress, accompanied by two black-hooded monks, went to Ferrer's cell and informed him that he was to be shot this morning, and that the orders were to place him in the prison chapel all night so that he might prepare for his death.

With perfect self-possession Ferrer threw away the cigarette he was smoking and said, 'It is unnecessary to place me in the chapel, for I do not believe in your religion and do not require its ministrations.'

But the governor replied that orders must be obeyed, and two warders came forward to robe the condemned man in a long black gown and hood, on the breast of which was a great white cross. He refused to wear it, however, and was conducted to the chapel as he was.

The six yellow candles on the altar feebly lightened the gloom. The monks at once began to offer Latin prayers, turning every now and then to offer their services to Ferrer, only to be gently waved away.

Ferrer asked to see his counsel, and maintained perfect serenity until the latter arrived. Then he was greatly agitated.

He gave a farewell message to his daughters. 'Tell them,' he said, 'that their father dies with a clear conscience,

and that his only crime is that of trying to break the blackness of superstition and ignorance in which his country is enshrouded.'

As his counsel, who was deeply moved, prepared to say farewell, he embraced Ferrer, who at this point broke down and wept violently.

Later, as the dim light of day entered the chapel window, a priest came in to say mass and to urge Ferrer to make his confession and receive holy communion. He refused firmly.

At last the death-bell of the chapel began to toll, and the governor of the prison, accompanied by the officers of the guard, entered and Ferrer's arms were bound.

He made no remark as he was led out into the courtyard and placed against a wall opposite to a party of soldiers.

The two black-hooded brothers, whose faces were cowed so that only their eyes were visible, made a last attempt to induce him to kiss the crucifix, putting it in front of his lips, but he turned away his head and said, 'Let me die in peace.'

At the word of command the company of soldiers, standing only ten feet away, levelled their rifles and fired. Ferrer fell instantly."

We translate the following account of Ferrer's execution from the report of the Barcelona correspondent of the *Journal de Charleroi*, appearing in that paper on October 15:—

"It was ten o'clock, the night before last, when the congregation of the Brothers of Peace and Charity received a communication signed by the Captain-General, instructing them to send six brothers of their order to assist at an execution.

At eleven o'clock three carriages drove up to the castle of Montjuich, conveying the brothers, who, after having been searched and their identity established, were admitted into the prison. Their arrival was enough to signal that an execution was going to take place.

Throughout the night, besides, there were signs of sinister preparations. The left side of the city was closely patrolled, and at five in the morning two companies of infantry and two mounted squadrons could be seen defiling in the Colon district. Curious persons or passers-by were compelled to accompany the patrols, in order that they might not spread abroad the news that an execution was approaching.

It might have been seven o'clock when the inhabitants of the neighborhood saw with a shudder two Brothers of Peace and Charity walking slowly up to Montjuich, carrying with them the coffin for the condemned man.

A few minutes later there also went up the hill the engineer Captain Galceran, Ferrer's counsel, who had the right to remain in the fortress with his client till the last moment.

When, at eight o'clock, General Escrin arrived, who was to command the shooting party, some fifty persons at the most had been able to gain the heights overlooking the moats of Montjuich, and could see the squadrons of cavalry take up their position in the moat of Saint-Eulalie, surrounding the two companies of infantry who were to do the honors and—shoot.

All was ready for the execution in that place, so lugubrious and still, which had witnessed the end of so many existences. But what had passed within the castle of Montjuich? Since the incarceration of Ferrer in the old fortress, it had suddenly become impossible to obtain any precise information about him. One might say that the tomb had already closed over him. Here, however, is what I have been able to learn of his last hours in the famous old prison, where he spent scarcely twenty-four hours.

If certain of his partisans had cherished some hope, it seems pretty clear that Ferrer himself did not share their optimism.

During the whole afternoon of the previous day he had spent his time in writing farewell letters. He showed a constant anxiety to clear himself of all unjust suspicions, and in most of his letters he inserted cuttings from newspapers reporting the most important passages of his counsel's defence.

In the evening, towards half-past eight, he was brought to the governor of the castle's office, where he found himself in presence of the judge, Raso Negroni, accompanied by his secretary, and flanked by armed soldiers. The magistrate read the sentence of death pronounced against him by the court-martial, ratified by the authorities at Madrid; and informed him that the supreme council and the ministry had refused to transmit any appeal for mercy to the king.

It was death, then.

Ferrer listened in silence, a little pale, but, in spite of a slight nervousness, maintaining a calm and dignified attitude. In his usual handwriting he firmly signed the document notifying that the condemned prisoner had heard the reading of his sentence; and he followed, without a word, the warders who conducted him back to his cell.

The cell was full of gaolers and armed soldiers. The prisoner is not allowed to touch any of the familiar objects that he quitted a few minutes ago. So the search began; a thoroughly careful search, which was to prevent the doomed man from having anything that could help him in attempting suicide. He was deprived of the least lace, the smallest button; and he was arrayed in clothes that fastened in a special manner.

Ferrer had already dined. Whether he wished to strengthen himself physically against the approaching ordeal, or whether his energetic temperament had enabled him to defy dejection, he had paid ample honor to a simple repast of pork and green peas. So that when the Brothers of Charity offered him a collation, with stimulants, he simply refused by declaring, quite truly, that he had dined and was in need of nothing more.

Yet a long night vigil—and what a vigil!—awaited him. He knew it when he followed with a firm step the soldiers who conducted him to the chapel.

This aggravation of the death penalty is customary in Spain, and is in essence purely religious. The legislators who prescribe it represent it as intended to familiarise the condemned man with the idea of eternity, and to leave him alone with his conscience in face of the cross and the holy sacrament. It is commonly in a prison cell that this rudimentary chapel is improvised. That *tête-à-tête* with the idea of death generally lasts twenty-four hours, and the prisoner has a right, during that time, to interviews with his confessor and his family.

For Ferrer the chapel had been installed in a place near the Arsenal which is in the centre of the castle of Montjuich. He found there father Font, the famous Jesuit, who had already visited, during that same black watch, the anarchists Pallas, Salvador, and other prisoners of mark condemned to death.

With a wave of the hand, Ferrer promptly refused the services of the priests. The chaplain of the castle came to try to vanquish his opposition, and two other priests approached him, one after the other, during the night, to offer him the 'succors of religion.'

Doubtless it was to the last one that Ferrer replied impatiently that he wished to have nothing in common with the 'black frocks.'

The exhortations of the Brothers of Charity, who remained with him in the chapel, were just as unsuccessful. They confined themselves therefore to offering him, with pleasant words, refreshments, or wine, or liqueurs, or simply tobacco. But the doomed man accepted none of those physical comforts, which cheat the organism and put off the thought of death. With calm determination he refused everything.

After walking up and down a good while, with bent brow, Ferrer expressed a desire to dictate his last will to a notary; and they fetched Juan Permanyer, who remained with him for more than seven hours. When the man of law thought he had finished the last clause of this testament, which no doubt surpassed the length of a simple family document and took the character of a political manifesto, Ferrer suddenly recollected that he had omitted an important clause; and the notary was recalled, and the dictation resumed.

Ferrer, who would not kneel down, had to stand up all the time in the chapel where he was obliged to spend the last hours of his life, and all the night he walked up and down with a rapid step in the limited space left to him between the rows of priests and monks telling the beads of their rosaries.

It was at a quarter-to-nine exactly, and it had been daylight for a good while, when they came to apprise Ferrer that he must prepare to march to his death. He had been in the chapel since eight o'clock the previous evening!

He at once declared that he was ready.

But he had to still wait while the castle authorities went carefully through the operation of casting lots. It is thus that priests and soldiers who assist at an execution are selected.

At last all was arranged. The escort formed, and, placed in the middle, Ferrer marched in step with the soldiers.

The chaplain of the castle walked by his side, murmuring no doubt the words of peace and supreme consolation. Ferrer's voice could be heard clearly, begging him to withdraw. But the priest replied that duty commanded him to remain at his post.

'Very well, then,' responded Ferrer. And those two men, so far in spirit from each other, marched side by side, and spoke no more.

The way was long. It was necessary to traverse a vast stretch of the precincts of the castle before reaching a postern which opened on the moat Saint Eulalie.

At that postern Ferrer was received (an administrative irony!) by the Governor of Montjuich, who awaited him as a distinguished guest. He was surrounded by all the other functionaries who were present out of duty or curiosity.

Ferrer continued to walk forward firmly with head erect. Arriving before the Governor, where the escort paused, he looked at him and awaited his questions.

'Have you any last request to make, or any wish to confide to me?' the Governor asked.

Ferrer looked him straight in the face and replied: 'I only wish, if it is possible, that I may not be forced on my knees and bandaged.'

A long colloquy took place among the officers. Could he be permitted to die in that way? After an exchange of opinion in undertones, the Governor decided the question by granting Ferrer the right to meet his death standing, but it was absolute that his eyes should be bandaged.

'I thank you,' Ferrer said.

He was then conducted to the end of the moat, by the wall, near which the infantry were drawn up in lines behind the two rows of the execution party.

Ferrer's hands were tied behind his back; his eyes were bandaged; and he was left alone. At the moment when the commanding officer of the firing party drew his sword, Ferrer cried with a strong voice:

'Look well, lads! I am innocent. Long live the Modern School. Long live —'

The rifles sounded, cutting off the last syllables, and he fell backward at full length.

The officer approached him with a doctor. It was seen that Ferrer breathed no longer. Death had been instantaneous. He had received one bullet in the throat and three others in the head.

The prisoner's death being certified, the troops defiled slowly before the corpse, then marched off in order, and disappeared at the angle of the moat.

Then the Brothers of Peace and Charity approached the corpse. They had deposited near him the coffin carried up the previous evening, and with infinite care they lifted Ferrer's dead body into its last resting-place.

A squad of soldiers then approached. The coffin was lifted on four shoulders, and the procession returned along the road to the castle."

It was not possible for us to translate Ferrer's last words into English and preserve the exact order in which he uttered them. The sentence cut short by the bullets was "Long live the School —!" The adjective "Modern" would have followed, according to the genius of the Latin languages. Ferrer's last words, therefore, were "Long live the School!" That was what he was thinking of. He had given his life and fortune to the School. It was the School—the Secular School—that was to explode superstition, undermine priestcraft, and liberate mankind.

G. W. F.

The Narratives in Genesis.—XVII.

THE LORD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM.

(Continued from p. 678.)

IN Genesis xvii. the Priestly writer, who is the composer of the whole chapter, gives us a full and particular account of a covenant which the Lord was graciously pleased to make with his friend Abram. The narrative commences:—

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am El Shaddai; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly."

This was the first occasion, according to the Priestly writer, upon which the Lord appeared and spoke to Abram. And such being the case, the god thought it advisable to inform that patriarch of the name by which he desired to be known. This was *El Shaddai*—translated "God Almighty." Shaddai, it is true, was a title of the Babylonian god Bel; but that is a detail we need not trouble ourselves with. It is true, also, that Abram was already acquainted with his god's other name, *Yahveh*; but this appears only in the Yahvist narratives which were evidently unknown to the Priestly writer. The latter fact, too, will account for promises being now made to Abram, apparently for the first time, predicting that he should be "the father of many nations," and that to him and to his seed should be given "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession"—promises made twice before in the narratives written by the

Yahvist. The only fresh circumstance connected with these promises is that the god Shaddai, upon this occasion, made a change in the names borne by Abram and Sarai—though why he did so will for ever remain a mystery.

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee" (xvii. 5).

"As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be" (xvii. 15).

In the first of these statements it is clearly implied that the name "Ab-raham" signifies "father of a multitude"—the first two letters *ab* meaning "father." Such, however, is not the case: the appellations *Ab ram* and *Ab-raham* both mean "high father," the additional letters making no difference. Similarly, the names *Sarai* and *Sarah* have the same meaning, both being derived from the *Babylonia Sarrat*—"Queen."

We come now to the great covenant between the god Shaddai on the one part, and Abraham and his descendants on the other part, by which the deity aforesaid engaged "to be a god" to the patriarch named and to his posterity, the latter agreeing to conform to the obscene rite mentioned in the covenant. The god Shaddai is represented as saying:—

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every male among you shall be circumcised.....and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations.....And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (xvii. 10-14).

In the Septuagint the words italicised read: "that soul shall be utterly destroyed from his family." The meaning of the phrase "shall be cut off" is therefore perfectly plain. It will also be seen that this covenant completely overthrows Paul's argument respecting Abraham being saved by faith without circumcision. With regard to Abraham, since El Shaddai was so good as to propose such a covenant, that patriarch had no alternative but to agree to it, and to get himself and all the males of his house circumcised with as little delay as possible. And so it came to pass. Without any explanations or instructions from the god Shaddai "In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son: and all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him." This was a day never to be forgotten in the annals of Abraham's household. Abraham had, as we know, 318 men-servants, and probably as many lads of various ages, who must all have blessed El Shaddai on that memorable day. All the women of the household, too—wives of the men, and mothers of the lads—would have known what was going on; so the moral effect of the new covenant upon all the inmates of Abraham's house must have been distinctly elevating.

Though not expressly stated, this account is supposed to record the divine origin of circumcision. The next mention of the rite is in Exod. iv. 20-26, in which it is related that the Hebrew deity met Moses and his wife and two sons on the way to Egypt "and sought to kill him" because he had neglected to circumcise one of the latter. On this occasion Zipporah, the wife, circumcised her son there and then, whereupon the god "let him alone." From this incident we see how very important the Hebrew deity considered the rite. Finally, in Josh. v. 29 we have an account of the circumcision of all the males of the Jewish nation, the reason assigned for which being that during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness no one had been circumcised, while all the males who had left Egypt circumcised had died during the wanderings. This was another never-to-be-forgotten day in connection with the Lord's covenant with Abraham.

From the account of the institution of circumcision by the Hebrew god himself, one would naturally suppose that the rite was ordained to render the descendants of Abraham distinct from other people;

that, in fact, it was something new which had never been known before. Such, however, is not the case. Many nations knew and practised this indecent mutilation long before the time of Moses, and even before the time of Abraham. First among these come the ancient Egyptians, whose use of the rite is proved by representations on the very earliest monuments. One of these is a scene on a bas-relief in the temple of Chunsa at Karnak, in which two lads, supposed to be sons of Ramses II., are depicted as undergoing the operation. Herodotus appears to have been perfectly correct when he said:—

"The only people who were circumcised originally were the Colchians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians. The Phœnicians and those Syrians that are in Palestine confess that they learned it from the Egyptians.....But as for the Egyptians and Ethiopians themselves, I am not able to say which of them received it from the other."

We know, further, that circumcision was a primitive custom of the Semitic inhabitants of Arabia, and that in later times it was carried by preachers of Islam into Persia, India, and Turkey. The rite was found in use among the ancient peoples of Central America. It is still in use among some tribes on the Amazon, among three distinct races in the South Seas, among most of the tribes of Australia, among the Papuans, the New Caledonians, and the New Hebrides, besides being widely spread among the native races of Africa.

With regard to the introduction of the rite into Canaan, we know from ancient inscriptions that several centuries before the Israelites are known to have inhabited that country, the Egyptian kings had reduced to subjection its Phœnician inhabitants—the people whom the Jews called Canaanites. Between the years B. C. 1630 and B. C. 1200 the kings Thotmes I., Thotmes III., Seti I., Ramses II., Menepthah I., and Ramses III. many times over-ran the land of Canaan, fighting battles with revolted subjects, and bringing them once more into subjection. This, there can be little doubt, was the origin of the alleged servitude of 400 years of Gen. xvi. 13, and of the 430 years of Exod. xii. 40-41. So far as evidence is concerned, there was no other Egyptian bondage. Before the end of this period of Egyptian domination the circumcision practised by the more powerful nation had been adopted as a religious rite by the conquered peoples, who, several centuries later, ascribed its origin to a covenant between a mythical ancestor and their tribal god. And this brings us to the first scrap of real history relating to the Israelites as a nation—which I take to be the following:—

Judges iii. 5, 6.—"And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites (the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite); and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods."

To the foregoing may be added the fact that the Israelites were of the same race and spoke the same language as the so-called Canaanites. The stories of an exodus from Egypt, of forty years wandering in the wilderness, of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, of the conquest of thirty-one kings of Canaan under a leader named Joshua, and of the division of the conquered country among the tribes of Israel—these stories are purely mythical.

At some period subsequent to the time of Ramses III. the Egyptian kings found themselves unable to maintain their long dominion over Canaan, which country then became split up into a number of small states, and as time went on, the usual result followed—wars of conquest and extermination, in which the stronger kings subjugated the weaker ones. Then was the time when a confederation of tribes became necessary for mutual protection, and then saw the birth of the Israelites as a nation. Most of the Israelitish tribes were old inhabitants of Canaan, and are referred to as such in the oldest piece of literary composition in the Bible—the so-called "Song of Deborah" (Judg. v.). These tribes were, no doubt, already circumcised;

but those which joined them at a later date—Judah, Simeon, Levi, and Gad—would have to undergo the necessary operation before being admitted into the confederacy and entitled to call themselves by the name of Israel—an appellation signifying "God fighteth," and meaning, of course, that the tribes did the fighting and the god took the credit when they were victorious. When the tribes met with a reverse, this was ascribed to their doing "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord"; so that whatever happened the god always won.

Of the four tribes not named in the ancient Song, one of them, the Levites, constituted the priesthood of the country, whose business it was to offer sacrifices to the gods. Another, the tribe of Gad, dwelt on the eastern side of the Jordan, but had not, apparently, joined the confederation. There remained, then, but two tribes that were not already in or near Canaan—Judah, the most powerful of all, and his ally Simeon. These, when they came, had to find for themselves a place in the land; and they did so, taking possession of the greater portion of the province called in New Testament times Judæa. Where these tribes came from is unknown; but the account of their conquest of the territory they afterwards occupied is given in Judg. i. 8-19. This chapter—if we date it after the time referred to in the Song of Deborah, and strike out all references to Joshua and "the Lord," and to the older tribes having attempted to "drive out" their neighbors called Canaanites—may be taken as mainly historical. ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Memorial Hall Protest Meeting.

SPECIAL TO THE "FREETHINKER."

THE Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, London, was crowded to the doors on Thursday evening (Oct. 21) with a great gathering of citizens to protest against the judicial murder of Senor Ferrer.

Mr. G. N. Barnes presided, and those who supported him on the platform represented many shades of opinion, and included Dr. Clifford, Mr. Harry Snell, Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Wilson, M.P., Mr. Cunningham Graham, P.P., Mr. Henderson, M.P., Sir George Kekewich, Mr. G. W. Foote, and the veteran Prince Kropotkin.

Letters of warm sympathy were read from Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. Philip Snowden, Dr. Spence Watson, Rev. R. J. Campbell, Mr. Percy Alden, M.P., Mr. Galloway Weir, M.P., Mr. Hall Caine, Mr. Geo. Cadbury, Mr. H. S. Salt, Mrs. Despard, and others.

Mr. Barnes, in his opening address, said that the feeling of indignation at Ferrer's death was general because all felt that the act was a blow at freedom of thought.

Dr. Clifford, who moved the resolution of protest, had a great reception, and spoke well. He characterised the death of Ferrer as a "most cowardly crime," and he contemplated "the birth of a new Spain as the outcome of the self-sacrificing devotion and noble patriotism of this great martyr."

Mr. Harry Snell, who followed, was in fine form. He was succeeded by Mr. Hyndman, who also had a great reception. Mr. Hyndman said that "he never remembered so spontaneous, so determined, so international an outcry as that which had been raised."

By this time the audience had become warm, and when Mr. Foote rose he had an ovation. His speech had a marked effect upon the vast audience, and his peroration was greeted with a tornado of applause.

Mr. Cunningham Graham was forceful and picturesque. His opening sentences, "Viva Espana!" "The Spanish people have answered the death of Francisco Ferrer by hurling Maura, his assassin, from power," were very telling.

Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., said he felt humiliated at the inaction of officialdom on this matter. It was serious that forty members could not be found in the House of Commons to secure the adjournment asked for. With regard to the Press, his sense of humiliation was worse.

Sir George Kekewich's statement that he was one of the four Liberal members who stood up in the House of Commons on that occasion, was greeted with loud cheers.

Prince Kropotkin had a royal reception. Evidently the meeting regarded the old warrior with affection.

The resolution of protest was passed in silence, all standing bareheaded.

A noticeable feature of the audience was the presence of a large number of ladies.

C. E. S.

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, "The Reverend G. Bernard Shaw."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, Harry Boulter, "In Prison for Blasphemy."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "New Light on Materialism."

OUTDOOR.

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

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon), Walter Bradford and Sidney Cook.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Seven Sisters Corner): 7, J. Rowney, "Some Sayings of Jesus."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): C. Cohen, 3, "Spain Under the Crescent and the Cross: a Chapter in the History of Christianity"; 7, "The Origin and Decay of God." Barrow's Coffee House, Spring Hill, Thursday, Nov. 4, at 8, H. Lennard, "Friedrich Nietzsche."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): John Turner, 12 (noon), "Women, Past and Future"; 6.30, "Free-thought as a Principle."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A. Aladin, "The Struggle for Freedom in Russia."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Idol of God and the Ideal of Humanity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "The Salvation Army and the Bible."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Hedley Café, Clayton-street): 7.30, A. Howson, "Socialism."

NOTTINGHAM (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, J. Bates, "Is There a God?"

BUSINESS CARDS.

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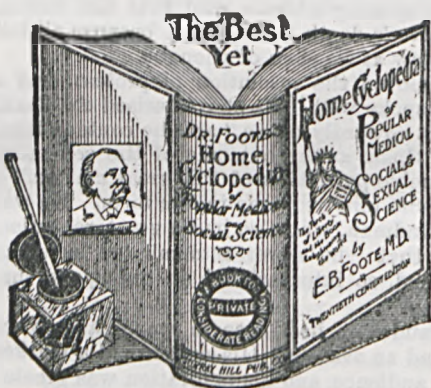
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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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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