

# THE Freethinker

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*Wisdom is to be found in truth alone.*—GOETHE.

## Spooks—Old and New.

GODS and ghosts belong to the same great family. A ghost is a little sort of a God, and a God is a big sort of a ghost. This may sound flippant to some ears, but the students of Anthropology and Evolution will not think it so. It may sound strange to some ears, but truth is often strange, and, as Byron said, stranger than fiction.

Christians worship spooks. Jehovah was at first a fetish carried about in a box, which was grandiosely called the Ark of the Covenant; the said Covenant being ratified by blood-rites such as circumcision and the sacrifice of the firstborn. Afterwards he became a spook,—which is a step in advance, for a spook is alive and active, which a fetish is not, and on the way to becoming a deity. Jehovah as a spook walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, visited and dined with Abraham, wrestled all night with Jacob, and granted a view of his "back parts" to Moses. Since then he has become God the Father of the Christian Trinity.

Jesus Christ started as a human baby, and lived and died as a human being. True, he worked miracles, but miracles were as common as blackberries then—and for hundreds of years afterwards; in fact, they still happen at Lourdes and other Catholic places of pilgrimage. Christians never challenged the miracles of Paganism; they simply ascribed those miracles to the power of the Devil,—their own miracles (of course) being wrought by the power of God. Thus the miracles of Jesus Christ, whether real or imaginary, did not make him God. He developed into that dignity after his death. It was the resurrection that advanced him a step higher. And what was the resurrection? It was the appearance of his spook to his apostles, and certain ladies of their acquaintance. We may say, indeed, that Christianity is the worship of the famous Jerusalem Ghost; who got out of the way of criticism by sailing aloft and sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, thus placing God the Father and God the Son for ever side by side.

The third person of the Christian Trinity is undoubtedly a ghost. It is called a ghost—the Holy Ghost; and all its appearances have been singular and superhuman, or at least non-human. It appeared mysteriously and indescribably at the annunciation of Jesus Christ's birth; it appeared as a dove at his baptism in the Jordan; it appeared as cloven tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost; and it was supposed to animate the goose which waddled in the van of one of the most foolish of the foolish Crusades.

Christianity and spookology are thus identical; or rather they are related to each other as bacon is to pork,—all pork not being bacon, but all bacon being pork.

Now the Christian clergy, like all other clergy, as we long ago remarked, are simply fighters of spooks. They are not quite as bad as they were when all the church bells in Christendom were rung to scare away Halley's comet,—which, by the way, *did* go— in the course of time. But they still talk of gods,

who get angry with us; of devils, who are always seeking to do us a mischief; and of male and female saints, who can do us good turns if they are properly supplicated, and adequately financed. The devils, or black spooks, were once believed to take up their quarters now and then in the bodies of men, women, or children; and turning them out of their human lodgings was a recognised part of ecclesiastical business. Exorcists were seldom unemployed. Even in our thrice respectable Church of England, the casting out of devils was duly provided for. The seventy-second Canon, which has never been repealed, provides that no clergyman must cast out devils without the written permission of the bishop of his diocese. Exorcism was thus regulated, but not abolished.

Winning for us the favor of one set of spooks, and protecting us from the malice of another set of spooks, is the special function of priests. All the other functions they claim nowadays really belong to the doctor, the statesman, the moralist, and the schoolmaster. The gentlemen of the Black Army, which has many divisions, earn their living by propitiating or terrifying spooks. The propitiating is done with cash; the terrifying is done with mystic spells. "We have an army of red coats," said Fox, "to fight the French; and an army of black coats to fight the Devil—of whom he standeth not in awe." One would think that whistling would keep off devils as well as a parson, but one could hardly expect the clergy to take the same view of the matter. They have to reckon with the hard law of self-preservation. Consequently, they declare that the spooks are real, and that they are the only persons who can keep them off. They cannot show a single specimen for love or money; but an imaginary spook is quite good enough for their purposes. If a showman never has to lift the curtain it does not matter whether he has anything on the other side or not.

Spookology always tends to become a close business. The old practitioners start a kind of Trade Union (they call it a Church) in order to keep the business to themselves. They quarrel amongst themselves a good deal, for each Church would have a monopoly if it could; but they oppose a united front to all new comers. That explains the dead set which is being made at Mr. W. T. Stead. He runs a lady spook called Julia, who was once a journalist in Chicago, and is therefore a most serviceable spook to a restless and enterprising publicist. Through the medium of this lady spook, who does the honors on the other side, and some "clairvoyant" and "clairaudient" persons on this side—that is, persons who can see what doesn't exist and hear what isn't said, Mr. Stead has just been interviewing the spooks of Beaconsfield and Gladstone, and supplying the press with readable, if misleading, copy. Now the good Christians cannot stand this. They roundly assert that Mr. Stead is either an artful impostor or a shocking simpleton. But why should *they* call him such unpleasant names? Jesus Christ's spook communicated with a number of persons, male and female, and why should not Beaconsfield's and Gladstone's spooks communicate with Mr. Stead? One spook is as good as another; one spook's word is as good as another's. Merely as spooks, Julia is as credible to us as Jesus Christ.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Dolorous Freethinkers.

SEVERAL weeks ago, in the course of a series of articles on "The Nature of Religion," I pointed out how vague, and consequently how valueless, the word "religion" had become with people of professed liberal tendencies. A word that is historically meaningless unless associated with supernaturalism is used to express all sorts of ethical and social ideals, and often a mere intellectual attitude. In its way this might be regarded as a pleasant sign of the times but for two considerations. The first is that one is never quite sure how far a desire to placate religious prejudice is responsible for the use of the word. The second is that while certain people may use religion in a social or an ethical sense, others—and these by no means a small number—will take it as either an indication of a belief in supernaturalism on the part of those who use it or as an unwilling testimony to the soundness of their own belief in the supernatural. In this way people who ought to count for forces of development are really converted into instruments of reaction. Persons who over and over again rightly emphasise the value of clear thinking are in this way made to encourage the perpetuation of both slovenly thought and speech.

Examples of what is meant by the above are furnished in a recent address by Professor Michael Sadler, and in a speech by Professor J. H. Muirhead, of Birmingham University. The former was delivering his presidential address before the Teachers' Guild of Great Britain and Ireland, the latter lecturing before the Yardley Labor Church. Both speakers would probably describe themselves as some sort of Agnostic in relation to religious beliefs, and yet both of them profess a certain reluctance in parting with religion and a fear of what may happen unless we quickly put "something in its place." A little more faith in their own principles and a little truer understanding of the nature of progress might easily dispense with much of this doleful speaking by those who are no longer at one with orthodoxy. It is dispiriting and annoying to find non-Christians referring to their own intellectual position as one that needs the sympathy of the religious world because of its forlorn character, and who look back upon the flesh-pots of their old belief as though in giving that up they had surrendered all the brightness and cheerfulness of their lives. Such utterances and such an attitude are travesties of the truth. A sane intellectual ethic respects the right of any person to hold and to express any opinion that seems to them justifiable, but it also demands that one shall duly respect one's own opinions. And neither truth nor justice demands that we shall attribute to *Christian* beliefs the devotion to ideals, or the sense of a common welfare uniting all members of society, that has been evidenced by people holding widely different religious beliefs, and by those holding none at all. Such quite unwarrantable deference to Christians only inspires them with a stronger conviction of their own value and encourages them in a supercilious treatment of their opponents.

Professor Muirhead, after pointing out that "some of our most prominent Churchmen and Nonconformists were among our greatest social reformers"—a statement hardly true as a matter of fact, and, even if it were, possessing no particular logical value—went on to lament that there was "no active alliance between the great mass of the Labor Party and religion, or any concerted attempt to permeate the new Socialism with any definite religious idea." And then he proceeded to give his audience some reasons why a religion of some kind is necessary.

"From the side of the individual no one can escape the 'obstinate questioning' as to the meaning of life and death and his relation to the universe around him. On the other hand, from the side of the movement towards social reform there is nothing except the consciousness in us of a force higher and greater than ourselves (which we call religion) that can give the necessary

impulse and the right spirit and direction to the reformer's efforts."

Here we have the common assumptions of the ordinary religionist; first, that religion alone can give an answer to certain unquenchable questions of the human mind; and, second, that apart from religion humanity is like a man in a boat minus oar and sails, drifting on an unknown sea towards an unknown destination. Neither assumption is warranted by facts. Whatever answer may be given to questions concerning the meaning of life and death, that of religion has no more value, *per se*, than any that reach us from other quarters. All that can be said in its behalf is that it is a very old one, and the special favor it enjoys may safely be attributed to the many illegitimate methods adopted for its perpetuation. And as a matter of fact, whatever light has come to us on this subject and on that of man's relation to the universe at large, has reached us from the side of science and not of religion. The last century of scientific work has taught us more on these topics than all the centuries that stand between us and the cave men. Professor Muirhead speaks of the "Unspeakable Mystery" of the universe as though that could supply us with some intellectual satisfaction. But one can extract neither consolation nor guidance from an unspeakable mystery. All that can be done with it is to cease making assertions concerning it. If the mystery be unspeakable let us cease expounding its nature and meaning. Or, if the unspeakable mystery be only a very complex problem, let us recognise that to settle down to its serious study is much more helpful than the awe-stricken vacuous attitude of the mystery mongering religionist. Let us beware of those who, in the name of progress, dwell upon mysteries, unspeakable or otherwise, with so evident a degree of satisfaction.

The latter portion of the sentence quoted is not quite clear, if only because while it might mean one thing, it may also be taken to mean something very different. It might mean, for instance, no more than there is needed to lift one above merely selfish interests, a sense of being part of a much wider and deeper movement than is covered by one's individuality. On the other hand, to the religionist such an expression always means that we need the conviction of the existence of a God, without which, human effort is bound to go astray. I do not think that Professor Muirhead means this; the unfortunate thing is that his language tends to bolster up a form of belief he would probably repudiate. And if he really means what I have suggested he might mean, that is, the need of identifying our aims and ideals with something wider and deeper than one's own personality, the reply is, first, that this is not what is generally called religion; and second, such a consciousness may be easily developed quite apart from all religion. We see this working in such men as Garibaldi, in such movements towards reform as is exemplified in Russia, and in the efforts of thousands of men and women, and the existence of scores of movements in our own and in other countries. When a man like Francisco Ferrer takes up a work such as he carried on, with a full sense of all it may lead to, and in the end pays with unfaltering courage the price demanded by bigotry, he clearly is feeling himself the mouthpiece of a force that is more permanent and important than his own personality. But there is no need to search beyond humanity for this force. It is the ceaseless activity of humanity that creates and sustains this conviction in the minds of all reformers. Our natures are of necessity fashioned with this organic recognition of the claims of the race against the individual on the one side and that of the individual against the race on the other. Unreflecting religious zeal personifies this expression of human solidarity and worships it as something apart from and above the human race. A one-sided individualism sees in the human race a mere collection of individuals, and is, therefore, driven to some form of transcendentalism to explain the facts. An equally one-sided collectiv-

ism often enough fails to give to the individual sufficient play to realise all that the forces which find expression through him might otherwise produce. An adequate perception of the facts of the case would see that individual and racial activity are two aspects of the same phenomenon, that all our feelings have this dual application, and that as man is a product of social evolution he cannot by any possibility transcend, even in thought, the long process of which he stands as the ultimate expression.

I have little room left in which to deal with Professor Sadler, but this is the less to be regretted because much of what has already been said will apply in his case. He, like Professor Muirhead, affects a regret at the weakening of religious belief. "The spirit of the age," he tells us, "has brought into our thoughts about religion a wider sympathy and a wistful regret. We are sensitive to the beauty the austere grace, of a life which is under willing obedience to a rule of faith." The word "sympathy" may pass. One may be sympathetic towards people whom we believe to be laboring under a delusion, although there is really no need to be sympathetic towards the delusion, still less to part from it with a wistful regret, as though we were losing an extremely valuable possession. In a sense, too, our knowledge of the nature and origin of religion may lead us to a more sympathetic treatment of a universal delusion, but this same knowledge should also save us from attributing to religious belief what is really the outcome of social forces, and so remove the need of regret at the weakening of religious faith. It should rather gladden the reformer to find that so much hitherto wasted energy may now be more profitably applied, and that a possibility is at hand of a more truthful appreciation of the nature and methods of social reform.

And there really is no need for Freethinkers, of even the mildest type, to accompany their remarks on religion with expressions of regret, and in a manner suggestive of extreme discomfort. It is not true that religious people have the more hopeful, the more truthful, or the happier view of life. If it were, the sooner we cease to be Freethinkers the better. The more helpful, cheerful, and truthful view of life, we believe, belongs to us. And if we believe this let us cease pretending to the contrary. We are Freethinkers, not because we are smitten with disease, but because we have discerned and practised the true laws of mental health. And the sooner we, by our speech and action, make this plain to Christians the sooner we shall convince them of the necessity of reconsidering their inherited beliefs in the light of modern knowledge.

C. COHEN.

### Life.

WHAT is life? The dictionary defines it as "the state of being which begins with generation, birth, or germination, and ends with death." There is no evidence whatever that life is a distinct and independent entity or substance. Even the "vital principle" theory is emphatically repudiated by modern biologists. The old idea of creation is now unthinkable. We cannot even imagine an infinite Being, by an act of will, causing matter to spring into existence out of nothing, and allowing it to aggregate and crystallise in a wholly fortuitous manner, and then afterwards selecting some of the elements and breathing into them a spark of the vital essence so as to produce living things. Sir E. Ray Lankester characterises this resort to "a vital principle" as a "facile and sterile hypothesis," which biologists have completely discredited and thrown over. Professor A. E. Dolbear, in his work entitled *Matter, Ether, and Motion*, says that "life is a process rather than a condition." Sir John Burdon-Sanderson informs us that "in physiology the word 'life' is understood to mean the chemical and physical

activities of the parts of which the organism consists." Professor Dolbear remarks:—

"If there are any that would still hold that life is a something *sui generis*, that may be considered apart from some material structure and not as a *transformation process*, it will be well for such to inquire what can become of such life as a grain of corn or an egg has, when it is cooked, or when either of them is left for months or years, and they rot. At first it is in the grain of corn or egg. If it be an entity of any sort, it must be somewhere else after leaving either the one or the other."

It is therefore beyond all doubt a contradiction of scientific testimony to speak of life as if it had an existence of its own, distinct and apart from the material structure in which it is said to manifest itself. And yet the Rev. R. J. Campbell has just published a sermon on "The Imperishableness of Life." The reverend gentleman refers to the well-known text, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." "There is a tender suggestiveness about this expression," he says, "of belief in God's care for the lower creation, but how much does it amount to? If the sparrow suffers, it suffers; if it dies, it dies; what difference does it make that God is aware of the fact? It does not do the sparrow any good, granted that things are what they seem." But Mr. Campbell maintains that "it is only reasonable to suppose that Jesus must have meant more than merely to assert that God gives a compassionate thought to the sparrow as it falls, but lets it die all the same; if he meant no more than that the saying was not worth uttering." In order to understand such a saying, Mr. Campbell declares, it is necessary to be familiar with the background of teaching out of which it arose; and, according to him, among the things that reposed in that background was "the belief in the imperishableness of all life." Then the preacher alludes to two other texts, and subjects them to the same process of idealisation. In Isaiah xl. 8 we read, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." And in Matthew vi. 30 occur these words: "But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" There is nothing in either of these texts, any more than in the verse about the sparrow, even remotely suggestive of the imperishableness of all life. True, admits Mr. Campbell, if we only take their surface meaning; but you must bear in mind that their *apparent* is not their *real* signification. If you dig into the depths of those sublime utterances you will discover that the precious truth which they were intended to convey to us is that "no life ever dies, and there is no death."

There is a strong element of disingenuousness in this method of exegesis. To an ordinary reader, Isaiah's words only mean that God's promise of deliverance from exile and of the restoration of national life was to be relied upon, that, unlike the withering grass and the fading flower, it would stand fast until it blossomed into happy fulfilment. So, likewise, to an ordinary reader, the words of Jesus simply signify that if God took pains to clothe with surpassing beauty the short-lived grass of the field he would certainly provide for the needs of his people whom he loved. Now listen to Mr. Campbell:—

"What is the word of God? It is the breath of life in all that lives; it is the forthgoing of eternal wisdom into a myriad creative forms; it is that which sustains and directs all existence and all change. Without the word of God there would be no world, no nation, no man, no beast or bird or blade of grass; it is the soul of all."

He treats the words of Jesus in precisely the same manner. He says:—

"His first thought about creation was that it was the temporary form in which the word of God clothed itself for a special purpose, ministering towards a greater end. Permit me to emphasise this point. All physical forms, without exception, are the out-breathing of God, the ensoulment of a Divine life, the temporal clothing of

eternal spirit. This is all they are; they have no independent existence, no separate identity, no power to maintain themselves apart from the Divine source..... When, therefore, Jesus spoke of the clothing of the lilies and the clothing of humanity, he must have meant more than the satisfaction of material wants. No life ever perishes, let appearances be what they may."

That is Oxford Idealism carried to its most absurd extremes. Biology knows nothing of life apart from living forms. If a living form does not reproduce itself, in obedience to its natural law, a time comes when it ceases to be, *as a living form*; and its death merely means the collapse of the conditions and combinations and processes which entitled it to be described as alive. Why does Mr. Campbell seek refuge in mysticism? Because in naturalism he can find no standing-room for his religious faith. He knows very well that, so far as this earthly life is concerned, the promises of the Bible are never fulfilled. "The remark about the clothing of the lilies of the field as illustrative of God's word," he observes, "thus penetrates deeper than the material plane. If it is only to be held to mean that the physical wants of all creation will be supplied, then it is misleading and untrue to the facts. Animals prey upon each other; they die of hunger and disease; battle and accident take heavy toll of every species from humanity downward; the struggle for existence is no mere figure of speech, but a grim and terrible reality." Because the words of Jesus are not true in relation to the only sphere in which they could be tested, Mr. Campbell applies them to an imaginary sphere in which no testing of them is practicable. And yet, after all, Jesus spoke of the clothing of the body in this world, *and of nothing else*. A careful reading of his words will show how utterly false the reverend gentleman's interpretation is:—

"Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

That is a perfectly lucid passage, and all it means is that those whom Jesus addressed had no excuse whatever for harboring anxiety concerning food and raiment. But Mr. Campbell, fully aware that, in their only natural sense, the words do not contain a single grain of truth, says, Yet there is a sense, a high, spiritual sense, in which they are wholly true, and I give you my word of honor that if you accept my interpretation you shall be lifted up, here and now, to a sphere in which there is no death. As an Oxford Idealist, of the whole-hog type, I assure you that Jesus meant infinitely more than he said, and than his followers in all ages, until to-day, have been able to realise. Unfortunately, however, Jesus was not an Oxford Idealist, but an Aristotelian Realist.

Of the immortality of life there is not the shadow of proof. Living forms perish by the thousand every moment, and inscribed on the crust of the earth is the record of many species which are now extinct. Furthermore there is nothing to show that a man is of greater intrinsic value than a lily or a sparrow. Nature takes no greater care of the one than of the other, which means that there is no such thing as Divine providence. A thunderstorm shows no favoritism, nor is an earthquake guilty of any respect of persons. Mr. Campbell says, "No life ever perishes, let appearances be what they may," but that is nothing but pulpit dogmatism, unsupported by a single known fact. Mr. Campbell does not even know that there is such a thing as life; and even if there were, he could not point to a single appearance

that indicated its imperishableness. All we know are living forms, and they, as such, are constantly perishing. The only things that endure are species; but even these are not imperishable. We, human beings, are self-conscious living forms, and upon us rests the duty of doing our utmost, while we live, to increase the welfare of our brothers and sisters and all other relations in the vast Living Kingdom.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Narratives in Genesis.—XIX.

### THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

(Continued from p. 715.)

IN Genesis xix. the Yahvist writer continues the "history" from the preceding chapter. Towards evening, he says, the two angels who had dined with Abraham came to Sodom, and Lot who had been sitting in the gate of that city "rose up to meet them" and asked them into his house to partake of some refreshment. This invitation they at first declined, but upon his entreaty they accepted. "And he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." The Israelites in later times had a "feast of unleavened bread," and though Lot knew nothing of this, the writer did—which accounts for Lot regaling his guests with holy food. But, later in the evening, when the angels were about to retire for the night, the men of Sodom, who had heard of the "two men" entering Lot's dwelling, came from every part of the city and surrounded the house. "And they called unto Lot.....Where are the men which came into thee this night? Bring them out unto us that we may know them." These words are interpreted as meaning that the men of Sodom desired to commit an abominable crime to which all the men of the city were addicted. Lot at once went out and remonstrated with them.

"And he said, I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing: forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof."

Thus, rather than violate the sacred law of hospitality, Lot was willing to surrender his daughters to the indiscriminate ravishment of a mob of beastly blackguards; and from the tone of the narrative, it is implied that he acted rightly. Moreover, the words quoted give us a very fair idea of the estimation in which women were held in the Yahvist's days, and they also shed light upon the story of Abraham seeking to save his skin at the expense of his wife's dishonor.

Lot's proposal, however, was rejected by the men of Sodom, who, after threatening Lot himself, "drew near to break the door." Thereupon the two angels pulled him into the house, fastened the door, and struck the men outside with blindness "so that they wearied themselves to find the door." The angels then informed Lot that they were sent by the god Yahveh to destroy the city, and bade him summon his relatives and get away from the place. The first of these commands Lot obeyed, "but he seemed to his sons-in-law as one that mocked." When morning came the angels urged Lot and his wife and their two daughters to hasten out of Sodom, and as they still lingered, took them by the hands and led them out of the city, with orders to flee to the mountains. Lot then pleaded to be allowed to take refuge in a small city named Zoar, which request was granted, and at sunrise Lot and his daughters entered Zoar. Lot's wife, however, was not so fortunate; she "looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

As soon as Lot and his family had left the city "Yahveh rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahveh out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the city, and that which grew

upon the ground." We may note here that fire and brimstone, as well as immense quantities of water, were stored above the clouds in readiness to be cast down at the command of Yahveh.

The historicity of this narrative is vouched for by no less a personage than Jesus Christ himself, who is represented as saying:—

"But in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 29).

The same eminent authority is also represented as holding up the fate of one of the refugees as a warning to his disciples—"Remember Lot's wife." After this, it would be in the highest degree presumptuous to question the truth of the narrative.

A New Testament writer says that "righteous Lot," when living in Sodom, was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked: for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds" (2 Peter ii. 7 8). This inspired writer appears to have forgotten that Lot was not compelled to live in Sodom; that after being rescued from Chedorlaomer by Abraham he went, by his own choice, to live there again; and that when the city was about to be destroyed the angels had almost to drag him out, so loth was he to leave the city.

There is one verse in this chapter by the Priestly writer, which represents, no doubt, all the writer knew of this part of Lot's history. This reads as follows:—

"And it came to pass, when Elohim destroyed the cities of the Plain, that Elohim remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt" (Gen. xix. 29).

But the Yahvist writer has more to say about Lot. That patriarch, he says, was afraid to stay at Zoar, so he went to the mountains and "dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters." While here, says this veracious writer, the daughters made their father drink wine until he was intoxicated upon two nights in succession, and each lay with him without his perceiving it. These were the two virgins whom their father was willing to give up to the debauchery of the men of Sodom. The result of this incestuous intercourse is stated to have been the birth of two sons, whom the daughters named Moab and Ben Ammi, the reputed ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites, two of the most bitter enemies of the Israelites. The reason assigned for this unnatural act is, that the daughters believed that all mankind had perished except themselves and their father—a plea which is disproved by the narrative itself; for they knew that the people of Zoar, the city they had just quitted, had not been destroyed, and were not even doomed to destruction. Moreover, when living in a cave, away from the haunts of men, it would be simply impossible to get the wine mentioned, or indeed any of the necessaries of life. There can be no doubt whatever that this incident is a malicious falsehood, invented by the Jews to cast opprobrium upon the origin of two hostile and hated nations. Furthermore, the earlier portion of the narrative will not bear looking at too closely. Thus, when he parted from Abraham, Lot had large flocks and herds and numerous herdmen; yet in this chapter we find him without any of these possessions, hiding in a cave with his daughters, and living where he could find no sustenance. His sheep and cattle—if he ever had any—were not penned up within either of the cities destroyed, but would be in the open country somewhere in the neighborhood; consequently, all he had to do when leaving Sodom was to go to the locality where he knew they were pasturing, and live in tents among them like his uncle Abraham, and as he himself had done before. Add to this the absurd statement of the destruction of the cities by "brimstone and fire from heaven," and the whole story becomes so improbable that we may set it down as devoid of all foundation in fact.

The abominable practice attributed by the Yahvist to the men of Sodom is mentioned and forbidden in

Lev. xviii. 22, which practice is, in the same chapter, stated to have been one of the abominations "the men of the land have done" who inhabited the country prior to its occupation by the Israelites. The latter statement may be true; but we know that certain "men of the land" who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin were noted for the practice of this bestiality. In Judges xix. 22 is recorded a precisely similar case to that related in the chapter under consideration—with this difference, however, that the Benjamites were a historical people, whereas the Sodomites are purely mythical. From a comparison of the two accounts it becomes evident that one of them was copied from, or suggested by, the other. Now, with the exception of a few interpolated passages, the Book of Judges is much older than the Yahvistic narratives in Genesis, the latter not having been written until more than three hundred years after the end of the Judges' period. Hence, it was the Yahvist writer who took his ideas from the account in Judges, and not the compiler of Judges from the narrative in Genesis. Moreover, the fact of the story in Genesis being fictitious disposes of the lewdness ascribed to the men of that city.

As a matter of history, it was the Lord's own chosen people *themselves* who were addicted to the horrible practice mentioned. Thus, in the Bible history of the Jewish kings—a series of narratives in a large measure historical—we find the following statements:—

1 Kings xiv. 24 (reign of Rehoboam).—"And there were also sodomites in the land."

1 Kings xv. 12 (reign of Asa).—"And he put away the sodomites out of the land."

1 Kings xxii. 46 (reign of Jehoshaphat).—"And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he put away out of the land."

2 Kings xxiii. 7 (reign of Josiah).—"And he brake down the houses [or tents] of the sodomites that were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah."

From the last passage it would appear that within the temple some kind of structure had been erected for the use of those who perpetrated the filthy act referred to, and that under the same roof "women wove hangings for the Asherah," which was also in the temple. Of the word italicised our English Revisers say: "The Hebrew word *Asherah*, which is uniformly and wrongly rendered "grove" in the Authorised Version, most probably denotes the wooden symbol of a goddess."

Without going into this matter, there is not the slightest doubt that the immorality of the Lord's chosen people from the time of the Judges to the reign of king Josiah was unspeakably gross. It was in the eighteenth year of the last-named king's reign (B.C. 621) that the Book of Deuteronomy first appeared; and it was in consequence of the following commands in that book that the king "brake down the houses of the sodomites":—

Deut. xxiii. 17.—"There shall be no harlot of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel."

Now, there is one fact which tends to prove that it was the Israelites themselves who originated the unnatural vice referred to. This is, that had it been a practice peculiar to the men of Sodom, the perpetrator might naturally be named after that of the city in which it originated—Sodomite. This, however, is not the case. The Hebrew word for "Sodom" is *sodom*; but the Hebrew word for "sodomite" is *kadesh*. The name, it will thus be seen, has no connection whatever with Sodom, but was suggested to our English translators by the fictitious narrative in Genesis. The word "kadesh" also means *holy, hallowed, consecrated, set apart, and purified*; so that the abominable practice to which it refers had the sanction of religion. No wonder, then, that this practice was allowed to be carried on in the Lord's holy temple. Similarly, the word "harlot" in the foregoing quotation from Deuteronomy is *kadeshah*—the feminine of *kadesh*—which denotes "one consecrated"; a fact which represents

another class of offences that also possessed the sanction of religion. It would further appear that those who gave themselves up to these two religious practices did so in fulfilment of a vow, and that the money paid for "hire" went into the temple treasury. The latter, as well as the former, was forbidden in the new "Book of the Law" that was "found" for the first time in the reign of Josiah—in the verse following that quoted (Deut. xxiii. 18). The mere fact of a thing being forbidden in the future is, of course, a proof that it had been done in the past—that is to say, up to the time of Josiah, when it was first known to be prohibited.

ABRACADABRA.

### Shady Saints.

"Whatever thy past life may have been, if thou wilt trust Christ, thou shalt be saved from all thy sin in a moment. Fifty, sixty, seventy years of iniquity shall all disappear as the morning's hoar-frost disappears before the sun."—  
SURGEON.

THERE is joy to-day in heaven, gem-decked streets are gay with banners,  
Every chorister is singing, all the golden harps are twanging;  
Aged Yahveh's nearly deafened by the roaring of hosannas,  
By the shrieks of exultation, mingled with the cymbals banging.

For the news has just been wafted from a planet called the Earth,  
That John Smith, the Mile End murd'rer's, undergone his second birth;  
That he's looking unto Jesus—praying now for all he's worth;  
That, doomed to die, he means to die a Christian!

Hear John Smith, the erstwhile bully, now a babbling, broken craven,  
Who in bestial madness murdered her he'd vowed to love and cherish,  
Raving of a blood-filled fountain, boasting heav'n will be his haven,  
Quite secure of future glory—since "believers" never perish.

Not a thought of her he slaughtered, only self is his concern;  
Hell may be the dead one's portion, she for evermore may burn;  
But that really doesn't matter, *he* eternal bliss will earn  
By "finding Christ" and dying as a Christian!

Comes at length the fateful morning, when John Smith must be translated  
To the mansion which awaits him, where he'll do no work forever.  
"Oh, his face was like an angel's!" (so the prison chaplain stated)  
As "so-long!" he softly murmured, "see you t'other side the river."

Draw the bolt, the deed is over, now Smith's blood-washed soul is free;  
Through the pearly gates he passes, radiant as a saint can be;  
Crowds of ransomed ones salute him, who on earth were base as he—  
But every one became at last a Christian!

Learn from Smith, and when you're acting as you know you hadn't ought to,  
Robbing (say) your benefactor, or some innocent betraying,  
Know a Throne of Grace is waiting, which your sins may all be brought to,  
That the punishment's another's—Christ has died and done the "paying."

Give the years to crime and folly, just whichever suits you best;  
Not the actions of a life-time, but your faith at last's the test;  
Clasp the Cross upon your death-bed, enter then upon your rest,  
And thank your stars you earned it—as a Christian!

JOHN YOUNG.

### Acid Drops.

The *Daily Mail* quotes with delight from a Christian magazine the statement that the old Atheism is dead or dying, and that Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, the giants, are followed by pygmies. Well, both Bradlaugh and Ingersoll are dead; that is why the Christians now call them giants; when they were living they were only "vulgar infidels." We may suggest, too, that the *Daily Mail* would be more honest if it published real news, instead of deliberately misleading its readers on matters of fact. It might have reported the great St. James's Hall meeting, convened by the National Secular Society's President, to protest against the murder of Francisco Ferrer. It might also have reported the same President's speech at the Memorial Hall meeting. This would be far better than concealing facts as a cover for fancies.

King Leopold is chiefly responsible for the hell of the Congo. He is the chief author of what Sir A. Conan Doyle calls "the very greatest crime ever committed in the history." But he is a king, and he is pious; and those two facts cover a multitude of sins.

"There is at this moment," the Rev. C. Silvester Horne says, "no wickeder person in the world than the King of the Belgians." This is not true, if Mr. Horne's religion is true. There is a wickeder person than King Leopold: the God who permits his wickedness.

Mr. John Burns is a more eminent man than he used to be, but we are not so sure that he is much wiser. He made a very odd reply the other day to a question put to him as President of the Local Government Board about the flogging of workhouse boys. "Guardians," he said, "cannot indiscriminately punish boys under their control, but they stand in almost parental relationship to some of these children." Apparently, then, the right to flog children is peculiarly parental. We fear that Mr. Burns, in spite of his later Free-thought, still retains too many traces of the Bible religion he learnt at his mother's knees.

Mr. Burns added that some boys want correcting—as if correcting and flogging were convertible terms. He said that he knew that he wanted correcting when he was a boy. This bit of autobiography was hardly called for, and it is not astonishing that Mr. Will Thorne asked the right honorable gentleman whether he did not need correcting as much now as when he was a boy. The personal answer which Mr. Burns gave was not witty, and certainly not relevant. Mr. Burns and Mr. Thorne may both want correcting now as much as they did when they were boys, but the question is do they, or did they, want *flogging*? Mr. Burns might inform the world why flogging is not good for a man if it is so good for a boy. We fancy that he would be obliged to draw a distinction on the ground of age—or rather of size. Boys should be flogged because it is easy to flog them. That is all there is in it.

Sunday golf has been vigorously denounced by the Rev. F. S. Webster, of All Souls', Langham-place, London. He is particularly severe on men of God who wink at Sunday golf, provided the players are careful to put in some attendance at church. "What right," he inquires, "has any clergyman to give permission to a man to break the Fourth Commandment?" Hear, hear! We like that upright and downstraight sort of talk. Mr. Webster is honest, if old-fashioned. It isn't enough to go to church on Sunday; you must also be miserable. The Bible says "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—not "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it happy." Between holy and happy there is a great gulf fixed.

The Bishop of London is a poor creature from an intellectual point of view. We should imagine him to have the meanest intelligence that was ever associated with that post. He has lately been preaching a sermon in the West End on the world to come; and unless the newspapers misrepresent him he uttered some of the most contemptible nonsense that ever came even from his lips. He actually told his congregation that science, by teaching the permanency of force and the indestructibility of matter, had "enormously strengthened the faith in a hereafter." This would be hard to beat for sheer fatuity, though his lordship did his best in the next sentence to beat his own record. "It had been reserved for this generation," he said, "to see the death-blow dealt to materialism." He really ought to have added that he had dealt the death-blow to materialism himself.

Purging the Free Libraries has spread from Camberwell to Lewisham, where the Libraries Committee have "chucked"—we believe that is the classic term—Darwin, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Zola, and a number of other writers. We understand that Jonah and Habbakuk still enjoy the Libraries Committee's patronage.

Three years' penal servitude is the sentence on the Rev. Douglas Philip Roper Nunn for stealing money from the alms-boxes at Clavering, Wicken, and Wanden churches.

Chief Rabbi Adler is greatly concerned about the Bible; that is to say, about the Old Testament, for he rejects the New Testament. Even the people of Israel are being bitten by the Higher Criticism. A new Judaism is coming in, with "many essentials of Judaism left out or whittled down almost to vanishing-point." "With a stroke of the pen," Dr. Adler groans, "the divine authority of the Pentateuch and of the prophets and the authority of every teacher in Israel is denied." Sad, no doubt; and the Chief Rabbi has our sympathy; but he will have to adjust himself to the changes which he cannot prevent—or die of grief at his impotence—which would be a great pity.

Mr. W. G. Thomas, retiring president of the North Carnarvonshire Congregational Association, regretted to have to say that in education of the young the "two most active and successful Churches" in Wales "were the Jewish Church and the Church of Rome." The latter Church not only maintained its hold upon the children of Roman Catholics, but "in Protestant and Nonconformist Wales to-day it was actually increasing the number of its adherents." We commend this to the attention of those who are chortling, a little prematurely we think, over the hopeless decadence of Catholicism. For our own part, we still think, as Bradlaugh did, that the great fight of the future will be between the logical opposites—Rome and Reason.

A Wesleyan minister, named Bradfield, being a witness in the High Court, Douglas, Isle of Man, applied to affirm, and was asked on what ground. Not being prepared to state, according to the Oaths Act (Bradlaugh's), that he had no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath was contrary to his religious belief, he had to be sworn—at which he felt surprised. But the judge was legally correct, and we don't understand why the reverend gentleman couldn't take advantage of the second reason for affirmation. Surely he is able to see that the question of affirming or swearing in a court of justice is not a matter of personal preference, but a matter of principle.

It is almost impossible to overtake and quash a lie. Only two Sundays ago, a prominent Glasgow minister, the Rev. A. F. Forrest, of the Renfield-street Church, told his congregation that it was scarcely worth while to trouble them with Haeckel's opinions, as Haeckel was now a discredited scientist, because, on his own confession, he had been guilty of forging, doctoring, reconstructing, or schematising certain diagrams of embryos of man and of apes. This lie was set in motion last spring, and the truth followed it almost immediately. Either the simple explanation has not reached Mr. Forrest, or he has deliberately suppressed it in order to prejudice his hearers against a great scientist.

The Rev. Silvester Horne says that "Blessed are the meek" really means, "Blessed are the bold and self-assertive." "Meekness to the kingdom of Christ," he goes on, "means relentless hostility to all the cruelties, intrigues, and diabolic machinations of King Leopold in his systematic oppression of the Congo natives." With what brazen effrontery a preacher distorts and misapplies his Master's words! "Resist not evil," said Jesus; "resist it with all thy might," says the conventional Christian.

Here is another pulpit gem. "Believers are branches of the true Vine," exclaimed the Rev. David Smith, "grafted on the living stem, and nourished by its sap." Yet, he said, this is "the precise opposite of renouncing any independent life of our own." Fancy a branch enjoying an independent life of its own!

The National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, through its president, the Rev. Evan Jones, and its secretary, the Rev. Thomas Law, has been reading another lesson to the Prime Minister. He was told that "The great body of Free Churchmen feel disheartened, and in the bitterness of their disappointment are beginning to regard the political situation as almost hopeless." Mr.

Asquith was finally warned that unless something was done in the Education affair it would have "an unfortunate effect upon the relation of Free Churchmen to a Government which they have hitherto so warmly supported." The Premier's reply was diplomatic. They said nothing about their real demand, neither did he; it was best left understood, for it simply meant Nonconformist control of public elementary education throughout England and Wales. Mr. Asquith therefore assured the anxious and angry Free Churchmen that the Government had done its best, and would have another try next year, or in the next parliament, at wiping out "the present injustices" which "continue to deface our educational system." Thus the Government and its Free Church supporters are fighting for an object which they dare not avow in honest language. And one is obliged to say that this is Christianity all over.

The Women's Social and Political Union held—or rather tried to hold—a Suffragette meeting at the Alexandra Palace the other evening. Over two thousand people were present, and disorder prevailed from the very beginning to the moment when the meeting was practically broken up. Yells, whistling, bursting of paper bags, and songs such as "Put me amongst the girls," made a perfect pandemonium. Mrs. Pethick Lawrence and Miss Christabel Pankhurst were quite unable to obtain a hearing; and, after a rush for the platform, the ladies were glad to call in their "sweet enemy" the police, and have the hall cleared. We have no sympathy whatever with the men who made all the disturbance. They ought to be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. We don't suppose for a moment, however, that they are anything of the kind. And at this point we may as well say that we have very little sympathy with the ladies either. By their systematic policy of violence they have long been appealing to the beast and the devil in man, and they ought not to be astonished at the result. We have said before, and we repeat, that creating disorder at public meetings is a game that more than one can play at, and the Suffragettes must not expect to monopolise it. As a matter of fact, they are sure to lose at that game in the long run.

The program of the American "Jesus Christ" kind of play—"the Servant in the House"—which has been running at the Adelphi Theatre, contains a number of Bible quotations and several advertisements of different brands of whiskey. The dramatic critic who mentions this fact seems to think it singular. We don't. The Prophet of Nazareth was no teetotaler. He never had whiskey, but he drank freely and cheerfully of what was going.

Rev. Ralph Henry Sneyd, rector of Earsham, Norfolk, left £6,251. Not a big fortune, by any means, and a mere trifle beside the colossal fortunes left by some of the Bishops. Still, six thousand pounds takes a deal of saving out of the salaries that men of God ought to receive for preaching the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor."

The *New Age* comes out in its threepenny form, and unless there is plenty of money behind its fresh enterprise we hardly see how it can subsist, although we wish it luck, for it is the most intellectual of the Socialist weeklies. We are wondering, however, if our contemporary is going to permit more piety in its columns. Amongst the reviews we see a reference to "blank atheism." But this is counteracted by a sentence in "Notes of the Week." Dr. Salter's poor poll at Bermondsey is said to have been partly due to "his effusive use of Biblical terminology, and his foolhardy profession of his belief in and practice of vivisection." So there is room for hope.

Dr. M. D. Eder's interesting and able article on Shelley calls for a separate paragraph. Shelley, it is said, was a severe and a just critic of his "execution as poet,"—which is a rather unfortunate expression. "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron," Shelley said, "and there is no other with whom it is worth contending." This is made the starting-point of Dr. Eder's criticism that "Byron was the more perfect artist." Now we have no hesitation in saying that "a more perfect" piece of absurdity is rarely to be met with. Byron as an artist is too often, not only a failure, but a joke. Shelley's lyrical artistry threw Byron's right into the shade; and Byron's dramas are not dramas at all, while the *Cenci* is the greatest English drama since what we roughly call the age of Shakespeare. Shelley's extraordinary modesty was not without occasional intervals of self-appreciation, and it was in one of these that he recognised that if *Marino Faliero* was a drama the *Cenci* was not; which is really the whole essence of the matter. Shelley was "poet of poets," as James Thomson said; he was *always* a poet, as his prose shows no less (in its way) than his verse does; but Byron's

two great excellences, as Swinburne so well observed, were *sincerity* and *strength*, and the veins of *poetry* in him being limited, he naturally gravitated to satire, as in *Don Juan*, which is far and away his masterpiece.

Rev. W. H. Abbot, curate of St. Mary's, Ash Vale, made a fictitious present of his punt to his late landlord, Mr. Pawle, in order to evade the payment of a fee of one guinea charged by the Basingstoke Canal Company to householders owning punts on the canal. The man of God boldly avowed this paltry trick in the Farnham County Court. Judge Harrington, however, said that as he had lied he should suffer; so the man of God was ordered to hand over the punt within fourteen days. He has therefore lost the punt—and a big slice of his own character. But we suppose he will still go on cheerfully saving souls and pointing the way to heaven.

Rev. R. J. Campbell has a way of playing with the question of evil from the point of view of a successful preacher with a big salary and a tip-top motor-car. To put his whole attitude in a single word, he sentimentalises. In his last printed sermon—we mustn't mention the paper in which it appears: they don't like it—he draws a picture of a butterfly being seized and devoured by a little bird, and the little bird in turn being seized and devoured by a hawk; whereupon he gushes:—

"The beauty of the one and the song of the other have both ceased to be. That is nature's grim way of doing things; but is it just what it seems? No, neither butterfly nor singing bird will ever stretch their wings again, but the invisible intangible life that thus uttered itself is precisely what it was before; what God has individualised in those two beautiful organisms is not wasted; the life is not the shattered form, but greater; it has never yet been privileged to know itself as man does, but its identity is as real, and will go on to higher things. Earthly forms are but the temporary moulds into which God pours something of himself that represents a thing of beauty in the making. He may break the mould, but the substance itself remains."

Why on earth, then, did Mr. Campbell protest against the shooting of Ferrer? Theoretically, at any rate, he believes that the shooting-party did Ferrer a considerable service. And suppose, on the other hand, that Mr. Campbell were to die, and somebody went to his sorrowing wife and daughter and told them it was all right,—only the mould was broken, and the substance itself remained,—would they not feel, and perhaps say, that the mould was precisely what they cared for?

Mr. Campbell sentimentalises all the time. He speaks of a young mother he knows who has lost her only child, and the cold corpse in its coffin in the grave is all that is left of what was once the light of her life. "Is it not terribly hard?" he asks. There you have the sentimentalist to a t. He believes a proposition because it is pleasant. He assumes that the universe is bound to treat him kindly. But propositions are true or false according to evidence, and the universe will never consult Mr. Campbell's feelings. What he is really appealing to is disguised selfishness. Sorrow for the dead is an idle sentiment unless it expresses itself in service to the living. Mr. Campbell might reflect on that for a moment, and try to understand why non-believers in a future life do *not* (for they *do* not) suffer from black pessimism as he supposes.

Mr. J. C. M. Dawson, of Belfast, has spoken, and the Rev. R. J. Campbell may consider himself annihilated. Mr. Dawson spoke to the Plymouth Brethren in the great and mighty city of Barnstaple, and he declared that Mr. Campbell's teaching was "damnable heresy." He also broadly hinted that Mr. Campbell would spend eternity in a temperature which earthly thermometers cannot register. Poor Campbell! He had better look out—and "flee from the wrath to come."

The New Theologians are getting on. They tell us that the more we understand that nothing related in the Bible ever happened the truer we shall see it to be. This has been said for some time of the Old Testament, and they are now saying it of the New Testament. Look at the following passage in the long leading article in the last number of the *New Theology* weekly:—

"The stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus have been dropped; so have the stories of the Resurrection and Ascension and crowning of Jesus at God's right hand. And, of course, all the miracle stories have had to be dropped, because these cannot be historical. As the critics push their historical analysis on they discover that they have scarcely anything left. Exceedingly little is known of Jesus, and some say we cannot be sure that a single saying attributed

to Jesus was uttered by Him, or a single deed ascribed to Him was performed by Him. All admit that we have not in the Gospels a biography of Jesus, nor the materials out of which to construct one. A great deal has been made of what Dr. Paul W. Schmiedel calls the 'foundation-pillars' of the life of Jesus—four passages affirming His human limitations and five others looking in the same direction. But even with these the historic life all but completely disappears."

"The marks of imagination," the writer continues, "are so plain in all parts of the Bible that it is a wonder how any thoughtful person could mistake Scripture for history." We have been saying this ourselves in the *Freethinker* for twenty-eight years, and have been called "a vulgar blasphemer" for doing so. Now the New Theologians take a leaf out of our book and call it the only true Christianity. Let us pray!

Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, one of the most prominent New Theologians, after Mr. Campbell, says that his party are "engaged in a great mission to convert the Christians of England to the need of establishing social justice in their own land." Fancy! After nearly two thousand years of Christianity! It is enough to make a sensitive person cry or laugh. Some might prefer swearing.

What is the matter with the Rev. Thomas Lloyd, of the English Congregational Church, Colwyn Bay? He has been fond of preaching hell, but he now says that "there are fifteen hundred million people on this globe, and God loves every one of them." Are we to conclude that the reverend gentleman has dropped hell for ever? If he hasn't, how does he reconcile it with the love of God? Poor lost souls in the Pit might surely exclaim to the loving "One Above"—

"It was all very well to dissemble your love,  
But why did you kick us down here?"

We hope Mr. Lloyd won't think this is blasphemy. It isn't. It's only common sense.

The editor of the *British Weekly* says "it is only the shallow-minded who too readily answer in the affirmative the question, 'Is Christ able to save?'" We agree. So far, he has furnished no proof whatever of his ability to set the world right; and because of this lack of evidence he cannot persuade the world to believe in him.

Lord Kinnaird, the pious gentleman who was hand in glove with Ananias Torrey in London, has been telling the Oldham Y.M.C.A. that the unemployed in this country, or rather the unemployables, are "people who had never attended a Sunday-school or church." It seems to us quite possible that if Lord Kinnaird had to earn his own living he might be amongst the unemployables too. And while the subject is Sunday-schools we may draw his lordship's attention to the fact that more than 90 per cent. of all the criminals in English prisons have been Sunday-school scholars.

King Alfonso should have kept his mouth closed. The hurried execution of Ferrer cannot be justified or excused by asking What about Dreyfus? Two blacks never made a white. Even a King ought to know that. And what His Majesty says about "Military courts whose honor cannot be called into question" reminds us of the gentlemen who murdered Cæsar and were "all honorable men."

The Bishop of Middlesborough (Catholic) justifies the execution of Ferrer, as he would justify the execution of anybody that the Catholic Church wanted to get out of the way. After repeating all the Catholic lies about Ferrer's teaching violence and immorality, the Bishop hypocritically "hoped that he had saved his soul," though he was "afraid that he died as he lived, a blasphemer and an Atheist." Certainly he died as he lived. A man like Ferrer was bound to do that. But what of the Bishop of Middlesborough? Is he not a worthy representative of his wicked Church? Does he not display the most hateful spirit? And what can be done with the Church he so worthily represents? There is only one possible answer: "Crush the Infamous."

By the way, the Bishop of Middlesborough is not as clever as he ought to be. He showed the cloven hoof rather badly in the speech we are dealing with. After talking sweetly about toleration, which, of course, Catholics want wherever they are in a minority, he called upon Catholics to "realise their own strength," and in a moment of injudicious candor he exclaimed—"If Catholics were only united they could sweep off the face of the earth all Socialists and people of that stamp." The Bishop is a true priest of "the bloody faith."



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 14, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool; at 3, "What Ferrer Died For"; at 7, "The Master's Mind: Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death."

November 28, Birmingham.

## To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 21, West Ham; 28, Aberdare. December 5, Liverpool; 12, Manchester; 19, West Ham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £259 19s. 6d. Received since.—T. A. Matthews, 5s.; Herbert T. Clarkson, 10s. 6d.; Vivian Phelip, 10s.; Horace W. Parsons, £5 5s.; J. Lentz (South Africa), £1; F. E. Raymond, 2s.; A. J. R., £1; R. Wood (2nd sub.), 5s.

EDMUND BOOTH.—Many articles and paragraphs about Ingersoll have appeared in the *Freethinker* from time to time, but we don't print an Index, and we can't spare the time to run through the file. Unfortunately we cannot refer you to an English book on Ingersoll, but there is an American book that you might find useful—*Ingersoll As He Was*, published at the *Truthseeker* office, New York. You could order it from our shop manager, who would be able to get it in time for your purpose. Glad you find the *Freethinker*, after three years' reading, of such a "decided intellectual tone."

B. PRICE.—You have ideas, but you want skill in versification. Writing poetry is not as easy as it looks.

R. BELL.—Notices for this journal must not be sent to Miss Vance, but direct to the Editor. Glad the Stanley Branch's resolution on the Ferrer case got into the local press, even in an obscure corner. The other part of your letter shall be answered by post.

J. DEEPLY.—Your suggestions are noted; also that you regard our lecture on "Why Men Believe in God" as "a masterpiece" and wish it could be published, with other such lectures, in the *Freethinker*. The infinite divisibility of matter is metaphysics, not science.

R. HUGHES.—See paragraph. Papers sent as requested.

H. FRAYN.—A very ingenious suggestion, but we fear it wouldn't work. Instead of our printing a special edition of the *Freethinker*, for which some readers, as you say, might be willing to pay fourpence, in order to help the paper along financially, it would be better, and certainly more feasible, for such readers to take an extra copy at the present price and pass it along to friends and acquaintances. Thanks, anyhow.

KERDON.—Mr. Lloyd is a Welshman. Glad you like his articles, and regard this journal as your "weekly treat." We may yet notice the brochure. You say justly, with respect to the boycott of the *Freethinker*, its editor, and his colleagues, that the malice of the new Inquisition is "almost more envenomed because it is powerless to crush its victims."

F. E. RAYMOND.—Most people are mentally lazy, as you say; and a rush of readers for the *Freethinker* is not to be expected; but we do make progress, slowly but surely. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

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

J. C. THOMAS.—Mr. Lloyd has been in the pulpit. He is an ex-*Presbyterian* minister. He is also a Welshman, as you surmise. Glad you like his articles. We quite endorse your judgment.

H. SMALLWOOD.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen was in such "good form" at the Birmingham Town Hall meetings. Thanks for what you do to help our circulation along. Request attended to.

A. B. MOSS.—We know you can be relied on to secure justice for the *Freethinker*, if possible, at the hands of the Camberwell authorities. We are very glad to see you seated on the Council for another three years.

R. H. ROSETTI.—Glad the West Ham Branch is getting good meetings at the Public Hall, Canning Town. We hope to meet you all at the Stratford Town Hall in January.

W. EDWIN.—Thanks, though too late for this week.

A. LEWIS.—True, the Bishop of London's crusade against literary "garbage" should begin with the Bible.

H. B. DODDS asks us to state that, owing to the closing of the Café where its meetings have been held, the Rationalist Debating Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne, will meet no more until further notice.

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.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 14) at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. The afternoon subject, at 3, is "What Ferrer Died For." The evening subject is "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death." The seats are 1s. and 6d. at each lecture, and as the police officiously interfere with taking money at the door—a thing, by the way, which is perfectly legal—those who want to secure seats should apply without a moment's delay to Mr. J. Hammond, 99 Belmont-road, Everton, Liverpool, for tickets; or to Mr. D. Spiers, 24 Kensington—or Mr. J. Green, 202 Molyneux-road. These tickets are for reserved seats. Admission to non-ticket holders will be by silver collection on entering.

It was a record day at the Manchester Secular Hall on Sunday. Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture on "The Martyrdom of Ferrer" drew an audience that crowded the place out to the street doors, every inch of standing room being occupied as well as all the seating accommodation. The lecture was followed with deep attention and most enthusiastically applauded at the end. Several Catholics were present, judging from some of the questions that followed. The evening meeting was not quite such a crush, but it was a fine one nevertheless, and it was a notable spectacle to see all those faces of men and women eagerly following every word of the lecture on "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life." During several of the selections from *Hamlet* and other plays the proverbial pin might have been heard drop. Several questions were asked and some criticism was offered after the lecture. Good collections were taken up towards the cost of installing the electric light, which is certainly an improvement. Mr. Philips made an excellent chairman on both occasions.

London Freethinkers are cordially invited to the "social" at Anderton's Hotel next Thursday evening (Nov. 18) at 8 o'clock. The gathering is under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive, and members will not only be admitted free but also have the privilege of introducing a friend. Freethinkers who are neither members nor able to be introduced in that way, should apply to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., for a card of admission. Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, and other well-known London "saints" will attend the "social," and there will be a good bill of fare at this feast of reason and flow of soul. Of course the principal object is to afford Freethinkers an opportunity of getting to know each other.

The Stanley N. S. S. Branch holds a meeting in the Co-operative Anteroom on Saturday evening (Nov. 13) at 7 o'clock, and all members are earnestly invited to attend.

The Kingsland Branch held its monthly social and business meeting at Mr. Schindel's, who acted as host and made all very welcome. The report of Mr. Davey, treasurer, and Mr. Gregory, secretary, showed that the Branch, in spite of the wet weather during the outdoor lecture season, had left off with a balance in hand. The feature of the evening was a presentation to Mr. and Mrs. Savill in commemoration of their wedding. It took the form of a picture painted by a member, Mr. Wright, and subscribed for by the members. A most enjoyable evening was spent.

"Apostolic hands, after a manner of speaking, are laid upon us. In closing a business letter, Mr. G. W. Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker* and successor of Charles Bradlaugh as president of the National Secular Society, writes: 'Just a line more—to say how glad I am that you stick to your brother's old post and keep the *Truthseeker* so bold and bright. As one of the oldest (one can't say longest, though that would be better if one could) fighters for Freethought, and the editor of the only weekly Freethought paper in England, I send you my benediction.'—George Macdonald, editor "*Truthseeker*" (New York).

Our esteemed contributor, Mr. W. Mann, will be pleased to know that his *Freethinker* article on "Blood and Fire" has been reproduced, with proper acknowledgment, in the New York *Truthseeker*, and thus helps to propagate Free-thought in America.

The Secular Society, Ltd., is organising a course of two Sunday evening lectures (Dec. 5 and 12) at the St. Pancras Baths, Prince of Wales'-road. Another course of Sunday evening lectures is arranged for at the Stratford Town Hall in January.

London "saints" and some provincial ones will please note that the Annual Dinner is fixed to take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday, January 11, which happens to be the President's Birthday.

#### CHRIST AND HIS PRIESTS.

Nay, if indeed thou be not dead,  
 Before thy terrene shrine be shaken,  
 Look down, turn upward, bow thine head;  
 O thou that wast of God forsaken,  
 Look on thine household here, and see  
 These that have not forsaken thee.  
 Thy faith is fire upon their lips,  
 Thy kingdom golden in their hands;  
 They scourge us with thy words for whips,  
 They brand us with thy words for brands;  
 The thirst that made thy dry throat shrink  
 To their moist mouths commends the drink.  
 The toothed thorns that bit thy brows  
 Lighten the weight of gold on theirs;  
 Thy nakedness enrobes thy spouse  
 With the soft sanguine stuff she wears  
 Whose old limbs use for ointment yet  
 Thine agony and bloody sweat.  
 The blinding buffets on thine head  
 On their crowned heads confirm the crown;  
 Thy scourging dyes their raiment red,  
 And with thy hands they fasten down  
 For burial in the blood-bought field  
 The nations by thy stripes unhealed.

—A. C. Swinburne, "Before a Crucifix."

#### SATAN'S WORRY.

King Satan sat upon his throne,  
 Lost in solemn thinking;  
 He seemed a figure turned to stone  
 From some dread horror shrinking.  
 His wrinkled brow was frown bedecked,  
 His breath came thick and fast;  
 His eyes bulged out with such aspect  
 As though he'd breathe his last.  
 His helpers feared to speak or smile,  
 But in silence gazed and wondered.  
 If aught approached, in any style,  
 Like mad he stamped and thundered.  
 He sent his imps to every store  
 Where fuel could be gotten,  
 And when the bills came, how he swore  
 Would bring a blush to cotton.  
 He ordered a new scorching pot,  
 The very best invention,  
 Contracted to stay double hot  
 With just half the attention.  
 His best friends gathered round his chair  
 And for the cause did face him:  
 "The Pope is due," said he, "and where  
 In Hades can I place him?"  
 —Wilby Heard, in the New York "Truthseeker."

#### SUPERSTITION VERSUS SUPERSTITION.

The man of the world despises Catholics for taking their religious opinions on trust and being the slaves of tradition. As if he had himself formed his own most important opinions either in religion or anything else. He laughs at them for their superstitious awe of the Church. As if his own inward awe of the Greater Number were one whit less of a superstition. He mocks their deference for the past. As if his own absorbing deference to the present were one tittle better bottomed or a jot more respectable. The modern emancipation will profit us very little, if the *status quo* is to be fastened round our necks with the despotic authority of a heavenly dispensation, and if in the stead of ancient Scriptures we are to accept the plenary inspiration of Majorities.  
 —John Morley.

## Bible Stories Retold.

### DAVID AT THE COURT OF KING SAUL (1 SAM. XVII., XVIII.).

KING DAVID of Israel is one of the most remarkable figures in Old Testament history. Although the plays of William Shakespeare, at that early period, had not been penned, yet, agreeable to their marvellous insight into the crookedness of human ways, our Israelitish worthy was a man who, in his time, played many parts. Giant-killer, warrior, courtier, king, poet, musician, play-actor, dancer, outlaw, libertine, murderer,—these were some of the numerous rôles in which, like a quick-change artist, he successfully appeared. As a play-actor he had no equal. On one occasion he joined a company of strolling players who were touring the outlying provinces with a blood-curdling tragedy, entitled *The Madman*. The principal actor taking ill just when they had an important engagement to appear before the King of Gath, David volunteered to act as understudy. And so realistic was his impersonation of the madman that Achish, the king, was actually deceived, and imagined the actor was really "up a pole." In a towering rage the monarch sent for the Lord Chamberlain. "Good God, sir," he yelled, "have I not madmen enough of my own countrymen about me in the palace that thou sendest a foreign lunatic into my presence? Take him away" (1 Sam. xxi. 15). And the play was brought to an untimely end before the finish of the third act.

David first came publicly into prominence in connection with the slaughter of the Philistine giant, Goliath of Gath. The country of the Philistines adjoined the land of the Israelites, and, as is not unusual with near neighbors, they were deadly enemies, and constantly at war. Quarrelling with their neighbors was the principal pastime of the Israelites, and when they got tired of killing bullocks and goats for sacrificial purposes, they used to go out and kill a few Philistines for sport.

The popular impression of the Philistines as being hardy, fierce warriors is altogether a false one, as they simply fell like timid birds before a sportsman's gun; and on one occasion a doughty Israelite killed a thousand of them with no other weapon than the jawbone of an ass. But sometimes they made a bold stand, as once happened when David was but a young stripling, tending his father's sheep. Preachers are very fond of picturing the future King of Israel at this time out in the lonely fields communing with Nature, and meditating upon her secrets. As a matter of fact, he was doing nothing of the kind; he was practising continually with his sling and stones, and there was rarely a bird ever came within sight that young David did not, with unerring aim, bring to the ground. Many of these birds were, of course, not killed outright, and one day, when he had had exceptionally "good sport," he sent a present of twenty-four of the best to King Saul. These were made into a pie by the French *chef*, and the dish was such a decided change from the usual courses of barley cakes and lambs' fry that his Royal Highness was mightily pleased. It was this *chef* who remarked to the head waitress, "Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before a king?" And thus it was that the popular rhyme,—

"Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,"—

first originated.

Now David heard that the Philistines had made a bold stand and brought into the field a huge giant, the very sight of whom struck terror into the hearts of the Israelites. This giant used to appear daily before the armies of Israel, and invite them to send a man to "come and get punched." So David made his way to the place of battle; and on the morning when the giant came out as usual, and the Israelites were quaking in their shoes, young David stepped out into the open with his sling, and in less than two ticks that monstrous giant had measured his length upon the greensward with a stone buried in his fore-

head. It would be difficult to say whether the Philistines or the Israelites were the more surprised at this unexpected change in the fortunes of the two armies. But when the Israelites regained their normal condition of consciousness it was just in time to see the last of the Philistine army rapidly disappearing over the top of a distant hill. After the stunning effect of the surprise had passed, the first man to recover the faculty of speech was the king. "Who—who is that youth?" he asked of his aide-de-camp. "Your Highness," said the gentleman addressed, "that is the youth who sent the four-and-twenty blackbirds, of which the *chef* made such a delicious pie." "Then," said the king, "I am twice indebted to him, and he shall have his reward." Calling the Chief Secretary of State, he asked if any of the public offices were vacant; and, on being informed that they were all suitably filled, he gave instructions for the creation of a new office. And thus it was that David was installed at the Court of King Saul in the capacity of jester-musician.

Modern preachers profess to see in this accurate aim of David's a providential guidance of the stone; but when it is remembered that in the tribe of Benjamin alone there were seven hundred men so expert with the sling that, left-handed, they could knock spots off a ghost, either holy or profane, at a range of three hundred yards and never miss by a hairsbreadth (Judges xx. 16), it will be seen that there was really nothing supernatural in a stone hitting the wide expanse of a giant's forehead.

David was not only the champion Slinger of his day, but he was also the premier Singer; being known to posterity as "the sweet singer of Israel." Nor were his accomplishments confined to these two arts alone; he excelled in the use of various musical instruments—the timbrel, the tamborine, the cymbal, and the banjo. His duties in the royal household required him to play before the king and while away those cares of State which an empty exchequer all too speedily imprints upon the monarchical brow,—to keep, in fact, his emotional apparatus in a state of felicitous equilibrium. Sometimes, of course, he would vary the entertainment with a selection of vocal music; and it is said that his rendering of a patriotic song, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," was so effective that always the following morning the king slept long past his usual hour. When, as sometimes happened, David was not wanted in the royal palace, he used to go out and kill Philistines. If there was any person whom the Israelites of that period esteemed as a hero, it was the man who could kill Philistines. Only, as we shall see later on, it was not their scalps that counted, but another curious part of their anatomy. So David was not only a favorite at the palace, but his fame was spread abroad throughout the land. As the result of his repeated victories over the enemy, he grew more and more in the public estimation, and especially did he become the hero of the ladies. And on one occasion when he had returned from an unusually great slaughter of the Philistines, we read that "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing with timbrels, and with instruments of music." That must have been a Mafeking day among the Israelites, as we further read that "the women sang one to another in their play, and said,—

Saul hath slain his thousands  
But David his ten thousands."

As for Saul, he kept this saying in his heart—for future reference: "And Saul eyed David from that day forward" (1 Sam. xviii. 9).

Were it not that the duty of the historian compels him to be faithful to the facts, we would prefer to pass over the following incident; but personal inclinations must be set aside in the interests of truth. If David had a way with him of captivating the hearts of the ladies at the court, he was not altogether to blame; because he was young and handsome, and winsome in his ways, and women's hearts incline to these virtuous attractions. But the old king became obsessed by the green-eyed monster;

and when little differences arose between them in regard to the Miriams and the Rachels, it is sad to relate that he did not observe those niceties of etiquette that obtained among gentlemen of a later date, when they nominated their seconds and gave their opponents the choice of weapons. The old monarch took a mean advantage; and on a day when the young man was wooing those charms of music that soothe the savage breast (another of the sayings of David, born of his experiences before the old monarch), the king savagely flung a spear at David's head, which happily missed its mark and imbedded itself in the opposite wall.

Saul would gladly have got rid of David, but by this time he was too great a favorite with the populace. Indeed, his services to the country, in putting a post-Malthusian check upon the Philistine population, rendered it necessary that suitable public recognition be made of the country's obligation. It was not customary, in those days, to vote £10,000 out of the Treasury to the country's benefactors, and if it had been, the state of the exchequer would have prevented compliance with the custom. The usual thing was to make them a present of a few wives. So, in the country's name, Saul said: "Behold my daughter, Merab, her will I give unto David to wife." Clothing among the early Israelites was not such a complicated matter as it is with us; consequently, little time was lost in the preparation of the marriage trousseau. The happy event was fixed for two days later. But the course of true love did not run any more smoothly than it does now. And on the morning of the wedding-day, David was just putting the finishing touches to his necktie, at the same time admiring himself in the glass, when a messenger knocked at his dressing-room door to inform him that Merab, half an hour earlier, had been married by her father to Adriel, the Meholathite. This was a regular "knock ah't." David first turned an ashy white, and then red, and then green and pink (as the saying is). At last, when he had somewhat recovered himself, he said with some emphasis, "Well, I'll be —." We have left this blank, because considerable difference of opinion exists among commentators as to whether the original Hebrew merely means "blowed," or whether it is an expletive of stronger signification. Those readers whose notions of David's character are based merely upon pulpit utterances, will be disposed to fill in the blank with the milder term; but those acquainted with his real character, will probably incline to the stronger expletive. The messenger still waited; and, seeing David's abstraction, he said: "Shall I dismiss the cab, sir?" "Go to Jericho with the cab," was the somewhat uncivil answer he received. And this was the true origin of the saying, "Go to Jericho."

Some time later, it was told Saul that his younger daughter Michal loved David, and such is the perversity of human nature, the thing pleased him. So with true fatherly solicitation for her future happiness, and deep concern for the mental peace of his prospective son-in-law, he said: "I will give him her, that she may be a snare unto him." And to David he said: "We will let by-gones be by-gones; this day shalt thou be unto me a son-in-law a second time." David highly appreciated the irony of the joke. As, of course, Michal was to be a present, the old king could not expect the usual Oriental acknowledgment in return for a wife; but, for custom's sake, he thought he would like if David could procure the foreskins of a hundred Philistines—a very curious dowry indeed. If it had been "scalps" it would have been a difficult matter, but foreskins was quite a modest request. David promptly slipped out by the back door, and in less than half an hour he returned with double the quantity, and mightily pleased his father-in-law with a gift of two hundred Philistine foreskins. What was the nature of the surgical instrument with which David operated on these two hundred ungodly Philistines, we are not told, but—if we may speak with reverence where the

sacred narrative is silent—we venture to think it not unlikely that it was the jawbone of an ass. So Michal became David's wife; but as we are writing history and not fiction, we cannot truthfully add that they "lived happily ever after."

The same regard for truth impels us to notice an inexcusable error on the part of the sacred writer. He gets into a mix with regard to these two daughters of Saul. In 2 Samuel xxi. 8, he says it was "Michal" who married Adriel, the Meholathite, and even goes so far as to give a list of the children that were born to them of the marriage. It is true that later Saul took David's wife and re-married her to Palti or Paltiel, the son of Laish, but, as we have seen, it was "Merab," and not Michal, that was married to Adriel. Probably the inspiration tap was shut off when the sacred narrator made this grievous blunder.

David was now a captain in the army, but he still occasionally dropped in to cheer up his father-in-law with a little music. However, the old man never forgot that odious comparison which was the burden of the women's song on the day that David made such a slaughter of the Philistines; and an evil spirit that was hovering round the palace, one day took possession of him, and he again viciously flung a javelin at his relative's head with intent to do grievous bodily harm. The position was now becoming serious, and after this second murderous attempt upon his life, David thought it best for a while to give the king a wide berth. He was sure that evil was brewing and that the king would again seek his destruction. So bidding his wife a loving farewell, he sought the hospitality of heathen climes. Going many days journey beyond the Arabah of the wilderness he came at last to cities of civilisation; and there a stranger in a strange land, he sat down beside the rivers of Babylon, and—wept when he remembered Zion.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

### A Chance for Romanists.

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

THAT there is distrust of Rome's professions of love for America no one who loves our institutions will deny. We share this distrust. Doubtless Rome appreciates the freedom which she enjoys in this land—a freedom which she never proffered to others where she ruled—but that she loves American institutions there is not the slightest evidence, and when a Roman Catholic journal or a Roman Catholic priest proclaims the Pope's love of America we know better than to trust the statement. The freedom in this country which Rome enjoys is the freedom to grow. She sees in numbers her opportunity to govern the nation. But of the many privileges of education, of better surroundings, of higher enjoyment for her followers, she not only takes no advantage, but sets herself squarely in opposition to them. This is sufficient to show that Rome does not sympathise with the spirit of our nation. The truth is that Rome hates and fears liberty and hates and fears any education that tends to make the human mind independent.

In a recent editorial the *Boston Herald* referred to the public school system of this country as "the most democratic of all the national institutions and most serviceable in conserving democratic ideals." Does Rome share this conviction? Does Rome proclaim this view of our public schools? Does Rome work to maintain this glorious system in this land? An honest answer of these questions condemns every profession of Rome's love for America.

Roman Catholics in the United States have a chance to show their love of our institutions by refusing to support the parochial school, but how many will dare to do it? Every Roman Catholic loves Rome better than America. To paraphrase the well-known words of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, we say to Romanists: No man can serve two rulers,

for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and work against the other. You cannot serve Rome and America!

When an Italian comes to these shores and declares his intention of becoming an American citizen, it is not enough that he abjure his allegiance to the King of Italy, but he should also be required to abjure his allegiance to the Pope of Rome. And when an Irishman comes here it is not sufficient for him to abjure his allegiance to the King of Great Britain, but he should also be required to abjure his allegiance to the Pope of Rome. A man divided against himself cannot be trusted. He cannot be a free man and follow a political despot or a religious tyrant. We hold that a man cannot love America and American institutions and serve Rome and uphold parochial schools. In this country we want no institutions that are designed to make Jews, Mohammedans, Roman Catholic Christians or Protestant Christians, but honest, intelligent, upright citizens, men and women who love the right, the true, and the good.

A flag may be only a piece of bunting, but the flag that waves over a free land and signifies to her citizens political and religious liberty is the noblest emblem that glorifies the air. There is only one such flag in this continent and every human being who comes here to share our liberty should love that flag above every emblem on earth.

If a man loves liberty he should send his children to the school where liberty is found, and where the mind is not guided by ecclesiastical avarice.

—Truthseeker (New York).

### The Note of Personal Authority.

If we had a skilful artist who was deeply versed in religious and ecclesiastical history, he might be induced to paint a gallery of portraits of the various gods which human beings have worshiped from the earliest times. But what would be more interesting work from the pencil of such an artist would be a gallery of one particular god—such as Jahveh, for example—depicting what that warlike person was, and, by representing the subtle modifications that have taken place in his features, conclude the series by giving us a portrait of him as he is to-day, or what he is supposed to be by those who to-day put any faith in him. I venture to say that the representation of the Jahveh of the twentieth century would bear little or no resemblance to the Jahveh of the early Israelites. The Christians took over Jahveh, whitewashed him and represented him as the father of Jesus Christ, robbed him of his warlike attributes as the God of Battles, and—particularly during the last fifty years—have so toned him down that he is now becoming generally regarded as a loving, benevolent, gentle old man who desires that none should perish, but who seeks the good of all. It is to be feared, however, that his character is now somewhat colorless; and, indeed, the prominence of his son has rather cast the old gentleman into the background.

The authority which rulers and oppressors and tyrants have in the past exercised over the mass of the people could not have been exercised so long, and with such effect, but for the fact that those rulers, oppressors, and tyrants induced ignorant people to believe, as indubitably true, that authority emanated from a mysterious Divine source, and was conferred by a Divine person. The vagueness of some of the modern views about the personality of God in Christian Churches really makes the religion of those who hold the views a negative, purposeless, and futile thing. But it is different with the religion of those who believe that God is an actual definite person, who made man in his own image. Their religion is of real service in keeping great numbers of people "in order"—that is, in subjection to a minority who claim to have conferred upon them Divine authority. Humanity is still in its early childhood. Men and women, even in an age supposed to be enlightened, solemnly go through the most ludicrous farces as the result of the notions they have got about supernatural beings intervening in human affairs. Thus they dress up in gorgeous robes a puppet from among themselves, declare him to be the God-sent one to reign over them, prostrate themselves before him, kneel to him and uncover in his presence. At the last coronation in England a priest anointed the monarch with oil to make him "the Lord's anointed," though, as scientific research has proved, this ceremony of smearing

## Correspondence.

## SIR ROBERT ANDERSON EXPLAINS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have just seen the current number of your paper. In your notes on the essay I read at the Evangelical Alliance Convention, on October 21, you put various questions to me. I don't at all suppose you would give me space to answer them, but possibly your courtesy will allow me to offer the following remarks upon them.

Your criticisms are based, of course, on some newspaper paragraph about a paper that it took half an hour to read—a paper that is shortly to be printed—and as a man of the world I venture to think that even you would be surprised to find how much there is in it with which you would agree. But the newspapers, as is their wont, have picked out a few isolated sentences which, taken out of their context, warrant certain of your criticisms.

I will ask leave to notice only two points. The Acts of the Apostles clearly indicates that miracles ceased in Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen. And the "Ichabod" upon the Jewish nation, for whom the miracles were specially given, is recorded in the last chapter of the book.

And as to Spiritualism and demons. Being both by temperament and training a hopeless sceptic, I utterly refuse to believe that Mr. Stead can be "put on" to Mr. Gladstone and Cardinal Manning on his spiritualistic telephone. So I fall back on an alternative belief. Unless Mr. Stead and his allies are a pack of shameless frauds and liars, the spirits of the *séance* must belong to that world of demons of which we read in the Gospels. I am generous enough to accept this latter explanation of the facts.

ROBERT ANDERSON.

[We believe that Sir Robert Anderson underrates our willingness to give him a hearing. He would be perfectly entitled, according to our code of journalistic etiquette, to answer all the questions we might put to him. We are not surprised at his being misrepresented in press reports. The newspapers usually taboo us, and when they break silence they nearly always misrepresent us. On that point we have a fellow feeling with Sir Robert Anderson.—EDITOR.]

## SPEAK OUT!

One reason why so many persons are really shocked and pained by the avowal of heretical opinions, is the very fact that such avowal is uncommon. If unbelievers and doubters were more courageous, believers would be less timorous. It is because they live in a fool's paradise of seeming assent and conformity, that the breath of an honest and outspoken word strikes so eager and ripping on their sensibilities. If they were not encouraged to suppose that all the world is of their own mind, if they were forced out of that atmosphere of self-indulgent silences and hypocritical reserves, which is systematically poured round them, they would acquire a robuster mental habit. They would learn to take dissents for what they are worth. They would be led either to strengthen or to discard their own opinions, if the dissents happened to be weighty or instructive; either to refute or neglect such dissents as should be ill founded or insignificant. They will remain valetudinarians, so long as the curtain of compromise shelters them from the real belief of those of their neighbors who have ventured to use their minds with some measure of independence. A very brief contact with people who, when the occasion comes, do not shrink from saying what they think, is enough to modify that excessive liability to be shocked at truth-speaking, which is only so common because truth-speaking itself is so unfamiliar.—*John Morley.*

The immortality of the soul is a thing that concerns us so closely and touches us so profoundly, that one must have lost all feeling to be indifferent as to knowing how the matter is. All our actions and all our thoughts follow such different paths, according as there are external gods to hope for or not, that it is impossible to take a step with sense and judgment, without regulating it in view of this point, which ought to be our first object.—*Pascal.*

Yea, if no morning must behold  
Man, other than were they now cold,  
And other deeds than past deeds done,  
Nor any near or far-off sun  
Salute him risen and sunlike-souled,  
Free, boundless, fearless, perfect, one,  
Let man's world die like worlds of old,  
And here in heaven's sight only be  
The sole sun on the worldless sea.

—A. C. Swinburne.

with oil was a custom of other savage tribes besides the Jews who gave us our religion. This idea of personal authority has, in the main, been injurious to humanity and an obstacle to progress. By the efforts of men like Paine a good deal of the nonsense about it was knocked out of the French and the Americans, who have gone in for Republicanism; but the ignorant and half-educated human being dearly loves a show. The numerous pageants we have recently seen notices of in the press and illustrated papers are proof of this fact. How little removed is the solemn "play" of so many of our grown-ups, from the little boys playing at soldiers or pirates in the garden, or little girls dressing their dolls in the nursery! The duty that lies upon adult persons—the morally imperative duty—of using the faculty of reason has been terribly neglected. State pageants and religious processions and ceremonials may raise a fleeting smile, but that must soon be cleared away by gloomy reflection upon the inward condition of things which these pageants, processions, and ceremonials indicate. With our lips we revere the divine right of kings. In fact, we assert and revere that right not only as vested in monarchs, but also in sub-kings and all rulers, down to the working-man J.P. and even in husbands and fathers.

What is all this dressing and bowing and scraping to gods, kings, priests, and nobles but evidence of the fact that, despite a superficial veneer of modern civilisation, underneath we are savages and animals? "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn" wrote Robert Burns; and has man's inhumanity grown so very much less since the days of Burns? All these grim social and economic problems of the day—12 000,000 on the verge of starvation, nearly a million unemployed, infantile mortality, myriads living in dens of vice and filth—all these owe their existence to this principle of personal authority and the submission of the majority of people to those supposed to be clothed with authority by an Almighty God. What does such submission involve? It necessarily involves the resignation of all right to think, speak, or act for one's self; it prohibits mental action and investigation; it denies any inherent title in man to stand up in the right of his own manhood and do and dare for himself. Why? Because when a people have for a long period adopted and endured this principle of personal authority, the great bulk of them necessarily become degraded by being dependent upon and having to obey their great ones or supposed teachers. That is the kernel of religion: OBEY. Obey without asking reasons for any command. Obedience to personal authority—not to the dictates of enlightened reason—is the keystone of all slavery, physical or intellectual.

The most modern representation of God as so loving and compassionate a Father is a clerical device by which it is hoped that the emotions of people will be so stirred that they will be attracted to church. But such a device can only be successful with a class who have no historical or scientific knowledge, and the numbers of that class are rapidly diminishing. The most pathetic pictures of Christ's death, for example, are painted in order to secure recruits for the Christian faith. But while everyone with a spark of humanity compassionates any victim of cruelty and injustice, the student of the great laws of nature and of the past history of mankind knows that there have been many such victims, and he cannot accept the conclusions of the religious emotionalist about Christ's personality. If Christ were man and Almighty in one person, would his suffering have been so heroic as it was? Surely not. He had his *Divine* strength in reserve in that case, and that would have made his sufferings as a man not so very serious after all. Anyhow, Christians have got their own back. They have got a number of people out of the way since Christ's death by murders much more painful and revolting than his.

Where is the proof of a benevolent God and a loving Heavenly Father? Where is the proof of an impartial ruler of the universe? I saw in a sloppy monthly religious paper called *The British Workman* the quotation of a remark by an old working man, who concluded his testimony by saying: "He never sends a mouth but what he sends the meat for it." That old gentleman had perhaps been fortunate in his experiences; but the dear old soul was arguing from the particular to the general with a vengeance. Whether God sends mouths or not, we know very well there are plenty of unfed mouths to-day, and there always will be till men adopt a sane and natural view of life.

SIMPLE SANDY.

## DONE FOR BY A BULL.

Mabel (testing the wisdom of the grown-ups): "Well, how did Martin Luther die?"  
Uncle Jim: "Die? Oh, in the ordinary way, I suppose."  
Mabel: "Oh, Uncle! you really don't know anything. He was excommunicated by a bull."

## 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.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What must we do to be saved?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, W. Heaford, "Ferrer: His Schools and His Persecutors."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11.30, N. J. Evans, "Let Us Make God, etc." Seven Sisters' Corner, W. N. J. Evans, "The God Jehovah."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Burrow's Coffee House, Spring Hill): Thursday, Nov. 18, Herbert Thompson, a Paper.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): Wednesday, Nov. 17, at 8, Meeting to arrange for indoor lectures.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Club Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, Mr. Smithies, "Egoism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): H. P. Ward, 12 (noon), "Why I Do Not Believe in God"; 6.30, "Do the Dead Live?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "The Evolution of Morality.—II. Morality among the Higher Savages." Lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote, 3, "What Ferrer Died For"; 7, "The Master's Mind: Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Miss Daisy Halling, Grand Dramatic Recital. Pianoforte selections.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Hedley Café, Clayton-street): 7.30, C. Watson, "Militarism."

NOTTINGHAM (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, J. Long, "Natural Law in Sex Relation."

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

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ON

Thursday, November 18, at 8 p.m.

TO MEET

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Mr. C. COHEN, Etc.

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Short advertisements are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per half inch and 3s. 6d. per inch. No advertisement under this heading can be less than 2s. or extend beyond one inch. Special terms for several continuous insertions.

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

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.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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