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It is much easier to make a creed than to believe it after it is made.—JOHN ASGILL.

Christian Heroism.

WHEN the famous Joseph Addison was nearing his end he sent for his son-in-law, the young Earl of Warwick, to see how a Christian could die. And a profane wit said that he probably sent for a pint of brandy to do it on. For the great Mr. Addison was a long way from being a teetotaler.

It is curious what a fuss Christians have always made of death. Death, salvation, and damnation, are their everlasting Trinity. Death, of course, first of all. "Learn to Die" has been called the sum and substance of Christianity. And it appears to take a lot of learning. Jesus Christ himself seems to have found it difficult. One of the shrewdest points in Ingersoll's reply to Talmage, in the form of a Catechism, consisted of one question and one answer. It had been stated that Christianity was the only religion that enabled people to die with serenity. Now the question was asked: "What were the last words of Jesus Christ?" And the answer was: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Christian preachers say to their hearers "You've got to die." When they have said that they have said all. They are at the end of their tether. They can say no more if they talk for a thousand years. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment." Behind life lies death, and behind death lies the awful alternative of heaven or hell—with about ten to one on your reaching the wrong destination. Every death-bed thus becomes a place of terror. And in that terror the Christian Church has always flourished. It has governed men through their fears, and traded on their cowardice. Take away the fear of death, and Christianity dissolves and disappears.

Two thousand years of Christianity has bred a craven spirit in the face of death; a spirit which is no more natural to man than it is to the lower animals. The instinct of self-preservation tends to keep all animals alive in the struggle of existence. But the avoidance of death and the fear of death are very different things. The one is nature's prompting; the other is the artificial creation of priests. Western travellers often wonder at the serenity, the stolidity, and even the callousness with which Orientals meet death. They go to the length of asserting that in Eastern lands no value is placed upon human life. But that is a mistake. The truth simply is that the Orientals meet the inevitable like philosophers; while the Western Christian is only too apt to shrink and shriek.

One result of the Christian attitude towards death is a most effeminate idea of courage. Slender exhibitions of courage are regarded as brilliant heroisms. That a man should risk his life for anybody; that the driver of a train or a tramcar, or the captain of a ship, should do his duty at a time of accident, instead of dodging it for the sake of safety, seems so strange as to call for astonishment. Tears of admiration are shed over men for not acting like dastards. Death, which is the least of all evils, is considered so

terrible a thing that when a man doesn't disgracefully run away from it they bid you behold how Christianity elevates and fortifies the human character. And indeed this is quite in keeping with the doctrine of original sin.

How different was the case among the ancients. The old Greeks and Romans had a kind of religion of duty. To die at your post was nothing very heroic in their estimation. It was what every man was expected to do. Many of our readers will remember the picture of the Roman sentinel at Pompeii. He was nothing wonderful, perhaps, in brain or heart; just an ordinary soldier, but there was something within him of the soul of a great people. His little cup of life was filled from the reservoir of a whole nation's traditional strength and courage. The ashes of the great eruption were falling around him, and men and women were running in a wild endeavor to save their lives, but he disdained flight, and stood there firm and proud at his post, testifying the might and majesty of Rome,—and showing how a vital virtue will glorify the commonest human clay.

While a lioness will dash against a hundred spears for the sake of her cubs, while a mother will shield her babe against the cold at the slow sacrifice of her own life, while sailors will put the women in the boat and calmly sink with their ship, while the soldiers on the *Birkenhead* will form up in line on deck, give three cheers for those who get away with the women in the boats, and fire a truly royal salute as they go down to their death,—we can afford to despise the most slanderous of all religions, which declares that no man can do a good deed save by the grace of some unknown god.

The New Theology is no better than the Old Theology in this respect. Mr. Campbell only softens the hard doctrine of original sin into a sloppy sentimentalism. He cries that we cannot do without God, and still less without Christ. It is impossible to stand upright without leaning on Jesus. Mr. Campbell has just been adding to the stock of Christian sentimentalities. In the course of a new year's sermon he told a story of Mr. Lloyd George. The popular preacher was one of a small party luncheon with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the conversation turned on what they would do if they knew they had only a couple of months to live. Mr. Lloyd George said, "I would bring in my Budget, and proceed with it till the appointed time of departure, and so leave the world with a good conscience." Could any man worth his salt do less? Could anything but a despicable fear of death induce him to desert his post at a critical moment? But the Oracle of the City Temple almost weeps over "the spirituality of feeling" displayed by Mr. Lloyd George, and remarks that he was "making the earnest performance of earthly duty a preparation for the eternal." It is really enough to make a self-respecting person sick. And what a compliment to its object! It implies that, acting only on his native impulses, he would sink upon his knees before death, abject, paralysed, and contemptible. Mr. Lloyd George should pray to be saved from his pious friends. In their endeavor to make him a very fine Christian they only make him a poor sort of a man

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Politics.

A GENERAL ELECTION is upon us, and we are being treated to the customary liberal dose of political "blather" from the two leading parties, to say nothing of the smaller bodies. But in this election, as in the last, political blather is supplemented by religious nonsense, which is easily the more nauseating of the two. For the politician knows that few people will take his statements at quite their face value, while his hearers, for the most part, look upon a certain amount of exaggeration and misstatement as part of the normal order of things. But the religious blatherer in politics comes under a different category. He talks as though he really believes all he says, and as though he expects his hearers to believe it also. When he denounces his political opponents he does it from the vantage ground of a loftier morality, and of a more "spiritual" religion. He is on the Lord's side, and whoever is against him is fighting the will of God. He knows God agrees with him because he agrees with God. He does not exactly open his speech on a political platform with a "Thus saith the Lord," but he implies it all the way through. He is worse than the actual politician because he claims to be so much better. His politics is vitiated all through by an inflated sectarian prejudice. National greatness means to him, in the main, a sectarian ascendancy. And his intrusion into politics is harmful in proportion as the average voter finds it more difficult to appreciate a spiritual tyranny than a material wrong.

In this matter Churchman and Nonconformist occupy different positions. With the former his religion is part of his politics, or his politics is part of his religion—one may have it which way one pleases. At any rate, his is a State religion, laid down, modified, and controlled by the State. He believes that there should be a State religion, and it would be wrong to expect him to keep his religion and his politics apart. I do not, of course, agree with this position; but it is plain, intelligible, and does assert a principle. The Nonconformist protests against a State religion. He claims—in principle, not in practice—that before the State we should all rank as citizens, on a common basis of common rights, duties, and responsibilities. If he speaks on politics, then, it should be from the point of view of this common citizenship. The State has no concern with his religion, and his religion should not be paraded before the world on purely political and social issues. Its introduction is a gratuitous impertinence. If he believes in good drainage, his support should be based, so far as the public are concerned, on verifiable scientific reasons. What Jesus or any other member of the Trinity thinks about it is of no public concern whatever. When Nonconformists protest against Churchmen using their churches to influence political opinion, they have the cordial support of all Freethinkers. But when they use the chapel for the same purpose they earn, and receive, their contempt. When the Free Church Council drafts political resolutions, uses its machinery in support of this or that political party, and calls upon its religious supporters to vote in a particular manner, it has become, what it has been called, a political caucus, and is acting as it complains ministers of the State Church act.

Dr. Clifford, for example, in an article in the *Baptist Times*, says the present is the time Christians must "mount guard," to secure justice. On which one feels inclined to vary a line in the National Anthem and say "Confound his impudence." It may be a time for all men with a sense of right and justice to mount guard, but to make British greatness depend upon *Christian* men is an example of a religious impertinence that does not excite much comment because we are so familiar with its manifestations. He calls upon his brother believers, as "Christ's men," to aid in bringing about the domination of "His ideas and His spirit." By this, of course, Dr. Clifford means the domination of his

political opinions, just as by the exhortation to "carry into practical life and affairs the higher morality of His Gospel" he means his own interpretation of Christianity. But all this is beating the drum ecclesiastic, and quite as loudly as it could be done by members of the Established Church.

Let us observe, too, that people are being continually urged to support a particular political programme because they are Nonconformists. The Government is being praised or blamed because of what it did, or promised to do, or because of what it did not do for Nonconformists. The *Christian World* publishes a long list of Nonconformist candidates. Mr. Birrell addresses a political meeting that is opened with prayer and closed with the doxology. Mr. Lloyd George is asked to address an Albert Hall meeting as a Nonconformist speaking to Nonconformists. And as a Nonconformist he treats his audience to what it expects. He tells them what a splendid set of fellows they are, the very salt of the earth, that all that is good and great in modern England we owe to them and their ancestors, and that in every village the Nonconformist chapel is the champion of liberty. All pure, unadulterated, Nonconformist nonsense. What greater freedom does Nonconformity give to its opponents than does the Church of England? What amount of liberty is there in the Chancellor's own beloved Wales? There is the liberty of the Chapel to differ with the Church; but what of the man who differs with both?

It may be said that Nonconformity has been driven to take political action, and to consider social questions. With this I agree. For long enough the otherworldism of dissent was its most prominent characteristic. Its hell was the hottest on the market, its heaven the most concrete and the most tawdry, its contempt of earthly pleasures more marked than that of other Christian bodies. The worst features of the factory system, the employment of women and children in mines, all the most deplorable features of our early industrial system flourished uncensured by dissent. All the modern reform movements came into existence without its corporate assistance, and had well established themselves before Nonconformity became alive to their importance. It was the diffusion of social theories and a secularising of life among the classes to whom Nonconformity appealed for support in its warfare against the Church of the "classes" that forced it to take a more direct interest in social affairs—or at least to profess a more direct interest. It could not afford to longer avoid social and political issues without alienating one large body of its supporters, and it could not well advocate whole hearted reform without alienating another body. Hence the outbreak of frothy denunciation of evils no one defends, flatulent eulogies of virtues no one decries, with a qualified advocacy of reforms that have a respectable following.

Or it may be argued that it is folly to expect a man of strong religious connection to keep his religion and his politics separate. Here, again, I agree. I do not expect it, and cannot well see how it can occur. Hence the inevitable hypocrisy of the Nonconformist position. If a man believes that religion is essential to a right ordering of life, it is folly to expect him to not to bring his religion into everything. He must desire not only that all individuals should be religious, but that the State, as a State, should be religious also. And he will, as opportunity occurs, use the power of the State to promote the growth of religion among the people. Any progress the world makes will be as nothing if it does not mean a further increase in the power of religion. At best he will judge affairs from a religious point of view, and at worst from that of a mere sect. It is this that makes, in the mouth of a Christian, the talk of a common citizenship so much cant, and which, were he really sincere in his religious beliefs, would make him next to impossible as a citizen. He does not judge life from the same standpoint as the secular citizen, he is not aiming at the same end, His association with non-Christians is accidental, and

largely undesirable, since it may distract attention from the all important object of spiritual development. His belief as a Christian must, while it is genuine, profoundly influence his conduct as a citizen, and it is this that makes the cry of men like Dr. Clifford such transparent humbug. They are all the time thinking like Christians, and acting as members of a Christian Church. The plea that they speak as citizens only is one that is forced upon them by the modern secularising of life.

Logically, religion must exist in the State under one of two conditions. Either religion rules the State, or religious beliefs are judged from the point of view of social and political requirements. Either a theocracy or an atheocracy. Believers have always struggled for the first, and the march of events is continuously aiding the consummation of the last. Nor is it right to assume that those who have striven to make the State subordinate to the Church have been always animated by a tyrannical spirit or love of power. As religious men, their desire to elevate society operates as a powerful incentive. That it has not helped progress is a truth demonstrated by all experience. The result of trying to regulate the State in accordance with religious beliefs are written in some of the most deplorable chapters of European history, and its condemnation in many countries is now so complete that one can scarcely find a responsible person to speak in its favor.

The other method, that of judging religious beliefs from the point of view of their social value, is one that is ultimately fatal to religion in all its forms. When people begin to discuss religion from this standpoint they have taken the first step towards its rejection. For religion is not based on social utility, and it cannot look to social utility for justification. Its real purpose is to secure man's eternal welfare, and its saving power only manifests itself on the other side of the grave. On this side, people begin to realise that life proceeds at least as well without it, and probably better. To the Christian, the argument from utility has proved itself to be a two edged weapon. When the Freethinker said that Christianity was not true, the believer retorted that at least it was useful. A very little examination showed that even on the basis of utility Christianity did not admit of justification. It shows nothing that really compensates for the enormous expenditure of time and energy in its service; while it does introduce into social life elements of discordance fatal to orderly development. While the tendency of social forces is to unite people in a common bond of increasing comprehensiveness, the tendency of religion is to separate, to create barriers where none existed, and accentuate those already in existence. While social development is teaching us all to deal with life upon a common basis of mutual necessities and responsibilities, religiously, people are driven to estimate one another in terms of their adherence to a creed or a dogma. These elements may be more noticeable with some sects than others, but they are manifest with all. A bond of common citizenship can only really exist among those who regard their disagreements as of vastly smaller importance than their agreements. But the disagreement of the religious person with his fellow citizen is, to him, fundamental and vital. All points of agreement sink into insignificance by comparison. That religious people so frequently work in amity with their non-religious fellows does not prove this diagnosis to be inaccurate; it only proves the power of life's secularising forces, and that religious people have not always either the sincerity of belief or the wit to carry their opinions to a logical and socially disastrous conclusion.

C. COHEN.

Apologetic Straits.

THE Rev. Pearson McAdam Muir, D.D., minister of Glasgow Cathedral, has just published a book, entitled *Modern Substitutes for Christianity*, in which

a chapter is devoted to "The Tribute of Criticism to Christ." The whole volume is a most remarkable production; but this portion of it surpasses all the rest as a signal exposure of the hopeless weakness of the argumentative case for Christianity. Dr. Muir is an able man and a pleasing writer; but he seems to be quite incapable of fully realising any position other than his own. According to him, all critical attempts to tear the crown from Christ's brow are foredoomed to total failure. What the crown that cannot be torn from Christ's brow really is it is difficult to discover. We know well enough what it is in Dr. Muir's own theology; but when told that the rejection of that theology does not necessarily imperil the crown we are not a little puzzled. Only they who deny that Jesus ever lived can be pronounced truly destructive critics, and these are so few in number and so blinded by prejudice that they cannot do much harm to the Christian cause. "That Jesus of Nazareth lived and taught and was crucified, that, immediately after his death, his disciples were proclaiming that he had risen and was their living inspiration, these are facts which can be denied only by the very extravagance of Scepticism. And the admission of these simple facts implies a great deal more than is commonly supposed." Dr. Muir ignores the work of wholesale iconoclasts. To their words, he observes in passing, none can listen with respect save "those who have come to imagine it to be a mark of advanced culture to break with all religion, to confine their attention to the fleeting present, to reject all that claims to have Divine sanction." It is to other critics, more moderate and reasonable, our author prefers to listen; and it is to these he turns for his most convincing tribute to Christ. He says:—

"If it is made plain that the positive teaching of men unconnected with any Church, untrammelled by any creed, is a virtual assertion of much that is most dear to Christianity, if it is made plain that even where there is a strong denial there is also much reference to Christ, it may have more weight than the most cogent arguments or the most glowing appeals of orthodox divines or devout believers.....It would destroy the value of the evidence simply to quote orthodox doctrines in orthodox language. What we rather offer is the testimony of those who have resigned their grasp on much that we may deem essential. It is because in a sense we may call them 'enemies' that we ask them to be 'judges' in the great controversy. It is exactly because they are incredulous, or sceptical, or irreligious that we cite them at all" (pp. 177, 179).

Now, who are those wonderful critics and what do they say? At the outset, it is clear that if they regarded their so-called "tribute to Christ" as possessing any evidential value for the orthodox creed they would not hesitate to adopt that creed themselves. Dr. Muir is of opinion that logically they are bound to accept it; but the fact remains that they do not. Curiously enough, the critics who thus unintentionally support the orthodox creed glory in the adjective "Christian." The first mentioned is Professor Schmiedel, one of the foremost Christian scholars. His position is so well known that there is no need to dwell on it. Believing in the historicity of the man Jesus, he rejects all passages in which his Deity is either affirmed or implied. The Gospels are chock-full of mythical husks within which Dr. Schmiedel finds, after much diligent search, a few kernels of history. Having, as he thinks, torn off the mythical coverings, what is disclosed to his view is nothing but a mere man, a man who is in no sense unique, who "would hardly have been successful if he had not been venerated with an undue amount of worship," and who cannot be pronounced "an absolutely perfect model." Verily, says Dr. Schmiedel, "it would not trouble me if I found another person who excelled him, as, indeed, in certain respects, some have already done."

That is the gist of the tribute which Professor Schmiedel pays to Jesus; and it is utterly incomprehensible how Dr. Muir can even imagine that, in its evidential bearing on the historic faith, it has "more weight than the most cogent arguments or the most

glowing appeals of orthodox divines or devout believers." Professor Schmiedel "renounces much," but what on earth does he "incontrovertibly establish"? The Jesus in whom he believes he has himself hypothetically constructed out of a confused mass of incongruous materials. Fancy his "incontrovertibly establishing so much" by a saying like this:—

"Nor would my religious convictions be disturbed if, in view of Jesus's claim to Messianic rank, I felt bound to regard him as a *visionary*, or as having some other character of which I could in no case approve. I am not bound by his statements about himself" (*Jesus in Modern Criticism*, pp. 85, 86).

Here is another example of the apologetic shifts to which Dr. Muir has recourse:—

"Some thirty years ago M. André Lefèvre, a fervid disciple of Materialism, an uncompromising and bitter opponent of every system of religious manifestation, could not help discerning 'with the clairvoyance of hatred' the influence of Christianity in modern thought. 'Descartes, Leibnitz, Locke, Condillac, Newton, Bonnet, Kant, Hegel, Spinoza himself, Toland, and Priestley, Rousseau, all are Christians somewhere.....Voltaire himself has not completely eliminated the virus: his Deism is not exempt from it' (p. 185).

If our author is prepared to accept all the great thinkers named in that extract either as Christians, or as "incontrovertibly establishing so much" of the Christian creed, he is heartily welcome to them. We make him a present of the lot. The above quotation is immediately followed by this strange reflection:—

"In the most unexpected quarters we find the fascination of Christ remaining. Men not acknowledging themselves to be his followers, defiantly proclaiming that they are not his followers, that they can hardly be even interested in him, are yet perpetually returning, in what they themselves will confess as their higher moments, to the thought of him, trying to make plain why it is that for them there is in him no beauty that they should desire him."

How naively Dr. Muir contradicts himself in this short passage. He begins by asserting that in such men "we find the fascination of Christ remaining," and ends by admitting that when the same men are "in what they themselves will confess as their higher moments," their supreme task is to "make plain why it is that for them there is in him no beauty that they should desire him." Then he cites Mr. H. G. Wells as an example of the universal fascination of Christ, and then immediately quotes the clever novelist as saying that "this great and very definite Personality in the hearts and imaginations of mankind does not, and never has, attracted me." After submitting a long extract from Wells's book, *First and Last Things*, this is what our author has to say:—

"There is no disputing about tastes; and it is impossible to refute one who tells us that he cannot see and cannot understand, though we may lament and be astonished at his disabilities" (p. 188).

Dr. McAdam Muir refers to Strauss and Renan in proof of his proposition as to the continual fascination of Christ; but he does not inform us that Strauss was a Christian theologian, or that it was as a Christian he wrote his *Life of Jesus Christ Critically Treated*, and that when Renan published his *Life of Jesus* he was still largely under the spell of his long religious training and special preparation for the priesthood. Neither of these great men began the study of Jesus with an open, unprejudiced mind, and yet both were conscientiously forced to renounce the supernatural and miraculous Christ; and the longer Renan lived and faced the facts the more sceptical he became.

Dr. Muir next quotes from the Hindoo Theist, Protab Chandra Mozoomdar, and Mrs. Besant, who started life as a zealous Christian, then turned an equally enthusiastic Atheist, and eventually became a leading devotee of Eastern Occultism; but, surely, the reverend gentleman does not expect us to accept the irresponsible rhapsody of either as "the tribute of Criticism to Christ." Nor can we take any lines from Browning's *Christmas Eve* as possessing any

critical value whatever, especially when we bear in mind that, according to those who knew him best, Browning himself was an Agnostic, and that most of his poems are the utterances of dramatic characters, and not so many expressions of his own opinions.

The conclusion to which a careful examination of the chapter under consideration irresistibly brings us is that it does not present us with a fair and true idea of the attitude of modern criticism towards Jesus. The only critic it quotes from is Dr. Schmiedel, while to Strauss and Renan it only makes a passing reference. The longest extract is from a novelist who unblushingly declares that Jesus does not attract, and never has attracted, him. But how is it that there occurs no direct allusion to such an accomplished British critic as Mr. J. M. Robertson, whose two large works, *Christianity and Mythology* and *Pagan Christs*, are without doubt worthy of Dr. Muir's very best steel? Why does the author ignore the fact, mentioned by Arno Neumann, "that ever since Napoleon's time there has been a succession of writers in Germany, Holland, England, and America who have denied all historicity to Jesus of Nazareth"? We infer, from one or two expressions, that Dr. Muir regards such men as hopelessly prejudiced, or as utterly blinded by their unbelief; but are not orthodox divines equally prejudiced, or equally blinded by their faith? The truth is, however, that most of our anti-Christian critics were fervent believers when they entered upon their critical work, and that it was critical conclusions, honestly arrived at, which killed their faith. It was as the result of writing an essay in defence of the Bible, which won the prize in a competition, that a young man of our acquaintance became a confirmed Infidel. It is only "reverent," that is, of necessity, prejudiced critics, who remain believers in spite of all the facts which inevitably make for Scepticism.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Narratives in Genesis.—XXII.

DEATH OF SARAH: ISAAC'S WIFE: ETC.

THE whole of chapter xxiii. is from the pen of the Priestly writer, who narrates the death of Abraham's wife, Sarah, and the purchase of a field and cave for her burial, which lady is the only woman whose complete age, death, and burial are recorded in the Bible. According to the story, Sarah died in the neighborhood of Hebron—a town in southern Palestine, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem—at the advanced age of 127 years; and though "the Lord" had three times promised to give to Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession (Gen. xiii. 15-17; xv. 7; xviii. 8) these promises were of the proverbial pie-crust character; consequently that patriarch was obliged to purchase a piece of ground before he could bury his dead. It is, by the way, remarkable that though Abraham had been living in the land of Canaan for over sixty years, we find no mention of the name of the people who inhabited that country. Now, at last, we hear that the people of the land were "the children of Heth"; that is to say, Hittites. And it was from one of this race—"Ephron the Hittite"—that Abraham bought the field and cave of Machpelah for 400 shekels of silver, the purchase being made in the presence of the chief men of the locality, so that the small plot of land was "made sure unto Abraham for a burying-place by the children of Heth."

The eastern custom of bargaining is well illustrated in the story, which doubtless reflects the method in use in the writer's day; this is the most that can be said for the narrative; for there can be little doubt that this story, like all the others we have examined in connection with Abraham, is pure fiction. This conclusion is evident from the fact that the writer has fallen into an error with regard to the people who inhabited southern Palestine. In the ancient Egyptian records which go back to the supposed time

of Abraham, the land of Canaan is invariably called "the land of the Amorites." We know from these records that the Hittites did not live in Canaan, but inhabited a district to the north and north-east of that country. The Egyptian kings, from B.C. 1600 to B.C. 1200, were continually at war with these "children of Heth"; but to come within striking distance of that people, they had to march through the whole length of Palestine, from south to north, and cross the mountains of Lebanon. The Phœnicians who occupied the lowlands along the coast of Canaan, and the Amorites who inhabited the more inland and mountainous parts of that country, had been easily conquered and made tributary; but the Hittites, being a more powerful and warlike race, were able to contend with the Egyptian kings upon almost equal terms. We hear, for instance, after a long struggle between these antagonists, of a treaty of peace having been concluded, which was ratified by the marriage of Ramses II. with the daughter of "the great king of the Hittites, Khita-sir, the powerful." Without entering into this matter further, it will suffice to say that "the people of the land" (xxiii. 7, 11, 18), whom the writer represents Abraham as bargaining with, were not Hittites. It is true that in later times, when the power of the great Hittite empire had been broken and its people dispersed, there were many of that race living in Canaan. King David had Hittite mercenaries fighting for him in his armies; but this was several centuries after the time when Abraham is said to have lived.

The next chapter, Genesis xxiv., is by the Yahvist, who tells us a story of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, who was at that time forty years of age. According to the story, Abraham called his head servant, and made him swear to go to Mesopotamia, and there take a wife for his son from the family of some of his relatives who lived in that country. "And Abraham said unto his servant.....Swear by Yahveh, the god of heaven, and the god of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites." This oath was administered and taken in compliance with the command afterwards found in "the book of the law," alleged to have been given to the Israelites by Moses, which command reads as follows:—

Deut. vi. 13.—"Thou shalt fear Yahveh thy god, and serve him, and shall swear by his name." (Also, Deut. x. 20.)

If Abraham knew nothing of this command, the writer did, which comes to the same thing. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, who is represented as saying that he "came not to destroy the law [of Moses] and the prophets," set this command aside, and taught "Swear not at all" (Matt. v. 34, etc.)

Returning to the story in Genesis, Abraham's servant, after taking the oath required of him, set out on his journey, and faithfully carried out his master's instructions. The narrative, moreover, furnishes a remarkable instance of answer to prayer. The servant, we are informed, on reaching the outskirts of the place where Abraham's kinsfolk resided, halted with his company at a well, and there prayed to Abraham's god, asking that whatever damsel should come to draw water at the well, and should give a certain answer to his request to be permitted to drink from her pitcher, that damsel should be the one he was in search of. This prayer the god Yahveh heard—and answered. Almost before the words were out of the servant's mouth, Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor, came with a pitcher to the well, and replied to him exactly as he had suggested in his prayer. It is true, she had left home with her pitcher before the servant had commenced his prayer to Yahveh, and her answer "that she would give his camels drink also" might have been prompted by seeing the weary animals standing near the empty trough. Still, the answer to prayer is undeniable, and when the story has been proved to be historical, it may be of use to Christian Evidence mongers and others in helping to convince the "infidels."

His prayer having been satisfactorily answered, the servant asked the damsel her name and parentage, and learning who she was, proceeded to load her with some of the presents he had brought with him. He put a ring of gold weighing half a shekel on or through her nose, and bracelets of ten shekels upon her wrists, and informed her of the object of his journey (xxiv. 22, 47). Thus loaded, she ran home and showed these ornaments to her family, and told them of the servant's mission. Thereupon her brother Laban came out to the servant who had remained at the well, and invited him into the house. The first words uttered by the brother prove that the god Yahveh was known and worshiped in Mesopotamia—according to the story. But it is very unlikely indeed that such was the case; indeed, it is distinctly stated in Exod. vi. 23 that the name Yahveh was unknown at that time.

The servant accompanied Laban home, and narrated to the family the nature of his mission, as well as the remarkable answer to his prayer; after which they agreed to let Rebekah go, and become the wife of Isaac. This matter being settled, the servant gave "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment" to the damsel, and "gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things," and then urged an early departure. The next day Rebekah, with her nurse and her damsels, set out with the servant on their journey back to Canaan, all riding upon camels. Upon their arrival at Abraham's encampment, Isaac "took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

In the next chapter, Genesis xxv., the Yahvist tells us that "again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah." That patriarch was then 140 years old, but this notwithstanding, he had six sons by this lady, one of whom, Midian, is said to have been the ancestor of a people who were one of the most bitter enemies of the Israelites—the Midianites. When these sons had grown up Abraham, after presenting them with gifts, "sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, into the east country." Isaac was thus left sole heir, while Ishmael, Abraham's eldest son, received nothing (xxv. 1-6.)

Having thus sent his sons by Keturah adrift, as he had formerly sent his slave-wife Hagar and his son Ishmael, the great and much lauded patriarch Abraham—"the friend of God"—"gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years."

Here the Priestly writer resumes the narrative:—

"And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.....And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite.....the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth; there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife."

At the time of Abraham's death Isaac would be 75 years of age, and Ishmael an old man of 89 years. When we consider that Ishmael was a mere lad of fifteen when turned out of Abraham's house, and that 74 years had elapsed without the son having seen or held communication with his father, it is very unlikely indeed that he attended the funeral, even supposing him to be alive at that time. But the story of the death and burial of Abraham is obviously of the same character as the other stories related of that patriarch; that is to say, they are one and all purely mythical.

ABRACADABRA.

Doubt is the beginning of wisdom. It means caution, independence, honesty, and voracity. Faith means negligence, serfdom, insincerity, and deception. The man who never doubts never thinks. He is like a straw in the wind or a waif on the sea. He is one of the helpless, docile, unquestioning millions, who keep the world in a state of stagnation, and serve as a fulcrum for the lever of despotism.—G. W. Foose, "Flowers of Freethought."

Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* had a Gladstone page on December 29, the hundredth anniversary of the late G. O. M's birth. It called him "The World's Greatest Citizen." This is rather tall talk, and it savors of that sort of "patriotism" which our contemporary is always rebuking. The Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell's article was more modestly headed "Gladstone." Mr. Russell laid much stress on the great statesman's Christianity—as though that explained him. There were myriads of Christians in English public life in the second half of the nineteenth century, but there was only one Gladstone. "All I write, and all I think, and all I hope," he said to an American correspondent, "is based upon the Divinity of our Lord, the one central hope of our poor, wayward race." No doubt Gladstone said this quite sincerely. But men who wrote against him, and thought differently from him, and hoped that many of his hopes would be disappointed, could have said the same thing as sincerely as he did. When we see Christians fighting Christians on political and social battlefields, what is the use of saying that Christ is inspiring the whole lot of them? Is it not far more probable that Christ is inspiring none of them?

Mr. Russell makes an odd statement about the great Bradlaugh struggle over the Oath question. "Under the system then existing," he says, "which admitted Jews to Parliament but excluded Atheists, to deny the existence of God was a fatal bar, but to deny the Christian creed was no bar at all." Thus is history written—even by well-meaning men! Atheists do not deny the existence of God. Bradlaugh never denied the existence of God. He expressly guarded himself against that representation. Neither did the law at that or any other time exclude Atheists from parliament. It is a common notion, but it is entirely inaccurate, that the law was altered to allow Bradlaugh to take his seat in the House of Commons. He entered peaceably at last by taking the Oath at the table of the House. Mr. Speaker Peel silenced the attempted opposition with calls of "Order! Order!" He knew that the interference with Bradlaugh in the previous parliament was unconstitutional. It was only legal in the sense that there was no legal tribunal before which the House of Commons could be called to account. Bradlaugh took his seat, therefore, under the same "system" which obtained during the whole period of his exclusion. True, the law was altered, but that was afterwards, and by Bradlaugh himself, who succeeded in carrying his Oaths Bill, making the oath and affirmation optional. When this paragraph meets Mr. Russell's eyes—and we shall take care that it does—he will probably recognise his mistake.

Mr. C. Jesson, London secretary of the Amalgamated Musicians' Union, appears to object to Sunday cinematograph shows on the ground that they entail Sunday labor. His objection to Sunday labor disappears, however, when it means work and pay for musicians. He seems to think that Sunday work done for the Sunday League, or other "voluntary" bodies, is quite legitimate, while Sunday work done for an individual employer, who caters to the public in the hope of profit, is an awful thing. All this is in our opinion fantastic. Sunday labor by some is unavoidable if Sunday is to be of any use to the majority. The only reasonable thing, and the only workable thing, is to adopt the French law, and secure one day's rest in every seven to every employee. To this complexion we must come at last.

Mr. Jesson's curious logic is endorsed by Sabbatarians generally. Why should concerts and shows be run on Sunday "for financial profit"? Well, why not? What crime can there be in "financial profit" on Sunday if there is none on Monday? We are bound to say that we regard this objection as mere cant. But the Sabbatarians' arguments were always foolish—or worse. What they really mean is very rarely what they say.

"The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning" was nothing to the Rev. William Batley, of Fern Bank, Old London-road, Hastings, who left £109,288. If the New Testament be true, this reverend gentleman took the wrong turning once for all, and is now at the end of his journey in a very warm place, which doesn't even boast of Water Works.

From *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1910, we learn that there were, at the last prison census, in British prisons, 21,730 Christians belonging to various sects, 257 Jews, 3 Mohammedans, and 26 who returned themselves as Atheists. We do not know exactly what this 26 meant by calling themselves Atheists. When, some years back, out of a prison

population of over 28,000 some 51 described themselves as Atheists, the Rev. J. W. Horsley found that only in four cases was the word correctly applied. Probably the 26 noted above need a similar sifting. But any way, with only 26 Atheists in prison it looks as though other Atheists are paying more than their share of prison rates to keep Christians in board and lodging. It almost seems as though there were room for another passive resistance movement.

The slump in the churches continues. The Congregationalists report an actual decrease of 2,534 church members, which means a larger number taking into account growth of population. The Baptists also report an absolute decrease of 1,553 members. With Mr. Lloyd George assuring us that Nonconformists represent the life-blood of the nation, this continuous decrease of dissenting adherents seems to bring promise of a gloomy future. Still, we manage to keep cheerful; always buoyed up with the hope that the Chancellor may have been wrong in his diagnosis.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, is a pleasant kind of a writer, as religious writers go, but some of his "facts" need checking. For instance, he informs his readers that the Anti-Slavery movement in America took its beginning in a sermon preached by the Rev. Samuel Hopkins to his congregation. We beg to point out to "J. B." that the credit of first publicly proclaiming the evils of slavery in America belongs to that great pioneer, Thomas Paine. Paine's services have been overlooked here as elsewhere, and presumably it is not yet quite safe for religious writers to tell their readers how much the world owes to its great heretics. One may add, that if Christians had not first taken the institution of slavery in America there would have been no need for Paine, or Hopkins, or anyone else to agitate for its abolition.

There are 170 Nonconformist candidates standing at the coming General Election. All of them feel that they are on the side of God, and Mr. Hay Morgan (Baptist) has reassured the Truro electors on this point. On the whole, the policy seems a trifle risky. How would it look, for example, if Mr. Hay Morgan were defeated and the news was announced as "God Almighty outvoted by the Truro electors," or that the electors of Bethnal Green prefer Dr. Molson to God Almighty's candidate—Sir Edwin Cornwall? If God Almighty is really at the side of these 170 candidates, their election should be a foregone conclusion. And if they are not elected who the devil elects their opponents? Perhaps the answer is given in the last question.

We referred last week to the suicide of the Rev. H. C. Lang, M.D., of Southend-on-Sea. It will be remembered that the reverend doctor left a letter for his wife stating that he had for some time been an Agnostic, and that Christianity and Science were antagonistic and irreconcilable. This was only too likely to cause trouble in connection with the funeral. Dr. Lang's own church took no notice of his suicide or of his anti-religious confession. His body was taken into the "sacred edifice" and a sort of requiem mass was said over it—in accordance with the ritualistic practices prevailing there. The parson of another church—the Rev. A. Waller—thought it his duty to protest against this proceeding. Mr. Waller is of the low evangelical party, and a stern teetotaler; in fact, he induced Mrs. Carry-On Nation to visit Southend during her late trip to this country. The reverend gentleman "protested [we quote from the local *Standard*] it was not lawful to admit the body to the church, or that the burial service should be read over the deceased priest. He urged that Dr. Lang had confessed himself an Agnostic, and laid violent hands upon himself, and the Church rubric said such should not be buried in consecrated ground. By his written confession the deceased had given the lie to his teaching for years." Having made this protest Mr. Waller went home—and the proceedings were continued as if he had gone further. Dr. Lang was not "buried at four cross roads, with a stake in his inside," as Tom Hood put it. He was buried in consecrated ground, and we hope it will have no injurious effect on the surrounding corpses.

"Father" Stanton, of St. Alban's, Holborn, is a Church of England parson. He is a good and an amiable man, but it doesn't follow that all he says is true, though there can be no doubt that he thinks it so. In the course of his Christmas sermon he begged his hearers to be ever on the side of God and the family, on the side of "Mary and Joseph and the Babe in the midst." But as Father Stanton regards Joseph as no real relation to the Babe it seems to us that his words are rather wide of the mark. Joseph's position was only an accommodation to a rather awkward situation. That would appear to be Father Stanton's view with respect to all

fathers. "It is for the mother," he said, "to keep the hearth and the home warm with the love of God." "If religion dies out of the family," he added, "it dies out of the heart of man; and if the faith dies from the heart of man, all is lost." All is lost to religion in general, and to Christianity in particular,—we quite admit that. But nothing will be lost to civilisation. We are equally sure of that.

Rev. S. R. Bawtree, a progressive theologian, says that "For full assurance faith must not be based on any physical fact or any material occurrence." We cordially agree with this opinion. To base religious faith on any actual, verifiable fact or collection of facts is to pave the way for certain disaster. For it is a thousand to one that, before long, some one will come along and prove that the facts have an entirely different significance. Most of the disasters to religion in the past have been due to this mistaken policy. Faith rested itself on certain alleged historical occurrences, or on a special interpretation of known facts, with the result that the former were shown to be mythical and the latter inapplicable. Mr. Bawtree has hit upon the really safe rule. Keep your faith clear of facts, and then it doesn't matter what happens. Its foundations cannot be questioned—they don't exist. Facts cannot be brought against it, it has no connection with them. It rests on nothing and ends nowhere; and one who develops a faith of this character may rest secure against all attack. Mr. Bawtree's fitness as a religious guide is unquestionable.

Archdeacon Lloyd, of the Colonial and Continental Church Society, says that his Society is doing a glorious work in North-West Canada. The Indian tribes have now been civilised and Christianised. How many have been Christianised out of existence the speaker did not inform the meeting, but as the Indians are a disappearing people, the benefit they derive is not very apparent. The Archdeacon also pointed out that there were hundreds of miles of beautiful land where wheat, oats, turnips, and fruit could be cultivated and interest was "taken in the development of the land by speculative business men." We do not doubt this; but, again, the benefit to the poor Indians is not apparent. One would like to know how much these original possessors of the soil benefit by this agricultural and commercial enterprise. It seems as though the Archdeacon's Society looks after the souls of the Indians while other people are looking after their more material possessions.

Mr. T. Shore, an old friend of ours, and a veteran Freethinker, desires to state his dissent from the views we expressed on certain relationships between the Republican Government and the Catholic Church in France, and he does so in a letter which appears on another page of this week's *Freethinker*. Our argument was, in brief, that when the Catholic Church is disestablished and disendowed, and placed on the same level as all other churches, or organisations of human beings, the Catholic priest becomes an ordinary citizen, and is entitled to all the political, social, and personal rights of an ordinary citizen. Mr. Shore denies this. As we understand him, he maintains that Catholic priests, and presumably all Catholics (for where can you draw a line between people and their representatives?) are entitled to no more rights than Freethinkers and other opponents choose to allow them. Mr. Shore does not state this quite nakedly; he covers it up with a good deal of parliamentary language; but if he doesn't mean it, we fail to understand what he does mean.

Our old friend is a man of strong convictions and warm feelings. We understand, therefore, why he devotes so much space to denouncing the Catholic Church. But it is a sheer waste in this instance. We do not hold a brief for the Catholic Church. We were not pleading for the Catholic Church. We were pleading for our own principles. We think no better of the Catholic Church than Mr. Shore does. Nevertheless, we concede to every Catholic all the rights that we claim for ourselves. We are for more than toleration; we are for absolute equality. But even on the lower ground of toleration, which is perfectly sound as far as it goes, we beg to remind Mr. Shore that this virtue is one that can only be displayed in the midst of differences, and only in a high degree in the midst of exasperating differences. There is no particular room for toleration when people agree with you. The test of toleration is where people differ from you. When they differ from you gravely and greatly the test becomes keen. And in the case of Freethinkers the keenest test is naturally in relation to the Catholic Church.

Mr. Shore argues that the Catholic "enemy is for ever undermining the happiness and well-being of every man,

woman, and child within its reach." We smiled when we read this. Not because it is not true, but because of our old friend's simplicity. Does he not recollect that what he says of the Catholic enemy is precisely what Catholics say of the Freethought enemy? Does he not see how easily his own argument can be turned against himself whenever (including wherever) the Catholic Church is powerful enough to indulge in the retort? Catholics have as much right to do unpleasant things to Mr. Shore as he has to do unpleasant things to them. Our old friend cannot deny that. If he did, he would put himself in a laughable position. Whatever right, then, he has to deal with Catholics in the spirit of his letter the Catholics have to deal with him in the same spirit. More or less does not matter to the principle at issue. And thus we find a veteran (and true) Freethinker like Mr. Shore propounding principles that lead straight up to the murder of Ferrer in the moat of Montjuich.

How is it possible to argue that Freethinkers have a right to treat Catholics in a disagreeable way in France, but that Catholics have no right to treat Freethinkers in a disagreeable way in Spain?

Mr. Shore takes our phrase of "an ordinary citizen" and puts more into it than the specific occasion warrants. We are quite aware that Catholic priests are not all "ordinary citizens" in some senses of the expression. Neither is Mr. Shore. Neither is anybody else. Every man has his own definite, yet indefinable, influence—physical, mental, moral, and "spiritual"—over his fellow men. In that sense of the words, there is no ordinary citizen. There is an infinite variety of citizens. What we were talking about was the legal rights of an ordinary citizen; that is, the legal rights of every citizen, merely as a citizen. We say that a Catholic priest is as much an ordinary citizen in that sense of the words as a bus-driver—or a Secular lecturer. He is so in England as well as in France. But the Church of England clergyman is not. He has certain privileges and certain restrictions. One of the latter is that he cannot be a member of parliament. And why? Because the Church of England is established by the State and under State control. While the Catholic Church was established in France it also was under State control. Now the case is different. The Catholic Church has been given her "bill of divorce" and the State cannot have it both ways; any more than a man can divorce his wife and still keep her under obligation to himself.

The Catholic Church professes to have "power over the next world." So do all Churches, directly or indirectly. The Catholic Church claims "power in this world." So do all Churches, directly or indirectly. The Church of England is fighting its own battle in the present political crisis, and the Nonconformist Churches are just as openly fighting *their* battle. There never was a Church on earth which would not persecute if it could. Look at the Puritans of the seventeenth century. They shook the English dust from their feet against the dungeons, brandings, and mutilations of Archbishop Laud, and when they got over to New England they set up a viler hell of persecution than the one they had left behind them. They had no idea of religious liberty. They believed, as other Churches did, in persecution. The only dispute on that point was, who should suffer it and who inflict it.

Mr. Shore's third paragraph from the end would delight a Grand Inquisitor. It would satisfy Torquemada. From the principle of Secular Education, which he confuses with Secularism, he argues that the "State is justified in preventing the teaching of every sort of superstitious dogma." At present the State, in Mr. Shore's own country, supports the teaching of superstitious dogma, but apparently it is going to alter shortly when it perceives the force of Mr. Shore's logic. The question will then arise, what is a superstitious dogma? Mr. Shore will answer the question readily. But a great many other people will quarrel like the very devil over it. It will be a fearful business for the State. And stern Freethinkers of Mr. Shore's school (in this letter) will clamor for a "censorship." "Generally accepted axioms" are not to be "subverted." We can quite conceive ourselves being arrested and punished, under Citizen Shore's new Blasphemy Law, for indocently criticising an "accepted axiom" and bringing a State manual into disbelief and contempt.

Our old friend doesn't really mean these things. We have known him most of our public lifetime. He is a born rebel. When the new State tyranny was set up he would be the first to cry "Hang it!" Nobody would be quicker than he at looking round for materials for a barricade. He has taken a wrong turning this time. That is all.

We repeat now what we said in leading articles during the Separation war in France. Liberty is for all; otherwise, what is called liberty is only an arrangement of privilege. Churches must be fought by Freethought organisations. Religious ideas must be fought by criticism. Faith must be fought by Reason. The sword must never be drawn in intellectual struggles. If Freethinkers do that they imitate the worst vices of their opponents. They stain their own cause with treachery. They repudiate their own principles. They trample upon their own traditions. It was not thus that they triumphed over the Catholic Church in France. The present Republican government is not the real author of the Separation of Church and State. It is the political accident of the hour. The real authors of Separation are the great Frenchmen who fought for it with the "weapon of the spirit,"—who wielded no other weapon and desired none. All the world is more governed from the grave than it ever recognises. Those great Frenchmen are in *their* graves, but they have a life beyond the dust of death. They live in the progress which they strove to achieve. The real authors of Separation are not M. Combes, M. Clemenceau, and M. Briand. No, the real authors of Separation are the dead philosophers, poets, publicists, and orators, who turned men's minds to Freethought, and challenged the dogmas and authority of the Catholic Church. Their names are Voltaire, Diderot, D'Holbach, La Place, Dupuis, Courier, Michelet, Quinet, Hugo, Gambetta—and many others on that long and glorious list. They did not fight to establish one tyranny on the ruins of another. They did not aim at making enough Freethinkers to turn the tables on Catholics. Their object was equal freedom for all sects and all opinions. And we have no doubt that the high traditions of French Freethought will shine out undimmed, if for a moment partially obscured, when the mistakes of its friends in the warmth of victory have been recognised and atoned for.

A word in conclusion about the Catholic Church, after dis-establishment, being as much a voluntary body as the National Secular Society. We should have thought this was unquestionable. Mr. Shore only disputes it by an equivocal use of the word "voluntary." It is nothing to us—it should be nothing to the State—that the Modernists, for instance, like the late Father Tyrrell, find it emotionally difficult to go out of the Catholic Church, and have eventually to be turned out. That is a private and personal matter. To say that such men as Tyrrell and Mivart were not free to go out because of their dread of ghostly terrors is not true. They had gone much too far for that. They simply feared to break old ties and associations. Every association is voluntary, in our meaning of the word, when its members are legally free to remain or resign; not that they have a right to remain when their fellow members want their room instead of their company. Every society on earth excommunicates. The N. S. S. has occasionally expelled a member. When the Catholic Church had the power of the State behind it, and could employ actual force to make its excommunications thoroughly effective, they were brutal and wicked performances. But its excommunications under the conditions now obtaining in France or in England are harmless thunders. We repeat, then, that without the power and authority of the State behind it, the Catholic Church is as much a voluntary body as the National Secular Society.

General Booth was at Crouch End Hippodrome on Sunday afternoon, and told rather a good story. An old woman, who had been in prison sixty or seventy times, was given an opportunity of going either to the lock-up or to the Salvation Army. When the dissipated old creature woke up in a clean bed she asked, "Where am I?" and upon being told that she was at the Salvation Home, she cried, in horror-stricken tones, "Let me out or I shall lose my reputation." The audience laughed, and Booth thought it funny, but we have a good deal of sympathy with the old lady. When she was in prison, no doubt for trivial offences, such as drinking to forget her poverty and remember her misery no more, she was not eating the bread of charity, for the people who locked her up had necessarily to feed her. But in the Salvation Home there was "charity" everywhere; so the old lady felt her reputation was in peril, and hurried out to save it.

Holy Russia! A Catholic priest at Minsk has been fined twenty pounds and imprisoned four months for marrying a Catholic man and an Orthodox (Greek Church) woman; also for baptising a child, one of whose parents was Orthodox. A Bill for putting an end to the criminality of such acts was before the Duma for more than a year, but it was withdrawn a few weeks ago, owing to the pressure of the Bishops of the Established Church. Whatever is right, with those gentlemen. They want no change. The present situation suits them to a T.

The *Postman's Gazette* trembles for the orthodoxy of its readers, which seems to be extremely sensitive and easily upset. It has summarily stopped, with regret at allowing it to begin, a correspondence on "The Origin of the World," on the ground that it was "drifting into the atheistical field," and "we must respect the religious feelings and beliefs of our members." Poor members!

Questions for Candidates

ON THE BLASPHEMY LAWS

For Use in the Present General Election.

- (1) WILL you, if you have the opportunity, support a Bill for repealing the Blasphemy Act of 9 and 10 William III., chap. 32, under which persons denying the truth of the Christian religion, or the divine authority of the Bible, are liable to be deprived of civil and political rights; and, for a second offence, to three years' imprisonment?
- (2) Will you, if you have the opportunity, vote for a Bill repealing the Common Law of Blasphemy, under which every outspoken critic of the popular religion is liable to prosecution and imprisonment like an ordinary criminal?
- (3) Are you in favor of religious questions being discussed with the same freedom as political and social questions? And if not, why not?
- (4) Do you consider it fair and just that the Blasphemy Laws should be maintained, not to protect Christianity, as was the original intention, but to punish every twenty-five years some Freethinker who happens to be distasteful to the police; or who, as in the case of the late Charles Bradlaugh, happens to be hated by political opponents ready to move heaven and earth (or elsewhere) to compass his ruin?
- (5) Do you consider it right that the State should meddle at all with religious opinions or religious controversy, except in cases where it directly (and not inferentially) leads to a breach of the peace? In that case, would you treat the advocates of every religion, or no-religion, with equal impartiality?

The first two of the above questions are the most important, but the others may be useful in cornering a candidate who will not give the first questions a straightforward answer. Questioners must judge in such cases for themselves. All depends on what is happening on the spot.

MR. BOTTOMLEY'S SEAT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is, of course, outside the province of the *Freethinker* to meddle with things political, but I would urge all Freethinkers to press upon candidates the two questions in which we are deeply interested—namely, Secular Education and the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

I think it the duty of all Secularists living in South Hackney to help in securing the return of Mr. Bottomley for that constituency. On both the above questions he is sound, as his speeches and votes in the House of Commons have proved, for he alone, among London M.P.'s, spoke in condemnation of the revival of the blasphemy prosecutions, and was also the only London M.P. who rose when the effort was made to bring the murder of Senor Ferrer before the House of Commons. The others sat like dumb dogs, all in silent approval of the brutal assassination. For these reasons alone Mr. Bottomley is entitled to the whole-hearted support of every lover of Freethought, and I, for one, am doing my best to secure him a thumping majority. I hope others will do the same.

W. J. RAMSEY.

The Ward Testimonial Fund.

Mr. Howard, 5s.; E. Cookson, 1s. 6d.; Mr. Fraser, 1s. Mr. Harper, 1s.; Mr. Roberts, 1s.; Mr. Forshaw, 6d.; A. S. Falkner, 2s. 6d.; Miss Robinson, 1s.; Mr. Yates, 1s.; Mr. Dodd, 10s.; Mr. Haigh, 2s.—JOHN ROSS, Treasurer, 13 Carlingford-street, Liverpool.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 9, St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W.; at 7.30, "Shelley and the House of Lords."

Tuesday, January 11, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner.

January 16, St. James's Hall; 23, St. James's Hall; 30, Stratford Town Hall.

February 6, Manchester; 13, St. James's Hall; 20, St. James's Hall; 27, Birmingham Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 16, Stratford Town Hall; 30, St. James's Hall; February 6, St. James's Hall; 13, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 9, Holloway; 23, Stratford Town Hall; 30, Birmingham.

J. P. GLOVER.—Your enclosure is written ironically; that is, it means the opposite of what it says. We hope your wish will be realised—"that the *Freethinker* will make a greater stride in 1910." Of course you mean in the matter of circulation.

D. D. CORRICK.—(1) Professor Bain's two books on *The Senses and the Intellect* and *The Emotions and the Will* were called by John Stuart Mill "a profound work"—which is more authoritative than anything we could say. It is the fashion to run down both Bain and Mill now, but they will have their day again. (2) Ruskin was essentially right in saying that there are many religions, but only one morality. What seems to you many moralities are only different judgments and social customs. Morality in its essence has always and everywhere been the same. Justice depends on how far men see, but sympathy and its result, kindness, are at the bottom of all morality; and the fundamental disciplines of life are the same wherever families, tribes, or nations exist; it is the subordination of individual impulses to the good of others. In various stages of human culture the good of others will be variously understood; but the vital fact is the subordination itself; the rest changes with the growth of experience and the development of reflection.

T. THELWALL, subscribing to the President's Fund, wishes success to our efforts "to advance the best of all causes," and promises to try to promote our circulation during 1910. He thinks the new year's number "splendid."

D. D. B.—We are quite aware that different times of the year are most convenient to different friends for subscribing to the President's Fund. Thanks for your letter. We are quite sure of your sympathy and good wishes.

A. HURCOM.—Better luck next time.

H. FRANCIS.—Glad you were so successful. Thanks.

OSCAR FRIEDMAN.—That is a happy phrase of yours—that you "have been afflicted with religion for twenty-three years." Glad you appreciate this journal so highly.

F. C. HOLDEN.—Shall be sent as requested. Thanks for a sight of the enclosure. Individual missionary work is of the greatest value.

D. GARLAND.—(1) We were not referring to military discussions, but to the German Invasion Scare started diplomatically just now, and our reference was merely incidental, or accidental, in replying to the *Daily News*, which sought to saddle Atheism with "Nunquam's" new crusade. We made no suggestion against Mr. Blatchford's good faith. That would be silly and ill-conditioned. There are many ways of "tempting" a Democrat besides the vulgar one of offering him money; and the people Mr. Blatchford rubs shoulders with in this crusade are adepts at the game. (2) Glad you owe so much to the *Freethinker*.

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

F. WOOD.—Subscription should have been sent direct to Mr. John Ross, to whom we have transferred it. Thanks for cuttings.

W. A. YATES.—If all subscribed according to their means, as you say, the President's Fund would "assume far greater proportions." There are more than hundreds we never seem to hear from; there are thousands. Glad you consider the *Freethinker* "an immense intellectual treat."

J. CHICK.—Your good wishes are appreciated.

HERBERT T. CLARKSON, subscribing to the President's Fund, does so "with all best wishes for the coming year, and hope that the good work you have done, and are doing, may bring forth the result it so richly deserves."

A. H. (Stalybridge).—Life is not long enough to do as you wish. We might refute definite charges made against Bradlaugh (as we refuted Torrey's slanders on Paine and Ingersoll) when the accusers are persons of sufficient standing to be worth our powder and shot, but we cannot spend our time in refuting the whispers of anonymous malice. You can't put a man in the dock on the charge of being a thief; you must allege that he stole a particular thing—and prove it. That is English law, and it is common sense.

F. SMALLMAN, subscribing to the President's Honorary Fund, says: "This fund, by the bye, is, or has been, quite inadequate as a proper recognition of the brave and fearless championship of the Freethought cause for so many years maintained

by you. It ought to be at least twice as much. Why don't the emancipated from religious thralldom 'shell out' more? If only they expended one half on Freethought what was formerly contributed to superstition both they and the cause would undoubtedly be the gainer. Why don't they see it in this light?" Mr. Smallman joined the N. S. S. in 1875, his certificate was signed by C. Bradlaugh, and it "hangs in the room where I write," Mr. Smallman says, "as one of my valued possessions." "I have subscribed," he adds, "for every number of the *Freethinker* since its first issue. I have followed your career closely, and I am thoroughly well pleased with you and with all that you have so nobly done for the cause of Freethought." There now! But it isn't so much the praise as the writer's frame of mind towards us that we value.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

"Shelley and the House of Lords" is the subject of Mr. Foote's opening lecture at St. James's Hall this evening (January 9). It was felt that, during a general election, it would be difficult to get the public to take much interest in abstract questions. The time for such questions will come when political strife is less acute. Shelley's admirers know that he was not only a great poet, but a keen political and social reformer. Mr. Foote will deal with that aspect of Shelley, as well as with his Atheism; and amongst the illustrations he will recite from the poet will be "Liberty" and "To the Men of England." If the latter doesn't bring the house down in the present state of the political world nothing will.

A new course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures opens at the Stratford Town Hall next Sunday evening (January 16). Mr. Cohen is the lecturer. He will be followed by Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. Foote will wind up the course. All seats at these meetings are free.

Our readers' attention is called again to the Questions for Candidates on Secular Education which were printed in last week's *Freethinker*. A special leaflet containing those questions, issued by the Secular Education League, can be obtained at the N. S. S. office, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. We repeat that Freethinkers should bring this matter before the attention of parliamentary candidates at public meetings. It is not enough to put the questions in writing to candidates. There is a great advantage in publicity. A candidate can be pressed for a better answer if he gives an unsatisfactory one; besides, the meeting hear what is said and can form their own conclusions.

Questions for Parliamentary Candidates on the Blasphemy Laws will be found on another page. We hope the "saints" all over the country will heckle the candidates in their divisions. "Heckle and spare not" should be their motto. Never mind the candidates' indisposition to deal with the subject. Freethinkers must not allow their rights to be trifled with merely for the convenience of those gentlemen. In some cases, of course, candidates will manage to get such questions put to them by letter, so that they can answer in the same way; but the best way to put the questions is to do so at public meetings. A good many people learn for the first time that Freethinkers have any grievances; besides, candidates themselves, facing public meetings, have to deal more frankly with questioners. Nobody but Freethinkers will take much trouble in this matter; we therefore beg them to bring the Blasphemy Laws well to the front during the present elections. It is peculiarly *their* question, even more so (if possible) than Secular Education.

Mr. H. Percy Ward, who has accepted an engagement in America, delivers his farewell lectures in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool, to-day (Jan. 9). The local "saints" will doubtless give him a good send-off. His evening subject is "My Thirteen Years' Experience as an Atheist Lecturer."

Mr. Heaford, who has lately been to Paris in order to assign his position in Ferrer's will to M. Lorand, who is better situated for usefulness as a trustee, informs us that M. Furnémont, secretary of the International Freethought Federation, besides being a member of the Belgian Chamber of Deputies and a member of the Brussels City Council, spoke of his intention to come over to the N. S. S. Annual Dinner next Tuesday evening (January 11) at the Holborn Restaurant. We shall all be glad to welcome M. Furnémont

at that function, and a special toast will be prepared in his honor. As this is the last announcement of the dinner that we can make, we conclude by warning the "saints" not to leave their application for tickets till too late. The price of 4s. is inclusive. Dinner at 7.30 prompt.

The President's Honorarium Fund.

To the Freethinkers of Great Britain.

January 1, 1910.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

We the undersigned appeal to you again in behalf of the above Fund.

Two years ago we proposed that an Honorarium Fund should be raised for the President of the National Secular Society, who is also Chairman of the Secular Society, Limited, and Editor of the *Freethinker*. We suggested that £300 might be raised for him in this way during the year. It was thought by some good supporters that this figure would never be approached, but the subscriptions during 1908 totalled £288 12s. 8d., which is very little short of the contemplated amount. During 1909, in spite of the death of some generous subscribers, a total sum of £277 12s. has been received.

Mr. G. W. Foote is well-known as the leader of militant Freethought in Great Britain. His whole time, energies, and abilities, are devoted to the cause; but, unfortunately, his income continues to be precarious. He receives no salary as President of the National Secular Society, and makes no charge for expenses. For many years he has received no salary, or other emolument, as Editor of the *Freethinker*. Ever since August, 1908, when he took over the paper and its adjuncts from the Freethought Publishing Company, which had come to the end of its resources, he has borne the financial burden of the enterprise entirely upon his own shoulders. He has had to apply more than £100 out of his own pocket during the past year to paying the deficit on the publishing business, including the production and sale of the paper, and a certain payment to regular contributors. In the course of time, as the paper improves in circulation, the deficit may disappear; but for the present it is a liability which we think that the Freethought party should bear in mind in considering the claims of the Honorarium Fund upon their liberality.

All subscriptions received have been acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*, and will continue to be acknowledged in that way.

Subscriptions for 1910 can be forwarded to either of the undersigned. These who prefer to do so can send, as before, direct to Mr. Foote himself, at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Subscribers who do not wish their names to appear in print should state the form of acknowledgment they prefer.

We conclude with the hope that there will be a prompt and generous response to this appeal. It would be pleasant if a considerable proportion of the Fund were subscribed by January 11, which is the President's birthday.

Yours faithfully,

J. W. DE CAUX, J.P.,
92 St. Peter's-road, Gt. Yarmouth.
R. T. NICHOLS,
28 Park-road, Ilford.
A. J. FINCKEN,
66 Mount Grove-road, Highbury,
London, N.

First List of Subscriptions—1910.

George Payne, £20; Major John C. Harris, R.E., £10. A. J. Fincken, £5; R. T. Nichols, £5 5s.; F. Smallman, £5; J. M. Gimson, £2 2s.; J. Chick, £2 2s.; A. Hurcum, £1 1s.; Herbert T. Clarkson, £1 1s.; H. E., £1 1s.; A. D. Corrick, £1; Firenze, per W. Heaford, 10s.; C. Shepherd, 10s.; W. A. Yates, 5s.

Thomas Hardy's New Poems.

ALTHOUGH Thomas Hardy will write no more of those magnificent novels that challenge the gods and creeds as boldly as the high priest of Jahweh is reported to have challenged Baal, we are not without a certain consolation. *Time's Laughing-stocks*, which has just been published (Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net), is a volume of poems in which the famous novelist again reveals his sense of the pitiless, heartless attitude of the Creator to the helpless mortals who crawl about his feet. Every one who is acquainted with Mr. Hardy's novels has been stirred to the depths by the narrative of the ill-starred Tess of the D'Urbervilles. We watch with sickening hearts the arms of Fate gathering round this innocent, white-souled woman; we see her "poor, wounded heart" offered up for the sport of the gods, and even love does not save her, for the President of the Immortals—Thomas Hardy's nickname for the Christian Deity—has no pity even for love. And when at last we close the book, the most pious of us is possessed by an uncomfortable feeling that the God in whom he put his faith is more like a Devil. We are made to realise, if we have not realised before, that this is not the best of all possible worlds, and that it would in many ways be difficult to imagine one that is worse. This pessimism has always been the inspiration of Thomas Hardy's fiction. The creator of the tragedy of Jude the Obscure, of the gracious comedy of the Mellstock folk, of the Titanic personality of the Mayor of Casterbridge, the revealer of the untamed powers that sleep and wake mysteriously in Egdon Heath, is essentially a Pessimist. And in the matter and the sentiment of the volume of poems before me there is nothing new to an old reader and student of Thomas Hardy.

In his verse, as in his prose, Mr. Hardy is entirely himself and entirely original. No one else has just so spoken. No modern poet has taken just his attitude. His poetry is seldom lyrical, although it is written in lyric form; and despite the deep ironic humor underlying most of it, hardly a single piece is illuminated by the joy of life. His characters—villagers, farmers, and wandering pedlars, who live and love and hate but to die—are very real, pathetic, insignificant figures who, to quote the epigram that strikes the keynote of the whole volume, are Mr. Hardy's schoolmates in this "senseless school"

"where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live."

Sometimes he simply tells his story in dark verses, leaving the moral to the winds, as in one piece called *A Tramp Woman's Tragedy*. This is a novel in a few pages, ending, as was inevitable, in disaster. Yet it does not depress, but only makes one realise the grimness of life.

"Life may be sad past saying,
Its green for ever greying,
Its faiths to dust decaying,"

and a benevolent Father may be for us a doubtful quantity, but all need not be bitterness:—

"Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight."

That is the true philosophy for the Freethinker; a fearless front to gods indifferent and creeds inadequate, with a comradely aspect to all human beings laboring and in pain, and a warm heart for the creatures that are helpless and unable to speak. "Life is roomy yet," he says, and though there is nowhere a smug hope that "the best is yet to be," the poems are not without vitality. Austere resignation and tenderness of memory are not the only notes, even in a poem like "The Farm Woman's Winter," which is short enough and sufficiently representative to be reproduced here:—

"If seasons were all summers,
And leaves would never fall,
And hopping casement-comers
Were foodless not at all,

And fragile folk might be here
That white winds did depart;
Then one I used to see here
Would warm my wasted heart.

One frail, who, bravely tilling
Long hours in gripping gusts,
Was mastered by their chilling;
And now his ploughshare rusts,
So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love not, brings."

Those last two lines might be applied to Nature by every man and woman at some period of their lives. Nature is without sympathy, without pity, and Nature is real; and were the God of the Christians and the thousand other gods real also, the couplet would be quite as true if applied to them. This aloofness and heartlessness of whatever supreme power there exists are the subject of several of Mr. Hardy's finest poems, and he writes with a magnificent scornfulness that is directed fearlessly towards the heights from which the gods make sport. When "New Year's Eve" was printed in the *Fortnightly Review* three years ago, Mr. Foote commented upon it in the *Freethinker*, and quoted one of its stanzas, but I am taking the risk of quoting the piece again, because it is reproduced in the present volume, and is so typical of Mr. Hardy's biting irony:—

" 'I have finished another year,' said God,
In grey, green, white and brown.
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

How shocking those opening words would sound in a believer's ear! " 'I have finished another year,' said God," is a very contemptuous way of reporting the Almighty. And in the next verse the poet speaks to him as if he were an erring father, a very ordinary creature indeed. "What's the good of it all?" he says; and goes on to ask why human beings were shaped as they are, and dumped down into this groaning world:—

" If ever a joy be found herein,
Such joy no man had wished to win
If he had ever known!"

Then the Almighty replies, deeply hurt, and evidently surprised to find that he has evolved a conscious creature who dares to ask the reason why:—

" 'Strange, that ephemeral creatures who
By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew
Or made provision for!'

He sank to raptness as of yore,
And opening New Year's Day,
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
In His unweeting way."

That closing stanza recalls many a stinging line from Burns, Shelley, and Swinburne. Thomas Hardy's new volume gives him a not insignificant place among the poets of Freethought. But, great as his power of expression undoubtedly is, the uncompromising truth which he holds is still greater; so that the imperfections of the poems lie on the surface, plain to the hastiest eye. But he is always perfectly coherent, and his verse refuses to be forgotten. The grim strength with which he handles his subjects places him in a world almost by himself. As I have already written, no one else has just so spoken. His poems are characteristic expressions of his mind, rugged and sombre, with a haunting melody of their own. He haunts the readers just as he haunted them in the novels; his attitude towards the universe is unique among poets, and an instinctive desire to speak the truth as he knows it has resulted in poetry unfamiliar even to Freethinkers. It is full of mingled scorn and tenderness: tenderness towards his fellow-creatures, and withering scorn of the undiscoverable methods of the God who is masked and dumb, and of his cruel handling of the chattels that are called men and women. And the spirit of that poetry is the spirit of the Freethinker who no longer believes that a God handles us at all.

THOMAS MOULT.

The Psychology of Jesus.

IN 1891, Mr. G. W. Foote studied, in a most interesting pamphlet entitled *Was Jesus Insane?* the personality of the founder of Christianity. It is certainly no exaggeration on my part to say that Mr. Foote was a pioneer in the fertile study of that branch of religious psychology, and I think I am therefore right in declaring that he was the first having the courage to point out to Freethinkers and to the world at large the existence and the necessity of ploughing and sowing a new field of scientific research which, with the inevitable progress of human knowledge, was bound to yield a rich and plentiful harvest of results.

Thanks to the boycott which exists in this country against anything directly or indirectly connected with Freethought, the orthodox reviewers took good care never to mention Mr. Foote's work, and this is undoubtedly the reason that the majority of people totally ignore the existence of same and that the intellectual and scientific "élite" of England, unlike that of the Continent, has not in any way undertaken the study of that most important question: Was Jesus, like the majority of fanatics and founders of religions, a mental degenerate who, from a medical point of view, belongs to the psychopathic group in the classification of brain disorders?

The problem is indeed of the greatest importance, in fact it is transcendental for all Freethinkers and lovers of Humanity whose most earnest wish is to establish on the firm rock of Truth, and not on the dangerous shifting sands of illusion and ignorance, the scientific rules, or, in other words, the ethics, which will serve as a foundation to our conduct and social duties in life.

The study of Jesus's psychology has been eagerly taken up on the Continent. Amongst other eminent writers who wrote on that subject we note Jules Soury,* a medical man, chiefly known by his work entitled *Le Système Nerveux Central*, who maintained that Jesus was the victim of chronic congestion of the brain, which developed inflammatory symptoms before his death, and that the crucifixion saved him from actual madness. Unfortunately, at that time, J. Soury was unable to collect sufficient psychological data to demonstrate scientifically the truth of the hypothesis set forth; however, the facts brought to light by this eminent author, although few in number, constitute a whole of wide importance and will be of great help to those who followed in his footsteps. It is interesting to note that the essence of J. Soury's opinions on religion is formulated as follows:—

"The natural progress of Man's intellectual powers has been seriously checked by these fantastic supernatural conceptions of the World and Life, which have created an abyss of darkness between Democritus, Aristotle, Galen and Galilee, Lavoisier, Laplace, Bichat."†

The well-known *Life of Christ*, by Ernest Renan, however beautiful it is from many points of view, is not the work of a scientist, but that of a poet. Renan was certainly a man of vast erudition and of superior intelligence; an historian both accurate and far-seeing as long as his highly-developed poetical instincts did not smother the man of science in him. Renan's works will doubtless live for ever as *chefs d'œuvre* of French literature, but they can never be considered as scientific landmarks.

Since the publication of the above mentioned works, scientists and philosophers of all parts of Europe have been eagerly continuing their researches. Results of the most interesting and impartial kind have been obtained by dint of perseverance and scrupulous inquiry. It is now high time for me to mention that, in this connection, Dr. Binet-Sanglé, Professor at the School of Psychology of Paris, has lately achieved a wonderful work,‡ which, without

* J. Soury, *Jesus and the Gospels*.

† J. Soury, *Le Système Nerveux Central*, i., p. 402.

‡ Dr. Binet-Sanglé, *La Folie de Jésus*, 2 vols. A. Maloine. Paris.

the slightest exaggeration, we can qualify as epoch-making. Dr. Binet-Sangl , though still a young man, is at present one of the leading lights of the French medical profession and a recognised authority on psychology and neurology. After having read his two publications with unflagging interest, I thought that the point of interrogation which follows the title of Mr. Foote's work, *Was Jesus Insane?* could now be safely removed and the all-important question answered in the affirmative.

The first volume opens with a criticism of the historical value of the Gospels; the author maintains that these should be accepted as simple and truthful accounts of what actually took place; his conclusion on that point is:—

"These books which the Christian looks upon as sacred are in reality legendary biographies, written for propaganda; they are similar to those writings concerning Mohammed in which it is easy to distinguish legend from history."

Of course, it is now a well-known fact that the four Gospels were not written by Mark, Luke, John, and Matthew; the truth is that the verbal declarations of these apostles were collected and written out long after their death. We therefore find Dr. Binet-Sangl  resuming his inquiry on the historical value of the Gospels as follows:—

"The originators of the four Gospels were historians, biographers; they were genuine, simple-minded folk who witnessed, without understanding its nature, the evolution of a case of theomania or religious lunacy and innocently described what they had seen."

It is obviously impossible for me, in the small space at my disposal, to give a detailed account of the thorough medical examination which Dr. Binet-Sangl  subjects his patient (Jesus) to; the aim of this review is simply to call the attention of Freethinkers on this most important work, which, I hope, will be shortly translated into English. Indeed, I would be rendering a very bad service to the author if I attempted to give, in an abridged and therefore inadequate form, the substance of his most painstaking scientific researches which have permitted him, after several years of study, to diagnose rightly Jesus's condition as a typical case of mental degeneracy commonly known as religious-hystero-mania.

Meanwhile, the author sums up his whole work in the following words:—

"Whilst ignoring dogma, prejudices, preconceived ideas, public opinion, and only taking for basis the declarations of the orthodox historians who, with undoubted good faith, have transmitted to us, without understanding their nature, a large number of facts, I have endeavored to apply to Jesus the method of natural sciences, to establish his clinical observation.

Born between the Mediterranean and the lake of Tiberias, in a mountainous country, thickly wooded, poorly populated, savage, where good wine was plentiful, and at a time when alcoholism was prevalent amongst the Jewish tribes, in a small rural village the inhabitants of which excited the derision of the town dwellers; son of a pious carpenter and of a bigoted mother, brother to a degenerate ascete who influenced by him also became a sectarian leader and paid his fanaticism with his life, second cousin to a sectarian leader who met with the same end, great-uncle to peasants who excited the pity of the Romans by their ignorance and simplicity, his family composed of thirteen members of whom seven suffered from religious mania; small of stature and of delicate constitution, he submits himself to a long period of fasting* and later on suffers from an attack of acute mental breakdown accompanied by hematidrosis (blood-sweat).† He dies a premature death on the cross following a syncope complicated by the existence of a pleuritic deposit probably of a tuberculous nature.‡ During his lifetime, he expresses ideas of eunichism § oedipism,|| and of manual amputation,¶ which reveal ardent sexual desires if not of sexual perversion; constitutionally weak, Jesus was a physical and mental degenerate.

He knew nothing of Aryan science, he had only read the Bible and the Apocryphal writings of the Old Testament. His knowledge is limited to a few ideas on

agriculture and breeding, his scientific ideas to a few errors. Not a single one of his religious ideas was original; his conception of Jehovah, the angels, the devils, the last judgment, paradise, hell, was identical with the ideas in existence before and contemporary to his time.

Having contracted, in the midst of an oppressed and anarchist society, the obsession of 'The One' who, according to tradition, was to deliver the Jews from the tyranny of the conquerors, unduly proud as most degenerates, he had, at the time of puberty, under the influence of fatigue and the excitement of a pilgrimage, an attack of mystical hebephrenia, where for the first time the fixed idea which later on became the centre of his thoughts and the basis of his actions, revealed itself.

Influenced by the elders of the Jerusalem temple, by John the Baptist, by his so-called miraculous cures, by his thought reading, by the admiration and the affirmations of 'cured' patients and those of his enthusiastic disciples, he believed himself to be the Messiah, the king of the Jews and of the universe, the son of Jehovah, his confident, his interpreter, his agent and sometimes Jehovah himself. Menaced by the fanatical worshipers of the Mosaic law, he also believed himself to be the lamb, which, through its death would atone for the sins of Israel, and which, at its resurrection, would ascend to heaven to appear in all its glory.

This degenerate was therefore suffering from hystero-religious-mania and from theomegalomania. During the first period of his delirium, he had hallucinations of a religious nature, luminous and verbal hallucinations accompanied by automatism; these visions were sometimes consoling, at other times terrifying; this variety of phenomena constituting the unmistakable symptoms of external demonomania.

In all this it will be seen that Jesus's case is identical to that of all those mental degenerates, suffering from theomegalomania, observed before and after his time, and who agitated the world up to the nineteenth century and who are at present only to be found in hospitals and lunatic asylums.

By the close study of the above, one will be better able to realise to what an undeniable, typical, and classical lunatic Humanity has sacrificed, during twenty centuries, so much art, so much energy, so much happiness, and countless human lives!"

F. O. RITZ

Correspondence.

FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been told that it is fearsome work to criticise an editor in his own paper, but the issues raised in "Acid Drops" (Dec. 19) are so vital that I am bound to raise protest to some parts.

That "the great and final enemy of Freethought is the Catholic Church" is true without doubt; but having agreed to that, almost every clause seems to demand criticism, because something is assumed which never has been true, and in all probability never will be—"If you reduce the priest to the position of an ordinary citizen you must grant him the rights of an ordinary citizen."

The supreme difficulty lies in the fact that the priest never has been reduced to the position of an ordinary citizen.

To say that "the whole case lies in a nutshell" is surely to minimise the awful power exercised by the "priest."

To say that the "ordinary citizen" may not use the most extraordinary means that he can devise in self-defence against the Catholic power is surely to magnify the power of the "ordinary citizen" out of all possible regard to the facts of the case.

The most extraordinary means which could be devised by any "ordinary citizen" fail absolutely when weighed against the awful powers wielded by the priest—to the minds of the victims supernatural.

Suppose we admit that "might is right"—and no government has yet been devised—hardly yet conceived—in which finally "might" can be wholly disregarded—even then the might of the material, the temporal State, the power of the ordinary citizen, is puny compared to the fears of hell and everlasting damnation held over the victims of superstition.

All the analogies cited fail because of this vital difference. The dispute as to whether the priest can be gagged or restrained has to resolve itself into the question whether a State has any right of self-defence against a foe which claims to be, and again and again has proved itself to be, above all ordinary, all human considerations.

* Matthew iv.

† Luke xxii., 44.

‡ John ix., 34.

§ Matthew ix., 12.

|| Matthew v., 29.

¶ Matthew v., 30.

Might is right. A point to discuss may be whether "might" shall always mean might of arms, brute force, prison, and pain, or whether we shall see, as we all hope, the "might" will be the might of reason, weight of evidence, and mental conviction, after a full discussion of all the *pros* and *cons*. But this consideration never will affect the position between the "ordinary" citizen and the dealer in the terrors of superstition.

Has the State the right to defend itself against the coiner and the forger, against the utterer of a debased currency? It needs no debating. How much more, then, the right to defend itself against the utterer of a debased morality and degraded ethic.

Has the governor of a city, in time of war, the right to execute out of hand the traitor who sells the secret pass? It needs no debating.

How much more the need, then, for unceasing defence against the enemy which is for ever undermining the happiness and wellbeing of every man, woman, and child within its reach; which defies and derides all the rules of the ordinary game, and mocks every engagement made with the "ordinary" citizen.

It seems to me a grave understatement of the case to say that "it makes no real difference that the Catholic Church threatens ecclesiastic pains and excommunication." I venture to submit that it makes all the difference. All the suggested parallels fail; always because of this vital difference between the powers of the "ordinary" citizen, the temporal State, and the awful powers of the Church.

It is to step into a squirrel cage to say that the only wise, safe rule is equal liberty for all. While the priest is left one tittle of opportunity to poison the well of truth, he will. So long as he is left any chance to poison the minds of the children he will; and in every case he will work to overthrow the State which makes the smallest attempt to limit his evil power, or to control in any way his influence over the child mind. It is the idlest farce ever to regard the priest as an "ordinary" citizen, or governed by ordinary rules. He laughs at the idea, accepts any grain of concession and goes on his way as of old, traitor to every ordinary consideration; he will plead for the "ordinary" usage, he never grants it.

It is easy to criticise any State engaged in fighting Catholicism; lookers on see better than the players, or think so, but it has always to be remembered that the guides of the Roman Catholic power claim power not only over the next world, but also this.

When it suits their game the temporal claim disappears; they are concerned only with the Spiritual, but it works, and always has, with a keen eye on the temporal for all forms of State control. At the moment it may be the game to magnify the Spiritual claim; but every general political event of the last ten years, almost every great trial, has proved that the Catholic Church is, as always, the active traitor against any form of power which limits its action; it is playing, as it always has, for the overthrow of the Secular power; and if the State has a right of existence it must have a right of self-defence and break the proud Archbishop as well as humble curé.

It is too specious to plead that the Catholic Church is as much a voluntary body as the N. S. S.

It is simply not true. Members cannot walk out and practice religion alone; it is not an exact statement, even restricted to the adult population only, but what can be said of such a statement as applied to school children.

If there be any sort of validity in the claim that a majority of adults have a right to say that the education of the new generation shall be Secular, it is inevitable that the State is justified in preventing the teaching of every sort of superstitious dogma; it is charged with the duty to do so. It must have the sole right to standardise the teaching, the teachers and the apparatus, and to censor the books which shall attempt to subvert the generally accepted axioms.

A railway without a time table would be a sorry jest; arithmetic without fixed rules, or geometry without axioms, would be too droll a waste of time, and Government on the terms demanded by the writer challenged never can be in the nature of things, for every extension of general liberty limits the particular, and the only consideration is to find the line of least resistance, the fewest possible places of friction.

To treat the priest as an ordinary citizen or the Church as an ordinary enemy is to fail all the time. T. SHORE.

[We have dealt with this letter in "Acid Drops" this week. —EDITOR.]

FREETHOUGHT IN HUNGARY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I see in your "Acid Drops" of this week's *Freethinker* that a Calcutta correspondent sends you a copy of the *Statesman*, in which it is reported that cremation is pro-

hibited in Austria as being contrary to the Catholic belief, and your correspondent thereupon does me the honor to ask what I have to say to that, after what I wrote in October last about the progress of Freethought in Hungary.

I am afraid your correspondent labors under the almost universal impression that Austria and Hungary are somehow mixed up as if they had been a shuffled pack of cards. It is impossible to explain within the space the *Freethinker* can spare for correspondence the juridical condition existing between Austria and Hungary. For our present purpose, however, it may be sufficient for me to assure your correspondent that there are hardly, on the face of the earth, two countries so much unlike each other as are Austria and Hungary.

In the first place, Hungary is inhabited by a real nation—the Hungarians, or Magyars—and has a history of over 1,000 years behind it, whereas Austria is inhabited by a loose conglomerate of races, and has no history except that of the ruling Hapsburg dynasty. In Hungary, history records a struggle for liberty since the days of the Golden Bull (a contemporary of the English Magna Charta), whereas Austria has never been anything but a feudal country. In Hungary, religious bigotry has never been permitted to go the length of that in Austria.

I feel somewhat reluctant in drawing further comparisons between Hungary and Austria, and still I am inclined to admit that probably in no country except Spain is Clericalism so thoroughly in the saddle as it is in Austria, where the latest phase of it is known under the up-to-date name of "Christian Socialism." At the last general election these holy Christian Socialists returned the largest party in Parliament, and to find a parallel to the class of men returned as M.P.'s of the people one would have to go down to the edifying days of chivalry—I mean the first, second, or third Crusaders.

It is one of the causes of friction between Austria and Hungary, that whilst Hungary, as a nation, bred thinking and independent men, Austria only bred pliable but very ignorant officials. Whatever of a semblance of a parliamentary régime Austria has been given of late is not the outcome of the Austrian people's efforts, but is a reflex of the action of Hungary. It would probably be no exaggeration to assert that Freethought is filtering into Austria from Hungary. The freedom of the press is absolute in Hungary but not as yet in Austria.

M. STEINBERGER.

December 19, 1909.

ATHEISTS AND THE INVASION SCARE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your paragraph of January 2 upon the *Daily News* cartoon *re* Mr. Blatchford, you ask, "What on earth has Atheism to do with the German Invasion Scare?" Further on in the same paragraph you say, ".....we venture to think that ninety-nine Atheists, at least, out of every hundred, would laugh at this German Invasion Scare."

I would ask you, in your own words—What on earth has Atheism to do with the German Invasion Scare?

My own experience happens to be that there is only one Atheist in ten who is ready to join you in laughter at what appears to the other nine to be a matter worthy of serious consideration. I think, therefore, that your remark is unjust to Atheists.

Wishing you a prosperous New Year.

F. J. B.

[Our correspondent repeats the mistake for which he desires to correct us. We had no wish, however, to raise a discussion on the general relations between Germany and Great Britain. We merely intended to refer to the German Invasion Scare raised on the very eve of the general election, for a purpose which is too obvious to need indicating. But one thing is certain; Atheists are usually friends of peace—an object which is included in the N. S. S. program; and the violent language of certain journalists, both in Great Britain and in Germany, is not likely to promote it. To be always talking of war as inevitable is the way to bring it about.—EDITOR.]

Obituary.

At the Leicester Crematorium, on Thursday, December 30, amid the tears and affectionate respect of family and friends, the remains of Mrs. Elizabeth S. Cartwright were committed to fire-burial. Mrs. Cartwright had been for many years a loyal and helpful member of the Leicester Secular Society, and, at the time of her death, was president of the Sewing Circle; and her quiet, kind, and companionable character leaves a cherished memory at the Secular Hall, where her husband has been a supporter and committee-man for a lengthy period. It gave her the greatest pleasure each summer to entertain the Secular friends at her garden-tee at her cottage in New Birstall. The funeral service was conducted by Mr. F. J. Gould.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.**INDOOR.**

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, London, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Shelley and the House of Lords."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Are Preachers Liars?" 7, "My Thirteen Years' Experience as an Atheist Lecturer."

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, J. Long, "Sun-Worship."

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