

# THE Freethinker

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Children can say over their religion at four or five years old, and their parents that taught them can do no more at four or five and fifty.—JOHN ASGILL.

## Christianity and Woman.

CHRISTIANITY has not benefited the world in respect to the condition of woman, which is one of the best criteria of civilisation. The ordinary Christian, seeing polygamy prevail beyond the borders of Christendom, and monogamy within them, imagines the difference is due to Christianity; and his clerical guides, who know better, confirm him in the delusion. Here again it is obvious that religion only consecrates the established social order. It sanctions polygamy in the East and monogamy in the West. Christianity found monogamy existing, and did not create it. Greeks, Romans, and even Jews, in spite of the Mosaic law, had become monogamists by a natural evolution. Polygamy was illegal in the Roman Empire at the advent of Jesus Christ. Nor did any disturbing influence arise from the conversion of the Northern barbarians, for monogamy existed among the Teutonic tribes, who held women in high honor and esteem, and allowed them to participate in the public councils.

Had monogamy not prevailed before the triumph of Christianity, it is difficult to see in what way the new faith would have established it. There is not a word against polygamy, as a general custom, from Genesis to Revelation. Jehovah's favorites were all polygamists, neither did Christ command the marriage of one man with one woman. The Mormons justify polygamy from the Bible, and the United States government answers them, not by argument, but by penal legislation. Concubinage is also justified from the Bible. The more a man is steeped in the Christian Scriptures, his sexual and domestic views become the more patriarchal.

Christianity, indeed, has been woman's enemy, and not her friend. Christ's own teaching on sexual matters is much disputed. His language is very largely veiled and enigmatic, but it gives a strong plausibility to the opinion of Count Tolstoi, that sexual intercourse is always more or less sinful, and that no one who desires to be Christlike can think of marrying. St. Paul's language is more precise. He plainly bids men and women to live single; only, if they cannot do so without fornication, he allows of marriage as a concession to the weakness of the flesh. Essentially, therefore, he places the union of men and women on the same ground as the coupling of beasts. Further, he orders wives to obey their husbands as absolutely as the Church obeys Christ; coating the pill with the nauseous reminder that the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man.

Following Christ and Paul, as they understood them, the Christian fathers lauded virginity to the skies, emphasised woman's dependence on man, and treated her with every conceivable indignity. Their language is often too foul to transcribe. Let it suffice to say that they were intensely scriptural in thought and expression. Taking the story of the Fall as true, they regarded woman as the door of sin and damnation. Logically, also, they saw in the

birth of Christ, from a virgin, a stigma on natural motherhood. Under the old Jewish law, every woman who brought forth the fruit of love was "unclean." This sentiment survived in the Christian Church. It was deepened by the miraculous birth of Christ, and strengthened by contact with the great Oriental doctrine of the opposition between matter and spirit—a doctrine which lies at the root of all asceticism, and is the key to the sexual morbidity of all the creeds.

These are debateable matters, and it is easy for Christian rhetoricians to find ways of escape by subtle methods of interpretation. The Bible becomes in their hands "a nose of wax," as Erasmus said, to be twisted into any shape or direction. Plain matters of fact, however, are not so easily perverted; and an appeal to history will show that Christianity lowered, instead of raising, the whole status of women.

Principal Donaldson (and it is well to take a clerical authority) is the author of an important article in the *Contemporary Review* for September, 1889, on "The Position of Women among the Early Christians." It is very unflattering to Christian vanity, and it has been answered by *silence*. "It is a prevalent opinion," says Professor Donaldson, "that woman owes her present high position to Christianity, and the influences of the Teutonic mind. I used to believe this opinion, but in the first three centuries I have not been able to see that Christianity had any favorable effect on the position of women, but, on the contrary, that it tended to lower their character and contract the range of their activity." He points out that at the dawn of Christianity women had attained great freedom, power, and influence in the Roman Empire. "They dined in the company of men," he says, "they studied literature and philosophy, they took part in political movements, they were allowed to defend their own law cases if they liked, and they helped their husbands in the government of provinces and the writing of books." All this was stopped by Christianity. "The highest post to which she rose" in the Christian Church "was to be a door-keeper and a message-woman." A woman bold enough to teach was in the eyes of Tertullian "a wanton." The duties of a wife were simple—"She had to obey her husband, for he was her head, her lord, and superior; she was to fear him, reverence him, and please him alone; she had to cultivate silence; she had to spin and take care of the house, and she ought to stay at home and attend to her children."

Sir Henry Maine had previously observed, in his remarkable *Ancient Law*, that Christianity tended from the first to narrow the rights and liberties of women. Not Roman jurisprudence, but the Canon Law, was responsible for the disabilities on married women that obtained in Europe down to the last century. The personal liberty conferred on married women by the middle Roman law, in Sir Henry Maine's opinion, was not likely to be restored to them by a society which preserved "any tincture of Christian institution." Married women, however, in every civilised country are now rising into a position of legal independence; and this is but a revival of the best Roman law, which prevailed before the triumph of Christianity.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Christianity and Medical Science.—IV.

(Continued from p. 115.)

IN the light of what has been said there is no need to further inquire why disease was so much more frequent and deadly a visitor during the Dark and Middle Ages than had been the case in Pagan times. The absence of the most rudimentary sanitary precautions, with the obstacles offered to the development of hygienic and medical science, provide a quite sufficient explanation. True, there is reason to believe that during the period named several new contagious diseases were introduced,\* but these found the European peoples peculiarly well prepared for their ravages. Such methods of protection as the Church officially sanctioned reacted most disastrously. The massing of people together in religious processions and pilgrimages, the crowding of churches as the result of days set apart for special prayer and penances, simply intensified the ravages of a prevailing epidemic. Little wonder that during the Black Plague nearly a fourth of the population died. The mortality formed a sardonic comment upon the pious words with which Hecker opens his work on *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*.†

The clergy, of course, had their own explanation as to the cause of these visitations. They were a judgment of God on the wickedness and vanity of the people, and with a fine sense of disproportion it was solemnly said by some that God was angry with the people for wearing a new-fashioned boot with pointed toes. As God had once before threatened with death anyone who infringed Moses' right to make a certain hair pomade, this was not, perhaps, so extravagant as it sounds. The only natural, although wholly fanciful explanation, given was that the plague was set going by the Jews. Their superior medical knowledge, together with their healthier mode of living protected them to a considerable extent from epidemics. And as the white man to-day grounds his chief complaint against the Chinese chiefly on account of their virtues, so in the Middle Ages the better knowledge and habits of the Jews exposed them to Christian persecution. They were accused of poisoning the wells, and so disseminating the plague. Many were tortured, and some, as was to be expected, confessed to anything their tormentors chose to dictate. The Jews were at once marked out for punishment, both as an act of piety towards the Lord and as a punishment for their poisonous practices. Messages were sent from one town to another inviting co-operation in the work of exterminating the Jews. At Basle the Jews were placed in a large wooden building and burned. At Strasburg 2,000 Jews were burned in their own cemetery. In Mayence 12,000 are said to have been put to death. At Chinon a huge trench was dug, filled with burning wood, and 180 burned in a single day. At Spire the Jews forestalled their enemies by burning themselves in their own houses; an example that was followed by the Jews of Eslingen, who burned themselves in their own synagogue. When they were not killed they were banished, and often enough met their deaths at the hands of the rural inhabitants. It is due to Pope Clement VI. to add that so far as he could he appears to have stood out against this wholesale murdering of the Jewish people.

The last instance I have come across of plague being attributed to the Jews occurred in 1527. The people of Pavia, threatened with plague, bargained with their patron saint, St. Bernardino, that if he would avert the plague the Jews should be expelled the city. A decree to that effect was passed, and the saint duly carried out his part of the contract. The Pavians were spared a visitation of the plague.

\* Among these the rapid spread of syphilis offers a striking comment upon the alleged improvement in morals effected by Christian teachings.

† "That Omnipotence which has called the world with all its living creatures into one animated being, especially reveals himself in the desolation of great pestilences."

It remains to take a brief glance at the influence of Christianity on mental disease—perhaps the most distressing of all human ailments. I have already pointed out that among the Greeks the conclusion had been reached that all madness was due to disease of the brain. In Greece and Alexandria this fruitful conclusion led to important results in the treatment of the insane, not the least of which was the recognition that mildness was of more value than harshness in dealing with lunatics. Yet, with the exception of the work of the Mohammedans in Spain, the teaching and practice were ignored in Christendom until the labors of Pinel in France, and Tuke in England, succeeded in beating back religious ignorance and once more placed the study of insanity on a scientific and a humane basis.

For the extinction of the scientific view of insanity and the prevalence of ideas and practices that were on all fours with those described by travellers as now prevalent among savage people, we have to thank the Christian Church. True it did not invent the theory of demoniacal possession, but it is taught right through the Old and New Testament, and was fully endorsed by Jesus Christ. The level of culture thus indicated may be best gathered by the following description from Tylor of the beliefs engendered in the uninstructed mind by the sight of an insane person:—

"The possessed man, tossed and shaken in fever, pained and wrenched as though some live creature were tearing or twisting within him.....rationally finds a spiritual cause for his sufferings.....Especially when the mysterious unseen power throws him helpless on the ground, jerks and writhes him in convulsions, makes him leap upon the bystanders with a giant's strength and a wild beast's ferocity, impels him, with distorted face and frantic gesture, and voice not his own nor seemingly even human, to pour forth wild, incoherent raving, or with thought or eloquence beyond his sober faculties to command, to counsel, to foretell—such an one seems, to those who watch him, or even to himself, to have become the mere instrument of a spirit which has seized or entered into him, a possessing demon in whose personality the patient believes so implicitly that he often imagines a personal name for it.....at last quitting the medium's spent and jaded body, the intruding spirit departs as it came."

I need hardly point out how completely this description covers all the cases of demoniacal possession described in the New Testament. Professor Tylor might indeed be writing a commentary upon the New Testament but for the illuminating conclusion, "This is the savage theory of demoniacal possession and obsession, which has been for ages, and still remains, the dominant theory of disease and inspiration among the lower races." It was precisely this savage theory that Christianity espoused and fought for, and it is almost in itself a pathological phenomenon to find people nowadays referring us to writings upon this culture level for guidance and inspiration. Dr. Maudesley may well ask, "What place could a rational theory of insanity have in such an atmosphere of thought and feeling?"

"In my name," Jesus gave his disciples power to cast out evil spirits, and the power to do this was one of the things upon which the early Christians prided themselves most. They placed themselves in competition with Pagan exorcists, and, by their own accounts, emerged triumphant. With the organisation of the Church there came the organisation of the practice of exorcism—to doubt which was Atheism. As late as the latter half of the seventeenth century, the learned Cudworth could write that they who explain away demoniacs "can hardly escape the suspicion of having some hankering towards Atheism." The Seventy-Second Canon of the Church of England still provides that no unlicensed person shall "cast out any Devil or Devils" under pain of penalties prescribed. That early and mediæval Christians did cast them out there can be no reasonable doubt, since in addition to the argument so beloved of Christians, that all people believed it, a Bishop of Beauvais, in the fifteenth century, not only caused five devils to come out of one sufferer but actually induced them to sign

a document promising not to molest this particular person again. Tremendous, again, was the work of the Jesuit Fathers in Vienna, who, in 1583, boasted that they had expelled 12,652 living devils. The odd two is a most convincing proof of the care and accuracy with which the records were kept.

The practice of Jesus was to cast out devils by prayer, to advise their ejection by fasting, or to simply command—"Hold thy peace and come out of him." This procedure, however, underwent a remarkable elaboration during the course of Christian history. There was, for instance, a simple formula of exorcism—

"By the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.....I exorcise you, ye angels of untold perversity.....By the seven golden candlesticks.....and by one like unto the Son of Man standing in the midst of the candlesticks, by his voice.....by his words.....I say unto you, Depart ye angels that show the way to eternal perdition."

Other exorcisms were of a more objurgatory character, as the following—a quite literal rendering would be unprintable.

"Thou lustful and stupid one. Thou lean sow, famine-stricken and most impure. Thou wrinkled beast, thou mangy beast, thou beast of all beasts the most beastly. Thou bestial and foolish drunkard. Thou greedy wolf, dingy sow, perfidious boar, envious crocodile, malodorous drudge, swollen toad, lousy swine-herd, lowest of the low,"

and so on through pages of religious Billingsgate.

If mere names did not suffice to move the devil, solemn curses were resorted to.

"May all the devils that are thy foes rush forth upon thee and drag thee down to hell. May the Holy One trample on thee and hang thee up in an infernal fork as was done to the five kings of the Amorites. May God set a nail to your skull and pound it with a hammer, as Jael did to Sisera. May he break thy head and cut off thy hands, as was done to the cursed Dagon. May God hang thee in a hellish yoke, as seven men were hanged by the sons of Saul."

Only occasionally were the indwelling demons reasoned with, as when they were asked, "Why do you stop and hold back, when you know that your strength is lost on Christ. Begone, then, take flight, thou venomous hisser, thou lying demon, thou begetter of vipers." Against this mixture of prayers, recriminations, and commands only devils of the most obstinate kind were able to make headway. But the office of the exorcist was a busy and a profitable one. For the devils grew more numerous and more active as the people became more Christian. Marcus Aurelius mentions as one of the debts he owed to the philosopher Diognetus that he had taught him to disbelieve in magicians, jugglers, and expellers of demons. What would have been the thoughts of the great emperor could he have returned two or three centuries later and seen the world enveloped in a mental atmosphere properly characteristic of people upon whom the sun of civilisation had never shone?

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

## Jesus and Nietzsche.

THE Rev. Dr. Newton H. Marshall, of Hampstead, is delivering a series of discourses entitled "Jesus and the Sages." Of course, from the preacher's standpoint, Jesus infinitely outshines all the sages that ever lived. This is always taken for granted. No attempt is ever made to prove it, the mere assertion of it, in every case, being quite sufficient for the average Gospel hearer. All the sages were only men, while Jesus was God incarnate. Dr. Marshall adopts this distinction as his universal starting-point. Socrates, for example, was an exceedingly great man and a highly original teacher; but he stood on a totally different platform from that occupied by Jesus, which renders any rational comparison between the two impossible. The third lecture in the course is on "Jesus and Nietzsche," and, as might be

expected, poor Nietzsche is introduced only to be dismissed as a philosopher behind all whose teaching "there is a fatal and devilishly sophistical fallacy." Up to a certain point Confucius and Socrates "had the light of Christ in them." "Confucian teaching will yet be found in China, to some extent, preparatory to Christianity, while the Greek Christians of the second and third centuries enthusiastically asserted that Socrates was sent by God to help in bringing them to the Master"; but Nietzsche is "a different type of sage—a sage who does not prepare the way for Jesus, but would obstruct; who is not a sort of Pagan forerunner as John the Baptist was a Jewish forerunner, but who is a pronounced, active, and passionate enemy of Jesus, the modern Antichrist." Why on earth should such a man be numbered among the sages? A "sage" is defined as "a wise man—a man of gravity and wisdom; especially a man venerable for years, and of sound judgment and prudence." If "an enemy of Jesus, a modern Antichrist," answers to that description, on what grounds of reason can he be condemned? Dr. Marshall made a big mistake in ranking Nietzsche with the sages when his only object was to warn his hearers and readers against his teaching, because the more thoughtful among them will be anxious to find out for themselves why a man of consummate learning and transcendent genius should have been "a pronounced, active, and passionate enemy of Jesus, a modern Antichrist."

Dr. Marshall makes a profoundly significant admission—an admission the full import of which he does not seem to realise. His reason for warning the Christian public against the Nietzschean philosophy is thus stated:—

"Though you may not have heard his name even, his spirit is abroad, his power is spreading rapidly, and his teaching, under a host of other names, is to be met with in many an innocent-looking magazine, in many a popular novel, and on the lips of many of those we meet in the ordinary affairs of life. For the fact is that Nietzsche is the chief exponent, prophet, and summary of that modern Paganism which is one of the most striking and all-pervasive spiritual powers to-day. It is only nine years since Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche died, and yet a vast and constantly growing literature has sprung up as the outcome of his teaching. He has avowed exponents and advocates in every civilised country, his works are being translated and are appearing in several editions in England already. He is, indeed, likely to be heard of more and more as the years pass.....When I was studying in Germany, students of philosophy found in Nietzsche's writings their chief delight. Young men carried his writings in their bosoms, and, although the professors scoffed at and denounced their favorite, read his books with the devotion of lovers. or as the Puritans read their Bibles. And to-day his teaching is sweeping victorious through the world."

Surely that is a surprising record for an Antichrist in a world said to have been under the reign of Christ for nigh two thousand years. The wonder is that the Powers Above permitted him to live at all. Why was he allowed to renounce the Christian faith, in which he had been so carefully trained by believing parents and pious teachers, or why was he not struck down dead when, in his twentieth year, he swore he would have no more of it? This is an eminently relevant question in view of the following evangelical outburst:—

"Poor man, he lost his life. All that he loved he sought—vigor, fame, friendship, knowledge. Yet they all conspired to mock him. Why? Because he fought against God, and his life echoes at its end the words of another apostate, the Emperor Julian: 'Thou hast triumphed, O Galilean!'"

It is to be hoped that, on reflection, Dr. Marshall will perceive that the above is an exceptionally foolish utterance, in that it puts the Deity in a terribly awkward predicament. The all-wise and all-good Sovereign of the Universe allowed a clever youth of twenty to become an Antichrist, and for years afterwards to do his very utmost to uproot Christianity, and then, when the evil seed had been sown broadcast, avenged himself on the sower by robbing him of his sanity and cruelly mocking him

for eleven long years. He struck down the mischief-maker, and yet afforded ample facilities for the fructification of the awful mischief wrought by him. All this is implied in Dr. Marshall's language. "Poor man," he says, "he lost his life because he fought against God," and this comes after the admission that this poor man's teaching is to-day, nine years subsequent to his death, "sweeping victorious through the world." Beyond all controversy, the Galilean has amazing ways of triumphing.

Now, wherein did Nietzsche's sin consist? In becoming a logical and full-orbed evolutionist. Dr. Marshall, too, is an evolutionist—of a kind. Nietzsche, however, accepted evolution "in that wide, unscientific, and almost superstitious way that it is the fashion to accept it to-day"; and having so accepted it, he could not "properly account for Christ"; and being unable properly to account for Christ, he could not set the proper value on his teaching and atoning work. In Dr. Marshall's opinion, this is a fatal fault in his philosophy, and not in his philosophy only, but "it is a fatal fault in a great part of the thought of our own day." This is a practical proof that Nietzsche's teaching "is sweeping victorious through the world." But what is Nietzsche's teaching? Dr. Marshall talks a great deal about it, but does not furnish us with a single quotation from it, nor does he give us the gist of it in his own words. The great emphasis is on the fact that it was in direct opposition to the teaching of Christianity. A sneering allusion is made to "the land which is beyond good and evil," but no hint is thrown out as to what that land really is. And yet until we have a clear notion as to what is meant by "beyond good and evil" we are not in a position to form an accurate estimate of the Nietzschean system. The chief objection to Christianity is that its conception of morality is woefully inadequate and mischievous, in that it puts the stamp of Divine sanction upon one classification of actions, thoughts, and desires into good and evil, thereby making moral growth and development impracticable. In reality, any such classification only marks a stage in the evolution of morality, and the attempt to perpetuate it by ascribing to it a supernatural origin and authority serves as a barrier against the further progress of the race. The distinction between good and evil is a symptom of immaturity and weakness, and our aim should be to transcend it. There comes a time in the history of every growing person when such a distinction is utterly irrelevant. One of the deepest of Nietzsche's aphorisms is this: "All that is done for love is done beyond good and evil." Indeed, that sentence is a condensed version of his whole philosophy. Another saying equally comprehensive and illuminating is that "morals are perpetually being transformed by successful crimes"; and we know that genuine advance is possible in no other way.

Dr. Marshall is shocked by the discovery that Nietzsche "treats the distinction between good and evil as something that has evolved just like the doctrine of the Divine right of kings"; but does the reverend gentleman deny that it has so evolved? Does not the history of morals amply verify the statement? Even the history of the Jews as recorded in the Old Testament is a conclusive evidence of that. What "fatal and devilishly sophistical fallacy" can be detected in this commonplace of modern science? Has not the whole history of the human family been an evolution? Have we acquired anything we now glory in by any other method? Life is a never-ending conflict between impulse and reason, between the progressive and the conservative elements in our nature. Dr. Marshall completely misrepresents Nietzsche when he says that, according to his system, men should obey their impulses and desires, and ignore all moral considerations. All students of Nietzsche are aware that he derived his conception of life from Greece, and not from Palestine. To him Apollo stood for law, custom, duty, science, art, and Dionysus for liberty, love, change, intuition, inspiration; and life meant

the eternal struggle between the two. As Mr. Orage very aptly puts it:—

"Life is conflict. Dionysus without Apollo would be unmanifest, pure energy. Apollo without Dionysus would be dead, inert. Each is necessary to the other, but in active opposition; for, as stage by stage the play proceeds, Apollo must build continually more beautiful, more enduring forms, which Dionysus, in turn, must continually surmount and transcend. The drama of life is thus a perpetual movement towards a climax that never comes. Apollo never will imprison Dionysus for ever; Dionysus never will escape for ever from Apollo. Only, as in the early stages of life, Dionysus begins by speaking in the language of Apollo; Apollo will, in the later phases, learn more and more to speak in the language of Dionysus."

Jesus is being slowly superseded, and his slave-morality gradually transcended, by the revival and further development of that scientific knowledge which Christianity succeeded so long in suppressing; and in spite of all his extravagances and contradictions, Nietzsche has been and is a strong influence making for the intellectual emancipation and moral progress of the race.

J. T. LLOYD.

### A New Freethought Work.

"The history of humanity is that of a progressive secularisation which is by no means complete as yet. In the beginning the whole atmosphere in which it moves is saturated, so to speak, with animism; spirits, dangerous if not essentially maleficent, hover on all sides, modifying and paralysing man's activity. The selection of *taboos* was the first step in advance, but not the only one. Humanity did not remain passive in presence of the thousand spiritual forces by which it believed itself surrounded. To react against these, to tame them and subdue them to its ends, it sought an auxiliary in a false science, magic, which is the mother of all true sciences. I have proposed to define magic as the *strategy of animism*, and I think this definition is better than Voltaire's, *the secret of doing what Nature cannot do*, for primitive man had no idea what Nature could do, and magic aspires to control it. By the aid of magic, man takes the initiative against things, or rather he becomes the conductor in the great concert of spirits which murmur in his ears: To make the rain fall, he pours out water; he gives the example, he commands, and fancies he is obeyed."—SALOMON REINACH, *Orpheus*, pp. 21, 22; 1909.

AN event of some significance to Freethought is the publication by Messrs. Heinemann of a translation, from the French, of M. Salomon Reinach's *Orpheus: A General History of Religions*. M. Reinach is a distinguished student of comparative religion, upon which he has published a treatise; he is also an authority upon art. His fine work, *Apollo: A History of Art*, has already been translated and published by the same publishers, and forms a companion to the present volume. The title, *Orpheus*, has very little to do with the contents; Pan, Adonis, or Mithras would have been equally suitable.

In his preface the author points out that in the two manuals of the history of religion, by Conrad von Orelli and Chantepie de la Saussaye respectively, the history of Christianity is omitted. The reason, of course, being that Christians object to having their religion placed on a footing with what they term the heathen and pagan cults. They possessed the only true God, who had revealed his will to them in the Old Testament, to which he added a codicil in the shape of a New Testament—and had no connection whatever with the rival establishments over the way, who were inspired by low, disreputable and evil-disposed spirits, adventurers of the worst type, quite unmentionable in polite society; some of whom might, like the Greek goddesses, be beautiful in a sinful and heathen sort of way, but who, morally speaking, were like the conventional character of the Sunday-school book, of whom we were told that "she was a nice girl, but she was not good." But the student of religion knows that some of the ancient religions taught a high morality, in no way inferior to Christianity, and that the life and teachings of Jesus can be paralleled from older faiths long before his advent in Judea.

M. Reinach shows how every religion has evolved from the wrong interpretation of natural facts by primitive man, and he observes:—

"I see no reason for isolating Christianity in this manner. It has fewer adherents than Buddhism; it is less ancient. To set it apart in this fashion is becoming in the apologist, but not in the historian. Now it is as an historian that I propose to deal with religions. I see in them the infinitely curious products of man's imagination and of man's reason in its infancy; it is as such that they claim our attention."

Moreover, to fill the cup of his iniquity to the brim—in the eyes of Christians—M. Reinach cites the hated Voltaire continually throughout his work. He says:—

"I do not share Voltaire's ideas of religions; but I have a due admiration for his incomparable gifts as a narrator. Dealing with the same facts after him, I could only do worse what he has done so well. I have therefore borrowed freely from him—always with due acknowledgment, of course. Those who accuse me of having cut my book out of Voltaire will only prove that they have read neither Voltaire nor me."

Perhaps this testimony to the value of Voltaire's historical knowledge, coming from such a scholar, will do something to check the common idea of Voltaire as a shallow and superficial scoffer. Voltaire was one of the founders of modern history; and Buckle, in his magnificent *History of Civilisation*, declared that "he is probably the greatest historian Europe has yet produced." It is not necessary to be dull to be learned; dullness and solemnity are not indispensable to scholarship; they are more often allied to stupidity, as millions of sermons can attest.

M. Reinach finds the earliest beginnings of religion in Animism and *taboos*. Primitive man, with his rudimentary, childlike mind, projected his volitions outward and endowed the beings and objects that surrounded him with a life and sentiment similar to his own. He observes (p. 7):—

"Animism on the one hand, and *taboos* on the other, such are the essential factors of religion. To the natural, I might almost say physiological, action of animism are due the conceptions of those invisible genii with which nature teems, spirits of the sun and of the moon, of the trees and the waters, of thunder and lightning, of mountains and rocks, not to speak of the spirits of the dead, which are souls, and the spirit of spirits, who is God. To the influence of *taboos*, which create the ideas of sacred and profane, of things or actions forbidden or permitted, religious laws and piety. The Jehovah of the rocks and clouds of Sinai is a product of animism; the Decalogue is a revision of an old code of *taboos*."

Therefore, as he is careful to point out, the origins of religion are not to be found in the revelation of some God, or in the imposture and fraud of priests, as was once supposed, before scientific methods of investigation were applied to the subject.

"The origin of these religious scruples is certainly not rational, in the modern sense of the word. The offspring of fear, the fruits of hasty generalisations and of arbitrary comparisons such as children and ignorant persons are constantly making—consider all our temporary superstitions about spilt salt, crossed knives, words and deeds of evil omen—*taboos* are peculiarly numerous and rigorous in the most backward civilisations, such as that of the Australians of the present day, where they are transmitted by oral tradition, and constitute almost the entire science of these savages. The idea evolved in the eighteenth century, of the free savage, emancipated from all constraints, is irreconcilable with the most elementary facts of ethnography. Rousseau's free savage is no real savage, but a philosopher who has stripped himself naked." (P. 20)

The pre-Christian religions are passed in review, and it is shown that many of them anticipated the teachings of Christianity. For instance, at the famous religious mysteries performed by the Greeks at Eleusis, the communion was partaken of, and the initiated were taught the doctrine of immortality. Mithraism was another religion very closely resembling Christianity. Indeed, the early Christians were so sorely put to it for an explanation of these resemblances to an older faith, that they declared that the Devil knew of the coming of Jesus and

imitated Christianity in advance! Mithraism spread all over the Roman Empire; and wherever the Romans penetrated, there we find traces of this religion. It was probably only owing to the Emperor Constantine—for political reasons—throwing his sword into the scales with the Cross, at a time when Christians numbered only one-twentieth of the population, that decided the balance in favor of Christianity, or Mithraism might have become the religion of the world.

M. Reinach analyses the Gospels, and finds them wholly mythological. Of the life of Christ he says:—

"Is it possible to extract the elements of a biography of Jesus from the Gospels? It is contrary to every sound method to compose, as Renan did, a Life of Jesus, eliminating the marvellous elements of the Gospel story. It is no more possible to make real history with myths than to make bread with the pollen of flowers." (P. 226.)

In his preface the author observes: "I am deeply conscious of the moral responsibility I assume in giving for the first time a picture of religions in general considered as natural phenomena and nothing more. I believe that the times are ripe for such an essay, and in this, as in all other domains, secular reason must exercise its rights." And of the terrible persecutions caused by religious bigotry, M. Reinach does not think they "ought to be coldly chronicled as insignificant episodes in history," and adds:—

"I execrate these judicial murders, the accursed fruits of a spirit of oppression and fanaticism, and I have shown this plainly. There are zealots still among us who glorify these crimes, and would wish to see them continued. If they attack my book they will do me a great honor."

At the end of every chapter there is a list of works dealing with the subjects upon which the chapter treats, of great value to the student. The book itself is a handsome volume of more than four hundred pages, and is cheap at eight-and-six. It is a favorable sign of the times that such a scholar should write such a work, and that one of our leading publishers should publish it.

W. MANN.

### "Chartered Libertines."

THE clergy are past masters at nobbling any movement likely to prove dangerous to them. The original Sunday-schools were initiated by laymen with the sole idea of imparting education to children on the one day in the week on which, in the time prior to Factory Acts, they were free to receive it. Nowadays, the Sunday-school is not concerned with other than theological instruction, and the average Sunday-school teacher cares as much for real education as a pigeon cares for hydrostatics. Similarly, with the Public Library movement. The clergy have great influence on the local committees of the libraries, and their one aim is to render such institutions, from their point of view, entirely innocuous. So long as the shelves of these libraries are stocked with the literary effusions of the Brothers Hocking, Marie Corelli, and other purveyors of sentimental pap for intellectual infants, they are quite content. The instant any attempt is made to place before the reading public works which make for sanity or for ordered thought, they at once display their animosity. The boycott is introduced, and the modern index expurgatoris contains the names of practically every author who is worth reading, from Bernard Shaw to Swinburne. Even minor writers do not escape, and Robert Blatchford suffers in the august company of Professor Ernest Haeckel.

The latest author to be placed on the index is Mr. H. G. Wells, whose novel, *Anne Veronica*, has lately been pilloried as "immoral." The book has been excluded from the Hull Public Libraries, and Canon Lambert was pleased to say that he would just as soon send a daughter of his to a house infected with diphtheria or typhoid as put this book in her hands. This is plain speaking, and requires

as plain an answer. Public libraries are not intended for the intellectual refreshment of simple maidens and callow youths, but should be for the use of adult ratepayers, many of whom have forgotten more about literature than the worthy Canon ever knew concerning the same subject. Immorality forsooth! A parson should be the last person to level such a charge whilst he advocates the placing of the Bible in the hands of every child. *Anne Veronica* is a most temperate story concerning sex relationship, and does not contain a lewd word from one end of the book to the other. In fact, Mr. Wells is an exceptionally clean-minded writer. And if *Anne Veronica* is likely to corrupt the good morals of the rising generation, what, in the name of morality, is the Old Testament calculated to do? There may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of sodomy, rape, and unnatural vice, written with all the nasty particularity and love of detail which is the peculiar birthright of all Oriental scribes. The florid, heated rhetoric of "The Song of Solomon" leaves nothing to the imagination, and the least lettered juvenile can appreciate the glowing periods. In fact, Oriental nastiness begins where Occidental pornography leaves off.

We are quite satisfied that Canon Lambert's indignation is overdone. If he had any reason for safeguarding the interests of the young people he would see at once that if *Anne Veronica* will corrupt a young reader the Bible will corrupt a regiment. No novelist would dare to disfigure his pages with detailed accounts of incest, rape, and various forms of unnatural vice. He would be imprisoned, and his books destroyed. Yet the clergy force the Bible, which contains all this filth, into the hands of every child. We do not believe in bowdlerising any book, but if ever there were any occasion for such drastic treatment it certainly should be directed against the Bible. Unfortunately, if all the objectionable passages were deleted, "God's Holy Word" would be so reduced in bulk as to be unrecognisable. Instead of prating of indecent literature, let the clergy set an example. Let them cease to force into the innocent hands of little children a volume which they dare no longer read in its completeness to a mixed audience. Until they consent to do this they merit the appellation of "Chartered Libertines."

C. E. S.

### David Lazaretti and Jesus of Nazareth.

A REPLY TO PROFESSOR GIACOMO BARZELLOTTI.

[Translated by F. Prewett, from *La Tribuna*, Rome.]

I CANNOT understand how Professor Barzellotti, courteously replying to my remarks, has laid stress on certain mistakes committed in good faith, and which I was the first to find excusable. He still says of me: "It is he, instead, who makes one believe him" (i.e., to be almost a follower of Lazaretti). Yet I have already written in the first edition that the explanation of his "Messiahship" was mental disease (epileptic degeneracy, which is not included in the classical group of mental diseases—it is temporary madness according to the modern psychiatrists: I quote Kraepelin and Krafft-Ebung). I wrote on the last page of the book that Lazaretti "was far advanced on that incline where consciousness meets total destruction." This is certainly not a sentence in the spirit of one who is "almost a follower" of the prophet. It is diametrically opposed. I suppose that the translator of the Danish text did not understand it. I wrote, however, and I repeat, that Lazaretti was a hero, like everyone else who goes boldly forward towards death for his own convictions. But his followers did not believe him to be a "hero"; they thought he was the Christ returned to earth.

The illustrious Professor does not see the substantial difference between him who maintains that "the thoughts of Christ were diseased" (as he makes me say) and him who affirms "that the thought of being a Christ constitutes a mental disease" (as I have said). The difference is very great. The so-called "fixed ideas" of the "paranoico" do not exclude a thousand and one sane and right ideas, even, as in the case of the "paranoico" Swedenborg; ideas of the highest importance. Jesus, for example, had many excellent ideas, which now form, in great part, the spiritual patrimony of the Church. The "paranoico" always preserves his reasoning faculty. That is why he may be mad and at the same time found a Church full of beautiful and moral thoughts. The sane ideas of Jesus, however, were not original: every one of them may be found in those

writings, canonical and apocryphal, which he studied. A "great moralist" he certainly was not. *Scripta manet*. He was an echo.

Professor Barzellotti has had the imprudence to attribute fervor to modern religious psychology, of which he evidently knows nothing; he even declares he never, never wishes to study that infamous monster. He wishes to stay with Goethe—in short, to remain uninitiated. The company could not be better. For the most part they may be sure that modern science, which is regardless of the most famous names and concerns itself only with natural facts and scientific methods, will never come to disturb them in their beatitude of 700 A.D.

Professor Barzellotti does not hesitate to declare "absurd" and "a priori" the results obtained by that science concerning the matter and methods of which he is completely ignorant. Certainly! Just so the movement of the earth in 1632 was "absurd." The most famous professors in 1650 and 1652 found the circulation of the blood was "absurd." When Robert Maier discovered the fundamental law of energy, the doctors gave him a cold douche every time he spoke of it; so "absurd" was it. These *reductio ad absurdo* are classical by now. And not less classical is the objection of Professor Barzellotti, who deserves a monument. "To make of Christ a mad and diseased man because he believed and affirmed himself to be the Messiah and the Son of God would be to maintain that the whole nation of Israel was struck by the same mental disease—which would evidently be absurd." I know that the Jews expected the Messiah, but I have never heard that they universally believed "to be" the Messiah. It is one thing to await the Messiah, to believe in the Father Eternal, to know that in Italy there is a king. It is quite another thing to believe "to be" the Messiah, the Father Eternal, or the King of Italy. The former may be sane; the latter are mad. Even in those far-away times the "Messiahs"—Theudas, for example—were considered mad. So if this objection of Professor Barzellotti is the strongest he can raise, just imagine the others!

He then says: "The proof *ad absurdo* of the one-sidedness, and the falsity of such a method, anti-historical and anti-scientific—i.e., attempting to explain the origin of Christianity, tracing it to a contagious case of teomegalomania—is the recent book of Professor Dimol-Sanglé"—a book which Barzellotti has not read, but the University of Paris has included in those text-books, which it publishes for the use of students.

Anti-historical and anti-scientific! That is not a trifling charge! Now let us see.

The history of Jesus is written almost exclusively in the Gospels. The Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul tell us that the enormous majority of the contemporaries of Jesus had never taken him seriously. The Gospel of Mark tells us that his neighbors believed he was mad even in the beginning. The Gospel according to John says three times that the people told him to his face that he was possessed, mad, senseless. Amongst those artless "apostles" who believed him sane, at least three suffered from hallucinations, and a fourth betrayed him. This is the story—which will certainly not be denied.

Our method is this: to collect and arrange the facts, compare them, and thus seek for the general laws by means of those hypotheses, which are the plough and the spade of modern science. Now this comparative method is not only scientific, but it is the *sine qua non* of modern science. We have no "preconceived ideas," as Professor Barzellotti says. Let us put our materials and our methods under the survey and control of anyone. Those who have "preconceived ideas" do not collect facts, do not make comparisons—in short, do not move; let the heavens fall, they remain with Goethe in that blessed seventh century.

We are "one-sided" if we wish, first of all, to insist on the madness or sanity of the man we are studying. We are the first to admit that a madman may have an immense importance. We only say, "Put aside the mad ideas, which may do harm, and take those others, which can do good."

From Jesus, Christianity has taken not only the right ideas, but also his mad thought, that he was a heavenly being.

This last idea is vanishing quickly. The world is perceiving that this man, who chastised instead of reasoning, who cursed whole towns, like Chorazin and Bethsaida, who even cursed a fig-tree, who wished to save only those poor people who believed in his hallucinations—in short, that this implacable egoist was not such a saint.

Fortunately, the Gospels have remained! And even if they had contained only half of those "typical" anomalies which they do contain, it would be enough, and more than enough, to show with absolute security that Jesus, like David Lazaretti, like the other thousands of "Christs" before and after him, was a religious "paranoico."

A greater than Goethe is needed to confound the sure methods of modern psychology.

EMIL RASMUSSEN.

## Acid Drops.

Ingersoll once remarked that people prayed for all sorts of things they never expected; indeed, they prayed for things they knew to be impossible. "The other day," Ingersoll said, "I was at Washington, and I heard a man ask God to give Congress wisdom."

The British House of Commons also opens with prayer,—several hundreds a year being paid to a praying-machine called the chaplain. It is easy to see, however, that God doesn't interfere with the regular course of political business in that House—any more than he "endows the Lords of the Council and all the nobility with grace, wisdom, and understanding." It would be to the credit of our Legislature if this pious farce were abolished.

King Edward wound up his speech from the throne on Monday with the customary pious flourish: "I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may attend your labors." His Majesty must have winked the other eye—at least subjectively, as the philosophers say—at that comic-opera conclusion of his empty address.

Tuesday's *Morning Leader* contained an item "from our own correspondent" at Berlin, which shows what may be expected now that journal is controlled by the Cadbury syndicate. The first sentence of this item is really delightful. "Enthusiastic demonstrations," we are told, "were held yesterday in Berlin in support of the teaching of the Gospels." How gratifying it must be to the "divine author" of those much-debated documents! What relief must be felt in heaven! It appears that Professor Drews, and other speakers, have been delivering a series of lectures, followed by discussions, in Berlin, seeking to "prove that Jesus was a mythical personality." Two protest meetings were organised against this shocking scepticism; one of them being held in the Cathedral and the other, rather appropriately, in Busche's Circus. The court chaplains were amongst the speakers, and the Emperor himself greatly wished to be present. "Tell them," he said, "that the words of Jesus prove his life. His words live in our hearts to-day as in the simple fisherman's hearts who heard them." That settles it. The Kaiser has spoken—and who is going to argue with the master of all those logions?

"Our own correspondent" must have filled himself up with Cadbury's cocoa, which is a wholesome but not an inspiring beverage; for he finished his report in this style:—

"Over 10,000 persons participated, and many leading men spoke. Luther's famous hymn was sung, and the confession of faith was repeated. Such a manifestation must give German materialism a pause."

It would be difficult to beat that. Fancy the scientific sceptics of Germany, from Haeckel downwards, all being staggered by a public meeting, a hymn, and a confession of faith! We suppose it must be put down to the comet.

Mr. George Franklin, of Southampton, who cut his throat in the Endell-street Public Baths in London, turns out to have come to the end of a career of most astonishing scoundrelism. He has done all sorts of Southamptonites to the total extent of nearly £200,000. Of course he was an ostentatious Christian. The newspapers describe him as "an earnest Churchman," and state that "his voice was to be heard every Sunday in the well-ordered choir of St. Denny's Church."

After weighing up the previous paragraph our readers will be refreshed by having their attention called to a recent sermon by the Rev. David Dorrity, rector of St. Anne's Church, Manchester. This gentleman, having stated that the real name for agnosticism was infidelity or unbelief, went on to say that "he feared the cause of agnosticism was not an intellectual one, but a moral one. There was a scrow loose in their life and conduct; they wished things to be as they would like to see them. When a man habitually boused his imagination with impure thoughts it was only natural that his heart should be hardened by deceitfulness and that the eyes of his understanding would also be darkened." What the reverend gentleman means is that people who differ from him must be wicked; otherwise he might possibly be mistaken—which is inconceivable.

A writer in one of the Sunday papers points out that there are four churches in London built to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo, where two or three Christian armies met to kill one another in thousands. They are St. Matthew,

Brixton, St. Mark, Kennington, St. Luke, Camberwell, and St. John, Waterloo Bridge—one for each gospel of peace on earth and goodwill towards man. There is not one to commemorate the proclamation of peace.

Windsor-place Presbyterian Church, Cardiff, was burnt down on Sunday night. The cause was a prosaic one—the overheating of a flue. The damage, £12,000, was doubtless covered by insurance. Churches have long ceased trusting in prayer. Religion is religion—and business is business.

"Providence" again! A local preacher named John Herringshaw, of Leamington, was killed by lightning during the great storm on Sunday between Marton and Long Itchington. Presumably he was on the Lord's business. From which it appears that the Lord is not very discriminating.

The new tariff on leather and paper has forced up by 20 per cent. the price of Bibles in Chicago. Sad! But the author of the Bible will understand it. There was a strong forward movement in the price of pork when he drowned all those pigs at Gadara.

"An old Nottingham reader" writes to the *Nottingham Guardian* from Secunderabad respecting the terrible discontent which is seething in India. He represents missionary enterprise as worse than a failure. He says it has only deepened the "prejudice and antipathy" of the natives. "I have not the slightest hesitation," he says, "in partly ascribing their present attitude to this faith-reforming agitation—which can only be regarded as a waste of time and money."

Canon Stokes, the rector of Elm, near Wisbeach, is in trouble with his parishioners. The child of a farm laborer's daughter having to be buried, the reverend gentleman read only a fraction of the burial service, and refused to allow wreaths to remain on the grave. This was no doubt an excellent religious attitude on his part, but the parishioners took it as unkindness, and showed their resentment. When the reverend gentleman went into his pulpit to preach on Sunday, some twenty persons rose from their seats and left the church. We suggest that they would lose nothing if they never returned.

Rev. Dr. Hunter, addressing the annual meeting of the congregation of Trinity Church, Glasgow, said that "in the matter of church going, public sentiment had, during the last twenty years, been steadily swinging from the extreme of Judaistic strictness towards that of Pagan license. The Jewish Sabbath which they Northern people used to be charged with observing was being gradually transformed not into the Christian, but into the heathen Sunday." Evidently, then, the question "Stands Scotland where it did?" must be answered in the negative. Dr. Hunter is not satisfied that the disregard of the blessed Sabbath has reached its limit. He fears it is going from bad to worse. Yes, and worse than that. For the decay of organised religion will mean, "ultimately," the decay of "much that is best in the national life." Of course it will—when the prophet is a preacher, whose profession is threatened with extinction.

We understand that Mr. Joseph McCabe, representing himself as a personal friend of the late Francisco Ferrer, recently lectured to an Ethical Society's meeting on the "martyrdom" of that hero without referring to the fact that he was a Freethinker and even an Atheist. This was pointed out by a member of the audience, whose interposition evidently displeased the lecturer. It is strange that people who so ecstatically praise Ferrer's courage cannot muster a little more of their own.

The greatest curse of England is hypocrisy. It works out in practice as "respectability." If you are poor, pretend to be well-off; if you are an hereditary plebeian, pretend that you have at least some very distant relations in the "hupper suckles"; if you are an Agnostic, pretend to be a bit of a Unitarian; if you are an Atheist, pretend to be a reverent Agnostic—one who wants to believe and can't, but means to have another try at it one of these fine days. You never know your luck.

We see that Archdeacon Sinclair has been complaining of the bitterness of speech on both sides—perhaps we should say all sides—during the recent general elections. As a Christian nation, he says, we ought to be ashamed of it. It was disheartening to those who were striving to plant "Christian forbearance and kindness" in people's hearts. This sounds very nice and sweet. But the Archdeacon

forgets that if you want to learn the full vocabulary of vituperation you should study the literature of religious controversy. When we were defending ourselves against an indictment for "blasphemy" in 1888—that is, for bringing the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion into disbelief and contempt—we answered the objection that our language was "outrageous" by arguing that Christians, of all people, had no right to talk of the "decencies of discussion." We made a list, chiefly from Mosheim, of the vituperative epithets that Christian disputants had applied to each other. It was simply appalling. Freethinkers were simply out of the running in that handicap. Christians took all the prizes.

Liverpool Christians have a way of their own of carrying out the injunction to "love one another." They hate "infidels" like poison, and each other nearly as much. The Head Constable, giving evidence before the Commission of Inquiry into the late religious riots, said that he had been living in a hell upon earth, and if he had known what it was like in Liverpool he would never have come to it. Sweet Catholics! Tender Protestants! They reckon themselves the salt of the earth, but in Liverpool they are only the mustard and pepper.

Lord Halifax, the leader of the High Church party, calls Canon Hensley Henson "an ecclesiastical Puck." How they love one another!

Ex-President Roosevelt is coming to England in May. It is a nice time of the year, and the better the season the better the deed. Mr. Roosevelt might choose it to apologise for a certain libel he perpetrated against a great Englishman—who was also one of the founders of the great American Republic. We refer to Thomas Paine, of whom Mr. Roosevelt has written, not in an article but in a book, that he was "a filthy little Atheist." This statement is a very exceptional one. It contains three lies in three words. Thomas Paine was not filthy, but clean and fastidious about his personal appearance, until old age and an incapacitating illness made him unable to attend to himself properly; he was not little, but several inches taller than Mr. Roosevelt—being, in fact, five feet ten; and he was not an Atheist, for he wrote eloquently *against* Atheism. Mr. Roosevelt has been often invited to extricate himself from the ranks of vulgar slanderers. He has been apparently too proud to do it hitherto. Perhaps the genial climate (at least it is *sometimes* genial) of an English May will soften his temper and enable him to do both Paine and himself an act of justice.

Boycotting was a dreadful crime in Ireland, but it seems to be all right in England. It is recommended by the Leeds Free Church Council against shopkeepers who do Sunday trading. But why the Free Church Council? What is its interest in Sunday trading? Simply professional. Nothing less, and nothing more.

Sir Oliver Lodge has written a big book called *The Survival of Man*. It is supposed to contain all the evidences up-to-date of man's living on after death. It contains a lot of words, but no facts. All that Sir Oliver Lodge shows is that he knows as much about a future life as we do. We say *knows*—for what is the value of guessing? We can guess as well as he can, and anybody else as well as either of us. But it appears that Mrs. Bridget Mary O'Reilly has a personal acquaintance with spirits, which Sir Oliver Lodge has not been able to acquire. This lady gave what the newspapers call "a remarkable lecture" lately at the Waldorf Hotel to a fashionable audience. She stated that every planet in the sky was in charge of an angel, though she said nothing about the control of comets. Spirits who turned up at Spiritist *séances* were bad angels, who maliciously personated the dead, with a view to controlling mediums and destroying men's souls. The lady lecturer asked one of these spirits to write down his name. He did so, and it was SATAN. A lot of other spirits announced, chuckling, that they were "Spirits from Hell—Demons." And the moral tone of the family in which these manifestations took place fell dreadfully low. We suppose it was the brimstone that did it. All people who attended *séances*, the lady lecturer said, lost their moral tone. This, however, was too much for the Spiritists present. They differed from Mrs. Bridget Mary O'Reilly. As a matter of fact, the ladies and gentlemen who talk so glibly about a future life always *do* differ. They have been at it for thousands of years, and they are agreed upon nothing yet.

James George Pike, gasfitter, of Tower-street, Waterloo-road, London, was out of work for many weeks. He tried hard to get employment, but it was all in vain. At length he lost hope. He was at the end of his tether. He had

gone short of food in order that his children might have enough. Returning home one evening just as his children returned from school, he was told by the elder, a girl aged thirteen, that there was no sugar or butter in the house. He gave her his last threepence, said good-bye to her and her little sister, drank the contents of a bottle and fell on the floor, where the doctor found him dead. He had swallowed oxalic acid. What a sad and painful tragedy! Yet, alas, it is common enough in this "best of all possible worlds." And—

"God's in his heaven,  
All's right with the world."

Which is the comedy to balance the tragedy of "Providence's" dispensation.

A discussion on why men don't go to church has taken place under the auspices of the Church of England's Young Men's Society at Wolverhampton. One speaker, a reverend gentleman, denounced pew-rents and class distinctions as amongst the chief causes of absenteeism. He also deplored the miserable differences as to which was the right way to get to heaven. He knew of one lady who refused to drink tea from a cup that came from another church. And what was the remedy? The reverend gentleman didn't think of making Church teachings credible. He had a much shorter method than that. Fathers should compel their children to go to church; then they would get used to going, and the habit would cling to them when they grew up. This proposal was much applauded, but it did not seem a very likely one when the meeting cooled down a bit; for the next speaker, probably with justice, complained of the "many" collections, and the following speaker came to the lugubrious conclusion that "the devil was stronger than the Church"—which was a bull's-eye. Properly speaking, that ended the discussion. But the people won't go to church. The speakers may lay their last sixpence on that.

The Bishop of Armagh had a laudatory poetical epistle to the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain in Monday's *Morning Post*. Here are the last two lines:—

"'Love thou thy brother' is the tender text  
Thou orbest in light to thought Imperial."

A man with an ear like that ought to be cracking stones, or sawing wood, rather than writing verses.

Religion often makes people positively in love with pain. Witness the following case. A Swiss woodcutter, named Ogay, sixty years of age, resolved to win the crown of martyrdom by burning himself at the stake, since he was born too late to have the blessing conferred upon him by others. Accordingly he built his own funeral pile under an impromptu cross on a hill. Setting fire to the dried wood, and waiting till it was in flames, he deliberately laid himself down on the pyre and was burnt to death. When the villagers arrived, attracted by the fire, they found only his carbonised body. Of course the case will be treated as one of religious insanity but there was a certain method in his madness.

Senator Jefferson Davis expressed a hope that Rockefeller might be burnt in hell with his own oil. We never knew that they imported fuel in that establishment. Old Nick should manage Rockefeller without assistance from the Standard Oil Company.

"A Search for the Real Jesus" was the title of an article in last week's *New Theology* organ. Fancy searching for the real Jesus after nearly two thousand years! The explanation is that there never *was* any real Jesus. It is all imagination.

Another apostle of "blessed be ye poor" has gone to the "everlasting bonfire," as Shakespeare calls it—if the said religion be true. Rev. Richard Dandy, of West Kirby, Cheshire, left £10,838. We suppose he has shaken hands with Dives before this.

Mrs. Smith, in the Charlesworth case, testified, "I trusted them thoroughly. It was all religion with them." It should have put her on her guard.

The Church of St. Alphage, London-wall, has a congregation of twenty, and the parson, the Rev. J. J. Glendinning Nash, a stipend of more than £900 net. per annum. £45 a year for each soul he attends to. We wonder if they are all worth it—or if *he* is?



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 27, Town Hall, Birmingham; at 3, "Robert Blatchford, the *Daily Mail*, and the Prince of Peace"; at 7, "Are the Gospels True?"

March 6, St. James's Hall, London; 13, Liverpool; 20, Leicester; 27, St. James's Hall, London.

April 3, Glasgow.

### To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 27, St. James's Hall. March 6, Manchester; 20, St. James's Hall; 27, Holloway  
PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £168 3s. 6d. Received since:—"Stamps," Manchester, £1 1s.; "Ernest" (Rotherhithe), 5s.; Joseph Bryce, 10s.; T. M. Mosley, 2s. 6d.; Sidney Clowes, 3s.; W. J. Conroy, 5s.

"ERNEST" (Rotherhithe).—Noted with thanks.

C. MILMAN.—The Bible does not expressly say that the earth is flat, but its statements are consistent with that theory. For instance, Satan took Jesus up a mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth from that position, which would not be possible on a globe, however high the mountain was.

JOHN W. WHITE.—Nothing but an express Act of Parliament—and it is much wanted—would enable Freethinkers to be certain that they should be buried (or cremated) according to their wishes. At present the law seems to be that the disposition of the dead is entirely a matter for the living, and without a change in the law it appears to be quite impossible to prevent Christian relatives from having a Christian ceremony performed over a Freethinker's grave. We are sorry it is so, but there is no use in blinking the facts.

W. T. HILL.—Thanks for cuttings.

ANON.—You could direct in your will that your body should be offered for dissection to the Royal College of Surgeons or to any Hospital you choose to specify. We know of no other way.

R. CLARKE.—See paragraph. Thanks.

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

F. WOOD.—Useful. Thanks.

H. DAWSON.—See "Acid Drops."

JOSEPH BATES.—Will doubtless be useful.

T. M. MOSLEY.—Will see what can be done with it.

F. MUNRO.—It shall be looked through as promptly as possible.

JOSEPH BRYCE.—Glad to note your "ever increasing admiration."

H. B. DODDS.—We are writing you.

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Feb. 27), afternoon and evening, in the great Birmingham Town Hall, and is pretty sure to have big audiences there, as usual. For the sake of visitors from a distance tea will be provided at 4.45 in one of the Town Hall anterooms.

The present St. James's Hall course of lectures has hardly had a chance yet. What with the elections in January, and the weather then and ever since, everything has been against the success of this enterprise. It was fondly hoped that there would be a favorable turn of affairs on Sunday, and a really good audience was expected; but the worst storm for

twenty years intervened and spoiled everything. Such a day! And such a night! It was almost a surprise to find any audience at all; in the circumstances the assembly was very gratifying. Mr. Foote's last Shakespearean lecture, for the present, was followed for nearly an hour and a half with deep attention. He was in good form, and lecturing *con amore*, and the audience seemed to be having "a night off." The proverbial pin might have been heard drop during the reading of some of the selections. A few questions were asked afterwards in response to the chairman's (Mr. Silverstein) invitation.

We hope the weather will be more auspicious this evening (Feb. 27), when Mr. Lloyd occupies the St. James's Hall platform. We also trust that the London "saints" will give Mr. Lloyd the meeting and the reception he deserves.

The Labor Party at its recent Newport Conference passed a resolution by 650,000 to 12,000 in favor of "a national system of education, under full popular control, free and secular, from the primary school to the university." The Catholics, led by Mr. Sexton and Mr. O'Grady, supplied the 12,000 votes. Mr. Arthur Henderson, the chairman, declared that the forces in favor of Secular Education were every year growing stronger and stronger.

Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., writes as follows on the foregoing matter:—

"The only debate of the Conference which aroused any degree of feeling was the one which asked for a ballot vote of the members of the societies on the question of secular education. It is a pity that this question cannot be allowed to rest. Neither side gains from the annual struggle between the small minority of Catholic delegates and the overwhelming majority who support the secular position. The President of the Conference advised the disputants to leave the question alone for the present, as it is not one which is likely to come before this Parliament. It is to be hoped that this wise advice will be taken."

Whether the subject of Secular Education is likely to come before the present parliament or not depends upon several things. It is bound to come up if there is another Education Bill. And the Nonconformists are certain to move heaven and earth (and the other place too) in that direction.

The death of the late Mr. Pate Curran came very sadly. Immediately after losing his seat at Jarrow he had to enter a hospital for an operation, to which he ultimately succumbed. Like so many other members of the Labor Party, he was not fond of advertising his religious heterodoxy, but we have always understood that he learnt Freethought from Bradlaugh in the old days, and really retained it till the end. It is only in English-speaking lands that advanced politicians think it necessary or advisable to hide their irreligion. The very idea would be ridiculed in France, Germany, and Italy—or even in Spain. Some day or other it will be the same here.

Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald made affirmation of allegiance, instead of taking the oath, before the Speaker of the House of Commons. Several others did the same, but we have not yet got a list of them.

Mr. T. Moulton, whose able articles will have been noticed by our readers lately, writes to us: "I met a man yesterday to whom I introduced the *Freethinker* three months ago, and he took the opportunity to thank me for doing so, adding that he regarded the paper as the 'finest, solidest'—to give his exact words—and most intellectual journal he had ever come across." Mr. Moulton also says: "A Russian lady asks me to thank you for your remarks in this week's 'Acid Drops.'" We welcome her thanks. And we take the occasion to repeat what we said some time ago in these columns, that a hundred thousand men had better die fighting on battlefields against such devilry than that women should be tortured and outraged year after year in Holy Russia's prisons. What is death? We have all got to die once—and only once. To die for the freedom and dignity of mankind is a glory.

The Annual Meeting of the Secular Education League will take place on March 15 at the Essex Hall. Members only will be free to attend, and we hope there will be a good muster. It will be followed by a public meeting (at 8 o'clock), with Lord Weardale, the League President, as chairman, and Mr. Halley Stewart, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., and Mr. G. W. Foote amongst the speakers. Other names of speakers will be announced next week.

## The Kingdom of God in Geneva Under Calvin.—I.

Lecture delivered before the Independent Religious Society, Chicago.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

THERE was no city in Europe which I was more anxious to visit than Geneva. And I wanted to be there on a Sunday. Of course, I had heard from tourists and read in books, glowing accounts of the scenery in Switzerland. The reality, however, certainly surpasses the most enthusiastic descriptions of it. Switzerland is the poetry of nature. Traveling through that country I seemed to be reading a wonderful poem, of which the mountain peaks, the murmuring lakes, the falling cascades, the peaceful valleys, the white villages nestled cosily in wood and wold, or hanging, so to speak, from the edge of some precipice—were the stanzas. But it was not for the scenery that I wished to be in Geneva on a Sunday.

I was anxious to have the sensation of comparing a Sunday in Nineteen Hundred and Eight with a Sunday in the same city in Fifteen Hundred and Forty-One, when John Calvin had just succeeded in establishing "the kingdom of God" in Geneva. But what did I find when I arrived in Geneva? I found Calvinism in ruins. When in Rome, I saw the Coliseum in ruins; I saw the Forum in ruins; I saw the Palatine Hill, with its columns and palaces, in ruins; and I felt like an orphan. But in Geneva the ruins of Calvinism made me feel like a victor contemplating the rout of a powerful antagonist.

Early Sunday morning I made inquiries about religious services in the city, and asked to be directed to the Cathedral of St. Peter, the name by which Calvin's church is known. Walking down the hill to the banks of the lake, I passed through one of the handsomest boulevards I had seen anywhere—enriched with splendid shops, hotels, cafés, and public buildings. The throngs in the streets give one the impression that Geneva is a city of some half a million of inhabitants, while in reality it has less than fifty thousand. Yet it has the air, the style, the pace of a Paris, or a Berlin.

Although this was Sunday, a great many of the shops were open; the cafés were patronised by a holiday crowd, the boats on the lake were filling up with excursionists, and in one of the large vacant lots a number of bands were furnishing the music for dancers. This was all on a Sunday, in a city in which, once upon a time, Calvin had as much power as a potter upon his clay.

Crossing the *Pont Mont Blanc* I got into the old quarter of Geneva, which seemed as if it had not changed at all during the past four hundred years. Narrow streets, more like alleys, crooked and creaking, as it were, under the weight of tottering buildings almost tumbling over each other. Walking through this part of the town which, in aspect, was the least attractive, I came to another hill on the summit of which stood the Cathedral of St. Peter. Architecturally the church is a fine specimen of the Romanesque-Byzantine style, and makes a pleasing impression upon the visitor. When I arrived at the main entrance of the church I could not help thinking of the time when John Calvin was alive and occupied its pulpit. Let us, therefore, before we go in, pause at the door of the church, to paint, as far as possible, a mental picture of the city that collected about this cathedral some four hundred years ago—when Calvin was in the flesh.

While the picture must necessarily be a mental one, I will try to make it truthful in every detail. To do this we must repair to the public library in Geneva, and examine the archives, the Registrar's records, the documents and files, all in excellent preservation. In attempting, then, to reproduce the Geneva of Calvin's day, we do not have to draw upon our own imagination, but simply to quote from records which are thoroughly reliable, and which are accessible to everybody.

The government of Geneva, in the year 1541, was a theocracy. In a democracy, the people choose their rulers and make their own laws; in a plutocracy or an aristocracy, a favored few hold all the power in their own hands; in a monarchy, one man's pleasure is law; in a theocracy, God is King. In Geneva, at the time we are speaking of, God was king, and John Calvin was his premier, or grand vizier. The affairs of the city, as we learn from the documents I spoke of, were in the hands of a Consistory, composed of pious churchmen, and presided over by Calvin. The City Council and Consistory were to Calvin what the hand is to the brain, or what a motor is to a train of cars. John Calvin was the whole government. To disagree with him, or to criticise anything that he did or said, was blasphemy against the Holy Trinity. To oppose his will was to oppose the will of God, who had set him up in power. The records show that no one escaped punishment who had the temerity to hold views in any way different from those advocated by John Calvin. The punishment was, as is to be expected, severe. The offence being against high heaven, the punishment had to be commensurate with the offence. In all such matters, however, the Bible was consulted, and the punishment therein prescribed was literally carried out. For, let it not be forgotten, that Geneva was a theocracy, and that the Bible was its divine instrument of government. In other words, the Church was the State, and the city government was "the Kingdom of God" on earth.

And how did it work? Let the chronicles and archives of Geneva answer the question. It appears that there was, under "the Kingdom of God," in Geneva, a great deal of poverty and misery among the peasant and laboring classes. The suffering at times was so acute that hungry people marched in crowds through the streets and had to be repulsed by the militia. The peasants were ever complaining of the assessments they were compelled to pay for the maintenance of the clerical regime. Even the port wine used at the communion table came from the peasants, for which they received no pay. These files also tell of the existence of widespread immorality in Calvin's city. The immorality reached clear up to the *entourage* of Calvin himself. His own father-in-law had gone into bankruptcy under decidedly "shady" circumstances; his brother had been divorced from his wife and had in consequence a lawsuit on his hands which placed him in a very unenviable light. Calvin himself had registered in other cities under assumed names. A number of his reverend colleagues are mentioned by name in these records as having been charged with conduct unbecoming to men of their pretensions.

The city of Geneva, in the year 1541, which is the date of the commencement of "the kingdom of heaven" on earth under Calvin, had only 10,000 inhabitants. And yet, one of the items in the Registrar's book is that the keeper of the prison complained to the Consistory that more prisoners were sent to him than he had room for, which means that the prison was crowded. The members of the Consistory, together with their chief, instead of seriously and effectively trying to improve this deplorable state of affairs, were devoting a considerable portion of their time to the eating of elaborate public dinners at the expense of the city. Spread on these files are the *menus* of the banquets given in their honor and paid for by a starving peasantry. One comes across these banquets frequently in reading the records of old Geneva. On October 29, 1545, John Lullin, hotel-keeper at St. Gervais, sends in a bill to the city for ninety-one dinners he has served to the Consistory. On February 25, 1546, the auditors of the public accounts complain that the officers spent as much as 240 francs at one dinner. From January 31 to February 1—that is to say, in two days—the Consistory ate and drank, in the city hall (*Maison-de-Ville*), 790 francs worth of food and drink. All, of course, at the public's expense. The least event was made the pretext for a sumptuous banquet. It appears that

there were frequent disputes among the godly people of Geneva, which disputes, however, always terminated by coming together and having a good dinner. A bill presented by Louis Tissot, steward, shows that in one month alone, the month of December, 1556, there were eleven dinners of the kind we have mentioned. In the three months of the following year there were thirty-one banquets, at a cost to the city of thirteen hundred and twenty francs. In "the Kingdom of God," such as prevailed in Geneva under Calvin, one would infer from these published items that the flesh was not in any way made subservient to the spirit. Of course, there was a great deal of "spirituality," but it never seems to have interfered in the least with the conviviality of John Calvin and his ministers.

We learn by the records that Calvin, who, when he came to Geneva as a fugitive from persecution, did not have a penny in his pocket, at the time of his death left what in those days would have been considered a little fortune. His yearly income amounted to about 25,000 francs—that is, about 5,000 dollars. In this, of course, is included the parsonage, which he occupied free of rent; his travelling expenses, all of which were borne by the city; his wood, his flour, and his wine, of which latter they allowed him, free of cost to him, two bottles a day. The fur coat which we see him wearing in some of his pictures was also a present to him by the city. Notwithstanding all this generosity on the part of the people, Calvin, according to the records, complains that he is unable on his income to make both ends meet. In most of his pictures Calvin has the appearance of being a man in bad health, which is not surprising, considering the number of banquets he attended, and the quantity of wine he was at liberty to use.

While the Consistory was dining and "wining," and wearing coats lined with fur, the people were denied all the pleasures of life, under the pretext that they would be an encouragement to worldliness. If there is one phrase which is more frequent in the records of Geneva than any other it is the phrase "*Est defendu*"—"It is forbidden!" Nearly everything that gives pleasure is forbidden. Pleasure itself is forbidden—to the people. All games, such as cards and checkers even, are forbidden. Dancing, theatricals, prize-contests of any kind are not allowed. Men and women are also forbidden to carry ornaments of any description, much less to wear any jewellery, such as rings, chains, bracelets, or anything made of gold or silver. Silks, satins, velvets, furs, bands, ribbons, bonnets, shawls, and embellishments and embroideries of every description were strictly forbidden. The Consistory tried to regulate everything, even how a woman should tie her hair, and how long a man should wear his. Any violation of the above rules was punished, for the first offence with a fine of 70 francs; for the second offence, 140 francs; for the third, 350 francs and confiscation of property and imprisonment. The example of Geneva shows what folly it would be to give any man or any government unlimited power. Whether the power conferred be in the name of the people, or in the name of God, the results will be the same. The clerical government of Geneva, considering itself appointed by God and representing him, wished to be consulted in every detail of life, even as God should be. Consequently people were expected under penalty to secure permission from the authorities when they desired more than one kind of meat, or a different kind of pastry at their meals than what the Consistory allowed. How many guests could be invited to a dinner, how many dishes served at a private repast, and how many at a public dinner; what kinds of drinks should be served, and how large or small the wine glasses should be; what presents a bridegroom could give his bride; and just how much money a father could spend for his daughter's wedding—all these, and innumerable other details of life were regulated, and the regulations enforced with fines and penalties. These were the actual conditions in

Geneva where God was King, and where Calvin was his delegate.

But we also learn from these records that what the Consistory feared most was a new idea. While they forbade the tailor and the milliner from introducing any new fashions without first obtaining permission from the authorities, it was the man with a new thought, a new accent, a new point of view, which called forth the lightning on his head and made the clergy to gnash their teeth with rage. You know that scene in Shakespeare in which Macbeth, about to take his chair in the banquet hall, finds it already occupied by the ghost of Banquo. Trembling with fear and rage, and rushing upon the apparition, he exclaims:—

"Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
The armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger,  
Take any shape but that,—"

In the same spirit the Church has always stormed at the man with a new idea. To the thinker and the scholar it has cried with fear and alarm,—

"Take any shape but that!—"

To protect the theocracy against new ideas of any kind, a most elaborate system of espionage was inaugurated, by means of which every whisper was heard and reported to headquarters. We often hear preachers speak of that great eye looking out of the sky, and which is never closed; Calvin's eye was like that "Great Detective's" eye, with this exception, that Calvin's eye *saw* things. We read in these records the names of church-spies, the amounts of their salaries; how they slipped into private and public places; interviewed strangers passing through the city, disguised or hid themselves at the meetings of young people suspected of opposition against the repressive regime of the Church government—in short, how they tried to earn their pay. The register of the Council or Consistory of September 4, 1544, among other items, has the following from one of these spies in the employ of the theocracy: "Brombrille has explained how vigilant he has been in watching and interrogating those who come and go, and when he has heard or discovered anything *new*, he has immediately communicated it to the Consistory.....For this he was paid sixty francs." An item like the above, however, gives but an imperfect idea of the Protestant Inquisition in Geneva. Of course, all these measures were defended by the authorities upon the ground that they were necessary to maintain "the Kingdom of God" on earth.

A better idea of the extremes to which the Consistory went in its endeavors to suppress every protest against the ecclesiastical tyranny, will be had when it is noted that even children were urged "to tell on their parents," and parents to betray their children. There is in the records one instance of the conduct of a son towards his own mother which beggars description. But it shows what "men of God" will do when they take the Bible for their guide, and God for their king. What are the natural feelings, or the rights of man, or the claims of decency, against the "glory of God"? The Calvinistic government of Geneva sought first of all and above and over all, the "glory of God." Everything else was of little consequence.

John Granjat, also called Blanc, was the executioner of the city in the year 1555. It was a usual thing for the executioner, before putting anyone to death, to mutilate him or her by cutting off the hands. The Genevese government one day sent to this executioner his own mother to be burned alive at Champel. Shall I proceed with the story? It is too harrowing. John Granjat was compelled by the authorities to mutilate his own mother and then to burn her at the stake. Could human brutality go further than that? Does religion turn hearts into stone? But what are the feelings of a son or of a mother compared with the "glory of God"? What an example to set up before children! What an encouragement to rebellion and disrespect and inhumanity! A son burning his own mother! All this happened when God was king in Geneva.

Brother! neighbor! what is it you are asking for when you pray "Thy Kingdom Come?" Do you know what this "Kingdom" is like? Is it something like what prevailed under Calvin in Geneva? Is that what you are so earnestly praying for? Is it something like what prevailed in Rome when the popes as vicars of Christ held the cross in one hand and the sword in the other? No? Well, is it something like what prevailed under Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, when God was really king? What is it then, neighbor, that you are asking for when you pray "Thy Kingdom Come"?

And why pray for any *kingdom*? Why do we want a *king*? And moreover, why an absent king? A king who never shows himself,—a king who is dumb! A king who always delegates his authority to others, and not one of whose delegates has ever given satisfaction!

"Thy Kingdom Come!" It came in Geneva in the sixteenth century.

(To be continued.)

## Recent Lucretian Literature.—II.

(Concluded from p. 125.)

MR. MALLOCK'S studies of the poet are all interesting, and some of his verse renderings of well-known passages deservedly rank high. But he has very little sympathy with fundamental Epicurean views of life. He tells us, for instance, that Lucretius' "first principles" and his "conception of gravity" are "crude, loose, and puerile":—

"Weight, as he explains it, and the tendency of every substance to be for ever falling downwards, is, strictly speaking, unthinkable. How, in infinity, can there be an up or a down? Again, he cannot conceive the propagation of energy without the propagation of matter. He knew nothing of the interaction of bodies by means of ether-vibrations."

Any boy in the fourth or fifth class in an English public school could mention a hundred scientific facts that Lucretius knew nothing about. He was entirely ignorant of the mathematical theory of attraction and the figure of the earth, of the size of the sun and moon, of radio-activity, of X rays, of wireless telegraphy, and many more things. What is really important is the principle underlying the Lucretian system—the hypothesis that there are "first beginnings of things," ultimate atoms, and the unflinching appeal to fact and experience. Nature works by her own inherent laws, "free from all proud overlords, doing everything by herself, and spontaneously" (ii., 1090, cf. v., 677-9). In that direction lies the truly scientific spirit, for it requires no keen-eyed student to assign a supernatural cause for any fact or phenomenon. There is more science in iv., 815, and the half dozen lines following, in which he warns us "to avoid the error of supposing that those bright lights, the eyes, were created that we might be able to see, and that thigh and shin have been made to converge to a point and have the feet for base to enable us to walk forward with outstretched pace," since all such design arguments "pervert reason and mistake the effect for the cause, as nothing has been born in the body in order that we may use it, but what has been born there creates a use"—there is more science in these few lines than in all the Bridgewater Treatises ever written, though Lucretius himself had not the merest suspicion of many facts which to the authors of those compilations were elementary.

Would it be an exaggeration to assert that any philosopher of the "schools" will always be at a great disadvantage in estimating the most subtle product of the Roman mind? It is not unlikely that the spirit of a later age towards Lucretius will be widely different from that of, say, profound university professors of the nineteenth century, whose highest boast would probably be that they are always on

the ground and never in the clouds. A recognition of this would surely have saved commentators from writing at such length about the poet's choice of a subject, about the "inadequacy of the system." For, though he tells us himself, more than once, that he will set forth his philosophy in sweet verses and thus persuade men of its truth, as if he regarded his science as more important than his poetry, it is a fruitless kind of criticism that attempts minutely to separate the scientific and the poetical features of *On Nature* and then subject the former to the analysis which a modern work on physics would receive at the hands of a specialist. Martha, in his brilliant essay, *Le Poème de Lucrece* (p. 76), thinks that an element of personal bitterness is traceable in the poet's violent opposition to the Roman religion, and Friedlaender, quoted by Merrill (p. 277), is of the same opinion. But in all ages statements of this kind have been directed against those who have shown any zeal in their attack on religion. Take away Lucretius' enthusiasm for his subject and where is his poetry? While his supreme desire is to expound the nature-teachings of Epicurus, it is because he would thus free men from religious fear and lead them on to a noble self-consciousness, a feeling of inward independence (i., 80-2, 146-8; v., 1197-1210), for he shows us again and again his own sense of the high poetic call. In those passages in which he gives us his deepest thought on this human life of ours, with its struggles and its miserable fears of gods and the future, and on death, the closing scene of all things for us; in his tender sympathy with every kind of living creature—the "sweet children" whom he so often delights to mention, the cow frantic for her lost calf that has just fallen before the "beauteous" temple of the gods, the flock of sheep appearing in the distance like one white spot at rest on the green hill, though we know that the well-fed lambs are frisking in all directions; in his constant references to Nature's various aspects—the star-spangled dome on a clear night, the reflection of the stars in a pool of water, the storm-tossed ship viewed from the safe shore, the monster-forms assumed by clouds, the shell-strewn beach, the motes dancing in the sunbeam; in his picture of the fearless Epicurus looking straight into the eyes of Religion, of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, of the immortal gods dwelling far apart in unbroken tranquility—in these cases and many more that might be instanced, he has touched a deeper note of pure poetry and pathos than can be found elsewhere in the literature of Rome.\* And the truly illuminating commentator on Lucretius will admit readily—nay, gladly—that the poet is very often astray in this science, but he will emphasise that the real burden of his song is—

*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum,*

that he is the deathless foe of any and every form of supernaturalism, that science is, for him,—

"a sword smiting in sunder  
Shadows and chains and dreams of iron things"

wrought by religion, which he can best meet and crush by presenting men with a self-contained cosmos.

A. D. MCLAREN.

\* At one time, members of the House of Commons frequently indulged in quotations from the Latin classics. The last of Mr. Gladstone's digressions into this fertile field was made on April 26, 1883, in his speech on the Affirmation Bill, when he informed the House that "from ancient times there have been sects and schools that have admitted in the abstract, as freely as Christians, the existence of a Deity, but have held that, of practical relations between him and man, there can be none," concluding with the well-known lines in which Lucretius (ii., 646-51) depicts the divine calm and unconcern, and of which the following is a translation: "All the gods must of necessity enjoy an immortal, self-centred existence, a supreme tranquility far removed, in utter separateness, from our world; for, having no part or lot in pain or danger, strong in their own strength, in no need of us, they are neither propitiated by kindly services nor ever moved to anger."

## Free Thoughts.

BY LEMUEL K. WASHBURN.

SOMETIMES a virtuous man is a man whose vices are not known.

Nothing remains a mystery after the facts in the case are found out.

The very poorest thing being taught to the young to day is Christianity.

The chief reason for our lack of faith in Jesus is that he never lived.

It is easy to believe in God, but not so easy to define the object of belief.

The Pope says: "Love me and the world is mine."

The Church of Sacred Superstitions is its true name.

A corpse is the symbol of the Christian religion.

The Holy Ghost is that part of 10 that is annexed to the 1.

A thing is not good because it is holy; it is holy because it is good.

Those who fight and lose make it easier for others to fight and win.

Christianity is such a mess of fool-dogmas that it is almost impossible to criticise it seriously.

Every man has had human parents, notwithstanding there are missing links in his genealogy.

Most of those persons who put up such a hue and cry about living for the hereafter do not live for anything decent here.

The most revolting sight in Christendom is the crucifix.

A dead body on a dead tree stands only for faith in the dead.

If men had the right faith, the true faith; faith in science, in knowledge, in truth and righteousness; they would pull down this hideous object and bury it forever from human eyes.

A God is something deified by man.

Jesus is hardly more than a statue carved out of superstition.

Sixteen ounces make a pound whether Jesus is a God or a myth.

A Roman Catholic has a window in his cellar but none in his attic.

God does not accuse himself in his "Holy Word" of being decent to any other people but the Israelites.

God has never got along very well with philosophers and scientists. He seems to like priests, prophets, and monks much better.

If you wish to see how far advanced the world is note what it condemns. Mankind are more sincere in their dislikes than in their likes.

While we read that God was angry with the first human pair for discovering that they were naked, we do not find that he was adorned with clothes. Nakedness is no more a state of innocence than a full dress suit and a wedding gown. To be naked and not know it is simply to be a fool and not know it.

We have always said: If Christians were honest and believed what they profess to believe, they would kill themselves and go to live with God and his angels in heaven. But they do not want to go to heaven until they have to, and God is the very last person they wish to meet, which facts make the Christian Church a retreat for hypocrites.

A heaven on earth is worth two in the sky, or anywhere else.

No man who fears a God can fully appreciate the world he lives in.

Give the world more comforts and it will not need so much consolation.

Religion says to morality: "I am holier than thou." But morality is a better foundation for human life.

Suppose that Romanism should try to manifest its antagonism to free schools in the United States in the same way that it did in Spain, when it pursued Ferrer to his death, what apology would our crooked politicians make for this enemy of twentieth century civilisation? The lesson which every European nature teaches us is: Beware of Roman Catholic majorities!

If you cannot save a man, I do not see why you need to damn him.

Perhaps no man is good enough to damn another, and no man bad enough to be damned.

A singular incident is related of William James Sidis, the youngest freshman in the history of Harvard College. He is eleven years old. At the age of seven he was a terrible sceptic, and when the teacher of the school which he attended said prayers, young Sidis put his fingers in his ears, because, he explained, he didn't believe in God. He retains this belief to-day. It will not be astonishing if this wonderful boy proves to be the greatest Freethinker of his age, as he is already the most remarkable intellectual prodigy the world has ever known.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## Correspondence.

THAT RIB.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On p. 114 of last week's *Freethinker* Mr. Cohen, in his interesting article, "Christianity and Medical Science.—III.," says: "The ignorance against which Vesalius had to fight may be gauged from the fact that, until his time, it was generally held that women had one rib *less* than men." Surely Mr. Cohen meant "more," not "less"?

H. T. HILL.

## A PIOUS PORTRAIT.

Cardinal David Beton, Archbishop of St. Andrew's, approached nearly to the ideal of the Romanist statesman of the age. Devoted to the Pope and to the Papacy, he served his master with the unvarying consistency, with the mingled passion and calmness which, beyond all other known institutions, the Roman Church has the power of imparting to its votaries. The sensual pleasures of which his profession as an ecclesiastic deprived him of the open enjoyment, he was permitted to obtain by private licentiousness; his indulgences were compensated by a fidelity with which they never interfered; and the surrender of innocuous vices was not demanded of a man to whom no crime was difficult which would further the interests of his cause. His scent of heresy was as the sleuth hound's, and, as the sleuth hound's, was only satisfied with blood. He was cruel when the Church demanded cruelty, treacherous and false when treachery and falsehood would serve the interests to which he had sold himself; his courage was as matchless as his subtlety; his accomplishments as exquisite as his intellect.—*J. A. Froude, "History of Henry VIII.," Ch. xx.*

## THE POLICY OF SLANDER.

Now everyone who, in the domain of ideas, brings his store by pointing out an abuse, or setting a mark on some evil that it may be removed—every such man is stigmatised as immoral. The accusation of immorality, which has never failed to be cast at the courageous writer, is, after all, the last that can be brought when nothing else remains to be said to a romancer. If you are truthful in your pictures; if by dint of daily and nightly toil you succeed in writing the most difficult language in the world, the word *immoral* is flung in your teeth. Socrates was immoral; Jesus Christ was immoral; they both were persecuted in the name of the society they overset or reformed. When a man is to be killed he is taxed with immorality. These tactics, familiar in party warfare, are a disgrace to those who use them.—*Balzac.*

## Obituary.

I AM SORRY to record that another ardent Atheist has ceased to battle against superstition and all its attending evils—through death. On Sunday, February 13, Mrs. Turnbull (late Sybil May Telfer) was buried. The funeral was attended by a very large number of people, although there was a walk of about three and a half miles to the cemetery. Most of the West Stanley Secularists were there to show their respect to one who was always a staunch and pronounced Atheist, and was for a number of years a member of the West Stanley Branch of the N. S. S. She was a granddaughter to the late Mr. and Mrs. John Todd, who both died some years ago, and who were the oldest members of this Branch. The sad thing about it was that the lady had only been married four months. She was, I am sorry to say, buried as a Christian, in spite of her continued opposition in life to Christianity, and in spite of the wishes of some of her friends.—*JOHN W. WHITE.*

We regret to hear of the death of Moses Harman, which occurred at Los Angeles on January 30. He was an old man, and his last imprisonment must have broken him up. It was not the first time he had suffered in that way. The United States Government, with pious Anthony Comstock at the head of this department of American virtue, has decided that there shall be no discussion of sexual problems in that holy and happy land. Besides, there is plenty of downright nasty sexual matter in the Bible; and what more can good Christians want? Moses Harman, however, thought that sexual problems should be discussed; in decent language, of course, but still discussed; and the result was imprisonment on imprisonment, and a life of social ostracism. Moses Harman held opinions which we do not entertain, and are never likely to; but he was a dauntless champion of the freedom of the press, and we shall always honor his splendid courage.

## 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, J. T. Lloyd, "The Glorious Gospel of Freethought."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, S. Vickers, "Freethought and its Influence on Civilisation."

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Culture and Faith."

## OUTDOOR.

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

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): G. W. Foote, 3, "Robert Blatchford, the *Daily Mail*, and the Prince of Peace"; 7, "Are the Gospels True?" Tea at the Hall, 4.45.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Club Room, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, John Pryde, "Eternal Punishments." Wednesday evenings, at 8.30, a Social Meeting.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 (noon), Class; 6.30, Zosimus, "Achill Island: a Sociological Study."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arnold Sharpley, "Religion as the Historic Enemy of the Worker."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. Shufflebotham, "Freedom: Religious, Political, and Social."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Vegetarian Café, Nelson-street): 7.30, W. Bowerman, "The Economics of Socialism." March 2, Co-operative Society's Guild Room, Darn Creek, at 7, Whist Drive.

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, "Spiritualism, Viewed as a Re-Hashed Superstition, Unscientific and Immoral."

## BUSINESS CARDS.

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

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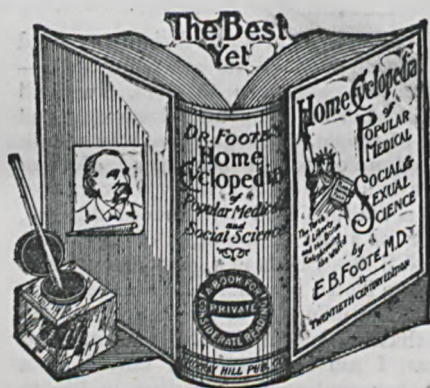
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