

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXX.—No. 11

SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 1910

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Children have the schoolmaster to teach them, but when men are grown-up the poets are their teachers.*

—ARISTOPHANES.

## Christ and the Democracy.

MR. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P., ex-chairman of the Labor Party, is vice-president of the National Federation of Brotherhoods, which is one of the many devices by which Christianity seeks to prolong its threatened existence. In his capacity as vice-president of the Brotherhood movement Mr. Henderson addressed, on Sunday afternoon, a crowded meeting in the Public Hall, Arbroath. There was a Wesleyan minister in the chair, and the proceedings seem to have been devout and orthodox enough even for godly Scotland.

It is well known, of course, that Mr. Henderson is entirely respectable. We are not certain that he wears a box hat, like Mr. John Hodge, but he has all the virtues of the lower middle class, to which by taste and temperament he belongs; and he wears them, not quite ostentatiously, yet with a solemn assurance that they will never be missing. Now one of the most important lower middle-class virtues is "religion." Mr. Henderson possesses it with the proper conspicuousness. He is a good speaker, in a rather monotonous way, which we imagine he must have learnt as a local preacher. His oratory would be more effective if he could forget the pulpit a little, and give freer play to the natural light and shade of the human mind. Solemnity is really not profundity, and a platitude is doubly platitudinous when it is uttered in the tones of a bishop reading a pastoral letter to his rural clergy.

Addressing such an audience, in such a place, on such a day, with such a chairman, Mr. Henderson could hardly help being extra religious. He congratulated all concerned on the great success of the Christian Brotherhood movement in Arbroath. It was already influencing the life of the town. All the churches united to advance it. It was non-sectarian—as if Christianity itself were not a sectarianism! Evidently it was a notable fact to find the Churches uniting about anything; which shows how beautifully the Christian religion has promoted "Brotherhood" during the two thousand years of its history; though that was not one of the lessons which Mr. Henderson sought to illustrate and enforce.

Mr. Henderson then assumed the rôle of an aggressive Christian apologist. "They had been told," he said, according to the *Glasgow Herald* report, "They had been told by one eminent writer in connection with Socialism that, in his opinion, justice could only be achieved by the people permanently cutting themselves adrift from the Christian faith." At that point someone applauded, and Mr. Henderson did not think, but declared, that if he had "half an hour to talk over the matter" with the misguided man "he could convert him"—which is considerably doubtful. That there was "one present who held that opinion" appeared to surprise Mr. Henderson. But surely he cannot be so miraculously innocent as all that. It is scarcely possible for any public man, or any man who reads the newspapers—in spite of their conspiracy of silence against

Freethought—to be unaware that myriads of people in England—yes, and in kirkridden Scotland—have broken away from Christianity. Concealed in all sorts of ways as the fact is, it emerges into the light of day in the course of reviews of advanced literature, and even in the wailings of the clergy at Church Congresses and Nonconformist Conferences. Freethought is like murder (according to Hamlet) in this, that "though it have no tongue," or regular means of publicity, it "will speak with most miraculous organ." You can no more "keep it dark" than you can keep a fire dark. People smell the smoke, and in time they see the flame.

To break away from the Christian faith would, in Mr. Henderson's opinion, be the most fatal step for the democracy. We do not gather from the report that this statement was supported by an appeal to history, or even to the express teaching of the New Testament. Yet such an appeal is absolutely necessary. That democracy owes anything to Christianity is one of those pleasant fictions in which half-educated Christian apologists indulge for the confusion of uneducated and credulous audiences. Democracy, in any true sense of the word, came upon the scene in Europe with the French Revolution. Practically, therefore, it is but a hundred years old. During all the other eighteen centuries of the Christian era it was taken for granted that "fear God and honor the King" was a fair summary of the political and social functions of the people. One of the chief duties of the common herd of Christians, as tersely expressed in the Church Catechism, was to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters. And the word "betters" did not mean their intellectual and moral superiors, by the fiat of mother nature, but simply persons who belonged to the higher castes of society. Parsons, squires, and such folk were one's "betters" for certain. It would have been laughable to suggest that one's real "betters" might be a poet singing a deathless song in a garret, a man with a scientific craze making experiments in a dirty old shed, and an almost threadbare scholar who was meditating an idea that would lie like a shaft of light over all the future of humanity.

It is a memorable fact that the man who wrote the *Age of Reason* wrote the *Rights of Man*. The altar and the throne, the clergy and the upper classes, recognised in Thomas Paine their common, implacable, and most dangerous enemy. For his political masterpiece he was nearly hung; for his sceptical masterpiece he was paid with a hundred years of the vilest calumny.

The reason Mr. Henderson did give for his amazing statement was peculiar. "He would ask his friend," he said, "to ponder over this fact, that amongst the leaders the democracy had sent to Parliament to obtain the changes they desired, they had not sent a single man who believed in the thought which he had just applauded." This assertion was naturally applauded by the Christian Brotherhood people. They delight to think that only Christians are sent to parliament, and men of all other persuasions (except the Jews, you know, except the Jews) are excluded. Such is Christian brotherhood at Arbroath. There it is merely bigotry. Down at Liverpool, with Catholics and Protestants

loving one another, it is a still worse brotherhood—the brotherhood of Cain and Abel.

Mr. Henderson seems to think that the democracy is the Labor Party, and the Labor Party is the democracy. But this is insular nonsense. Democracy, even in the House of Commons, is not confined to the forty votes wielded by Mr. George Barnes. There are friends of liberty and progress in the Liberal ranks. And some of them are Freethinkers; and if Mr. Henderson says he doesn't know it, he is either prodigiously ignorant or shockingly worse. Confining himself, however, to the Labor Party in parliament, Mr. Henderson denied that any of them were Freethinkers. Or rather he put it in a more artful way. He said that they all accepted "principles which were consistent with, and not opposed to, the teaching of the principles of Jesus Christ." (More applause.) But this is an evasion and a subterfuge. It leaves the speaker a loophole of escape through the old puzzle of *what are the principles of Jesus Christ?* We therefore invite Mr. Henderson to deny, if he can, that there is any member of the Labor Party who is not a Christian, without defining the word "Christian" in a way that has never been accepted by any Christian Church in the world.

Even if what Mr. Henderson alleges were true it would be a very paltry boast. Christianity is dying, but Christians are still more numerous than Freethinkers in Great Britain. Few avowed, and fewer aggressive, Atheists could expect to be chosen as parliamentary candidates. Christians are so bigoted that they *will* take their religion into politics. Moreover, the Labor Party, in spite of its occasional indiscreet vaunts, depends a good deal upon Liberal support in several constituencies, and the Liberal Party is mainly controlled by Nonconformists. This is quite enough to account for the religious color (natural or artificial) of the Labor members. They are all Christians (of a sort) because open Freethinkers cannot get through the straight gate to the narrow way.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Pecksniffian Morality.

INCIDENTALLY the Royal Commission on Divorce Reform has helped to illustrate the restricted sense in which even educated people use the word "morality." If we take the sense of this word as used by the best pre-Christian moralists, we find that it implied an all-round degree of goodness—a meaning that seems strangely absent from the modern mind. When the best Pagan writers spoke of a moral man, they meant one whose conduct in all the relations of life exhibited a fair measure of attainable excellence. With non-Christian writers, such as Spencer, this is the meaning it still bears; but with those who have been trained in a Christian environment, or whose minds are still influenced by Christian beliefs, morality has become substantially restricted to sexual morality; and in such a manner that if A or B is spoken of as a moral or immoral person, ninety-nine out of every hundred of one's hearers will understand that the person referred to either comes up to or fails to reach the accepted standard of sexual rectitude.

One illustration of this may be found in a question addressed to Sir George Lewis. He was asked to suppose a case in which a man had been guilty of fraud, or an act arising out of violence of temper, and not involving any great moral turpitude, would he consider this a fair ground for divorce? I am not now concerned with the answer, although one would imagine that violence of temper, carried to a degree that embittered the relations between two persons, might present an arguable case for the Commission, and also that adultery is often quite as much due to overmastering passion as is the infliction of personal injury. What I am concerned with is the temper of mind disclosed in this and other questions—namely, that morality is only seriously concerned in questions of sexual irregularity. Other matters—fraud, lying, deceit, both in public and private life, the pursuance

of ends without the slightest regard to the welfare or interests of one's fellows—would, presumably, be counted as not evincing "any great moral turpitude." In public life men who have offended the established sexual code are hunted down with a pertinacity that probably owes some measure of its strength to the salacious minds of their pursuers. But the hypocrite or the liar, the man who plays fast and loose with great national issues, may be forgiven. He escapes the brand of immorality. The value of Parnell's services to both England and Ireland could not atone for his offence in breaking a commandment that is actually as often broken as is any other in the decalogue.

I do not know if it can be argued that sexual offences involve deeper or wider issues than do other offences. But if it is so argued, then it seems to me open to grave doubts. I put on one side, of course, those extreme cases that are really cases of disease; but, taking the normal case of sexual misconduct, its effects are probably not of a wider or deeper character than are many other offences. Dishonesty in trade, the deliberate misleading of the public on political and social issues, the flotation of fraudulent companies, the compulsory herding of people under insanitary conditions, and with less than the wherewithal to secure the necessary food, seem to me to involve moral issues of the very gravest kind. And if it be argued that sexual offences concern the home, while the others do not, then again I demur. A man does not instruct his children in sexual vice any more than he gives them lessons in dishonesty in public or business life; while of the two classes of offences there is little room for doubt as to which is the more likely to be copied in the home.

It is, perhaps, although it ought not to be, necessary to say that I am neither championing nor minimising the gravity of sexual wrong, only protesting against one's moral consciousness being obsessed with this particular offence, and so losing sight of other aspects of conduct. For this over-emphasis of one particular aspect of morality is injurious in a double way. It does not make people better; on the contrary, by keeping it constantly before the mind it probably makes them worse. Dishonesty may be suggested by a well-meant, but ill-timed, lesson in honesty, just as a notice of "Wet Paint" often invites the touch of a finger. All teaching ought to consider the possibility—nay, the probability—of rousing opposite suggestions. Descriptions of vice in the streets by preachers *may* do something to urge people to work for its suppression; it certainly sends many more to look for it or to look at it. The row about living pictures in the music halls, or nude statuary in the Strand, did not make either the music-halls morally better or abolish the statuary. But it prevented most people looking at the one as a labor of art, and set many others looking for the impurity suggested by their moral instructors.

And, meanwhile, it does detract from the imperative nature of the other virtues. No less a person than Mr. Augustine Birrell says, in *Obiter Dicta* of a type he must often have met in Nonconformist circles,—

"Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned, and, remaining sober, you will escape the curse of men's pity, and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called 'social noise,' you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have labored and saved; talk not of the love of friends, or of help given to the needy; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of women. For all will avail you nothing. You get drunk—and the heartless and the selfish and the low claim the privilege of pitying you, and receiving your name with an odious smile."

Vary the terms a little, and you have in the above passage a fair description of many who, while serving as centres of moral and mental corruption, yet escape the stigma of immorality because they are uncon-

victed of one particular offence. And not only steer clear of external condemnation, but escape also, what is more powerful and more important, self-accusation. Like Mr. Birrell's character, with whom an occasional fit of drunkenness might have acted as a redeeming and humanising vice, he will console himself, for all his chicanery and dishonesty and callousness, with the reflection that he is not such as those who are daily pilloried in the Divorce Courts. He may have blighted a woman's life quite as effectively by other means, but society will judge but lightly so long as he has steered clear of this one offence.

The truth is that our emphasis on sexual morality, and the practical restriction of morality to this one thing, is not an expression of a love of rectitude, it is the outcome of an asceticism that was once the distinguishing feature of Christian teaching, and which Christian teaching has never yet outgrown. It is the expression of a Christian morality, and this is always and eminently lop-sided in its expressions and its judgments. Whatever the fashionable religious virtue or vice may be, in its denunciations or its praise religion always errs by over emphasis. This may be a legacy from a time when any amount of personal vice might be compensated by proper orthodoxy of belief, but the fact is beyond denial. At present the emphasis is laid on drunkenness, although sobriety is steadily on the increase. But just as the clergy once traced all moral offences to unbelief, so a number of them are now tracing them to drunkenness; and one is given to believe that if we were only a sober people everything—including belief in Christianity—would be well. Really, I do not know any offence that a man may commit under the influence of the drink that he may not—and frequently does—commit in a state of complete sobriety.

Meanwhile, we may note that very large tracts of morality have always been neglected by Christian teaching. In its irrational asceticism, which it translated into a desire for sexual purity—an entirely different thing and resting upon a quite different basis—it has failed to ask itself what are the essential conditions of a healthy morality. Ignoring the important truth that the imperative nature of morality comes not from teaching, but from life, it laid stress upon the former while neglecting the latter. In this way it has given a preaching of peace with a constant encouragement to war; a denunciation of wealth with the development of as useless a wealthy class as the world has seen, and a worship of money greater than ever before known, a preaching of purity with the growth of a radically impure imagination. And with a fatuity that almost defies comprehension, nineteen centuries of failure still finds it claiming credit for its supreme moral efficacy.

Equally fatal to real moral development has been Christianity's influence on the intellectual life. Its method of controversy made virtues of the suppression of truth and the concoction of falsehood. Its enforced conformity robbed the mind of its native strength. People were brought up without any clearly conceived notions of a standard of honesty or dishonesty, because any such criterion would have been fatal to Christian claims. An emasculated intellect was as essential to the guardians of the faith as was physical emasculation to the guardians of an Eastern harem. All over the country to-day are men and women who lack the moral courage and the intellectual strength to break away from a faith that they see has no basis in truth and no justification in utility. And the creation of such a mental type cannot be without its evil influence on both our moral theory and our moral practice. It creates of necessity minds that are either stupidly dogmatic or given to unworthy compromises. We do not face real moral issues because there is lacking clarity of mind to perceive them, and the courage to deal with them, even if they were perceived. All we can do is to raise fervent cries against a special evil, and as often as not increase its prevalence by our ill-directed efforts at improvement.

C. COHEN.

## "The Awful Gulf of Atheism."

IN the year 1862 the late Rev. James McCosh, LL.D., published a sort of reply to the famous *Essays and Reviews*, under the title of *The Supernatural in Relation to the Natural*. As a defence of the orthodox Christian faith the book was a total failure, and was very soon out of print, while *Essays and Reviews* went through nine editions within a year of its publication. But though Dr. McCosh did not achieve a brilliant success as a demolisher of heresy, he possessed a wonderfully clear and accurate idea of the influence which *Essays and Reviews* exerted upon the public mind, especially upon thoughtful young readers. Speaking of the Oxford Movement, he says:—

"It was a most perilous course which was followed in Oxford an age ago, when men of erudition and friendly to religion labored to show that the Evidences of Religion, Natural and Revealed, could not stand the tests of logical evidence. Two very opposite and yet not inconsistent results followed. Those who had deep natural faith, feeling that they must have something to lean on, were induced to leap into the arms of a pretended infallible Church rather than be left in the dreary desert of unbelief, or be driven out into the awful gulf of Atheism. As falling among other materials, the sparks kindled a very different conflagration. Not a few, unable to accept the inconsistencies and follies of the Romish Church, were left out on the wide waste to which they had been conducted by those who should have led them in a far different route, and have ever since been restless—and conceited withal."

"The dreary desert of unbelief" and "the awful gulf of Atheism" are highly characteristic expressions, and savor so strongly of the spirit of Christ; but it is undeniable that the opinions advocated in *Essays and Reviews* logically lead to Atheism, and that deliverance from them is possible only by a servile subjection to Rome.

It must be borne in mind that the influence of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy was extremely potent during the first half of last century. As is well known, Sir William divided existence into two parts—the conditioned and the absolute—and taught that only the conditioned can be an object of knowledge. Indeed, he is best remembered by his theory of the relativity of knowledge, which gave rise, on the one hand, to the evolutionary philosophy of Herbert Spencer, and, on the other, to a school of theology whose only appeal is to faith. Again and again Hamilton declares that we cannot prove the existence of God, and that "the argument for it, got by human intelligence, is inconclusive." And yet, curiously enough, he was a Theist, a kind of Agnostic Theist, who had absolutely no knowledge, but simply believed. His disciple, Mansel, went so far as to affirm that God is not even an object of thought, not in the least degree conceivable; and yet he was an orthodox divine, and a dignitary highly revered in the Church of England. He took the Bible on trust, and sentenced his intellect to eternal silence. In other words, on the intellectual side of their nature Hamilton and he were Atheists, while on the emotional side they embraced Theism.

We often read of people who are said to have gone through Nature to God, but the truth generally is that they have gone through God to Nature. The majority of children are trained from their earliest years to see Nature in the light of the Deity. In their minds the Universe is a wonderful toy, which the Almighty made for his own amusement. But those who study Nature in the light of its own history fail to discover any signs of an indwelling Being of infinite intelligence and love. This failure has driven many of them into "the awful gulf of Atheism," while others, to escape that dreadful catastrophe, have fled for refuge to the chair of St. Peter, saying to the occupier, "We have slain our reason, and come here to bury it for ever." Now, which is worse, "the awful gulf of Atheism" or the blind faith of Catholicism? The cost of going to Rome to Newman was, that he had to wear a pair

of colored spectacles for the remainder of his life. That is to say, in order to retain his faith he had to immolate his intellect, and renounce the pure and independent study of Nature, because he had learnt that intellectual pursuits were bound to land him in Atheism. But why, in the name of all the wonders, should any honest man *fear* Atheism? The divines assure us that Nature is God's work; and yet, when even a deeply religious man like Newman looks at her facts with as little prejudice as possible, what he beholds, staring him in the face, is "the awful gulf of Atheism." But why should Atheism be described as an "awful gulf"? Either Nature is unworthy of God, or God unworthy of Nature; but, in either case, what is the use of him? Sir William Hamilton, Dean Mansel, and Herbert Spencer aver that he is unknowable and inscrutable; but of what value can the unknowable ever be? His or its very existence is unknowable. Thus every theology, old or new, is a philosophical absurdity of the first water. Fancy believing in and praying to and worshipping the unknowable and inscrutable, making love to it and passionately addressing it as Father, Beloved, Redeemer, Savior, Friend. Very pertinent are the following sentences in Professor Veitch's article on Hamilton in the *Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography* :—

"For years past, I have been calling on the school of Hamilton to give some account of the nature and claims of that unexplained faith, on which they ever fall back, when their nescience leads them to conclusions which alarm them. An able and faithful disciple admits, 'The absolute or infinite is cast beyond the sphere of thought and science'; it is still, however, allowed by Hamilton to remain in some sense in consciousness, for it is grasped by faith, and faith is a conscious act. The question at once meets us—In what sense, and how far, can there be an object within consciousness, which is not properly within thought or knowledge? In other words, how far is our faith in the infinite intelligent and intelligible?"

Our contention is that faith in an infinite above and beyond Nature is neither intelligent nor intelligible, and, therefore, that Atheism is the only logical, intelligent, and intelligible doctrine. Mansel used to say that "creation is to human thought inconceivable"; and it may be added that to believe in the inconceivable is an inconceivably foolish act. Now Science comes to our rescue with the assurance that there is in Nature nothing to indicate that an act of creation ever took place, and if there never was a creation there was no need of a creator.

Belief in the supernatural is built on a foundation of absolute ignorance. It is an assumption utterly incapable of verification. One eminent divine asserts that, "in every age of the Church of God, sufficient evidence has been furnished to the candid mind of the operation of a supernatural power." The only "candid" mind, however, is the "believing" mind. The same divine has the "candor" to admit that "the very existence of God is not a truth of so intuitive and demonstrative a character as to make it impossible for the fool to say in his heart that there is no God." Proof has been furnished, according to this reverend gentlemen, but not of such a character as to preclude the possibility of doubt. "In regard to the Bible revelation," he adds, "God has given sufficient proof to convince every truth-seeking mind, but not enough to prevent cavilling." Wherever Atheism is to be found, therefore, it evidences the entire absence of truth-loving minds. It was most unkind of the Deity to be so sparing of his proofs. While at it he ought to have made the supply sufficient to preclude the possibility of doubt and to prevent all cavilling. The stinginess is explained on the supposition that there is "a sort of moral probation in the way in which the evidence is presented." We maintain, on the contrary, not only that the evidence is not sufficient, but that there is no evidence at all, not even the tiniest scrap. Atheists have no serious objection to the flattering designation of fools, applied to them by believers; and were they rude enough they would return the compliment by declaring that they are the fools who

believe without and against evidence. In their estimation this is the supreme folly.

The chief emphasis of the Gospel Jesus is on faith, an emphasis which the Church has zealously repeated ever since; but faith is only another name for fancy or imagination. Indeed, a great preacher used to define faith as sanctified imagination. Thus the exhortation to have faith in God is equivalent to saying: "Imagine that there is a God; fancy that he exists and is clothed with your own attributes unnaturally magnified; paint your own pictures of him as you feel he ought to be; then consort with him and regard him as your infinite Lover; meditate upon him, and let your meditation deepen into contemplation, and thus you shall find that communion with him is the sweetest thing in life." The communion may be real enough and exceedingly joyous; but at best it is fellowship with an imaginary person, that is, self-communion. Those who believe that there is an objective Divine Lover who listens to and delights in their terms of endearment are the victims of illusion. In reality, they are as great Atheists as those who label themselves such. They are as truly without God as if they avowed their unbelief in him.

Someone may ask, "What substitute do you provide for faith in God?" The answer is, faith in Nature, faith in humanity and the possibilities of human progress; and this faith should be based upon the knowledge won through experience and observation. If we believe in one another, we shall learn to love one another; and love, when full-grown, flings mountains of difficulty into the depths of the sea, finds the right solution for every vexing problem, and gathers all together into the magic ring of a common brotherhood. Thus we would offer Humanitarianism as a suitable and profitable substitute for all forms of Theism, Christian or Heathen, a Humanitarianism which two millenniums of Christianity has failed to produce.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Yeast of Progress.

It is a common error amongst those whose knowledge of the Freethought movement is gleaned exclusively from orthodox sources to suppose that the designation, "Freethinker," indicates merely one who rejects the Christian religion and all that appertains to it. Upon this misconception is based the entirely erroneous conclusion that a Freethinker is a mere negationist without any constructive philosophy of life or morals.

That such a view should be commonly accepted amongst Christians is not surprising. They argue from deduction. To say that a man is a Christian gives one not the slightest hint as to his mental capacity. It is rare indeed to meet a Christian who is able to support his adherence to his creed by any real display of intelligent comprehension and argument. He is usually one who inherits from his parents the religious and sectarian prejudices which surrounded his childhood. His mental state reflects that of his early environment, which either intellectual servitude or moral timidity have left undisturbed. To assert that such an one possesses a constructive philosophy of life is the veriest inanity.

In the case of the Freethinker the position is far otherwise. His Freethought is not simply a creed to which he gives adherence; it is a symptom and a symbol of his intellectual life. It indicates at least his accessibility to ideas. The test which he applies to religion he applies equally to all other questions of life. Other things being equal, the opinion of a Freethinker on social, political, literary, and kindred matters will be far more reliable and freer from bias than that of a Christian. The former approaches every question not without preconceptions, but without prejudice. To every problem that presents itself he has but one criterion,—the irresistible logic of facts. His belief cannot be commanded by the authority of great books or great names unless they satisfy the test of his reason. The Christian "Thus

saith the Lord " only succeeds in provoking his risibility.

A man thus mentally equipped has a far greater opportunity of leading a sane, healthy, and happy life than one whose judgment is warped by religious prejudice and superstitious fears.

To the Freethinker, life possesses an added interest. Literature has for him an exhilarating charm—the charm of illimitable fields of knowledge and enchanting vistas of beauty awaiting the explorer. To the Christian who believes in the sufficiency of faith, knowledge has no such alluring attraction. Intimate contact through their works with the great minds of all ages is the most elevating, humanising, and sweetening influence to which the mind of man can be subject. These refined delights can be appreciated in a far fuller measure by one who possesses that catholicity of sympathies, expanse of interests, and comprehensiveness of intellect which the emancipation of the mind from the gyves of narrow creeds and sects inevitably generates.

Thus it is that most movements of intellectual and social advance have originated in the minds of men who were out of sympathy with the orthodox religion of their age. It would be easy to support this assertion with a wealth of historical evidence. It was true in past ages of Galileo, Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Paine, and a hundred others in the hagiology of Progress. It is true to-day of Tolstoy in Russia, of Anatole France and the advanced politicians of France, of the leaders of the social aspirations in Europe, of Professor Haeckel and the scientists of Germany, and of the leading scientists, writers, and social reformers in England and America.

These things are in accord with the immutable laws of life and thought. Orthodoxy is stagnation; heterodoxy is the symptom of life and progress.

To say that all communities are orthodox is to utter a truism, since the opinions or prejudices of the majority constitute orthodoxy. The natural sequence of this is that the intellectually indolent will gravitate along the line of least resistance, and constitute a large factor of orthodoxy without their adherence having any particular significance. It is amongst the heterodox that intellectual vitality is displayed. They have thought themselves out of the commonly accepted beliefs, and have entered into conflict with popular errors. It is from these that the intellectual life of a nation receives its stimulating impulse.

Freethought is the yeast of Progress. No great man was ever orthodox, or he could never lead a nation higher on the upward path of civilisation. The greatness of a poet, an artist, a philosopher, or a scientist, and the indebtedness of the world to him, is precisely in proportion to his elevation beyond orthodox ideas.

It is not, of course, contended that this revolt of the world's great men will always be directed entirely, or in some few cases even partially, against religious ideas. Heterodoxy displays itself in every sphere of life. It is the revaluation of ideas, the reconstruction of moral, social, and intellectual concepts, rendering them consentaneous with the highest and widest knowledge of an age. From the effects of such a process religion cannot possibly escape. The constant readjustment and synthesis of knowledge perpetually infringe upon the bourne of supernaturalism. The ever-rolling restlessness of the ocean of science is continually wearing away the foreshore of superstition.

Moreover, it is not merely an intellectual movement. It has an ethical inspiration, an impulse of heart and brain. It is natural love and thought beating against the repulsive barriers of theological horrors, of gibbeted gods, blood salvation, mental subjection, and threats of damnation. It is a movement entirely healthy and humanising. It destroys nothing that is real or inherent in human existence. Truth can never harm the heart of humanity.

When religion is deracinated from the human mind the drama of life is not lessened one whit. Life has still its desires to express, its dreams to sing, its sad-

ness to be wept, and its battles to be fought. Nothing that is real or good has been taken away. The mind has only been liberated for a keener and more joyous contest with the vicissitudes of human existence. The belief and love which were wasted upon an empty sky, and diffused amidst the space of a deaf heaven, become centred upon humanity and earth; and as a distinguished Agnostic and novelist of France, the late Edouard Rod, once said, "Life has a meaning for those alone who believe in, and love, humanity."

LIONEL VALDAR.

## Free Thoughts.

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

THE kingdom of Edward VII., or the kingdom of Great Britain, we can comprehend, but the kingdom of God lies beyond our knowledge. Just where God rules we cannot say. How to reach the divine kingdom we do not know. If the kingdom of God is "within you," we want to know which "you" is referred to. Is it within "you" criminal, "you" miser, "you" tyrant, "you" villain, "you" dunce? Or is it only within "you" lover of your race? Does God rule most where man lives best? If so, man's kingdom is just as good as God's.

It is light that makes revelations to man. The man who sees most stands in, or lives in, the greatest light. Knowledge is light. To know is to see. When the mind is in ignorance, it is in darkness. To educate man is to open his eyes; it is to make him able to see more. The school-house is a lighthouse. Every person on earth is heir to the sunlight. So every person should be heir to the light of knowledge. Man's worst enemies are those who keep him in darkness.

The Bible was declared the Word of God by the consensus of the incompetent.

What is the use to try to prove the "second coming of Christ" when his first coming cannot be proved?

Is the Holy Ghost the ghost of a dead god?

The lawyer wants men bad, the doctor wants them sick, and the priest wants them fools.

Give God nothing until man has had all he needs.

Miracles are the disgrace of a religion.

It takes more than one person to save the world. Jesus could not save a Mohammedan, and Mohammed could not save a Christian. Everyone who helps a fellow-being helps to save mankind.

We should give our best thoughts to this world rather than to another.

It is better to be decent than to be devout.

We are told that the Holy Ghost is the ghost of the Father and of the Son alike, as though two persons would cast one shadow.

If the writers of anonymous letters are held in contempt, what shall we think of the writers of anonymous gospels? And if the contents of anonymous letters should be rejected as unworthy of confidence, how shall the contents of anonymous gospels be received? The four gospels of the New Testament are the work of anonymous authors.

Save man from the priest here and you will not have to save him from hell hereafter.

The Lord God was no better than he should be, if David was a man after God's own heart.

It is more essential to get rid of a lot of old religions than it is to get a new one.

We are pleased to see that many persons are waking up to the fact that all the kingdoms and monarchies of Christendom rest upon the Bible for their authority to rule and oppress the people, and that if the results of modern scientific discoveries held sway, as they should, every throne in Europe would crumble to pieces. It is true that nearly every great tyranny and wrong in the world is a Bible product.

—Truthseeker (New York).

## JUSTIFICATION.

The old darky had driven his fare to the hotel, and was now demanding a dollar for his service.

"What?" protested the passenger, "a dollar for that distance? Why, it isn't half a mile as the crow flies."

"Dat's true, boss," returned Sambo, with an appealing smile, "but ye see sah, dat old crow he ain't got free wives an' ten chilluns to suppoht, not to mention de keep foh de boss."

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Bottomley, acting on the lines we suggested, asked the Prime Minister, on Thursday, March 3, whether "in view of the fact that the membership of the House now included seven ministers of religion, he would consider the desirability of inviting one or other of those honorable and reverend gentlemen to officiate at prayers, and thus save the salary of the present chaplain." Mr. Asquith's reply was extremely cold-blooded,—not to say irreverent. "I was not aware," he said, "of the fact which my honorable friend brings to my notice, and I am disposed to doubt whether his suggestion would turn out in practice to be a well-considered form of economy." Whereat the good Christian members of the House of Commons burst into "laughter." It was evidently considered a good joke all round, in spite of the feelings of the seven ministers and the Deity. Mr. Asquith himself is a professed Christian, and he appears to be pretty regular in attending "divine service"; but the tone of his answer to Mr. Bottomley's question seems worthy of the Cato who said that he did not know how two augurs could look each other in the face without laughing. Can it be possible that our Prime Minister is a statesman of the class referred to in Gibbon's epigram, that the religions of antiquity were considered by the multitude as all equally true, by the philosopher as all equally false, and by the statesman as all equally useful?

Rev. A. J. Waldron was a candidate for County Council honors at Dulwich, and he was severely beaten. He actually scored 1,148 less than the candidate in the same interest three years ago. Nor is that all. Within the immediate sphere of his interest, namely Brixton, of which he is Vicar, and Clapham, a crushing defeat has been inflicted on the side with which Mr. Waldron has identified himself. This makes his position a very awkward one. God evidently disapproves either of Mr. Waldron or of the Progressive cause. If it is the latter, the reverend gentleman should let the Progressives find another candidate. If it is the former, the Progressives should find another candidate whether the reverend gentleman wishes it or not.

Dr. Clifford tells the magistrates again that he wants to go to prison. Most people think he shows a wonderful alacrity in keeping out of it. We believe he will do so to the end.

We mentioned last week the case of the Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, who wanted to see the Church, or rather the Churches, controlling the theatres and the music-halls. This idea has since been dealt with by the *British Congregationalist*. After referring to the great increase of late years in the number of theatres and music-halls under the London County Council, our pious contemporary feels obliged to declare that Christians have to "confront in the drama a growing influence, the moral character of which is of vital importance to the Churches." "The real question" is said to be "whether the Church should continue to control the theatre through its public, or try to moralise the public by controlling the drama and the theatre." The cool impudence of which is quite delightful. Our pious contemporary reminds us of the old discussion about the best way to skin a bear. It was overlooked that the first thing to do was to catch the bear. The Church—which, we repeat, must mean the Churches—has not yet got hold of what it proposes to moralise. Even if it had, the moralising would be a very awkward task for those who teach from an inspired book, which contains a thousand times more brutality and filth than was ever allowed on the stage.

Rev. Montague Fowler, of All Hallows Church, London Wall, E.C., has been defending the theatre against bigoted opposition. Really it does not matter to the theatre now whether the Churches praise or denounce it—though it may matter to the Churches. Nor do we gather that Mr. Fowler's views on the subject are of much intrinsic importance. He appears to have dwelt on "the lessons" conveyed by the *Passing of the Third Floor Back* and the *Sign of the Cross*—which, to put it mildly, are not the greatest artistic successes of the modern English drama.

Rev. J. W. Dobbs told a Wolverhampton audience the other day, "It was the bounden duty of parents to compel their children to attend church." From the Christian point of view this may be so; from any other it is the duty of parents to use as little compulsion as possible, and, above all, to refrain altogether from compulsion in forcing upon children ideas that have at most a speculative value, and which

many learn only to reject. The inwardness of the reverend gentleman's advice was disclosed by the further statement that if the children were compelled to come to church, they would continue to attend as adults. We do not believe it; but at all events to make people swallow Christianity before they are old enough to reason about it is the only method of getting any sane and educated adult to continue supporting it.

The *Christian World* reports that the notorious Dr. Torrey continues his work as an evangelist, but on a much smaller scale. That such a man should continue his evangelistic work on any scale is anything but complimentary to the types of character that Christianity produces.

Clergymen are always discovering things. The Rev. C. Ensor Walters has discovered that the Atheism of Charles Bradlaugh is quite dead. Moreover, Atheism never can succeed because it "fails to satisfy the intellect, the heart, and the soul." As regards the first statement, we expect the wish is father to the thought. There are, we should say, more Atheists now than ever before in the history of this country. And in France, we would remind Mr. Walters, over five millions wrote themselves down Atheist in the last census returns. We also beg to call his attention to Cole-ridge's statement that not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart sufficient to be an Atheist. As to whether Atheism satisfies or not, this, we should imagine, depends entirely upon the person in question. That it would not satisfy a Christian goes without saying. But then, being a Christian, nothing but Christianity would. Still, Atheism evidently satisfied Bradlaugh, of whom, we are pleased to note, Mr. Walters spoke in terms of respect. And we shall certainly not be opening ourselves to a charge of sectarian conceit if we say that a Christian Church, of which 25 per cent. of its members were men of the type of Bradlaugh, would be superior to any church that the world has yet seen. If Mr. Walters really wishes to know whether Atheism satisfies, the proper plan would be to inquire of Atheists. To ask and answer the question in a Christian church is to fool oneself, or one's hearers, or both.

A Stepney coroner was holding an inquest over the dead body of a Jewish infant. He noticed an abrasion on the child's forehead, and asked for the explanation. The child's mother replied that it was the mark of the cup that had been broken over its head when dying, in order to drive away evil spirits. And this is the twentieth century!

According to the *Standard's* correspondent at Odessa, "unscrupulous persons"—that is, pious scoundrels—are doing good business out of the terror they are fomenting at the approach of Halley's comet. Leaflets are issued describing it as "the sign of God's scourge and the harbinger of universal war and famine, if not of the end of the world." Large sums of money are collected for supplicatory Masses and special prayers in all the churches and monasteries for "the rescue of Holy Russia from destruction by the falling comet." The masses of the people are deeply superstitious, and the priests and monks are mostly shameless exploiters of the popular credulity. Their motto might be one of Iago's sentences about Roderigo: "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse."

Having sharply criticised Mr. Belfort Bax last week, we are glad to quote the following passage from a new article of his:—

"Two things Christianity has undoubtedly given to the world, viz., religious persecution and religious hypocrisy. A Catholic bishop had the effrontery, after the murder of Ferrer, to talk in an encyclical about the antagonism of the wicked world to 'Christ and his church.' Yes, there has been, is, and will continue so long as a vestige of organised Christianity remains an antagonism between all that is best in the world, all that is worth living and fighting for in human affairs, and the solid phalanx of opposition to knowledge backed by cruelty, toadyism to wealth, privilege, and lust of oligarchic power, for which in the main 'Christ and his church' have always stood. The men of movements are, after all, largely symbols. It may well be that the Idealist, the Socialist, and the Freethinker of the future will oppose to the memory of the self-praising Galilean of what by an arbitrary convention (as reckoning from the 27th year of Augustus, A.U.C. 753) we term the first century, that of the self-effacing Catalanian, of what, by the same reckoning, we term the twentieth century."

It may be so, but efforts have already been made to date a new era from the martyrdom of Giordano Bruno, without much success. Our own impression is that no more eras will date from the birth, life, or death of any man, however great or noble.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has been returning to the remedy he propounded—though it was not the novelty he imagined—in *Man and Superman*. Progress, he there said, was a matter of breeding. If we could breed a better race we should achieve a better state of society; and if we could not, there was no hope for us. In taking the subject up again he doesn't suggest, any more than he did before, how the idea could be carried out. All he does is to declare that it will be feasible when we live under Socialism; which is, after all, but a prophecy, and only entitled to be treated as such. Mr. Shaw, however, makes a new suggestion; not new in itself, but new for him. Future society must have lethal chambers to kill off its undesirables. But who will be the undesirables when the lethal chambers are ready? Mr. Shaw himself might be among them. He is always disturbing the public mind—and the British public, at any rate, doesn't like its mind disturbed. Moreover, he positively despises and detests orthodox Christianity. Yes, he is very likely to be in the first batch of undesirables. It would be like Dr. Guillotine being beheaded in his own machine.

Lord Halifax, who is the lay leader of the Church Union, has just been speaking in favor of the abolition of divorce. It was hard (he said) for a man or a woman to be tied to an unfaithful partner, but there were harder things in this life—though he doesn't appear to have mentioned them. The hardship was a trial that God intended them to bear. But how does Lord Halifax know that? We beg to tell his lordship that people are tired of bearing misery as "the will of God." They want a better and more certain reason for putting up with it. Man's welfare, and not God's will, is the criterion of the morality of the future.

Mr. Stephen Coleridge, the well-known anti-vivisectionist, being in New York, was asked at a meeting, "How did you become an anti-vivisectionist?" He replied, "Because I am a Christian." Nonsense, Mr. Stephen Coleridge, nonsense! There are hundreds of millions of Christians who are not anti-vivisectionists. And if you take the trouble to inquire, while you are in New York, you will find that the late Colonel Ingersoll denounced vivisection, in language more eloquent than you can command, long before you were connected with the opposition to it. And he was the chief opponent of Christianity in the United States of America. Was it Christianity, too, that made anti-vivisectionists of Voltaire, Bentham, and Schopenhauer? Why not leave your religious bigotry outside the moral movement you represent, Mr. Stephen Coleridge? Is it because Christians cannot help being boastful and self-assertive?

The Ardrossan U. F. Presbytery complains of laxity in the matter of Sunday observance amongst the visitors at Arran. Some office-bearers in city churches seldom or never enter church while on holiday. Awful! Then there is talk of extending the Sunday excursions from the wicked city of Glasgow as far as Arran. That is more awful. The Ardrossan U. F. P. prays God that it may never take place. Presbyterian ministers do hate to see people enjoying themselves—especially on the blessed Sabbath.

We have often remarked on the slight acquaintance manifested by religious preachers of the Freethought they so readily condemn. This may be partly due to the great difference between the mental worlds of the convinced Freethinker and the sincere Christian. The differences are so great that it may well be difficult for the Christian to appreciate the mental position of his opponent. This difficulty does not obtain with Freethinkers for the reason that most of them have been where Christians are. Their mental state represents one Freethinkers have outgrown. At any rate, one is inclined to ascribe to these considerations much of the nonsense uttered by Christians when dealing with unbelief. The Bishop of London, for instance, says that "if Mr. Bradlaugh had had someone to sympathise with him as a young man, he might never have become the Secularist and Atheist that he was." One's only excuse for noticing the Bishop of London is that he represents a type, and in saying this he is voicing the common statement that it is the conduct of Christians that make people Freethinkers. We can assure everybody concerned that it is nothing of the kind. Freethinkers use, and rightly use, the conduct of Christians as illustrations of their arguments; but if every Christian, from the first century onward, had been a paragon of consistency and a monument of morality it would not make the least difference to the Freethinker's attitude in relation to the truth of Christianity. He rejects Christianity because it is false as a matter of theory, and being untrue to facts is bound to express itself injuriously in practice. So far, the conduct of Christians is useful to illustrate and enforce his position. But his strongest arguments are

not exemplified in the case of inconsistent and immoral Christians. On the contrary, it is in the distorting effect of Christian belief on sensitive and refined natures that one may most clearly trace its influence. Brutal and debased characters have neither been controlled nor purified by the belief in eternal damnation, but hundreds of more worthy individuals have lived lives of misery because they believed in it. And this is but a single illustration out of many that might be given.

Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi of the Free Synagogue of New York, where there are about a million Jews, admits to a *Daily News* interviewer that "there is a large section of the younger generation which has completely divorced itself from religion" and "takes it for granted that Judaism is dead." The younger generation. This is very significant.

The Rev. Carey Bonner says that in three years there has been a decrease of 157,000 members in Nonconformist Sunday-schools. We are glad to hear of it. It shows that the Churches are losing their hold on the young; and when they do this completely their days are numbered. In a civilised country Christianity is a religion with which the uncorrupted adult intelligence will have little or nothing to do.

We are pleased to note that the Royal Commission on Divorce is pursuing its labors, and we hope that some much-needed reform of our divorce laws will result therefrom. Meanwhile here is one point in the evidence worthy of very serious attention. One of the witnesses, Sir George Lewis, was asked his opinion as to whether lunacy should afford a ground for divorce. The reply was in the affirmative, but with the curious restriction that divorce should only be granted after two years' suffering, and satisfactory certificates that the case was incurable. Now, if the only parties concerned in marriage were the man and the woman, the suggestion might pass. But they are not; there is the much more important question of the children, which is really the question of the race, and this opens up more important issues. To commence with, the possibility of curing insanity is a matter of the gravest doubt. What is meant by a cure in such cases is that the unfortunate subject is restored for a time to a normal frame of mind. But the insane taint remains, liable to express itself at any time, and, above all, with the fatal probability of handing on the weakness to the next generation. In one year no less than seven thousand patients were discharged from lunatic asylums as "recovered." But there is, we imagine, no qualified judge who would say that "recovered" here means release from the probability of handing on to children the defect that placed the parent within the walls of an asylum for the insane. One case of a "recovered" patient is cited by Dr. Rentoul in his book on *Race Culture; or Race Suicide*. In this instance a woman was discharged over and over again, and meanwhile gave birth to no less than nine children. Her recovery simply meant her return to a normal state just long enough to present society with a fresh vehicle for the perpetuation of her own weakness.

There are, in the United Kingdom, between 40,000 and 50,000 married and widowed lunatics. How many children these are the parents of no one knows, since the authorities, apparently, do not consider the question of sufficient importance to collect the facts. We should, however, be within the limits in putting the figure at 100,000. And it does not require profound or prolonged thinking to form some idea of the effect of this perpetuation of the insane type on the race. There is a great deal said of the increase of insanity, although it is usually accompanied with the conclusion that the responsibility for this lies with the increased pressure of modern life. Well, there is simply no evidence whatever to support such a conclusion. Such a conclusion is the product of armchair philosophy, not of a careful collation of all the facts. The truth rather seems to be that modern conditions and modern knowledge have, on the one hand, eliminated the conditions that made for the actual destruction of lunatics, and, on the other, has enabled us to "cure" cases that, once upon a time, would have remained in perpetual confinement. In this way our knowledge, instead of being our best friend, has acted as our greatest enemy. There is no reason why it should continue to be so. On the contrary, the knowledge and sympathy that has enabled us to save the insane from the brutal treatment of earlier generations ought to enable us to save the present and the future from the gravest burden the race can bear.

Sixty per cent. of the children in some parts of Belgium cannot write or read, but the Clerical Government will not take steps to alter such a deplorable state of things. It pro-

fesses to be opposed to compulsory education as an infringement of personal rights. Its real reason, of course, is the Clerical desire to keep the people in ignorance.

Bishop O'Dwyer protests against the closer growing alliance between Irish Roman Catholics and English political parties. Many English politicians, he says, are Atheists or Socialists, and intimate relations are bound to have a bad influence. Of course the Bishop is thinking of the influence of this association on Roman Catholic beliefs. Not that we believe his protest will have much effect. In other walks of life friendly associations with one's fellows is looked upon as a sign of civilisation and the condition of development. In religion we cling to the primitive method of isolation and distrust.

Beachampton Church congregation had not faith enough to escape a fright when noises were heard like the report of a pistol during divine service. It was only the tiled floor near the font cracking. But the worshipers, on the rector's suggestion, left the sacred edifice. They preferred to trust in the Lord outside. And they require professional assurance before they venture inside again.

£8,120 is not a big clerical fortune, and we don't want to make too much of it. This sum was left by the Right Rev. Richard Frederick Lefevre Blunt, of the Vicarage, Hessele, Yorks. We fear it was not small enough to let him through the needle's eye.

A young Frenchman committed suicide, by means of charcoal fumes, at his lodgings in Church-street, Soho. He left an extraordinary letter in French, of which the following is a translation:—

"Saturday, 26 Feb.—In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In case death does his work, as I hope, there is no necessity to make any researches.

I must be buried at once in London, with the Mass, if that is possible.

I leave the address of my parents, who are in France. I desire, in order not to cause them too much distress, that they are not told that I voluntarily killed myself. Let them be told that some accident has happened to me.

I have nothing to reproach myself. I have carried out my religious duties to the last moment, and therefore I go to the right hand of God in Heaven, and whoever will carry out my wishes on earth will be recompensed by me in Heaven by my prayers that I will make to God for them. Amen."

Evidently a good Catholic! Yet we thought it was only Athoists who commit suicide. At least, that is what Talmage, Torrey, and such friends of God, always say.

The *Catholic Times* has, religiously speaking, the principles of a brigand or a pirate. It is now chortling loudly over the rumor that a prosecution is to be started against the anti-clerical *Asino* of Rome, which it calls a "diabolical publication," that even caricatures the sacred person of the poor Prisoner of the Vatican. Our Catholic contemporary also rejoices over the failure, up to the present, of attempts "at legislation limiting the rights of the Church" in Spain; the said "rights" comprising the control of public education and the privilege of assassinating intellectual opponents like Francisco Ferrer.

Hatred has been called one of the sinews of the soul. It is as natural as love, and is often, indeed, but the obverse of that sentiment. We are glad, at any rate, to note one instance of it. General Haynan, who was so brutal in repressing the Hungarian revolution in 1849, even going to the length of publicly whipping ladies, so that he earned the nickname of "the woman-flogger," came to England on a visit in 1850, and went to inspect Barclay, Perkins and Co.'s brewery. It was whispered who he was, and the draymen drove him out of the place and "assaulted" him in the street. Haynan's name stank in England, and especially in London, which was a more virile London then than it is to-day; and the draymen's deed was applauded all over the country. Well, the woman-flogger went home and settled upon his estate at Szekeres. By his will his estate passed to his daughter, after whose death it was to be presented to the commune of Kisszekeres. The daughter having just died, the Communal Council has declined to accept the gift, and ordered that the estate should be left to fall out of cultivation and be called the "Bloody Meadow."

A newspaper cutting about Mr. W. T. Lee's missionary work as a Christian Evidence lecturer in the Clitheroe district contains the inspired statement that he "has debated ten or a dozen times with Mr. Foote." The arithmetic of this statement is worthy of people brought up on the science of the Bible and the mathematics of the

Trinity. Mr. Lee should really correct the exaggeration. He has had it pointed out to him before.

One of Mr. Lee's subjects at Clitheroe was "Is Life Worth Living?" It all depends on how Mr. Lee stands in the will of the late Coal-King Corry, of Cardiff.

Bishop Welldon points out that when a man has died we say "he has gone," which shows "we recognised that a vital part of the man had gone." We also speak of London as containing so many "souls," and thus testify "to the effect Jesus Christ produced on the everyday thought of Christendom." We agree; the testimony of language is really striking. For people not only say of a dead man, "he has gone"; quite as frequently they say, "it is all over with him." Or, when told of some life-destroying disaster, the spontaneous cry is, "Good God!" and there is an unconscious, even though sarcastic, emphasis on the "Good." That a sick person has no one but God to help him is universally recognised as an indication of a desperate and deplorable condition. "God only knows" is quite a common way of expressing ignorance. And do we not sharply distinguish between a lecture and a sermon? A lecture is a discourse in which we expect to hear sense, and from which we hope to learn something; while a sermon is—well, a sermon is the kind of discourse Bishop Welldon favors his hearers with.

More "Providence." The mining village of Mace, Idaho, United States, has been wiped out by an avalanche. Some three hundred people perished. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

The report is spread afresh that Evan Roberts is going to take the field again. His friends ought to know better. They should be perfectly aware of what he is suffering from. He is paying the penalty (and probably will never cease paying it) of the emotional debauch he indulged in during the Welsh revival. Even if he could take the field again he would be a wretched failure; for the Welsh revival is a matter of history now, and a regiment of Evan Robertses could not renew it. The Welsh revival, indeed, seems to recur every half century, and that will be a long time for the good young man to wait.

Lord Hugh Cecil had a long article in Tuesday's *Daily News* on his favorite topic—the Christianisation of China. We are bound to say that his mind is in a dreadful muddle in regard to the subject. He argues that the future of China will be devilish unless she accepts the religion of the West; at the same time, he says that China's greatest danger is adopting the wickedness of the West. He does not stop to consider how it is that the religion of the West has not cured the wickedness of the West, even in two thousand years. Nor does he consider why the Chinese, who are (he admits) a moral people, should change what they have now for what has been such a moral failure in Christendom. Lord Cecil makes one admission which is really important. He declares that "materialism" has captured the University of Tokio, and that it is now a race in Eastern Asia between Materialism and Christianity. His lordship, we may observe, seems uncertain which will win.

We see by an American exchange that Baron Kikuchi, President of the Imperial University of Kioto, has been in New York lately, studying American educational institutions. This distinguished Jap publicly states that the progress of Christianity in Japan is extremely slight. "I do not think," he says, "that Christianity has borne at all on the national thought of the Japanese. It played no part whatever in the political revolution resulting in the establishment of the empire. None of the Japanese moral teachings come from the West. In fact the attitude of some of the Christian converts among my people has not been acceptable to the body of the nation because they oppose our reverence for the Emperor and our worship of the spirits of our ancestors." This is really an authoritative statement. The missionaries, of course, give more glowing reports of their progress, but that is what might be expected. Who is going to cry stinking fish?

#### HIS CREED.

A man, during one of the Belfast riots, was asked by a mob what his creed was.

He did not know whether his interrogators were Catholics or Protestants; but he looked at their weapons, their bludgeons, and their firearms, surveyed all carefully, and answered:—

"Gentlemen, I am of the same opinion as that gentleman over there with the big axe."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 13, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool; at 3, "Robert Blatchford, the *Daily Mail*, and the Prince of Peace"; at 7, "The Lord and the Lords."

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

April 3, Glasgow.

### To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 20, St. James's Hall; 27, Holloway.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £172 9s. 6d. Received since:—F. S. E., 2s.; W. Hopper, £1 10s. 6d.; P. M. W., £1.

THOMAS MARSHALL.—"Probably" applied to the "exclusive salvation," meaning, of course, that Christians were mistaken in teaching the doctrine of "no salvation outside the Church"—in other words, that if there be a heaven it is probably false that Christianity is the only road to it.

W. HOPPER.—Thanks for your encouraging letter and good wishes. You say it is sad that a Freethought leader has a struggle for existence "while intellectual charlatans flourish all around." Yes, but part of our payment is our conscious superiority to the said charlatans. Self-respect is one of our rewards,—and the respect of men who, like yourself, think "the Freethought party fortunate in being led by such a splendid fighter and brilliant writer." The praise may well be above the truth, but that it is given in all sincerity proves that we have not labored and sacrificed in vain.

W. C. G. BETHELL.—Glad you have "received enlightenment through the *Freethinker*." With regard to the leaflet you send us, it would take columns to answer it, and the writer is not worth so much powder and shot. We took a lot of trouble over Price Hughes, Dr. Torrey, and such "distinguished" Christians, but we are not going to confer the same honor on paltry small-fry seeking an advertisement.

LIRRA.—Thanks for your letter. We tender you our sympathy. Perhaps you will introduce yourself and shake hands at one of our Glasgow lectures.

A. G. ROYSTON.—Glad to hear you think so highly of the *Freethinker*, and may your luck improve! Copies shall be sent as requested.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Kindly tell us if Mr. Manson replies. Thanks.

T. M. MOSLEY.—There is no ground whatever for supposing that the wine used at the marriage-feast at Cana in Galilee was unfermented. The matter is fully dealt with in our *Bible and Beer*, the new edition of which will be ready very shortly.

W. E. LEWIS.—"First name" is just as expressive as "Christian name." It is, indeed, common enough in the Latinised form of "prenomen." You do not encroach on our time by asking questions. We are always pleased to answer them.

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

F. CLOWEN.—Sending as requested.

F. W. ASHBY.—Sending as desired. Glad to know that, after taking the *Freethinker* for four years, you regard it as "the most intellectual journal obtainable." You note our "unsurpassed straightforwardness." We never could understand why people should make hypocritical faces at each other, instead of saying plainly what they mean.

J. BARNOUR says, with reference to our "Acid Drop" on religious cinematograph displays, that he saw one at the Grand Theatre, Manchester, on Christmas, 1906. Two of the pictures represented Jehovah in person; one at the burning bush, with Moses,—the other handing Moses the ten commandments. God was represented as a venerable old man. Our correspondent says "I have not seen God face to face, but I have seen his photo."

H. ALLEN.—Thanks. We are always glad to receive names and addresses of likely persons to whom we might send a free copy of this journal for six consecutive weeks. It is a good form of advertisement.

P. M. W.—Passed over to the publishing side. Thanks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (March 13) afternoon and evening, in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. District "saints" who wish to secure seats should obtain tickets, before the date of the lectures, for the shilling reserved or sixpenny back seats. These are the prices of the tickets for each separate lecture, not for both lectures inclusively. Apply to Mr. J. Hammond, 99 Belmont-road, Mr. J. Martin (secretary), 342 Edge-lane, or Mr. G. Roleffs, 49 Whitefield-road, Islington. Admission to what seats are left after ticket-holders are provided will be by silver collection at the door. During the evening lecture Mr. Foote will recite Shelley's "Song to the Men of England."

For the sake of visitors from a distance a tea will be provided at the Alexandra Hall between Mr. Foote's lectures. Tickets 8d. each.

There was a marked improvement in the audience at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "No Traveller Returns." A number of ladies were present, and a large proportion of strangers. The lecture was closely followed, keenly relished, and greatly applauded. Miss Kough took the chair with grace and efficiency.

Mr. Cohen occupies the St. James's Hall platform this evening (March 13). We hope to hear of good weather and a good meeting. It is sure to be a good lecture.

There should be a crowded attendance at the Secular Education League's demonstration, which takes place on Tuesday evening (March 15) at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand (near the Law Courts). Lord Weardale, the League's President, takes the chair at 8.15, and the list of speakers includes Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. Halley Stewart, Mr. Herbert Burrows, the Rev. Father Hogg, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Prior to the public meeting the League's annual members' meeting will be held (at 7.30) in the minor Essex Hall. We hope the Secularist members will make a point of attending.

Mr. Theakstone, of the local N.S.S. Branch, sent in a fresh application to have the *Freethinker* reinstated in the Free Libraries of Camberwell, and the matter came before the Libraries' Committee on the last Monday in February. Councillor A. B. Moss made a strong appeal for fairplay for all papers, whether political, social, or religious; and he was well supported by Councillor Hearson. The immoderate Moderates, however, resorted once more to the miserable trick of moving "the next business," which was carried, and, of course, prevented a division on the main question. Many of the Progressives are pretty nearly as bad as the Moderates. They are mostly Nonconformists, and have no comprehension of the principle of religious liberty, except as it concerns themselves against the Catholics and Anglicans. Mr. Moss says he will try again. Meanwhile he has our best thanks.

Editor Shaw, of the *Searchlight*, Waco, Texas, has our deepest sympathy. He has carried on his valuable paper for many years, not only without profit, but in face of difficulties and discouragements. He is now obliged to suspend it in consequence of serious illness, and his circular to subscribers suggests a doubt whether he will be able to resume it. We earnestly hope he will, and that he has a good deal of pleasant work and public usefulness still before him. He bears his troubles bravely, but Freethought editors are usually built that way. On the whole, we believe they are the most sorely tried persons on this planet. They ought to have a soft place in the next life, if there be one. If it should be in Hades, it ought to be a draughty seat near the door.

### MYSTERY.

To surround anything with an air of mystery is to invest it with a charm which, to the multitude, is irresistible. There has always been a large demand for "mystery," and to supply this demand is the aim of the many new doctrines in our day. Dark sayings provoke curiosity, and proceedings veiled in secrecy exert a sort of hypnotic influence upon the masses. This explains to some extent the success of secret societies and the vogue of secret doctrines. But there are no secrets. No honest man or religion has secrets. Nature does not make a secret of her secrets. The highway to truth is open unto all, and no one has a tap on any fountain of knowledge which is not equally accessible to others.—*M. M. Mangasarian.*

## Bible Stories Retold.

### THE STORY OF SAMSON AND DELILAH (JUDGES XVI.).

"To see things in their beauty  
Is to see them in their truth."

So wrote Matthew Arnold. But the statement is more euphonious than accurate. Which shows that a person may have a profound knowledge of Literature and Dogma, and an intimate acquaintance with God and the Bible, and yet be ignorant of the Delilahs of human nature. Samson saw Delilah in her beauty, but he failed utterly to see her in her truth. Delilah was as false as she was fair, but her beauty rather served to hide than to reveal the truth: it was only learned after a painful and bitter experience. It was when the Philistines had put out his eyes and he could no longer behold her beauty, that he first beheld the *true* Delilah, false and rotten at the core.

If Samson had taken his parents' advice at the first and married a daughter of their own people, how different might have been his fate. Or if, as was the case with David, it had come to pass that at eventide he had walked on the roof of the parental abode, and beheld some beautiful Bathsheba in the act of bathing, perhaps the divine form of his own countrywoman, seen to such advantage in Oriental bathing costume, might have counteracted the evil influences of Philistine attraction. But the ways of the Fates are not as our ways, and this omission on their part was the cause of most serious consequences to the ill-fated Samson. His fond parents made the grievous Puritanical mistake of continuing to treat him as a child when he grew up, believing that in those matters which more than anything else make or mar a man's happiness, ignorance is bliss. He never seems to have realised the duality of human nature until he saw a woman in Timnah; and the sudden realisation of sex shook his emotional edifice to its foundation. The disasters which followed we have already seen in our previous articles.

Samson was a victim of Predestination. His destiny had been linked, by the angel who interviewed his mother, with the Philistines, before his birth. And notwithstanding his unfortunate experiences with the daughters of this alien race, some irresistible impulse seemed to urge him ever in the same direction. "And it came to pass afterward that Samson loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." It would seem that at last Samson had found his true affinity, because it is not said of any of the other women who were the objects of Samson's desire, that he "loved" them: that distinction was reserved for Delilah alone. But Samson was evidently not the only human male that loved Delilah, as she seems to have been on very intimate terms with some of the lords of the Philistines. And when these lordly rulers heard that the redoubtable Hebrew had got entangled in the meshes of Delilah, they began to formulate plans for his capture. Samson might be able to kill a thousand with the jawbone of an ass, but they knew that a single woman is often more powerful than an army. And so they approached Delilah secretly, and promised that each of them would give her a thousand pieces of silver if she would find out the secret of his great strength, and deliver him into their hand. One of them tentatively suggested that Samson must drink a lot of Bovril or Oxo. But Delilah assured them that he drank nothing but China tea; that he had some peculiar kind of vow which compelled him to be careful of his drinks.

The deputation of Philistines had just left the house by the back way, when Samson entered by the front door. "I have been so lonely," said Delilah. "I thought you were *never* going to come." And when they were seated in the parlor and Delilah had kissed him on the beard, in the sweetest of tones she innocently remarked, "I have been wondering, Samson, wherein thy great strength lieth, and how thou mayst be bound to afflict thee." It was said so

innocently that Samson nearly fell into the trap. But his racial cuteness came to his aid. He might be an ardent lover, but he was a Hebrew, and his religious vow was sacred. Prevarication was the only way, and he prevaricated. "Of course, dear," said Samson. "Get some new fiddlestrings that have never been played upon, and bind me with these, then shall I become weak as other men." But Samson winked the other eye. Delilah was delighted. She began to think of all that she would purchase with those thousands of pieces of silver that the lords had promised her. Already, in thought, she was in Paris, her fingers itching to handle the latest creations in hats and costumes. But she must wait until Samson was safely delivered over to the enemy. When the tying process was finished the victim was scarcely visible for fiddlestrings, and Delilah was in high glee. There were liers-in-wait secreted in the house to secure him in the hour of his weakness; and when the last knot was tied, Delilah shouted (the signal agreed upon with the liers-in-wait), "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." But no sooner did Samson hear the word "Philistines" than—bang went the catgut, and he was free. It was fortunate for those Philistines that they had not left their hiding-places, because if there had been a jawbone or a toothpick lying about, or even one of Delilah's hairpins, Samson would certainly have sealed their doom. The millinery castles in the air that Delilah had built temporarily vanished with the snapping of the catgut.

"Now, Sammy," she said (she used to call him Sammy for short), "that's not fair. You might have told your little Delilah true." (As a matter of fact she stood six feet in her stocking soles. But she was using the diminutive language of Love.) "What I told you was true," said Samson, "only instead of fiddlestrings I should have been bound with blue ribbon." So Delilah tied him up with yards uncountable of blue ribbon. But no sooner had she given the signal than the blue ribbon flew into a thousand pieces, and they were fooled again. Delilah, however, was not to be beaten; she was playing for high stakes. So she kissed him again, and returned to the charge. "The truth is," said Samson, "that only *my hair* should have been bound." The moth was sailing perilously near the flame of the candle. When his massive curly locks were tied up with the blue ribbon, Samson looked not unlike a prize horse at a show. Delilah smiled at his strange appearance, and the millinery castles began to take shape again in her scheming brain. But the laugh was still on Samson's side, and once more he fooled the trusting Delilah. But she was a woman, and the game was hers with perseverance. She evidently could not work the soft side of Samson, so she must try another method. She threatened to go and make love to one of the lords of the Philistines if she were not favored with full wifely confidence; and her threats were more effective than her pleadings. She so vexed his righteous soul until at last he made a clean breast of it, and divulged his secret. He explained to her the mysteries of the Nazarite vow, and the religious connection between his superhuman strength and his bushy head of hair. Delilah requested the Philistines to attend once again, as she was sure that this time Samson had told her all his heart. She made him go to sleep with his head upon her lap, while she hypnotically ran her fingers through his wavy tresses, and while he was dreaming pleasant dreams "the barber shaved them off." At last he was undone!

At length, Samson awoke out of his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times and *shake* myself." Where he learned this canine habit of going out to "shake" himself, the sacred writer does not tell us; but it is supposed that in a former existence he had been a dog, and that after his reincarnation as a human being the habit still clung to him. But, shake himself as he might, his strength would not return. And so the Philistines laid hold of him, and put out his eyes, and brought him to Gaza. As Samson passed through the gates of the

city of Gaza he thought, with regret, of the memorable evening when he "laid hold of the city gates, and put them upon his shoulders and carried them to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron." But now he was a prisoner, outwitted by a woman, and "weak as other men." They bound him with fetters, and put him to grind corn in the prison-house. Sightless, and without strength, he was a pitiful object indeed.

So the Philistines made a great festival in honor of their god Dagon, who had thus proved himself superior to the Hebrew Jahweh by delivering Samson into their hands. It was a great gathering, about three thousand of the nobility, gentry, and clergy being assembled on the roof of the Grand Assembly Rooms. And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call for Samson out of the prison-house that he may make us sport." The honored guest of the evening, next to the great god Dagon, was the beautiful Delilah, who looked superb in a new dress that represented about half of the first thousand pieces of silver. With a victorious smile upon her deceitful lips she beheld her victim below, the sport of the Philistines.

But the eager Philistines had overlooked a little circumstance that cost them dear. Samson's curly locks had been shaven off, but the roots remained; and while he was in prison they had neglected to attend to his daily shave. Samson was the discoverer of a secret preparation named "Thatcho," and when the warder was not in sight he assiduously applied the liquid to his bald pate. And before the arrival of the feast he had forced a luxuriant growth of hair. On the day that they sent for him to the prison-house his strength had reached the ten-horsepower standard, which was his normal condition. Little did the Philistines think, as they joyously beheld Samson below, what an awful doom was awaiting their august assembly. He got the little lad who attended him to lead him to the middle pillars upon which the house rested. And, placing one arm round each of the pillars, with a mighty effort he wrenched them from their position, and hurled the three thousand spectators to the earth, amid the crashing ruins of the vast building. Samson joined the noble army of martyrs, but he had avenged himself of the Philistines.

When his brethren came to remove his dead body for interment in his native land, they found the corpse of Delilah amid the debris, lying crossways over that of Samson. The hems of her garments were sticking fast to his massive hair, cemented with coagulated blood. Thus was fulfilled the saying, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

After this eventful catastrophe the jailer of the prison found some curious writing on the walls of the cell lately occupied by Samson. Thinking it might be his last will and testament, or some fond message to his parents, he had a copy made and submitted to a Hebrew scholar for translation. He was not a little surprised to read the following transcription:—

"The time I've lost in wooing,  
In watching and pursuing  
The light that lies in woman's eyes  
Has been my eyes undoing."

The record of this remarkable Bible hero is brought to a close with the statement that "He judged Israel twenty years." But this is evidently a mistake, as Samson never appears in the narrative in any judicial capacity whatever. Indeed, from the day that he first beheld the woman in Timnah he was very rarely in his native land. In his time he certainly played many parts, but that of judge was not amongst them. Such a sombre business was not in Samson's line. He could catch foxes by the hundred and tie them tail to tail like the Kilkenny cats; he could attack lions single-handed, and come out of the fray without a scratch; he could slay a thousand with the jawbone of an ass, and carry enormous iron gates to the top of high mountains; but he could not sit long enough on the Woolsack to hear

the *pros* and *cons* of a legal case. Not while there were any Delilahs in the valley of Sorek. Of Samson and his prodigious feats it is safe to assert that history will never see his like again.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

### Pitiless Processes of Nature.

FROM the standpoint of the thoughtful Theist, one of the most puzzling phenomena of Nature lies in the ubiquitous cruelty of her methods. The indifference displayed in Nature's living laboratory concerning the happiness and well-being of its inhabitants by any assumed intelligent or humane director of the affairs of the Universe, ever remains a sad stumbling-block to those who strive to interpret the regulation of the processes of organic existence in terms of justice or beneficence. Many more than half of the living species of animals pursue a parasitic mode of existence. The highest and most sensitive organisms yet evolved are rendered miserable by the inflictions of these disgusting intruders. Nature never discriminates between the just and the unjust; she selects her victims for torment with stone-cold impartiality. A philanthropist has no pre-eminence over the fiercest carnivorous beast if attacked by the micro-organisms that engender those appalling scourges that men have agreed to consider diseases of the body, mind, or will.

In the general evolution of life, pitiless as were the means whereby the higher and nobler types ultimately triumphed, there emerged at least some compensating benefit. But what answer can the optimistic Theist make to the indisputable fact that extremely sensitive organisms are relentlessly tortured with no compensatory result whatever? What argument can be advanced in extenuation of the circumstance that the most ingeniously elaborated contrivances exist for the precise purpose of perpetuating the existence and extending the scope of parasites incapable of feeling, to the detriment and degradation of superior organisms whose normal state is one of health and happiness?

Competent observers have expressed the opinion that the backboneed animals are more frequently martyred by parasitic organisms than the lower and less sensitive orders of living things. In an able and instructive essay on "Parasitic Life" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Professor Patrick Geddes writes:—

"Fishes swarm externally with Trematodes, leeches and parasitic crustaceans, internally with cysts and intestinal worms all too numerous for enumeration. Nothing gives a more vivid idea of the extent to which parasitism has reached than the examination of a ray, or even better a common sun-fish. Amphibians are inhabited by many parasites,—the common frog having almost constantly *ascaris nigrovenosa* in its lungs, and infusorial parasites in its rectum, yielding twenty species in all. Lizards and Ophidians have all kinds of parasitic worms. The parasites of birds are of extraordinary number and variety; preying, fishing, and omnivorous birds serving very constantly as intermediate hosts; but graminivorous birds are hardly more exempt. The number of parasites is often so vast as to occasion the most serious disease; thus the gapes in poultry is due to the choking of the bronchial passages by multitudes of Nematoids, and the grouse disease is traced to a similar cause."

But the ingenious devices which secure misery do not end here. Parasites are themselves preyed upon by other parasites. In his great work on this subject, Leuckhart mentions that water-lice and thread-worms attach themselves to parasitic crustaceans, and the endoparasitic larvæ of various Hymenoptera are in their turn preyed upon by other larvæ.

The tragedy of pain and misery associated with these semi-morbid manifestations of living matter may be traced from the most primitive organic beginnings to the crown and glory of the vertebrate division of the animal kingdom. The most comprehensive survey of these phenomena ever penned

is to be found in a magnificent chapter of Spencer's *Principles of Biology*, which deserves a wider recognition than it has yet received. In his chapter dealing with the special-creation hypothesis, Herbert Spencer's attitude towards Theism assumes a character more antagonistic than is to be found in any other portion of his published writings. And the views which that chapter expounds were doubtless those that he most strenuously held concerning the power that is sometimes said to preside over the destinies of the universe in general, and this planet in particular. Commencing with the lowly Protozoa, Spencer remarks that among these microscopic organisms are those which are found to be infested with broods of intruding parasites. Larger and more complex organisms are martyred by parasites of almost unending variety. But the pains and torments endured by the human race more closely concern us. Among the unwelcome guests of man are two disgusting tapeworms, *Bothriocephalus latus* and *Taenia solium*, which can never reach maturity unless they find their way to the human intestines, there producing grave constitutional disturbances, sometimes leading to insanity. And if the germs of *Taenia solium* are carried to other parts of the human body, various pathological phenomena supervene. To the morbid influences set up by the partially developed forms of tapeworms that arise from these detached germs are to be traced disorganisation in the brain, the lungs, the liver, the heart, the eye, etc., which frequently end fatally after prolonged suffering. Of a different class are five parasites which haunt the viscera of man—which, in addition to the defective nutrition they necessarily entail, occasionally induce irritations which end in complete demoralisation. Added to these are five kinds of Entozoa dwelling in various organs of the body—the portal-vein, the gall-duct, the liver, the intestine, the bladder, and the eye. That well-known intruder, *Trichina spiralis*, which passes through one phase of its existence embedded in the muscles and a further phase in the intestines, some years since committed such ravages in Germany as to produce a panic. Other beneficent creatures mentioned are the Guinea worm, which in Africa and in India renders human life a misery when it burrows in men's legs, and the Belharzia, which affects 90 per cent. of the East African Coast natives with bleeding of the bladder. Passing from internal parasites to external ones, we are introduced to two varieties of Acari, one infesting the follicles of the skin, and the other producing the itch. Some parasites burrow beneath the skin and deposit their eggs, and we are afflicted with three species of lice which irritate the surface of men's bodies. These are supplemented by vegetal parasites, which cause gastric disturbances or lead to the decay of teeth. Then we have the microscopic fungi which are responsible for ringworm, porrigo, thrush, pityriasis, etc. The human body is thus shown, by a no means exhaustive list, to be the habitat of parasites, internal and external, animal and vegetal, numbering in all between two and three dozen species; some of which are peculiar to man, and many of which cause great suffering, and even death.

"What interpretation," asks Spencer, "is to be placed upon these facts by those who espouse the hypothesis of special creations? According to this hypothesis all these parasites were designed for their respective modes of life. They were endowed with constitutions fitting them to live by absorbing nutriment from the human body; they were furnished with appliances, often of a formidable kind, enabling them to root themselves in and upon the human body; and they were made prolific in an almost incredible degree, that their germs might have a sufficient number of chances of finding their way into the human body. In short, elaborate contrivances were combined to secure the continuance of their respective races; and to make it impossible for the succeeding generations of men to avoid being preyed on by them. What shall we say of this arrangement? Shall we say that 'the head and crown of things' was provided as a habitat for these parasites? Shall we say that these degraded creatures, incapable of thought or enjoyment, were created that

they might cause human misery? One or other of these alternatives must be chosen by those who contend that every kind of organism was separately devised by the Creator. Which do they prefer? With the conception of two antagonistic powers, which severally work good and evil in the world, the facts are congruous enough. But with the conception of a supreme beneficence this gratuitous infliction of pain is absolutely incompatible."\*

Nor must we forget that the innumerable germ diseases which afflict mankind are the direct or indirect outcome of the growth and reproduction of micro-parasitic forms of life. The methods in operation among these are calculated to bring about a maximum of evil with a minimum of effort. The malaria parasite is conveyed to man by Anopheline mosquitoes; while another mosquito conveys the germs of yellow fever. Plague in man and in the lower animals is, in the majority of animals, transmitted by the agency of fleas. The parasites which produce sleeping sickness in man, and nagana in horses, cattle, and other animals, are transferred from host to host by flies of the genus *Glossina*. African relapsing fever, which afflicts men, red water and East Coast fever in cattle, a fatal disease in poultry, biliary fever in horses, heartwater in goats and sheep, malignant jaundice in dogs, are all disastrous diseases which are conveyed by the agencies of different species of bugs and ticks.

Tetanus, or lockjaw, was long suspected as micro-organic in origin. Kitasato discovered the bacillus while working in his laboratory in Berlin in 1889; and despite all the medical advances since made in the successful treatment of disease, taking all forms of lockjaw together, "in a fair average number of cases, the proportion appears to be 7½ deaths to one recovery."

In 1874 Hensen announced the discovery of a bacillus in the affected tissues of leprosy subjects, and this has been amply confirmed by the researches of later observers. There is now no reasonable doubt that the presence of this organism is a constant feature of this disease. In 1881 Koch proclaimed the existence of the bacillus tuberculosis; he subsequently established the fact that the bacillus was constantly present in all varieties of tubercular disease; and there is little reason to doubt that the malignant disease of cancer will be sooner or later definitely identified with a specific micro-organism.

It has thus been demonstrated that, in whatever direction we investigate the complexities of organic substance, we are persistently met with the parasitic genesis of pathological phenomena which lead to misery, degradation, and death. In terms of mechanical evolution these morbid phenomena find their only rational explanation. But upon any other conceivable principle of design, unless the design be deliberately diabolical, no philosophical or scientific solution is imaginable. What sentient creature can form the most attenuated adumbration of the sum of horror and suffering these devilish devices—if consciously prepared by an omnipotent power—are responsible for? Surely it is more rational to realise that "Nature red in tooth and claw" is the resultant of cold and uncalculating mechanical modes of existence than to primarily postulate a controlling intelligence for whose existence no shadow of proof, or even probability, is forthcoming, and then proceed to burden this alleged power with responsibility for unmerited slaughter and suffering which the least moral and imaginative of human-kind would immediately ameliorate or redress were he in possession of sufficient ability or knowledge.

T. F. P.

#### A JOB FOR THE PROFESSOR.

Chairman (concluding an address of introduction): "An' now, ladies and gentlemen, I hab de honor of presentin' to dis audience de speaker of de evening—Professor Johnsing, of de Westville Seminary—who will proceed to define de indefinable, depict de indelectable, and unscrew the unscrewtable!"

\* *Principles of Biology*.

## The World of Books.

Amongst the new volumes of the "Everyman's Library" is a wonderful shilling's worth called a *Dictionary of English Literature*. It is edited—we scarcely suppose all written—by John W. Cousin. Its general merits are such that we hope it will have a very large circulation. But no work is perfect, and the merits of a work like this cannot be uniform. Perhaps it is not quite surprising that the notice of James Thomson ("B. V.") is really ridiculous. After mentioning the poet's friendship with Bradlaugh, his atheism, and his pessimism, Mr. Cousin goes on to say that "His views resulted in depression, which led to dipsomania, and he died in poverty and misery." Now this is not true; it is, indeed, the very opposite of the truth. Thomson's views were acquired, like other people's views; the depression was born with him; it was the result of a congenital melancholy, which was clearly inherited, and which came on in irregular attacks, as other maladies do to which human beings have a constitutional tendency. Thomson was habitually most abstemious; it was the attacks of melancholy that drove him to drink, which probably staved off suicide. Naturally the healthy intervals became shorter, by the attacks becoming more frequent, and the end came in the way that might have been expected. He collapsed in what was the final assault of his enemy, there was internal hemorrhage, and he died in University College Hospital. All these facts are thoroughly well established, and we see no possible excuse for overlooking them. Thomson's "views" and his "depression" had absolutely nothing to do with each other. His views were the result of the operation of his strong intellect (which was always unclouded) on the facts of human life in the midst of the life of nature; his depression was the result of bodily causes, just as much as was the depression of the Christian poet Cowper, who was not driven to drink but to suicidal mania. It is safe, we think, to say that personal prejudice, or pandering to the prejudice of others, is responsible for the foolish method of criticism which ascribes the faults and failings of unbelievers to their scepticism, and the faults and failings of believers to any other cause than their faith. We hope Mr. Cousin will correct this nonsense in subsequent editions of his useful compilation.

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Thomson's "depression" and "dipsomania" naturally led to "misery," although it was far from being constant until his hereditary malady had exhausted his powers of resistance. But he always lived in "poverty," according to conventional standards, after he left his schoolmastership in the army. He was a powerful and brilliant writer, but he had no marketable talent; he could not write to order, and he was incapable of wielding his pen in the service of anything but his own convictions. And as his poetry was not popular, as it never will be, and his trouble stood in the way of his holding an ordinary situation, he always lived from hand to mouth; yet he was never actually in want until his last illness, when he wandered away from the friends (he had many) who would gladly have ministered to his necessities.

\* \* \*

We turned to Mr. Cousin's article on George Meredith with a certain curiosity, after reading that on James Thomson; and on arriving at the last sentences we smiled. "In matters of faith and dogma," it is admitted that Meredith's "standpoint was distinctly negative." Did this lead to "depression" and "pessimism" in his case? Far from it. He displayed "an invincible optimism." Mr. Cousin thus answers himself.

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*The City of Dreadful Night: and Other Poems.* Being a Selection from the Poetical Works of James Thomson ("B. V."). Edited and Published by Bertram Dobell, 77 Charing-cross-road, London, W.C.—This new edition is both printed in larger type, and issued at a lower price, than the previous one. For half-a-crown the purchaser obtains Thomson's masterpiece and a considerable body of his other poetry. It is really a cheap volume, and it should have a large circulation. Mr. Dobell contributes a biographical introduction. It is brief, but excellent within its limits, and contains all that the general reader will probably care to learn.

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Mr. Dobell also sends us *A Century of Sonnets* by himself. Not one of the hundred is mediocre, some are really fine, and a few are entitled to still higher praise. We have recently reproduced several, with permission, in our columns; and they must have shown our readers that Mr. Dobell is not a mere Cockney minstrel, but a real poet, with a message for his generation, which he delivers ably and courageously. We are glad to see nearly a dozen sonnets devoted to or sug-

gested by Shakespeare. Mr. Dobell calls the mighty Master "the greatest intellect that time has known." On the theme of the Master's sonnets he writes sanely; not regarding them as biographical, in the common sense of the word, but transmutations of experience. "Shakespeare did, I believe," Mr. Dobell says, "unlock his soul in his Sonnets, yet not in such a way as to make their meaning plain to those who read as they run. He was not a literal recorder of facts, but a poet to whom the material he worked upon was no more than the web upon which to embroider the rich design woven by his imagination." Perhaps the best sonnets in this little collection are, after all, those at the end, dealing with musical themes. The one on "Bach's Second Concerto" is intimate, tender, delicate, and beautiful; and few sonnets nowadays are entitled to so many good adjectives. We may add that Mr. Dobell is his own publisher, and the price of his *Century of Sonnets* is one shilling net.

## Correspondence.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read in your journal some remarks on the growth of the Christian Science movement in which the statement occurs that "movements of this kind never grow in the right sense of the word." It is not clear what the writer means by the "right sense of the word," but the fact remains that the Christian Science movement continues to grow at a very rapid rate, if we are to judge by the results accomplished. Christian Science can be judged only by its fruits, and those best qualified to speak on the subject are quite clear as to the ever increasing number of people who are finding freedom from sickness, sin, and discord through its teachings—a freedom they have sought in vain elsewhere.

Those who have been finally healed of some physical trouble after turning to Christian Science, perhaps as a last resort, are satisfied; they know that advertisement in the usually accepted sense of the word is unnecessary. They know that no amount of incorrect statements can alter the facts, and they go on their way unmoved by adverse criticism, fully conscious that in such cases it is merely the wish that is father to the thought.

ALGERNON HENRY BATHURST.

[What our writer meant was plain enough. Christians don't multiply; new sects grow at the expense of the old ones.—EDITOR.]

### NIETZSCHE AND JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* dated February 27 an article by Mr. Lloyd, "Jesus and Nietzsche," gave me a little surprise. I read it a second time to make sure that I had read it correctly, that he looked upon Nietzsche as the coming philosopher. Nietzsche, who loves cruelty, and takes pleasure in pain, torment, and injuries to others!

In *Zarathustra* he expresses his thoughts thus:—

"Man is wicked,' so spake to me in consolation all the wisest. Ah, if only it is yet true to-day! For wickedness is man's best strength. Man must become better and more wicked so I teach. The greatest wickedness is necessary to the best of the over-man. It might be good for that preacher of little people that he suffered and bore the sins of man. But I rejoice in great sins as my great consolation. With this new morality humanity will finally be able to produce the over-man."

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 226, he writes:—

"A people is the detour of nature in order to arrive at six or seven great men. The essential thing in a good and healthy aristocracy is, that it should feel itself to be not the function, but the end and justification, be it of royalty or of the commonwealth, and that it should therefore, with a good conscience, suffer the sacrifice of a countless number of men who, for its sake, must be humbled and reduced to imperfect beings, to slaves, to instruments."

Some people doubt the sanity of Jesus. There is no doubt in connection with the sanity of Nietzsche. He wrote his most important works between two detentions in a lunatic asylum, and hence not before, but after, the appearance of his affliction. Dr. Hermann Lürch characterises in excellent words the disciples of Nietzsche:—

"In degeneration, Max Nordau, whose degeneration I have been carefully reading, says Nietzsche's false individualism and aristocratism is capable of misleading superficial readers. The error may be accounted a mitigating circumstance. But, even taking this into consideration, it still ever remains a disgrace to the German intellectual life of the present age that, in Germany, a pronounced maniac should have been regarded as a philosopher, and have founded a school."

I think I prefer Jesus to Nietzsche.

A. W. HUTTY.

## 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, C. Cohen, "Socialism, Religion, and Freethought."  
 ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, Arthur B. Moss, "Poverty, Population, and Progress."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson, 12 (noon) and 6.30, Lectures.  
 LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote, 3, "Robert Blatchford, the *Daily Mail*, and the Prince of Peace"; 7, "The Lord and the Lords."  
 MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "A Chapter of Egyptian History."  
 NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, Mr. Whitaker, "What is Anarchy?"

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

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