

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXX.—No. 24

SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 1910

PRICE TWOPENCE

Views and Opinions.

THOMAS HARDY is unquestionably the first of living English writers since the death of Swinburne and Meredith. This seems fairly well admitted by the journalists who have been celebrating his seventieth birthday. What they have carefully concealed is the fact that he is a Freethinker. Some of them, perhaps, are not aware of it—for it is a mere superstition that journalists always know the subjects on which they write; but the greater number of them suppress it, either to gratify their own religious bigotry or to satisfy the newspaper proprietors who hired them in the literary market. These so-called gentlemen of the press (some of them may be ladies) said quite enough about Hardy's pessimism. But that doesn't matter. The ordinary reader looks upon both pessimism and optimism with absolute indifference. Not that he thinks any more of meliorism,—for he thinks of nothing. He would prick up his ears, however, if he heard that Hardy was a Freethinker; and as his ears are the principal organs (after his nose) through which he is first tickled and afterwards led, they must not be startled and injured by the sudden announcement of unpleasant truths. The same thing happened when the "glorious free press" dealt with Swinburne and Meredith; their Freethought was carefully kept back; yet the more accomplished journalists know that pretty nearly every great writer is a Freethinker, and a Freethinker just in proportion to the extent of his greatness.

It is the fashion nowadays, with the jargon about "art for art's sake—as if art ever existed for any other reason—to prattle interminably about "form" and say nothing about "matter." On this principle, when Hardy's poems, for instance, are reviewed, it is easy to expatiate on the peculiarities of his "technique" and ignore the vital substance of his utterance. And the dear public, with the long hairy ears that are so fond of gentle stroking, fancy that this is criticism; indeed, they often consider the critic a much cleverer person than the poet, perhaps because they understand him better—that is, if one can really assume that the dear public understand poetry at all. And thus it comes about that the multitude of those who are flatteringly called "readers" are unaware of any intellectual difference between Tennyson and Meredith, or Keble and Swinburne, or Tupper and Hardy.

It is obvious, of course, to any decently intelligent reader of Hardy's two great novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, that Freethought is of the essence of Hardy's philosophy. Swinburne described himself as an Anti-Theist, and the same description might be applied to Hardy. From the first sneer at "Nature's holy plan," when Tess is introduced to us as a part of the shiftless Durbeyfield household, to the last tragi-comic statement that "the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess"—whose life has been squeezed out of her by the hangman's noose, and whose dead body lies amidst quicklime in a prison grave—the whole

Christian theory of the world is not simply ignored, but repudiated, and the divine ordinance of human affairs is branded as a thoroughly ridiculous superstition. And as the last five chapters of *Tess* belong to the very greatest human literature—loftier than heaven and deeper than hell—and that Æschylean phrase about the sport of the President of the Immortals occurs at the crown and climax of the heart-rending drama, we may be sure that it expressed the writer's most mature and deliberate thought. Hardy had, indeed, to defend himself in a special Preface against "a gentleman who turned Christian for half-an-hour the better to express his grief that a disrespectful phrase about the Immortal should have been used." Mr. Andrew Lang, being thus lashed, was addressed as follows:—

"I can assure this great critic that to exclaim illogically against the gods, singular or plural, is not such an original sin of mine as he seems to imagine. True, it may have some local originality; though if Shakespeare were an authority on history, which perhaps he is not, I could show that the sin was introduced into Wessex as early as the Heptarchy itself. Says Glo'ster to Lear, otherwise Ina, king of that country:—

'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.'

* * *

Jude the Obscure is in some ways a more terrible book than *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess's life is a tragical failure, but her character is a glorious triumph. It imparts strange beauty to the dismal mists of a shocking death. And where beauty is there is always consolation,—which is the reason why we feel so purified and chastened and pitiful at the end of a Shakespeare tragedy. But no adorable woman stands out for the reader's love and reverence in the latter novel. Sue is a poor creature after Tess, and Jude a poor creature even after Angel Clare; and the other characters are natural enough, but commonplace, vulgar, and sordid. It is the philosophy of *Tess* applied in greater detail to the conventional life and ideas of Christian society, and the Freethought is more strongly pronounced in various ways. Hardy first shows "Nature's holy plan" wrecking, ruining, torturing, and eventually killing (in the name of justice!) a pure and noble soul; and then shows it devastating the lives of inferior but sensitive souls, though showering a good deal of satisfaction upon a number of coarse, sensual, false, and treacherous beings who are mixed up with their existence.

* * *

Hardy is called a pessimist as Meredith was called an optimist. The point of view in the two cases is different, yet the ethical outcome is almost identical. The sincere optimist may say "You should promote human happiness." The sincere pessimist may say "You should not increase human suffering." There is a verbal difference between these two sayings, but how much practical difference? Life is so constituted and ordered that if you diminish pain you promote pleasure, and if you promote pleasure you diminish pain.

* * *

Meredith was a friend of the Humanitarian League, —so is Hardy, and he has just been congratulating it on reaching the age of twenty years. The fol-

lowing is a striking part of his letter:—

"Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging, as a necessity of rightness, the application of what has been called 'The Golden Rule' from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not quite perceive it. While man was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough to practise towards the 'inferior' races; but no person who reasons nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable."

All this is profoundly true, but the "few people" who realise it are not quite as few, or as recent, as Hardy appears to think. The National Secular Society, at any rate, in the list of its Immediate Practical Objects, has the following: "An extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty." Speaking myself, as President of that Society, in a lecture to the Humanitarian League, some fourteen or fifteen years ago, I argued that the moral law—grounded on utility, and therefore on susceptibility to pleasure and pain—extends to the lower animals in their due degrees. And I added:—

"This principle, at least to the Secularist, is strengthened by the teaching of Evolution. Darwin and his successors have demonstrated the kinship of life, and thus the lowliest organisms that swim, or creep, or fly, or run, are brought—at first negatively, and then positively—within the scope of the spirit of brotherhood. Strictly speaking, of course, the lower animals are not our *brothers*, but it is incontestable that they are our *relatives*. This is not a mere spiritual perception, which is liable to be neglected in the tumult of actual life; it is a scientific fact, a truth of biology, a practical lesson from the history of our planet. In the ultimate analysis, then, I say that the moral rights of animals, their claims upon our sympathy and consideration, are involved in the Darwinian demonstration of the kinship of life."

I am not boasting of having said this so long ago. I am only assuring Thomas Hardy that the great and pregnant idea he refers to has spread more widely than his secluded life perhaps induces him to believe.

* * *

By the way, it is amusing, after Hardy's letter, to come across one from Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., in which that gentleman rebukes "the spirit of a gross materialism," which he says "is more rampant now than it was last generation." Mr. Macdonald had better leave "materialism" alone. He is guilty of a mere abuse of language. "Materialism" is the name of a philosophical theory of existence, which may be right or wrong, but cannot possibly be "gross." Mr. Macdonald's anxiety to be supposed to have an orthodoxy of his own is one that he shares with other Labor leaders, but it does him no credit either as a politician or as a man.

* * *

Returning to Thomas Hardy, one might illustrate his Freethought amply from his poems. I have only room to refer to one of them—"The Church-BUILDER." A man spends money and pains in building a church for the glory of God and the worship of Christ. But misfortunes burst upon him, his sons rebel, deeper thinkers sneer at his faith, and this is the result:—

"My gift to God seems futile, quite;
The world moves as erstwhile;
And powerful wrong on feeble right
Tramples in olden style.
My faith burns down,
I see no crown;
But Cares, and Grievs, and Guile."

What is the remedy? Why this. He goes into his own church and hangs himself—feeling that those who discover him in the morning "dangling" will mockingly remark that he might have built "a cheaper gallows-tree." What a ghastly disillusionment! One shudders at what Rabelais would call the *sanglante dérision* of the church-builder's corpse swaying in the mysterious gloom of the house he had erected to a non-existent or indifferent God.

G. W. FOOTE.

Freethought and Reform.—III.

(Continued from p. 357.)

THE most important fact in sociology, as was pointed out by Comte, is the progressive influence of the past upon living generations. Just as Darwinian biology teaches us to find in the past history of organisms the causes of their present form, so on the mental plane the reason for the existence of our ideas and our institutions is to be sought in the past mental life of the race. Biological heredity is paralleled by psychical heredity. Our institutions, our customs, may find a justification in the present, the cause of their existence lies with the past. The honor paid the king is the outcome of the fear inspired by the primitive magic-worker. We ring bells to call people to church because our forefathers used them to scare away evil spirits. We don black at a death because our remote ancestors wished to disguise the living from the ghosts of the dead. We strew flowers on a grave because food was once placed there to feed the ghost of the departed. Whether the institution be good or bad, whether the practice be wise or foolish, it is nearly always the case that we have to seek in the past for the reason of its being.

But if this is so, it involves the further truth that all sociology, to be useful, must become historical. A mere catalogue of things, as they are, can tell us little. It is how they came to be as they are that is of vital importance to the student. For, in tracing their history, we are really studying the human nature that produced them, and the human nature that still preserves them. The more historical our studies become the more clearly do we appreciate the character of the human nature that is the subject of all our reforming efforts. It is, too, because of this truth that methods of reform that succeed with one race of people fail wholly with another. This is observable with people so closely associated as the various nations of Europe, although much more evident when we contrast Europeans with Asiatics. Appeals that evoke a ready response in the one case are inoperative in the other. There is a different set of ideas and ideals to deal with when dealing with different peoples,—or, in other words, we have a different mental heredity to encounter, and the form in which certain principles are cast must vary in accordance with the special mental environment if they are to be accepted and survive.

Thus, in saying that sociology has to be historical, we must give to that word a much wider and deeper sense than that with which it is usually endowed. We have to trace, not merely the perpetuation of social customs and institutions as objective facts, but the more vital phenomena as illustrating the growth and development of those frames of mind upon which this perpetuation depends. For the only way in which the past can influence and dominate the present—excluding mere biological heredity—is by the transmission of ideas and beliefs. Church and government, all the great institutions of life, are handed on from generation to generation in virtue of a mental heritage that expresses itself through language and literature. What we really inherit from the past is its ideas, objectively in the shape of machinery, inventions, customs, and institutions, and subjectively in all the instruction, oral and written, that is forced upon us from the cradle to the grave.

When, therefore, we define a human society as an aggregate of human beings, we are only expressing half a truth, and the least important half at that. Human society is an association of individuals possessing ideas, and it is these ideas that are the all-important sociological facts. No one has realised this more clearly than Herbert Spencer, and no one has stated it in a clearer or a more convincing manner.* He has shown how primitive life is dominated by ideas, and in such a manner that the study of social life and of social institutions becomes

* *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i.

a study of the influence of ideas on associated existence, while social forces become little more than another name for the operation of psychic forces in aggregates. So soon as man begins to form ideas of himself and the world, they begin to exert a strong influence in moulding the social state. Fear of the gods, of the magic-worker, beliefs as to the nature of dreams and of disease, belief in the authority of chief or priest, hatred of other tribes or love of his own, all these are the fashioning forces of primitive life so soon as man is lifted beyond the extreme and direct pressure of his material environment.

Nor does man ever escape from this dominance of his intellectual nature. Their power is, in fact, the condition of all human progress. It is the variable factor in a problem to which the other factors are constants. Heat and cold, food and hunger, affect all races of men substantially alike. It is the differing degree of intellectual development, and of stored-up knowledge that explains, for the greater part, what differences exist. Reduce the power of ideas, and civilisation disappears to a corresponding extent. Add idea to idea, watch their power in transforming man's material and organic environment, and we are observing the whole history of civilisation. It is the neglect of facts of this order that makes many works on economics so unsatisfactory and their results so disappointing. Their authors have failed to realise that material advancement implies mental development. It implies more accurate perception, a greater development of a creative imagination, discipline in social co-operation, confidence in one's fellows, and faith in the ability of man to overcome material obstacles. Society is not, as Rousseau imagined, held together by agreement in a bond, but it is held together by a bond of agreement. And this agreement, as I have already said, consists in each individual sharing a mental and moral life that is a characteristic of the tribe or nation. Each man learns to adapt himself, more or less, to the ideals and ideas of the society to which he belongs. And he does this without the least consciousness of any material advantage that may accrue from either the association or the identification. Forced to give a justification for social organisation, we fall back upon the existence of mutual advantages, upon arguments of utility. Yet we really seek association with our fellows, not because of any material advantage, but because of the gratification of certain feelings it offers. It is, indeed, only on this basis that any meaning whatever can be given to that much-abused, but still useful, phrase, "social organism."

It is, then, through the medium of its intellectual and moral life that society, in an organic sense, perpetuates itself. Each new comer is born into a network of ideas and beliefs, and is influenced by them for either good or ill. The process commences with a child in its youngest years. Its parents or its nurse begins its education by filling its mind with the desire to please or the fear of offence, or developing its latent power of imitation. At school, the work is continued by its teachers. Among its playmates it is introduced to a form of group life that impresses its psychic existence upon each one of its members. As he grows older he mixes with a larger world of adults, and here, again, he is brought into contact with a mental life that bids him "play the game" in this or that prescribed manner. At every step of his career he is bound to his family, his class, his country, by ties of common feelings and a common mental life. To break these ties is always the hardest of tasks and often the most dangerous of operations. His best and latest development is when the ties of interest that bind him are wider than those of family, class, or nation, and embrace humanity in one all inclusive conception. But even here the line of growth is by an extension of his psychic self. From the cradle to the grave the line is being spun, and between the cradle and the grave no break is possible.

But if the true social forces are psychic in character, how is it that progress is achieved? Do we not

see, it may be argued, the cramping effects of material conditions, and also how a change in material conditions affects the mental and moral life of the individual? I agree with nearly all that may be said on either topic, but it does not at all affect the position I have taken up. In the first place, I am not claiming that psychic states are independent of conditions. As mind is the function of a physical organism, that organism must obviously be affected by such things as food, sanitation, and the like. My contention is, that social forces are psychic phenomena conditioned in their expression by material facts. But having said that, it must be observed that material conditions, be they as bad as may be, do not in themselves breed reform. Otherwise, reform would have been accomplished long since. The effect of bad conditions, in themselves, is to depress and degrade and develop feelings that perpetuate the state that nourish them. Habit and inherited ideas make the serf, the slave, the peasant, or the sweater's victim bear their lots with resignation, and even to look on any radical change in the order of things as a mere Utopian illusion. One of the commonest experiences is that of the reformer who finds the least help given him by the class who most need change. Yet change does come. How? Well, the reply is that in every society there exists more than one class, or various stages within any one class, and there is thus always the opportunity for the circulation of ideas. And, again, as a matter of common experience, it is from those who are more comfortably situated in life that have come the ideas that inspire some among the less comfortably placed to agitate and struggle for an improvement in their lot. It is the imparting of ideas that gives birth to a consciousness of the need for improvement and of the resolve to secure it. The same phenomenon faces us when we study the history of nations. I know of no case in the whole life of humanity where any nation has progressed when it has been shut in on itself. Conquest or friendly intercourse, which has meant the contact of different mental forces, has been with all nations the cause of their development. It is thus we see how historians are continually finding in the case of the civilisations of Greece, Rome, Egypt, India, Chaldea, and other nations of antiquity, the cause of their development in the inrush of ideas due to their intercourse, friendly or otherwise, with a foreign people. In the case of our own country, we have the successive wars of foreign influence, from the Romans onward, continuously supplying us with the necessary stimulus. And we have a still more recent and striking case in the rise of modern Japan. Here we not only have an Eastern nation transformed by absorption of Western ideas, but we have a change of material conditions directly induced by mental forces. Writers are telling us—and I believe with truth—that many of the unlovely features of Western civilisation are beginning to show themselves in Japan. But here it is clearly not a case of the material conditions developing the mental life that accompany these conditions. It is the reception of Western ideals—notably that of brute force and the power of wealth—that is reproducing undesirable conditions. In all directions comes the same lessons. Desires are the motive forces of human life; they are born, developed, and expressed in accordance with the group-life of the society to which we belong or by which we are influenced.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Mistakes About Death.

DEATH is the end of every living thing. When a man dies he ceases to be as a member of the human race. This is the most patent and indisputable of facts. There is a beginning and an end to every individual existence. Everything that lives has its own definite cycle to run, and when it has fulfilled it,

it disappears. This is a law of Nature from which there is no escape. What death is depends, therefore, upon what life means. If life is an entity which by entering into a material structure animates and organises it, as many Idealists maintain, then death must signify its departure from the same, and the consequent disorganisation and dissolution of the vacated piece of matter. But is this theory reasonably tenable? There was a time when light, heat, electricity, and magnetism were believed to be created entities; but the moment the search-light of science began to play upon them, that belief was seen to be utterly groundless. It was a belief begotten of ignorance, and which was doomed to perish simultaneously with its parent. So, likewise, the belief that life is a created, separate, and independent entity, supported by no evidence whatever, is bound to disappear. The more we study life, the more clear it is becoming that it is not a distinct existence present and active in a body, but a specific condition or process of that body. To die, then, is to cease to be as a living body. Death means the same thing universally. The death of a man does not differ, in any essential sense, from the death of a dog, or of a tree. Surely, there is nothing humiliating and loathsome in this natural truth. Death can be unwelcome only to those who have not finished living, just as sleep is avoided only by those who are wide-awake. Death is as natural as sleep, except when it comes prematurely. What the doctors fight, with such noble heroism, is not death, but disease, which brings death before its time. Our enemy is ill-health, not decease; the destructive parasite that subsists on our vital organs, not the seasonable advent of sleep's brother.

This is the natural doctrine of death which science offers to us. It is the only view that rests even on the semblance of evidence. All appearances are in its favor. And rightly conceived, there is nothing "inexplicable, ruthless, or blundering" about it. To say of death that "nothing leads up to it, nothing prepares for it"; that "it simply traverses every line on which life is ours, every hope which life feeds, every intention which gives life significance"; that "it is the cruel ambush into which we are snared, the pit of destruction"; that "it wrecks, defeats, shatters,"—to thus speak of death is to woefully misrepresent it in the interest of a pet theory. Of such deliberate misrepresentation we must pronounce the Rev. Canon Scott Holland guilty in a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Whit Sunday, and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for June 1. The reverend gentleman asks, "Can any end be more untoward, more irrational than this? Its methods are so cruelly accidental, so wickedly fantastic and freakish..... It makes its horrible breach in our gladness with carelessness and inhuman disregard of us. We get no consideration from it. Often and often it stumbles in like an evil mischance, like a feckless misfortune. Its shadow falls across our natural sunlight, and we are swept off into some black abyss." This is a wilful distortion of the truth, a cruel caricature; and it is presented solely in order to render the Christian view of death all the more winsome. In imagination the Canon gazes wistfully on the face of a much-loved friend who has just died, and as he gazes he imagines that from the face in its sweet silence comes the following as a last message:—

"Death is nothing at all. It does not count. I have only slipped away into the next room. Nothing has happened. Everything remains exactly as it was. I am I, and you are you, and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged. Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.....Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was. There is absolute and unbroken continuity. What is this death but a negligible accident? Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just round the corner. All is well."

That is very neatly put; and were it treated as clever fiction there would be no harm in it. The Canon, however, seriously wants it to be accepted as the

very revelation of God. If an archangel existed and came down from beside the white throne, he could not be one whit more dogmatic. The Canon *knows*, and with the confidence born of omniscience he cries out: "It is not death; nobody is dead. It would be too ludicrous to suppose it. What has death to do with us? How can we die? Everything that we cared for and loved exists. Physical death has no meaning, no relation to it. Reason refuses to bring the two together." If this is not cant and twaddle, what on earth or in heaven is it? Still gazing on the face of his dead friend, Dr. Holland continues:—

"Nothing that we see in this dead material now laid out under our eyes represents or involves or includes the thing that was or is alive. *That which we loved is not here.* That is all. It has dropped out. It has slid away. We are as sure of this as we are of our own identity. We cannot conceive any other possibility. Reason and imagination alike repudiate it."

Take the sentence in italics and you will see at once how utterly irresponsible the preacher is. *That which we loved is here, but not as it was when we learned to love it.* The only difference is one of state or condition. It is now only a machine that has stopped working through the failure of the motive-power, the heart. The only thing that slipped out was the last breath. It was this very thing with the heart active, the lungs vigorous, and the brain full of thought and feeling, that we loved with such ardent devotion. Now that it has ceased to be as it used to be we must put it out of sight, and treasure its loving past in our breasts. We claim that this is the only view of death which reason can tolerate, the only view that is really thinkable.

Now, the curious thing is that Canon Scott Holland tacitly admits that the doctrine he has just enunciated contradicts the testimony of reason and experience, and can only be held with firmness when one is in a state of emotional excitement, or of exaltation, as he would call it. Moreover, nothing is more undeniable than that such a state of emotionalism would be impossible were it not for the prior existence of a belief, based on the authority of the New Testament and the Church, in the reality of a future life. This is a point of vast importance. The Canon knows full well that reason and imagination do not repudiate the natural interpretation of death. Concerning the certainty of which he speaks with such cocksureness in the early part of the sermon he makes the following admission later on:—

"Alas! it will pass from us. The long, horrible silence that follows when we become aware of what we have lost out of our daily intercourse by the withdrawal of the immediate presence will cut its way into our souls. We shall feel it impossible to keep at the high level without a word, without a sign, to reassure us of its truth. The blank veil will hang on unlifted, undisturbed. Not a glimpse to be had of the world inside and beyond! How black, how relentless, this total lack of tangible evidence for the certainty that we believe in! Once again the old terror will come down upon us. What is it that happens over there? What are the dead about? Where are they? How picture it? How speak of it? It is all blind, dismal, unutterable darkness. We grope in vain. We strain our eyes in vain."

It inevitably follows from this extract that the certainty of an "absolute and unbroken continuity" of life beyond the tomb so loudly sung in the former extracts, is cherished in spite of "the total lack of tangible evidence" for it; and it also follows quite as inevitably that a belief held under such circumstances is wholly unreasonable. Thus it turns out that when the Canon asserted so high-mindedly that "reason and imagination alike repudiate" the natural interpretation of death, he was guilty of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." Nothing can be more unreasonable than to believe without evidence; and, on Dr. Scott-Holland's own showing, for the belief in immortality there is a "total lack of tangible evidence." But as "the total lack of tangible evidence" is admitted by so eminent a divine as the Canon, we can only conclude that the belief in a future life is based on the authority of the

New Testament, which was written by, and of the Church which is composed of, people equally as ignorant of any region beyond the grave as we are. It is therefore perfectly safe to declare that, so far as we know, death ends all for individual men and women.

Now, much of the shrinking from death, on which the Canon puts such emphasis, is due to the influence of religion. People fear death because of the vague "dread of something after death," in which religion has taught them to believe. Now, Free-thinkers are completely free from that dread in whatever shrinking from death that they may experience; and it is not from the *idea* of death that they do at any time shrink, but from the possibility and danger of dying prematurely. They do not wish to die before the time, any more than they wish to fall asleep in the midst of the day's work. Their attitude to death itself is one of utter indifference. In the full knowledge that, in the course of Nature, it will surely come, they seek to concentrate upon life in order to make it as wise and useful and joyous as possible. What the ultimate object of life is, or whether or not it has such an object, no one can tell; but, without a doubt, its primary object is to become as perfect and effective as possible. It is here that the value of intelligence manifests itself. Inasmuch as we are gregarious or social beings, our intelligence tells us that the perfection of our life is conditioned on our being in right, smooth, and happy relations with one another as constituent members of the human family. In the light of this truth we are enabled to put death in correct perspective, and to realise its true meaning. Thus willingness, readiness to die is seen to be a high ethical virtue. In the words of George Meredith, "we go that others may come—and better, if we rear them in the right way."

J. T. LLOYD.

A Neglected Poet.

SOME years ago, that most kindly and discerning critic, Mr. Henry S. Salt, wrote an eulogistic account of the poetry of John Barlas, the neglected poet of democracy. It was hoped that the notice, which appeared in *The Yellow Book*, would lead to the publication of a selection from his writings, but nothing came of it. To-day there is a real danger that one of the fiercest and most outspoken singers of our time will pass out of the public remembrance. To avoid such a catastrophe it is well to recount Barlas's claim to recognition. As a sonneteer he is only rivalled by the greatest of his contemporaries, whilst the quality of his other verse is such that he is entitled to fuller consideration than has been accorded to many another poet of democracy.

Maybe, the chief factor against the public recognition of Barlas's verse lay in the fact that the volumes were published in an obscure provincial town, and that few copies ever got into circulation. Even now, the only place where anything approaching a complete set of his writings can be found is the British Museum. Another factor is their outspokenness. For Barlas is a Radical of Radicals, and, like most poets, he wears his heart upon his sleeve. This means much when most of the newspapers of the country are in the hands of the Tories and the Church party, and when professedly Liberal organs are run in the openly avowed interest of the Nonconformist Conscience. There is much to upset the Chadbands and the Cadburys in the pages of Barlas's work. For this poet is not a drawing-room minstrel. He is anarchistic in tone, and, while tender and compassionate in tone towards all that is simple, human, and compassionate, he is fierce and vindictive in his scathing hatred of hypocrisy and tyranny. Throughout his songs resounds the cry of liberty, the

utter abhorrence of kingcraft and priestcraft in every shape and form: Listen:—

"Freedom is come among us. Winged from hell
She rises with the serpents in her locks;
Kings, priests, republics, with her fiery shocks,
She breaks and scatters daily. This is well.
But, though all other false dominions fell,
There is one tyranny based on rocks
Of nature and necessity that mocks
And breaks all waves that 'gainst its base rebel—
The union of the drove against the deer
That follows not their path, of bird with bird
Against the lonely one of alien song.
The league against the brave of those that fear,
The hate for isolation of the herd,
The banding of the weak to crush the strong."

This is the work of a daring singer of revolt and rebellion, a flouter of convention, a mocker of authority. He has, however, other strings to his lyre. Here is a stanza from "The Golden City":—

"They be happy men that dwell there,
In that serene abode;
They have no heaven nor hell there,
Nor fear of friend or god;
Each by his soul's light steering,
Not resting, neither veering,
Nor coveting, nor fearing
The recompense or rod."

In quite another vein is the poem "Magdalen to her Sister":—

"She is gone out of sight, out of mind,
There is none the remembrance to keep
Of flowers blown away by the wind—
Poor desolate flower, let her sleep;
I am left, and I only, to weep.
Well, no more, she shall thirt now nor fast,
And she feels not the sin and the shame,
And my heart when it breaks at the last
Shall be found writ in fire with her name,
And on man and on god be the blame."

One of the most characteristic poems is "Le Jeune Barbaroux," one of the ablest of the Girondists:—

"Bright-haired Apollo with the hero's eyes
That dreamest dreams too fair for earthly skies,
Man free and equal, all things fair and true,
What shadows dark across thy dreams arise?
Young Barbaroux.

Freedom, her arm outstretched, but lips firm set;
Freedom, her eyes with tears of pity wet,
But her robe splashed with drops of bloody dew;
Freedom, thy goddess, is our goddess too,
Young Barbaroux.

Freedom, that bore the robe from kings away,
That clothed the beggar child in warm array;
Freedom, the hand that raised, the hand that slew;
Freedom, divine then, is divine to-day,
Young Barbaroux.

We drown, we perish in a surging sea;
We are not equal, brotherly, nor free;—
Who from this death shall stoop and save us? who?
Thy Freedom, and the memory of such as thee,
Young Barbaroux."

These are but a few extracts taken at random from Barlas's poems. Many other examples might be given if space permitted. Throughout his songs rings out clearly and unmistakably the challenge of Liberty. A dreamer of dreams, Barlas has given us something more than merely honeyed utterances. He has taught us soldiers of Freethought that it is good to act during life, and not to lie down and sulk. The call to arms vibrates with iron clang throughout his music, as in that of Shelley and Swinburne, and not entirely without result. As we march to battle against the hosts of superstition we are nerved to fresh endeavors by hearing the music of a poet.

MIMNERMOS.

When I have to choose between believing a common, and believing an uncommon, event, I believe the former in preference to the latter. Why? Because in the very words which I make use of it is implied that the event called common has hitherto been of more frequent occurrence than the event called uncommon; and to suppose that, having been hitherto more frequent it will continue to be so, is only to believe what all experience testifies—that the course of nature is uniform.—*Jeremy Bentham*.

Acid Drops.

Mr. G. Bernard Shaw has recovered from his mild attack of the popular fever that followed the death of the late King Edward. He wrote to the *Times* making a suggestion, which is not worth specifying now, with regard to economy in the wearing of mourning for the King's death. One would have thought that "G. B. S." would have laughed at the whole farce, but he took it rather seriously. He has since resumed his part as mocking philosopher in a Socialist journal, and put forward the same view that was expressed by Mr. Foote in last week's *Freethinker*. He does not even shrink from saying that "the propaganda of Royalism is the purpose of these pageants." Mr. Shaw puts the case against the monarchical superstition clearly and ably—as, of course, he would do when he set about it:—

"You cannot make a man a king and then know anything about him. The divinity that hedges a king is, in the last analysis, a general agreement to pretend that he is what no man ever yet was: the just man made perfect. A king, in short, is an idol; that is why I am a Republican. I know as well as anyone that if you have an idol, you had better save disputes about the succession by making the post hereditary instead of elective."

This is excellent as far as it goes. Mr. Foote went further and explained the origin and function of the "idol."

Mr. Shaw takes a benevolent interest in the royal family. "Has not the King," he asks, "an indefeasible right to be a man, and not an idol?" Certainly he has; but is he likely to exercise it? How many kings have ever done that? Perhaps if Mr. Shaw himself were offered the crown he would wear it—at least for a day, to see how he looked in it.

We rather like Mr. Shaw's suggestion that "the Coronation should be at Stonehenge, not at Westminster Abbey." Our reason for it, however, is different from his. He says there would be more room for the multitude on Salisbury Plain. We should say that the Coronation ceremony and Stonehenge belong to the same stage of human culture.

The Duke of Norfolk has brought a letter to King George from the Pope. Idol to idol.

The *Guardian* notes, with a certain semi-suppressed sectarian pleasure, that Nonconformist religious organisations are not flourishing in Lancashire. This is so; but are any of the Churches in any better case? The truth is that all religious denominations in the country are—certainly in relation to population—declining. A few preachers draw large audiences, but their churches are filled with people from other churches, and these suffer. It is when they are all lumped together that one sees how ineffective they are. As usual, the responsibility is thrown upon the pressure of modern life, the thirst for pleasure, and similar factors. The real cause of the decline is that the whole current of modern civilisation makes for the destruction of religious beliefs. And Mrs. Partington trying to sweep back the Atlantic with a broom is paralleled by the Churches trying to reverse the current of civilisation with smoking-concerts and cinematograph shows.

A correspondent in the same issue of the *Guardian* writes that the statement "no man of science believes in Christ" forms the chief, if not the only, stock-in-trade of the militant Freethinker, and recommends a little book giving the opinions of scientific men in order to counteract this. The writer must have been singularly unfortunate in the militant Freethinkers he has met, or strikingly untruthful in his report of them. Far from this being the stock-in-trade of Freethinkers, it would make no difference to the Freethought position if every scientific man believed in Christ. The question is, not what do scientific men believe about Christ, but what does their science teach about the doctrines associated with his name and the experiences recorded of his life? Freethinkers are not in the habit of estimating truth by counting heads. That is a method they leave to Christians. And we assume it is because they are so obsessed with this method that they believe other people pay it the same deference.

After saying this, we may inquire how many leading scientific men are believers in Christ in any genuine sense of the phrase? How many believe in the Virgin birth, in the miracles of Jesus, and in the resurrection? We fancy very few; and none of them would say they had any scientific warranty for such beliefs. The important question is not whether a man says, I believe in Christ, but what does he understand by believing in Christ? But Christians are

nowadays in such desperate straits that they are ready to catch at anything that has even an appearance of helping them. Greater self-respect would make them less ready to claim the support of men who, while verbally agreeing with them, are intellectually in entire disagreement.

"Peter Lombard," the writer of the always interesting "Varia" in the *Church Times*, has committed himself, in the issue of that journal for May 27, to some exceptionally foolish positions. Naturally, the subject under consideration is the Holy Trinity. In all ages and all lands, he finds vague hints and dim intimations of this Christian dogma. Even the shamrock, in Arabic *shamrakh*, has from earliest times been looked upon as emblematic of a trinity. Indeed, nature herself is full of apt illustrations of the same so-called cardinal truth. For example, Miss F. P. Cobbe informs us that one of the French nuns whom she met on her voyage to Cairo in 1857, told her that "if anyone looked out on Trinity Sunday exactly at sunrise he would see all the persons of the Sacred Trinity." When asked if she had ever seen them, she was obliged to confess that she had not.

Miss Cobbe laughed at the credulity; but "Peter Lombard" maintains that the belief can be traced back to ancient Egypt. At sunrise, the infant Horus, typifying the sun, made his appearance over the horizon between the two goddesses of the dawn, Isis and Nephthys, and these, Isis, Horus, and Nephthys, formed the well-known Egyptian Trinity. Then we are told of "an analogous Japanese belief that there is a certain mountain in Northern Japan on which, if a man prays just before sunrise, on the sixteenth day of the seventh moon, he will see on the sun, just appearing above the mountain chains, distinct figures of the Buddhist Trinity."

All this is highly interesting when taken as purely mythical or legendary, as it is rightly taken in these "Varia." What the writer means by "the Buddhist Creed" we have no idea, for every scholar now knows that in Early Buddhism there was neither place nor need for any God at all. Gautama was a Secularist pure and simple. In ancient India the gods had no objective existence, but were mere ideas in men's minds. "Peter Lombard," however, is of opinion that "the doctrine of a Trinity, dimly revealed, was part of the Buddhist creed." "Dimly revealed" is distinctly good, for it turns out, according to this writer, that "dim" revelation is no revelation at all. Even in Buddhism nothing was really revealed from above. But the Japanese have the doctrine of a Trinity in their Buddhist creed; "and," "Peter Lombard" proceeds,—

"I hang upon it here, with the idea that the full doctrine will be accepted by them not long hence, as resting not on fancies or legends, but on the historic facts revealed in the history of Christ and his Church; the reality of the unknown God whom they ignorantly worship, made known to them by prayer and sympathetic love, and the history contained in the New Testament."

With what cool complacency these Christian men of God assume and proclaim the infinite superiority of their own religion to all others. Their insolence is an insufferable stench in the nostrils of all decent people. As a matter of fact, and as a few honest Christian scholars are beginning to admit, Christianity is founded on myths and legends quite as completely as any other religion that ever was or is—a truth "Peter Lombard" pretends not to be aware of.

"The Bishop of London at Home to Nurses," ran the heading of an article in the *Church Times* for June 3. We trust there is no prospect of a scandal at Fulham Palace.

Dr. Thomas Windsor, of Great Budworth, Cheshire, a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, left £38,162, which is devoted by his will to the relief of suffering. Curiously, however, he orders that "nothing shall be given to any hospital or dispensary or medical society or medical institution." This looks as though he saw what a chaos such institutions really are. Hospitals, in particular, ought to be taken out of private hands altogether, and either nationalised or municipalised. We no more want private hospitals than we want private workhouses. Doctors appear to have reasons of their own for maintaining the present unhappy state of things. The same may be said of the religionists. Religion is rampant in nearly all hospitals. In addition to a chaplain, who usually belongs to the Church of England, the matron exercises religious discipline over the nursing staff, who have to add the profession and practice of Christian piety to their other accomplishments. Dr. Windsor appears to have felt this too, for he orders that nothing shall be given to "any church or charity subject to any religious body or sect."

"Providence" was very helpful after the sinking of the *Pluviose* off Calais. The difficulty of dealing with the iron tomb of those twenty-seven unfortunate sailors was increased by specially heavy weather, which made it impossible for the divers and salvage men to proceed with their work for several days.

Tolstoy has just written, through his secretary, a letter to Mr. J. E. Eastham, of Southport, who had written to him on the subject of settling international disputes by arbitration instead of war. The great Russian writer, who fancies himself a Christian, though he gives up everything that the Churches have always accepted as Christianity, says that he does not believe in such devices for getting rid of war and its ghastly evils. They are too much like preaching sobriety in public-houses. War will only cease when men are citizens, not of a nation, but of the world, and recognise each other as brothers. This may be perfectly true, yet every end has to be reached by steps, and arbitration seems to be a necessary one in this instance. Tolstoy was bound to bring in Jesus, and this is how he does it:—

"War can cease only by people ceasing to laugh at religion as they do now, when they imagine some sort of Christian religion consisting in redemption and other nonsense; and by people indeed believing in the eternal and only law of God known and common to all, expressed not only by Jesus but by all the wise and righteous men of all times, in the law that all men are brothers and therefore should love one another, and consequently not kill each other. Were people to recognise this law, war would cease—it would cease because there would be no soldiers."

This is so true that it is a truism. Certainly war will cease when nobody wants to fight. But why drag in Jesus? If brotherhood has been taught by "all the wise and righteous men of all times"—before Jesus as well as after—it must rest upon something in the nature of things; and to show this in a clear light must be far better than raising fresh confusion and controversy over particular personalities.

The *Church Times* special correspondent in India remarks that, although the ruling race in India, and "proud of our Christianity," we yet maintain a system of secular education in the universities. Presumably, in addition to all that India contributes to the Empire, he would also tax the Hindoos to pay for a religious instruction in which hardly any of them believe. Lord Curzon, he says, longed to change the existing order of things, but was unable to do so. Well, if we wish to maintain our position in India, one can only say, a good thing too. The people of India would hardly be likely to submit quietly to the establishment of Christianity in the colleges merely to gratify a handful of English religious fanatics. The true inwardness of the complaint lies in the writer's statement that "so long as the present education system remains any efforts to root Christianity in India are doomed to failure." This we quite believe, although we also believe they would be doomed to failure under any conditions. But the statement is a significant comment upon the stories of Christianity's great advance in India—when collections for missionary work are being made. It is also interesting to learn that the only way in which Christianity can be established is by the power of the State being exercised in its behalf. Well, there never has been a country in which Christianity has been established except by force, and we do not expect to find an example to the contrary at this time of day.

The stupid prejudice that normally obsesses the religious mind is amusingly illustrated by this writer's comments upon the lax morality of the Hindoos. We really do not suppose that, taking the civilised inhabitants of India, there is any very great difference between them and other people. But even as the case is stated by the *Church Times* writer, the fault seems to be that the religions of India exert too much power over the people. But if this be true, the secular system in the universities cannot be blamed for it. Rather it must serve as a counteracting influence. Evidently it is the religion of the Hindoos that is at fault; and what they need is not more religion, but less.

Having said this, we may point out the absurdity of going to Hindoo religious books, written perhaps a couple of thousand years ago, and quoting from them as though the present generation accepted them in all their literal meaning. We may be "proud of our Christianity," but if any Hindoo were to quote selected passages from the Old and the New Testaments, and assert that present-day Christians accepted those teachings in their most literal application, the *Church Times* would have something very strong to say on the matter. A Christian talking about his own religion usually descends several stages in the scale of intelligence, and when he talks about the religion of other people he often goes lower still.

An eloquent divine asks, "Is this imperial essence [the soul], which knew God and eternity, inferior to the meanest thing it used? Is the spirit's journey the only one which arrives at nothing?" Then he answers his own question thus: "To admit that is to miss the whole of Nature's lesson." This is an argument for immortality based upon three gratuitous assumptions. The first assumption is the existence of a soul in man, separable from the body, and capable of surviving it. This assumption has never been verified. The second assumption is that God and eternity exist, and are objects of knowledge. Neither has this assumption ever been verified. If there be no spirit, and no God and eternity to bestow imperial grandeur upon it, it is utter folly to speak of a "spirit's journey" arriving at anything. The third assumption is that man's body is immortal. "Has our body ceased in dying?" asks our friend, and answers, "Not an atom of it." This is true only of the ingredients that make up the body. These survive all changes; but the body, *as body*, absolutely ceases at death.

This is a remarkably plain and simple truth, yet the divines close their eyes against it. "What is the death of the day at evening, of the leaves in autumn?" they ask, and triumphantly answer, "The end here is yet another illusion. It is only a beginning." But it is nothing of the kind. The same day never appears twice. The same leaves never adorn the tree a second time. So, likewise, the same man never lives more than once. And in saying this we do not miss any of Nature's lesson: we are simply laying Nature's lesson to heart. What she says to all of us is, "You have but one life to live; make the most of it while your day lasts."

The present discussion over the King's Coronation Oath gives rise to a pretty little problem, the solution of which in either of two directions is equally uncomplimentary to Christianity. The object of the Oath is to secure a Protestant succession; and from the Protestant side it is argued that a Catholic ruler would place the interests of the Roman Church before those of his country. English Catholics resent the charge as having no foundation. From this it follows that if the Protestant position be sound, it is the belief in Christianity that prevents Catholics doing their duty as members of the State. And if it be not sound, it is the Protestants belief in Christianity that prevents them acting with justice towards their fellow-citizens. We leave the matter as it is; but, either way, we have the fact of Christian belief standing in the way of social duty and justice.

Some time ago the Rev. R. F. Horton brought a charge against the newspapers that they were nearly all under the influence of Roman Catholic writers, who suppressed news antagonistic to their Church, and gave prominence to news unfavorable to Protestantism. Now Mr. Hillaire Belloc says, as the result of twenty years' experience as a journalist, that "nowhere else in the world was the Church suffering so violent a press persecution as in this country, and in no other land was information regarding the Church so distorted and suppressed." We do not attach much importance to either statement. The truth seems to us that both sides use the weapons of misrepresentation and suppression when occasion offers, and, on the whole, religion of all sorts gets more than a fair show in English papers. It is anti-Christian news that is most carefully boycotted, and the humbug that leads to our "free press" suppressing this news leads it also to play to the religious gallery with all its might.

Bishop Vaughan says that pain and suffering are in the world because if we have good health and prosperity we grow "careless in the exercise of religion," and little by little neglect God. For this reason the Bishop believes we are being continually reminded God is there in a more or less unpleasant manner. But as the reward is to go to a place where pain and suffering are non-existent, and where, if the theory be correct, they will promptly forget all about God unless they are sent to hell for an occasional reminder of his existence. But, as a matter of fact, suffering is quite as effective an antidote to religious belief as is happiness. More than once an earthquake has proved itself a very cogent argument to the survivors. Besides, the suffering does not invariably occur to those who forget; were it so, Freethinkers would be, of all men, the most miserable. And what of the sufferings of children? Or of those born cursed with mental and physical maladies that are the outcome of others' misdoings? If only preacher or congregation gave five minutes serious consideration to what was being said, such absurdities as those of Bishop Vaughan would not be heard. But in religion nothing seems too ridiculous for credence.

The Rev. B. G. Collins, who is in charge of "The Wayside Well" in the *Baptist Times*, has a wonderful way of interpreting Scripture. His contribution for June 3 deals with "the wonder of the love of God." "God does not love us," he says, "because of any beauty or worth in us which wins and deserves his tenderness, but because he loves us." Now the text (Deut. vii. 7, 8) on which the sermonette is founded teaches an entirely different doctrine. While Mr. Collins says that God loves all mankind because he loves them, his Scripture represents Jehovah as setting his love upon the Jews, in preference to all other nations, and choosing them to be his own people, not because of their numerical strength, but because he liked them. That is to say, Jehovah was a respecter of persons with a vengeance, which he could not have been without being guilty of the grossest injustice and cruelty. As he was declared to be the maker of heaven and earth and the Father of all men, he had no moral right to select one nation and shower all sorts of good things upon it, while rejecting all others and allowing them to dwell in the cruel bondage of savagery and animalism. Such a deity would deserve to be execrated as a loathsome Fiend, and not praised as a God of love. The God described by Mr. Collins is but a spectre, a phantom of the mind, one of the

"Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise."

According to the *Berliner Zeitung*, Dr. Ludwig Gurlitt, one of the most temperate and fearless of the pioneers of secular education in Germany, is being proceeded against for blasphemy. Some time ago, Dr. Gurlitt delivered a lecture in Dresden on "The Child, Religion, and the School," in which he demanded the complete abandonment of religious instruction. As a result of certain expressions made use of in this lecture, the Public Prosecutor has been called upon to take action, and has decided to do so. One day, perhaps, public officials will realise that the march of ideas is not to be stopped by the baton of a policeman.

The organ of the New Theology protests against certain preachers speaking slightly of Unitarians, because the leaders of Unitarianism have done much to enlighten Christian sects. This is quite true, but the advice might be made to apply over a larger area. For the greatest benefactors to Christians have been Freethinkers. They forced upon Christians more accurate knowledge of the nature of the Biblical writings, and of the absurdity of the old-fashioned belief in prayer and miracles. They made Christians ashamed of the doctrine of eternal damnation, and instructed them as to Christian origins. And at present they are busy teaching them the origin of fundamental religious beliefs, such as the belief in a God and a soul. They are unwilling pupils, and ungrateful ones, but the fact and force of the instruction remains.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has been explaining how Shakespeare is honored in the land which he made illustrious by his genius. On a certain month during last winter Mr. Jones thought he would see, if he could, how many of Shakespeare's plays were being acted in England. He found on inquiry, after some trouble, that Shakespeare was staged that month in but one theatre in the whole country, and that was not in London but in Manchester. Curiously enough, Mr. Jones considered that this was an argument in favor of a Shakespeare National Theatre. It seems to us that he overlooks the crux of the problem. Supposing the National Theatre is built and endowed, and under select management, how are you going to get the people to come and see Shakespeare's plays? And will good actors go on playing to empty benches? What is really wanted is better taste. Shakespeare is freely played in Germany. Why? Because the Germans are better educated than the English. *Voilà!* as our French friends say.

Another thing is quite clear. Mr. Jones complains that our actors and actresses are very seldom capable of speaking blank verse—especially Shakespeare's—with all its poetry and fulness of meaning. Moreover, Shakespeare's plays cannot be staged with a couple of stars (male and female) and a lot of duffers. Altogether, there is reason to extend Charles Lamb's argument as to the unactableness of Shakespeare. And perhaps it is better so. Better read the greatest of all thinkers (and of all Freethinkers) in solitude than see him murdered by indifferent players before an uncritical audience.

A school-manager in the South of England has been solemnly complaining of Shakespeare's bad language. He takes an instance from the *Merchant of Venice*. When Shylock finds he cannot get his pound of flesh from Antonio,

nor even the moneys he lent him, he exclaims, "the devil give him good of it!" This doesn't seem bad enough to disturb a cat on a garden wall. Yet it fills the school-manager aforesaid with indignation. Strange, is it not? We wonder if the gentleman has read the Bible.

Shakespeare is a clean writer, though he used expressions then which he would not use now; indeed, the puritans would not let him use them. But puritanism in language is no evidence of morality in conduct. Thackeray well observed that our mouths may be cleaner than our forefathers' without our lives being purer. Without ever using an "improper" word, a man may be an utter scoundrel and a filthy beast. Ruskin knew what he was talking about when he said that girls should be allowed to browse at liberty in their fathers' libraries. He was a much wiser man than that South of England school-manager, who is probably a very good Christian—in his way.

We see it announced that the reports sent in to the World Missionary Conference number 1,000, and are to be issued in nine volumes. We imagine that one volume—and a slim one at that—would contain a list of all the genuine converts these missionaries have made.

"There are some, and their number increases, who are uncertain whether there is a God or not," says the Dean of Salisbury. "Some" is rather a deprecatory way of stating the position, but as to the increase in the number of this class there is no doubt whatever. When the Dean goes on to ask "What, in a general way, do men mean when they speak of God, or say there is a God?" we reply, nothing at all. When they mean anything definite or understandable, people generally use another word. "God" only comes into use when their understanding has reached its limits. God is then a general synonym for a state of mental vacuity. Hence the opportunity of the religious teacher; for religions begin where knowledge and understanding end.

Here is a fine specimen of mental confusion, taken from the same sermon. The Dean says he cannot believe that nature is without mind, "a titanic idiot, a colossal, blind, deaf, and dumb imbecility." But if nature is without mind how can it be an idiot, or an imbecile? An idiot and an imbecile possess a brain and a nervous system, although they do not function in an ordinary manner. Idiots possess intelligence, their idiocy being a proof of its presence. If nature were really idiotic the presence of mind would be demonstrated. As we have no reason to believe that nature possesses intelligence, to call it idiotic is itself idiotic—it is an evidence that the one who does so fails to realise the meaning of the words used. Of course, the Dean is merely indulging in the theological privilege of calling names, and trying to gain assent by awakening prejudice.

The Rev. Dr. Anderson, of Dundee, a great and shining light among New Theologians, is nothing if not rhetorical. He lives and moves and has his being in the cloudland of metaphysics, and visits solid earth but seldom. In his disdainful disregard of earthly history, he informs us that "Christ" is the richest word in our language. "It contains more meaning," he adds, "than any other term ever used by man." Had he said that "it contains more numerous and more conflicting and mentally destructive meanings than any other term ever used by man," he would have expressed a historical and incontrovertible truth. What he does say so often is the direct opposite of the truth. "Christ" is a word that has ever kept Christendom in a state of confused, insane, and murderous turmoil. The cool-headed historian, Ranke, estimated that the number of the victims of Christian persecution exceeded ten millions. That is one of the many ways in which the term "Christ" proved its superior preciousness. It would do Dr. Anderson incalculable good to face the facts—for once.

And yet, possibly, Dr. Anderson's rhetoric is not without its use. For one thing, it does its utmost to annihilate the Christ of history. According to this divine, Christ means "the Higher Self in every individual man." That is to say, neither Jesus nor Christ, as understood by the orthodox Church, ever existed. Both are symbolical terms, and are of value only when employed to signify the higher nature that lies dormant even in the lowest human being. After all, the New Theologians are, though by false pretences, hastening the disorganisation and dissolution of the Christian religion.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(All early dates cancelled until further notice.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £214 12s. 7d. Received since:—W. A. Underdown, 10s.

W. A. UNDERDOWN.—Pleased to hear from one who has known us and the *Freethinker* so long.

G. E. QUIRK.—We are not surprised that your letter was refused insertion. The newspapers you mention don't want free discussion. They hate it. We are glad to have your warm praise of the *Freethinker*.

T. O'NEILL.—The fact is mentioned in Draper's *Conflict Between Religion and Science*. Human flesh was frequently eaten by the Christian Crusaders, as may be seen in Michaud, Mills, and Von Sybil. You may see by the Old Testament that human flesh was eaten by the ancient Jews in times of siege and famine.

G. CAFFEY.—See "Acid Drops."

W. M.—We are not surprised at the specimens of newspaper nonsense you send us. The King's death seemed to act as a signal for all the idiots in the country to rush into print. If we could only believe that Edward the Seventh's influence kept them silent, there would be in this the strongest reason for regret at his decease. In all probability, though, their foolishness found expression in other directions.

WELL-WISHER.—You do not say what the subscription is for. Glad to hear that you and your husband spent many pleasant evenings at St. James's Hall in the winter. We hope it will be possible to have further courses of Sunday evening lectures there.

H. A. WILLIAMS.—You take no liberty; on the contrary, we are pleased to have your letter. Thanks.

H. PROSSER.—Of those who went to the river to be baptised, we daresay that some profited by the wetting. Cleanliness is next to godliness under Christianity as the south pole is next to the north pole.

W. McKELVIE.—Your suggestion *re* reprinting the Conference speeches for distribution is noted, and will receive consideration. We are afraid, however, they would make rather too large a pamphlet for gratuitous distribution.

J. PEARCE.—Articles dealing with Christian origins are continually appearing in the *Freethinker*. Some of them deal directly with the topic, others by way of allusion and illustration. You do not appear to attach enough importance to non-Jewish influences in the development of the Christian religion. We agree with you that if many of the "inspired" teachers of the past lived to-day they would run no small risk of confinement in an asylum—and Christians would be the first to propose their incarceration.

J. BRUCE.—Received, and will appear in due course. Please suit yourself about the other article named. Glad to know that you find Mr. Cohen's articles on "Freethought and Reform" helpful. We note your pleasure at Mr. Foote's return to his usual health, a feeling which is shared by all readers of this journal.

W. A. EVERETT.—We have already seen the leaflet you forward, but it is really not worth taking seriously—either it or its author. To devote special replies to such people, unless exceptional circumstances call for them, only lifts them out of the obscurity in which they would otherwise remain.

L. CHEETHAM.—Received. Pleased to find that the Rev. C. E. Walters' opinion as to the inefficiency of Secularism has been modified to the extent of bringing it into greater conformity with the truth. Most of those who sneer at the power of Freethought are constantly providing evidence in their teaching of its far-reaching influence.

Some answers to correspondents by Mr. Foote unavoidably stand over till next week.

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.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

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.

We cut the following from the June number of the *Humanitarian*:—

"We are extremely glad to hear that Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, is now convalescent, after a rather severe illness. The humanitarian cause has no truer friend than Mr. Foote, who for many years past has again and again expressed his strong condemnation of vivisection and the numerous other cruelties against which the League is contending. It is a source of great gratification to us that our principles have the support of some of the keenest and most logical thinkers of the times."

We are glad to welcome this sympathetic reference. We are very sorry, however, to see that the quarterly *Human Review* is now discontinued after completing its tenth volume. It did good service to a great cause in its too brief career, and its disappearance is another proof—if such were needed—of the difficulty in maintaining really advanced periodicals. We have seen so many excellent periodicals go under in our time that we sometimes regard the long life of the *Freethinker* as little short of a miracle.

Mr. H. S. Salt, who is one of the ablest and most devoted apostles of Humanism, has edited the *Human Review* during the ten years of its existence. He contributed many valuable articles himself and secured others by some of the best writers of the day; and the magazine was beautifully printed and got up; yet it only lived by the financial support of two generous friends of the cause it represented. "If humanitarians cared at all about their literature," Mr. Salt says, "the *Human Review* would have had a longer life." No doubt this is true, and it may be said once, but not twice. Nor is Mr. Salt, if we read him aright, the man to be discouraged by such an experience. He knows, as all true reformers do, how hard it is to love one's fellow men, in the common meaning of the words; yet he knows how good a thing it is, and how possible, in spite of all disillusion, to love them in the sense of serving them.

The Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. holds its Annual Picnic to-day (June 12). The place selected is Thurston, and brakes for the conveyance of the party will leave Woodside Station at 10 o'clock. The tickets, including luncheon and tea, are 3/9 each, cyclists 2/6. Tickets may be obtained of the secretary, Mr. W. McKelvie, 49 Penrose-street, Everton. We hope the weather will be favorable; all else necessary to a day's enjoyment will, we have no doubt, follow.

A few weeks back we called attention to the case of Mr. F. Schaller, who had been several times assaulted by a vindictive Christian, and had twice proceeded against his aggressor in the police-court. On each occasion the magistrate, Mr. Mead, had dealt with the case very leniently, and had taken occasion to lecture Mr. Schaller—quite unnecessarily—on his Freethought speaking. The same person, no doubt encouraged by his experience, repeated the assault and was brought before Mr. Denman on a warrant. The magistrate ordered him to find a surety of five pounds to keep the peace for twelve months, or in default to go to prison for fourteen days. We hope this will prove effective; but we are of opinion that, had the assault been committed on a Christian by a Freethinker, more stringent measures would have been taken earlier.

As we hinted last week, the suggested compromise of the Educational Settlement Committee bids fair to become so much waste paper. Dr. Clifford, who represents a considerable body of Nonconformists, will have nothing to do with it; and on the other side both the *Church Times* and the *Guardian* declare that Church of England people cannot accept the proffered solution of the difficulty. The pity is that men and women ranking as educational experts should waste their time in drawing up such documents instead of facing the situation with intelligence and courage, and plump for the just and final solution of secular education. To find such people assisting to retain in the schools an element that must always produce dissension and injustice is almost enough to make one despair of the sanity of human nature.

The Catholic Trade Union Congress, which met recently at Manchester, had, as was to be expected, no difficulty in carrying a resolution protesting against the introduction of the question of Secular Education into the Trade Union Congress and Labor Party Conference. As the Catholic Trade Union represents only an insignificant fraction of the Trade Unionists of the country, we do not suppose the resolution will seriously disturb other Trades Unionists.

Dreams.—II.

(Concluded from p. 363.)

WERE the story true, Joseph must have been the greatest curse, the greatest scourge of mankind that was ever known; for he deliberately and sanctoriously stole from the people not only all their money and goods and land, but also their liberty. Here is the record of his monstrous crime:—

"When money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph and said, 'Give us bread; for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.' And Joseph said, 'Give your cattle, and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.' And they brought their cattle unto Joseph; and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses; and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, 'We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land be not desolate.' And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them; so the land became Pharaoh's" (Genesis xlvii. 15-20).

And, in order to bind the chain of slavery more firmly upon them, we are told that, "as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof" (Genesis xlvii. 21). What greater crime than the enslaving of a nation could any being commit?

But, according to Bishop Wilson, this monstrous crime is not to be charged to Joseph's account; for, says he, "if God ordained it, was it Joseph's fault? Was Joseph to blame for it?" Certainly not! And this view is borne out by Joseph himself, who, when making himself known to his brethren, spoke as follows:—

"I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis xlv. 4, 5-8).

This atrocious crime, therefore, is chargeable to that being whom Christians describe as a "God of love." What a happy thought it is that this Bible story is a dream, and nothing more! But, dream though it be, it teaches one great lesson—that in all ages priestcraft and statecraft, have gone hand-in-hand. Joseph did not, because he could not, buy the land of the priests; for we read that "the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore, they sold not their lands" (Genesis xlvii. 22).

I have said that Joseph was a prince of dreamers and interpreters of dreams; but so also was Daniel, another Bible worthy. Indeed, in one respect, Daniel takes the cake; for he was not only a dreamer and an interpreter of dreams, but he could also, on a pinch, recall to others the dreams they had dreamed, and which they had forgotten. He did so in one notable case. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had dreamed a dream which greatly troubled him, but he could not remember the particulars; and because his "wise men" could not recall it to his mind, he threatened to destroy them. Daniel, however, saved their bacon, and his own too, by telling the king what it was that he had dreamt. This same king had another dream which greatly astonished Daniel; and well it might, for Daniel's interpretation of it was that the king should be driven from men, should take up his dwelling with the beasts of the field, and live upon grass as cattle do. And, according to the Bible, this really did happen; for it tells us

that Nebuchadnezzar "was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel iv. 33).

Of course, the only people who can swallow as truth such absurdities as these are those who aver, as I have heard them aver, that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, they would have believed it. Commentators, however, gullible as they are, draw the line here. None of them have the hardihood to say that they believe this portion of Scripture to be true, notwithstanding that perforce it must be as true as all other parts of holy writ. The celebrated Dr. Mead says: "The circumstances of the case agree so well with an hypochondriasis that, to me, it appears evident that Nebuchadnezzar was seized with this distemper, and under its influence ran wild into the fields, there fancying himself transformed into an ox, and fed on grass after the manner of cattle." This is all very pretty; but apologies for lies are quite as bad as the lies themselves. Those who are fond of the marvellous should read this book of Daniel, and the three tales which have been eliminated from it—"The History of Susanna," "The Song of the Three Children," and "The History of Bel and the Dragon." These latter tales have been rejected as apocryphal—as being additions interpolated by Hellenistic Jews; though why they should be treated as fables, and the book of Daniel as divine origin, no satisfactory reason was ever given. It goes without saying that the book of Daniel was considered to be canonical because of the vast amount of prophetic rubbish that has been based upon it. In the eighth chapter there is an account "of a vision which appeared unto Daniel" which has been made to fit in with certain historic facts; and these so-called fulfilled prophecies have been looked upon as indisputable evidence of the authenticity and veracity of the Bible. Unfortunately, however, for the believers in these prophecies, it has been proved that the book of Daniel was written a long time after the events supposed to be referred to had occurred; and, therefore, these so-called prophecies are no prophecies at all. According to Dr. Giles, the book of Daniel was written "about the middle of the second century before Christ"; and ever since the days of Porphyry its historical character has been disputed.

I shall refer to only one other Biblical dream; but it is the dream of dreams—the dream upon which the doctrine of Christianity rests; the dream in which, according to Matthew (ch. i. 18-20), "the angel of the Lord," in the character of a private detective, "appeared unto Joseph in a dream," and gave him information of a most astounding character. Now the passage in question should read that Joseph dreamed that an angel appeared unto him, not that "the angel appeared unto him in a dream"—a difference in meaning which is very great. Situated as Joseph was, and considering the age in which he lived, it was not at all unreasonable that he should have dreamed as he is said to have done. He had just received information as to the condition of his betrothed—that she was likely to become a mother—and it was only natural, therefore, that he should be greatly disturbed in his mind. It was while he was in this state—"while," as we are told, "he thought on these things"—that he fell asleep and dreamed. Of course, he dreamed about that of which he had been thinking; every dreamer does that. This is the basis of all dreams, the reason why we dream. And, in the circumstances, it was not at all unreasonable that he should have dreamed that some lustful angel had visited his betrothed, and that her condition was due to that visit. We may take it that Joseph was as ignorant, and as superstitious, as his fellow men; and we know that at that epoch of time, the universal belief was that supernatural beings could, and did, in human form, pay lustful visits to the daughters of men. Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (Bk. xviii. ch. 3) proves

this statement to the hilt. He also proves that such wonderful births as that of Jesus Christ were due, not to the lusts of gods or angels, but to the lusts of priests, or of men through the connivance and contrivance of priests. It was then, I say, not unreasonable for Joseph, in the circumstances, to have dreamed as he is said to have dreamed. The only unreasonable part of the matter is, that any sane person should believe that what Joseph the Second dreamed was true. If dreams were from God, if they were messages from spiritland, if they were edicts from the infinite and brimful of fate to human creatures, surely they would have been communicated—would be communicated—not by symbols which may mean anything or nothing, not in a hieroglyphic cypher to which there is no key, but in language so precise that no one could, or can, misunderstand them—so plain that "he may run that readeth it" (Habakkuk ii. 2).

But it may be asked: "Do not Freethinkers dream dreams? Do they not dream of a hereafter, of another world? Have they not hopes and fears of a future state?" Certainly they dream as Christians do. Most certainly they have hopes—that is, wishes and desires—regarding the future, as Christians have. But they differ from Christians in this respect; they have no fears of infinite justice, no belief in, and therefore no dread of, eternal pain and misery. The Christian doctrine is based upon fear, upon mortal terror that is engendered by ignorance and superstition.

Christians believe in hell and all its hideous surroundings. They worship an omnipotent being who, if their doctrine be true, is an omnipotent fiend—an omnipotent being who created mankind in order that he might torture the greater part of it in hell throughout eternity. For are we not told that "many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew xx. 16), that "straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew vii. 14.) To Freethinkers this belief is a hideous nightmare. If there be one thing of which they feel absolutely certain, it is that in the next world, if there be another world, there is no such place as hell.

The world of which Freethinkers dream is that depicted by Tom Moore in his poetic vision of *Paradise and the Peri*. This world of his consists of heaven and the surrounding universe. Its inhabitants are simply the Blest and the Unblest. The Blest, of course are in heaven. The Unblest are outside it—simply outside it—their only punishment being the knowledge that they cannot participate in the joys of Eden. Hell is not mentioned; such a place is unknown. The heroine of the poem is a fallen angel who yearns for re-admittance to the Paradise from which she has been excluded—

"How happy," exclaimed this child of air,
Are the holy spirits who wander there
Mid flowers that never shall fade or fall.
Though mine are the gardens of earth and sea,
And the stars themselves have flowers for me,
One blossom of heaven out-blooms them all!"

Go, wing thy flight from star to star,
From world to luminous world, as far
As the universe spreads its flaming wall;
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of Heaven is worth them all!"

Thus, and much more, spake the Peri; and to her came this reply from—

"The glorious angel who was keeping
The gates of Light, and saw her weeping:

'Nymph of a fair but erring line!
Gently he said, 'One hope is thine.
'Tis written in the Book of Fate,
'The Peri yet may be forgiven
Who brings to this eternal gate
The gift that is most dear to Heaven!'"
Go, seek it, and redeem thy sin—
'Tis sweet to let the Pardoned in.'

And forthwith the Peri commenced to search through earth and sky for the gift which should be her passport to Paradise.

It is not my intention to give even a faint outline of this exquisite poem. You must read it for yourselves. I want simply to call your attention to the gift which secured for the Peri her most cherished hope. It was a sinner's tear! Not the tear of one who had sinned against God, but of one who had sinned against his fellow men. He was a wearied man, with haggard brow, but fierce look.

"Sullenly fierce—a mixture dire,
Like thunder clouds, of gloom and fire;
In which the Peri's eye could read
Dark tales of many a ruthless deed.
The ruin'd maid—the shrine profan'd—
Oaths broken—and the threshold stained
With blood of guests! *there written*, all,
Black as the damning drops that fall
From the denouncing angel's pen,
'Ere mercy weeps them out again."

Yes, such dreams as these are the dreams of Freethinkers. To the Freethinker the hereafter means eternal happiness or eternal annihilation. It means, if the grave be an entrance to another world, that that world will be a world of light and gladness unclouded by the horror of an everlasting hell. If, on the contrary, there be behind the curtain of death nought but darkness, no injustice will be done to any human being, for all mankind will then be wrapt in the dreamless drapery of eternal sleep.

And what sane man will say that eternal annihilation is not preferable to, and more just, than eternal woe and misery? Who can believe in eternal woe? It means, horrible to relate, not eternal death—for that is simply annihilation—but eternal *dying*! It means excruciating agony that shall last forever—a never-ending fiendish miracle; for the tortured, quivering flesh of the victim must be re-created even whilst it is being destroyed. Who can believe such a blood-curdling doctrine? Who can believe that such a hellish doctrine was enunciated by one who taught that man should forgive his fellow man not seven times, but seventy times—which means always (Matthew xviii. 22). Surely the creature cannot feel and show more pity for, and sympathy with, suffering humanity than the Creator. If there be such a Creator, is it not the rankest blasphemy to attribute such atrocious cruelty to him?

The Freethinker knows that such a doctrine is false—knows that it cannot possibly be true. He knows that such persons as Adam and Eve never existed; that the story of the Fall is mere legend; and that, consequently, as there never was such a crime as original sin, the pathetic drama that is founded upon it is a tale, and nothing more. Strong in this knowledge, therefore, the Freethinker goes down to the grave in peace—to the grave where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest" (Job iii. 17). For this reason, too, we who are alive sorrow not for the dead, but for the living. Our hearts go out in sympathy with those who have been bereaved of loved ones—of husband, wife, child, or friend; but we sympathise not with "the dead, who know not anything.....for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave" (Ecclesiastes ix. 5, 10). To the living, we speak words of comfort; but to the dead one, when bending over his grave, we simply say "Good-by!" only "Good-by!"

The sun hath set,
But golden beams still linger in the sky—
Fond memories of the time when first we met—
Good-by!

The tree is dead,
Riven by forked lightning from on high;
But still its green boughs, life-like, wave o'er-head—
Good-by!

Never again
Shall evening twilight glad his weary eye;
The shadows darken, night comes on amain—
Good-by!

J. W. DE CAUX.

In all things let us have justice, and then we shall have enough liberty.—Joubert.

The Primitive Condition of Man.

EVIDENCES of the immense antiquity of the human race have progressively accumulated within the last seventy years. The claims of the earlier philosophical geologists are now substantiated by the discoveries of the investigators of prehistoric archæology, and the students and observers who have established the great science of culture have furnished abundant and conclusive testimony of man's existence upon this planet many tens, and more probably hundreds, of thousands of years ago.

Among the wonderful children of nineteenth century science, anthropology occupies a proud position. None of the numerous branches of the tree of knowledge display more spreading foliage or sounder ripened fruit. The harvested crops husbanded by travellers, explorers, and traders in various parts of the world render the fabled Creation story of Eden's Garden impossible of credence to any educated man.

When in 1839 the famous French savant, M. Boucher de Perthes, directed the attention of other scientists to the rudely chipped flint implements found imbedded in the previously undisturbed pits which were being exploited for their sand and gravel in the valley of the River Somme, in the vicinity of Abbeville, Picardy, his expressed opinion that they were due to human agency gave rise to a chorus of ridicule and utter unbelief. And the Abbé Bourgeois, some quarter of a century later, encountered similar incredulity when he exhibited his Thenay flints in progressive Paris. English geologists and antiquaries likewise surveyed the Somme relics askance; but when in 1859 they inspected the beds which yielded the flint implements, their doubts were completely dissipated by the overwhelming evidence of their genuineness. Moreover, not merely were they satisfied with the evidence afforded of the human handiwork exhibited, but they also had the supreme satisfaction of seeing with their own eyes a fine specimen of one of the chipped flints "*in situ* in its undisturbed matrix of gravel at a depth of seventeen feet from the original surface of the ground."

Scepticism and prejudice being thus conciliated or removed, an awakened interest deepened and developed research, with the result that similar implements were brought to light in England, in beds of gravel and sand and clay. The ancient gravel courses of the Thames and the Lea, the meanderings of which so largely determined man's migrations, supply abundant relics of his savage life in prehistoric times. As our charming writer, Mr. Edward Clodd, remarks:—

"We may take a run to the village of Caddington, near Dunstable, and noting the 'lakeside living place,' where Palæolithic man settled to work for a while, follow the course of the Lea to its junction with the Thames at Blackwall; gather chipped flints *en route* at Waltham, Edmonton, and Clapton, in short, all along the ancient clays and gravels, till we halt for a moment at Stoke Newington on 'an old surface floor which agrees well with the Palæolithic floor at Caddington.'"

From Salisbury Plain in the South, to the Yorkshire Ouse in the North, the river drifts of England have yielded implements of stone in the closest association with remains of such long extinct mammals as the woolly-haired rhinoceros and the mammoth. Scotland, however, in company with the Scandinavian peninsula, furnishes no evidence of man's presence in the earliest stone era, in which period he was scattered over the larger part of Europe.

In his classical work on *Ancient Stone Implements*, Sir John Evans arranges the drift implements under three headings. Firstly, flint flakes, intended for cutting instruments or arrow heads. Secondly, pointed weapons utilised as spear heads or lances. And thirdly, tongue-shaped tools whose surfaces were sharpened for cutting purposes.

These primitive instruments of aggression and domestic utility, all bearing the closest resemblance,

are not confined to the river drifts of England and France, but, Scandinavia excepted, are remarkably numerous in the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. "Their identity," states that great authority, Professor Boyd Dawkins,

"shows that the Palæolithic man who hunted the arnee [a variety of Indian buffalo] and the extinct hippopotamus in the forests of India; who wandered over Palestine and the valley of the Nile; who hunted the wild boar and stag, the mammoth, and probably the pigmy rhinoceros in the Mediterranean; was in the same rude state of civilisation as the hunter of the reindeer, bison, woolly rhinoceros, and horse in the forests of France and Britain."

Centuries have rolled by since the time of which we write. Our own island was then part of the continent of Europe. The English Channel and Dover's celebrated Straits had not come into being. The Mendip Hills were the habitat of the lion. The plains now hidden by the North Sea were the pastures of wild horses, the elk and reindeer, the as yet undomesticated ox, with countless lesser organisms. These feeding grounds were the home of a river whose tributaries were the various watercourses now known to us as the Elbe and Rhine, the Humber, the Tyne, and the Thames. Each stream, fissuring its channel as it flowed, "entombed therein the stone tools and weapons of man, and the bones of animals which the smacksmen on the Dogger Bank bring up in their nets in countless numbers. These fossil remains tell us what brute life surrounded man, and what varying climates prevailed."*

But the relics preserved in caves are far more interesting and informing than those hitherto surveyed. These objects are relatively recent when compared with the Palæolithic survivals from the river drifts. They are, however, of far different dates; the most modern are such implements as bronze knives, fragmentary remains of coarsely-smelted copper, and Roman or pre-Roman ceramics. By these are frequently associated with implements of bone and flint. The upper bed of stalagmite on the floor of the celebrated cavern, Kent's Hole, near Torquay, has furnished remains of a very remarkable character. Among these deposits were the remains of a very mixed group of quadrupeds: the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, reindeer, Irish elk, cave lion, cave bear, horse and other animals; while the archæological finds comprised various flint flakes and cores, with specimens of bone awls, harpoons, and a needle with a well-perforated eye. The French caves of Dordagne yielded stone implements. Finally, the later age of Iron was reached, and this Viking period, covering 700 to 1000 A. D. was coincident with a vanishing stone age which long lingered in the farthest north of Lapland and Finland.

At a later date the cave men appear, and the indubitable records of their existence remain. Presumably they were the evolved descendants of the drift men; they had certainly advanced to a superior state of culture. Their implements display a much higher stage of workmanship; the materials employed were more numerous, and the greatly extended range of their activities is made manifest by the new uses to which their tools and weapons were put. Another index of mental and cultural development is to be witnessed in those artistic achievements through which these advancing savages of the Reindeer period have won immortality's crown. Beasts of the chase were the subjects that these prehistoric artists depicted with a flint's point upon the surfaces of bones. An engraved outline of a mammoth, and numerous stags browsing knee-deep in the luxuriant grass, being notable. The most realistic art illustrations of this period have been found in the cave dwellings of Dordogne. But if we survey these discoveries as a whole, without special reference to locality, we possess in one example, scratched on a fragment of antler, a wild ox at pasture, while stealthily approaching him is a hunter

* *Primitive Man*, p. 39.

Primitive Man, p. 44.

in the posture of a spear-thrower. Another represents a nude savage hurling a spear at a horse, while a third reveals a group of reindeer. Even when the materials utilised by the artist were broken, thus preventing the finished representation of the figures, the true proportions are faithfully given, nor are any of the necessary details sacrificed. In that prehistoric masterpiece, the much-reproduced delineation of a mammoth on an ivory fragment, the animal's hairy covering, shaggy aural organs, and upwardly curved tusks, but with its feet hidden by the high grass, are all conscientiously portrayed. In his brilliant book on the evolution of art, that eminent critic, Dr. Solomon Reinach, goes so far as to declare that "If we set aside the primæval art of the reindeer-hunters we see that before the fruition of Hellenic genius only two great schools of art had flourished in the world—those of Egypt and Chaldea." In the light of this opinion it appears a thousand pities that the reindeer artists were barren to posterity.

Although we possess no archaeological record of the presence of the human race in the Scandinavian north in those periods of remote antiquity to which the river-drift remains and cave preservations elsewhere bear witness, Worsaae was in a position to give the following approximate chronology of the most distinctive eras for that geographical province. There was an early stone age, ranging from 8000 to 4000 B.C.; this is succeeded by a later stone epoch, gravitating between 2,000 and 1,000 years before our era. The primitive Bronze Age is next in order of succession, estimated from 1000 to 500 B.C., and this stands for a time when a stone age persisted in the extreme north, and an age of iron had arisen in the south. The late Bronze Age came into being about 500 B.C., and continued down to the commencement of our era, at a time when a pre-Roman civilisation had developed in Western and Central Europe. The early iron age flourished from 1 to 450 A.D., when bronze was still in use in the more inaccessible retreats of Scandinavia. Next, the middle age of iron, about 450 to 700 A.D., when Romano-German influences powerfully predominated. Finally, the later age of iron was reached, and this Viking period, covering 700 to 1000 A.D., was coincident with a vanishing stone age which long lingered in the farthest north of Lapland and Finland.

The practically limitless collections of primitive man's handiwork, together with other proofs of his upward progressive evolution, are now stored in national museums in which the student may conveniently study them. The museums of Norway and Sweden exhibit the relics and remains of the Iron Age in a manner calculated to inspire enthusiasm in evolutionary studies; the museums of Constance and Zurich are particularly rich in the prehistoric lake dwellings so characteristic of the "Playground of Europe." In the City of the Seven Hills, the new archaeological museum, under the direction of Pigorini, is rapidly filling with the prehistoric remains of Italy. The wonderfully varied objects disinterred from the overwhelmed pagan cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum are stored in a museum of unrivalled interest at Naples. And in the United States' National Museum at Washington, America treasures a collection of ethnological and anthropological importance which already rivals the largest institutions of the Eastern World.

The vast storehouse of evidence bearing upon man's position in the realm of living nature all supports the doctrine of development. In this article an attempt has been made to render some account of the early beginnings of the human race. In another I hope to trace his further general advance from the Palæolithic or early Stone Age into that higher and more comprehensive Neolithic period, or later Stone Age, which presents even more conclusive evidence of the truth that our remote progenitors, and those that succeeded them, slowly and painfully emerged through savagery to barbarism, onward to a civilisation which still bears abundant survivals of our brute beginnings.

T. F. P.

Correspondence.

MRS. EDDY AND JESUS CHRIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of May 8, under the heading of "Persecution," you say: "Mrs. Eddy, in one of her writings, quotes from the New Testament on one page, signed J. C., meaning, I suppose, Jesus Christ; and on the opposite page she quotes from *Science and Health* and signs it Mary Baker G. Eddy."

This is an absolutely definite statement, which should obviously never have been made unless the writer was prepared to give chapter and verse for it. I think you will agree with me that no matter how much you may differ from another person's views, you should not be betrayed into making statements of such a nature as this unless you have previously verified them, and are prepared to prove them. Even in this case, it would be only right to indicate the place in which the words quoted occur.

Will you permit me to say that I know of no such place, and am confident that the writer of the words has simply fallen into the error of accepting something about someone from whose opinions he differs without taking the trouble to satisfy himself of its accuracy.

If he is able to substantiate his statement, will he kindly say where in Mrs. Eddy's writings this occurs. If he is not able to do this, will he kindly admit, as publicly as he has made the charge, that he is wrong. Whether a man calls himself a Freethinker or a Christian, I presume he is bound by the same code of fairness.

FREDERICK DIXON.

[The quotation referred to appeared in our reprint of Mr. Mangasarian's lecture on Persecution. We have every faith in Mr. Mangasarian's accuracy, and have no doubt that he will supply the proof when this meets his eye. As, however, no reply from him can be received for about three weeks, we print Mr. Dixon's letter as requested.—EDITOR.]

AVIATION AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Aeronautics is the topic of the hour, or, to pun on a French phrase, one might say it is "in the air." It might therefore be of interest to note that the first aerial flight ever made was accomplished by a Freethinker, Michel Montgolfier (1740—1810) on June 5, 1783, with a fire balloon. He was the friend of the astronomers Delambre and Lalande. The latter says Montgolfier was an Atheist, and includes him in his supplement to *Maréchal's Dictionnaire des Athées*.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

As long as the masses were believers—that is to say, as long as the same sentiments were almost universally professed by a people—freedom of research and discussion was impossible. A colossal weight of stupidity pressed down upon the human mind. The terrible catastrophe of the Middle Ages, that break of a thousand years in the history of civilisation, is due less to the barbarians than to the triumph of the dogmatic spirit among the masses.—*Ernest Renan, "Recollections of My Youth."*

AN IMPROVED HYMN.

Little six-year-old Willie was persuaded by his mother to remain after Sunday-school and attend the Easter services in the church. He was very obedient and tried to join in all the hymns. One of the hymns sung was "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me."

The next day Willie was seen sitting on the front steps singing away in all earnestness: "Jesus, save a pie for me."

INTERRUPTED PRAYER.

Two brothers were saying their prayers before going to bed. George, having finished, was inclined to tease Philip, who was still praying. Philip, becoming angry, exclaimed "Please, God, excuse me until I knock the stuffin' out of George."

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.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, A. B. Moss, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, E. Saphin, Lectures.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Walter Bradford and J. Darby. Newington Green: 12 noon, James Rowney, "God, the Flesh, and the Devil. Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, H. King and T. Dobson. Finsbury Park: 3.30, J. W. Ramsey, "Salvation by Faith." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King and T. Dobson.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, S. Cook, "The Atheism of Charles Bradlaugh."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, F. A. Davies, "Following Jesus."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Moss, a Lecture. The Green, Enfield: 7, H. Ball and L. Dawson.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

Huddersfield BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Cross): 8, G. T. Whitehead, a Lecture. Saturday, at 8, a Lecture.

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