

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man!
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day.*

—A. C. SWINBURNE.

Death the Democrat.

EVERYONE has heard of the great Saladin, the Mohammedan ruler, whose humanity was such a striking contrast to the brutality of the Christian Crusaders. When the Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they turned it into a shambles; when Saladin recaptured it he did not shed a drop of gratuitous blood; on the contrary, he spent a large sum of his own money in redeeming captives, whose misery filled his heart with compassion. At his death this splendid "infidel" ordered charities to be distributed to the poor, without distinction of Jew, Christian, or Mohammedan. This was a sublime act in that age and in those circumstances. But I have always more admired—if that be possible—the poetical inspiration of another death-bed act of his. "Take this cloak," he said to his servant, "show it to the faithful, and tell them that the ruler of the East could take but one garment with him into the grave."

There is something in the lofty and stern monotheism of Islam more favorable to the sentiments of democracy than anything to be found in the Christian religion; and doubtless this was in part the inspiration of Saladin's death-bed message to the world; but another, and probably a larger, part of it was due to his own superiority of nature. He had something of the poet in him. He saw through the shows and masks of things. He perceived their naked reality. He knew what life is, and what death is. We are all equal at birth, all senseless and helpless; and afterwards, beneath all the distinctions of society, we are less unequal than we appear; and when death comes the equality is once more pronounced. A husband standing beside his dead wife is just the same sad picture in a palace or a cottage. A mother weeping over her dead child recka not whether the furniture of the room be mean or sumptuous. The accidents of life sink into nothingness when the essentials assert themselves. And then comes the final and eternal equality of the grave. All fare alike at that last supper—"not where he eats, but where he is eaten." Nay, a tall pauper inherits more earth at the finish than a shorter nobleman; and the little worm knows no distinction between king and peasant.

Death makes all odds even. Hats off, then, to Death the democrat! Death the leveller! compared with whom the most fanatical Socialist on earth is mild, and the wildest Anarchist an old-fashioned reactionary.

It must be this sentiment, however unconsciously it operates, that prompts the Frenchman to lift his hat and stand still when a funeral passes. The rougher Englishman is apt to think this theatrical, but it is nothing of the kind. France is the land of social equality. Economical and class distinctions obtain there as elsewhere, but the moral distinction

between the various sections of society is comparatively slight. This is partly a legacy of the Revolution, and partly owing to the genius of the people. It is one of the best features of the French character. For my part, I think the better of my kind when I see the Frenchman's lifted hat and bent head. Let the coffin be poor or costly, death is there, and love and grief, which make us all akin.

Nothing I have read about Bismarck has touched me like the following story told by one who knew him well. Bismarck was a good family man, and kind to his poor neighbors. Away from the turmoil of politics, and the glare of high public life, he found his humanity. When his old wife died, the veteran statesman sat in his nightshirt, with naked feet, on her bedside, weeping like a child. That is a sad-sweet picture, but I like the other better. Here it is, in the very words of the narrator:—

"In the home circle he was perfectly charming, easy-going, and good-natured. He was passionately fond of children, and I have seen him over and over again have a game with the little ones of his gardener, who were very familiar with him, and would not hesitate to climb upon his knee. Once, when his gardener's little girl died, the great statesman went to condole with him. He was dreadfully upset, and, whilst holding the poor father's hand, burst into tears, for he was very fond of the child. He kissed the little corpse, and himself placed a bunch of roses in its hand."

This is true life. This is eternal. Those tears of sympathy with a poor brother man in his distress are better to think of than all the blood shed at Gravelotte and Sedan. Weaving the threads of subtle diplomacy, flashing the sword of conquest, changing frontiers, and making empires, are great things in the eye of the world. But the finest thing Napoleon ever said was, "Respect the burden, madam," as he drew aside a proud lady who stood in the way of a loaded laborer; and the finest thing I have read about Bismarck is this story of his sharing the sorrow of a poor father over the corpse of his little child.

Standing out against all the bloody villainies of David is his grief over his favourite child. "O Absalom, my son, my son; would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." And through all the tumultuous glories of Rome, and the shouts of her legions, and the ring of their swords on hostile helmets, pierces the musical wail of Catullus over his dead brother—a note of immortal love and grief that will find an echo in human hearts for ever.

Walt Whitman was well inspired in singing a hymn to Death. It is the great democrat and the great leveller. And it is the great softener of the human heart, as it is the great renewer of humanity. Death removes, and birth supplies, and thus the human race is kept ductile and progressive. Death also demonstrates our common nature by proving our common mortality. How absurd are pompous inscriptions on tombstones! Great was he? a whole hand higher than his fellows? Yet he lies here, and all his pride has dwindled to those fading lines on that crumbling stone. We turn away to memorials more in keeping with the scene; to simple words of grief and affection, of rest and peace. All sprang from Nature and had their little day of mingled pleasure and pain, and all return for their last long sleep to her bosom.

G. W. FOOTE.

Herbert Spencer and Religion.

MOST people who are at all interested in religious or philosophical speculations are familiar with the "Unknowable" of Herbert Spencer. It is always printed with a capital letter, which apparently has the same effect on them as a uniform is said to have on a German. Sometimes it appears as an "Ultimate Reality," or as an "Infinite and Eternal Energy," or as an "Unconditioned"; but in whichever guise it comes upon the stage it is equally impressive. In itself it is a harmless enough speculation. Its philosophical value is not very great; its scientific value is *nil*. It solves no difficulty and answers no question. We repeat the formula that all things proceed from an Infinite and Eternal Energy, that this is the Ultimate Reality, but *what* it is must remain forever Unknowable, and find that in relation to any and every question we are where we were before.

Strangest of all is the use made of these formulas by hard-pressed defenders of religion. They seize upon Spencer's assertion of the existence of an "Unknowable" as though it were equal to a demonstration of the existence of God. They cry out to the Atheist: "You believe in only matter and force. But here is the great Agnostic, Herbert Spencer, who believes that all things proceed from an Infinite and Eternal Energy." And the Atheist is supposed to be reduced to silence at once. Well, after all, this is only repeating the Atheist's position. Force and energy are, in physics, substantially convertible terms. To call it infinite and eternal is only repeating the Atheist's statement that to speak of it as being created or annihilated is to say that which is arrant nonsense, because it is unthinkable. You do not add anything to the statement by printing "Infinite" and "Eternal" and "Energy" with capital letters. Or if the defender of Deity says—as he does often say—"Ah, but Spencer admits that all things are the result of this Infinite and Eternal Energy," the Atheist may reply with Sairey Gamp, "Who's a-deniging of it?" Certainly not the Atheist. He does not deny that all phenomena are the expressions of infinite force; on the contrary, he has been asserting it all along. And on the other hand, what the Theist wants is not an infinite force—with or without capital letters—but an infinite personality; not an eternal energy, but an uncreated and unconditioned intelligence. That he should accept so gratefully the Spencerian abstraction as the equivalent of his God is only proof of how desperate is his condition. Drowning men clutch at straws, and a disintegrating Deity hopes to renew its being by clinging to capital letters.

How far and in what sense Spencer's use of these phrases is justifiable will be considered later. For the moment, at least, let us grant that all Spencer says on this head is justifiable. Does that help the believer in Deity? Not in the least. What he wants is a personality, an intelligence animating and dominating the universe. An Ultimate Reality, or an Infinite Energy, or an Inscrutable Existence, or an Unknowable, will not give him this. It is a special kind of Energy, a special kind of Existence, a special kind of Reality he is in search of; and he finds no help in his search from the writings of Spencer. Nor does Spencer's curious statement that this "Ultimate Reality" must be "higher" than personal help him. If it is higher than personal it is not personal, just as surely as though it were lower. It must be personal, and not something above or below personality. The Theist who fastens on this expression is much like the man who boasted that, owing to his knowing the promoters of a lottery, his ticket came next to the winning number.

What is Spencer's doctrine of an "Ultimate Reality" that is at the same time "Unknowable"? Following a line of thought that has been steadily gaining ground since the time of Hume—although much older than Hume—Spencer holds that all our knowledge is, in final analysis, a knowledge of mental states and their relations. Our consciousness of the

existence of a universe is a consciousness of mental states; beyond this we know nothing, and can know nothing. Nevertheless, he holds that while we cannot *know* anything beyond consciousness, the condition of human thinking obliges us to assume something existing as the eternal cause of our conscious states. Just as black implies something that is not black, hard something that is not hard, so we must assume as against the conditioned, relative existence of our conscious life, an unconditioned, absolute existence lying beyond. It is this assumed, but unknown, cause of all phenomena that Spencer distinguishes by the names of the "Unknowable," the "Unconditioned," the "Absolute," etc., and which yields so much consolation to religionists because of the reverential manner in which Spencer speaks of it.

It is not my purpose to discuss the "Unknowable" in all its philosophical implications, but only so far as it has a bearing upon religious beliefs. Still, I may point out in passing that even philosophically Spencer is untrue to his own Agnosticism in speaking of this Unconditioned existence as the *cause* of phenomena. For causation belongs to the world as we know it. As Spencer himself would point out, it is a relative term, and has only validity within the sphere of phenomena. But a cause is only a cause in relation to an effect. Destroy the one and you destroy the other. Thus, either the Unknowable is a real cause of phenomena, in which case it ceases to be the Unknowable, and becomes part of the chain of phenomena, or it is not part of a phenomenal series, and cannot stand to it in the relation of a true cause.

There is a difficulty in referring to Spencer's theory of religion, for the reason that he really lays down two theories. One is contained in his *Principles of Sociology*, and this in its main outlines I heartily accept. In this theory all gods are traced back to ghosts, all ghosts to subjective delusions, and the whole of religious beliefs and doctrines as the product of an inadequately equipped human intelligence seeking to frame a theory of things. But in addition to this theory Spencer propounds another, each possessing the quality of parallel lines—they never by any chance meet at any point. This last theory is concerned with his famous doctrine of the "Unknowable." This is famous only because of the support it is thought to give to religion; without this it would have ranked as a more or less harmless speculation of no particular value to anyone or anything. For the Spencerian philosophy does not rest upon the "Unknowable," but upon the Persistence of Force. All his analyses bring readers back to this, and it is on this that his philosophy rests. The "Unknowable" is in all probability a survival of his own Theistic belief, which was in full blast when he commenced writing, and was fairly strong when the Synthetic Philosophy was first planned. It became more attenuated in after years, and disappears altogether in the more important volumes of his work. If any reader of Spencer drops the "Unknowable" altogether, he will realise how unimportant it is to the teachings of the Synthetic Philosophy as a whole.

Mr. Spencer's theory of the nature and function of religion and science may be summarised as follows:—

1. The conditions of human thought compel the recognition of an unknowable reality of which all phenomena are the expression.
2. The function of religion, from the earliest time, has been the assertion of the existence of an unknowable reality, and to keep alive a consciousness of the insoluble mystery surrounding it.
3. The function of science is to deal with the known and the knowable, with all that is presented in experience, with the world of phenomena exclusively.
4. Religion having for its subject matter the unknown and the unknowable, while science has for its subject matter the known and the knowable, religion and science are not antagonistic, but complementary. Conflicts only arise when one trespasses on the other's department, and a recognition of the true line of demarcation effectually reconciles these hitherto hostile forces.

A very obvious criticism of number one is that, in affirming a consciousness of an "Unknowable," its quality of unknowableness is annihilated. Existence can only be predicated of that which affects consciousness in some manner; and, so far as I have the faintest apprehension or consciousness of anything as existing, to that extent it ceases to be the unknowable. Our knowledge of it may be imperfect or altogether erroneous; we may even feel it to be impossible that we should ever rightly understand it; but, so far as we do think about it, we assimilate it to the rest of our mental states, even though it be only that of mere force. Unknowableness, in brief, is not a property of a thing by which it may be apprehended; it is merely the name for complete mental vacuity. It does not belong to the thing itself; it belongs to us. It is a pure negation, which Spencer, by sheer verbal play, converts into a quasi-positive conception. A consciousness of ignorance can never be made a satisfactory basis on which to build a positive affirmation, nor can a consciousness of things unknown ever be any more than a consciousness of ignorance.

But, says Spencer, "to say that we cannot know the Absolute is, by implication, to affirm that there is an Absolute." Certainly, if we take an infirmity of language to be equivalent to a necessity of existence, not otherwise. When I say that we cannot know a four-sided triangle I do not affirm, by implication, that such a figure exists. I am merely affirming that the expression, a four-sided triangle, involves conceptions that cannot be brought together in consciousness, and so dismiss it as being without meaning. And Spencer himself is my authority for saying that this is good ground for such dismissal.

The truth is that each of Spencer's attempts to prove the existence of an "Unknowable" only proves the existence of the unknown, and this is not in dispute at any time or by anyone. We are told that "a known cannot be thought of apart from an unknown," and also,—

"Positive knowledge does not, and never can, fill the whole region of possible thought. At the utmost reach of discovery there arises, and must ever arise, the question, What lies beyond? As it is impossible to think of a limit to space so as to exclude the idea of space lying outside that limit, so we cannot conceive of any explanation profound enough to exclude the question, What is the explanation of the explanation?"

With all this one can agree, only it does not bring us a step nearer an "Unknowable." It is perfectly true that at no time does the limits of thought equal the limits of existence, and that the very limitations of thought suggest something beyond. But it is an obvious impossibility to think of what lies beyond this boundary as unknowable. So far as we think of it, it is thought of as the unknown, but as the possibly knowable. The unknown is the conceivably knowable. We think of it as the traveller thinks of an unknown country—a place concerning which nothing is known, but which, when seen, will offer at most only new modifications of soil, with fresh forms of plant and animal life, all substantially identical with what is already known.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Fallacies.

WHAT is a fallacy? The logicians tell us that there are various kinds of fallacies to be met with in the process of reasoning as conducted by multitudes of people. If we adopt Mill's classification, and there is no better, we have to deal with five distinct species of fallacy. There are *a priori* fallacies, or fallacies of simple inspection; and there are also fallacies of observation, of generalisation, of ratiocination, and of confusion. Very often we come across all these different forms of false reasoning within the compass of a single philosophical or theological treatise; and when they are resorted to in order to prop-

up exploded superstitions, it is the bounden duty of honest thinkers to expose them. Now, as a matter of fact, superstitions survive because their devotees support them by arguments which are claimed to be decisive when in reality they are not, or by inferences or conclusions drawn from false premises. In the sophistical employment of such fallacies Christian apologists are altogether unrivalled, and the sophistication is often so perfect that it is extremely difficult for untrained minds to detect where the fallacies lie, and how to discredit them.

Take the subject of Creation as a first instance. The Rev. J. D. Freeman, M.A., preaching recently in the Belvoir-street Church, Leicester, on "Nature's Testimony to God," is reported to have spoken thus:—

"Suppose you should wake up some morning to find a railroad track around the world, bridging the wide oceans, and on a colossal car a weight equal to that of the Alps and Andes combined, and this car making the circuit of the globe once every sixty minutes, and doing it so smoothly that there should be no jar or slightest noise, would you not think that some Deity had visited this planet whilst you slept? But such a wonder would be trivial compared with that of the daily revolution of the earth upon its axis, and its annual circuit round the sun; in the one case turning so smoothly that an infant's slumbers are not disturbed, and in the other whirled through space at the rate of 19,000 miles an hour, and kept in its aerial grooves without variation from century to century."

Now, the reverend gentleman imagines a monstrosity, and then ventures to compare that unnatural and absurd and impossible phenomenon with some of the most beautifully natural phenomena of the Universe; and the conclusion he draws is this: "If the sudden appearance of my fantastic railway, with its more grotesque car, would prove that both were constructed by a Deity, does it not follow that 'the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork'?" Is not the fallacy of such strange reasoning self-evident? But before proceeding any further let us listen to Mr. Freeman once more:—

"The table at which you sit to write, the paper upon which you inscribe your words, the ink which flows from your pen, and the hand that wields it, all these things challenge thought, they all demand an explanation of their origin.....It seems to me they were created by someone. Certainly it is easier to believe in an eternal, creative mind, than in the eternity of matter."

The whole argument here rests on the gratuitous assumption that the raw material of the Universe must have been created by someone. It is quite as easy to conceive of matter existing eternally, as for a period of a hundred, a thousand, or a million years. Besides, if it was ever created, it must have been created out of nothing, which would have been a flagrant violation of the great law that out of nothing nothing comes. It may be excusable to ask, "Who invented the steam-engine?" but no scientist would ever dream of inquiring who made that rock or that mountain. The geologist can demonstrate *how* the rocks have been formed. He knows of a time when they were not, and he can foresee a time when they shall have vanished; but any inquiry as to their personal maker would be to him insufferably stupid. A beginning to the "raw materials" of the Universe is unthinkable. The idea of an immaterial Person creating a material substance is laughably absurd. The various creation-stories are intensely interesting and instructive when treated as wholly mythical, but become quite intolerable when taken as historically true.

Mr. Freeman makes much of the argument from design, but forgets that that argument is a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. He refers to "the countless and marvellous adaptations to be found in Nature," but he makes no mention of the terrible mal-adaptations, which are at least equally countless and marvellous. There are many exquisite harmonies in Nature, but side by side with them there are as many jarring disharmonies. What Mr. Freeman says is true, but there is no valid argument in it

until what he neglects to say is supplied. What he states about the perception and memory and reason and personality of man is incontrovertible; but there is no sound argument in it until it is placed alongside of what he omits to state. "Personality in man," claims Mr. Freeman, "argues personality in its author." This preacher must keep on hugging the unscientific idea of creation. But let us take him on his own ground, and see where it lands us. The argument is that whatever attributes the creature exhibits must exist in its maker. Man is a personality, and this fact argues personality in his originator. But we learn from astronomy and geology that the Universe must have existed for millions of years before life and personality appeared in it. These sciences teach us that Nature, as we know it to-day, is the product of a process of evolution extending over a period inconceivably long. Now, if Mr. Freeman is consistent, he will admit that his own logic unmercifully drives him to the admission that when God first created matter he was himself devoid of life and personality, that he remained in that curious state for innumerable millenniums, and that life and all its attributes have been evolved in him at precisely the same rate as that at which they have been evolved in the material Universe. Mr. Bernard Shaw is consistent, and resolutely maintains that the evolution of Deity has been identical with that of the Universe. But there is much more than this in Mr. Freeman's article. Whatever qualities the creature possesses are also present in its Creator. Hence the ferocity which expresses itself in the lion and the tiger and the wolf is only a reflection of a corresponding ferocity in their Maker. If Mr. Freeman's argument is valid, there is no escape from this conclusion. The ancient Israelites, in their practices, unconsciously acted on this principle, in that they invariably held Jehovah responsible for their own deeds of cruelty and barbarity. No wonder that they called him "a man of war"! The truth is, then, that, when *all* the facts are taken into account, the argument for creation completely breaks down. In the light of all the facts, Mr. Bernard Shaw's Deity is absurdly impotent and useless, and Mr. Freeman's "Our Father who art in heaven" becomes a hideous mockery.

Another instance of false reasoning in support of Christianity is to be found in the case of those who argue that the only way to Reality is through Illusion. In a general way this is perfectly true; but in the sense intended by Christian apologists it is the opposite of true. It is true that sunrise is an illusion, and that men cherished this illusion until some great astronomer stumbled upon the reality. But it is not true to say that the illusion led to the reality. That illusion would have held us to this day had it not been for the man of science in whose hand it melted clean away. And yet only the other day a great preacher assured his hearers that Jesus Christ converts illusions into gorgeous realities. "The mirage shall become a pool," he kept on repeating for half an hour. "The great Teacher," he said, "he who has spread out this mighty book called Nature, has not failed to use the power of illusion to get us to reality." Are we to infer from this that God dazzled the imagination of Columbus with the illusion of getting to the Orient by way of the West in order that he might discover the great reality of America? Are we to suppose that the Almighty fired the fancy of a certain man with the illusion of finding new and richer land on purpose that he might go out and make the great discovery of the Mississippi River? What we find is often better than what we seek; but it is idiotic to imagine that there is a God who sends men out on false scents in order that they may drop upon something they had never dreamed of. Fancy driving Abraham out of his country in search of Canaan that he might find Paradise beyond the tomb!

The preacher's great point was that the mere illusions and dreams of other religions and countries become most precious realities in Christianity and

Christendom. It is frankly admitted that in all religions there are clusters of illusions which have never led to realities. The Greek and Roman and Jewish religions bristled with illusions, some of them harmless, and more injurious. What we confidently deny is that Christianity is a religion of realities. "The mirage of Greece," said the preacher, "was beauty and wisdom. Greece had wisdom and beauty"; and therefore, we add, beauty and wisdom were *not* entirely a mirage in Greece. It is nothing but prejudice that says, "We look to Jesus; here is one wiser than any Greek." We hold, on the contrary, that Socrates, for example, was much wiser than Jesus. The speech of that great philosopher on the eve of his murder was stronger, wiser, and manlier than that attributed to the Galilean on the eve of his. "And Rome had her dream, her mirage—the dream of universal empire," the preacher continued. "But Rome dissolved and the dream faded." Surely, no sane man, with the slightest knowledge of history, would claim success for Jesus where Rome had failed. The Galilean has not conquered yet, and those who sing his praises now admit that they are having a hard time of it. A universal kingdom of God is at present a long way from its predicted establishment. The belief in it is a pure illusion, and is responsible for many vain delusions as well. The whole argument is fundamentally fallacious.

J. T. LLOYD.

Catholicism, Chaos, or Atheism?

WHETHER the Roman Catholic Church is, or is not, making real headway in England and Northern Germany—the two Protestant strongholds in Europe—is a question often discussed and variously answered. Certain it is that the Catholics are at present active in these two countries, and lose no opportunity of displaying their activity. We have just seen Westminster Cathedral consecrated with mediæval pomp. Every week sees the issue of a number of books on some aspect or other of the "Catholic revival," and prominence is given to Catholic movements by all sections of the press. I know from my own experience that many of the faithful in Germany hold quite optimistic views, based on misleading statements made to them by the priests, of the progress of their religion in our country. Protestantism, as representing anything like a coherent body of doctrine, is vanishing from Germany: perhaps the process of dissolution is more rapid there than it is in England. That is a point, however, on which there may be difference of opinion; and, while every Catholic can see the facts, he sometimes misinterprets them. In Berlin alone, a few months ago, the daily average of those leaving the Established Church was about 800, and in the Kultusministerium (Department of Public Instruction and Worship) several extra clerks had to be engaged to make the necessary alterations to relieve the backsliders of further payment of the Church tax. Some German religious periodicals affected to take a very light view of this defection, which "would only rid the Church of undesirable members"; but let anyone read between the lines and say whether the Churches are in no way distressed. Looking homeward, what do we find? Recent reports show that last year the Congregationalists lost 14,000 Sunday scholars, and the Baptists 5,000 communicants, while the Methodists admit the heaviest decrease known for years. The Anglicans, too, are far from comfortable. Many of their churches are empty, and the paucity of their communicants, in proportion to the population, is another source of anxiety to them. "Protestantism," indeed, is a term vehemently repudiated by a large section of the Established Church. The adherents of this section style themselves "Anglo-Catholics," and it has always been a moot point which of the other three branches of Christendom in England they love the most—the Low Church party, the Roman Catholics, or the

Nonconformists. All this helps to prove that Protestantism, from its very nature as a system that is rooted in supernaturalism in some of its grossest forms, and that yet claims the right to handle such delicate questions as "Christian truth" freed from authority, is, and ever has been, on precarious ground. For in the moment of denying authority Protestants are forced to assert that religion must rest ultimately on authority, and they find its source in a written revelation. In interpreting this revelation, however, they want to use their private judgment—a thing that has no finality. Consequently, it is found necessary from time to time to reconcile the sacred record with science and reason and a later moral consciousness, to make it "progressive"; and, despite the complete success with which theologians have accomplished this task, and the fact that they are able to flaunt in the face of the "infidel" or the waverer long lists of scientific men who are ready to declare that there is no antagonism between religion and science "properly understood," it would seem that there are many in the Churches who are incapable of understanding "properly," for every day we hear much of "religious unrest" and "perplexed faith." The somewhat wild statements about the "Scarlet Woman," the "Roman menace," and "papal aggression," indulged in every now and then by a certain class of Protestants, are a sign of weakness. To the Freethinker, calmly surveying the whole religious horizon, it is no matter for astonishment that some unemancipated minds, bewildered and oppressed by the evident signs of disintegration in what is called Protestantism, should seek refuge in Rome, and that others, probably never anything else than Catholic, should be attracted by her gorgeous ritual. To be just to those called "converts" by some and "perverts" by others, it must be said that they see at least that the faith cannot stand if doctrines, once upheld by all Christians, are true only in a mystical or spiritual sense, and not in an absolute or historical sense. They may well plead that their change of front represents something honest than the attitude of the apologist who, with a haste that can only be called indecent, rushes forth to tell them that the Higher Criticism has strengthened his faith, without even waiting to find out what the Higher Criticism will establish. Hence the defection of some Protestants to the *visible* centre of authority that regards itself as the only legitimate Church of Christ, and offers tranquility of soul to him that is prepared to pay the price—to allow his soul, such as it is, to be locked into the prison-house.

Newman, in his *Apologia*, admits that there are difficulties in the articles of Christian creed, whether as held by Catholics or by Protestants; but he says that he was able to accept certain doctrines as soon as he "believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God" and had declared them to be part of original revelation. When his difficulties were smothered—for they were never solved—he said it was "like coming into port after a rough sea." Here is a man of fine intellectual endowments of their kind, notwithstanding his ignorance of science and German speculation ("German philosophical twaddle," Schopenhauer calls it), going into a dungeon in order to save his soul. For all these men the law and the prophets and the Christs are the saving of their precious souls. Even if they get on to a track of thought they cannot fare unafraid to the end with their own thinking. They run away from their souls in their desire to save them, and we can only ask, in all sincerity, Are they worth saving? Such a convert as Newman and the liberal reconciler are both bondmen. But while one is a slave to his own mental limitations, the other, the man who, continuing to accept his "thirty pieces of silver," throws over every Christian doctrine and yet tells us that nothing essential has been touched, or, rather, that his faith has been strengthened, though he will never say exactly in what respect, is worthy of nothing but scorn. I am aware that some Protestants will reply that such a criticism of their faith

simply shows that an Atheist can set up an orthodoxy of his own just as hidebound as the orthodoxy of Catholicism; that no one can be the final arbiter of what is and what is not truth; that, according to their first principles, there must be a continuous seeking for the truth in matters of faith, and that no standard of doctrine can be laid down applicable for all time. But what appeals to the layman with it all is the evident uneasiness of the leaders of life and thought in the Protestant Churches. If the creed, or whatever they like to call it, is in this state of flux, devoid of any substratum of doctrine, no wonder we hear so much of "the present religious unrest" in all Protestant countries. Besides, such a statement of the case does not meet the point raised. We are not asking that Protestants or anybody else should be perfectly consistent and logical, for that no man or system can ever be; but we are entitled to demand that those who set themselves up as the depositaries of the Word of God and the guardians of morality should avoid subterfuge and palpable insincerity. That bulwark of Protestantism, the *Christian World*, referring last June to the World's Missionary Conference—a curiously impertinent name for a Christian assembly which was looked upon with contempt by the greater part of Christendom—spoke of the worthlessness of creeds as standards of truth:—

"The dead hands of outworn creeds and confessions become hindrances and nuisances to the Churches, and are the foes of a living and progressive faith."

Since when have the creeds become outworn, and to what does the *Christian World* want to convert the heathen? Well may the *Catholic Times* (July 1, 1910) ask:—

"If the creeds of the Christian Church are outworn and have become hindrances, what truth remains in Christianity, and how are the missionaries of the Free Churches to give the natives an idea of a divinely revealed religion?"

Protestants cannot give a satisfactory answer to this question. The more they attempt to explain their position the more hopeless it becomes. The characteristic note of the writings and sermons of Protestant Christianity to-day is a mournful undertone indicating that all is not well. If we read almost any religious journal, or go into any church—except, perhaps, some country Bethel, still found here and there, where an illiterate preaches to illiterates and finds it easy to confute the "infidel" with a text—the thought is borne in upon us unmistakably that the writers or speakers are sadly aware that the faith is in a bad way. Even when this particular note is absent, what are all these platitudes about "the dynamic forces behind Christianity," "permanent elements in religion," "eternal verities," and a thousand others like them, that would at one time have been scornfully rejected by self-respecting believers—what are they but proof, in another form, of the same fact? Moreover, the number of sects, or divisions, seems to be increasing. We hear of a religious crisis, and Mr. Campbell's "elasticity" and "liberal theology" and "cultivation of the Higher Self"; and Sir Oliver Lodge's "reconciliations" and "universal world-mind" have not averted it, but rather made it more acute. Some there are, indeed, who tell us that they do not desire uniformity; that, as Protestants stand for individual liberty of thought, they have always differed in their views on great questions. In the next breath the same men will deplore their "unhappy divisions." Sometimes they will tell us that, even if the doctrine of plenary inspiration is no longer tenable, the Scriptures nevertheless contain a divine testimony. When the last vestige of Biblical inspiration seems likely to vanish, the same men will fall back on something else—perhaps "religious experiences"—as the one unanswerable argument. These "experiences" seem to be responsible for much disquietude—a natural result, seeing that they can only be human testimony, and vary among different men as well as in the same individual at different times.

We have to observe, then, as closely as we can the

movements of Rome in this country, and especially to notice how she is trying to make the most of the drifting away of many members of the Protestant Churches by inducing them to appreciate the unchangeableness of "the faith once delivered to the saints," the definiteness of dogma which she alone offers. Rome represents dogma and religious authority in their highest form, and it is well to remember that her attitude towards Freethought is just what many types of mind demand. Above all things, she is the mistress of a thousand subtleties. She will tell the Freethinker that all his Bible-smashing affects her not; that, though the Scriptures are the Word of God, she is their interpreter, and is not committed to any precise theory as to the manner of their inspiration; so that she stands unalarmed by criticism. The good Baptist or Methodist, on the other hand, will be assured that she has not deliberately kept the Bible from the people, as some Protestants have ignorantly asserted, and "Scriptural proofs" of the Primacy of the Pope as the successor of Peter will be as plentiful as the proverbial leaves in autumn. But even the Catholics, masters of every kind of duplicity, stumble on this question sometimes. Archbishop Carr, in *Lectures and Replies in Defence of Catholic Truth*, lays great stress on what his Church has done in giving the Bible to the world; but he also emphasises that the Church denies the right of private interpretation. What, then, is the good of giving the Bible to the people? No Catholic dare deny that Scripture is *part* of the body of "revealed truth." Now if it is to be interpreted from time to time in such a way as to avoid heresy, the Catholics are, like the Protestants, reduced to a "progressive revelation" as part of their creed. That is, the book must not be allowed to mean what it says, and doctrines may be introduced at any period, however late, and must yet be accepted as authoritative statements of the faith. I have just read the chapter on this question of the Catholic attitude to the Bible in Johannes Janssen's *History of the German People*, an immense work in fourteen volumes, which seems to be a sort of general apology for Catholicism in Germany. The Frankfort Professor, a man of encyclopædic knowledge of dates and names, quotes with approval the following statement appended to an early edition of the Vulgate:—

"The Holy Scriptures excel all the learning of the world. For all other sciences treat of the creatures, but the Scriptures teach us to know the Creator. All believers should watch zealously and exert themselves unremittingly to understand the contents of these most useful and exalted writings and to retain them in their memory" (vol. xiv., p. 381).

But two pages later he says:—

"Of its being the duty of all people to read the Scriptures, of any right belonging to individuals to regard all that they found in the sacred books as the teaching of Christ, they [the ecclesiastical authorities] had no notion whatever.....It was also considered that there was no contradiction in regarding the Holy Scriptures as the 'holiest of all non-sacramental things,' and at the same time thinking it possible that the reading of Scripture might be dangerous and injurious to many people."

It is dangerous. The Protestants have now found that out for themselves; but why is the Professor so indignant with them for saying that the Church withheld the Bible from the masses? His own statements come to much the same thing.

A. D. McLAREN.

(To be concluded.)

The lightship at the Thames estuary has the distinguishing letters "Nore" painted on it. Those who are familiar with the Cockney language will understand the following story. A passenger on one of the pleasure steamers passing the lightship, catching sight of the lettering, exclaimed, "Hello! Here's Noah's Ark!" He did more justice to his Scripture lessons than to his spelling. No doubt he went to a Church-school.

Acid Drops.

What has Christianity done for the world? The question is a large one, of course, and takes a lot of answering. But let us consider it from one special point of view. According to the third Gospel, bearing the name of Luke, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in the reign of Augustus Caesar. Now this great ruler governed the immense Roman Empire, and kept the peace of the then known world, for thirty-eight years. He kept no great state, he lived very much like a Roman gentleman, and he maintained no bodyguard to protect him against the ill-will of his subjects—for he governed so as not to earn their ill-will. He respected their liberties, he protected their interests, he acted in every way as the first servant of the State. And of course he was a Pagan. The glorious light of Christianity had never dawned on his benighted mind. He had no religion at all worth speaking about. He was simply wise, just, and humane. Let us now look at the state of things in Holy Russia, nineteen hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ—if he was really an historical personage. The Christian Czar cannot go about as the Pagan Emperor did, safe in the respect and even affection of his people. Just see what precautions have to be taken for the Christian Czar's safety when he travels. During his latest visit to the Kaiser, the entire railway line from the frontier to the meeting-place was guarded by soldiers and police at intervals of four paces. Think of it! This is one thing that Christianity has done for the world. No Pagan Roman Emperor could ever have contemplated the possibility of such a thing.

Florence Nightingale's death having created a vacancy in the Order of Merit—to which Mr. Thomas Hardy and Sir William Crookes were recently appointed—the dear *Daily News* suggests that her successor might be William Booth. Oh what a fall was there!

We are loth to believe General Booth's statement that Lord Morley is "deeply interested" in the Grand Old Showman's new idea of dealing with criminals in India. They would be handed over to the Salvation Army for reclamation instead of being sent to prison. "Given suitable land," Booth says, "we will endeavor, under the influence of religion and kindness, to teach these criminals to earn an honest living." If a Freethinker like Lord Morley cannot carry on the government of India without the aid of General Booth and his "religion," his lordship should consider the advisability of resigning a post for which (in that case) he is so unfitted.

Writing on the mysterious new prophet who is going to convert London to a new religion, the *Daily Chronicle* referred to Penda, King of Mercia, who died 1,255 years ago. "Pagan as he was," our contemporary says, "he permitted Christians to reside in his kingdom on one condition; that they practised what they preached. If they fought with each other, then Penda hanged them or threw them into dungeons." It is fortunate that inconsistent Christians are not treated in that manner nowadays. A terrible lot of them would be in trouble.

How is it, by the way, that the London newspapers have given such prominence to the "mysterious prophet," whose name appears to be Maryon? Monday's *Chronicle* contained a special quarter-column, evidently "contributed," about this gentleman, stating that he had been unable to secure a meeting-place for last Sunday, and had been obliged to fall back on Hyde Park. How much, we wonder, does a paper like the *Chronicle* charge for inserting such "news"?

The hero of Mr. Hall Caine's new melodrama, *The Eternal Question*, made up from his old novel, *The Eternal City*, goes out from prison to face his trial with the words "God bless the people" on his lips. The heroine goes out hand-in-hand with him exclaiming, "God save our girls!" Mr. E. A. Baughan, the dramatic critic, completes the trinity of prayers by exclaiming, "God save the British drama!" We don't suppose either prayer will be heard, but the last one is at least sensible.

Mr. Aylmer Maude has been telling an interviewer how the Tolstoy colony in England failed. While he was living at the colony five of the residents were put under medical restraint and one committed suicide. Tolstoy's ideal of a Christian community would not work. Mr. Maude, who is one of Tolstoy's most ardent admirers, frankly confesses that "it only resulted in a great deal more friction and quarreling than the ordinary way of life." Mr. Maude sensibly says that Tolstoy's real influence does not lie in

the founding of sects and colonies, but in "getting people's minds to work."

The Cock-lane Ghost over again! Losley Hall Farm, near Uttoxeter, was haunted. Strange noises were heard, boots and bottles came falling downstairs, furniture was shifted, window-panes broken, and other uncanny things occurred. But the police got to the bottom of the mystery. The "spook" was a girl of 14, employed on the farm. She had a sunstroke some years ago. Hence these pranks.

Who is right? Jesus Christ said "take no thought for the morrow." Rev. David Smith, in the *British Weekly*, says that "the improvident man is irreligious and immoral."

Mr. Smith pretends that "take no thought for the morrow" means "don't fret, don't worry." But that is quite out of harmony with the context. Jesus teaches that we are to take no more thought for the morrow than we take about adding a cubit to our stature. Nothing could be plainer.

At Hamilton Sheriff Court recently a Protestant lecturer was fined £10, with the option of sixty days' imprisonment, for using expressions calculated to cause a breach of the peace at Motherwell. According to the brief report in a London newspaper, his language "provoked the Roman Catholic and Socialist members of the audience, and so led to disorderly and tumultuous proceedings." Of course, if the man used brutal language, merely intended to cause bad blood, there is no more to be said. But the mere fact that he "provoked" Catholics and Socialists does not prove that he committed any real offence. It takes very little to "provoke" some people. Any opposition to their views "provokes" them. Those who attack a public speaker with physical violence ought to bear the onus of proving that flesh and blood could stand him no longer. His attacking their views, even in the light of their history, ought not to be treated as criminal. Catholics who cannot listen to criticism should not attend controversial meetings. They have their remedy, without calling in the police.

Professor William James was hardly the "Great Thinker" which the political organ of the Nonconformist Conscience alleges, and the statement that his Gifford Lectures "mark an epoch" is all nonsense. Professor James was, at best, a suggestive and stimulating writer on philosophy, with a singularly vivid and interesting style. What on earth is the use of quoting the following passage as profound thinking?

"We and God have business with each other, and in opening ourselves to His influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. The universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for better in proportion as each one of us fulfils or evades God's demands."

The really important fact about Professor James is that his investigations and reflections took him farther and farther from orthodoxy. His lecture on immortality, while proclaiming his own personal belief in the probability of another life, does not announce it as anything like a certitude. On the whole, he concludes that the chief reliance of believers, after all, is on "faith." He unhesitatingly declared that *Thought is a function of the brain.*

The ravages of the cholera in the Don country are terrible. Whole villages are depopulated, the dead lying unburied and rendering the air pestiferous. People are wandering northwards to escape the epidemic, and orphaned and abandoned children search in vain for their parents. The medical service is shockingly inadequate. Yet the Mayor of St. Petersburg urges that no Jews should be allowed on the sanitary staff, although three-fourths of the sanitary personnel are Jews, who deserve most of the credit for keeping the cholera in check at all. Such is Christian charity in Holy Russia.

The forest-fires in America are a very serious calamity. Apparently the death-roll runs into hundreds, and whole towns are destroyed. The inhabitants of threatened towns took to praying hard for rain, but heaven made no response, and the raging flames went on with their cruel work.

A train on the Northern Pacific Railway, carrying refugees from the town of Wallace (burnt out) towards Missoula, was caught in the flames when travelling over a part of the line which runs through a forest, and all on board appear to have perished. The refugees were patients from the Providence Hospital at Wallace, and were in the care of nineteen sisters of charity. Providence Hospital! Good old "Providence"! What a fraud he, she, or it is!

The *Church Times* wonders if "any children read the Old Testament now." Some do, no doubt, but the number is rapidly decreasing. The taste of the age is superior to the brutal and "blue" parts of the holy volume. And as the Bible cannot be expurgated without ruining its claims to be the Word of God, the safest plan is to keep children off it altogether.

By the way, the *Church Times* admits that the Old Testament "used to be read unintelligently and even superstitiously." Some day or other it may say the same of the New Testament.

There is a sermon in the *Church Times* by Canon Newbolt on Elisha. There are two great sentences in it. Both are quotations, and from ancient Pagans: "Count no man happy before he dies" and "All the earth is the tomb of famous men." Christianity has no great sayings of that character.

Religious papers blow hot or cold as it suits the interest of their creeds. The *Catholic Herald* (Aug. 12) had a leaderette on "Crippen's Religion." It admitted, as it was obliged to, that Crippen was a Catholic. "We do not think," it added, "that it matters what religion an accused person is except from the point of view of the person in question." "The characters of persons," it says later on, "do not alter principles. If the leader of a Tory party, a Liberal party, or a Socialist party turns out to be a criminal, this would be no argument against Toryism, Liberalism, or Socialism. These spheres of thought would stand or fall by the tests of the principles they involve." Good! But curiously enough there was a leaderette in the *Catholic Times* of the very same date, dealing with the case of a ruffian who shot two policemen in Paris. No such crime ever occurs in London. Of course. Consequently our Catholic contemporary winds up by declaring that such crimes are due to "anti-Christian teaching in the schools" of France. Thus do circumstances alter cases.

Who doubts that if Crippen had been an Atheist a thousand articles and a thousand sermons would have pointed to the awful charge against him as a proof of the immorality of Atheism.

Gibbon remarked that Christianity was imposed on the Roman Empire by Constantine because he saw that it would secure the throne of the emperors by teaching their subjects to suffer and obey. We are reminded of this by the statement in the *Daily News* that Christianity is spreading rapidly in Korea. We scarcely believe it, but if it were true it would not be unnatural. Korea has just lost her independence, having been annexed by Japan, and the conditions seem favorable to the spread of the most slavish religion in the world.

Missionaries are all truthful. Of course! They are also all poor. It must have been by accident that the Rev. George Ensor, who claimed to have been the first English missionary in Japan, and was afterwards vicar of Heywood, Westbury, Wilts, died worth £8,508.

The Garw Valley Evangelical Free Churches' Council has sent out a circular to tradesmen, and amongst them a news-agent who sells the *Freethinker* and advanced literature generally, asking them to refrain from opening their places of business or "doing any business for commercial gains on the Lord's Day." Surely the Nonconformist men of God who are responsible for that circular have great powers of "face." These men preach for a living, and their great day of business is the very Sunday they are so anxious to keep free from such "desecration." Why not close *their* "places of business" on the Lord's Day? It is so easy to lecture other people.

English newspapers are severe on the Kaiser for declaring that he reigns by the grace of God. Why? Does not King George rule by the grace of God? Is the fact not stated in every royal proclamation? Is it not stated (in abbreviated Latin) on our coinage? Will not King George's coronation take place next June in Westminster Abbey? Will he not be anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury? What is the use, then, of railing at the Kaiser? The fact is that *all* kings reign by the grace of God. Royalty is a superstition inherited from far-off times.

Many years ago Mr. G. L. Mackenzie hit a similar situation off cleverly in some verses, entitled, "God and the Kaiser," from which we quote some verses:—

"The German folk we guide,
God and I,
We're both upon their side,
God and I;

My Colleague's inspiration
Gives me determination ;
We thus both bless the nation,
God and I.

If ever we fell out,
God and I,
We'd both be put about,
God and I ;
All other kings are, clearly,
His passive puppets merely,
But we are equals nearly,
God and I."

Liberia, the Christian negro Republic, is not exactly the best of all spots on the best of all possible worlds. Mr. F. D. Morel, who has done such good work in exposing the Congo atrocities, gives a very bad account of it in a recent article in the *African Mail*. He also publishes a strong letter from a West African correspondent who says:—"I have witnessed more abuses committed in Liberia upon the defenceless native than have ever been made known to the world. These abuses are carried out with impunity. No consuls inquire into them. There is a conspiracy of silence. Yet they are perpetrated by a so-called Christian Government, with its churches and its black bishops, who do not make one word of protest, for fear of damaging their propagandist work among the natives. The natives perish from wanton pillage and from murder perpetrated by black Christians under the shadow of churches and in the proximity of mission stations. Mission youths are sent by their teachers to the front, and when they return with hands imbued in their brothers' blood thanksgiving services are held in the churches."

Mr. Lee Jones, the Liverpool philanthropist, whose proposal to help people who are being driven to suicide we referred to last week, has been interviewed by the *Catholic Herald*. Mr. Lee Jones told the interviewer that the people who had written to him, in response to his public offer, could not be called irreligious—"the vast majority seemed to be of the most orthodox turn of mind." He added that "only in quite an insignificant minority of cases" were any reflections cast on the Deity for allowing so much human misery to exist. We understand that a Dissenting minister wrote to Mr. Lee Jones: "You will hardly believe it but I went to your town purposely to fall into the river." A church clergyman said he was "tired of life and its shams, and wished it would all end." Everything shows that Freethinkers have not the special tendency to suicide which Christians imagine.

The reckless building of places of worship is always advertised as a sign of the advancement of the Christian religion. No notice is taken of the closing of such places. Emanuel Church, Folkestone, is about to be transformed into a Bioscope Hall, and Sutherland Chapel, Walworth, London, has been used as a picture-show for some time past.

Religion is responsible for morality, prate the clergy. Yet 8 per cent. of the births in pious Scotland are illegitimate, and a London and North Western Railway official stated recently that his Company lose 20,000 towels and thousands of drinking-glasses, water-bottles, and cakes of soap yearly from pilfering travellers.

Mr. Coulson Kernahan, the novelist, writes to the *Hastings and St. Leonards Mail* denouncing a large, able-bodied man of God who sat comfortably in a tramcar, nursing his umbrella, while "several women—old, middle-aged, and young, some of them looking very tired—were allowed to stand, clinging uncomfortably to the strap." Mr. Kernahan says he denounced the reverend exhorter to his face for preaching self-denial and telling the story of the Cross—and sitting there while those ladies stood. He does not state what reply the reverend exhorter made, if any. For our part, we really do not understand why Kernahan should expect a Christian—even a professional Christian—to show more chivalry than any other person. History and experience are against such an expectation.

With the approach of autumn the howling dervishes who have been preaching hell by the sad sea waves will now transport their harmoniums and lady friends to the corners of the town thoroughfares. Cash, and not Christ, is their objective.

Rev. J. Walleit, spaaking at Southend-on-Sea recently said that "creeds were in the melting-pot to-day." Just so! And all Freethinkers will keep the pot merrily boiling.

A GREAT FIRST CAUSE.

Why should we ever pause in our regressive march along the lines of phenomenal sequence, of which we observe the slow evolution through immeasurable time? and how can we reach a fountain-head at all? Because we cannot think out an endless regress of infinite antecedents, we are not warranted in therefore assuming the existence of a first cause. For that assumption of an uncaused cause, after we have spent some time in mounting the ladder of phenomena, is to the speculative reason equally illicit, as its assumption would be, when standing on the first rung of the ladder. Why should we not assume it at the first, if we may do so, or are compelled to do so, at the last? The fact of our having wandered a little way backwards, from our present standing ground amongst antecedent phenomena, will not warrant our ultimately leaving the phenomenal sphere, unless we are warranted in doing so before we begin our wanderings.—Prof. W. Knight, "Aspects of Theism," pp. 54-55.

I am just and honest, not because I expect to live in another world, but because, having felt the pain of injustice and dishonesty towards myself, I have a fellow-feeling with other men who would suffer the same pains if I were unjust or dishonest towards them. Why should I give my neighbor short weight in this world because there is not another world in which I should have anything to weigh out to him? I am honest because I don't like to inflict evil on others in this life, not because I am afraid of evil to myself in another. It is a pang to me to witness the suffering of a fellow being, and I feel his suffering the more because he is mortal, because his life is so short, and I would have it, if possible, filled with happiness, and not misery.—George Eliot.

A TRUE BELIEVER.

The Buddhists' creed he stigmatised, their laws and doctrines he despised, and all their customs he denounced in language that was pretty strong.

Confucianism he declared—and very oft his views he aired—was just a thing made up of flaws no man of sense could follow long.

Those who in Islamism believed he said were very much deceived, and he grasped every chance he could their laws and tenets to abuse.

And he was very happy when with ribald laughter now and then and what he thought was eloquence he scorned the teachings of the Jews.

He was well known to all his friends as one possessed of selfish ends, although his friends were very few and those he had were hard to hold.

A kindness seldom he bestowed, he rarely paid the bills he owed, and to his children and his wife he was at all times very cold.

He never did a noble act, he was so very mean in fact that every person that he met would quickly place him "neath a ban.

And yet he felt religion's need, and when you asked him what his creed, he with much emphasis exclaimed: "Behold! I am a Christian man."—Nathan M. Levy.

EUCHRED.

While occupying the pastorate of a Western church in his early career, Dr. George H. Ferris had a deacon whose character had always been above reproach until a certain prayer meeting which followed a sermon during which the elder had soundly slumbered.

"Will Brother Jones kindly lead?" was asked by the pastor at the beginning of the prayer service.

Waking with a start at the mention of his name, the deacon almost broke up the service by replying: "I led last time; it's your turn. What's trumps?"

THE TEMPTATION.

A Pittsburg lawyer, who was a Jew, was employed to defend a corporation in court. He was anxious to win the case and engaged a well-known corporation attorney to help him with advice. The case was won, and the Jew said to the other lawyer:

"I have made out the bill for our fees. Don't you think 500 dollars is about the right amount?"

The other picked up the bill and added another zero, making the amount 5,000 dollars, then said:

"Send them down to the treasurer."

The Jew had his misgivings, but sent it down, and soon a messenger returned, with a check for 5,000 dollars. The astonished Jew held it up for the inspection of his friend and adviser, saying:

"Thou almost persuadest me to become a Christian."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 4, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, W.: at 7.30, "Ferrer Haunts His Murderers."

September 11, 18, 25, Queen's Hall, London.

October 2, Glasgow; 9, Manchester; 16, Queen's Hall; 23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.

November 6, Shoreditch Town Hall; 13, Liverpool; 27, Shoreditch Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £245 ls. 1d. Received since:—Alexander Leuthwaite, 10s.

BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £21 0s. 0d. Received since:—M. J. Charter, 5s.; R. Carless, 1s.

J. KNOX.—There is much sound sense in your little pamphlet, but we should hardly know what to do with more copies than the one you have kindly sent us. It is pleasant to learn that for twenty-five years you have derived "knowledge and help" from the *Freethinker*. You are rather mistaken, though, as to our attitude towards the Catholic Church. You say that we "praise" it. But when we do so it is not for its principles and objects; only for its organisation. In the same way, we might admire a modern battleship or a maxim-gun as a triumph of ingenuity, while heartily detesting war. The Catholic Church has no more determined enemy than we are, and we fight it in fighting Christianity—for Catholicism is Christianity; but we do not intend to stultify and degrade ourselves by betraying our own principles in the contest. If we cannot practise our own principles, what is the use of offering them to the world? A bigoted and fanatical Freethinker is worse, in our eyes, than a bigoted and fanatical Catholic; he knows better, he sins against a greater light.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome cuttings.

J. W. WHITE.—You may dismiss the idea of the "stocks." We did not make the statement you refer to ourselves. Before we can advise further we must know under what Act the summonses, if any, are issued. As to the fines, of course they are recoverable by distraint.

J. M. REID.—Sent as requested.

G. G. CRICKSHANK.—Your letter, being addressed to the Editor, was forwarded to him, and was thus too late for your object. Letters applying for literature should be addressed to the business manager.

KINGSLAND BRANCH.—Your last week's lecture notice did not appear in the *Freethinker* because it was not posted till Tuesday evening. We regret that the lecturer, Mr. A. B. Moss, lost an announcement.

R. CARLESS.—You are quite right. Mr. Foote has neither sub-editor nor private secretary—and only one pair of hands.

STANLEY SAVAGE.—Abstractly there is much in what you say; but there are so many journals dealing with the political and social objects you refer to, and only one (weekly) in all England dealing with the topics treated in the *Freethinker*.

H. SMALLWOOD.—We do not supply the *Freethinker* direct to the newsagents you mention. They obtain it through some general agent, probably in London. The delay is not our fault. We are ready for trade orders regularly on Wednesday afternoon. Your only remedy is to put pressure on your newsagents. Thanks for the address, and for your general efforts to promote our circulation.

M. GREEN.—We never used the word "God" ourselves as "another word for good." "God" and "good" have really no necessary connection. We may have said that Christians sum up all good under "God" and all evil under "Devil."

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.

The new course of lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., opens this evening (Sept. 4). Mr. Foote occupies the platform, and his subject will be a very striking one—"Ferrer Haunts His Murderers." The Brussels Congress, as relating to Ferrer, and the present situation in Spain, will be dealt with. Prior to the lecture there will be some music, and Mr. Foote will give a poetical or dramatic reading.

London "saints" should endeavor to bring along some of their less heterodox friends to these Queen's Hall meetings, and it would be well to give the course a good start. A good attendance and enthusiasm on the opening night go a long way towards securing the success of the following nights.

As the holiday season is not yet quite over we may venture to renew our appeal to Freethinkers who are away from home at the seaside or elsewhere. They come into contact on such occasions with all sorts of fresh people, and new opportunities arise of introducing the *Freethinker* to persons who might be interested in it if they only made its acquaintance.

Miss Vance did not attend the Brussels Congress. It so happened that the time was the only one available for her brief holiday before the opening of the new lecture season. Rest by the seaside, of course, will do her more good than a visit to Brussels would have done—in August.

Nearly a thousand persons assembled in the Garrick Theatre, Chicago, on Sunday morning, August 7, to commemorate the seventy-seventh anniversary of Ingersoll's birthday. A letter was read from Mrs. Ingersoll, and speeches were delivered by Mr. W. E. Clark, corresponding secretary of the Independent Religious Society, Mr. H. Percy Ward, Mr. R. J. Cooney, late president of the Lawyers' Association of Illinois, and Mr. H. H. Hardinge. Mr. Cooney's tribute was a very eloquent one. Our readers will be pleased with the following extract:—"His face, presence and the sound of his voice were in themselves as eloquent as anything he ever uttered. His imposing presence was the outward manifestation of a great man. Within was a massive, powerful and creative intellect, penetrating and far-reaching, and capable of dealing with large subjects and in a large way. He was resourceful. His imagination was warm, keen, vigorous and poetic. His eloquence poured forth from inexhaustible fountains and assumed varieties of hue, form and motion to delight, persuade and instruct. At times it was limpid as the river-let sparkling down the mountain's side, then gradually swelling it rolled into the headlong cataract and sprayed its rainbows in the sun. Again it floated in tranquil majesty, like a great river reflecting from its polished surface forest, mountain and sky."

Some of the tributes to Ingersoll were well worth printing. We are indebted to the New York *Truthseeker* for a report of the meeting. Our contemporary prints the speeches verbatim.

Mr. Foote's name seems to have given a good deal of trouble to the Belgian journalists in reporting the proceedings of the International Freethought Congress. Even the *Journal de Charleroi*, which is one of our exchanges, and frequently quotes from our columns, printed the N.S.S. President's name as "M. Food." That isn't quite so bad as the "Toote" we mentioned last week. Mr. Foote is believed by some people to have supplied some mental food to his readers.

Mr. Foote has been spending a week with his old friend, and veteran Freethinker, Mr. J. W. de Caux, at Great Yarmouth. The weather has been very mixed, but he has been out of doors a good deal, and the change of air has done him some good, although the insomnia still haunts his bedside. Perhaps it is a trifle nearer the door.

We have often been asked to reprint some of our old articles for the sake of present-day readers. We reprint one this week, with a few slight alterations. We thus gain a little time for other pressing work and the reader loses—what?

The Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ.

"Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of me."—JOHN v. 39.

THESE are the words of Jesus Christ, as reported by the apostle John; and they are so precise and lucid that there can be no misapprehension as to their meaning. We are not to permit other people to search the Scriptures—that is, the Old Testament—for us, but we are to search them ourselves, in order that each one of us may be fully persuaded, in his or her own mind, as to whether or not the writings of Moses and the prophets substantiate the claims that are made by the evangelists on behalf of Jesus. Let us then do as we are bidden, and ascertain for ourselves the amount of truth there is in the assertion of the late Bishop Beveridge that "all the histories of Jesus are nothing else but the prophecies of Christ turned into a history."

Now the prophecies concerning Jesus which are the most important are those which relate to his genealogy, his parentage, and his birth—as to his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, there are none. According to Matthew (i. 1-17) and Luke (iii. 23-38) Jesus was descended from David and Abraham; but, even if this were so, there is nothing remarkable in such a fact, because, at the Christian era, there must have been thousands of Jews who could claim descent from the same ancestors. Had it been a remarkable fact, how comes it that the evangelists Mark and John are silent respecting it? In good sooth they either knew nothing of it, or they utterly ignored it; either of which conclusions take from it the glamor of a special value. Christians, however, believe that it was a remarkable fact, because they assert that it was the fulfilment of two prophecies regarding the Jewish messiah. Let us, therefore, consult these prophecies in order to see if it be so.

The prophecy relating to David is contained in the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel. Therein Nathan the prophet is described as having had a vision, in which the Jewish god instructed him to speak to David these, among other, words: "Thine house" (that is David's house) "and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee" (v. 16). The meaning of these words can only be that David's house and David's throne here upon earth should be established forever. But have they been so established? They have not. Are they in existence now? They are not. David, and all that pertains to him, have long ago been buried in the misty past, and the historic memory of him and his now survives only "as a tale that is told." But, say the Christians, "forever does not mean never-ending; the original Hebrew word does not mean never-ending, but only a period of time the duration of which is uncertain—it might be long, or it might be short. In David's case it was short; the prophecy has been accomplished and is ended." But, my Christian friends, if such be the case, how can the prophecy apply in any way to Jesus?

The prophecy relating to Abraham is contained in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. You will remember that, after Abraham had pretended to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Jewish god, the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven, and said that the Lord said: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (v. 16-18). Christians do not consider this prophecy in its entirety, for the very simple reason that it would not answer their purpose to do so. As a matter of fact, Isaac was not Abraham's "only son," and therefore he cannot be taken as a type of Jesus, who is described as being the "only begotten son" of Almighty God. Abraham

had another son—Ishmael, the son of Hagar, who was as much his son as Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, were the sons of Jacob. Moreover, all the fine promises which the Jewish god through his "angel" made to Abraham, notwithstanding that they were ratified again and again, have been broken. Abraham never saw the land of Canaan which the Jewish god gave to him for an everlasting possession; and as for his seed having become as numerous as the stars of heaven, the Jews remain, as they have ever been, but a small part of mankind. It is estimated that the Jews are more numerous now than they ever were in the past ages of the world, and yet that, of the 1,800 millions of human beings that are now upon the earth, they can only boast of seven millions. The only portion of the prophecy which Christians claim through Matthew and Luke are the words "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." But in what way do these particular words help them? Matthew and Luke assure us that the father of Jesus was not Joseph but the Holy Ghost; and yet it is Joseph and not the Holy Ghost who is said to have been descended from David and Abraham. That even this is doubtful all must admit, for whereas the genealogical tree of Matthew shows forty-two generations from Abraham to Joseph, that of Luke proves the number to have been fifty-four. One of these statements, therefore, must be false; and the probability is that both are so. If they prove anything at all, they prove that Jesus—if he were the "only begotten son" of Almighty God—was not the "son of David, the son of Abraham." So much for the genealogy of Jesus; now for his parentage and birth.

The story of the supernatural birth of Jesus is told only by Matthew (i. 1-18) and Luke (i. 31, 35, and ii. 5-7). This circumstance alone is sufficient to arouse suspicion as to the truthfulness of the statement. For how comes it that this wondrous fact, if fact it be, was confined to the knowledge of these two men? That the apostles—including Paul, who was not "called to be an apostle" (Rom. i. 1) until long after the crucifixion—were utterly ignorant of the supernatural birth of Jesus is beyond all doubt, for they never alluded to it. Had they known it, and believed it, they would not have failed to promulgate it as evidence of the highest value that Jesus was the expected Messiah. That they did not know of it—had, indeed, never heard of it—is proved by Luke's statement that "Jesus was supposed to be the son of Joseph" (Luke iii. 23), and by Phillip's exclamation to Nathanael: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John i. 45). That it was not known to either Mark or Luke we may infer from their silence; for what writer concerning Jesus would have failed to notice so momentous a circumstance had he heard of it, and believed in its truth? How, then, are we to treat these statements of Matthew and Luke—as true or false? Before we reply let us ask and determine another question, which is—Were these statements ever made by Matthew and Luke, or are they spurious interpolations, and consequently forgeries?

Now, the four Gospels, as we have them at the present day, have been accepted on the authority of those early Fathers whom ecclesiastical writers have denominated "orthodox." No other gospels have descended to us, although, as Luke himself bears testimony, such evangelical histories were numerous (Luke i. 1). This, of itself, is a most suspicious circumstance. It goes without saying that, before the invention of printing, it was a very easy matter for bigoted and superstitious priests, who were the copyists, not only to interpolate authentic writings with such alterations and additions as accorded with their own credulity and cunning, but also to produce entire pieces of their own or others' forgeries. And that fraudulent offences of this character were common there can be no doubt. The established maxim—a maxim that was not confined to the early Christians—appears to have been that it was not

only lawful, but commendable, to deceive, and assert falsehoods in order to promote what those who uttered them considered to be the cause of truth and piety. Mosheim assures us that the early Christians "asserted that a man did no wrong who supported truth, when hard pressed, by deceit and lies" (*Hist. Eccle.*, ch. iii., sec. 9).

Ireneus tells us that different sectarists had published a multitude of apocryphal and spurious scriptures to astonish the weak and ignorant (book i., chap. 17). Origen informs us that that part of Luke's Gospel wherein Christ promises the penitent thief that he should "that day be with him in Paradise" (xxiii. 43) was not in the older copies, and was a late edition by someone of the interpolators (Comm. on John). And that Origen (185-254) was right in his statement may be inferred from the fact that neither Justin (the) Martyr (70-167), nor Ireneus (120-202), nor Tertullian (died 216), take the least notice of the circumstance, although they have quoted almost every other passage of Luke relating to the Crucifixion.

But the early Fathers themselves were as ignorant and superstitious as those whom they condemned. Dr. Shuckford and other Biblical savants speak of them in deprecatory terms, but no condemnation of them is so severe as that of their own utterances. Here are some few of their statements by way of illustration:—Justin Martyr justifies the doctrine of the Incarnation by its similarity to the births of Esculapius and Hercules, and the other illustrious god-men of Pagan mythology (*Apol.* i.). Ireneus, describing the Millennium, assures us not only that every productive part of the vine, from the stem to the bunch, and of wheat, from the root to the ear, shall be multiplied by ten thousand—every bunch containing ten thousand grapes, and every ear ten thousand grains—but that "every grain of wheat shall yield ten pounds of pure fine flour, and every grape four hogsheads of wine; and that when any of the saints shall be going to gather one of these bunches, another will cry out, "I am a better bunch! Take me, and bless God by me!" (book v., chap. 39). Tertullian asserts, of his own knowledge, "that the corpse of a dead Christian, at the first breath of the prayer made by the priest, on occasion of its own funeral, removed its hands from its side into the usual posture of a suppliant, and, when the service was ended, restored them again to their former situation." He also asserts, as a fact which he and all the orthodox of his time credited, "that the body of another Christian, already interred, moved itself to one side of the grave to make room for another corpse which was going to be laid by it" (*De An.*, chap. ii). With this evidence before us, what amount of credence can be placed in the testimony of such ignorant and superstitious men—men who are dubbed "the Fathers of the Christian Church"? In common justice to these "Fathers," however, it should be stated that for their superstitious notions they had scriptural authority; for we read in the thirteenth chapter of the second Book of Kings that when a dead man was let down into the sepulchre of Elisha the prophet, as soon as the corpse of the newly interred touched the bones of Elisha, it (that is, the dead man) revived and stood upon his feet" (v. 21). How long the revived dead man lived we are not told. Bearing these facts in mind, let us consider if the first two chapters in each of these Gospels be not interpolations, and therefore forgeries that are not to be relied upon.

That the first two chapters of Luke, if not other chapters of this Gospel, are interpolations there can be no doubt, for the statements of Luke himself are conclusive of the point. Luke, it should be remembered, wrote not only the gospel which bears his name, but also the Acts of the Apostles. Both his works are dedicated to Theophilus, and he commences his Acts by stating in brief, but pregnant, terms what he had written in his Gospel. Says he: "The former treatise I have made of all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up" (Acts i. 1, 2).

In these words Luke tells us that his Gospel contains a complete record of the public ministry of Christ from its commencement to its ending, and he utterly ignores the contents of the first two chapters. And the introduction to his Gospel bears out this view, for in it he says that he had "taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which had been delivered unto them by those who, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke i. 2). Now the "eye-witnesses and ministers" could have been none other than the apostles; and, as they were strangers to Christ until he had commenced his public ministry, the treatise written by Luke could, and can, refer only to his public ministrations. Here, then, we have not only reasonable grounds, but cogent reasons, for believing that the first two chapters of Luke are forgeries. This being so, the story of the supernatural birth of Jesus rests only on the uncorroborated testimony of Matthew—the uncorroborated testimony of a man who must have written from hearsay, if he ever wrote at all, and who was utterly unable to test the truthfulness of the rumors to which he gave credence, even if he had been wishful to do so.

Here an important observation should be made. It is this: that there are, in each of the suspected portions of these Gospels, circumstances detailed which are not even referred to in the other Gospel, and, of course, not by Mark and John; they are therefore entirely uncorroborated, and must be treated accordingly.

The Gospel of Luke opens with an account of the miraculous conception by Elisabeth, the wife of the priest Zacharias, of John the Baptist; and, subsequently, of the meeting between her and her cousin Mary, when we are assured that, at the salutation of Mary, "the babe leaped in her womb" (i. 41). Of this, even if it were physically possible, there is no corroboration, nor, indeed, could there well be; but it is passing strange that the wonderful offspring of these two wonderful women—these women being not only intimate friends but relations—should have grown up to manhood without knowing each other. Jesus was unknown to John when the one was baptised by the other; and even when John was in prison he was doubtful of Jesus, or he would not have sent two of his disciples to ask this question: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" (vii. 19). Surely it is impossible for any historian to be the author of statements so directly opposed to each other; and equally sure is it that such statements do not bear the impress of truth.

Both Matthew and Luke are made to declare that the father of Jesus was the Holy Ghost. Who was this Holy Ghost? For the statement of Matthew is the first time that ever such a being is mentioned. Nothing whatever is known of him. We are only certain of his being of the masculine gender by his ability to get Mary with child. Yet we read of his having "descended in a bodily shape like a dove" (Luke iii. 22); of his having appeared in the shape of "cloven tongues, like as of fire" (Acts ii. 3); and of other curious ways by which he manifested his presence. According to the Christian religion he is one of the Trinity, which consists of three persons known as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and these three are One. According to this doctrine, therefore, God the Son may have been his own Father. For, although it is distinctly asserted that the Virgin Mary became with child not by God the Father but by God the Holy Ghost, it is also as distinctly asserted that the Holy Ghost was nothing more or less than the breath of God the Son; for what other interpretation can be put on the twenty-second verse of the twentieth chapter of John, which reads thus: "And when Jesus had said this, he *breathed on them*, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost"?

J. W. DE CAUX.

(To be continued.)

The Brussels Conference.

ALTHOUGH lacking the historical glamor associated with the name of Rome, and the holiday attractions of Paris, the Brussels International Freethought Conference will, when all things are considered, compare favorably with its predecessors. In some respects, the business aspect of the meetings showed a distinct improvement. Instead of a large number of subjects being down for discussion, there was only one, and that of general and pressing importance. It is true that some of the speeches were rather wide of the mark, and there was no attempt to propose formal resolutions to which delegates were compelled to speak. Most of the speeches were, however, commendably brief. This plan gave room for a greater number to participate in the discussions, and served in no small measure to induce a general feeling of satisfaction. Delegates who come prepared to speak are naturally annoyed when no opportunity is offered, and it is to be hoped that much good will result from the statements of the position of Freethought in the various countries.

Previous Conferences have been held in September, and I do not know who was responsible for August being selected on this occasion. It was obviously too soon. August is the holiday month abroad as at home, and a number of men prominent in the continental world of literature, science, and politics were prevented being present who would otherwise have attended. Some sent letters of regret, amongst whom was Professor Haeckel, who found himself unable to undertake the journey to Brussels. Still, there was a considerable number of well-known men present, and to English delegates it was remarkable to see eminent politicians and professors in the various universities coming boldly forward to champion Freethought, while in their own country the same class of men maintain a cowardly silence concerning religious beliefs. In this respect England appears to be in a worse position than any other European country. Social ostracism and the press boycott is all-powerful. And, while the former stops prominent public men from announcing themselves as Freethinkers, the press boycott keeps the mass of the people ignorant of even the existence of a reasoned Freethought propaganda. Abroad, neither force operates to anything like so great an extent. If not adequately reported in the press, at least Freethought views are not excluded. And I did not gather that social ostracism operates to a degree that seriously interferes with Freethought work.

From many points of view the place of first importance ought to be given to the demonstration of Sunday, August 21. The day was brilliantly fine, and the streets full of life and bustle. A procession, some seven or eight deep, and numbering quite 10,000 people was formed on the Boulevard de Senne, and with numerous bands and banners marched by a wisely-chosen circuitous route through some of the main streets to the great historic square of Brussels, the Grand Place. The procession itself was striking; a conspicuous feature of it being the contingent of neatly-dressed, happy-looking children from the Brussels Freethought Orphanage. But much more striking, to English visitors at least, was the attitude of the crowd along the line of march. Very few police were to be observed, and there was nothing to maintain order but the feelings of the people themselves. Yet there did not occur a single hostile remark during a march that lasted some considerable time. The attitude of the public was respectful and even sympathetic—as indeed the newspapers noted, and emphasised by their daily reports. This in a country like Belgium, that is still terribly priest-ridden, is significant.

The proceedings in the Grand' Place, too, deserve a special word. There is no spot in Brussels more closely interwoven with the history of the city than is the Grand' Place. On one side stands the ancient and beautiful Maison du Roi; on the other the equally beautiful and ancient Hotel de Ville; while on

the remaining two sides are the houses of the historic Flemish guilds. So much value do the people of Brussels attach to this square that a special law has been passed preventing the present owners of the houses from altering their facades in any way. Yet in this square permission has been given to the Freethinkers to place a large marble slab about five feet square, bearing in brass letters a tribute to the memory of the Counts Egmont and Horne, put to death for liberty of conscience in the sixteenth century, and to Francisco Ferrer, the Church's latest victim. The stone is immediately in front of the Maison du Roi, one of the principle show places of the city.

The authorities not only granted permission for the ceremony; everything was done to facilitate it. On each side of the square large barriers were erected. Behind these were confined the general public, while inside them stood the demonstration. The front of the Maison du Roi was beautifully decorated with palms and other plants, the steps of the building being used as a platform by the three speakers who addressed the gathering. The extent of the crowd, its enthusiasm, the speeches (commendably brief, but to the point), the sunlight playing on the banners and bringing out in delicate relief the architectural beauties of the surrounding structures, formed a picture at once striking, and, under such conditions, impressive.

A further civic recognition of the Congress was made on Monday afternoon, when the delegates, introduced by M. Furnemont in an eloquent and tactful speech, was received by the Burgomaster. In a delightful speech of welcome to the delegates he said that he had much pleasure in welcoming a body of people whose ideas might be debateable, but whose ideals were of the noblest description. He had been blamed for welcoming a body of Freethinkers, but he had borne in mind that he was the Burgomaster of all; but above all he was the Burgomaster of all who defended liberty, and in that spirit he received them. After referring to the struggles of earlier times, he said the illusions of victory were often dispelled, and at the present time in Belgium they were witnessing new manifestations of intolerance and fanaticism. Their consciences were tranquil, but the danger still confronted the minds of the young. It was for them to defend the intellectual rights of the people, and it was because Freethinkers were doing that, he was happy to give the delegates a whole-hearted welcome. At the conclusion of his speech the Burgomaster in person conducted the delegates through the building, which is probably one of the finest communal palaces in Europe.

The first and chief sitting of the Conference was held on the afternoon of Sunday. Unfortunately, Professor Haeckel was unable to be present, as was also Anatole France, both of whom had been elected Presidents d'Honneur, and many were disappointed at not hearing at the meeting two men so eminent in science and literature. The business of the day was confined to speeches delivered by the delegates of different countries; nearly every country in Europe being represented, besides delegates being present from Brazil, Algeria, and the United States. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner spoke on behalf of the Rationalist Press Association, Mr. Heaford and myself on behalf of the N. S. S.; Mr. Victor Roger also made a brief speech at a later sitting. M. Furnemont announced his personal regret at Mr. Foote being too unwell to be present, and moved that a message of sympathy be sent to the President of the N. S. S. This was carried unanimously.

The general topic of discussion was the law in the various countries in relation to liberty of conscience. Many interesting speeches were made, but from all came the tale either of laws that were vindictively oppressive or of laws more favorable to Freethought rendered inoperative to a considerable extent by the power and intrigues of the clergy. In Belgium, for instance, M. Lorand pointed out that although the law guaranteed freedom of opinion, yet the Church practically controlled education, it exerted

enormous financial power, it stood behind much of the Congo misrule, while religious institutions were converted into trading communities. Curiously, in spite of these facts, the chief emphasis was still laid upon an alteration of the law; whereas it would seem that the obvious lesson is that a real guarantee of intellectual liberty can only be found in the enlightenment of the general public.

Among the lighter occupations of the Conference was a visit to the Exhibition, with a reception, including refreshments, in one of the public halls in the grounds. On Wednesday a visit was paid to the Orphanage, which stands unique among the institutions of Freethought. The Orphanage shelters at present some seventy inmates, ranging from three to sixteen years of age. The plan of education is carefully graduated, including manual instruction, which latter stage is only in its infancy. A pleasing feature of the institution is the care taken to keep in touch with the children after they pass out into the world. The Orphanage is under the control of Mlle. Talmasse, a lady whose intelligent face inspires confidence in adults, and whose kindly nature must breed a strong affection in the children. That she has this is evident from the happy appearance of her charges, their general behavior—as well as one could judge from a brief visit—combined with a charming and desirable freedom from restraint.

The concluding meeting of the Conference was one for the consideration of administrative affairs. In the conduct of pure business the Federation still has much to learn. The English method of preparing an Agenda to which delegates have to speak is one that has not yet established itself, with the result that an invitation is offered to chaos—which sometimes arrives. If the Federation is to do its work successfully, it is simply intolerable that individuals should be permitted to spend the time in oratorical displays which, however interesting in themselves, are quite out of place in a business assembly. Freethinkers do not meet in congress for the purpose of making fiery speeches to each other on matters on which they are already agreed, but to consider how to spread their ideas among outsiders. Before the meeting concluded, thanks partly to the persistence of the English delegates, a promise was secured that better methods should be adopted, and a committee was appointed to consider the matter. When the next Congress meets in Munich in 1912, I trust the result of the committee's work will be evident.

It was very plain, from the speeches delivered by delegates, that the Federation exercises a valuable influence in stimulating Freethought on the Continent. In England we are under different conditions, and are more independent of it. But in Roman Catholic countries the power of an organisation such as the Federation yields works for mutual strength and benefit. Events in the future may bring English Freethought into closer contact with Freethought on the Continent. Personally, I hope it will. True Freethought is international—probably the only internationalism of ultimate value. For genuine human progress must always depend upon the recognition of a common human need and capacity that is strong enough to overleap the artificial barriers of religion or political differences.

C. COHEN.

Correspondence.

THE PRE-CHRISTIAN CROSS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On casually glancing through my current *Freethinker* this morning, I saw the article on "The Antiquity of the Cross" by W. Mann. Might I say that the subject of the article is largely to be found on the Assyrian, Egyptian, and Mexican sculptures of the British Museum? For the benefit of Freethinkers residing in London, may I be permitted to quote a few examples, easily found and well defined? The first is that of the Greek type, with rays of light emanating from the centre in the spaces between

the arms, which I think, in this particular case, are of equal breadth from centre to the apexes. This emblem is found on a monolith of an Assyrian king, rear doorway of Archaic Room in Assyrian Transept, quite near to the winged lions. I see the guide-book gives this monolith as a stele rounded at the top, with figure of a king and emblems of Assyrian gods in relief. In the Nimroud Gallery are to be found hunting and war scenes in bas-relief. By a little study the bas-relief of the king is easily found, and it is to be noticed that on the trappings of the horses drawing his chariot are well-defined crosses of the Greek type. May I pause here and say that the cross is evidently a regal emblem among the Assyrians? for on no other horse-trappings is it to be found—they only have plain medallions?

In Mr. Mann's article reference is made to the Sun-God, Dionysus. A very typical case occurs in the Nimroud Gallery, where directly over a king's bas-relief is a figure—I might almost say of a cruciform shape—winged and, if memory serves me right, with an eagle's head; its motive is to shoot its arrows of light either into the eyes of the king's enemies or those of the prey he is after in the chase, so that he may kill them more easily.

In the Nimroud Central Saloon, and near what is known as the Black Obelisk, is a large monolith of an Assyrian king wearing a pectoral cross of the Greek type suspended from his neck by a narrow cord. This cross stands out as the clearest of all in the Museum. The periods appear, according to the guide-book, as those of 885-860 B.C. May I say that, in all the Assyrian sculptures, there is not a single example of the Assyrian emblem representing the soul—*i.e.*, a butterfly? And again, if not going outside the subject, some Assyriologists affirm that Assyrians believed that souls left the body by means of the eyes, and not through the mouth, as popular Christian superstition gives it.

In the Egyptian vestibule, at foot of north-west staircase, are to be found two types of crosses—one of the Greek type enclosed within a circle, and that of the Latin type. These crosses are to be found on the stele affixed to the walls; either two or three of these Latin crosses are to be found immediately on the right as one turns into the vestibule from northern Egyptian Gallery. These are the earliest types extant in the public galleries of the Museum, the period assigned being, I think, 3,500 B.C. There are many examples to be found in the Egyptian sculpture galleries, but the Ank type is largely predominant, as it embodies the loop, cross, and staff; many of the Sekhets are holding them as keys to open the mouths of the dead. Inside and outside the stone sarcophagi, crosses are to be found; but in these instances they seem to have degenerated into Phallic emblems. On one sarcophagus is a clearly defined example of Phallic adoration by women, which seems to be on all fours with Mr. Mann's reference to Ezekiel viii. 14.

On the N.E. staircase landing, upper floor, there is affixed to the wall a small amount of Aztec or Mexican sculpture. I do not think there are more than six or seven crosses to be found among it. This type differs from both the Egyptian and Assyrian, as the vertical arm is longer in each case than the horizontal; but, like the Assyrian, these crosses are in relief, while the Egyptian, with a few exceptions, are incised. Then the Mexican differs again; for while both Assyrian and Egyptian, when enclosed, are always within a perfect circle, the Mexican type is within a beautiful oval. Many crosses are to be found on the wall paintings of First and Second Egyptian Rooms, also on the inner and outer wooden mummy cases in these rooms.

J. R. NICHOLS.

Obituary.

HUDDERSFIELD.—With great regret I have to announce the death in somewhat painful and tragic circumstances of a good steady Atheist—Mr. Tom Ollerenshaw. He had gone into Derbyshire to attend the funeral of a relative; and soon after the interment, whilst walking in the street with a friend, he was seized with paralysis, which took away both his speech and the use of his limbs; and, despite the attention of two medical men, he lingered in this state for three days, until his decease on Monday, the 22nd inst., never having regained consciousness. He was a devoted follower of the late Mr. Bradlaugh; and our esteemed President, Mr. Foote, had in him a firm supporter through thick and thin. He had been a member of this Branch from the time of his return from Australia over twenty years ago, in which over-sea Colony he was residing at the time the late Joseph Symes went out there, and his references to the many occasions when he and some of his conferees thought it a small matter to travel some forty miles each way on a Sunday to hear Mr. Symes lecture in Melbourne. He was of nature sensitive to a degree, and, so far as his means would allow, always a generous supporter with his purse to any movement connected with the N.S.S. and its work. He was interred at Helme Village Churchyard.—WM. H. SPIVEY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): Mr. G. W. Foote: 7.30, "Ferrer Haunts His Murderers."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Allison, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 5.45, W. J. Ramsey, Lectures.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Walter Bradford and G. J. Cook. Newington Green: 12 noon, J. J. Darby, "Christianity and Commonsense." Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, T. Dobson and H. King. Finsbury Park: 3.30, James Rowney, "Bible Prophecies." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King, T. Dobson, and James Rowney.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, J. Marshall, "Dives and Lazarus."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. Davidson, "Civilising the Christian."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Davis, "Religion and Life."

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Square): John Geneva, 3, "Does God Care for Us?" 7.30, "Should We Care for God?"

HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Cross): 8, G. T. Whitehead, a Lecture. Saturday, at 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Probable Crush in the New Jerusalem."

LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Beward of Infidels."

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

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

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President: G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary: MISS E. M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

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