

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXX.—No. 37

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1910

PRICE TWOPENCE

It is Christendom that is the matter with the world. The world is sick of Christendom. We must come out of Christendom into the Universe.—JOHN DAVIDSON.

Thimble-Rigging.

THE annual meeting of the British Association is followed by a Sunday's "spiritual" debauch. All sorts of professional and amateur orators hold forth, in churches and hired halls, on Science and Religion. They explain how science helps religion, and how religion blesses science. And the two old enemies are represented as weeping over each other in a fraternal embrace.

Sheffield was no exception to the general rule. A vast quantity of "gas" was let off from pulpits and platforms. The performers were too many for separate notice. We must confine our attention to two—the Archbishop of York and Sir Oliver Lodge.

The Archbishop of York "came over specially" to preach the sermon at what is called the official service in the Parish Church. He was supported by the Lord Mayor, the Corporation, and other civic dignitaries. And he really needed a good deal of support in such a performance. It was a clever piece of intellectual thimble-rigging. The congregation must have been both tickled and stupefied. The preacher had them well under control. He must have felt at the finish that his £10,000 a year was thoroughly secure.

His Grace—that's what they call this poor humble apostle of the meek and lowly Jesus—remarked that there was an unfortunate misunderstanding between religion and science during the nineteenth century. Scientists and theologians were often in conflict. But of late years there had been a striking change. The truest and best men on either side were conscious that there was a call for a truce of God. "There were still, no doubt," his Grace said, "in the popular press and platform, echoes of the old disputes. Those who might be called the camp followers of science and religion were apt to break out into quarrels." Wretched people, in deadly earnest over principles, and utterly unable to understand the reconciliation of opposites and the harmony of contradictions, still go on disputing; but the dignified and well-to-do leaders of religion and science have set up an *entente cordiale*, with a view to a readjustment of claims and a rearrangement of territory. Science is to take the known, and religion to take the unknown. Science is to acknowledge an ultimate mystery, and religion is to make the most of it. In other words, the masses of the people are still to be bamboozled and exploited.

The Archbishop did not express himself in those very words, but that is what he meant. Humbug is always solemn; it cannot succeed otherwise. When a man sells a patent medicine worth a halfpenny for two-and-nine he does it through an intensely benevolent advertisement that would charm a parrot off a perch. For the same reason the Archbishop of York's eloquence was worthy of Elijah Pogram. "The man of religion," he said, "must love God with all his mind as well as with all his soul, and the man of science must love God with all his soul as well as with all his mind." Which means at bottom that

the men of science must be good enough to leave the men of God in the free exercise of the most profitable craft in the world. The most profitable, the most useless, and the most pernicious.

Perhaps the most astonishing part of his Grace's sermon was that in which he represented a hopeless defeat of religion as a noble victory:—

"How barren and needless seemed to have been the old wrangle about the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. A sound theology no longer claimed for that noble foreword of the Bible that it was a scientific treatise, miraculously anticipating in every word and detail the discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We had learned to see in it something far more worthy of the divine teacher of man—a truth conveyed in forms of speech and symbols of imagination intelligible alike in the childhood and the maturity of the race—that the ultimate basis of the unity of nature and of knowledge was a living mind and will, containing, while it transcended, all that we meant by personality."

The Archbishop of York has the effrontery to suggest, nay to affirm, that the metaphysic of his last sentence was in the mind of the priests who wrote, and the people who accepted, the first chapters of Genesis. They believed the Creation Story literally. So did the Christians for nearly two thousand years. They persecuted honest men to the death for doubting it. Later on they tried to throw Colenso out of the Church. They applauded Gladstone, only twenty years ago, for writing a book to prove that Moses anticipated Darwin. Yet now that they are utterly beaten all along the line they have the "face" to say that the whole conflict was the result of a misunderstanding; that the Bible does not mean exactly what it says—that to find out its true meaning you must read it upside down or diagonally; that by a proper interpretation it will always be found to mean precisely what science has succeeded in establishing; that, after all, if it is not true as history it is true as poetry, and that the more it is proved to be false in its letter the more it is proved to be accurate in its spirit. Religion says to science, "What is the up-to-date theory?" Being supplied with the information, it says, "All right; we'll make the Bible mean that." And the men of religion, who do this for the sake of their situations and salaries, have the impudence to teach other men the laws of honesty.

Prove what you will, the theological thimble-riggers will keep their Bible. Prove that life, mind, and even spirit were evolved from matter, and what would follow? "We would only bow with deeper reverence," the Archbishop says, "before a fresh discovery of the power and wisdom of God." Heads we win; tails you lose! His Grace preaches the principles of the Vicar of Bray. "Keep the Bible and 'God' in the show; only keep them there, and let them mean anything you please—as long as I remain Archbishop of York, with an income twice as big as the Prime Minister's."

It was pitiable to see men like Sir J. J. Thomson, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, and Sir Archibald Geikie, sitting out such a contemptible farce. We suppose that they, in their turn, were worshipping the great goddess Respectability.

Sir Oliver Lodge's lecture in the Victoria Hall we will deal with next week.

G. W. FOOTE.

Herbert Spencer and Religion.—II.

(Concluded from p. 563.)

THERE is an unconscious satire in a postscript to the 1898 edition of *First Principles*, and a probably unconscious rebuke to those who, in the interests of religion, emphasise the importance of the "Unknowable." In this postscript, at the conclusion of the section entitled "The Unknowable," Spencer says:—

"The subjects on which we are about to enter are independent of the subjects thus far discussed; and he may reject any or all of that which has gone before, while leaving himself free to accept any or all of which is now to come."

In other words, "The Unknowable" is a pure theologico-metaphysical speculation, holding no relation to the Synthetic Philosophy as such, and of no value whatever to an evolutionary philosophy. The pity is that so much space and time were spent in discussing it.

To return to Spencer's reconciliation of religion and science. This, as I have pointed out, consists in the discovery that religion and science represent parallel lines of development; the former asserting the existence of an unknowable reality, the latter being concerned with the known and knowable. Now, if this were merely a philosophic way of saying that religion in civilised countries begins where knowledge ends, I should be the last person to question the truth of the statement. For actually that is what occurs. Civilised people, whether they be educated or uneducated, do not rest their religious beliefs upon what they know, but upon an absence of knowledge concerning certain questions. The form of the argument is, Because we do not know how certain phenomena are produced, therefore we are warranted in assuming a creative intelligence as their cause. Spencer, however, does not mean this; the humor of the position being that it is stated with the utmost gravity of purpose. And to that position the adequate reply is that there are not two lines of development of human intelligence, but only one—religion and science representing earlier and later stages of growth. Primitive man, not being a metaphysician, does not base his religion either upon the consciousness of an "insoluble mystery," nor upon a reality that lies beyond experience, but upon a supposed fact, and this a fact that is to him the most obtrusive of all facts.

Spencer himself may be cited as proof of this. He points out, once he is clear of the "Unknowable," which he drops as completely as he advises his readers to, on a wide survey of the facts, that the imagination of primitive man is reminiscent, not constructive; his grasp of thought is feeble; he is without the quick curiosity of civilised man; there is an absence of the idea of natural causation; he accepts things as they appear, without any particular desire to inquire into their real nature or their connection with other events, and is without abstract ideas. Clearly not a very promising subject from which to derive even the germ of the idea of an existence transcending experience. He also, and quite properly, insists that early religious ideas are, under the condition of their birth, rational ideas. We must, he says, accept the truth "that the laws of thought are everywhere the same; and that, given the data as known to him, the inference drawn by the primitive man is the reasonable inference."

Quite so; and it is this that gives the death blow to his previous theory of the essential nature of religion, and its essential differentiation from science. For, given the constitution of the primitive mind, its ignorance of causation and lack of knowledge, religion begins as concerned with what are to the primitive mind the most real of facts. Step by step Spencer shows how the experience of dreams, of disease, of apoplexy, ecstasy, echoes, shadows, etc., combine to produce in the primitive mind the belief in unseen agencies, differing in no respect from man save in that of invisibility. From the visions

seen in dreams he derives the idea of a ghost. Ignorant of the nature of death, he assumes the ghost to be still existing. Hence the ceremonies round the grave, and the attention paid to the dead man, developing naturally into ancestor worship. The same train of thought leads primitive man to give a double to other objects than human beings. Hence animism, totemism, and their numerous subsidiary developments. He insists not only that "All religions have a natural genesis," but also "that behind supernatural beings of all orders.....there has been in every case a human personality"; in other words, every god is developed from a ghost—"Ancestor worship is the root of every religion." To this he will admit of no exception, and he contemptuously asks:—

"Must we recognise a single exception to the general truth thus far verified everywhere? While among all races in all regions, from the earliest times down to the present, the conceptions of deities have been naturally evolved in the way shown; must we conclude that a small clan of the Semitic race had given to it supernaturally, a conception which, though superficially like the rest, was in substance absolutely unlike them?"

And in a following half dozen pages he shows conclusively that the Biblical God had precisely the same origin as those of the savage races just under discussion.

Now, if the Spencerian account of religion means anything at all, it means that instead of religion and science moving along parallel lines, religion is just primitive science. For the reasons given by Spencer, man's earliest conception of things is vitalistic—he reads his own feelings and his own intelligence into nature. Ghosts—the primitive protoplasm of which Spencer insists all gods are formed—are created, and once brought into being, dominate the primitive mind. Fear combines with ignorance in resisting any conception of natural operations that will take power from the hands of these extra-natural agents. In spite, however, of all fear and all opposition, the mechanical theory of things grows, and by growing, does establish a clear line of demarcation between religion and science. But the line of demarcation is not that stated by Spencer. Religion no more asserts the existence of an "Unknown Verity" than it does the existence of a fourth dimension of space. Its characteristic future is that it offers the world a vitalistic explanation of things as against a mechanical explanation offered by science. In this it stands for the earlier as against the later expression of human knowledge. It champions savage thought against civilised intelligence. Religion in a civilised State has no other genuine significance than that of the persistence of animistic modes of thought disguised by a philosophic terminology.

This conclusion, he it observed, is one that is thoroughly justified by Spencer's own explanation of the genesis and nature of religious beliefs as given in that portion of his writings that rests upon the solid ground of fact. Nor do I know a more remarkable instance of a first rate thinker propounding in one portion of his writings a theory bearing no relation to the rest of his work, and then, when dealing with the facts, disproving this theory at every possible point.

Spencer's reconciliation of religion is only one degree less surprising than that it should have been accepted by so many religionists as satisfactory. Following the line of the untenable theory that religion and science pursue parallel lines of development, he points out that "the agent which has effected the purification (of religion) has been science." That is, it is the growth of the mechanical theory of nature that has driven back the vitalistic theory. This is purification, only in the sense that a defaulting cashier purifies the finances of the concern with which he is connected. "As fact or experience proves that certain familiar changes always happen in the same sequence, there begins to fade from the mind the conception of a special personality to whose variable will they were before ascribed." This Spencer calls, in science, teaching

religion its true function. As a matter of fact, science has, in this direction, given religion no positive instruction, it has merely issued prohibitions. It has warned religion that it must not meddle with certain departments of human knowledge. So religion is forced continually back until it is left— with what? Not with anything that is known, or with anything that can be known; it is left in the kingdom of nowhere, ruling over an empire of nothing at all. And so long as religion strives for a more tangible possession there must be conflict between it and science. But—

"As the limits of possible cognition are established, the causes of conflict will diminish. And a permanent peace will be reached when science becomes fully convinced that its explanations are proximate and relative; while religion becomes fully convinced that the mystery it contemplates is ultimate and absolute."

So, when science has monopolised the entire field of human knowledge, actual and possible, and when religion is satisfied that it knows nothing, and never can know anything of the object of its worship, that it can offer nothing in the shape of counsel or advice, but that its sole function is to sit in owl-like solemnity, contemplating nothing at all, offering man an eternal conundrum that he must everlastingly give up, then there will be peace between science and religion. And this Spencer calls a reconciliation; He finds two combatants in a deadly struggle. He murders one and offers the corpse to the other, with the hope that they will live on friendly terms in the future. The religious man is asked to find comfort in the reflection that science must eventually monopolise the entire field of conduct and of knowledge, and that religion will be left free to work in an unknowable region, occupied with an unknowable object, and to eternally cry, "Mystery, mystery, all is mystery," in an amended philosophic version of the Athanasian creed.

As a piece of humor, this is, no doubt, superb. So also is the expression, "Science has been obliged to abandon the attempt to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known; and has so yielded up to religion that which of right belonged to it." Capital! Science gives up to religion that which cannot be known; and as it does not know that there exists anything of which something cannot be known, it surrenders to religion absolute vacuity as the proper sphere for its existence. And it does even this with the proviso that if it happens that a mistake has been made and there is something to be known, the overlooked territory must be ceded immediately by religion. Well, science would indeed be vindictive if, after having murdered religion in this manner, it refused to even look peacefully at its corpse.

Religion, however, does not begin in a sense of mystery, but in an assumed knowledge of facts. Man believes in the gods because of what he thinks he knows about them, not on account of what he does not know. The talk of a mystery only begins with the creation of a priesthood when it is necessary to keep laymen at a distance. And more and more emphasis is placed on religious mystery only because positive knowledge steadily monopolises a growing area, and religious teachers experience the danger of dealing with matters that can be brought to the test of fact and verification. Mystery-mongering is not really the essence of religion; it is the cover for the sanctuary that has been emptied by the growth of scientific knowledge. Mysticism, too, is the end of religion, not its beginning. If religion is to really live it must have some knowledge, no matter how little or how imperfect in relation to its subject, to impart. A religion that does not possess this, but is compelled to hand over the whole of life to secular science, signs its own death warrant. It commits suicide to avoid execution. And as people realise this they turn to clear-eyed Science for guidance, leaving religion to such representatives of primitive animism as still survive in a civilised community.

C. COHEN.

Freethought in Belgium.

THE fifteenth Freethought Congress, which has just been held at Brussels, is destined to go down to history as, on the whole, the most important and memorable of the series. As the celebrated writer, Eugène Hins, well says, it opened amidst circumstances that imparted to it a thoroughly unique character. It is well known that the Papacy is at present making a desperate attempt to reassert and re-establish its ancient tyrannical powers. Its sole aim is to crush the modern spirit and bring back the Middle Ages. "The Church," it says, "cannot allow the baneful principle of liberty of creeds, which is an offence to true religion, which is opposed to the sentiments of the Catholic Spanish nation, and which is not at all desired by that noble people, nor is justified by any necessity." It is to the entire suppression of modern liberty that the whole activity of Catholicism is now directed; and it is in Spain that the reactionary forces are to be seen at their most sinister work. It was peculiarly fitting, therefore, that the recent Congress of International Freethought had but one subject to discuss, namely, Liberty of Conscience, and that the name of the Church's latest victim, Francisco Ferrer, should have been so closely associated with all the proceedings. Another circumstance deserves to be emphasised in this connection, namely, the wise choice of Brussels as the place of meeting. Spain has committed innumerable brutal murders in her time, three of the very worst of which stood in bold relief at the Brussels Conference. Ferrer's name was naturally linked with those of Counts Egmont and Horn, who had been cruelly massacred by Spanish tyranny three centuries earlier. These three heroes were advocates of toleration and denouncers of persecution; and now the three are commemorated together, on the very spot where the first two were assassinated. The inscription on the white marble, which now forms part of the pavement in front of the Maison du Roi in the Grand' Place, reads as follows:—

"To the memory
Of Counts Egmont and Horn,
beheaded in this place by order
of Philip II. for having defended
liberty of conscience
in 1568.
This marble is dedicated to them
by the International Committee appointed
to commemorate the heroic death
of Francisco Ferrer
shot at Montjuich for the same cause
in 1909."

On uncovering the stone Emile Vinck very truly said: "Three victims of priestly intolerance, Egmont, Horn, and Ferrer, so different and yet so much alike through the grandeur of the cause which their sacrifice symbolises." As we stood in the beautiful square on Sunday morning, August 21, 1910, listening to eulogistic speeches, or gazing on the commemorative marble, how easy and yet how painful it was to imagine the horrible scene that had transpired there on the 5th of June, 1568, at ten o'clock in the morning, when a large platform stood close to the scaffold. All around were the Spanish lancers, armed to the teeth, ready to scatter the crowd at the first sign of revolt.

How enormously the times have changed. Egmont and Horn were zealous Christians. Their only offence was their disapproval of the intolerant proceedings of the Spanish Government, and particularly of Cardinal Granvella. They had many serious faults, specially Egmont, who vacillated shamefully, and then became an unscrupulous supporter of the Spanish tyranny and fierce persecutor of heretics; but it was not for their faults, but for a feeble virtue, that they lost their heads. To-day, Spain does not kill her heretics, and her day of shooting sceptics is nearly over. In her cities and towns there are now to be found hundreds of thousands of stalwart Freethinkers, who are resolved, at whatever cost, to deliver their country from the bondage of supersti-

tion and priestcraft. During the first half of the year 1909, they fondly hoped that the triumph of their cause was at hand. They believed that the fires of intolerance were well nigh exhausted. There were rural villages in which the majority of people had severed their connection with the Church, and in which births, marriages, and deaths were celebrated without the ministrations of the priests. But the Papacy, realising that Freethought was its deadliest foe, and that its own supremacy was already imperilled, resorted to its most drastic measures, and, throwing all scruples to the wind, boldly shot down the foremost Spanish Freethinker, and closed all the Secular Schools in the country. Meantime, Spain is still the most backward country, the most decadent nation, in Europe, because she is still crushed under the heel of Rome; and, unless she succeeds in throwing off her galling yoke, the day is not far off when she shall disappear from the list of nations. That her case is by no means hopeless is shown by the example of France. France is rapidly emancipating herself from the shackles that bound her for centuries, and learning the art of thinking and acting for herself. The same thing is true, though by no means to the same extent, of the kingdom of Belgium. Sixty years ago, organised Freethought did not exist in any part of the country. The first Secular Society was formed in 1854. Its founders were for the most part working-people, among whom, we find, were many French exiles, victims of the prince-president's famous *coup d'état* on December 2, 1851, who naturally knew better than the Belgians how to appreciate "the infamous conduct of the clergy, and the spirit of domination and exploitation which animated the Church." This parent Society suffered severely from the fierce opposition and persecution of the priests. The press, being in the pay of the clergy, pursued a scandalous polemic, with the result, fortunately, that the eyes of multitudes were opened, and the Society quickly grew in number and influence. Sixty years ago a Freethinker was treated worse than a dog. When he died it was next to impossible to secure decent burial for him. Indeed, there were scarcely any sordid actions of which the priests were not guilty in their eagerness to suppress Freethought. But the Secular Society found means either to remove or greatly to mitigate many of the disabilities to which the members were at first subjected. In 1857 a second Society came into existence at Brussels. This was really a split from the first, but instead of injuring each other, the friendly rivalry between them proved of vast service to the cause. In 1863, a third branch sprang into being. Whilst the first two Societies were composed almost exclusively of workers, the new group, "The Freethought of Brussels," drew its adherents from the middle class, a great number of professors, lawyers, doctors, artists, being identified with it. Among its founders was the illustrious Professor Hector Denis, who for nearly fifty years has taken a brilliant part in all Freethought movements. Naturally, such a Society evoked violent opposition. Even the king threw himself into the conflict. He instructed his secretary, Viscount Conway, to write a letter to the Dean of St. Gudule, in which he called the founders of Freethought insane people, "who, under the pretence of civilisation and progress, desire to thrust society outside the pale of Christianity, with the certain risk of seeing it reverting into barbarism." Of course, the clergy made a great noise over such a royal pronouncement, but the letter was never published. After causing a vehement controversy, it was disavowed by him who had dictated it. But, in spite of all opposition, the new Society prospered rapidly. Starting with forty members it soon attained to a membership of eight hundred. And it has borne abundant fruit. Out of it came the Model School, and what is known to-day as the "Upper Elementary School of the town of Brussels."

Nothing could have more effectually proved the relative triumph of Freethought in Belgium than the

sympathetic reception accorded to the International Congress. Our procession through the main streets of Brussels was an event never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. Judging by the respectful demeanor of the dense crowds that thronged the pavements, doors, and windows, one would have inferred that Brussels is inhabited exclusively by Freethinkers. The Congress platform was occupied by men and women of great eminence. Two professors of the University of Brussels took prominent parts in the general discussion. One of the most effective orators was Dr. Eugène Hins; and the Professor of Oriental Languages made a favorable impression on those who were privileged to hear him. Dr. Hector Denis's masterly discourse on "The Philosophical Bases of the Liberty of Conscience," published verbatim in *Le Peuple*, imparted high tone and dignity to the whole Congress.

Indeed, there are indications not a few that, ere long, Freethought will be as predominant in Belgium as it is in France. During the last fifty years the progress of the cause has been so enormous that already the Church scarcely counts in practical affairs. Some of us attended a gorgeous service in a beautiful church near the Royal Palace, where the music was characterised by chastened power and soothing, but the building was empty. Brussels has lost all interest in the world to come, and is too busy making the most of this to waste its time in churches and chapels. But Freethought in Belgium means serious business. In an intensely interesting pamphlet, from which most of the facts in this article have been taken, we are supplied with valuable information about "The Works of Freethought." The following extract ought to silence completely those opponents of Freethought who are perpetually asking for a list of the benefits it has bestowed upon humanity. This is what we read:—

"To make their program and their works known, the Belgian Freethinkers have established a weekly organ, directed by our valiant friend Eugène Hins, and conducted by our devoted comrade Alexander. To shield infancy and youth from the ceremonies of religious worship, they have organised secular festivals, both amusing and instructive. To protect sickness against the prejudiced suggestions of monks and priests, they have initiated lay nursing establishments, which to solid technical instruction add the principles of tolerance and of absolute respect for the convictions of the sick. To prevent the orphans of Freethinkers from being inoculated with ideas contrary to the principle of free investigation, they have founded a Rationalist Orphanage where infants of both sexes receive an education erected on a strictly scientific foundation and inspired by a purely human morality."

J. T. LLOYD.

"Mankind and Marriage."

THIS is the rather too comprehensive title of an article by the Reverend Christopher Hudson, B.A., of Nuneaton in the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, dated August 27. Mr. Hudson's personal views on marriage are not necessarily unimportant for the reason that Mr. Hudson's circumstances colour his views. His wife has deserted him (at least he tells us so), and he is in love with another lady. Thus far the facts seem commonplace, and there is little wonder if a commonsense couple take a course consistent with their sentiments, basing their actions on utilitarian wisdom instead of traditional theory. Our sympathy is with the man and woman in what is no doubt a trying crisis in their lives.

Mr. Hudson is, however, a beneficed clergyman, and he has to study something more than logic and public opinion. He has subscribed to the Articles of Religion, he is the paid servant of a certain church, he professes a definite creed. It is open for him to resign if he can no longer teach the doctrines of his church. There is something repulsive in the picture of an intellectual man clinging to the "cash nexus" of a creed he has discarded. It may be remembered that when F. W. Robertson resigned his Brighton

living on grounds of doctrinal dissent, the Rev. H. R. Haweis described the resignation as "an anachronism." There have been precious few anachronisms of the kind since Robertson's day.

In Mr. Hudson's *P.I.P.* article he throws over altogether any attempt to reconcile his own attitude with canon law or church doctrine. He refers to these as "Ecclesiastical and Legal Barbarities," and falls back on that indefinite and self-contradictory authority, the Holy Scriptures. Even here, after quoting with approval Genesis ii. 18 (which he misquotes by adding a hyphen between the two words "help" and "meet"), Mr. Hudson realises the impossibility of defending "The God-Made Laws of Marriage," and he rivets our attention on the New Testament as if Christ and Paul were any improvement on Moses and Solomon.

The Marriage Service of the Church of England flatly contradicts Mr. Hudson's views as to the "irrefutable end of marriage," and he will have to decide how far he can honestly administer his Church's sacraments while fundamentally disagreeing with their plain teaching. He goes farther and implicitly in word, as well as explicitly in act, refuses to accept the Church's view of what constitutes a marriage. Mr. Hudson seems to misunderstand what is required of him. His views on marriage may be well worth stating. The immediate demand is for him to justify his retention of his benefice. Mr. Dennis Hird was deprived of his living for writing *A Christian with Two Wives*. Mr. Hudson will hardly be allowed to "live in open sin," four ridicule on the sacrament of marriage, and continue to enjoy the "cure of souls."

"The fundamental requirement of the New Testament," says Mr. Hudson, "is that the man shall be the husband of one wife." On the contrary, the fundamental requirement of the New Testament is to "believe and be saved," and believing implies forsaking father, mother, wife, and children (Matt. xix. 29). Mr. Hudson's "husband of one wife" is evidently our old friend, 1 Timothy iii. 2, and 12, where bishops and deacons alone are enjoined to be monogamous. Matthew xix. 12, regards castration as a more desirable operation than marriage, while the whole of Paul's sex teaching is summed up in 1 Cor. vii., which begins. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," and perfectly clearly indicates Paul's preferences and teaching: "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I" (1 Cor. vii., 8). Marriage, in St. Paul's view, was better than fornication, and had no other excuse.

Mr. Hudson does not even accept the "one wife" theory in his own practice, unless he thinks the passage means "one wife a year," or some similarly qualifying reservation. No one but a parson could quote St. Paul as an enlightened teacher of divorce law. "The end and aim," he says, "of marriage being to produce mutual life, help and happiness, where this end is not accomplished, we find two passages of Scripture, which mercifully allow its dissolution."

The first passage quoted is 1 Corinthians vii. 15: "If the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases." Mr. Hudson ingeniously anticipates the objection that probably Mrs. Hudson was a believer, by arguing that "in departing, if the Church's stupid and cruel theory is right, he shows that he does not believe it or he would not depart." He also suggests that "if the one that remains may be set free if deserted by an unbeliever, how much more when deserted by a Christian?" Reason totters on its throne in face of "arguments" like these. Obviously Paul had no objection to an unbeliever ridding his Church of an embarrassment, and so setting the believer free from the bonds of matrimony. Paul's idea of being free was very different from Mr. Hudson's.

The second passage is an extraordinary "support" for Mr. Hudson to quote—viz., Matthew v. 27-29: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his

heart." Christ's *expansion* of the Mosaic law is made a justification for easier divorce!

The reverend gentleman challenges the production of a single New Testament passage which requires "that the parties" to a marriage "shall promise to take each other for life." It is difficult to see how Matthew xix. 6 can be reconciled with divorce under any circumstances; but perhaps Mr. Hudson is emphasising the word "promise," as I notice he repudiates the necessity of publicity for marriages. Unwittingly, he here betrays the shallowness of his thought. If an iron law binds a couple together in intolerable conditions, it can matter little what the parties promise to each other. On the other hand, it is not the secret promise which constitutes marriage, but the public declaration proving good faith, which ought to be made less a barrier to honorable divorce, and more a protection to the weak, and a guarantee against deceit.

Marriage law reform was never more hopeful of progress than now; but we do not expect any assistance from the Holy Scriptures, of the Old or the so-called New Testament. Mr. Hudson might help, but only in so far as he throws overboard his religion, which is, as it always has been, the enemy of rational reform.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Satiated!

GREEN, shot with malice, and rage, and spite,
Empearled with star-dust spray,
The waves, called up by the snarling night,
Seemed in their unquiet, toiling might,
Hungry for food as hungry for life,
The men on the ship who pray.

Still, for the winds to their home have fled,
The sky, the sea, are still;
And peace, as only the night can spread
O'er vast expanses, is silent, dead;
The waves that were hungry smile in sleep
Fed well by the Holy Will.

ROBERT MORELAND.

God never saved
A king:—which king of all the catalogue
Who came to violent ends was saved by God,
From poison, from assassins, from the scaffold?
They died the death their enemies decreed.
God never yet did anything at all.
And why? Because there is none; never was.

—John Davidson.

PROFANITY BY ASSENT.

Bishop Olmsted, of Denver, tells this story: The Bishop was once talking in Olmstedville with an old fisherman about a neighboring divine, says the *Kansas City Star*.

"A very good man," the Bishop said.
"A good man, yes," assented the old fisherman. "He swears a good bit for a preacher, though."
"Swears?" exclaimed Bishop Olmsted, "I can't believe that."

"But I heard him," said the old fisherman, obstinately. "I sat beside him at our Thanksgiving treat, you know, sir. We both of us were hacking away at a turkey leg. His got away from him. It slid across the table toward me, and a lot of cranberry sauce was spattered about. I said to him, sympathetic like, for I could see he was worked up: 'These legs are damn tough, ain't they, sir?' He answered back, quick as a flash: 'Yes, George, they certainly are.'

Now, if that ain't swearing," concluded the old fisherman, "what is it?"

ANOTHER TRADITION EXPLODED.

Two Englishmen were resting at the Red Horn Inn at Stratford-on-Avon. One of them discovered a print picturing a low, tumbling building underneath which was printed: "The House in Which Shakespeare Was Born." Turning to his friend in mild surprise, he pointed to the print. His friend exhibited equal surprise, and called a waiter, who assured them of the accuracy of the inscription.

"'Pon my word," said the observing Englishman, shaking his head dubiously, "I though he was born in a manger!"

Acid Drops.

Here is the *Christian World* joining in ridicule of the Kaiser for his "divine right" notions. Will it ridicule the same notions when King George is crowned next June? Will it agitate for the removal of "dei gratia" from the British coinage? Will it move to strike out from the New Testament all such texts as "the powers that be are ordained of God"? Does it believe that "Fear God and honor the King" is a republican or democratic text?

"A Bishop at a Nonconformist Funeral." This is the headline of a news item in last week's *Christian World*. The novelty of such an incident speaks volumes for the "love" that Christianity has shed abroad in the world.

Spain from Within, by Rafael Shaw, seems to be an able and interesting book, and we hope to return to it shortly. Meanwhile we may draw attention to what he says about the hatred of Clericalism by the proletariat in the great cities, and especially in Barcelona. According to a review of the book in the *Christian World*—which doesn't mind any digs at Christianity, so long as it is Catholic Christianity—Mr. Shaw states that—

"The hatred against the Religious Orders found a vent in the attacks last year on the convents at Barcelona and in Catalonia. Mr. Shaw clears the rioters from the charges of wild disorder that the clericals heaped upon them. They fired monasteries, convents, and churches, but left public buildings, banks, and rich men's dwellings untouched. They protected and brought food to orphanages supported by the objects of their attacks. They had the markets opened for two hours every morning and kept their forces under complete discipline, so that persons of both sexes could walk all over the town without molestation."

This agrees with what Mr. Nevinson and other special correspondents reported from Barcelona at the time. It is well to have the facts put on record in the more permanent form of a book.

A most extraordinary announcement appeared in a Reuter telegram recently. It appears that the Eucharistic Congress was to open at Montreal on September 6, and was going to be "the greatest church demonstration that has ever been held on the American continent." High dignitaries were to be present, including Cardinal Vannutelli. But the great thing is to come:—

"Besides the Congress, there will be a public exhibition of the Sacrament, which will be carried through the streets of Montreal, and an open-air Mass on Fletcher's Field. As many as five thousand clergy will take part in this Mass, and the Host will be guarded by soldiers with drawn swords."

Exhibition of the Sacrament means exhibition of God—for Catholics believe in transubstantiation, the bread and wine being the very body and blood of Christ. Such is the show that has by this time, we suppose, passed through the streets of Montreal, with British soldiers, apparently, guarding it against the contempt of rational people. This is what we are coming to in the British Empire. Fifty years ago it would have been thought impossible. But nothing is impossible in the way of insolent priestcraft when the Catholic Church is able to display its true spirit. It is the historic enemy of reason, freedom, and progress, and has to be crushed—that was Voltaire's word—out of existence.

Never believe the Catholic Church when it talks about "toleration" and "liberty of conscience." It is a liar. It means nothing of what it says on such subjects. It loves toleration when it is weak. It tramples on toleration when it is strong.

Pope Leo XIII. blessed the Catholic democratic movement known as the Sillon. Pope Pius X. has just damned it. Yet the Papacy is infallible.

The judgment in the Osborne case, in connection with the payment of Members of Parliament from Trade Union funds, is taking a curious development. As our readers are aware, for some years the Trades Union Congress has passed a resolution, with practical unanimity, in favor of secular education. There has always been a small minority of Catholics against this resolution, and these have now issued a manifesto declaring that they cannot be parties to asking for a reversal of the Osborne judgment unless the secular education policy of the Labor party is abandoned. The two cases are not in any way analogous. The objection in the Osborne case was that the money of the Unions was spent for purposes other than those for which it was subscribed. But the Congress does not spend any money in promoting secular education.

It merely passes a resolution, as it might pass one on housing, drainage, or any other question affecting the well-being of the working classes. The real moral of the manifesto is that the Roman Catholics will sacrifice everything to their religion. We trust, however, that the other members will not allow themselves to be overruled by an intolerant and priest-led minority.

Professor Bonney, the new President of the British Association, says that "Christian doctrines are, on the whole, the best approximation to the expression of mysteries which in themselves transcend human understanding and knowledge." How on earth Professor Bonney can tell that anything is the best approximation to something else that is quite above understanding and knowledge, is more than we can tell. If Christian mysteries are in this position, the Professor knows nothing whatever about them; and knowing nothing, he cannot say whether anything else approximates to them or not. If one does not know in which direction Manchester lies in relation to London, how on earth can one say that one road will bring one nearer to it than another. The new President is talking unmitigated nonsense, and if we were to talk in the same manner on a scientific subject we should become a public laughing stock. We expect Professor Bonney reserves his lapses from sanity for his religious moments—which is not an uncommon phenomenon.

We are not surprised to see it stated that the Rev. R. Roberts, author of the plainly spoken *Hibbert Journal* article, "Jesus or Christ," though "seeking pulpit work" has been unable to get any. His enemies will remember his article much longer than his friends, and the former will supply him with a continuous reminder of the value Christians attach to mental rectitude. The Christian Church has no room for men who think seriously, and are honest enough to place the results of their thinking before the world.

The Rev. Dr. Muir, of America, does not hesitate to affirm that when God does not do certain things it is because he cannot. Hearing so much about the Divine power and love, a child asked the question, "Mamma, why does not God make people do right?" The mother could not answer; but Dr. Muir's audacity knows no bounds. He is reported to have spoken thus: "I say it with all reverence to the Eternal God; he cannot do anything of the kind." Of course he cannot; nor can he show any resentment when foolish preachers are talking arrant nonsense in his name. Occasionally, as in this instance, a preacher tells the truth; but is it not his profession to assure his hearers of God's ability and eagerness to make people do right? Is not that declaration the very core of Christianity, and is it not the blackest lie ever uttered?

Some Christian writers—they call themselves "advanced," by the way—are congratulating themselves that the day of "mere intellectualism" in Christianity is passing away. Christianity, they say, is a life, an experience, and people may cling to this without any definite intellectual theory as to its nature. We quite agree that the day of intellectualism in Christianity is rapidly passing—if it is not already gone. But this, instead of being a sign of renewed life, is really an indication of continued decay. It is quite true that life is more comprehensive than any of the special theories we may frame concerning it, but it is also true that reason will justify the most unreasoning of our instincts. A thing may be independent of reason, but it is a bad sign when it is contrary to it; and writers of the kind referred to confuse independence with opposition. Christianity is in conflict with reason; and, having tried in vain to bring about a reconciliation, Christians are now raising the old cry of sour grapes. And this, we say, is a sign of the end. Religions have always commenced to decay from the top. They die by the brains leaving them first of all. Then we have recrudescence of the primitive feelings upon which religion rests, an orgie of emotionalism, with a sectarian ebullition of mysticism. All these are indications of religious disintegration, and the symptoms are to be met with in every country in the civilised world.

What is the matter with Mr. Robert Blatchford? Is it going to live in the country by the seaside? "God," he said, in last week's *Clarion*—"God paints fine skies in this place." God! It was understood that Mr. Blatchford knew nothing about "God."

For some years Mr. Blatchford has been preaching Determinism—as he understands it, and proclaiming the absurdity of praise and blame. He now says that "Man only is to blame for man's sorrow." Nature does her part, she is "bountiful and fair," it is not her fault "if we trample on

the blossom and batten on the weed." It is man's own fault. But is not man a part of nature? Who (or what) made him what he is, with all his strength and weakness, his virtues and vices, his ignorance and wisdom? The answer may be found in Mr. Blatchford's own writings. Mr. Blatchford himself has forgotten it.

It is in the interest of optimism that Mr. Blatchford flouts his own teaching. He denounces pessimism and pessimists. Listen!—

"The rage of all pessimists appears to rise from their resentment against nature. They are mad because they must die. They are mad because appetite becomes sated with much indulgence; because friends die, and pleasures pall, and youth's tree sheds fruit and blossom and leaf, and at last becomes a barren trunk with naked and sapless branches, fit only to be wrenched up by the storm, and gathered together as faggots for the fire. These men who so curse life, curse it because their love of life is great and their anger great at losing it. Out upon these windy grumblers!"

Fancy any well-informed thinker writing of pessimism in that way! And the pessimists—those "windy grumblers." Pascal, Leopardi, Schopenhauer, James Thomson, Thomas Hardy: these are the names of some of them. Mr. Blatchford, forgetting other things, forgets also that these are the names of his betters.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing is that Mr. Blatchford writes of King Solomon as one of the Bible writers. He must be thinking of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, for he says that "the great King had a wise and righteous understanding." It would puzzle anyone to explain a "righteous understanding." And as for a "wise understanding," was it displayed by the Hebrew gentleman who is reported to have had 700 wives over the right and 300 over the left? The said Hebrew gentleman had no more to do with writing Proverbs and Ecclesiastes than Mr. Blatchford or ourselves. And there are hundreds of Christian ministers who are prepared to say that they are perfectly aware of the fact.

What is our object in drawing attention to these "curiosities of criticism"? It is a simple and a sound one. We value Mr. Blatchford's services to Freethought as an eloquent populariser. When he mistakes himself for an original thinker he is apt to do the cause more harm than good.

A writer in one of the religious weeklies draws some concluding—religious—reflections from his conclusion that in a general way the children of Freethinkers revert to the religion their parents rejected. This phenomenon is not by a long way so common as this writer assumes; in fact, it is rather uncommon. What does often take place is that the children of enthusiastic Freethinkers do not follow up the attack on religion, but lapse into nothingarians, sponging whatever reforming energy they possess in social matters. Naturally we deplore this, but are not surprised at it. However qualities are inherited, they are not handed down like a picture or an estate; there is no reason for expecting that children should possess the same qualities as their parents. The men and women who attack religious beliefs in a society where religious influences are so powerful are necessarily built on different lines to the average person around. Biologically they are "sports." But sports would cease to be sports if they were not uncommon; and therefore to expect that the same mental characteristics will exist in the children as existed in the parents is to look for a biological and psychological miracle. The child of the Freethinker will have assaulting it all the influence of a society of which a large number of the institutions are erected and maintained for the express purpose of perpetuating religious belief. That so many of the children of Freethinkers resist these influences to the extent they do is strong evidence of the healthy influence of their home life.

Having said this, one other thing must be pointed out. Christians write and talk as though people became Christian by the influence of some supernatural power, and as though all that Christian Churches had to do was to register the new arrivals. Now, this is not the case. Every Christian adherent is the product of a long and costly process of manufacture. As Christians admit, if each new-comer into the world were left—religiously—alone, the world would be filled with Atheists. Which means that while the calculated efforts of people do succeed in turning the larger number of arrivals into religious beings, the forces of civilised life, if allowed free play, would keep them non-religious. But they are not let alone. Through infancy, adolescence, and maturity gigantic efforts are made to create and perpetuate religious beliefs. Those who profess religion are visibly rewarded, and those who do not are as visibly punished. Yet, in spite of all, religion cannot hold its own. It scores

its triumphs from uninstructed and dependent childhood, only to experience defeat from instructed and independent maturity. The attack, in the interests of religion, is so persistent and so universal that the wonder is so many are able to ward it off. Give Freethought, not the same opportunities of coercion—that it does not ask for—but give it something like a fair and open field, and see how much of Christianity would be left in a civilised country in the course of three or four generations. Or let Christians rise to the perception of their parental functions to the degree that will permit them letting their children religiously alone until they are, say, twelve or fourteen years of age, and how many churches would be required to house the religious population of the British Isles? Most of the existing ones would soon be used for cinematograph shows.

Rev. J. C. Gostwick, of Macclesfield, is a gentleman who knows what's what; and, knowing this, does not hesitate to speak out. Addressing a missionary conference, he asked for "unhesitating fidelity to the evident destiny of the English people, providentially destined and called, as no other people, to lead all nations Godward." Well, Mark Twain said something of the same thing when he observed that the text, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," was fulfilled in the extent of the British possessions. In acquiring territory the British Empire is only obeying the call of "Providence." Other nations may be urged to the same end by lower motives, we are merely carrying out the divine intention. If we profit financially in serving the purpose of God, that is a mere accident, and none but gross Materialists would mistake the accidental for the essential.

Mr. R. J. Campbell once thought that he was great enough to command success without including hell in his repertoire. He has found out that, to a preacher of supernaturalism, hell is absolutely indispensable; and for some weeks now he has been gradually slipping it in. Once he made game of it and held it in derision, but now his "deep conviction is that hell is a dreadful reality, and that one feature of any spiritual reawakening which comes to the modern world will be a reaffirmation of it." Hell is a Christian preacher's great stand-by, or the most valuable portion of his stock-in-trade; and this fact constitutes the most damnable indictment that can possibly be advanced against it.

We are often reminded that humility is the chief Christian virtue. A Christian's first duty, it is said, is to cherish a very low opinion of himself. As a matter of fact, however, the disciples of Jesus are the most bombastic, egotistical, and boastful people on the planet. They speak of themselves as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Had it not been for them the world would have perished long ago. A man of God bragged the other day that God spares the world only for the sake of the Church. It never occurs to such people that boasting is a sign of weakness, that self-praise is indulged in only by fools, and that the self-righteous are, as a rule, conspicuous only by their lack of righteousness. Deep and strong character needs no artificial advertisement, has never to blow its own trumpet.

Canon Newbolt says that "when we are most conscious of our mistakes and imperfections we are still to say, 'It is he (God) that hath made us, and not we ourselves'"—and we dare say that God is duly proud of his workmanship, and proud, also, of Dr. Newbolt, who pays him such pretty compliments. Logic, in the pulpit, is evidently a minus quantity; and, of course, the long-suffering of a non-existing Deity is simply amazing.

Canon Newbolt's quiver is full of surprises. Here is one of them, shot at us at the close of a sermon. Believing that God demands "consecrated men, consecrated places, consecrated times," he says: "But in the vision of the New Jerusalem the apostle says, 'I saw no temple therein.' Why? Because all was temple." Then, the New Jerusalem is an altogether intolerable city. If Great Britain were to become all Church, decent people would either emigrate to some other land, or commit suicide. Life here would then be as impossible as in the crater of Vesuvius.

There was a very odd statement in last week's issue of the New Theology organ. A reverend gentleman (his name doesn't matter) has been preaching a series of sermons on Individual Immortality, and we are informed that "he has given to this subject much careful thought and deep study." Indeed! Well, suppose he has. What of that? What does he know about it now more than the most ignorant man in the street? All that the preacher can say about a future life is guess-work. He knows absolutely nothing. And all

the "careful thought and deep study" in the world is perfectly useless without information. Religious people constantly forget that the basis of all reasoning is *facts*.

Religion is the classical subject of irrationalism. The great "J. B." of the *Christian World* does credit in this respect to his profession. Writing last week on pre-existence and reincarnation, he said: "John Wesley believed in the survival of animals." That settles it. "And why," asks "J. B.," "should not the survival be a progress?" That settles it too. What a remarkably easy way of reaching conclusions!

Francis Haydn Williams, minister of Flowergate Old Chapel, Whitby, sends us a new pamphlet of his, entitled *The Bible a Pessimistic Book*—which we, for our part, have always said it is. "Here we are," Mr. Williams says at the finish, "after nineteen centuries of 'Gospel,' finding out that the whole concern is a myth, fit only for the emotional 'nigger' and those how know 'nowt' about astronomy. It provides a 'living' for thousands of noodle parsons and sophists, who would be better employed as scavengers and dustmen." The future is "for Religious Agnosticism (or Atheism)."

Rev. Edward Palliser Carew Browne, of Tynemouth, has been fined £15 for betting. He pleaded that he was simply seeking material for a pamphlet he was writing to warn people against backing horses. He reminds us of the men of God who go to see naughty productions at theatres and music-halls in order that they may warn their congregations more effectively against such corrupting things.

Great efforts are being made by the authorities in Egypt to prevent the introduction of cholera from Mecca, where the dirty pilgrims go to worship Allah at the tomb of Mohammed. But the dirty pilgrims sometimes battle all precautions. A few years ago one of them got through with a small bottle of "holy" water from the well at Mecca. The "holy" water was poured out of the bottle into an Egyptian well, and it killed (by cholera) some hundred thousand inhabitants of the district. Every pilgrim is now searched, to prevent the recurrence of such a "holy" tragedy.

According to the *Hawick News* a Mr. J. Sursham is "missioning" as a converted Atheist. We never heard of him before. Perhaps he will be good enough to say when and where he was *known* to be an Atheist. He has been telling the public "how he became an Agnostic and then a drunkard." We need not doubt his having been a drunkard. We may take his word for it. But we should like some proof of his having been an Agnostic.

The *War Cry* looks askant at Mr. Lee Jones's effort to befriend persons who are being driven to suicide. He does not intend to trouble himself about religion in this effort, and the Boothite organ declares that "such an agency would be utterly useless without religion." The Salvation Army ought to know. It was wonderfully successful when it started its Suicide Bureau. It saved ever so many people from suicide—without reducing the public official statistics.

A correspondent of the *Liverpool Evening Press* remarks that "a person with atheistic notions is not of much use to advise the despairing of both sexes." Is this a bit below the belt at Mr. Lee Jones? Anyhow, it was not mere *advice*, but practical *help*, that he offered these unfortunates.

"A man has only to be a very short time on the road," says a writer in the *Ironmongers' Chronicle*, "to discover that almost without exception his most impossible, discourteous, selfish, and inconsiderate customers are to be found among those who most loudly profess their Christian virtues."

A correspondent of the *Liverpool Post* visited Frodsham lately, and noticed on the board at the entrance to a certain place of worship that it was "registered for the solemnization of marriages." Exquisite!

Mr. Harold Begbie declares that "The truculent Atheism of the seventies and eighties, and the mechanical agnosticism which flourished so exceedingly under the fighting cocksureness of Huxley's banner, are now moribund." They are being followed, we suppose, by the hysterical sentimentalism which provides Mr. Harold Begbie and his like with good livings.

The veteran Morrison Davidson, writing on Tolstoy in last week's *Reynolds*, says:—

"Unlike the Ingersolls, the Bradlaughs, the Saladins, the Footes, and the Blatchfords, who make no effort to garner the goodly harvest sown by the hand of the Son of Man, Tolstoy proceeds on the true principle—I will destroy and I will build up. And it is the building up, not the destroying, that is the all-important matter."

We do not know exactly what it is that Tolstoy has "built up"—any more than the other publicists whose names are mentioned. The real truth is that pulling down and building up are arbitrary divisions of a continuous process. Life itself is a constant interchange of destruction and construction. Waste and repair of tissue go on to the point of death, and it is always repair that gives way first. To say that building up is the all-important matter is like saying that a surgical operation is nothing, the all-important matter being the patient's continued existence. Your interests may be in effects, not in causes; but as the effects cannot be had without the causes, how absurd it is to praise the one and damn the other!

Mr. Davidson writes "Son of Man" with capital letters. That is a result of his early training and his inherited admiration for Jesus Christ. He forgets that Freethinkers do not regard that personage as really historic. As for the sayings of Christ being "shattering explosives," it is fair to ask, What have they exploded? Mr. Davidson will, perhaps, condescend to tell us.

We take the following from the *British Congregationalist*:—

"A vigorous and comprehensive program for the coming autumn and winter months has been outlined by the National Free Church Council. Foremost amongst the great questions that affect the national and religious life is that of Sunday Observance, and this urgent and pressing matter will have the careful consideration of the Council. Already the Legal Committee has met, and a summary of the law on the subject is to be shortly communicated to the local councils."

This is one of the many signs that the Churches are going to fight hard for their Sunday privileges. They have hitherto enjoyed the benefits of clerical Protection on their great weekly day of business. It is a matter of life and death with them to prevent the complete triumph of Free Trade. They mean to fight for all they are worth. But will they succeed?

"Providence" again! Rev. P. J. Cocking died on Sunday in the vestry of the Wesleyan Chapel, Haughton Green, near Denton. He was just taking his first service and going to preach his first sermon in a new circuit.

Cholera is causing much trouble in Italy. In Russia it is still raging destructively. There were 6,423 fresh cases last week, with 3,254 deaths. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

"As God's masterpiece was man, so the Devil's masterpiece was a barmaid." Thus said Mr. T. A. P. Frost, of Canada, in an address to the Union Chapel Brotherhood, Manchester, on Sunday afternoon. What the warm Mr. Frost has now to tell us is this: Whose masterpiece is the Johnnie that leans over the barmaid?

Father Bernard Vaughan, the celibate gentleman who is always egging on other men (and women) to have lots of children, preached at St. Patrick's, Montreal, on Sunday, and said that—"Protestantism in England to-day was divided, half drifting to Agnosticism and half creeping back to Catholicism." Rome gains the croepers.

Just as the *Freethinker* is going to press we learn that there was a welcome change in the program of the Eucharistic Congress at Montreal, which is referred to in another column. It had been arranged that the Duke of York's Hussars were to supply a guard of honor and mounted escort to Cardinal Vannutelli, the Pope's Legate. But at the last minute this was cancelled by the authorities at Ottawa, and the demonstrators, much to their chagrin, had to be satisfied with sixty policemen. M. Guerin, the Mayor of Montreal, welcomed the cardinal, not simply as Mayor but as an enthusiastic Catholic. It is easy to see what these gentlemen would be up to if they could. Fortunately "there are others" besides Catholics even in Montreal. We have yet to see what happens with respect to guarding the Host.

Rev. Eyre William Hussey, of Christchurch, Hants, for fourteen years rector of Bromsberrow, Ledbury, Hereford, left £42,116. He won't suffer from cold this winter—if there is any truth in the Gospels.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 11, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, W. : at 7.30, "Man's Discovery of Himself."

September 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.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 2, Queen's Hall, London; 9, Glasgow; 30, Queen's Hall, London. November 13, West Ham; 20, Shoreditch Town Hall. December 4, Manchester.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £245 11s. 1d. Received since:—C. Wollett Jones, £1 1s.; R. Lancaster, £1; Ernest, 1s.; T. A. Matthews, 5s.; T. C. Riglin, 3s. 6d.

BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £21 6s. Received since:—A. B. Moss, 5s.

JAMES MASTERSON —(1) The doctrine of original sin rests on the story of the Fall, but beneath that is the common oriental idea of the eternal opposition between matter and spirit. (2) The Messiah was to rescue the Jews from bondage and make them the lords of others—not to save them from their sins. (3) There is no good cheap book, such as you require, on the history of the Councils and the formation of the Creed.

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

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.—We have quoted from your interesting and encouraging letter elsewhere. We will see what can be done with your suggestion of an article (or more) on the late Professor William James and Pragmatism. There is a considerable body of literature now, besides Professor James's books, on that subject.

A. C. EARL & Co., 14 Brixton-road, opposite the Motor Garage, supply this journal and other advanced literature. They inform us that a copy of the *Freethinker* placed rather sportingly in the window brought four customers very quickly.

M. THIRDLIE.—We know the Shirley poem quite well, and a verse from it—with three other extracts—stood at the head of our article when it originally appeared. Thanks, all the same, for the reference.

H. W. MATTHEWS.—We have made use of it. Thanks.

F. KINTOENS.—M. Furnémont corrected the misstatement that Mr. Foote was in prison at the time of the Congress, but the Brussels papers did not report the correction. Pleased to hear that your wife, as well as yourself, was looking forward to the Queen's Hall lectures.

J. K. (Liverpool).—We don't understand what it is you desire us to say or do. The verses you say emanate from Pastor Wise are simply drivel.

T. C. RIGLIN.—We quite agree with you. Lord Rosebery, whose speeches contain more human nature than most politicians', once said that the want of money was most felt at times of sickness and when one wanted to be generous.

A. BALFOUR.—No apology is needed. We are always glad to hear from our readers. Your thanks to the staff of the *Freethinker* for stimulus and information are appreciated. Thanks for your efforts to extend our circulation.

A. B. MOSS.—The explanation makes the matter worse. Doesn't it? It is pleasant to see a report of the Ferrer lecture, but the press boycott is far from generally breaking down.

W. OWEN.—Couldn't it have come before Tuesday? We are able to insert it through a mere accident.

JACK TAYLOR.—We have all sorts of papers sent to us. Why make such a fuss because someone (we don't know who) sent you a *Freethinker*?

H. SMALLWOOD.—It is much easier for you than for us to put pressure on the local newsagent who supplies you with the *Freethinker*. The newsagent's business is a very special one. Obtaining small supplies direct from publishers would generally more than eat away all the profit. Wholesale agents do the distributing, and thus a reasonable profit is conserved. Your newsagent, so far as we can see, has simply to order more copies of his wholesale agent. We have always supplied the *Freethinker* on "sale or return," and it is ready for the trade with great regularity on Wednesday afternoon. Statements to the contrary—they are too frequent—are falsehoods.

G. CROOKSON.—We will consider your suggestion. Thanks for paper.

R. CARBOTHERS.—Glad to hear the Blackburn Branch had such fine open-air meetings on Sunday, addressed by Mr. Genever. We contemplate publishing the names and addresses of Branch secretaries in our columns occasionally.

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 series of lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., opened well on Sunday evening. The hall was crowded, and a good many people had to be turned away from the doors. The musical part of the program, from 7 to 7.30, was rendered by Madame Saunders (pianist) and Miss Clarke (vocalist), their playing and singing being highly relished by the audience. Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who occupied the chair, had a very warm and affectionate reception, showing that Freethinkers have taken him to their hearts. Mr. Foote's reception was what might be expected at his first lecture after his late illness. No man could possibly have had a more appreciative audience. The lecture—not a short one—was followed with the deepest attention from the first sentence to the last. Great applause greeted every tribute to Ferrer, and the sketch of the course of affairs in Spain since Ferrer's assassination (only eleven months) was listened to with breathless interest. The closing warning against the Catholic Church as the historic and relentless enemy of liberty and progress was framed on the lines of Voltaire's "Crush the Infamous," and was greatly applauded. A considerable number of questions were asked and answered afterwards. Question-time, indeed, seemed to be one of the most interesting portions of the evening.

Now that such a good beginning has been made at Queen's Hall we hope there will be a good continuance. The hall could easily be filled every Sunday evening by the London "saints" if they bestirred themselves a little. We ask them, besides attending themselves as far as possible, to assist in the advertising of the lectures by circulating the neat printed announcements (pocket size) which can be obtained of Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., and by telling their friends and acquaintances, in the course of conversation, of the Queen's Hall meetings.

Mr. Foote occupies the Queen's Hall platform again this evening (Sept. 11). His subject is a new and very striking one—"Man's Discovery of Himself." The lecture is quite an original one that Freethinkers should hear. Mr. C. Cohen is to be chairman on this occasion. There will be music, and a poetical reading by Mr. Foote, before the lecture.

We must acknowledge the courtesy of the *Star* in announcing the Queen's Hall lecture on Ferrer, and the courtesy of both the *Star* and the *Morning Leader* in reporting it.

"Travelling in the train to-day (Sept. 1)," a correspondent writes, "I have for the first time come across the *Freethinker*, which a holiday-maker left behind him evidently on purpose—as a means of propaganda. I have had an intellectual treat in reading it, and in future I shall not fail to purchase your paper." Owing to expensive illness in his family, our correspondent has to say: "I shall purchase the *Freethinker* by docking myself of two pennyworth of tobacco per week—tobacco is my only luxury—but the *Freethinker* will be a splendid exchange for that small sacrifice, and I shall feel that I have something to look forward to now on Thursday evenings." A letter like this should encourage the "saints" everywhere to do all that they can to get this journal into fresh hands.

"I feel sure," the same correspondent says, "that you and your colleagues must make a great pecuniary sacrifice for the sake of your convictions. In fact, I heard a man

state once, at an outdoor discussion, that G. W. Foote could have *easily made* a thousand or two a year if he had been an *ordinary journalist*, and sold his pen." Of course there is some truth in this. But one can hardly conceive the leaders of Freethought selling their pens. They were never built that way, and they write so differently from ordinary journalists because personal conviction and sincerity are the salt of all really good writing.

Our esteemed contributor, Mr. Joseph Bryce, writing to us from Newcastle-on-Tyne, says: "I was recently in a news-agent's where I usually procure any extra copies of the *Freethinker* that I may require, and happened to get talking with a gentleman there about papers generally. He asked me what I thought was really the best paper dealing with the higher aspects of life. When I presented the claims of the *Freethinker*, the newsagent remarked: 'Do you know there is an old man comes here for that paper, who says that if the price of it was a shilling he would have to have it.' Evidently the man referred to can appreciate a good thing." "I liked that article on 'Death the Democrat' very much indeed," Mr. Bryce adds in conclusion.

An advertisement of a proposed new Freethought Club was left at our office on Monday morning, with the requisite cash in payment. On its being handed over to Mr. Foote, he wrote the following letter to the advertiser:—

"DEAR MR. —, Money is welcome at this office, but there are some things of greater importance. One of them is the welfare and reputation of the Freethought movement. I must know a good deal more about your projected Club before I can consent to its being advertised in the *Freethinker*. Clubs have been, and ever must be, one of the most dangerous forms of effort in connection with Freethought or any other intellectual movement. I have seen so much mischief come of them in the past that I will not lightly place any agency that I control at the service of a new one, even on terms of the usual payment. The *Freethinker*, as you know, is an exceptional paper, conducted primarily for principle and not for profit. Hence my hesitation—which you must please not take as a personal reflection on yourself or anyone who may be associated with you."

Mr. Foote prints this letter of his in order that his attitude towards Freethought Clubs generally may be placed on record.

Mr. Howatt, vice-president of the Glasgow Branch, and one of its most energetic open-air speakers, debates this evening (Sept. 11) at the Assembly Rooms, 165 Crown-street, S.S., with a Mr. Townsend on "Is Theism the True Explanation of the Universe?" The debaters take the field at 6.30.

We always have pleasure in calling attention to the *Humanitarian*, the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League. The September number contains several interesting items, and a long article by "Lex," who used to write in the now defunct *Humane Review*, on the Home Secretary's Prison Reforms. It is a very able and in all ways excellent article. We see that the Editor quotes what we said the other day about the new Prison Reforms being so largely the result of the Humanitarian League's work in the improvement of public opinion and sentiment during the last twenty years. "We quote this friendly testimony," the Editor says, "with the greater pleasure, because it is likely to be about the only one we shall receive." We regret to hear it. We hoped for a more generous recognition of the League's efforts. But the Editor says that pioneers are always ignored in the hour of success.

HOW THE DOMINIE LOST.

A newly appointed Scottish minister, on his first Sunday of office, had reason to complain of the poorness of the collection.

"Mon," replied one of the elders, "they are close, very close; but"—confidentially—"the aul' meenister, he put three or four saxpences into the plate hissel', to give them a start. Of course, he took the saxpences awa' with him afterward."

The new minister tried the same plan, but the next Sunday he again had to report a dismal failure. The total collection was not only small, but he was grieved to find that his own sixpences were missing.

"Ye may be a better preacher than the aul' meenister," exclaimed the elder, "but if ye had half the knowledge o' the world, an' o' yer flock in particular, ye'd ha'e done what he did an' glued the saxpences to the plate."

Catholicism, Chaos, or Atheism?—II.

(Concluded from p. 566.)

PROTESTANTS have heaped no end of ridicule on the doctrine of papal infallibility. Yet they know that some form of infallibility is indispensable for any body of men that represents a deity. They themselves tried to find it in the Bible; but that view, after a somewhat pathetic struggle, has been abandoned. Catholics find it in the Church, and, formally, in the Pope. The doctrine, they say, covers all matters of faith and decides all controversies affecting Christian belief; but it does not embrace questions of science or abstract opinions unconnected with religion. Who is to decide when an opinion is abstract and when it is connected with religion? Let the Romanists answer that question. They will not be allowed to escape the decisions of the past so easily as they hope. They have always striven for despotic sway over the human mind, and have used fire and sword to maintain that sway. Given the same old powers, will they use the same old methods? What is to prevent them from stepping in any moment and saying the trend of this or that teaching is anti-religious, as indeed all science is and must be? Rome's onslaught on what has so significantly been styled "Modernism" is nothing more or less than a feeble echo of her anathemas of the time when she claimed to be the custodian of all truth and to inflict "punishment" in the interests of the faith, and when her predominance in Europe enabled her to back up that claim by force. For the principles that underlie persecution for heretical opinions appear from the very date of the establishment of Christianity in the Roman Empire. From the time of Constantine onward many laws were enacted, and these are all collected in *The Digest* (Justinian) under the title *De Hæreticis*. The penalties are varied, and include corporal punishment and death. These enactments proceed on the assumption that religion is the affair of the State, and that an offence to religion is an offence to the State—that is, they are, according to the theory of the persecutors, essentially the same as the laws that give justice power to proceed against a thief or a murderer. Newman speaks of "the great work which he had to do in England," and several times expresses the opinion that the ultimate alternative is Catholicism or Atheism. Well, then, let us hear his views on this question of the "punishment" of heretics, for they are certainly of interest to us. In 1852 he wrote:—

"Ecclesiastical authority, not argument, is the supreme rule and the approximate guide for Catholics in the matter of religion. It has always the right to interpose, and sometimes, in the conflict of parties and opinions, it is called upon to exercise that right" (*Idea of a University*).

In writing to Monsell in 1864 he asks whether the civil power may inflict punishment for religion as religion, and adds:—

"My notion is that you must hold the affirmative here, in spite of St. Athanasius' attacks on the persecuting Arian Emperors" (*W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival*, p. 268).

Read this choice morsel:—

"Is not the miraculous infliction of judgments upon blasphemy, lying, profaneness, etc., in the Apostles' day a sanction of infliction upon the same by a human hand in the times of the Inquisition? Ecclesiastical rulers may punish with the sword, if they can, and if it is expedient or necessary to do so" (Quoted by Lord Acton, *History of Freedom and Other Essays*, p. 423).

A frail plant, this divinely established faith. On all sides limitations and weaknesses that must be roofed in, ever kept in the forcing-house. It cannot grow in the open air. Manning, in the somewhat embittered controversy with Newman on the question of sending young men to Oxford and Cambridge, condemns the proposal, and urges the clergy "to explain to the faithful the sin of exposing our youth to the danger of losing or weakening their faith." And he in turn is censured by Fitzgerald in *Fifty*

Years of Catholic Life (1901), which is considered one of the best popular accounts of the progress of Catholicism in England during the second half of the nineteenth century. In vol. ii., pp. 278 and 279, the Catholic attitude to Freethought is stated perhaps as clearly as it ever has been stated. After condemning Manning for taking part in the discussions of the Metaphysical Society, where "infidels" and others used to meet for "bold attack and defence" of all sorts of principles, orthodox and unorthodox, and for thus conceding that such matters are proper topics of discussion, he concludes:—

"There was further something disagreeable in the idea of friendly recognition as club comrades of such men. It must have been painful to sit by and hear Mr. Huxley challenging such accepted truths as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and such matters. Dr. Manning, we are told, was rather taken aback when called upon to prove these things before he went further. All this modern treatment of the unorthodox would not have commended itself to good old Dr. Johnson, whose method was to turn his back on the infidel or assail him with rude speech; argument such was unworthy of. This, if intolerant, was logical from his point of view. Again, may not the close study of infidel opinions, for the serious purpose of refuting them, be fraught with perils—not the least of which is familiarity? The weighing of arguments with judicial fairness leads to the persuasion that some may have more force than others, and have even relatively a certain cogency of their own; while a sense of equity may compel the admission that there is really no sufficient answer to be found—to this poser, at least."

What sort of apologetic would this man use for the enforcement of "Catholic truth"? Why, the only sort of Christian apologetic, Catholic or Protestant, that has ever been really effective—the strong arm of the law. Rome will persecute, we know. Could she rule again, with full sway, the minds of men, there would be no more "re-statements of fundamental positions," no more investigations, by outside critics at any rate, of "the foundations of belief." All this we know. But excited protests against her persecuting mind do not come well from those who preach from their sacred book that "the wrath of God" is on "the children of unbelief," that the unbeliever shall be damned, that the heretic shall be rejected, and that whoever preaches any other gospel shall be held accursed. It must be remembered, too, that Protestants at one time were quite ready to put into practice the principles of persecution implied by such teaching, notwithstanding present-day boastings that their faith is not blind submission to dogma imposed from without, an absolute obedience to an infallible Church, and that religious conviction is an individual matter, an "interior revelation" for each. Had Protestantism been a full expression of the principle of revolt against authority in the spiritual life, had it been an advance towards complete mental freedom, it would not, as soon as triumphantly established, have invoked the brute force of the State to crush every form of opposition and critical inquiry. But this it did do. Its record is bad. The advance, if there was any, did not go far; the authority was transferred from one source to another, infallibility remained, and along with it persecution.

It is not Protestantism that the Catholic fears, it is Atheism. He rather enjoys showing the Protestants the weakness of their position; it is only when he is asked by the Atheist to establish *all* his premises that he is "taken aback"—he must not concede that certain subjects are fit topics for argument. What is the use of talking about the manifestation of a God in human form to those for whom the supernatural has never been substantiated? What is the use of discussing the question of reconciliation with God, from either a Catholic or Protestant standpoint, with those who hold that evolution is true and that there never was any original sin and consequently that there is nothing to reconcile? To the Atheist there is no such thing as a truth that is apprehended otherwise than intellectually. It is all the same to him whether

the "revealed truths" are written, or oral and traditional, if they clash with his intelligence. Not long ago, a French Catholic said that "Modernism" was the age-long conflict representing in a new form the revolt of man against God. This is the simple truth. The exact antithesis of the Catholic principle of authority is Atheism. In the view of the Church, man derives his worth from the *acceptance* of certain "highest truths" which are said to rest on an infallible basis and which are withdrawn from criticism. In the Atheist's view there can be no truths that are not in harmony with his own intelligence and his own knowledge, gained by struggle and stress; that is, for him there can be no truths that are not in harmony with himself. Thus he is a personality, a being stamped with his own individuality, and this the good Catholic can never be, because for him the worth of men lies in the absolute truthfulness of their surrender of self. Catholics are adroit in submitting evidence to Protestants; but that is the work of a clever barrister, not of an honest inquirer. Argumentative skill is a different thing from reasoning, from a desire for that knowledge which comes from the noting of facts and the rejecting of incongruities. When anyone, be he Catholic or Protestant, tries to go outside this position and to set faith higher than this process of reasoning, he is introducing a system that must prove to be a source of special pleading, hypocrisy, and persecution.

The recent cases of Dr. Koch and Professor Schnitzer in Germany, of Loisy and Houtin in France, where the revolt against ecclesiastical domination has resulted in a severe check to Catholicism, the present condition of things in Spain, which has just dared to propose that other religious professions shall be allowed to practise openly, and in Italy, where there are many searching critics of the Holy Father and his claims, all show that Rome herself is by no means free from the "pressure of the time." What will the ultimate result be? It is useless to attempt to predict that. Rome says that the Church of Christ must triumph over all opposition. Most of us are convinced that progress must continue. But something more than the mere expression of this conviction is wanted to strengthen the ethical growth of Freethought to the point of forcing out all the poisonous weeds of superstition. The interests arrayed against us run in all directions. One of the legacies of clerical sway, with its inevitable Papal or Biblical infallibility, is that men have grown used to thinking in an unhealthy atmosphere. The trammels of religious mist are all round their eyes. Look at Campbellism, Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science! Straight-out Freethought will be in a minority for many years. In the meantime, the movements of Catholicism in England deserve the attention of Freethinkers, especially of those who hold aloof from active work and say that they "don't believe in kicking a dead horse."

A. D. McLAREN.

The Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ.—II.

(Continued from p. 571.)

BEFORE and after the commencement of the Christian era, the belief in supernatural births was widespread. Justin Martyr, as I have already said, defended the Incarnation of Jesus by referring to the incarnation of various Pagan godmen. And that the Jews should believe in such extraordinary births is not to be wondered at, seeing that they were cradled in the belief that, at times, the "sons of God came in unto the daughters of men who bare children to them, and the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." (Gen. vi. 4). Josephus, the Jewish historian, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, recognizes this belief; but he is careful to explain how these

supernatural births were to be accounted for. The account is to be found in the third chapter of the eighteenth book. It is somewhat remarkable that this account follows the paragraph which contains the celebrated forgery respecting Jesus—a forgery which, even now amongst the ignorant is looked upon as vital evidence of the truthfulness of the Christian doctrine.

The account sets forth that one Decius Mundus, a man very high in the equestrian order, had fallen in love with a married woman named Paulina Saturninus. This woman was young, beautiful, rich, and virtuous. Nothing that Mundus could say or do could tempt her to be faithless to her husband. But he determined to possess her. So he went to the priests of the temple where Paulina worshipped, and, presenting them with a large sum of money, induced them to assist him in the matter. The narrative proceeds thus:—

“Accordingly, the eldest of the priests went immediately to Paulina; and upon his admission, desired to speak with her by herself. When that was granted him, he told her that he was sent by the god Anubis, who had fallen in love with her, and enjoined her to come to him. Upon this she took the message very kindly, and valued herself greatly upon this condescension of Anubis; and told her husband that she had a message sent to her, and was to sup and lie with Anubis; so he agreed to her acceptance of the offer, as fully satisfied with the chastity of his wife. Accordingly, she went to the temple, and after she had supped there, and it was the hour to go to sleep, the priests shut the doors of the temple, when, in the holy parts of it, the lights were also put out. Then did Mundus leap out (for he was hidden therein) and did not fail to enjoy her, who was at his service all the night long, as supposing he was a god.”

This scandal, in all probability, would never have been known had not Mundus so far forgot himself as to tell Paulina how he had enjoyed her; whereupon she “rent her garments, told her husband of the horrid nature of this wicked contrivance, and prayed him to avenge her.” Accordingly, he went to the Emperor Tiberius, with the result that the temple was demolished and the priests were crucified; whilst Mundus, who was the biggest rascal, was simply banished because what “crime he had committed was done out of the passion of love.”

This anecdote illustrates in a startling manner the gross superstition of the time, and throws the searchlight of truth upon the episode that we are now considering.

Now, Matthew is made to declare not only that the father of Jesus was the Holy Ghost, but that “all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us” (i. 22, 23). Here observe that this is only a portion of the prophecy referred to, this part having been cut out for a particular purpose and to suit a particular event. This, however, is the usual way in which prophecies are made to fit in with the so-called interpretation thereof. The prophecy in question is contained in the seventh and eighth chapters of Isaiah, and I purpose not to confine myself to any particular portion of it, but to criticise the whole of it. It should be remembered that Isaiah is looked upon as a prophet of the highest dignity; and so numerous are his so-called prophecies concerning Jesus that he has been dubbed emphatically “the evangelical prophet.” To criticise this prophecy, therefore, closely and minutely, will enable us to form a just value of the many other prophetic statements with which Isaiah is credited.

The prophecy is a lengthy one, and is given with unusual minuteness, but it may be accurately related in a few words. Ahaz was king of Judah when “Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it” (vii. 1). Ahaz, who was of the house of David, the son of Abraham, was afraid. Thereupon the Lord instructed Isaiah to go to Ahaz,

and to say to him: “Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands” (vii. 4) who have said: “Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass” (vii. 6, 7).

Here was a definite promise—a promise that could not be misunderstood; Ahaz was to be protected by God, and to be successful against his enemies. But was he? Most certainly he was not. For, in the twenty-eighth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, we read that “the Lord God delivered Ahaz into the hands of his enemies, the kings of Syria and Israel, who smote his valiant men with great slaughter, and carried away great multitudes of captives and spoil” (xxviii. 5-8). This portion of the prophecy is never referred to by Christian men—professional sky-pilots or otherwise. Why is this? The reason is because the prophecy was falsified by events that could not lie; and it goes without saying that if one portion—and that the most important portion—of the prophecy be untrue, all the other portions of it must be equally false.

Now, the portion of the prophecy to which Matthew refers is that which was told Ahaz when he (Ahaz) evidently expressed some doubt as to the truthfulness of Isaiah’s statement. “Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God” (v. 11), said Isaiah. But Ahaz replied: “I will not ask; neither will I tempt the Lord” (v. 12). Then, said Isaiah, “the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings” (v. 14-16). What followed is told in the next chapter, thus: “Moreover the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man’s pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria” (viii. 1-4).

Now, we have seen that, so far as Ahaz was concerned, the prophecy was a false one. Be it remembered, however, that Ahaz was the person to whom the sign was given, whilst Isaiah was the person through whom the sign was to be accomplished. And the crucial point is as to whether the woman who bore Maher-shalal-hash-baz was, or was not, a virgin at the time of his birth. Undoubtedly she was not, and for the following reasons:—Greek scholars are unanimously of opinion that the noun *almah*, which is translated “virgin,” is a wrong translation, for that the true meaning of the word is “a young woman.” Now, if the words “young woman” be substituted for the word “virgin,” the whole passage becomes plain. The birth of a child was predicted as a sign that certain national events were about to take place; and this child, we are expressly told, was the son of Isaiah by his wife. Were it not so, why was the mother spoken of as “the prophetess”? And why was it said that the child should cry “My father and my mother”? The statement is that, as soon as the prophecy had been uttered, Isaiah “went unto the prophetess”—for what purpose there can be no doubt, because we are told that he took with him “faithful witnesses to record” the time, so that if she “conceived and bore a son”—it might, you know, have been a daughter—as had been promised by the Lord, they might be certain that the child was the child of the prophecy. This prophecy, then, is valueless as regards a supernatural birth; whilst it refers to the son of “the prophetess” only, and not to the son of Mary.

As to the birth of Jesus being miraculous, the only person who could know the truth of the matter was Mary herself. Joseph, if he had had no sexual intercourse with Mary, could only know that he was not the father of Jesus; but it does not appear that he ever made any statement whatever on the subject. All we know respecting him is what Matthew is supposed to have recorded as to Joseph having been a "just man," and that he was "minded to put her away privily" (Matt. i. 19).

As to Mary herself, she always asserted that the father of Jesus was Joseph, and not the Holy Ghost. Did she not? Well, on one most important occasion she said to Jesus: "Son! Why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father [Joseph] and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke ii. 48). And we have it on the testimony of Luke himself that "when Jesus began to be about thirty years of age he was supposed to be the son of Joseph" (Luke iii. 23). This of itself is proof positive that up to that time, at all events, Mary had never stated that Jesus was other than the son of Joseph.

One other thought in regard to this subject is worthy of consideration. It is this: that, had Mary been so "highly favored among women," as she is represented to have been, it is only reasonable to suppose that she would not have been permitted to have had other children by Joseph; but that she had other children who, of course, were the brothers and sisters of Jesus, is certain—as certain, that is, as one can be of what is recorded in the Gospels. Matthew records the fact in these words: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are not they all with us?" (Matt. xiii. 55, 56).

In connection with this subject it will be as well to refer to another statement of Matthew. In the fourth chapter of his gospel the evangelist describes how Jesus was tempted by Satan, and then tells us that "from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt. iv. 17). And this he claims to have been a fulfilment of that "which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 'The land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up'" (Matt. iv. 14-16; Isaiah ix. 1, 2). But what reference could these words of Isaiah have to Jesus? Isaiah was speaking of a circumstance that had taken place. It would seem that he expected that the son whom "the prophetess" had born to him would become a great and wise man, would become the governor of the country, and would govern the people with judgment and justice. Then their "dimness" would not be as it was when they sought familiar spirits and wizards; for which God at first only slightly afflicted them, but afterwards punished them solely, especially in Galilee beyond Jordan. To this kingdom Isaiah fondly imagined there would be no end; but, as I have already pointed out, "forever" in the Bible does not mean "never-ending," but an uncertain period of time, which might be short or might be long.

Matthew tells us—and again he is the solitary possessor of very special information—that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in fulfilment of a prophecy that had been recorded respecting him by the prophet Micah. Matthew supports his assertion by saying that this was a statement of the chief priests and scribes. According to his version, Herod the king "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him," at the appearance of the "wise men of the East," who had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping the newly born "King of the Jews," whose star they had seen in the sky. Thereupon Herod "gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet—'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of

Judea, art not the least amongst the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel'" (Matt. ii. 3-6).

The prophet alluded to is Micah, and the prophecy—which, as usual, is misquoted and garbled—is contained in the second verse of the fifth chapter.

Now, who was this Micah? The Bible gives an account of two Micahs. One was an Ephraimite, who resided near Shiloh; the other was an inhabitant of Moresheth, near Gath. This latter was the prophet referred to, and he lived in the days of Isaiah and Hosea—that is, in the eighth century before Christ. Yet, though these very extraordinary men were contemporaries, and could not have lived very far from each other—for Palestine was only about half the size of the county of Norfolk, being just forty miles long by about fifteen miles broad—they were utterly ignorant of each other's existence. This is somewhat strange, akin to the strangeness that Jesus and John the Baptist, though they were relations, knew not one another until they were grown men. But stranger still is the fact that these three prophets—Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea—denounced the same judgments against Israel and Samaria, not only in the same style, but in many places in the very same language. In fact, the writings of Micah appear to be only an abridgment of those of Isaiah, just as the epistle of Jude is a complete plagiarism of the second chapter of Peter's second epistle. They both begin in the same way (Isaiah i. 2; Micah iv. 1-4). Their chief complaints are against princes and priests. The former they describe as "beating the people to pieces, and grinding the faces of the poor" (Isaiah iii. 15), the latter as being "blind and ignorant watchmen, greedy dogs which can never have enough, shepherds that look to their own way, every one for his own gain" (Isaiah lvi. 10, 11). How happy should we be that, in this twentieth century, the ways of princes and priests are so widely different!

As for prophets, they declare that some "prophets were fools and madmen" (Hosea ix. 7), and that the "tail of Israel" consisted of prophets who "taught lies" (Isaiah ix. 15). Of course, they themselves did not belong to this "tail." When they prophesied falsely, as they invariably did, they laid the blame upon the Lord God; and, according to Ezekiel, the Lord God accepted the blame, for he makes the Lord God to ventriloquise thus: "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet" (Ezekiel xiv. 9). Moreover, according to the Bible, even a true prophet can deliberately tell the most fearful lies; for we read that when Benhadad, king of Syria, sent his servant Hazael to Elisha to ask if he should recover from the disease from which he was then suffering, Elisha replied to Hazael thus: "Go, say unto him, 'Thou mayest certainly recover.' Howbeit the Lord hath shown me that he shall surely die" (2 Kings viii. 10). Still further we are expressly told that, at times, "the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets" for the sole purpose of deception (1 Kings xxii. 19-22; 2 Chronicles xviii. 19-21).

J. W. DE CAUX.

(To be continued.)

DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

Sandy McPherson, in a moment of abstraction, put half a crown into the collection plate last Sunday in mistake for a penny, and has since expended a deal of thought as to the best way of making up for it.

"No, I might stay awa' frae the kirk till the sum was made up; but, on the other han', I wad be payin' pew rent a' the time an' getting nae guid o' it. Losh, but I'm thinkin' this is what the meenister ca's a 'religious deeficulty!'"

THE TRUTH.

Sunday-school Teacher: "Now, Johnny, why do we put a penny in the plate to-day?"

Johnny: "'Cause there ain't nuthin' smaller."

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, "Man's Discovery of Himself."

OUTDOOR.

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

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, S. J. Cook and Mr. Bowman, a Debate. Newington Green: 12 noon, J. J. Darby, a Lecture. Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, H. King and T. Dobson. Finsbury Park: 3.30, R. W. Rosetti, "God, Faith, and Morality." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King, T. Dobson, and James Rowney.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, Mr. Ramsey, "Life of Charles Bradlaugh."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, F. A. Davies, "The Light that Failed."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Davidson, "Civilising the Christian." The Green, Enfield: 7, Mr. Rosetti, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

Huddersfield and District Branch N. S. S. (Market Cross): 8, G. T. Whitehead, "Faith, Fiction, and Fact." Saturday, at 8, G. T. Whitehead, "The Second (?) Coming."—Monthly Meeting, Friendly and Trades Hall, Tuesday, Sept. 13, at 8.

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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.

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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,

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