

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXX.—No. 39

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1910

PRICE TWOPENCE

The Atheist does not say "There is no God," but he says: "I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word 'God' is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation."—

BRADLAUGH'S
Defence of Atheism.

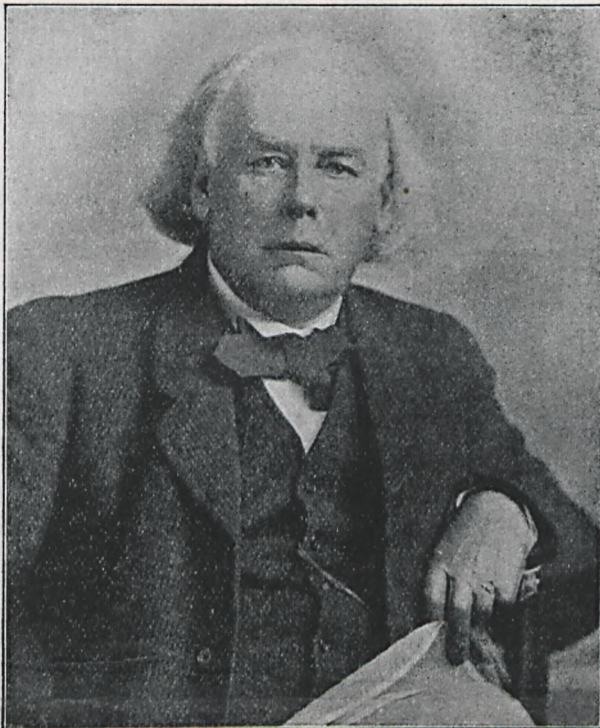


Photo. by

Elliott & Fry.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

BORN, September 26, 1833—DIED, January 30, 1891.

Charles Bradlaugh: Random Reflections.

ON the morning of his fifty-seventh birthday, twenty years ago, in response to repeated urgings from me, my father went to Elliott and Fry's to sit for a new photograph, for none had been taken for four or five years. When the proofs came home we were horrified. Seeing him every day, we were blind to the changes which the progress of his disease was making in his appearance, and could not bring ourselves to believe the evidence of the camera. But when after his death, only four months later, I looked at this series of photographs, of which one is here produced, then indeed my eyes were opened: the truth, and what I may call the beauty, of the likeness was absolutely clear to me. The noble lines of the head, the direct, penetrating gaze of the eye, the character in the face, all are seen here more strikingly than in any other portrait.

Nearly twenty years have passed since Mr. Bradlaugh's death, and it is even yet a little difficult to say what place he occupies in public estimation, or what place he is destined to occupy in the history of the people of his country. Or perhaps it is that I am not well placed for forming a judgment. Many of his contemporaries have passed away during those twenty years, and the influence of a new generation, without personal acquaintance with the earlier struggles, is now largely in the ascendancy. This new generation, treading the path made smooth for them by the toil and suffering of their fathers, is sometimes apt to take the smoothness a little too much as a matter of course, and is not always either generous or just to the dead; some even belittle or deride

their labors. They, whose feet were never cut by stones, whose garments were never torn by thorns, complain of the coarseness and roughness of the pioneers who had to hew a way through the stony, tangled wilderness. This younger generation of Freethinkers stands in danger of becoming "soft"; and, in the desire to avoid the possible rough and tumble of conflict, there is always the danger of confusing truth. Many, for example, shrink from using the word "Atheist"; not because they are not Atheists—there are more real Atheists in this country to-day than ever there were—but because the word is absolutely explicit, leaving no room for doubt, and also because of the odium which has been so unjustifiably attached to the name. The older folks, in large measure, conform to the desires of their children, saying, "After all, what's in a name so long as it means exactly the same thing?" We know it means the same thing, but do others know it also?

I do not mean that it is not perfectly right for us to-day to use careful courtesy and scrupulous gentleness in our propaganda, just as our fathers—and my father in particular—did where it was possible. I do not mean that our pioneers should be exempt from criticism; by criticising the manner in which they handled difficult situations we may learn even from their errors. But in such criticism it is well to remember that it is much more simple to judge after the battle has been fought and won, than when one is taking action in the midst of the fray; and it is the basest ingratitude to sneer at, belittle, and misrepresent the methods and achievements of those who, surrounded by bitter prejudice and menaced by cruel penalties, wrested from our enemies the liberties we

now enjoy. This year, at a meeting of Freethinkers at which I was present, in discussing a certain proposition, one of the older members pointed out that its provisions were such as would have "excluded Charles Bradlaugh." Immediately someone near me cried out: "We can't help that; Bradlaugh has had his day." For the moment, this combination of intolerance in principle and personal ingratitude affected me as though someone had struck me, and I reflected bitterly: "Was it for these ingrates, my father, that you sacrificed yourself and brought yourself to an early grave! You had better have used your powers to build up a fortune, and been alive to-day in the enjoyment of wealth and honor!" Of course, it was a passing bitterness; for no one knows better than I do that my father did what he did because he thought it right, and not because he expected recognition; and I am so proud that this was so that on no account would I have it otherwise. But the wounds received in the house of a friend carry a poison which the stabs of an enemy never have.

Although it is amongst Freethinkers that it is my happiness to find the staunchest, most devoted friends of my father, yet curiously enough it is also amongst Freethinkers I meet with the most carping criticisms of him to-day. The reasons for this are not far to seek; I do not intend to enter upon them here, nor even to complain, save on the broad ground of principle. I believe that it is a frame of mind which will pass with time, and by-and-bye Freethinkers of every kind, sorting the grain from the chaff, will be able to look back upon my father's career and frankly recognise that the great guiding principle of his life was that of service in the cause of political and religious liberty; more especially religious liberty, if I may venture to discriminate where he was so strenuous in both. Whether he accomplished much or accomplished little, no fair-minded person can deny that he was ever ready to sacrifice all that most men hold dear in his desire to serve his fellow-men.

In political circles I find a fairly general recognition of my father's struggles for political reforms. When I speak for the first time in any place upon politics, and—as is usually the case—I am introduced as the daughter of Charles Bradlaugh, his name is generally received with an outburst of applause, and many and many are the regrets I have heard during the past twenty years that he is no longer here to help in this fight or that. One Member of Parliament, who took the chair for me in the North, three or four years ago, told me that he himself had never known my father, but in the House it constantly happened that when some matter of difficulty arose, some Member or other would say "Oh, for one hour of Bradlaugh!" These political meetings occasionally take me out of the way of towns where there are Secular Societies, and I frequently find some of the older men or women waiting to speak to me after the meeting is over, to tell me, with tears in their eyes, how they used to read the *National Reformer* and go to my father's lectures—and how much they miss him still. In Yorkshire, one old friend told me how he had tramped twenty miles over the moors to hear him lecture three times on the Sunday, and had tramped twenty miles back at night. As he recalled these memories in broken tones, my eyes filled too, and with a pride

which I hope may be pardoned, I asked myself where is the man to-day who could induce such enthusiasm in another? Forty miles of moorland walk and three lectures is no light undertaking between two week's work. Three lectures are too much for most people in these less strenuous times, without counting the trifle of a forty miles walk.

As all Freethinkers on the "active list" know quite well, all sorts of myths are still current about my father, and there are still base Christians always on the look-out for unkind stories to manipulate to his discredit. Quite recently a whole mountain of paltry defamation was built up in connection with the pathetic case of Marie Le Roy, all based upon the simple and harmless fact that at one period of her life she was well known to my father. Is this eagerness to believe, and to say, the worst about a heretic, without regard to accuracy, to be taken as one of the choice fruits of 2,000 years of Christian teaching! The legal maxim that a man must be looked upon as innocent until he is proved guilty, carries no weight with the ordinary Christian when he is judging an Atheist. Most of the stories told of my father in the name of Christianity are so unutterably foolish that it is difficult to understand how they can be accepted and repeated by persons presumably sane and presumably honest. These stories may be divided roughly into two classes: those which represent the Atheist

Bradlaugh as a monster of infamy; and those which try to make out that, although he called himself an Atheist, he really was not one, but was, on the contrary, a true Christian and a Christ-like man. I hardly know which kind of myth is the more respectable: that which in the teeth of all evidence tries to represent the detested Atheist as a villain of the deepest dye; or that which, equally in the teeth of evidence, tries to make him out a brainless fool who did not know his own mind. Over and over again, have I dealt with these stories privately and publicly, and have even published a pamphlet giving quotations from my father's speeches and writings to show that from 1854 to 1891, that is to say, from the age of twenty-one till the very month in which he died, there had been (to use his own words) no material change in the propositions he advocated. Having once arrived at the Atheistic position, having submitted it again and again to examination and discussion, he never found reason to abandon or modify the conclusions at which he had arrived. From the moment he became a Monist none of the many conflicting schools of dualism and pluralism had any power of attraction for him. Without God he lived, and without God he died.

And yet assertions to the contrary are constantly being made by Christians, who apparently labor under the delusion that, by these lies, they are proving the truth of Christianity. "'Tis a mad world, my masters!"

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Leaf after leaf drops off, flower after flower,
Some in the chill, some in the warmer hour:
Alike they flourish and alike they fall,
And Earth who nourished them receives them all.
Should we, her wiser sons, be less content
To sink into her lap when life is spent? —*Landor.*

Christianity's Failures.

A WELL-KNOWN preacher, Dr. Len Broughton, has been getting into hot water for saying that "The world has never seen Jesus; it has seen only a monstrous representation of Him through a greedy and negligent Church." In its way, the statement represents a truth. The New Testament Jesus being a manufactured character, each age has modified it to suit its own peculiar idiosyncracies. When a character is really historical there usually exists sufficient data to limit this process. Certain facts stand out and are sufficiently well-known to serve as some sort of a check upon the myth-making propensity. The only data in this case is the New Testament—containing an obviously manufactured biography—and this, with its contradictions and the vague teachings placed in the mouth of its central character, has given every encouragement to those who wished to find their own ideas realised in its pages. In this connection, it is a significant thing that, in all the portraits of Jesus, few, if any, depict him as a Jew. Almost invariably he is a Western, and it may be safely assumed that a picture of Jesus depicting him as a typical Jew would strike most Christians as being positively blasphemous. As with the physical so with the mental aspect. Each society calling itself Christian has depicted a Jesus in accordance with its social and intellectual condition. Reformers who have not outgrown this Christian training have created a Jesus to suit their ideals, from those of John Ball to *le bon sansculotte* of the French Revolution. With slavery accepted as a sociological necessity, Jesus was the patron of the slave holder. Slavery abolished, he became its opponent. With Socialism in the air, certain Socialists find no difficulty in claiming his name as a sanction; and Dr. Broughton is following on the same old and profitless lines in creating a Jesus suitable to his own social ideals and denouncing all others as caricatures.

Some of Dr. Broughton's critics have denounced his sermon because, they say, it is tantamount to implying the failure of Christianity. One of his critics writes thus:—

"It is a specimen of common and often much admired abuse of the whole Christian Church. But it is rather an insult to Jesus Christ than a criticism of His church. If He really lives among men, and yet after His presence with them for nearly two thousand years has been able only to gather out of the world a following of disciples, who, as a whole, present to the world a monstrous misrepresentation of Him, of what use is it to proclaim Him as the Son of God and Savior of the world, with such an unholy abortion as the fruit of his coming to Humanity?.....A Christian preacher proclaiming such an advertisement of colossal failure to an approving assembly of professed disciples of Jesus should go far to persuade the world to keep aloof from so disreputable an institution, created by so impotent a master."

Now, although this is intended for a refutation of Dr. Broughton's indictment, all it really does is to dot its i's and cross its t's. For, from any point of view, even the religious, the Christian Church has been one of the most colossal failures in history. Failure is written everywhere over all its teaching and practice. It has taught, only to find its teaching disproved by the growth of knowledge. It has practised, only to find its practice discarded through the pressure of experience. This is a consideration often, perhaps conveniently, overlooked, but it is one of the strongest proofs of its truth are furnished by Christians themselves.

The mission of Christianity was, we are told, to conquer and convert the world. Well, it obviously has never done this, and its outlook at the present time is less promising than at any period of its history. There is not a civilised State in the world in which Christianity is not a declining force. In every country there is proceeding a separation of the State from Christianity, not merely in name, but in fact. The principle that the State should have no

concern whatever with the religious opinions of its members, is rapidly gaining ground; and this in practice implies that Christian teachings are mere speculations which bring no particular good to those who accept, and no special harm to those who reject. As a power ruling the collective life of humanity, Christianity is rapidly becoming a spent force.

Protestants assert that for nearly 1,200 years the teaching a "true Christianity" was practically prevented by the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church. They explain that the "pure and primitive" teachings of Christianity became more and more corrupted by the Roman Church, and that these "corruptions" are at present accepted as the genuine article by half—if not more than half—of the whole body of Christian believers. I am not concerned to argue whether this is true or not; but if it is accepted as true, it is a confession of failure upon the most stupendous scale. A religion that could not keep its own teachings pure and undefiled; a Christianity which admits that the greatest historic Church is a fraud, an imposture, reared on deceit and maintaining itself by trickery and discreditable methods, cannot reasonably lay claim to any conspicuous measure of success in its mission.

The admissions of failure are on an even more sweeping scale by those who pride themselves on being "advanced" Christians. With these hardly one of the historic teachings of the Christian Churches are admitted as true. The inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, vicarious sacrifice, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, a literal heaven and hell, justification by faith, are all either denied or explained away. Again, I am not at present concerned to say whether these up-to-date Christians are correct or not. But if they are justified, it means that ever since the preaching of Christianity commenced believers have been fed upon falsehood, nurtured upon delusions; and that the truth has only now come to light in the minds of a select few. It means that during the whole nineteen centuries of its existence Christianity has been a failure of the most deplorable description. For not only has it failed to teach the truth; it has actively inculcated falsehood. And in the inculcation it has laid cities waste, depleted nations of some of their finest minds, and pursued a career of cruelty and butchery to which history offers no parallel. If these things had been done in the attempt to establish admitted truths it would be bad enough; but to find out that it was to perpetuate admitted falsehoods makes the matter infinitely worse.

Again, when Christianity obtained power it was among a civilised people. Admitting that at that time ancient civilisations had passed their meridian, there is no reason whatever for believing that, had the proper remedies been applied, the existing evils might not have been gradually removed. At any rate, Christianity inherited a dominion in which there was a valuable literature, much scientific knowledge—how much we are only beginning to discern—traditions of civic freedom and personal dignity, an elaborate jurisprudence, with the prestige of a dominant power that had carried the elements of civilisation wherever it had penetrated. Now it is an unquestionable historic fact that, far from introducing an elevating influence into the Roman Empire, its decay under Christian rule became more rapid. All the elements of disorder increased. The schools were closed, science was neglected, the bulk of the literature was lost, while the civic life of the Empire speedily decayed. Against all the arguments of modern Christians as to the benefits Christianity has conferred upon the world stands the unquestionable fact of the neglect of ancient learning and of the collapse of the greatest civilised State of antiquity under its influence. Whether it actively co-operated in this decay or not matters comparatively little. At all events, it failed to save. Nor has Christianity, during the whole of its history, been more successful with any people or in any country that has been subjected to its unchecked influence.

It is sometimes urged that Christianity's success lay in the types of individual character it produced.

Where? When? Mohammedanism can at least boast that it kept its people sober. Brahminism can claim to have made kindness to animals a general feature among its followers. Buddhism can pride itself on having made its followers temperate and tolerant. What special virtue is there that one can honestly associate with Christianity, in the sense that it is more developed among Christians than among others? They are not better behaved, they are not more sober, they are not more tolerant, they are not of a more humane disposition. The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury said the other day:—

“Who put it into the hearts of men to condemn persecution and wars and cruelty, and pride, and exclusiveness? These things existed and were more or less honored in Pagan times. No one thought of fighting against them upon the ground of religion. It is Jesus himself who has taught men to hate persecution, who has given the broad tolerance to mankind which characterises it in our own day.”

Presumably if a man keeps on voicing a falsehood long enough he will end by believing it to be true. At any rate, we will give Mr. Rattenbury the benefit of the doubt. Still, it is difficult to realise how any human being with a knowledge of the history of the Christian Church can really believe that cruelty and exclusiveness and persecution have been diminished by Christian influence. This is specially difficult to believe of a man who belongs to a section of the Christian world that is full of outcries concerning the persecuting spirit of the Roman Church and the intolerance of English Churchmen in relation to Dissenters. That the things named by Mr. Rattenbury were not condemned in pre-Christian times is simply not true. A mere casual reading of Seneca, of Cicero, of Marcus Aurelius, of Epictetus, or any history of Greek and Roman thought will show how false is such a statement. One can safely challenge Mr. Rattenbury to point to a single Latin writer who ever gave to persecution the aspect of a moral and religious duty such as it received at the hands of Christians. And whatever persecution did exist was a negligible quantity at the side of the century-long persecution of the Christian Churches. And the man who can look round at the armies and navies of *Christian Europe*, who can review the constant succession of wars during the Christian period—wars that have often had their worst features aggravated by religious passion—the man who can know all this and then speak of Christianity as diminishing war must possess a power of self-deception that is fortunately not common.

In whatever direction one turns, the proofs of Christianity's failure are abundant. It claimed to be the supreme authority in matters of religion, and has had the nature of religious belief explained to it by unbelievers. It set out on its career with a body of doctrines, all of which are now, by educated people, either rejected or in process of rejection. It laid down a definite theory concerning the nature of the Bible, and has been forced, by educated criticism, to admit its error. It posed as an authority upon the nature and practice of morality, and in both directions it has been shown to be an unsafe guide. In fifty years, scientific investigators have taught us more of the nature of morality than the Christian Churches did in eighteen centuries. Moral teachers and social reformers no longer look to Christianity for guidance; and if some of these do condescend to give the Churches a patronising word, their very patronage is proof of the degradation that has overtaken organisations that once claimed to direct the social life of man.

In all matters of positive knowledge, the failure of Christianity has been complete and irresistible. Its original cosmic theory is accepted now by none—not even by the most ignorant of its followers. No one now believes in the flat earth of Jesus and his followers, or in their theory of demoniacal possession. Christianity taught astronomy and failed. It taught geology and failed. It taught biology and failed. There is not a single one of its original teachings that time and experience has justified. It has lived

on only by eating its own teachings; and it lives today by accepting as Christian teachings for which it once sent men and women to the stake or left them to rot in Christian prisons. The history of Christianity is, indeed, “an advertisement of colossal failure,” and the sooner that system ceases to engage the attention of serious minded men and women the better it will be for the race.

C. COHEN.

Faith and Reason.

CHRISTIAN apologists are at last beginning to realise that it is too late in the day to hurl black anathemas at the unfortunate human faculty called reason, in order to place a crown of glory upon the head of faith. It is becoming quite fashionable now to assert that Christianity exalts and glorifies reason. In an article entitled “Christianity and Reason,” which appeared in the *Methodist Times* for September 4, the Rev. Harry Bisseker, M.A., dealing with a correspondent who had consulted him, said: “I ask him to accept my earnest assurance that the Christian holds reason in high reverence and, whether rightly or wrongly, yet conscientiously believes it to furnish a firm foundation for his faith.” Mr. Bisseker omits to inform us whether by “the Christian” he means the Catholic or the Protestant type, or both, or simply the Wesleyan specimen; but, in whatever sense he employs the term, his statement is, at best, only very partially true. Taking Christians generally, it cannot honestly be said that they hold reason in high reverence, believing that it furnishes a firm foundation for their faith. They are blind believers. This is true of Catholics and Protestants alike. It is common knowledge that at the present moment the Church of Rome rigidly forbids the use of the reason in religion. The whole faith is made to rest on the authority of the Pope. He is declared to be the representative of God on earth, and all his official utterances must be accepted and treated as absolutely infallible. Every legend, every superstition, every conclusion of scholastic theology is to be believed without question, without submitting it to any investigation whatsoever. All questions are finally closed, and the Christian's sole duty is to believe the Church's teaching. The same state of things substantially prevails in the Protestant Church also. Protestant superstitions may not be so numerous as the Catholic ones, and it is possible that this is due to the exercise of the reason upon those rejected; but all the retained dogmas are objects of blind belief. The great word of the pulpit everywhere is “Believe,” not “Think.”

It follows, then, that the high reverence for reason ascribed to “the Christian” is a pure myth. St. Augustine was perfectly right in claiming that “faith precedes knowledge.” The truth is that faith precedes, and, in religion, is never followed by, knowledge. The great African Bishop dropped the following extremely significant thought as well, namely, that “he should not believe the Gospel if he were not moved thereto by the authority of the Church.” Anselm said, “I believe in order that I may understand. He who has not believed has not experienced, and he who has not experienced will not understand.” Duns Scotus admits that reason cannot discover Divine truth, though it may recognise it when it is communicated. The scholastic position was that some religious truths are above reason, while others are accessible to it, but that it is necessary to have them all verified by Revelation. Indeed, this reliance on Revelation proves that in Christianity the reason is not logically held in reverence, nor treated as a firm foundation for the faith. Kant argued that the proofs of the existence of God are untenable, and that “rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology have no foothold.” In other words, all purely intellectual exercises inevitably lead to scepticism. In the reason there is absolutely no basis whatever for any supernatural system. So eminent a divine as the Rev. Professor

Fisher, of Yale University, in his *History of Christian Doctrine* (p. 11), makes the following statement:—

"Believers are taught by the Spirit. They are enabled to discern spiritual things, which are presented in verbal form on the page of Scripture. The intellect, however, has an office to perform. Its function is to translate the truth which the Bible teaches and the soul appropriates in a living experience, into lucid statements. The Word, the Spirit, the Intellect, or Scripture, Experience, Science, are the factors by whose combined agency the Gospel is rendered into systematic expressions of doctrine."

According to Dr. Fisher, all we owe to the reason is systematic theology, which such writers as "J. B." of the *Christian World*, are perpetually denouncing as essentially hostile to the spirituality of the Gospel.

As Mr. Bisseker does not define reason, it is fair to infer that he regards it as synonymous with the intellect. The famous distinction, elaborated by Kant and adopted by Coleridge, between pure and speculative reason and practical reason, is not even mentioned in the reverend gentleman's article. Now, Coleridge, in his *Aids to Reflection*, xviii. 14, 15, frankly admits that reason, when taken as interchangeable with intellect or understanding, "has only a negative voice, at the utmost." Mr. Bisseker must know that, with a few notable exceptions, theologians have been accustomed to pour withering contempt upon the reason and all its works. St. Jerome called the poet-philosopher of Greece "that fool Plato." Even St. Augustine, in his later years, spoke of Plato and the Platonists as "impious men," and emphatically discouraged the study of physics and astronomy as a shameful waste of time. In the early Church, reasoning or arguing for the faith was disallowed. In Kingsley's *Hypatia*, we read that, when the young monk, Philammon, had resolved to attack the Neoplatonist lady in the middle of one of her eloquent orations, Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria, addressed him thus:—

"So you wish to go into the heathen woman's lecture-room and defy her? Have you courage for it?"

'God will give it me.'

'You will be murdered by her pupils.'

'I can defend myself,' said Philammon, with a pardoning glance downward at his sinewy limbs. 'And if not, what death more glorious than martyrdom?'

Cyril smiled genially enough. 'Promise me two things.'

'Two thousand, if you will.'

'Two are quite difficult enough to keep. Youth is rash in promises, and rasher in forgetting them. Promise me that, whatever happens, you will not strike the first blow.'

'I do.'

'Promise me, again, that you will not argue with her.'

'What then?'

'Contradict, denounce, defy. But give no reasons. If you do, you are lost.'

That extract makes more than one humiliating disclosure, but the one to be stressed now is that Cyril was shrewd enough to perceive that, argumentatively, Christianity could not hold its own against Heathen Philosophy. The most effective Christian arguments in Alexandria, at the close of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth, were daggers and bludgeons. Hypatia could not be defeated in debate, but she could be torn from her chariot, dragged into a church, stripped naked, cut to pieces with oyster-shells, and, finally, burnt piecemeal. Such was the method adopted to exterminate Paganism!

Returning to Mr. Bisseker's article, we find that it contains other mistakes than the one just discussed. The reverend gentleman affirms that the question at issue in the conflict between Christianity and Agnosticism "is not one of reason *versus* credulity, but one of the particular truths to which reason points." The Agnostic who consulted him wanted to know why men should believe in Christianity. "The answer is," says Mr. Bisseker, "that thoughtful men cannot avoid believing *something*. We all believe *something*—both Christians and Agnostics." Of course

we do; but this fact is no argument for belief in Christianity. The fact that a man believes two and two make four furnishes not even the ghost of a reason why he should believe in the Trinity. Belief in Astronomy does not carry with it acceptance of the Incarnation and the Divinity of Christ. That a man believes *something* does not necessitate his believing *everything*. "The difference between the Christian and the Agnostic," adds Mr. Bisseker, "lies in what they believe." This is at once true and false. It is true that Christians and Freethinkers do not share the same beliefs, but it is false to say that this is the chief difference between them. The fundamental difference between them is that the former profess to walk by faith in the supernatural, while the latter seek to walk in the ever-growing light of knowledge. Mr. Bisseker is a perfect gentleman, and, as such, is honorable enough to grant that an Agnostic is not "wicked" because he is not a Christian; but he is no less erroneous, on that account, when he maintains that the Christian explanation of the Universe is accepted by him and his brethren because it satisfies their reason. The fact is that they imbibed the Christian explanation of the Universe with their mothers' milk. They accepted it because they were duly instructed to do so. The first appeal was to their *credulity*, not to their *reason*. Belief in God and Christianity springs up in obedience to authority, and there are countless evidences that in the absence of such authority it never makes its appearance at all. If Mr. Bisseker was brought up in the Christian faith, he never had an opportunity to examine its credentials as an impartial critic. It was as a *believer*, as a man with a distinct bias, that he engaged the reason to justify his position. A believer cannot conduct a fair and impartial investigation of the Christian evidences. Furthermore, belief in the supernatural cannot be subjected to a strictly scientific examination, because the supernatural is a purely imaginary object, which the reason cannot grasp, or even discern at all. Supernaturalism is the offspring of ignorance; and, in proportion as the ignorance out of which it was begotten by the fancy is being dissipated, the belief in it becomes weaker and less comprehensive. Such is the process at present going on. Science, the child of reason, is gradually shoving religion, the child of fancy, out of the field. Protestantism is already in a state of hopeless chaos, driven everywhere by the forces of reason,—

"With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout,
Confusion worse confounded";

and Catholicism is being rejected by increasing multitudes every year. Science does not make a set attack upon religion, but it is silently and of necessity undermining it.

Supernatural faith and natural reason cannot flourish together. The one is bound to suppress the other. As Christianity rose, reason fell. Now it is reason's turn to rise, and Christianity's to fall. The tide of unbelief is flowing in, and no amount of sincere Christian resistance can stem it. It is a tide that is fructifying the rich soil of humanity.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Bishop of To-day.

THE bishops are always saying things which makes the average man feel that he would like a hand in "sacking" the whole overpaid crew. The Archbishop of York—a bachelor, by the way, with ten thousand a year—has amused thinking people by his inconsequential clatter about the decrease of the population and his talk about the responsibilities of parents to rear a large family. The Bishop of London startled England, not so long ago, by his confession of being unable to make ends meet. And the Bishop of Liverpool, with his pet scheme of a fine cathedral in that city of jerry-building and

sordid slums, has only deepened the disgust of the modern man for the mitred brigade.

Only recently "The Lady's Chapel"—the only finished part of the Liverpool edifice—was duly dedicated and consecrated. And a Liberal-Christian paper very pertinently asked on what authority the female divinity was thus ostentatiously invoked. It was most amusing to find that the Bishop gave a reason for his architectural enterprise by quoting the words of a Pagan visitor to our shores: "Surely the God whom you worship must be a little God, for the temples that my people build to their gods are greater and finer than these." And the Bishop desired, "A glorious building, which would be a witness for God, and would tell the heathen, the Mohammedan, and the Jew who landed on our shores, that they honored and worshiped God, and that they deemed nothing too good to give to Him."

Building a cathedral in a city like Liverpool is as sensible a scheme as building a gigantic school of cookery in a famine-stricken country. I have resided in a number of our large cities, but a residence in Liverpool opened my eyes to the need of drastic reform to do away with the terrible tyranny of the damnable social and commercial conditions which exist in our great industrial centres. In Everton, Liverpool can boast of the most densely populated district in England. The miles of dingy, jerry-built streets; the gangs of dockers wearily waiting in the hope of a job; the squalid, crowded districts with their multitudes of dirty, ill-clad children, affected me as the slums of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other cities have never done. I was startled out of an orthodox state of lethargy into thinking about the social problems of to-day. And progressive ideas in religion and sociology go hand in hand.

One raw Sunday in January of last year, I was induced to go and hear Dr. Chevasse, the Bishop of Liverpool, at a church not far from my abode. He was advertised to preach at an afternoon service for men only. I had not previously heard a real bishop—a Free Church bishop does not, of course, count—and I went in the expectation of hearing good things cleverly said and eloquently spoken by a cultured preacher; and at a men's meeting, I thought, the Bishop would give expression to his most robust thought.

The service was conducted by the vicar. Everyone is familiar with the droning of the Prayer Book service, so that no description is needed from me. I must say that I detest the ritual of responsive services; and here it was almost unintelligible to any stranger. Had a gentleman not handed me his Prayer Book, I should never—with the exception of an odd word or two—have made anything out of the jumble of mumbled sounds.

When the Bishop got into the pulpit, and gave out his text, my expectations received a serious blow. He had nothing of the venerable appearance and gigantic figure of his predecessor, Dr. Ryle. A little man without any distinguishing features, he stood in the pulpit like some rural lay preacher, and announced his subject in a thin, characterless voice. And the sermon! I have heard most of the best preachers on both sides of the border, and the Bishop's address seemed no better than what one would expect from a half-educated local preacher. There was no suggestion of wide reading, far less deep learning; there were no references to present day literature, and not even a quotation from the poets. Twice he referred to two well-known names. He mentioned Dr. Chalmers' "Astronomical Discourses" as a fine exposition of the newer science in the light of Revelation; and from the late Henry Drummond he borrowed a story. If the reverend doctor's knowledge of modern astronomy dates back to Chalmers' discourses, he is almost a century behind the times.

The short discourse, based on the passage from St. Peter, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you," was simply a plea for faith in the working of a divine Providence. And he used a story told by Drummond as an illustration. A

soldier, during the American Civil War, was posted, one night, at a lonely spot on sentry-go. Feeling eerie in the darkness and stillness of the night, he started to sing, "Jesu, lover of my soul." Unknown to him, the enemy's scouts had covered him with their rifles, but on hearing the words of the hymn, they lowered their guns and moved stealthily away. And with an exhortation to exercise more faith in the providential dealings of the Almighty, the Bishop ended his address.

I was thoroughly disappointed; and I looked round the well-filled church at the faces of the congregation, wondering how many of the business men and hard-headed artisans present carried this belief of a Divine Providence into their work-a-day life.

Finding the adjoining Park dripping with wet, I turned my steps homewards. On passing near the vicarage, I saw that a finely appointed motor-brougham was standing at the gate. A few minutes later, I heard the whir of wheels, and the Bishop's motor-carriage flashed past. Can anyone fancy the Carpenter of Nazareth in a motor-car?

We turn again to the scathing words of Milton's *Lycidas*, in which he lashed the ecclesiastical corruptions of his day, and find in them the expression of our contempt:—

"Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it then? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
But swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said."

FELIX PONDERING.

Acid Drops.

Rev. R. J. Campbell's Progressive League has had its name changed. Henceforth it is to be known as the Liberal Christian League. This is an admission that "Christian" alone is an unsatisfactory adjective. It must have another adjective in front of it nowadays to make it passable. Besides, it is a word with many different meanings. From the Catholic to the Unitarian there are sectaries who define "Christian" in various contradictory ways. Not a single point of doctrine exists on which professed Christians are universally agreed. To call a man a Christian, therefore, is to say nothing definite about him. No wonder, then, that Mr. Campbell's League has "Liberal" in front of "Christian" on its label.

A press paragraph, announcing the annual meetings of the Liberal Christian League in October, states that the League itself "has been formed to propagate Liberal Christianity among the masses." Well, it is not the masses that are attracted to the City Temple. The same comfortable middle-class people go there that go to other Nonconformist places of worship. The Catholic Church will get hold of the masses far more successfully than the Liberal Christian League. The Pope's establishment is the real thing; it goes the whole hog; people who want that sort of thing find it just the sort of thing they want. Mr. Campbell's establishment is a half-and-half affair; a mixture of faith and reason, with the two ingredients always at war with each other.

Mr. Campbell was posing as the Messiah of Socialism when he started the Progressive League. There is no Socialism in the Liberal Christian League. And what a curious assemblage of names is on the list of speakers at the approaching annual meeting. Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Radstock, Lady Constance Lytton, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, are quite a "happy family." How will the first and third keep the peace together? The second and fourth, in the matter of religion, have hardly anything in common. Mr. Campbell, we suppose, will play the part of the showman who keeps the "happy family" harmonious—with a stick.

The Y. M. C. A. Lecture Room, 346 Strand, is going to be used by the Public Speaking Club of Great Britain. For a fee of a guinea per session young men may go there and be

made orators. It was different in the primitive days of Christianity. The preachers of the gospel spoke then as it was "given to them." Apparently the Holy Ghost has retired from the business.

The Musicians Union wants Sunday concerts stopped. The reason is that musicians don't want to work seven days a week. Neither do we wish them to do so. But the policy they propose is like decapitation as a cure for toothache.

One would think that a hatless female in church would be welcomed. You could sit behind her and see the preacher as well as hear the sermon. But a good many parsons object to her, apparently out of respect to an ancient gentleman named Paul, who had very strong opinions about ladies' heads. We mean the outsides of them. A woman who cut her hair short, and went abroad without something besides her hair on her head—even if it were only a motor veil—was to him anathema. He seems to have believed that Peter would never let such a saucy creature through the golden gate. It is not easy to see why he was so sore on this subject, but they say he was jilted, and that he took it out of the fair sex ever afterwards.

Of course there is something occult behind the Pauline text about the "uncovered" female. We see that the rector of Middleton-on-the-Wolds informs the public that he has had occasion to turn women and girls out of his church, especially at weddings, because they had entered with their heads uncovered. He goes further, and declares that no woman or girl has a right to enter a church without hat or bonnet. This man of God ought to be better versed in ecclesiastical history. When St. Paul forbade a woman "to pray or prophesy with her head unveiled," he was thinking of something very different from the modern hat or bonnet. Behind his prohibition lay the superstition that evil spirits were always hovering round, ready to assail all women, especially virgins, through their ears. Hence the veil he recommended was a talisman that covered the ears as well as the head. According to his teaching (1 Cor. xi.), a woman might enter a church unveiled; but if she took an active part in the service she was then to put on the talisman, inasmuch as during such exercises the risk of the bad angels flocking in was much greater. If the rector of Middleton-on-the-Wolds must be superstitious and foolish, let him go the whole hog, and forbid any woman to enter his church unless her ears are veiled to protect her from the vile fiends of the pit. What stupidities parsons are capable of!

Sir Joseph Compton Rickett, M.P., treasurer of the National Council of Free Churches, denies that it is a political body. He is reported to have said recently in a speech at Lancaster:—

"The Free Church Council did not discuss constitutional questions or whether there should be a Second Chamber or not. They had nothing to do with Free Trade or Tariff Reform, though there were Free Churchmen who thought there was a moral side to those questions; but when their sons and daughters were not permitted to have a fair share of the positions on teaching staffs of national schools, or when they were asked to surrender their principles in order to obtain employment, and when children were taught things they did not approve of, when Free Church money was being used to place school children in revolt against Free Churchmen, they would protest individually and collectively, and use lawful means in obtaining justice for Free Churchmen."

The politics of Free Churchmen only concern the interests of Free Churchmen! A lofty policy!

We may call Sir J. C. Rickett's attention to the fact that in the great majority of County and Borough Council schools, where Free Church religious teaching obtains, at the cost of the whole of the ratepayers and taxpayers, the sons and daughters of Freethinkers are "not permitted to have a fair share of the positions on the teaching staffs." We should have more sympathy with the Nonconformist complaint if Nonconformists recognised the rights of other minorities.

Something like a storm was raised when Archbishop Magee said, many years ago, that no State which took the teachings of Jesus Christ for its laws could survive for a week. A similar opinion was expressed the other day by Canon Hensley Henson. He said: "It hardly needs argument to prove that the Sermon on the Mount could never have been intended to provide a manual for the citizen's guidance. The attempt to order a community on such laws as those which are there promulgated would induce anarchy, and bring about the speedy destruction of society." Well, we have said much the same on many occasions, and been

denounced for saying it. With an Archbishop and a Canon of the Church to endorse us, we can at least claim to be in "respectable" company.

A "Free Churchman," apropos of the action of the Woolwich Borough Council respecting the rating of chapels, puts the following questions to Free Church leaders:—

"Considering our antagonism on principle to State Churches and to the payment of public money in support of denominational religious bodies, how can our Free Churches consistently and conscientiously accept relief of rates upon our chapels, thus making the community at large pay a part of their support?"

This is not a recent difficulty, but one which is presented anew. I might be permitted to ask further:

Suppose the Woolwich Borough Council proposed to make a grant of £50 per annum to every church and mission hall within the limits of that district, if it were legal to do so, would not Free Churchmen oppose this form of concurrent endowment? If so, what is the difference between that and exemption from payment of rates?"

The only correct answer is, None at all. The truth is that an overwhelming majority of Free Churchmen—a majority that includes practically all the leaders—do not object to the State endowment of religion. All they object to is that one Church is getting a larger share than another. A Government that was willing and able to offer Free Churchmen a sufficiently large measure of State assistance, could silence all opposition, save from a few stalwarts, among whom would be the writer of the above pertinent letter.

Rev. Dr. Horton, during a holiday in Switzerland, managed to lose his engagement-book containing a list of his fixtures for the next twelve months. He writes to the *Christian World* asking all with whom he has made an engagement to acquaint him with the fact. So far, all is on the usual lines. But we remember a very circumstantial story of Dr. Horton's of how, while on a holiday in Norway, and a lady of the party had lost her shoe, he went down on his knees and solemnly asked the Lord for guidance in the matter. And in answer to his prayer he was led directly to a cleft in the rocks where was discovered the missing slipper. Now we wonder why Dr. Horton did not pray for the recovery of his engagement-book, instead of adopting the commonplace method of writing to the papers? Or, if he did pray, why is the book still lost? Are we to assume that in the eyes of Providence the recovery of a lady's slipper was of greater consequence than a list of Dr. Horton's sermons for the next twelve months? We should so like a little light on this question.

The Berlin correspondent of the *Christian World*, from whose accounts of the dolorous state of Christianity in the Fatherland we have often quoted, writes in the last issue of that journal of the great scarcity of pastors. Candidates for the ministry are dwindling in number, and at the present rate of falling off there bids fair to be about 1,000 livings vacant by 1920. In some places there are no divinity examinations owing to an absence of candidates. In the various Protestant universities the number of students shrinks year by year. In Berlin the number of communicants has shrunk from 23 per cent. to 8 per cent. of the population in ten years. What with the decline in the number of believers and the Emperor's indiscretions, it looks as though God and the Kaiser will presently be in a bad way.

That great Christian apologist, Dr. Frank Ballard, says that Christianity has nothing to fear from any source. This may be true as long as Dr. Ballard lives to defend it. And yet this militant man of God has to make a most humiliating confession. He tells us that to-day "the person of Christ is in a chaotic state, even among the ministers themselves." Poor old Christ, he cannot even take care of his own person, while his followers are forever fighting over it. But if the Redeemer's person is in a chaotic state, how on earth can Christianity have nothing to fear?

Rev. J. E. Rattenbury is not one whit more complimentary to his Lord and Master when he describes him as "hungering for the confidence of the human race" without securing it. He wants the trust of every man, woman, and child, but cannot win it. There are tens of thousands of people whose profession it is to do their utmost to help him to satisfy his hunger; but the truth is that he is hungrier to-day than ever before. It is his impotence in this respect that makes him conspicuous.

Professor Witton Davies, of Bangor, is surely somewhat disingenuous in his observations on Secular Education in the *Baptist Times* for September 16. After referring to the fact that "the teaching of religion and even the reading of the Bible have been entirely excluded from the Italian

schools" owing to the selfish conduct of the priests, he warns the Anglicans in England that their "insistence upon dogmatic religious teaching in the schools may cause the Bible to be entirely excluded." The reverend gentleman, however, forgets two things—the first, that Nonconformists are as full of blame in this respect as Anglicans, and the second, that any teaching of religion is of necessity dogmatic.

Montreal, the Catholic city of Canada, where the Eucharistic Congress has just been held, and the Host carried defiantly through the streets under a guard of drawn swords and bayonets, has not a single Public Library within its borders. Mr. Carnegie offered to build one eight years ago, but the Archbishop put his big foot (metaphorically) on the project and extinguished it. He will take care it does not revive.

Catholics rule the roost at Montreal. Protestants, who number a quarter of the city's inhabitants, and pay quite half the taxes, might as well live in China for all the power they possess. A committee was appointed by the City Council to inquire into an alleged conspiracy to lure some of the sweet innocent priests into houses of ill fame, and then exposing them, during their stay in Montreal in connection with the Eucharistic Congress. Every member of this committee is a Catholic.

Mr. R. J. Campbell is of opinion that the arguments against Determinism cannot be refuted by any logical process. To anyone not a preacher this would seem a capital reason for admitting the soundness of the case for Determinism. To Mr. Campbell it is nothing of the kind. Every person in his church—including himself—he says, is of the opinion of Professor Lecky, that "No human being can prevent himself from viewing certain acts with an indignation, shame, remorse, resentment, gratitude, enthusiasm, praise or blame, which would be perfectly unmeaning and irrational if these acts could have been avoided." If Professor Lecky had properly understood the subject on which he was writing he would never have penned that passage; and if Mr. Campbell had any better understanding of it than Lecky, he would never have quoted it. A nonsensical statement does not become reasonable because it appears second-hand, and its endorsement by "every person" in the City Temple only proves that Mr. Campbell and his congregation are well matched.

Indignation, shame, remorse, praise, blame, etc., are real facts of our mental and moral life, whether Determinism be true or false. No one can deny their existence; and the function of any useful inquirer is to find out what is their place and purpose in life. Now our feeling towards a certain action is not concerned in the remotest degree with the question of whether the person committing that action could have acted otherwise or not. If a hatchet falling from a workman's hand at the top of a ladder threatens to fall on the head of a passer-by, those near by will be as much concerned to save the threatened person as they would were the hatchet in the hand of one who was deliberately seeking to take another's life. Our feeling towards suffering—other things equal—will be the same by whatever means it is caused. If a man acts with kindness towards us, we are grateful for the kindness done, and we admire the character that prompted the action; but the consideration of whether that character, being what it is, could have acted differently does not arise. Determinism may alter, and ought to alter, our feelings towards the doers of certain actions; and, in place of unreasoning fury or the encouragement of a foolish resentment, it should inspire people with a desire to eradicate the causes or dispositions of which bad actions are the fruit. Resentment of wrong is a proper and healthy expression of human nature. It is in studying the causes and consequences of wrong that Determinism—and Determinism alone—can be of moral and mental assistance. If Mr. Campbell, and those who think with him, would only take the trouble to find out the real meaning of Deterministic philosophy, they would cease to make such ridiculous statements—even at second-hand—as the one quoted above.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children dealt with no less than 31,794 cases of cruelty during the past seven months, involving the welfare of 92,629 little ones. This shows how much religion has to do with ethics.

Mdme. Sarah Bernhardt, who is not only the foremost living actress but who is also a witty lady, is paying a visit to London. Some years ago the celebrated actress was playing in New York, and Dr. Talmage made a violent attack on her in the pulpit. Mdme. Bernhardt wrote him a

little note: "Dear Doctor,—It is not usual for persons in our profession to insult one another."

Rev. J. Michell Cox, of Paddington, supported the Conservative candidate at the last general election. For this he has been so persecuted by his Nonconformist colleagues, who are always boasting their love of freedom, that he has had to sell his chapel premises and retire from the ministry.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his recent book, *The Ball and the Cross*, introduces a man who thought he was "God." We hope it is not a portrait of the author.

In connection with the organisation of a "mission" in one of our northern towns, we see that a great "downpouring of the spirit" is anticipated. We presume the expectation is serious, as it has been resolved to "canvass" all the adults in the town. This is extremely thoughtful, only we would suggest waterproof sheeting would answer the purpose equally well.

Rev. E. Griffith-Jones says it is impossible ever to get "rid of religion by any process of scientific reasoning." There is some truth in this, although not the kind of truth Mr. Griffith-Jones has in his mind. There are some people in the world who seem marked out by Nature for religion of some kind or other; and although they may vary their superstition from time to time, a superstition they will have all the time. It is hard on them that they should be born so, and hard also on the rest of the community. Still, hard or easy, it is a fact, and with this type we regretfully admit scientific reasoning is of no avail. They remain impervious to it. Science can only affect this class indirectly, by affecting the better brains of the race, and through them so modifying the social environment that encouragement will no longer be offered for its persistence. We shall make a start in this work by giving our children a sound and unadulterated education. The secularisation of the State will follow. And soon the type of religionist that is impervious to scientific reasoning will appear only as a case of atavism. Meanwhile Mr. Griffith-Jones may console himself with the reflection of one of the gods in Lucian's dialogue, after the Atheist, Damis, has routed the defender of deity. "Suppose a few people have gone away believing in Damis, what then? A great many more believe the reverse; the whole mass of uneducated Greeks and the barbarians everywhere."

Mr. Griffith-Jones finds much consolation in the fact that anthropology has shown man everywhere to possess a religion. Quite so; but historical investigation also shows that man is all the time getting rid of the religions he has inherited from an uncivilised past. Man's religion nowhere grows. Man grows, and his growth involves a modification and ultimate rejection of his gods. In its earlier stages humanity is everywhere religious; in its earliest stages humanity is also everywhere ignorant. And the former is the normal expression of the latter. With knowledge man outgrows his creeds; with civilisation the gods grow thin—so thin that one can easily see through them the humanity of which they are at once the expression and the caricature.

Theodore Hook was once asked if he would subscribe to the funds of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. He wrote: "I regret being unable to let you have any money, but if you send me a few Jews I will try to convert them."

Men of God like to decide the matter of "calls" for themselves. Wesleyan men of God, however, under the three years' system, are shifted about willy-nilly. And the Rev. J. S. Cooper, of Sheffield, has found this so trying that he has resigned. He had a nice residential circuit in Liverpool, and he couldn't stand the slum circuit which was his part of the Lord's vineyard in Sheffield. So he has therefore cleared out of the vineyard altogether. His wife is said to be a lady of independent means. *So that's all right.*

Cinematograph shows are becoming increasingly popular, and it is suggested that they will shortly be used for educational purposes. Fancy a Sunday-school enjoying a film of "Jonah and the Whale" or "Ezekiel's Banquet."

An American paper states that at a recent party of children of New York's millionaires it was estimated that the little ones present would inherit between them over £100,000,000. It is difficult to imagine that "the god" worshiped by Americans was a pauper.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 25, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, W. : at 7.30, "Charles Bradlaugh—After Twenty Years."

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.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 2, Liverpool; 9, Queen's Hall, London; 16, Glasgow; 23, Queen's Hall, London. November 6, Fulham; 13, Shoreditch Town Hall; 20, Manchester; 27, Leicester. December 4, Holloway; 18, West Ham.
- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £248 4s. 7d. Received since:—R. L. M., £2.
- BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.—H. W. Parsons, 5s.
- H. G. F. wishes to "express his great appreciation of the lucidity of Mr. de Caux's third instalment of 'The Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ.'"
- C. FRANCIS.—The paper you mention is not likely to publish letters criticising Sir Oliver Lodge adversely. The poor creature you refer to as bursting to say something defamatory of Mr. Foote in Finsbury Park is one of his Creator's misfits. Don't worry over such insignificance.
- A. M.—We cannot give you "a list of the best books for and against Determinism." The subject has been dealt with by thinkers on both sides in the course of works on philosophy in general. Mill's contribution to the controversy, for instance, occupies a long chapter in his large book on Sir William Hamilton's philosophy. The only notable contributions we know of that have been reprinted are Jonathan Edwards's, which can be picked up sometimes second hand, and Anthony Collins's, which we reprinted some years ago, but is now sold out. We do not know of any separate book *against* Determinism of much value. The truth is that few of its opponents (like some of its friends) don't understand it.
- F. H. How.—Egotistical twaddle, not worth a moment's attention. The writer ought to be restrained from using pen and ink except in the way of business or pleasure, and a paper must be very short of copy to print such stuff.
- "INFIDEL."—Sir Oliver Lodge, in saying that there is no conflict between religion and science, has to define, or describe, them both to make them harmonise. Glad you like our article all the more for your recent visit to Montreal, where "it was sickening to see the hold a degrading superstition has on the people."
- A. PIMLEY.—We have given the Branch committee an opportunity of selecting the new Bradlaugh lecture for our approaching visit to Manchester.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- J. W. REPTON.—Pleased to hear that the lady who accompanied you to Queen's Hall on Sunday evening "had nothing but admiration throughout the evening." Her thanks, with yours, for "an intellectual treat," are gladly accepted. We hope Freethinkers will all try to do missionary work in this way. Men should bring their women folk into contact with advanced ideas. Women make excellent Freethinkers when they have opportunities. It is silly to complain of their backwardness when opportunities of advance are denied them.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Sorry to hear Mr. Ridgway is ill again, and hope he will soon recover. The February date is duly booked. Glad you are all so pleased at Birmingham with the arrangements made for our Queen's Hall lecture on Charles Bradlaugh. It seems peculiarly fitting that our old general's daughter should preside on this occasion.
- G. PROCTOR.—It is common to exclude theology from local debating societies. Gainsboro' is no exception. But, of course, the exclusion of any subject shows that the excluders are afraid of it; which we can well understand.
- H. J. WHIPP.—It is rather off our beat—isn't it? though we sympathise with your view of the case.
- T. H. PERKINS.—Shall be attended to. Thanks.
- J. W.—Will make use of it next week. Very sorry to hear of your sad loss.
- R. HEPBURN.—You need not take up the cudgels for Mr. Lloyd. He is well able to defend himself. The real difficulty in saying that God does not exist lies in the fact that "God" must be defined before he (or it) can be affirmed to exist or not. The same difficulty, of course, attends the opposite assertion that God does exist.
- CLARA GUNNING.—Glad you found the answer helpful. Mr. Foote generally takes his time in leaving the hall after a Sunday evening lecture, and if you wish to speak to him as he passes along you have only to do what other "saints" do—introduce yourself.

T. H. WHITEHOUSE.—See paragraph. Thanks.

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.

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.

This week's *Freethinker* contains a beautiful and characteristic portrait of Charles Bradlaugh, and a special article upon his life and work by his daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. We suggest that the "saints" should circulate copies of the present number of this journal as widely as possible. The opportunity is a good one for placing the paper in fresh hands. Extra copies have been printed for that purpose.

There was another fine audience at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening. Ladies were, if anything, in stronger force than ever, and there were many strangers, Madame Saunders (pianist) and Mr. A. Hardisty (vocalist) well sustained the interest of the musical half-hour from 7 to 7.30. Mr. F. A. Davies took the chair punctually, and called on Mr. Foote for his announced reading. Tennyson's "Rizpah" produced a powerful effect upon the audience, and was greatly applauded. The lecture on "The True Heaven and Hell" was followed for more than an hour with the closest attention, punctuated with laughter and cheers. Discussion was invited, but none was forthcoming. One gentleman asked a pertinent question concerning the ancient Jews, and was suitably answered.

Queen's (Minor) Hall is likely to be crowded out this evening (Sept. 25). The date is one day off the great Charles Bradlaugh's birthday, and it is nearly twenty years since he died. Mr. Foote is going to lecture on "Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years," and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner—Bradlaugh's only surviving daughter—is to take the chair. It will therefore be an important and interesting occasion. There will be vocal and instrumental music, as usual, before the lecture. The poetical reading, in the first part of the program, will be given this time, not by Mr. Foote himself, but by his daughter Florence.

Mr. Foote lectures in the country on four out of the five Sundays in October. The first Sunday will be devoted to Glasgow, where he opens the Branch's winter session. South Scottish friends will please note. Mr. Foote's subjects at Glasgow will be—"Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years" and "The Greatest Lie in the World."

There is no room in this week's *Freethinker* for Mr. Foote to deal with the question raised in Mr. Gould's last week's article as to whether the principle of toleration covers the action of the Catholics in carrying the Host in procession through the public streets. Mr. Foote will deal with the question in our next issue.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti, one of the most promising of the new generation of Freethinkers, having gone to live at Laindon, in Essex, has been doing some good propagandist work there. He closed the "lecture season" there on Saturday evening (Sept. 17). Opposition has only helped to create a greater stir in the locality. Even the opposition of the village brass band has not been able to do any serious mischief; indeed, it rather served as a striking advertisement. Miss H. Pankhurst has taken the chair at all meetings, and has added materially to their success. Her presence has several times been as oil on troubled waters. A good sale of the *Freethinker* has been effected by Mr. A. C. Rosetti, a recent convert to the N. S. S. and already an active worker. Unfortunately a hall cannot be obtained at Laindon to carry on Freethought work during the winter; so there will have to be a break until next summer.

South London Freethinkers, especially members of the Camberwell Branch, are requested to attend a meeting at the Lambeth Baths (Committee Room), on Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8 p.m. Mr. Victor Roger, the president of the Camberwell

Branch, will preside. The principal object of the meeting is to reorganise the Branch with a view to more effective propagandist work. If sufficient assistance is forthcoming the Secular Society, Ltd., may be induced to help in a series of indoor lectures during the winter season in South London.

Once more the Catholic Church has stirred up its faithful sons in the Trade Union movement to do their very utmost to stop the annual Labor vote in favor of Secular Education. Mr. O'Grady, M.P., and Mr. James Sexton did their level best, but the Trade Union Congress reaffirmed the policy of the "secular solution" by 827,000 to 81,000. Mr. O'Grady "challenged any single member of the Labor Party to get up at a meeting of his constituents and say that by Secular Education he meant the Bible being taken out of the school. If that was so, could they not appreciate the position of the Roman Catholics?" This challenge was accepted on the spot by Mr. Will Thorne, M.P., who said that "he had made that declaration to his own constituents, and was quite prepared to make it again."

"Some of our friends," the New York *Truthseeker* says, "think that we should have a more insinuating heading than 'a Freethought and Agnostic Journal.' We are not pledged to the retention of *Agnostic*, but *Freethought* has come to stay. That a non-committal title favors the acceptance of a publication by persons to whom Freethought or Agnostic or Atheistic is offensive has not been proved by experience. Editor Foote of the London *Freethinker*, with a view to appealing to this class, once launched a monthly magazine entitled the *Pioneer*. Had it been a success he might possibly have merged the *Freethinker* with it, but it failed, while the *Freethinker*, with the uncompromising title, still flourishes, and, next to the *Truthseeker*, is the oldest Freethought journal in the world."

We agree with Editor Macdonald in all but one part of the foregoing paragraph. The *Freethinker* would hardly have been merged in anything. The title is a rallying flag in a hot war. When you call the stalwarts of a movement together you want something clear and decisive. Ingersoll said that men would fight to the death for their homes, but who would shoulder a rifle for a boarding-house? Men won't fight under nothingarian flags. That is why the "respectable" unbelievers hardly ever get near the smell of powder when a battle for Freethought opens.

Sir Oliver Lodge as a Decoy.—II.

IT would be charitable to assume that there is a touch of Sir Oliver Lodge the rhapsodist in the following mixture of nonsense and truism:—

"Materialist sceptics were abroad who saw and enforced only one side of things, and denied other sides. Their assertions might be true; their denials were often absurd. There might be a world of emotion in what physically was exceedingly simple. You can imagine a materialistic critic saying to an audience at a concert (said Father Waggett) What are you crying about with your Wagner and your Brahms? It is only horsehair grating upon catgut! Yes, from a narrow physical point of view that is what it is. It can all be represented by vibrations in the air—all, that is, except the soul. The soul of music is in humanity, it is an affair of perception, and without perception it is non-existent or meaningless."

Father Waggett said that, did he? We should have thought it was old Father William. And the great Sir Oliver Lodge adopts it! Well now, we will ask him a few plain questions. Does he really believe that any "materialistic critic" could ever be so utterly and hopelessly silly as to tell people thrilling to the point of tears under the influence of say Bach's "Chaconne" that the beginning and end of music is horsehair and catgut? Is it dignified to argue in public with imaginary opponents who are flagrantly fit for a lunatic asylum? Do "materialistic critics" believe in nothing besides horsehair and catgut? Do they not believe in the human brain and its psychic experiences? Sir Oliver Lodge calls it "the soul." But what does that matter? Names do not alter things. Words do not alter facts. Music is the same to those who accept Hamlet's description of man as "the paragon of animals" as it is to those who regard man as "a fallen angel." Sir Oliver Lodge must be reminded that the dispute

between the so-called spiritualist and the so-called materialist is not about the phenomena but about their explanation. Berkeley and Hamilton taught very different theories of perception, but it would not have occurred to either of them to assert that the other could not see.

We may also remind Sir Oliver Lodge, in passing, that some of the very greatest musical composers have been sceptics—notably Wagner and Beethoven. What would *they* have thought of his horsehair and catgut argument? They were both irascible and outspoken, and they might have made his ears tingle.

From music to inspiration is not an unnatural step. Sir Oliver Lodge proceeded to deal with the "inspiration" of the Old Testament. "Great parts of it," he said, "were manifestly inspired." That was a nice sop to the Bibliolators who were listening to him. But it was just as well that he did not define "inspiration." He actually rejoiced over the fact that "no authoritative definition had been given by any Church." "It was fortunate," he said, "that it was so, that our conception of inspiration might enlarge and become more definite as our knowledge grew."

Was there ever a more unfortunate simile? Conceptions do not generally become more definite as they enlarge, and the conception of "inspiration" has certainly grown more and more indefinite; in this respect following the universal law of religious development, which has always consisted in "defecating to a transparency" the inherited crudities of primitive superstition. The development of religion, indeed, bears a good deal of analogy to the development of a soap bubble. Each is most attenuated, and each is most beautiful, just at the point of greatest extension, when it is ready to burst into nothingness for ever.

It may be perfectly true—we cannot stop to discuss it—that "inspiration" has never been authoritatively defined. But it has been practically defined. The theory which underlies the attitude and practice of the Church is, in every age, its practical definition of "inspiration." At one time, and for a very long time, it was heresy or blasphemy to deny the absolute truth of the smallest fraction of "Holy Scripture." The verbal theory of inspiration then held the field. And the verbal theory was an honest theory and an intelligible theory. We may call it the original soap-sud out of which the modern theory has been blown by the breath of hypocritical compromise. Modern "inspiration" is undefined—and undefinable, and therefore unintelligible. No man can express the non-verbal theory in perspicuous language. It is nothing but a more or less clever evasion of an insuperable difficulty. Saying that God inspired—that is, virtually dictated—every word of the Bible may be very foolish, but it may be perfectly understood. Saying that the Bible is not the Word of God, but contains the Word of God, is simply a plunge into chaos. It is not the darkness of the night, nor the light of the day, but a twilight between the two, in which the eye catches gleams but has no clear vision, everything being vague and fantastic, and constantly changing from one inchoate form into another.

"Great parts of the Old Testament were manifestly inspired," Sir Oliver Lodge said. Now we ask whether anyone can attach a real—that is, a definite—meaning to those words? And "manifestly" begs the very question at issue. What parts of the Old Testament are inspired? In what respect do they decisively differ from other parts? And is that difference what is meant by inspiration? Sir Oliver Lodge is bound in intellectual honesty—we might say, in intellectual decency—to answer these questions. Certainly he must do so before he can claim a right to thinking people's attention. How long would he retain his scientific reputation if he talked of chemistry and electricity with the same looseness that he speaks of the Bible and inspiration?

Is it worthy of Sir Oliver Lodge, also, to echo the foolish old platitude of the pulpit about the function

of the Jews as the "chosen people"? "To the Hebrews," he said, "it was given to kindle and uphold the torch of religion through the dark and nascent ages of human history." What a childish view of human history! Long before the Jews had any religious ideas that were worthy of a moment's notice—when they were little better than a horde of brutal, bloody, and lustful savages—religion flourished in a highly developed condition in Egypt, in India, in Babylon, and in Persia. The importance of the Jews as religionists is entirely owing to their sacred writings being adopted as a starting point by the Christians. The New Testament has kept the Old Testament alive. And as the New Testament goes—and it is going—it will carry the Old Testament into oblivion with it.

We are speaking of both Testaments, of course, as books of religion. What intrinsic value they possess as literature may be left for more impartial times to determine.

Finally, we have to say that Sir Oliver Lodge turns the truth topsy-turvy in dealing with some "childish" religious conceptions of the Jews, such as the story of Jehovah walking in the garden in the cool of the day, just, he observes, "as Zeus walked in the garden of the Hesperides." "These things," according to Sir Oliver Lodge, "were poetical modes of expression for a reality." Then they were *not* childish. The childishness consists in taking such stories as facts. That is what they were to the Jews, and that is what they were to the Christians for eighteen hundred years. They were not poetical, but actual. Now they are not actual, but poetical. And the change is one from real belief to make-belief. The ghost of a dead faith haunts the places where it once lived and reigned.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ.—IV.

(Concluded from p. 604.)

THE only other prophecy concerning Jesus which is referred to by any of the Evangelists is that which is embodied in the forty-fifth verse of the first chapter of John, and which reads thus: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." The prophecy itself is recorded in the fifteenth verse of the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, and reads thus: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." To my mind, this is a most important prophecy, and yet but little notice of it is taken by the orthodox. Why is this? The reason is that these words mean, if they mean anything at all, that God would raise up a Jewish man, in all respects like Moses himself, to be such a prophet as he was. They could not mean that the Lord would raise up a being transcendently superior to any other man, and who could not by any possibility be of the seed of Abraham, in whom "all the nations of the earth were to be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18).

These are the prophecies which are referred to by the Evangelists, and virtually they cover the whole of the prophetic ground concerning Christ. There are, however, some other prophecies which, according to the orthodox, are as important as those which I have already considered. These are but few in number, but I shall treat them one by one in order that no charge of slurring or evasion, however slight, may be made against me.

Taking the prophecies in the order in which they appear in the Bible, we read (Gen. xlix. 10-12) that Jacob on his death-bed spoke, among other things, as follows: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his

garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white as milk." I fail to see any description of Christ in these words. But only the first part of the first sentence is claimed as a prophecy—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Shiloh is supposed to represent Jesus. But, when Jesus was born, the sceptre had long departed from Judah. It is pretended that Judea was not reduced to a Roman province until after Christ's incarnation—no long after, it is reluctantly admitted, but still, after. This is mere equivocation, for history tells us that Syria became a Roman province in 65 B.C., Palestine in 63 B.C., and Egypt in 30 B.C.; and to say that the "sceptre did not depart from Judah" when the country of which it was a small part had been annexed by Rome, is simply absurd. Moreover, this view is borne out by the orthodox interpretation of the celebrated vision of Daniel (chapter viii.). The little horn of the vision was Rome, which—from being a small town that was the "sanctuary of malefactors, slaves, and such as were desirous of novelty"—gradually extended its sway until it overshadowed the whole of the civilised world. In 19 B.C. Rome ceased to be a Commonwealth, and became an empire under Augustus. And thus it was that the Roman Emperor—to use the language of the vision—"stood up against the Prince of princes" (Daniel viii. 25) in the person of Herod, who attempted to destroy Christ in infancy (Matt. ii. 16), and at last by crucifying him when represented by Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 22-26).

Christians say to me: "Read Isaiah xxxv. 5-6"; which I do, as follows: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Then they say: "Now read Matthew iv. 23"; which I also do, as follows: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease, among the people." Then they say, and in triumphant tones: "Is not that a prophecy, and its fulfilment?" To which I reply: "Is it?" "Is it?" they exclaim; "of course it is!" My Christian friends, there is no "of course" in the matter, and for these reasons: The words quoted from Isaiah are only a portion of the dreamer's prophecy; and if the chosen portion be treated literally, so also must the other portions of the prophecy be. Now the prophecy continues thus: "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (v. 6, 7). Will anyone say that this, and other similar portions of the prophecy, if prophecy it were, were ever fulfilled? It is pure assumption that it referred to Christ. Farther, it is not true that "Jesus went about all Galilee, healing all manner of sickness and disease," for the very simple reason that his power to heal depended, according to the evangelists themselves, in a great measure on the faith which his patients had in him. "And he did not many mighty works there [that is, in Galilee] because of their unbelief" (Matt. xiii. 58). Peter himself was deficient in the necessary faith, for when, at the bidding of Jesus, he attempted to walk upon water, "he was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried, saying, Lord save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" John also tells us that there was "at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water"; their object being to obtain, by immersion in the water when it was "troubled," a cure for their complaints. John also tells us—and I invite attention to the fact—that of this "great multitude" of sick persons, Jesus healed only ONE (John v. 2-9).

Then I am told to read Haggai ii. 9, which says: "The glory of this latter house [that is, of the second temple in Jerusalem] shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." And I am told that this is a prophecy that was fulfilled when Christ "taught daily" in it (Luke xix. 47). But how could this be when we read that the temple that was built by Solomon enshrined not only the "ark, with the two tables of stone which Moses had put therein at Horeb," but also the shechinah—the "cloud of the glory of the Lord"—the presence of which manifested that God himself was always there? (1 Kings viii. 9-11). As for the "peace" which the Lord of hosts had promised, is it not declared that Jesus said that the temple "had been made a den of thieves"? (Matt. xxi. 18; Mark xi. 17).

The last prophecy to which I shall call attention is that which is said to have been fulfilled when Judas Iscariot covenanted with the chief priests to betray Jesus to them for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. xxvi. 15). But how it can have been so I am at a loss to imagine. The prophecy is to be found in the eleventh chapter of Zechariah. Therein the prophet said: "And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock" (v. 7). "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all my people" (v. 10). "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" (v. 12-14). Here the prophet sold himself or his services, which he had a perfect right to do; a person has a right to damn his own eyes, though he has no right to damn the eyes of another. The man who can believe that Zechariah and Judas Iscariot were counterparts of each other must be void of common sense.

I have now marshalled before you all the so-called prophecies concerning Christ. I do not say that I have presented to you every one of the verses which sky-pilots aver are prophetic of Christ; but I do claim that I have omitted no texts that are necessary to a careful examination, and a dispassionate judgment, of the subject. I say "so-called" prophecies, because I have shown that their apparent fulfilment is due simply to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. It goes without saying that the men who wrote in the names of the evangelists many years after the death of Christ could make their narratives plausibly agree with portions of the writings of the prophets—portions that were wrenched from their surroundings, and made to do duty as independent prophecies. To my mind it is as impossible to make these Gospel narratives agree with the so-called prophecies concerning Christ as it is to make a perfectly round circle the circumference of which shall be exactly double its diameter. But Christians believe, or say they believe, in impossibilities; with them all that pertains to Christ is purely a matter of faith—of credulous faith which excludes all reason and common sense. Be it so! Let every man judge for himself.

J. W. DE CAUX.

The Man of Sorrows.

A MAN who, in some inexplicable fashion, was also the divine ruler of the universe, himself atoning to himself for a peccadillo he himself had anticipated, arranged, and allowed two ignorant savages to commit, is said to have been crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem. He had come from his celestial domain to save the world from the fearful punishment his justice had decreed on all the descendants of the

two unfortunate savages. The peoples of the world should have discerned and worshiped him in his disguise of wandering fanatic. As an omnipotent deity he could have made them do so, but he preferred not to exercise his power, while retaining his intention of damning all who did not recognise and revere his true character. Since he was persistently in opposition to the various religious bodies of his country, and lost no opportunity of exciting the enmity of the powers that were, he ended, after a trial as irregular as blasphemy trials, from their nature, must be, on a cross between two malefactors undergoing a similar punishment.

Now even thus the story sounds improbable. The account of the arrival of the divine masquerader on this earth is still more fantastic. His mother never lost her virginity; in youth and manhood his supernatural gifts enabled him to be a worker of wonders, and the manner of his death is related above. Yet every word in the four contradictory biographies compiled by four friends of the hero is true; the Churches have said it, and if you experience any doubt as to the truth of the narrative you will be outlawed on earth and, after a painful demise, submitted to the tortures of devils for ever and ever. For this man is the Man of Sorrows, and not all the tears and penitence of all generations—past, present, and to come—can avail to atone for what he suffered in life and death.

But to the mind of the unintimidated reader the life of this character, so historical as to be ignored by his contemporaries, may seem to have been simple and happy, if not enviable. He had devoted parents, whom he repaid with an utter lack of filial affection. Joseph, who is said not to have been the father of his eldest son, never reproached him with his dubious parentage. Mary, his mother, is to this day the conventional type of the highest motherhood. As a young man, he soon gathered faithful companions; a vagabond existence in their society appears to have charmed him, and no one interfered with his mode of life. People listened to his inflammatory speeches with rapt attention; he had a ready wit and no little popular support to help him in his conflicts with authority; the glibness of the demagogue evaded awkward questions; the Jews kept open house, and he was not above calling upon a generation of vipers to furnish him with sustenance. Ladies of uncertain character supported him with their earnings. He was even allowed to upset the trade-centre of Jerusalem with impunity. The elements were never a source of peril to him, nor the denizens of the desert, since he had in reserve his divine authority over them: the same power helped him to rid himself with credit of the importunate people who crowded round the traveller to display their physical deformities. He had created all these infirmities; he cured a very few. Had the unfortunates ever recognised him as God, the creator of good and evil, the author of their misfortunes, they would have saved the theatricality of Calvary. With what a satirical smile he must have heard the thanks of some blind victim of his cruelty, newly healed at the end of life!

In short, life held very little sorrow for Jesus "Christ." His parents survived him; he would not have dropped a tear for them had it been otherwise. He had once driven them from his door. The loss of a wife he never knew, and it is not recorded that he had a child. One of his disciples was faithless, but he had known that all along. Only once were his desires thwarted, and that was when he wished to gather figs out of season—and then the paragon of meekness used his divine power to blast the tree instead of making it produce the desired fruit. Long fasting and prayer we read much of; but does a god need food? To whom should the Supreme Being pray? Lacking material troubles, the Omnipotent could have no mental pain. He could, indeed, curse the folly of a world he kept in ignorance: could he sincerely weep for the sins and sorrows of the world when he had created them and never bade them cease?

And his death? This death in remembrance of which men and women lacerated their flesh, gave up all that was dear to them on earth, made their lives a foretaste of the hell they dreaded; this death for which the world can never atone, despite all the mummery of holy weeks, all the smiting of sacerdotal bosoms, all the frenzy of deluded devotees—what was there extraordinary in this instance of capital punishment? The popular voice was induced to demand the death-penalty for blasphemy; a weak governor yielded to the outcry. Then Jesus, after undergoing the mockery of the soldiers, was given a few light, formal blows as a mark of contempt—note well, he received nothing remotely approaching a flagellation such as the priests depict—and, like any other malefactor, was nailed on a crucifix invariably misrepresented in ecclesiastical art, there to hang till death supervened.

The punishment was inhuman in all conscience. Yet before Christ, and after him, many guileless men went through torments infinitely worse—and he, after death, was to gain heaven and his seat as sovereign of the universe. Unconsciousness would soon dull the pain from pierced limbs, loss of blood, thirst, and exposure. The least torture of the Inquisition must have exceeded the pain of crucifixion—a steady toothache is probably fiercer, but still, we will admit it to have been great. At all events, it was suffered voluntarily. Shame—that shame about which a *dilettante* curate can weave such a thickness of impassioned verbosity—could not have existed in his bosom. How could a god, feeling omnipotence within him, feel shame at the mockery of a few ribald soldiers? How could a god, consciously performing the greatest act of sacrifice, feel shame? That there could have been no such god is self-evident; and if ever there was a poor zealot crucified for blasphemy, whose dying words have been truly recorded, what he felt most was neither physical agony nor shame, but doubt, fearful doubt!

And if you have read Léo Taxil's *Life of Jesus*, and have marked the ease with which the hero could exchange divine security for human frailty, what is easier than to assume that he used his deity to obliterate his sufferings?

Since this is the story of the careless life and ill-justified execution of one Jesus of Nazareth, I want to know from what source the Churches obtained their Man of Sorrows. There is nothing in the whole story to extract tears for the hero of the petty tragedy from any reader free from hysteria. The reason is simple. The hero is neither one thing nor the other. He is not great as a man, much less as a god, and the hearts of reasonable men are not for him. He cannot fill his throne as a deity nor fit his niche as a figure of history: only as an ill-drawn character in a work of fiction is he to be explained, and those who by prayer and fasting and tears strive to atone for the fate of Jesus can have no mark of grief too great for the lot of Lear.

Over the empire of Austria an old man holds sway, and sorrow has been his meed through life. To make a mere beginning of his griefs, strong son and beloved wife were taken from him by violent death, and his own tarries too long. Little love have I for kings and princes and emperors, but trouble strips off the purple and the crown to reveal a suffering man. Among those who might be farthest removed from care, I find one who has drunk a cup to which that of the fictitious Man of Sorrows was a draught of wine. If I searched the depths of human life, what horrors might I not drag up to confront the sacrificed idol of the Churches? Because, on their thrones or in their slums, they ask no worship, these, our fellow-men; because they are not gods in disguise, creatures of fancy and terror and darkness, but nobler, higher beings of reality and clear day—therefore, beyond help, they may rule empires; without help, they may starve in the slums; and the world keeps up its wailing and tears for the "Man of Sorrows," and has none to spare for the sorrows of Man.

T. M.

A Soldier of the Cross.

THERE'S many a legend old and strange
That tells how knights abroad would range,
And seek out chances to display
Their prowess in some desperate fray.

Now, one of those, Sir Guy de Brenne,
Would challenge passing gentlemen
Some strokes in battle to afford,
Just for the glory of the Lord.

Sir Guy was tall and stout and brave,
And he could wield a heavy glaive;
He called himself, in jousting list,
"A humble champion of the Christ."

He wandered here, he wandered there,
He wandered nearly everywhere;
And all that met him had to take
His heavy blows for Jesu's sake.

One day he reached a gloomy wood
Wherein a haunted pine-tree stood.
He drew his rein before the tree,
And smote upon it heavily.

Whereon a dazzling flash of white
Illumined sword and horse and knight;
And when it died there stood beside
The tree, a stranger, single-eyed!

"Ho, wizard!" cried the bold Sir Guy,
"Thy power for evil I defy—
Thee and thy master. Take thy sword!
I fight for Jesus and the Lord."

The other slowly drew his brand
And held it balanced in his hand,
The while he raised his massive head.
"I fight for Thor!" was all he said.

Then sparks began to fly and flash
As blade met blade in mighty crash.
Sir Guy's attack was swift and skilled.

Unfortunately, he was killed!

ERIC DEXTER.

MOTHER.

Behold a woman!

She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer
and more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the
farmhouse,

The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-
daughters spun it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and
does not wish to go,

The justified mother of men. —Walt Whitman.

The real searcher after truth will not receive the old because it is old, or reject the new because it is new. He will not believe men because they are dead, or contradict them because they are alive. With him an utterance is worth the truth, the reason it contains, without the slightest regard to the author. He may have been a king or serf—a philosopher or servant—but the utterance neither gains nor loses in truth or reason. Its value is absolutely independent of the fame or station of the man who gave it to the world. Nothing but falsehood needs the assistance of fame and place, of robes and mitres, of tiaras and crowns. The wise, the really honest and intelligent, are not swayed or governed by numbers—by majorities. They accept what they really believe to be true. They care nothing for the opinions of ancestors, nothing for creeds, assertions and theories, unless they satisfy the reason. In all directions they seek for truth, and when found, accept it with joy—accept it in spite of preconceived opinions—in spite of prejudice and hatred. This is the course pursued by wise and honest men, and no other course is possible for them.—Ingersoll.

Obituary.

SOUTH SHIELDS.—Friends in the North of England, and especially on Tyneside, will learn with regret of the death of the wife of Mr. D. R. Bowe. The remains were interred at Heworth on the 14th inst., amid every indication of sympathy and respect.—R. C.

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, "Charles Bradlaugh—After Twenty Years."

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Walter Bradford and S. J. Cook. Newington Green: 12 noon, J. J. Darby, "Christian Evidences." Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, H. King and T. Dobson. Finsbury Park: 3.30, James Rowney, "Holy Moses & Co." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King, James Rowney, J. J. Darby, and T. Dobson.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, W. Davidson, "Borrowed Plumes."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "God's Dealings with His Chosen People."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

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

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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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