

# THE Freethinker

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*I wish less of our piety were spent on imaginary perfect goodness, and more given to real imperfect goodness.—GEORGE ELIOT.*

## Religion and Ethics.

“Apart from moral conduct, all that man thinks himself able to do in order to become acceptable to God, is mere superstition and religious folly.”—*Kant.*

KANT was a great thinker. He continued the work of Hume and carried philosophy to the point of Atheism. Heine humorously said that he had stormed the heavenly citadel and left the Holy Trinity dead upon the ramparts. But then he experienced a soft relenting. At his elbow he perceived his manservant Lampe, who used to carry the master's umbrella when he took his daily constitutional. Poor old Lampe was no philosopher, but a good, honest, silly soul, who could not help shedding tears when he saw the objects of his worship stretched out lifeless. And the sight of his servant's trouble touched Kant to the very heart. “I can do without a God,” he said to himself, “but poor Lampe cannot—so I must make him one.” Accordingly, having slain the Deity in his treatise on Pure Reason, Kant brought him to life again in another treatise on Practical Reason—that is to say, a reason suited to unreasonable people. And poor old Lampe was comforted; and all his race—a numerous one—have been comforted ever since.

Kant's lead in this matter has been followed by many writers since. Mr. Mallock, in his religious books, has only carried the thing to the highest perfection in the present stage of inquiry. In one book he plays the very devil with all the arguments in favor of Theism; knocks them down, tramples upon them, and subjects them to still worse indignities. He laughs at the idea that anybody could ever have regarded them as of the slightest importance. Some of his language, indeed, is so fierce and bitter that it would have been considered rather strong even in the columns of the *Freethinker*. But in another book he seeks to prove that, although religion is intellectually untrue, when tested by science and logic, it is necessary because we cannot get on without it. Morality itself is at stake, and we shall never be able to keep it alive unless we place it under the care of religion. Which is essentially what Kant said when the sobs of Lampe frightened him out of his wits. And this is the last trump card in the theologian's hand—although we venture to say that it will not take the odd trick.

It must be said of Kant, however, that he did not lose his head entirely. After sacrificing “pure” reason to the “practical” reason of Lampe and his like, the great German philosopher tried to remedy the mistake as far as possible by refusing any value to religion except as far as it actually did assist the cause of morality. Hence the emphatic declaration of his which stands at the head of this article.

Now if the only thing that man can do to make himself acceptable to God is to conduct himself as a moral being, and if conducting himself as a moral being means acting with a view to the welfare of his fellow men, it follows that morality is the only part of religion that is worth troubling about, and that

all the creeds, revelations, and churches in the world are unnecessary and harmful, and that all the priests, parsons, and preachers in the world are costly parasites on the social organism. For it is certain that if man only wants to practise “moral conduct” the mystery-men of every denomination are the very last persons who can furnish him with guidance and enlightenment.

This bold declaration of Kant's was echoed by Thomas Paine in his finer and more poetical manner when he said that the world was his country and to do good was his religion. This was a noble utterance, and all the nobler for the hostile conditions in which it fell from the speaker's lips. Such a religion as that would have found few sceptics—outside prisons and lunatic asylums; and were it to prevail it would mean the death of all that the word “religion” has hitherto denoted; for when religion and morality lie down together, one or the other is sure to be inside. In the ages of faith religion swallows morality; in the age of reason morality swallows religion.

All that the theologians can now do, at least in the case of intelligent people, is to pretend that “moral conduct” has a certain transcendental element; in other words, that morality is not altogether a natural product. A battle has long been waging on this ground, and will yet be fought to a finish. Supernaturalism, as usual, trades upon human ignorance. Naturalism, as usual, works within the circle of knowledge. Science has been steadily showing us, with ever increasing precision, that the highest morality can be traced down to the simplest origins. Our grandest virtues may affect to commune with heaven, just as the loveliest rose may seem to be related to the skies rather than to the earth; but in reality the rose is vitally connected, through stem, and bough, and bole, with coarse roots stretched out in darkness beneath the rank soil; and in the same way all the grace and beauty of ethics is vitally connected, through a long process of complicated evolution, with the two primordial instincts of self-preservation and the continuation of the species.

Religion did not make man moral, it found him so. There is no “revelation” which does not presuppose morality as an existing power. How could a “religious” teacher have made any effective appeal to man except as an already moralised being? What would have been the use of telling man that “God is love” if he had not realised for himself that love is the most precious thing in the world. Even before Moses (or whoever it was) told the Jews “Thou shalt not murder” they must have known or felt that it was wrong; otherwise he might have delivered the commandment as effectually to sharks and tigers.

That last sentence touches the pith of the matter. Morality is, after all, nothing but the conditions of social health. Hence it varies—not in essence, but in detail—as the environment varies; for instance, it never could have been right for men to use women cruelly, but in a certain state of society polygamy may be right, while in another state of society it may be absolutely wrong. What is wanted, then, for the origin and growth of morality, is simply the presence of human society; which, in turn, depends upon the facts of sex and offspring; so that Voltaire was justified in saying that the same elements of human society were to be found all over the earth—all that

was requisite being a man to find food, and a woman to suckle a child. It was the child that made the woman a mother, and the mother and child that made the man a father; for motherhood and fatherhood are not physical but moral relationships.

Historically, too, it is clear that religion was at first merely ritual. It had no moral elements whatever; it had no relation to morality; it often stood in the way of morality; for instance, when it ordered the sacrifice of the first-born—a thing that human nature would never have consented to except under the shadow of an awful fear. In the course of time religion set up relations with morality; but that was only because it recognised morality as a thing to be exploited. Religion, indeed, has never been anything else but exploitation. It robs mankind, and then pretends that the fruit of its robbery is a gift from heaven. Religion boasts of being woman's best friend. What has it ever done for her except drawing upon her tenderness and devotion in the interest of churches operated by men?

Every civilised nation is gradually coming to see that religion is a luxury and morality a necessity. And all luxuries tend to be not only expensive, but injurious. Brutalities to natives in Africa, or brutalities to Russian subjects by the Autocracy, go on comfortably enough under the ægis of religion. They could not go on for five minutes under the ægis of morality. The world is growing tired of the blight of superstition—and no religion is anything else. Of course it may be contended that religion in some form is indestructible. Well, it all depends on what you mean. If religion is to continue to exist it will have to

"Suffer a sea change  
Into something rich and strange."

The only possible religion for the future is the Religion of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The God Who Takes No Heed.

AMONG the many ancient Roman religious inscriptions brought to light by the patience and enthusiasm of antiquaries is one that runs, "To the Gods who Take no Heed." At first the inscription, or the intention in the minds of those who raised it, is puzzling. An altar "To Unknown Gods" is understandable. The catholicity, if not the fears, of polytheism had no desire to overlook any probably existing deities: and after erecting altars to all the gods who were known—or, what amounts to the same thing, to all the gods they thought they knew—another altar was erected to any others that might have been overlooked in the work of cataloguing. Gods were then plentiful enough to excuse an error of omission, and altars were cheap enough to invite recognition of a god's existence. And an altar to any gods that may have been overlooked has an air of large-hearted hospitality and tolerance about it that appeals to one's better instincts.

But an altar to "The Gods who Take no Heed"! If there were really gods of the Lucretian variety, who dwelt in unruffled calm, far apart from the affairs of men, why not leave them alone? Perhaps there was a fear that the gods would be offended if their existence was not acknowledged, and they might take heed of man in a more or less unpleasant manner. Or perhaps the altar was erected as an elaborate act of sarcasm. Some may have recognised that when the gods did interfere in human affairs the results were as often as not unpleasant. They may have noted that a large part of man's efforts were directed towards repairing the ills caused by the gods, and that even their benefits involved lengthy and costly acts of recognition. And anyone, whether he lived in Roman times or in our own day, might justifiably conclude that as the happiest nations are those that have no history, so the best gods are those that do nothing. To one who looks at human history from the proper point of view,

"Lord, leave us alone," is a far more intelligent prayer than "Lord, help us."

Times change; the gods to whom this ancient altar were erected are gone and forgotten—if they were ever actually known; but the God who does nothing—if there be one to do anything—is as prominent as ever. If we were all logical in thinking, and honest in expression, "The God Who Takes No Heed" would be the only one who would receive recognition—with the practical result that we should soon cease to recognise the existence of even him. For we are coming to the pass of seeing—even religious people are reaching this conclusion—that natural forces are all we have to reckon with; that if there be a God, he must work through natural forces, and that these are absolutely insensible to human desires or to human welfare. Science declares this in a thousand different ways, and supports it by innumerable proofs. In the cosmic structure man is only a fragment of a whole, a product of forces that create with serene impartiality the organism that lives and the conditions that hurl it to annihilation. To man himself, his well-doing or ill-doing, his pains or his pleasures, are matters of supreme moment; to nature at large they are of no greater value than the fall of a stone down the side of a hill. The indifference of nature to human welfare or to human tests of value is one of the supreme facts of modern science.

Advanced religious believers warn us nowadays that we must not look for any miraculous manifestation of God's care for man. God, they say, works only through natural law, and any alteration of the established order is not to be looked for. Well, I agree as to the futility of expecting any alteration in the natural order of things; but what part does God play in the process? Are we merely to thank him for having created a machine which, once created, can work for ever without his interference? If so, what is this but practical Atheism? The Atheist says, I do not believe in a God, and see no evidence for his existence. Natural forces seem adequate to produce all I see around me, and I am unable to get beyond them. The Theist replies, Yes, I agree that natural forces are adequate to produce all natural phenomena; I agree that an interference in the cosmic order is not to be looked for or expected; still there is a God who is responsible for the existence of the whole cosmic structure. Maybe; but where, in practice, is there any substantial difference in the attitude of the two towards life? Both believe in the supremacy of natural law; neither believe in the actual interference of Deity in natural processes; each, therefore, cancel the operations of Deity so far as the affairs of life are concerned. God cannot interfere without a contravention of natural order, and the Theist tells us that God cannot contravene natural order without departing from his character as deity. Truly he becomes one of "The Gods who Take no Heed."

In using this argument the Theist really commits suicide to escape slaughter. But he does not die without a struggle. God's care for man, we are informed, is shown not by a series of interferences in the natural order, but by the order itself. Destruction and disease are facts, but a more perfect form of life is produced out of the carnage. Hatred is evolved, but so is love, and the latter becomes the more permanent factor in the life of man. All this may be granted, but it confuses rather than clears up the issue. If God's care for man is shown in the removal of obstacles to human development, what is shown by the creation of these obstacles? Is it carelessness or cruelty? All that is shown is that some benefit by the cosmic process, and this no one disputes. A tiger benefits by dining off a sheep, but the injury to the sheep is none the less real. And in the evolutionary process it does not happen that individuals are perfected through suffering. Some suffer and others profit. Myriads of animals are born and die before the assumed perfect form appears. Consider the generations of men that have lived cherishing degrading superstitions, practising

brutal customs, butchering and being butchered, before their descendants began to glimpse a more rational and more humane mode of life. And why should we excuse, because good appears at the end, all the carelessness or cruelty that preceded its appearance? Surely we have a right to demand—if there be a God—that even though progress be slow it should not be paid for by the sufferings of thousands of people, each of whom has a clear claim to the benefits that are vouchsafed to a favored few.

Does God heed and encourage earnest human endeavor? Much is said by sentimental preachers about the power of love in the world, and it is true that, thanks to man's social heredity, love is a stronger bond than hatred, and men will persistently dare more in defence of right than on behalf of wrong. And yet nature—or God, if there be a God behind nature—cares nothing whether we act to establish a right or to perpetrate a wrong; whether we act in hatred or in love. It is the *act* alone that matters. Says Maeterlinck:—

"If I am guilty of a certain excess or imprudence, I incur a certain danger and have to pay a corresponding debt to nature. And as this success or imprudence will generally have had an immoral cause.....we cannot refrain from establishing a connection between this immoral cause and the danger to which we have been exposed, or the debt we had to pay.....And we are content deliberately to ignore the fact that the result would have been the same had the cause of our excess or imprudence been.....heroic or innocent. If on an intensely cold day I throw myself into the water to save a fellow creature from drowning, or if, seeking to drown him, I chance to fall in, the consequences of the chill will be absolutely the same, and nothing on this earth or beneath the sky—save only myself, or man, if he be able—will enhance my suffering because I have committed a crime, or relieve my pain because my action was virtuous."

It is not merely the case of right failing to overcome wrong. That alone were serious enough. What Maeterlinck is emphasising is that the endeavor to do right often leads to disaster; the desire to help others may entail swift punishment. Mentally or physically, we meet with the same truth. Atheists are railed at for not believing in God. But if they are wrong, with whom does the fault lie? Certainly not with them. Had they been less careless in their search for truth they would have remained Theists. Unbelief is usually purchased at a far higher cost, mental or social, than mere belief. Not many Theists have striven so hard to find out what is true as have those who reject all theisms. And if, after all, Atheists are in the wrong, the real fault lies with the God who shows himself so indifferent to human needs as to refrain from showing the truth to those who most earnestly seek it.

To think that God decrees any particular catastrophe is to go against all common sense, says one of our leading preachers. May be; although, if there be a God, the catastrophe must be part of his "mysterious" plan. But if God did not decree it, God does not prevent it. And though we save his credit with the statement one moment, we damn it the next with the undeniable fact. What is the use of the providence of God if it does not protect man from disasters that he has no hand in producing? If man is left to reap the full consequences of his folly or ignorance, what is the use of praying to God for this or that? Or what is the use of a God at all? Believers talk of the hopeless outlook for man if God is dismissed as an outworn theory, and the universe left as the theatre of unconscious forces, with life as a mere iridescent bubble. But far more gloomy and disheartening is the contemplation of a universe which, if it suggests a presiding intelligence, suggests, as Mr. W. H. Mallock puts it, "some blackguardly larrikin kicking his heels in the clouds, not perhaps bent on mischief, but indifferent to the fact that he has caused it."

Many years ago, Carlyle lamented that "God does nothing." It was an overdue discovery. "God" never has done anything. He has not ceased

acting, people are simply ceasing to expect him to act. Stripped of its "haughty Lord," nature is adequate to produce all we see around us. Cleansed of its superstitions and armed with sufficient knowledge, human nature is equally adequate to the task of properly organising and guarding human existence. Ignorance and superstition is at the bottom of nine-tenths of the troubles by which we are surrounded; and the same time and energy spent on these that are now squandered on religion would see a substantial reduction of our difficulties in the course of a single generation. But in the name of God we make mysteries of problems, and despair of their solutions. We create difficulties where none need exist, and ignore those that are only too palpable. Man has looked to his gods to help him when he should have been busy helping himself. One day we shall perhaps recognise that "The God Who Takes No Heed" is a description that fits every variety of Deity, from the Mumbo Jumbo of an African savage to the attenuated abstraction of the advanced Christian.

C. COHEN.

### "The Hope of a Savior."

THE religious newspapers are already full of Christmas and its message. Most of them seem to be under the impression that Christmas is a creation of the Christian religion, and that prior to the advent of Jesus the world "sat in darkness, in the region and shadow of death." Who has not listened, again and again, to lurid descriptions of that awful "darkness," of that grim "region and shadow of death," and to glowing accounts of the great and glorious light that sprang up with the miraculous birth at Bethlehem? The majority of people believe that even to-day heathendom is composed of "the dark places of the earth," which "are full of the habitations of violence." This is not at all surprising when one remembers that eminent theological professors like the Rev. Dr. Orr, of Glasgow, confidently declare that the Bible is distinguishable from all other sacred writings by the alleged fact that it alone is from God. Dr. Orr makes the following three-fold claim on behalf of the Bible:—

"That it embodies a supernatural revelation which the others do not; that it possesses, because of this, a structure and purposefulness which the others lack; that it exhibits spiritual qualities and powers which are traceable only to a direct Divine inspiration."

Such mischievous exclusiveness is extremely difficult to understand, especially when it is accompanied by considerable pretensions to scholarship; but of its active existence there can be no doubt whatever. A pure and undefiled Christian is bound to be exclusive, because he believes himself to be the possessor of the only soul-saving religion in the world. This is an entirely false position; but it has the merit of being logical. If Christians commemorate the birth of the only Savior of the world it inevitably follows that until it believes in him the world is lost.

Professor Orr represents orthodox theology, and he carefully nurses his exclusiveness, but the Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D., champions heterodox views, and is naturally less exclusive. They have both signed the Westminster Confession of Faith; but their points of view are radically different. Dr. Orchard says that "we have long passed the stage when it was imagined that revelation was confined to the Jewish race." If by "we" he means the New Theologians, the statement is doubtless true; but the reverend gentleman cannot plead ignorance of the fact that in his own denomination alone there are thousands of whom the assertion is not true. The general belief is that the only soul-saving revelation of God was communicated to the Jews, from whom it was to be duly conveyed to the rest of mankind; and the fact that, after so long a time, there are still millions who know nothing about it, is said to be due to culpable indifference and neglect on

the part of those who originally received it. It is impossible seriously to believe that a loving Heavenly Father would treat his offspring in that unjust and cruel fashion. But it is equally impossible to think of him as revealing himself more or less to all—more to some and less to others. An infinitely powerful, just, and good God, guilty of such conduct, would be so unfathomably ashamed of himself as to be unable to look at the world, with all its unspeakably dark places and habitations of cruelty.

Dr. Orchard contributes an article to the *Christian Commonwealth* on "The Hope of a Savior in the Ancient World." He says:—

"In natures less consciously religious than the Hebrews we can hardly expect to find that intensity of expectation which, among the Jews, blossomed into the Messianic hope, but there are indications that in other nations also there was not only a longing after God, but that this desire centred continually upon the expectation of some outstanding person who should redeem mankind."

On examining the Messianic hope of the Jews, we learn that the object of it was an ideal king who should deliver the nation from its foreign oppressors and secure for it a golden age of peace and prosperity. The Hebrews cherished this hope so ardently simply because they were so terribly afflicted politically, and so frequently harassed by foreign invaders. Their expectation was that Jehovah would grant them such a deliverer. Now, is there anything to show that other ancient nations harbored any different expectation? Dr. Orchard is not quite sure that some five hundred years before Christ there was "a widespread expectation in the valley of the Ganges that a 'Great Man' was about to appear." Well, we know that about that time a great man did arise and bring most of India to his feet. But Gotama matured a philosophy of life in which there was no place either for God or for immortality. Not long after his death legend put its transforming hand upon him and he reappears as a supernatural personage, endowed with miraculous faculties. Even Plato underwent a similar transformation soon after his decease. Alexander and Augustus went through the same process, and the latter was "glorified as the savior of the whole human race, as one in whom Providence had not only fulfilled but even surpassed the wish of all men." But the blessings which Augustus is said to have showered upon the world were purely temporal, such as peace, harmony, order, "the best hopes for the future and joyful courage for the present."

Dr. Orchard devotes a paragraph to Socrates, but its relevancy is scarcely discernible. It is certain that Socrates did not expect the advent at any period of a savior, for of a savior he felt no need. Man's supreme need was knowledge or wisdom. People did wrong simply because they were ignorant or foolish. Wrong injures its doer, but no one will willingly harm himself. Socrates was the first to make the study of ethics scientific, and to teach clearly that the highest and most valuable moral conduct must be under the guidance of a dæmon, or a supernatural voice within him; but it is quite as incontrovertible that his object was to develop in those whom he catechised a passion for knowledge, which knowledge, once acquired, would serve as an adequate moral guide.

The reverend gentleman now passes on to Horace and Virgil, both of whom refer to a coming man, a new race of people. Horace sang thus:—

"Among the guardian gods what pitying  
To save our sinking state shall Rome implore?  
To whom shall Jove assign to purge away  
The guilty deed?"

This was a perfectly natural cry after the assassination of Julius Cæsar, especially from believers in the gods. It was a highly superstitious age, and most of the people believed in dreams and omens and supernatural interventions. A great man was looked upon as a gift of the gods. Dr. Orchard's conclusion is that the hope of a Savior was entertained by the

people generally in the ancient world; but if he imagines that the Savior hoped for by the Pagans was analogous to the Savior proclaimed from Christian pulpits he is radically mistaken. It is the Savior-Gods and God-men of mythology that belong to the same category as the crucified Christ of Christianity; and it requires more ingenuity than even Dr. Orchard can command to show wherein the latter is one whit more historical or more ethically serviceable than any of the former. It may fairly be doubted whether this minister himself, indeed, believes in Jesus as the God-man of theology. He quotes Seneca as saying: "We ought to choose some good man and always have him before our eyes, that we may live as if he watched us, and do everything as if he saw." Then he immediately adds: "Even John Stuart Mill saw that no one has ever fulfilled this need like Jesus of Nazareth." In this connection it must not be forgotten that John Stuart Mill was not a Christian, and that, while admitting that "some of the precepts of Christ as exhibited in the Gospels, carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before," he declares that "much even of what is supposed to be peculiar to them is equalled in the meditations of Marcus Antoninus, which we have no ground for believing to have been in any way indebted to Christianity." Mill goes further still, and says that the deeds of the God of Nature and the precepts of the God of Grace are often diametrically opposed to one another. "Unfortunately," he adds, "the believer in the Christian revelation is obliged to believe that the same Being is the author of both." Then comes this scathing passage:—

"This, unless he [the Christian] resolutely averts his mind from the subject, or practises the art of quieting his conscience by sophistry, involves him in moral perplexities without end; since the ways of his Deity in Nature are on many occasions totally at variance with the precepts, as he believes, of the same Deity in the Gospel."

Instead of facing this insurmountable difficulty Dr. Orchard flies off at a tangent to talk vaguely about personality being the goal of evolution and the clue to God. As a matter of fact no one can tell what the goal of evolution is, or whether or not it has a goal, and most assuredly personality cannot be the clue to anything beyond and independent of itself. Of course, the ways of the New Theology are past finding out. To Dr. Orchard, unless he has thrown his Confession of Faith to the winds, Jesus is "the Son of God become man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin"; but in this article he calls him "the express image of God in personality." How he made that discovery he does not inform us. We should like to know how he found out exactly what God is like and that Jesus is his "express image"; but he cannot satisfy our curiosity. He is only using words to which it is impossible to attach any definite, intelligible meaning, words about things that exist only in imagination, and which transcend knowledge. He speaks of God as if he were a play-actor poking fun at some invisible audience. What does he mean by saying that Jesus was at once "the end of a Divine impulse at work in the race to express the love of God within the limits of a single personality, and the beginning of another movement vaster still, the impulse which stirs among us, mightier than ever, to express in our personal and social relationships that God whom the Christian religion has dared to conceive as a kingdom rather than a lonely individual"? On his own showing, God is at once supremely impotent and insufferably ridiculous. It took him many thousands, if not millions, of years to express his love within the limits of a single personality, and for the last two thousand years he has been trying hard to get his love expressed in our personal and social relationships, and he has not succeeded yet. He is said to be immanent in all Nature, though Nature is "red in tooth and claw." He is described

as making man in his own image and likeness at the start; and yet he still remains unexpressed in human life. What an intolerable calumny upon our reason, what a vile insult to our finer feelings, theology is, to be sure; and of all theologies the New Theology is the most irrational.

From every point of view the Bethlehem story is utterly absurd. We are at one with Dr. Anderson, of Dundee, in pronouncing it a pure myth. The more we think about it the more unbelievable and impossible it becomes. Socrates sounded a true note when he said that all virtue is resolvable into knowledge, and all vice into ignorance. The possession of knowledge will result in the right cultivation of the emotions; and then men and women will take to a virtuous life as naturally as infants do to their mother's milk.

J. T. LLOYD.

### A Philosopher of Modern Revolt.

"A mighty workman of our later age,  
Who, with a broad highway, has over-bridged  
The forward chaos of futurity." —WORDSWORTH.

THE publication of the magnificent Centenary Edition of Emerson's works and the simultaneous issue of his journals, remind us that Emerson is still an intellectual force. Of all his contemporaries he is to-day the strongest, the most influential, the most read. The latest voices in philosophy, like Nietzsche and Max Stirner, simply repeat, in varied and more hectic language, the golden message of Emerson, and send us all back with renewed interest to the Master's own writings.

It is natural to feel curious concerning the evolution of a great literary force that is really original. To watch Shelley as he grows from "Queen Mab" to "Adonais," or to trace Shakespeare's genius from "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" to "The Tempest," from his early plays to the masterpieces of the world's literature, form the best introduction to a re-reading of the works of these authors. Nor is such curiosity wasteful in the case of America's wisest son, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

This great Freethinker first saw the light in a parsonage. He had clericalism in his blood. His father and grandfather were clergymen. He at first followed in the footsteps of his ancestors and was ordained as a Unitarian minister. His early preaching was rather ethical than devotional. Emerson did not care for the threshing of old straw. There is already a suspicion of chafing under the harness. The bent is towards Secularism. The prime duty, he thought, was to be truthful and honest, and he revolted at the "official goodness" of the ministerial office. Later, his intellect begins to rebel at the rite of the Communion. His elder brother, William, was even more strongly rationalistic and declined altogether to take "holy orders."

As early as 1831, Emerson opened his church to Anti-slavery agitators. In 1833, a pleasant interval of travel broke the monotony of his duties and he made the acquaintance of Thomas Carlyle at Craignputtock. That visit to Carlyle was the germ of a great friendship notable in the history of literature. Emerson's first book saw the light in 1834. It was, characteristically, a slender volume on "Nature." It revealed the fact that he found the Unitarian fetters not the less real for being simple and few. From the publication of this book Emerson became known as a writer of intellectual eminence.

Sorrow had its share in moulding the philosopher, for Emerson lost his young wife after less than three years of wedded happiness. Thus early he had begun to feel the sobering effects of life. Later, there came to the front that notable project of Brook Farm, of which Nathaniel Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller were adherents. Its ultimate failure left a sore place in Emerson's heart. Time's winnowing fan separated the chaff from the wheat, and Emerson, in the process of time, became the

calm, meditative philosopher. He unlocks his heart in his poetry when he sings "And, chiefest prize, found I true liberty."

Despite his apparent austerity and aloofness there is no intellectual chill or distrust of his emotions. There was a fulness of affection behind the pen which wrote "Threnody" for his dead boy, and the plaintive lines in the Carlyle correspondence on his brother Charles. The damnable cruelty of the Fugitive Slave Law caused him to break out into vehement, scorching protest, much as the execution of Jean Calas caused Voltaire's swift, live pen to indict the Great Lying Church before the eyes of astonished Europe. And, like Voltaire, he had the sure, keen vision which allowed him to perceive that murder, under the guise of "law and order," is none the less murder, and is unpardonable. Emerson hailed John Brown as the hero whose martyrdom made the gallows glorious.

Emerson's second visit to England resulted in his finest volume, *Representative Men*, a book which contains the refined gold of the Emersonian philosophy. In *English Traits* he has many biting and searching things to say. He mistrusts mitres, indeed, as he smiles critically over his glass at my Lord Bishop's table. He was, indeed, critical of the follies of the mother country, but he took pride in her virtues. Emerson wrote little after the close of the American Civil War. In his old age he struck Carlyle as "confidently cheerful." A brave optimism kept by him when the shadows were darkest. A fragment of granite marks his grave, a fitting symbol of the nobility of character of the Plato of America.

In Emerson we have a notable contradiction to the adage which excepts the prophet from honor in his own country. He became a classic in his lifetime, and the passage of the years has only more assured his place among the really great writers. Certainly, no one stimulates thought like Emerson. His books are a discipline in self-knowledge, self-reliance, and self-fulfilment. They are a perpetual antidote to the poison of custom and tradition. No less cautious a critic than Matthew Arnold has pointed out that Emerson's works are the most valuable contribution to English literature of the nineteenth century, and he has not hesitated to assign to Emerson a niche in the Temple of Fame beside the imperial philosopher, Marcus Aurelius.

MIMNERMUS.

### The Trek for Infinity.

OF all those who sway the public mind, be they authors, scientists, teachers, or politicians, we expect at all events a semblance of consistency. The State for which all work demands this at least of them—that, holding and expounding definite principles and ideas, they shall be prepared to defend them against hostile criticism, and not abandon them to seek others at the first blast of opposition. Only the preachers are, as ever, exempt. They take delight, apparently, in discarding all traces of consistency. In the religious atmosphere lurks some microbe fatal to consistency as to many other qualities elsewhere esteemed. Attack one set of doctrines, and the preachers are heard in a distant quarter sweetly warbling the joys latent in dogma utterly different.

And now once more the old ruse is about to be performed. Some time ago Mr. J. G. Fletcher issued a warning to be ready for a new movement in the Church, and already through the religious world are heard the rumblings of the wagons rolling up for the latest religious trek. Defeated and discredited over the old beliefs, behold the brethren swiftly weaving the banner of the new advance and whetting such arms as are not over-antiquated for the brunt of modern warfare; but the new advance is in a new direction. This time, however, the fight must be to a finish; for there is no longer any place where they may flee vanquished, and very wisely the hostile

forces have delayed fleet pursuing in order thoroughly to demolish the strongholds of the ancient creed.

The deserted creed we know well, but what is the nature of its successor—this to accept and defend which the hosts of priestism are known to be moving? In the first place, it has shed a lot of the equipment possessed by the former. It has no Old Testament lumber to hamper it; it has no blood-thirsty Jehovah, no lurking Devil, no gaping hell, at which the infidel who prefers man to God can hurl defiance; no biscuit-box heaven he may relegate to the nursery. Even Christ seems to be looked on askance by the exclusive, and the Holy Ghost will have to establish his position. God is left in solitary splendor, but it is a fresh God—not Mumbo-Jumbo repainted for the season, but a God of new substance, or rather of no substance at all. The new object of adoration is impressively called the Infinite. Jehovah lost body, parts, passions, nationality, and individuality; here is the result: a God with neither.

It is an old enemy, of course. It is the being that the weak-kneed among infidels wish to propitiate when they call themselves Agnostics. Ingersoll said he would not deny that such a creature might exist somewhere in the shoreless sea of infinity, though he refused to believe that it could be affected by the antics of man. Bereft of Christ, sundered from the Holy Ghost, with no revealing Book, no heaven and no hell, it fills all space and time, ruling everything with infinite wisdom for an infinite purpose. Such, it seems to-day, is to be the future fetish of those who cannot live the lives of men without empty prayers and ignoble prostrations. They find it absolutely beyond criticism; and if you can once imagine this impalpable monstrosity as taking any interest in your actions, down you must flop.

Many of those sufficiently enlightened to discard the orthodox beliefs have already flopped, and we have need to fear lest many more follow their example, for the system is specious, and bold is he who would attack Infinity. "The finite mind cannot comprehend the Infinite," is the claptrap of those who yet, from their creed, claim to possess that comprehension. But certain absurdities result from the application of the philosophy of the Infinite to the poor tests of the finite mind, such as, once adduced, should make the thinking once more refuse obeisance.

As aforetime the religious proclaimed God a spirit, and persistently gave him human attributes, so to-day they speak of the Infinite when they really imagine something severely finite. When they speak of the Infinite having no limit in space they really imagine something which fills all space not already occupied by matter. But an Infinity does not envelop solid bodies as air does; it is not limited by matter, since an Infinity cannot be limited. That solid body must actually be made up of that Infinity, for every molecule in it which is not that Infinity limits it. Thus, by the new philosophy, a man must be part of God, although he has neither "divine" knowledge, power, nor immortality, and spends his time in breaking "divine" laws. And man, though God, can deny God's existence; and another man can affirm it, and lo! the two amaze the skies by quarrelling over the existence of that which composes them. And on the same reasoning, a man is God, a stone is God, the air is God; so that God can sit on God and inhale God. It is utterly wild, yet, on the Infinity hypothesis, the inevitable result; and God must be unlimited or the Churches find he won't work. An Infinity in space is the product of men at a loss for means to befog their own brains and delude the intellects of others.

It is also claimed that the Infinite fills all time and works out an infinite purpose. Purpose is the desired end of scheming and action: what an endless purpose is, it would puzzle an archbishop to say. Yet Infinity has one of these freaks, and all pain and sorrow in the world are necessary, in Infinity's wisdom, for the attainment of this purpose which never gets anywhere. But if Infinity is unlimited

in time, he dwells in the future as well as in the present, and fills all time. Thus, possessing omniscience and living in past, present, and future all at once, he wades through blood and tears to a tremendous purpose. Since, however, he exists in the future, he exists at the time when his purpose will be attained; far back when the world began he lived in this future, and, before the world started, had the satisfaction of attained purpose. The head swims with the thought of the world's agony being intended to secure a purpose achieved before the world began.

No one who gives a moment's consideration to the matter can fail to observe the ludicrous and impossible results reached by thinking logically straight from the hypothesis of the existence of a being infinite in space and time. Some have been exposed above and others will readily arise to the mind of any reader. And the conclusion which is attained is that such a being cannot exist—not even that he may exist aloof from human affairs, unconcerned and unaffected by them, but that his existence is a sheer impossibility.

We have, indeed, yet to hear any clerical exposition of the doctrine that the Deity existed before the world was formed, while it was in full swing and when its stress was over, all at once, or that the blotting-pad and ourselves have equal title to divinity. Yet men are setting up for their adoration something whose very name, given its full meaning, contains and implies these absurdities, just as the believer in the utter reality of Joshua's Ajalon performance implies his faith in the motion of the sun around the earth. And let none say we are flogging a horse as yet non-existent. The Churches are striving to identify Jehovah, at last become a deity of whom, as they long depicted him, they are now ashamed, with this Infinite Being; those who do not venture to Atheism but reject all priestly creeds are bending to him; such modern literature as clings to dream and mysticism is full of the vision, and physical science is as yet unable definitely to crush the newest theological edifice with the hammer of fact.

Freethought is now beyond defeat, but its progress may be retarded though never arrested. The danger of this is great, and warning sounds wherever liberated minds watch the tactics of the goaded Churches. The aim of this article has been to re-echo this warning and to indicate the manner in which reason may meet the peril so as to save many who would otherwise follow the priests to be confined in the old shackles in the name of an altered God. There is no defeat so crushing as that which overtakes a force cut off from retreat and still far from fresh encampment; and it is the duty of Freethinkers thus to entrap the Churches by vigorous assault on their new doctrine even as they migrate towards it.

MARCUS.

#### IF I WERE GOD!

If I were a God like you, and you were a man like me,  
And in the dark you prayed and wept and I could hear  
and see,  
The sorrow of your broken heart would darken all my  
day,  
And never peace or pride were mine till it was smiled  
away,—  
I'd clear my heaven above your head till all was bright  
and blue,  
If you were a man like me, and I were a God like you!

If I were a God like you, and you were a man like me,  
Small need for those my might had made to bend the  
suppliant knee,  
I'd light no lamp in yonder heaven to fade and disappear,  
I'd break no promise to the soul, yet keep it to the ear!  
High as my heart I'd lift my child till all his dreams came  
true,  
If you were a man like me, and I were a God like you!

—Robert Buchanan

## Acid Drops.

The American Bible Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Canadian auxiliary of the latter, are going to celebrate in 1911 the tercentenary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible. Three hundred years ago the Bible was entirely a book of religion; now it is very largely a book of literature. What will it be three hundred years hence? Perhaps forgotten—except by scholars and students.

While the Royal Commission was preparing the Authorised Version it happened that Shakespeare was writing his great tragedies. When will *they* be forgotten? Everybody knows the answer to that question. Shakespeare's greatness doesn't depend on organisations, propagandist resources, and pauper editions of his works. He is "not for an age, but for all time," as Ben Jonson foresaw. He has but to be printed, and he does all the rest for himself.

More "Providence." A caravan of barges and tugs were driven by the storm from the river bank at Astrakhan and carried down the Volga to the open sea, where most of them were stove in by ice-floes. Men clung to them until they perished from the frightful cold. Heroic efforts were made by two ice-breakers and three other steamers to save 1,000 workmen. Two thirds of the number were rescued; the other third were all lost. Human effort was not aided by "the one above." Report says that the whole Astrakhan coast and province have been devastated. The fishing industry is ruined; depôts, boats, and nets being nearly all destroyed. Yet the Holy Scripture saith that "He doeth all things well" and "His tender mercies are over all his works."

Further "Providence." Dr. Ferdinand O. Zesch, of the German Presbyterian Church, in the pulpit at Jamaica, L.I., on Sunday, November 13, was stricken to death in the middle of a spirited sentence. The cause was heart trouble. Had he been a Freethinker, delivering a Freethought lecture, it would have been a divine judgment.

On the same day, at Port Huron, Michigan, Mrs. Mary Leibzelt, standing by the coffin of her dead daughter, Alma, cried: "Oh, God, oh, merciful Savior, please take me away with my angel daughter." An hour later she was dead. The doctors said it was apoplexy. But good Christian people know better. It was an answer to prayer.

We hope the readers, and especially some of the contributors, of the *New Age* will profit by the lesson they received from Mr. R. B. Kerr in the correspondence columns of that journal last week. "Those who sneer at Freethinkers," he said, "know little of history. If the whole program of Socialism were completely realised, it is doubtful if even then the Socialists would have done as much to diminish human misery as the Freethinkers have done already." After referring to the fear of the gods and the fear of hell, from which Freethought has slowly, but surely, been relieving mankind, Mr. Kerr said:—

"Such are the terrors from which the Freethinkers are very gradually delivering the world. The task is not an easy one. Socialists and Suffragettes are mere dilettanti compared with the men who first struck a blow at the fear of the gods and of death. From about 1200 to 1800 the burning of infidels and heretics was one of the chief amusements of Europe, and sometimes the amusement was varied by tearing out a child's tongue or breaking an old man on the wheel. During the past century there has been a slight improvement, for such giants as Voltaire and Paine have managed to produce some effect at last. Protestantism is getting pretty well smashed; so is Roman Catholicism in the Latin countries. But I advise the people of England, Germany, and the United States to keep an eye on Rome. Do not laugh. Horace and Ovid would have laughed heartily if they had been told that in four hundred years every educated man in Europe would believe in infant damnation."

We agree with this, of course; we have, indeed, been saying it for ever so many years. It was this dread of the recrudescence of superstition that made Diderot, at one moment, savagely long to see the last king strangled in the entrails of the last priest.

The man who believes that the oath is a guarantee of veracity should attend police and assize courts for a few weeks. He would soon find the truth of the saying—The more swearing the more perjury. Mr. Robert Wallace, K.C., chairman of the London Sessions, lately told a prisoner who had lied like anything in the witness-box: "That will do. I must repeat what I said before on the subject of perjury. I wish the Director of Public Prosecutions would see that

the right of prisoners to give evidence on their own behalf—a right so valuable itself—is not destroyed through men who perjure themselves. Some seem to think they have a right to go into the witness-box and swear to what is not true. It is done daily in the courts." Of course it is. And twenty Public Prosecutors would not stop it. The destruction of Christianity is the only remedy. Religion does not diminish liars. It breeds them.

The Duchess of Marlborough, the Earl of Meath, and Lady Jane Taylor, have been talking to a fashionable gathering in London about the ninety-four Atheist Sunday-schools which, they allege, exist in London. We hope their allegation is true, though we rather doubt it; and, if it be true, we can quite understand the anxiety of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen. The Earl of Meath is more than anxious. He seems to be in a state of intense alarm. He foresees the growth of Atheism so acutely that he fears a coming period of "Christian persecution, and even of Christian torture." Christians have been so guilty of persecuting others that their guilty consciences anticipate similar treatment for themselves when they are in the minority. But they need not be so apprehensive. Atheists are not going to imitate the Christians' bad example. Christians, under Atheism, would have all the rights they ought to have. They would enjoy, as they do now in France, precisely the same liberty as other people; no less—and no more. But that "no more" is always the trouble with these Christians. They have ruled the roost so long that they feel themselves bitterly persecuted when they are prevented from oppressing other people.

"Two or three days ago," Mr. W. P. Ball writes us, "a very religious friend of mine told some of us of a recent instance of prayer being answered. A lad wanted to go out to Canada. His father told him to put the matter before the Lord, and in one way or another the Lord would answer his prayer. The lad prayed accordingly, but nothing seemed to come of it until one day he was run over by a motor and taken to the hospital with both legs broken. He has accepted £70 as compensation for his injuries, and the Lord having thus provided the money for his passage he will start for Canada as soon as he is well, which the doctors tell him will be in a few weeks' time. My informant says that when he told his wife of this case, she asked him why the Lord couldn't provide the money without breaking the lad's limbs. He confessed he was unable to answer her question."

That question *could* be answered. If the lad's limbs hadn't been broken we shouldn't have known it was the Lord who sent the money. See?

The following is from the *Daily Telegraph*:—

"Some additional controversial bitterness has been imported into the electoral contests in Ulster by an incident arising out of a mixed marriage. A Roman Catholic married a Presbyterian girl in her own church. There were two children of the union, and they were duly baptised into the mother's faith. Apparently the couple lived very amicably till the late awakening of the husband's religious scruples. Recently he pressed his wife to have their children rebaptised into the Catholic Church, and herself to become a member. To neither proposal would she give any assent. Finally the father removed the children without the mother's knowledge, and then he deserted his home. The mother cannot trace the children, and she has appealed in her distress to the Lord-Lieutenant to aid in their discovery and restoration to her. The Roman Catholic Church, it is well known, refuses to recognise the marriage of any of her members unless solemnised according to her own rites, and the wife in this case declined, after some years' wedded life, to go through a ceremony which, she thought, would imply an imputation on her honor."

Yet the *D. T.* (please, Mr. Printer, don't put this in the plural) still thinks religion is a grand thing.

The *Catholic Times* cannot be congratulated upon the dignity and elegance of its language whenever it refers to the men at the head of the Portuguese Republic. It seems to take delight in calling them "petty dictators," "these little tyrants," "degenerates," and in charging them with being "filled with a Satanic hatred of the Catholic Church," and with being "nothing if not thorough in their persecuting policy." It appears to us, on the contrary, that the treatment of priests and nuns by the Republic has, on the whole, been marked by great consideration and kindness, and that, throughout, a commendably tolerant policy has been and is being pursued by the authorities.

In its extreme dread of persecution, the *Catholic Times* conveniently ignores the fact that it is the organ of a

Church which, as Lecky says, "has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind." It forgets also with what disastrous cruelty Catholic Spain expelled a hundred and sixty thousand Jews and a million of Moors simply because they refused to turn Christians. It omits all reference to the oppressive measures resorted to against all non-Catholics and non-Christians in Portugal down to the dramatic fall of the monarchy. Some little time ago, a Republican Deputy, Senhor Alexandre Braga, was arrested and imprisoned for not removing his hat on passing a religious procession. In every possible manner the liberties and comforts of Freethinkers were restricted. And now the great persecuting Church complains of being itself persecuted when the Portuguese are only asserting their rights.

To the Hindus the cow is sacred. The Mohammedans at Calcutta proposed to sacrifice a cow at the Bakrid festival. Consequently there was trouble. Riots and free fights ensued between the rival religionists. Shops were looted, several enthusiasts killed, and many injured. Finally the soldiers had to be called out to keep the pious factions from destroying each other. Such are the blessings of religion!

Insurrection has broken out again in the Yemen and in Syria. The Arabs have captured Kerak and massacred the garrison. They have also indulged in the luxury of killing more than a hundred Christians. Judging by what usually happens in that part of the world, the Christians would be very happy to return the compliment.

William Edwards, twenty-seven years of age, employed at Woolwich Arsenal, a good Christian and chapel worker, desiring a house of his own, and not having the patience to wait for the mansion that Christ was preparing him, took to stealing bicycles, altering them beyond identification, and selling them for £2 10s. and £3 3s. each. He did an extensive business in this way, but he came to grief at last. Had he been a Freethinker (pardon the wild supposition!) he would have had a heavy sentence. Fortunately for him, he was a sound religionist. Testimony was given by the minister of Queen-street Baptist Chapel, Woolwich, that Edwards had attended services regularly for many years, and taken an active part in the chapel and Sunday-school work. He was also connected with the Band of Hope. It would never do to treat a man like that as a vulgar criminal, so he was simply bound over, though he was told that he must steal no more bicycles, which we dare say he finds a very hard condition.

In the Roman-road, Bow, East London, there is an unregistered slate club known as the "Help One Another Society." The secretary, however, seems to have helped others less than himself. He and £1,000 could not be found when the sharing-time came round. The Society seems to have derived no advantage from carrying on business, and holding meetings, at the Primitive Methodist Church schools in Driffield-road, Old Ford.

The Bishop of Nottingham has publicly declared the Rev. T. Philips, late vicar of Misterton, recently sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment, to be incapable of holding office in the Church. Fancy having to declare *that!*

Priests live on bogies. The priest is the real bogie-man. No wonder he is always frightening people for his own purposes. He has been fairly busy in the recent elections. Here is a pretty specimen of "bogeyism" from the pen of the Rector of Alcester and Ovsorsley, occurring in his Parish Magazine:—

"It is a great crisis, because, if the Veto Bill is passed, such matters as (1) the provision now made for religious ministrations in every parish through an Established Church, also (2) the religious teaching of our children in the schools, and (3) the binding character of the marriage tie might be swept away and lost for ever, and you may be led to think that these are merely unimportant matters, compared to the struggle of political parties for office. It is possible that these three great things may be at the mercy of any small majority of any political party."

Note the cool way in which this priest assumes that marriage was invented and patented by his Church or his Religion. It existed before Christianity was known, and it will exist when Christianity is forgotten. We fancy the Rector must be trying to frighten the ladies of his parish with *this* bogie.

The *Journal de Charleroi*, referring to our recent articles on the Blasphemy Laws, and our questions to candidates, says that "there are such singular Liberals in England that one cannot depend on their answering those questions pro-

perly." And it adds, rather significantly, that it would like to see the opinion of Mr. Keir Hardie on this matter.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who won Cockermouth for the Liberals, replied "Yes" to our first question for candidates *re* the Blasphemy Laws: "Are you in favor of equal rights and liberties for all forms of belief in matters of religion?" But he stultified himself by answering "No" to the question whether he was prepared to vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, which are aimed exclusively at Freethinkers. "Though they may not be fair in principle," he said, "I believe they are usually worked reasonably and with latitude." How on earth an unfair law can be worked reasonably passes our comprehension. It is with such jargon that politicians evade issues which do not lie in the direct path of their immediate interests. And as to working a law "with latitude," is it not shameful to put forward such an excuse? The late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge well said that the worst application of any law was a discriminating application. To catch some offenders in the net of law, and let others escape, only makes a bad law worse. Sir Wilfrid Lawson is another Liberal who wants educating in these matters.

Mr. Stephen Walsh, Labor candidate for the Ince Division of Lancashire, being asked our "Blasphemy" questions, replied "Yes" to the first. With regard to the second, he replied that he had no objection to Freethinkers disseminating their opinions "if they did so with decency." The questioner drew his attention to the fact that there are laws against indecent language apart from the Blasphemy Laws. The meeting tried to shout the questioner down (bless them!) but Mr. Walsh was honest enough to say that, in those circumstances, he was prepared to vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Groves Lord, the Conservative candidate, said "Yes" to the first question. But he didn't mean it. For, on being asked why he replied "No" to the second question, he replied: "It will not do in a Christian country to allow free criticism of Christ and his teachings, thereby bringing them into contempt, because it might lead to disorder and riot." Note the gentleman's view that free criticism of his religion is bound to bring it into contempt.

Mr. Tom Wing, ex-M.P. for Grimsby, won the seat last January by prayer. He said so himself. His wife said so too. Apparently his prayers have deteriorated during the past eleven months,—for he lost the seat on Saturday, December 3. Or was the Deity that this gentleman prays to suffering from deafness during the recent election at Grimsby? One would like to know.

Mrs. Annie Forwood, a lady of independent means, being charged with riotous behavior in the parish Church of Hythe, was found guilty and bound over in £50 to be of good behavior for twelve months. It appears that she took roast chestnuts to church in a paper bag, and bit them in pieces, and threw them in all directions. The parson asked her to leave the church, and she told him to leave the church himself. The lady seems to have been warmed up with the wrong sort of spirit, but she "was sober enough to understand what she was praying for." Which is a very felicitous observation.

A Christian debtor, in the Morpeth County Court, said to his Hebrew creditor, "It would be a good job if all you Jews were shot." This caused great laughter amongst the other Christians in court. Judge Greenwell, however, rebuked them severely. "If all the Christians in Northumberland," he said, "were as good as some of the Jews it would be a good deal better for the community." Quite so. The idea that Christians could give Jews a good start in a moral handicap is one of the many delusions into which the vanity of the "Nazarenes" is always leading them. When a Christian is most angry with "Shoenies" you will probably find that he has been after a bargain and found a Jew in front of him.

Rev. Canon Charles Michael Turner, of Southampton, formerly rector of Aldford, Cheshire, left £11,547. For of such is the kingdom of heaven. Yet it looks odd in face of the Sermon on the Mount.

A leper who had been a long time in the London Hospital has been transferred to the Whitechapel Infirmary and thence to the West London Hospital. It has been found impossible to do anything to relieve him. Leprosy is a most intractable disease. Jehovah, according to the Old Testament, occupied himself a good deal with it, but all in vain. He gave Moses all sorts of wrinkles for discovering whether a man had leprosy or not, but never gave him the slightest hint how to cure it.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Queen's Hall, London; 10, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner.  
February 5, Glasgow; 12, Manchester; 26, Birmingham.  
March 5, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 18, Abertillery.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 18, West Ham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1910.—Previously acknowledged: £280 1s. 1d. Received since:—Sydney Smith, 4s. 6d.; Dr. E. B. Foote (New York), £5; T. Stringer, 1s. 6d.; W. A. Yates, 3s.; J. Burns, 10s.

W. G. (Sheffield).—(1) Are the names and addresses you send us those of persons likely to be attracted by the *Freethinker*? Of course we don't want ordinary names and addresses. (2) There is no official burial service for Freethinkers, but the N. S. S. secretary supplies one written by Austin Holyoake, Mrs. Besant, and another. (3) We don't understand the question "What are Freethought lecturers to Ethical Societies?" (4) We are not concerned here with your "amalgamation" question, except to say that where amalgamations are not vital, but mechanical, they would probably do more harm than good. Even the army of progress will always have several divisions. (5) You will find in our *Infidel Death-Beds* ample refutation of the orthodox lies about Voltaire's last hours.

W. McKELVIE.—Glad to hear Mr. Cohen had a good audience on Sunday evening at Liverpool.

W. SHAWCROSS.—Much obliged. The Wells extract is comparatively new, but the other books referred to are nearly ancient now. Campbell's *New Theology Sermons* has been dealt with already. What you say of him is fairly true. Mr. Booker Washington's joke about the nigger preacher and the Red Sea appeared in the *Freethinker* a long while ago, perhaps twenty-five years. We believe our old jokes are dug out for present-day use, even in the most "respectable" papers.

THOMAS DIXON.—Thanks. But the gentleman isn't worth another criticism. That he should win Gateshead by a majority of 3,155 shows how much Liberals have to learn outside the limits of party politics.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

H. T. HILL.—We quite agree with you that an Index to the *Freethinker* would be an excellent thing for those who bind up the volumes. But it would be too costly for us to undertake. A really good Index would involve a lot of careful labor.

T. J. PETTIT, sending us names and addresses for six weeks' free copies of the *Freethinker*, says he has gained us two new subscribers by laying the paper on the I. L. P. reading rooms at Alfreton. "I have taken the *Freethinker*," he adds, "for over twenty years, and I think each issue improves."

T. P. WHITE.—Too late for this week. Next.

G. BRITTAN.—Sorry to hear that Mr. James Branch, the defeated Liberal candidate for Enfield, was in favor of Secular Education *plus* the Bible. It is like being in favor of pure water *plus* old whisky. Mr. Branch couldn't have been more than defeated if he had been sensible and straight on this question.

R. BARTLETT.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Lloyd had two successful meetings at Tonyandy, considering the weather and other disadvantages, and there was plenty of questions and discussion.

W. A. YATES.—It is a good story, but we have no right to reprint it. Thanks, all the same.

G. SMITH.—There is no "Irish State Church" now. You couldn't expect to make much headway with the Tory candidate. Mr. Branch's letter on the Blasphemy Laws questions was satisfactory.

A. DAVENPORT.—Glad to hear from a devoted reader who met with this journal three years ago "quite accidentally."

E. PARKER.—Mr. Will Thorne's answer to the two "Blasphemy" questions was admirable. Pleased to hear he gave it while a lot of ministers were sitting on the platform. That makes it all the more valuable.

A. W. HUTTY.—It was a matter of course that Mr. J. M. Robertson's answers would be all right; but you did well in putting the questions,—they help to educate the public.

W. P. PEARSON.—Both unsatisfactory, as you say; and the Liberal candidate's reply (Birkenhead) is no better than the Conservative's. Thanks.

JOSEPH BOSTON.—Well done.

T. MATHER.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

P. SAWYER considers the *Freethinker* "the grandest and best paper on the market" and "would not miss it for anything." We thank him for heckling his local candidates on the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Will Crooks answered both questions with a straight "Yes." His Conservative opponent was less satisfactory.

SYDNEY SMITH.—We know the Isle of Man is "a very religious place." Perhaps you are not aware, though, that we held a Sunday afternoon meeting on Douglas Head many years ago, in spite of the warnings and prohibitions of the Town Council and the threats of violence by irresponsible Christian ruffians. We knew the law better than the Town Council's legal advisers,

we outwitted the Christian ruffians, and we lectured to a big and appreciative audience. Of course it was in "the season." Thanks for getting us a new subscriber who "looks anxiously for Thursday." We wish every reader would make up his (or her) mind to do the same.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

HARRY SHAW.—Will see by next week.

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.

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.

London "saints" will remember that the new course of Sunday Evening Freethought Lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall opens on January 1, with Mr. Foote occupying the platform during January. Also that the Annual Dinner takes place on Tuesday, January 10, at the Holborn Restaurant.

Members of the Secular Society, Ltd., who, in consequence of removal or other causes, do not receive the official notice of the Annual Meeting, are hereby informed that it takes place at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C., on Thursday evening, December 29, at 8 o'clock.

The Sunday Freethought lectures at King's Hall, Birmingham, carried on by the N. S. S. Branch, have done good, and it is intended to continue them in the new year. Financial help has been rendered by the Secular Society, Ltd., but the local "saints" are invited to give some assistance too. Subscriptions should be sent to the secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road.

Mr. Percy Alden, who kept his seat at Tottenham with a greatly increased majority, was plainly in favor of Secular Education and the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. Timid Liberal candidates might take a leaf out of Mr. Alden's book. Courage never hurts a man with the people.

The Malthusian League has started a James White Defence Fund, and subscriptions, which are urgently required, should be sent to the treasurer, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, New Cross, London, S.E. Mr. White is being prosecuted for selling Mr. J. R. Holmes's *True Morality*—a plain-spoken but perfectly reputable pamphlet on the Population question. He has sold the pamphlet quite openly for many years, and is only now interfered with, probably at the instance of a pious and fussy constable. The question at issue is not the truth of Malthusianism but the right of free publication. Friends of freedom will please bear this in mind and act accordingly. We hope the Defence Fund will be well supported. Our own mite is being forwarded to the Treasurer.

We drew attention lately to some sentimental nonsense in the *Contemporary Review* about the death of Björnson, making out that he was really a Christian, and (the usual lie of these people!) that religious light broke in upon his mind as he was dying. All that nonsense is happily now contradicted by the great Freethinker's son, Björn Björnson, whose article on "Björnson's Last Days" appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* of Thursday, December 8, the seventy-eighth anniversary of the poet's birth. It is a beautiful article, well worth reading and preserving. We venture to quote a strong, decisive passage:—

"He spoke on religious subjects, but not in the spirit of a convert—no, he was often in an aggressive mood: 'They believe in dogmas and think that is faith.....All the hypocrisy these parsons feed us with.' It seemed as if he was answering somebody. 'Ah, no, no; it is not religion; not the sword or the sceptre, which is going to help us; it is love alone.' He stroked his forehead with his hand. 'I have read in a Swedish book that all religions ought to unite and merge themselves into one great, common faith. That is what I long for.'"

On one occasion he, who suffered so much before the very end, said: "It is not death which is so hard; it is the long road of suffering which most of us must travel before we reach the dark abyss." Which reminds one of Bacon's: "I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death."

## Predestination and Freewill.

CHRISTIANITY is the doctrine of contradictions. Were it not so, Christians could not be believers in both Predestination and Freewill. Of course, in a certain sense, all men are Fatalists. No one will affirm that he has any knowledge of a previous existence, or that he has any recollection of his birth; he must admit that he is in nowise responsible for his being, and, indeed, the knowledge that he was actually alive only dawned upon him by imperceptible degrees. It goes without saying, therefore, that the country in which a man is born, the social status of his parents, his physical and mental endowments, and all the circumstances of his environment, are due to some unknown power or force, the idea of which can only be expressed by some such word as Fate. The belief in this power or force is known as Fatalism. And this belief is the most genuine product of the human mind; because it is the outcome of no artificial creed or dogma, but is the result of a natural and intuitive mental process. And throughout life every man discovers for himself that he is not his own master, not the architect of his own fortune, but that he is the creature of circumstances over which he has little or no control. This Fatalism is commonly known by the name of Luck; and so potent is this power or force that the belief in it has been embalmed in the aphorism that "it is better to be born lucky than rich." Such phrases as "What a slice of luck that was!" "What a lucky fellow he is; everything he touches turns to gold!" are trite expressions too common not to be thoroughly understood and appreciated.

There is, however, a fatalistic belief which goes beyond this. It is the belief that this power or force is, and always has been, controlled and exercised by a Supreme Personal Being, who, before this world was formed, knew and determined what should be the life of every creature inhabiting it. This is Predestination, or Fatalism pure and simple—such Fatalism as is believed in by the followers of Mohammed, and, I presume, by all those who call themselves Deists. Said Mohammed, when he was dying, at Medina: "Everything happens according to the will of God, and has its appointed time, which can neither be hastened nor avoided."

This is the doctrine of the Bible, but is not the doctrine of Christianity; for, strange to say, Christians believe, or pretend to believe, both in Predestination and Freewill—that the omniscient Creator, so far as future events respecting individuals are concerned, can be controlled by the will of the creature. In other words, they believe, or profess to believe, in the incomprehensible—in the impossible—that water and oil will mix readily and permanently; that two cubes of exactly the same dimensions can occupy the same spot in space at the same moment. This Christian dogma is repugnant to reason and common sense. It is a pure absurdity, for which there is no foundation, scriptural or otherwise. It is not the teaching of the Old Testament—the "scriptures" to which Christ referred; and it is not the teaching of Christ. Is it not? Well, let us "search the scriptures," and see if it be so or not.

The question resolves itself simply into this—Is man a free agent? If this question be answered in the affirmative, it necessitates the reconciling of the irreconcilable; if in the affirmative, it swallows up, like Aaron's rod, all other questions which concern, or relate to, man's eternal welfare. If man be free to do and act as he likes, how can God be omnipotent and omniscient? As God, according to the Bible, created all things, and knows everything—in the future as well as in the past—how is it possible for man to be a free agent? Can these contradictions be reconciled? Are they a paradox—that is, something that is really true, though apparently false—or are they such absolute contradictions as to be utterly irreconcilable?

The Bible declares that man is simply "a reed shaken with the wind" (Matt. xi. 7), "mere clay in

the hands of the potter" (Is. lxiv. 8); whilst God, to use the words of Bishop Beveridge, is "the being of all beings; and so the creator, preserver, governor, and disposer of all things in the world." As, therefore, God created everything, and is the possessor of absolute knowledge, it follows surely that nothing can take place or occur, except as God himself hath foreknown, and therefore preordained shall occur. God's foreknowledge is, and must be, equivalent to predestination. St. Paul tells us: "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate" (Rom. viii. 29). The free agent says that "God's foreknowledge is not a cause." Well, if it be not, what is it? The Psalmist says: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm xxxiii. 9). The foreknowledge of God does not "abolish man's freewill," for the simple reason that God cannot take away that which he never gave. The Bible tells us: "He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening" (Job. xii. 14). Saith the Lord: "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand" (Jer. xviii. 6); "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto him whom it seemed meet unto me" (Jer. xxvii. 5).

It is inconceivable that an omnipotent and omniscient being should be ignorant of the purpose for which he created any man, or of the destiny to which he appointed him. It is said that "with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26); but it would be impossible for God to make an equal to himself. Jesus Christ testified to this fact when he said: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John iv. 34); "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John v. 30); "My Father is greater than I" (John xix. 28). And it would be equally impossible for God to make a creature so absolutely independent of himself that it would be absolutely free to do as it might please, in defiance, it might be, of his decrees. The creature might appear to be free, though he would not be so in reality. That this is so is proved by the manner in which Saul was appointed to be king over Israel. Saul, the son of Kish, of the family of Metri, of the tribe of Benjamin, was selected *by lot* for the office (1 Sam. x. 21). Yet, in reality, the Israelites had no voice in the matter; for, "before the casting of lots," Samuel, by the command of God, "had anointed Saul to be king" (x. 1); whilst "after the casting of lots," Samuel said to all the people, "See ye whom the Lord hath chosen" (x. 24). To say that God is omnipotent, and yet to limit his power as regards mankind, is simply absurd. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?" (Psalm xciv. 9, 10).

He who believes in the omniscience of God cannot reasonably believe in the freewill of man. God, we are told, is an eternal being; but the things of time and sense, of which man is one, are not eternal. Consequently, although the *knowledge* of all things and events is, and has been, ever present with God, the *actual* things and events—belonging, as they do, to the past, the present, and the future—are *not* so present. God, we are told, had no beginning; but all his handiworks had a beginning, for it was "in the beginning that God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). But, before they were so created, God knew that in due time he would create them; and in this respect, therefore, God's knowledge was foreknowledge. Had he not foreknown that which he purposed to do, he would not be infinite; were it possible for him to acquire knowledge, he would not be perfect; and, were he not perfect and infinite, he would not be God. Christ, we are told, was *actually* crucified upon Calvary *once*, and such a fact cannot be a reality *now*, for has not "God raised him from the dead"? (Acts xiii. 30). This truth was recognised by Christ when he said: "This that is written must yet be accomplished of me, for the things concerning me have an end" (Luke xxii. 37).

To say that God knows what a man will do, and yet that, having made him and placed him where and as he pleased, he does not compel him so to act, or control his choice in any degree, is a statement that embalms its own contradiction. It is an assertion, not a reason; and he who makes it is bound to prove its truthfulness, if he can. For God to possess the power of controlling a man in the doing or not doing of a thing, and to deliberately abstain from exercising such control, would be in reality to exercise such control.

It is admitted by all who believe in God that God knows what will happen in the future, just as well as he knows what has happened in the past. The Bible tells us that God has "declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isaiah xli. 10). "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Isaiah xliii. 9). "I appointed the ancient people; and the things that are coming and shall come" (Isaiah lv. 7). It is admitted that God foreknows what man will do—foreknows the use man will make of the freedom which God is said to have entrusted him with. But the assertion—not the argument—is that God's foreknowledge does not fetter man's freedom of will; that the possession of the one power does not imply the exercise, even if it imply the possession, of the other power—in other words, that *because God knows that a certain event will happen, he does not therefore will that that event shall happen.* Now, is not this a distinction without a difference? If God know that an event *will happen*, must it not happen? And, if it *must happen*, who but God hath willed that it *shall happen*? And, if God have willed that that event shall happen, who can prevent its happening? Men do their actions, not because God *knows* that they will do them, but because he hath *willed* that they shall do them according to his good pleasure. Were man a free agent, he could do that which he wishes to do, and obtain that which he wants, without God's assistance; whereas he can do nothing, and does not even know that which he wants, without God's direction and help. He who believes that God is the first great cause must believe that nothing comes by chance, but that everything comes from God. The event, therefore, that has to happen in the future cannot happen without God's knowledge and will, nor without the factors or actors in it being created by him: and, if that be so, how can it be said that God *knows*, and yet that he *does not will*? With God, to know is to will. "He commanded, and they were created" (Psalm cxlviii. 5). "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isaiah xli. 11). "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her who is with child, even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccle. xi. 5).

For the purpose of illustration, let us suppose that there are two roads, along one of which a man *must* travel. Mark the words—"must travel"; there is no freewill here! And yet every human being is virtually in the position here supposed. The Christian says that the man is "free to choose which road he pleases, but that God knows which road he will choose." Now, such a statement is an absolute contradiction; because God's foreknowledge being granted, the predestination of man follows as a logical sequence. To choose means to select, and selection implies doubt; for, until a selection be actually made, the man himself does not know which road he will choose. If, therefore, it be known which road he will choose before he knows it himself, it follows that he has no choice in the matter, but acts simply as he is predestined to act. He appears to have a choice in the matter, whereas he has none at all. As, therefore, God knows, and, knowing, wills that a certain event shall take place at a certain time, is it not futile to say, when such an event occurs at the time and in the manner previously indicated, that it was occasioned by the

creature who was the actor in it, and not by God who made the creature and predestined the event? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. xxviii. 1). "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah xiv. 27).

When God commanded Noe to make an ark of gopher-wood, and, having shut him in, caused the deluge, did he not display his omniscience and omnipotence and the utter dependence of man on him? In view of such a catastrophe—publicly predicted long before it occurred—in what sense can man be said to be free? The Bible tells us "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matt. vi. 27). "Thou canst not make one hair white or black!" (Matt. v. 36). "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Prov. xx. 24).

I might refer to other notable events which are recorded in the Bible in support of my contention that, according to its teaching, man is utterly dependent upon his Creator; but I will not labor the point, as I deem it to be unnecessary to do so. I will simply say, respecting these events, that if Adam and Noe, Moses and Pharaoh, and the other important Biblical personages, were predestined to fulfil the events that had been predicted of them, then they must have been created for the purpose; and if they were so created, and did so act, then they could not have been free agents. And, if they were so predestinated and created, then men and women have been thus predestinated and created ever since; to suppose otherwise would be a gross and palpable absurdity. "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof" (Isaiah xxiv. 1). "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39). "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?" (Jer. xxxii. 27).

The believer in the Bible must admit that God, had he been so minded, could have made me, and anyone else, Enoch and Elijah, and Enoch or Elijah me and anyone else; and, in either of these contingencies, one of us would not have had to taste of death. Or he could have caused us to die in our infancy; in which case we should have escaped much physical pain and mental torture, and—assuming that all dead infants go to heaven—we should have been assured of an entrance into the heavenly world. It was this doctrine—this belief—which actuated the celebrated Richard Baxter to cry out, whenever he saw a criminal going to execution, "But for the grace of God there goes Richard Baxter!" It is this doctrine which has embalmed as a proverb the belief that "the man who is born to be hung will not be drowned"; this belief which induces hoary age to teach infancy to lisp:—

"Not more than others I deserve,  
But God has given me more."

The Good Templar, who publicly thanks God that he is not as other men are, illustrates and proves the truth of the doctrine of predestination when he exclaims: "I am where God has placed me; and it is a blessed thing for me that he has made me a sober, steady man, and not a drunkard." Because, if it be true that the Good Templar is what he is, through God's goodness, it must be equally true that the drunkard is what he is, and where he is, through God's goodness too. God needed not to have made tigers, sharks, and hawks: but, according to the Bible, he has made them. Why? I cannot say. Who can? But this I read: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31).

There is no half-way house between Predestination and Freewill. Such adjectives as "free" have no degrees of comparison. A woman cannot be more than virtuous; and if a man be not honest, he must be dishonest. So with being free. If free, then he can do as he likes; but if predestinated, he can only do as he is predestinated to do. If this be not so, why are we told that the "very hairs of your head are all numbered"? (Matt. x. 30). St. Paul testifies to the same effect: "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but the sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Romans vii. 19-21).

Man may be justly compared to the train which, one stormy winter night, rushed out into the darkness on the bridge of Tay, and, as happened to the Egyptians of old, perished in the waters. A thousand years—ten thousand years—ago, did God foreknow that that event would happen? If he did not, his knowledge is not infinite, and he himself not God. But if he did, then follows surely as the day the night, that he ordained it, planned all the circumstances, predestinated and created those who were the actors in it.

Luck, Fate, Destiny, Providence, are synonymous terms. What is luck or fate to the ignorant, is destiny to the educated, and Providence to the religious. Were it possible for any man to do what God had not foreseen, and not provided for—to break the chain of events which he has been forging ever since the beginning of the world—the "things which must be hereafter" (Revelations iv. 1) could not take place. It cannot be doubted that "what is to be, will be," but, as man cannot know what will be until it is—until the future becomes present—he is compelled by his desires, his impulses, his necessities, to do that which he *hopes* will cause the will be that must be, to be the will that he wishes it to be. He acts according as his wishes; his interests, his needs, his instincts, prompt him to act; the circumstances of the moment decide his choice and overrule his judgment, and, in a moment, results are produced, the consequences of which are as lasting as they are important; and over these circumstances, as over his thoughts, he has no more control than he has over the wind which "bloweth where it listeth, the sound of which he hears, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth" (John iii. 8).

There is no gainsaying the fact, if the Bible be true, that all phases of both national and individual existence are due, primarily and absolutely, to Almighty God who created "good" and "evil," and with whom are the issues of life and death. "The nations shall rush like rushing of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind" (Isaiah xvii. 18).

"We now stand face to face," says Professor Tyndall,—

"with the final problem. It is this. Is the will of man free? or, Are it and Nature equally bound fast in Fate? What is meant by Freewill? Does it imply the power of producing events without antecedents? of starting, as it were, upon a creative tour of occurrences without any impulse from within or without? Let us consider the point. If there be absolutely or relatively no reason why a tree should fall, it will not fall; and if there be absolutely or relatively no reason why a man should act, he will not act. It is true that the united voice of this assembly could not persuade me that I have not, at this moment, the power to lift my arm if I wished to do so. Within this range the conscious freedom of my will cannot be questioned. But what about the origin of the wish? Are we, or are we not, complete masters of the circumstances which create our wishes, motives, and tendencies to action?"

If, then, man's will be free, it must be a creative cause. But, if it be itself dependent upon anterior circumstances, how can it be free? If it be not free, then man must have been predestinated, and if

predestinated, then—being "bound fast in Fate"—he must have been created by God for some special purpose—for the carrying out and accomplishment of some pre-ordained design.

The lifting of the arm, or the raising of the hand to the head, has always been a favorite argument of the free agent, because he considers it to be an absolute demonstration of the power of his will. But in this he unwittingly deceives himself—and for a man to do anything unwittingly is the plainest possible evidence that he does not act of his own freewill, but is urged thereto, is compelled so to act, by some unseen force, some unsuspected power, which, for want of a better and more descriptive word, is called "motive." The raising of the hand to the head, under such circumstances, as being a proof of free-will, is illusory, because the doing so is not the result of the man's unbiassed will, but simply of his *desire* to display this power; consequently, the action is due not to his will, but to the desire or motive which sets his will in action—the desire being to convince his opponent. Were man a free agent he would be able to will, that is to choose, *without* motive, and would be able to prevent motives from coercing his will. This he cannot do, and hence it is impossible for him to be a free agent. A fairer illustration than raising the arm to the head would be for the free agent, when standing at the edge of a precipice, to assert that he has the power to jump down it. In such a case—unless, indeed, he were a madman—he would not dare to risk his life in order to prove his argument; and were he, in a moment of bravado, to do so, he would give unmistakable evidence that he was falling against his will. The suicide who determines to die must put himself beyond the reach of help, or he would be unable to accomplish his purpose. Darwin illustrates this point in his usual admirable manner. Says he:—

"I put my face close to the thick plate-glass in front of a puff-adder in the Zoological Gardens, with the firm determination of not starting back if the snake struck at me; but, as soon as the blow was struck, my resolution went for nothing, and I jumped a yard or two backwards with astonishing rapidity."

It is not for me to inquire why God made this world, why he created Satan, why he permitted Adam to fall, or Christ to be immolated upon the cross. It is sufficient for me to show from the Bible that every creature has been made for a purpose, as was the man who was born blind, and was healed by Christ. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master! who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John ix. 1-8). The question was an absurd one; for how could a man sin before he was born? But it illustrates my point. This man, according to Christ, was created blind for a definite purpose. And in like manner, of course, were created the men who crucified Christ; for did not Christ exclaim, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"? (Luke xxiii. 34). They could not, indeed, have crucified Christ had they not been preordained to do so; for Christ said, after Peter had smitten off an ear of a servant of the high priest, "Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11); "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Adding, however, as his reason for not doing so, "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 53, 54). Christ himself was predestinated; had he not have been so he could not have been crucified. For it is the very acme of childish absurdity to assert that puny mortal man, of his own freewill and power, could have subjected Christ to ignominy, and have done him to death—Christ, before whom water blushed into wine (John ii. 1-10); Christ, who could cause even a fish to provide him with tribute money

(Matt. xxiv. 27); Christ, of whom the awe-stricken disciples said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Matt. viii. 23-27).

I will not trespass upon your patience any longer. If the facts to which I have referred, the texts I have quoted, and the arguments I have adduced do not convince you that the Bible teaches Predestination pure and simple, the mere multiplying of such facts, texts, and arguments will not, I am sure, do so. For myself, I believe in Fate, but not in Predestination. To me the thought is horrible that a supernatural and all-powerful Being, having absolute control over human beings, should favor and bless an elect few both in this world and the next; and both here and hereafter treat the myriad many with the most terrible barbarity. I look around, and everywhere I see men, women, and children living in the most degraded fashion, and in the deepest misery—such misery as wrings one heart to see, and which, imperfect creatures as we are, we would gladly stop, if we could. I see little children cripples from their birth, with white thin faces quivering with pain, and surely dying, though by imperceptible degrees. I see monstrosities of every size and shape, disgusting in their appearance, even to those who gave them birth. I see human beings, of both sexes and all ages, craving for death as the only relief from the frightful diseases which are causing them unutterable sufferings. And these, and all other nameless horrors, my Christian friends tell me are the handiworks of a loving and Almighty God. Well, let them believe it, if they can. I cannot, and never shall!

J. W. DE CAUX.

## Anti-Cant Tickles; or, Pith and Pepper.—II.

BY A TWENTIETH CENTENARIAN.

(Continued from p. 781.)

### WHO IS RIGHT?

Heaven's haven is a narrow creek beset with rocks a few; but "trust to pilot Dollinger and he will pull you through."  
Each pilot of the sky contends that his one course is true: "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Jew, with Ten Commanding claims, asserts his point of view: "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Quaker, Shaker, Wesleyan, and Churchman, say it too: "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Mahdi shouts the same old cry, each Pope and Lama too: "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Buddhist, while he turns his wheel, says (as he oils a screw): "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The dreamy, faithful Mussulman repeats that phrase anew: "Fear not, but trust in Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Fengshuist, the Fetishist, and all that heavenly crew, cry "Trust yourself to Dollinger, and he will pull you through!"  
The Mormon (in his sanctity) takes just the same old view: "Fear not, but trust in Brigham Young, and he will pull you through!"

### HISTORY.

Folks talk of sacred history and also of profane, and over these book-maggots long have struggled might and main; but with such blindworm quarrellings we need have nought to do: profane is what consists of lies, and sacred what is true?

If two and two make four, just place all sacred books a-row, and point your finger at the one which is *exactly* so. To swear the sun and moon are square would shock a thoughtful jay; yet *we* are forced to take on trust things equally *outré*.

### THE VALUE OF CRITICISM.

"See what a plain tale shall put thee down."

For centuries the wisest mouths had gulped the Books of Moses, and (nothing doubting) swallowed all in allopathic doses, until a simple critic came (a Zulu man) and when so unlettered a logician spoke—he posed the late Colenso!

That part is now "apocryphal" and slightly under ban, but all that came about *because of one poor Zulu man!*

### KINGSHIP.

A king may be a murderer, a maniac, or fool; but, if he is his father's son, he has "the right to rule"; yet if you owned a business firm, it just occurs to me, you would not choose as manager one from those kingly three.

### CABALISTIC CANABALISM.

"We come obedient to Thy Word,  
To feast on heavenly Food;  
Our meat the Body of the Lord,  
Our drink His precious Blood."

—*Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 320.

A Pantheist might hymn like this,  
For earth yields heavenly food;  
And meat the flesh of Nature is  
And water is its blood.

Most hymns are silly doggerel,  
Like sermons are (at times),  
Which do not scan or reason well  
And make atrocious rhymes.

### GOD'S WORD.

The Word of God should never need "apologists" or "gloss"; it should, and would, be clear as Christ upon man's brutal cross.

The Word of Nature (what is that but God's own master hand?) is readable, so that a child its gist can understand. Yet all our Scriptures are obscene and mystic and defiled with foolish tales that outrage quite the logic of a child.

### EXODUS.

When Israel crossed that handy sea, their foresight was most praiseworthy. They stole with Israelitish craft, and thought it very fine, and laughed.

They called it "borrowing," forsooth; but, if you told the nasty truth, you could not even kindly say that it was kleptomania.

No: you would say (although it grieves) that they were just a pack of thieves.

To me the ever-growing wonder is how their God approved such plunder! Well, on the whole, my sympathies are certainly with *Rameses*.

(To be concluded.)

## Obituary.

ANOTHER of the Old Guard of Freethought has passed away—Charles Cockbill Cattell. His connection with the Freethought party stretched back to the early fighting days of Charles Bradlaugh and his associates, G. J. Holyoake and others.

Mr. Cattell was born near Stratford-on-Avon on February 27, 1830, and as a young man at Birmingham, where he was working, he early embraced Freethought views. Under the name of "Christopher Charles" he lectured, organised, and wrote many articles during a long series of years in the old *National Reformer*, the *Secular Chronicle*, and other journals, including *Secular Thought* (Canada) and the *New York Truthseeker*. In 1852 he founded the Eclectic Institute at Birmingham, and during its operation came in contact with G. J. Holyoake, whose newly broached Secular principles he found were in close harmony with his own opinions. A few years later Mr. Cattell's name became associated with Secularism and its advocacy, both as speaker and writer, and thenceforth he was for a long time a sort of advance agent for all lecturers on the Freethought side coming into the district.

Mr. Cattell was a useful pioneer. Fifty years ago his lectures in the Midlands on Sundays, with vocal and instrumental music, were deemed heretical and dangerous. For initiating at Birmingham a branch of the National Sunday League he had notice to leave his situation. Later on the City of Birmingham opened its Picture Galleries and discoursed municipal music in the parks. So persecuted they the prophets!

Mr. Cattell's death took place at his residence at Bournemouth on December 8. He died, as he had lived, a staunch Secularist and Freethinker. Death had no terrors for him; he rather welcomed it at any time during the past four years, which, for him, have been years of physical helplessness and great suffering.

His interest in the movement was maintained with keenness to the end. By his special injunctions a Secular funeral was given to his remains. He was buried at Bournemouth Cemetery on December 10, and the undersigned read a Secular address at the graveside.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

**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.**

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public (Minor) Hall, Canning Town): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Law of Liberty in Morals."

**OUTDOOR.**

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7, J. Hecht, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and S. J. Cook.

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, J. S. Clarke, "Heralds of the Dawn."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Harry H. Woolley, "The Leicester Infirmary and Desford Convalescent Home." With lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, E. Archbold, "Secularism and Individual Liberty."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Fred Morgan will recite Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol." Pianoforte selections.

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Parry's Temperance Bar, Tony-pandy): 3, Business Meeting and Election of Officers.

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