

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 4

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 1911

PRICE TWOPENCE

Conscience is born of love.—SHAKESPEARE.

The Blessings of Pain.

ALL religious systems find themselves confronted with the problem of evil, and set about explaining it, but not until they are driven into doing so by sceptical opposition. The first explanation advanced was certainly simple. Divines declared evil to be a mystery. Sceptics replied that this was only a confession of ignorance, that it left the problem where it was, and that calling it by a grandiose name did not make it any plainer. Besides, the "mystery" was, after all, purely artificial, being really no more than a flat contradiction between the theory of "God" and the facts of nature. When this point was pressed home, the theologians saw that they must somehow prove that evil is actually good; thus they reached the serene quackery of ultimate optimism, affirming that discord is misunderstood harmony, that a man groaning with the toothache, for instance, is unconsciously sounding his note in the symphony of universal happiness. This theory still holds the field, only it is modified by a "wrinkle" borrowed from Evolution. Evil is not exactly good, the divines tell us, but it is good in the making; and when we get to the end of the process (if we ever do) we shall look back, like Jehovah upon his six-days' creation, and pronounce it all "good." This argument, of course, is based upon prophecy; it is like paying an account with a very long bill, due forty days after death—or the millennium. Still, it serves the purpose; the Micawbers of theology exclaim, "Thank God, that's settled!"

Pain, of course, has its place in human evolution. The struggle for existence involves pain, and natural selection means the elimination of the unfit,—the "survival of the fittest" being primarily a result and not a cause. Nature brings so many animals, including "the paragon of animals," as Shakespeare calls man, into existence, and then sets about destroying the most weak and helpless, not generally by a swift and merciful death, but by starvation and disease, which entail long bodily suffering and mental misery. These facts, however, are slurred over by the theologians. When their case was taken up for them by Mrs. Besant, on her becoming a Theosophist, the lady put it in this way:—

"By pain we learn when we have struck against a law, and the law which pierced us when we opposed it becomes our strength when we place ourselves in harmony with it. By pain we learn to distinguish between the eternal and the transitory, and so to strike our heart-roots into that which endures. By pain we develop strength, as the athlete develops muscle by exercising it against opposing weights. By pain we learn sympathy, and gain power to help those who suffer."

We entirely dissent from this philosophy. It appears to us the very reverse of the truth. "Adversity," as George Meredith said, "tries us; it does not nourish us." Theologians mistake the trial for the nourishment. A child does not grow strong in darkness, privation, and suffering; it grows strong in sunlight, plenty, and happiness. When adversity comes, it does not give strength; it only

tests the strength that has been acquired in prosperity. We do not deny that pain is useful in one way, as a warning against danger. But the danger is itself an evil,—the proof being that we try to avoid it; and the usefulness of the warning depends on our ability to shun the danger. There is no use at all in pain when a little child falls against the fire and is burnt in its helplessness; nor is there any use in pain when a man is cremated alive because he differs from other people on religious questions.

The analogy between the athlete and the sufferer is fallacious. In the first place, the athlete does not suffer; generally speaking, he takes a pleasure in his exercises and performances. In the next place, no man gains any strength from bearing pain, although he may gain strength by exerting himself against the causes of pain. In the third place, the very idea of an athlete is active, while the very idea of a sufferer is passive. Man is the victim of pain, and if he bears it willingly, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, he bears it for the sake of some other victim.

Certainly we learn sympathy by pain. But that is only one illustration of a general law, namely, that we learn sympathy by experience. And the very fact that there is such a strong tendency to associate sympathy with suffering shows how pain and weakness have predominated in human experience. A hundred persons will help a child in its distress for every one who will play with it and enter into its child-life. The sympathy of delight is far rarer than the sympathy of sorrow.

What a blunder it is to represent pain as the great agency of moral and spiritual culture! If it were so, one could point to something wrong in its distribution. The poor, who have little time for sinning, get the most of it; and the wealthy, who have plenty of time and means, get the least. It is a pretty figure of rhetoric to represent pain as "a sternly gracious friend, whose hands are full of gifts"; but, as a matter of fact, pain is the colleague of death as joy is the colleague of life.

When pain is represented as a necessary evil, the question arises—What made it necessary? The only answer that is given is—The will of God. The deity could have started man strong instead of weak; a success instead of a failure. That is what earthly fathers would do for their children, if they could. The heavenly father could, but he did not. Yet his courtiers are always talking about his benevolence.

Neither the Christian nor any other religious philosophy of pain will stand the test of criticism. It is impossible to justify "God" by appealing either to the past or to the present. His apologists are only safe when they appeal to the future. No one can contradict them then; at the same time, no one is bound to believe them. There may be future explanations and satisfactions for all of us; but, also, there may not be. We have to judge by the known, not by the unknown; by experience, and not by speculation. Bring theology down to the test of fact, and it fails miserably. All it can do at the finish is to exclaim, like the gentleman in the melodrama, "No matter; the time will come!" "God" is really an object of faith, and to vindicate him at the bar of reason is to subject him to a painful humiliation.

G. W. FOOTE.

On Progress.

THE philosopher of the *Christian World*, "J. B.," has, in two recent issues of that paper, been busying himself with the question of progress. There does not appear, on the face of it, any essential connection between religion and progress, or between Free-thought and a denial of progress. The denial of a capacity for progress in normal human nature has been often enough found in connection with strong religious belief; and an enthusiastic belief in the possibility of progress has been fairly common with those who have rejected religion in all its forms. But the rule that governs writings of the class of which "J. B." is an exponent appears to be, first prove a theory to be wrong, or idiotic, or degrading, and then call it the sceptical, or the unbelieving, or Materialistic, or the Atheistic view. A most convenient method if only the opposite side can be kept quiet.

Now I need hardly say that the Freethinker denies neither the fact nor the possibility of progress. Some Freethinkers may question whether men do grow wiser, or better; but their doubt on this head has no necessary connection with their disbelief in religion. All they are concerned with is divesting the notion of "Progress" of all teleological implications, and using the word with as great a scientific exactitude as knowledge permits. "J. B." appears to be under the impression that unless we conceive "Progress" as something impressed upon nature as a whole, and unless we believe that the human individual will escape destruction, "Progress" is a pure illusion. He quotes the following description of the naturalistic end of all things from Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*:—

"After a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the dimensions of time open to our imagination, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude.The uneasy consciousness which in this obscure corner has for a brief space broken the contented silence of the universe will be at rest."

And he adds: "According to this theory the idea of progress is, of course, the absurdest of illusions." "Of course" should be a synonym for the obvious. In this instance it is merely a cover for the untrue. At any rate, it is only true for those who make the value of everything here dependent upon possibilities elsewhere, or who deny that life is any good to anyone unless he or she is going to enjoy it forever. We may not exist forever in the future; but neither have we existed forever in the past. And the absence of an eternity of existence after death has no more real bearing upon the value of life than has the absence of an eternity of existence before birth. If "J. B." had followed his own advice to be well assured of what we mean by "Progress" before we believe in it, a great deal in his two articles would never have been written.

"Progress" is not bound up with the question of the ultimate fate of our planetary system, for the simple reason that it has no application thereto. We can use the word in relation to man, because it is an ideal born of man, and its reality is measured by a standard created by man. We can speak of progress in morals, in knowledge, or in art, and our language is valid so long as we apply it within its legitimate sphere. We can speak of a more perfect art, a more complete knowledge, a better balanced morality. We know what we mean by such language—in spite of variations in judgment—and in proportion as our art, our morality, or our knowledge approximates to our ideal standard, we declare that advance has been made. But what is meant when we speak of "Progress" outside the human sphere? In what sense is the non-human universe better or worse at one stage than it is at another? At one time we have the earth an incandescent mass incapable of maintaining life. At another stage we have it with a solid crust, bearing a highly diversified fauna and flora.

At yet another stage the earth may be "tideless and inert," devoid of all life, wandering untenanted through the frigid depths of space. On what principle are we justified in saying that the second stage marks an advance on the first, and the last a recession from the former state? Apart from human ideals, the absurdity of speaking of the world as being "better" or "higher" at one stage than another is patent to all with any capacity for scientific thinking. The world at any stage of its existence is the exact result of all the forces it represents. It is neither better nor worse; it simply *is*.

What we see in the universe is not progress, but change. And we interpret this change in terms of our own feelings and our own ideals. A developed solar system is more perfect because it is necessary to us. The primitive nebulae is less perfect because human life is inconceivable under such conditions. Human life demands for its maintenance a certain degree of warmth; therefore the evolution of a moderate temperature is called an advance. But if human life were impossible above freezing-point, a temperature of thirty-three degrees would be considered a disaster. We make our needs the measure of the cosmic process, and declare it better or worse as they do, or do not, get satisfaction. I do not question the justifiability of so doing. In a sense, we are bound to do this if we use the word "Progress" at all. Only it is well for us to remember how the idea is born, and the sphere within which it is legitimately applicable. Used within its proper sphere, to talk of progress is right enough. Applied elsewhere, it leads us into confusion and ends in the absurd philosophising of the *Christian World*.

Man has the past on which to reflect, he has the future on which he may speculate and for which he may work. From this is born the conception of progress—human in its origin and application. Not only is the conception of progress human, but, more significant still, it is essentially a social fact. Those who have denied the reality of progress have usually worked along one of two lines. Either they have realised that, applied to the universe as a whole the conception is meaningless, and have thereupon rejected it altogether. Or they have contrasted the individual man of different periods and asked wherein lay the profound difference on which was based the claim for progress? From this point of view, the question would indeed be difficult to answer. Were the people who planned the Pyramids individually inferior to those who built St. Peter's or St. Paul's? I see no reason for thinking they were. Were the ancient Chaldeans, or the Athenians of twenty-five hundred years ago, less able than the men of the twentieth century? One could not say they were with any degree of confidence. Go back as far as history will carry us, we see the same passions of love, hatred, fear, cruelty, heroism, knavery at work that are at work now. The contemporaries of Nebuchadnezzar felt as we feel, and in all essentials lived and died as we live and die to-day. If we could transport a child of modern English parents back to ancient Athens he would grow up with an Athenian's outlook upon life, and would not feel anything lacking. And if the child of an ancient Athenian had been preserved by some means directly after birth, and resuscitated in the reign of George V., he would grow up sharing an Englishman's feelings and prejudices. Individual human nature has undergone no great change during the historic period, nor perhaps for a much longer time.

Yet there is a change in things. The modern European does not, after all, look upon life as did the Chaldean, the Egyptian, or the Athenian. And, in some respects at least, we all think that the changed aspect is a better aspect, and therefore counts for progress. And, if progress has been made, what is its cause? If we are not individually better than our ancestors of long ago, in what sense have we progressed? The answer is that we are richer because of the social heritage in which we share. All the inventions and discoveries between ourselves and any preceding generation that we may select is

the measure of the extent to which the modern man is better able to subjugate the natural environment to human necessities. As a sailor, he is less at the mercy of winds and waters. As a traveller, he is less limited in the area he may traverse. As a creature needing food he is less at the mercy of the season's fluctuations. In a thousand-and-one ways the life of the individual is more secure against adversity than it was; not because he is better as an individual, but because there is a social continuity that has been the condition of his inheriting the accumulated and accumulating riches of the race.

Moral progress is essentially the same. As individuals, and apart from our social environment, our susceptibilities are neither more numerous nor more delicate than were those of our historic ancestors. Parents loved children, husbands and wives loved each other, friends were loyal to one another in ancient Rome as well as in modern London. But again there is the different social medium into which we are born and which acts as the greatest of educative influences. Slavery shocks us to-day merely because of the social education to which we are subjected. We may witness enormities almost as vile, but we see them with small compunction because our education has not yet moved along the line of their condemnation. But the course of centuries has taught us to look upon human life and welfare with a larger knowledge of its capacities and possibilities. This larger knowledge becomes incarnate in our literature, in our institutions, and is taken for granted in our common intercourse; and it is this which constitutes the basis of any claim that may be made for moral progress.

People have denied moral progress because all the moral teachings known to-day were known thousands of years ago. Quite so; but the important thing is not what men teach, but what interpretation is placed upon the teaching. The Brotherhood of Man means one thing in the mouth of one who uses it to express his belief that all men have a right to equal consideration; it means a vastly different thing with the Christian who holds that disbelief in Christianity puts one outside the pale of brotherhood. Our larger moral heritage does for us in one direction what our larger intellectual heritage does for us in another. At bottom they are, perhaps, identical. For each generation profits more or less by the experience of preceding generations. We learn from their failures and we profit from their successes. If we blunder it is not quite in the same way, or perhaps not quite to the same extent. This experience is consolidated, is inherited, it forms part of the environment into which each is born, and serves to direct the capacities of each in the ordering of human life.

C. COHEN.

Spurious Agnosticism.

It is well known that the word Agnosticism was invented by the late Professor Huxley in order to define his attitude to the various metaphysical and theological "isms" of his day. He called himself an Agnostic, and thus distinguished himself from the Sceptic and the Atheist. That this distinction was merely nominal is proved by language employed by himself. It is beyond question that, unintentionally, he grossly misrepresented the teaching of Atheists; but that does not concern us at present. The only important fact, in the present connection, is that he described himself as "the man without a rag of belief to cover himself with." His objection to classing himself with Theists, Pantheists, Materialists, Idealists, Freethinkers, Atheists or Christians he thus stated:—

"They were quite sure that they had attained a certain 'gnosis'—had more or less successfully solved the problems of existence; while I was quite sure that I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble."

Writing to Charles Kingsley, he said:—

"I have by nature and disposition the greatest possible antipathy to all the atheistic and infidel school. Nevertheless I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian would call, and, so far as I can see, is justified in calling, atheist or infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomenon of the Universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts."

Such is the meaning of Agnosticism as explained by the inventor of the term. "To my great satisfaction," he adds, "the term took," and "became the fashionable label for contemporary unbelief in Christian dogma, particularly during the 'seventies and 'eighties." R. H. Hutton, of the *Spectator*, understood the word to signify "belief in an unknown and unknowable God," but Huxley himself was careful to point out that it meant, "not belief, but absence of belief, as much distinct from belief on the one hand as from disbelief on the other; that it was the half-way house between the two, where all questions were 'open.'" Now, while the Agnostic attitude, as thus stated, is logically an impossible attitude, it cannot by any stretch of interpretive licence be regarded as a Christian attitude. It rather denotes the complete absence of the Christian attitude, and the Christian would be justified in characterising it as a distinctly Atheistic attitude. And yet, strangely enough, in the *Christian World* for January 12, "J. B." has an article entitled "Faith's Agnosticism," in which we find the following remarkable assertion:—

"We have found the word to be a good word. It stood, when it was coined, and still stands, for an honest confession of ignorance about subjects which dogmatists imagine they know all about, while knowing of them little or nothing. The surprising thing is that Christian people should have supposed that the word was directed against faith. The truth is that it is through and through a word of faith. It is, we admit, a searching, a disconcerting word against this or that opinion. But, as we shall here try to show, it expresses better than any other the inmost heart of belief."

"J. B." is an exceedingly ingenious writer, but it will tax his powers to the utmost to establish the truth of that astounding proposition. The simple truth is that he does not and cannot do it. In two wholly irrelevant paragraphs he falls foul of a nameless Manchester Secularist who had ventured to criticise a previous article of his on "What is Progress?" Judging by the extract supplied, the criticism was perfectly gentlemanly and fair. In that article "J. B." maintained that "if the Universe teaches us anything, its story is of eternal progress, under the guidance of One greater than itself." How does he know that there is progress in the Universe and that it is guided by "One greater than itself"? "Our friend knows too much," as he says of his Secularist critic. "We strike here at once on the value of a little sane Agnosticism." Because the Secularist does not accept his theory of progress, and thinks a state of perfection would produce satiety, "J. B." sneers at him, saying, "To our humble thinking this is as if an oyster should pronounce on the mental equipment of a Shakespeare"—a most elegant, complimentary comparison, and quite worthy of the Christian profession.

But let us proceed. The two irrelevant paragraphs are followed by a third which illustrates the absurdity of the writer's contention. "J. B." has nothing too bad to say of the dogmatists; and yet he is as dogmatic as the worst of them. He never hesitates to declare that evolution is under the guidance of a Perfect Being who is all tenderness and love, our Father in heaven. There is not the least sign of Agnosticism here. The language employed is that of the most advanced Gnosticism. But on being confronted with difficulties and unwelcome facts our friend flies for refuge to Agnosticism. Listen to this:—

"Our Secularist was naturally scornful at the attempts of Christians to vindicate the Divine goodness in the face of pit explosions and railway wreckages. Why are these things allowed if God is good? Indeed,

we do not know. Yet, is there any reason why our Agnosticism here should not be one of faith rather than of unbelief?"

That is the very acme of illogicality. It is impossible to conceive of a more irrational position. It practically comes to this: "I have no idea why these dreadful disasters and catastrophes are allowed, but I believe that the God who allows them is infinitely good and loving." On what ground he cherishes such a belief he does not tell us. What is certain is that all the facts known to us contradict such a faith. "J. B." himself admits it thus:—

"There are some sixteen hundred millions of us at this moment alive on the planet, and it is certain that Nature, within a certain number of years, will kill every man, woman, and child of us, and that by means often far more painful and lingering than those which marked the recent calamities."

What a cruel indictment of Nature's processes. "But faith lives, in spite of all this," the reverend gentleman avers. "Faith here is content with its Agnosticism." But this is a spurious Agnosticism, and it mocks the faith that pretends to be content with it. The Agnosticism preached by Huxley concerned the existence of a good God, and meant simply the absence of belief in it. The true Agnostic knows nothing of a good God, because he "cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence" that he exists. The Christian believes blindly, without a scrap of evidence, and against the only evidence that is forthcoming.

The Manchester Secularist, in spite of the sarcastic and insulting treatment he has received at the hands of this defender of the faith, has no reason whatever to consider himself annihilated. The fact is that his argument has been evaded by a cowardly artifice. Instead of a convincing refutation of it, he is treated to vulgar abuse and cheap ridicule. Sound or unsound, the argument deserved to be honestly faced. But it cannot be honestly faced by a Christian Theist. The goal of life is said to be perfection. The Secularist is represented as holding that if progress ends in perfection, satiety will result; and that "if perfection is not reached, and we are to have an interminable succession of what we may term temporary purposes, involving dissatisfaction and desires to spur us on to something else, then, in that case, that succession of experiences will become a meaningless round." Will it not? Instead of answering that question "J. B." says to the Secularist, in effect: "Oh, you are merely finding fault with the order of Nature. Doubtless you could have produced a better order had you been consulted. You know too much. You are actually in a position—so far are you in advance of the rest of us—to dogmatise on the question of perfection. You know, apparently, what it would be, and how it would feel, to be perfect. But, my friend, we are not gods yet, even if we live in Manchester: and, until we are, it will be wisdom in us to confess our ignorance and walk by faith." "J. B." himself falls back upon God, and prophecies that the time will come, in another life, when we shall see that there is another side to this life's experiences—"a side which, when it is turned upon us, will reveal the mystery, and justify it." This is what he calls "the Agnosticism of faith." "Be an Agnostic," he advises the Secularist, "and in your Agnosticism I will join hands with you. But, though an Agnostic, I believe in God and a future state, and that in that future state God will make known to me the meaning and purpose of my life." If that means anything, our only possible inference is that faith is based and nourished upon ignorance, and is incapable of any reasonable justification. In other words, in the region concerning which Huxley was an Agnostic, "J. B." is a blind believer, while in the region in which "J. B." avows himself an Agnostic, Huxley was a strenuous searcher for knowledge. Huxley said: "I neither affirm nor deny, neither believe nor disbelieve in, the existence of God and immortality; as regards such matters I am wholly ignorant." "J. B." exclaims: "I do not know why the good God allows destructive earth-

quakes, volcanic eruptions, railway accidents, and mine explosions, nor can I explain the sufferings and sorrows and evils which characterise social life; but, in spite of all, I believe in the Divine goodness and love, and that everything that comes to pass is ordained by his holy will." Huxley refused to believe in the absence of evidence; "J. B." believes in the presence of evidence to the contrary.

The Agnosticism of faith is an illusion, and the faith of Agnosticism is an intolerable absurdity. Agnosticism is the absence of belief, and belief is the denial of Agnosticism. What we need is neither the Agnosticism of faith nor the faith of Agnosticism, but such a knowledge of Nature and her laws as will enable us to make the best use of the life we possess. To live wisely and well we must know, and knowledge is an acquisition. It never comes unsought; it must be ardently wooed day by day; and in proportion as we pursue it we shall discover that it grows from more to more. We often say that knowledge is power, but it is a truer saying still that knowledge is life—the only life that is really worth living.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Ruined Tower.

AMONG the wooded hills of Central Italy, where the blue plain parts the mountains from the sea on the west, rises a summit—Monte Labbro—on which the wayfarer descries a broken tower. The ruin is not old, but, like the Tower of Babel, it is unfinished. Its melancholy stones recall a tragedy which took place in the vicinity on a summer day rather more than thirty years ago.

In the village of Arcidosso, on the brown slope of Mount Labbro, a butcher's wife bore, on All Saints' Day, 1884, a son whose destiny was to be sadly associated with the ruin. The child learned to read and write, and his dreamy ways and his early attempts at poetry aroused the wondering attention of the village. His name was David; his parent's name, Lazzaretti. David waxed into a hugely strong man, who threaded all the roads of the district with his two-wheeled cart. Carrying loads under the Italian sun, cursing as one who feared not codes of propriety, David led what he afterwards called a wicked life; though, probably, it was not a wicked life than that of John Bunyan, the Bedfordshire villager. Like Bunyan, he had his visions; but, to David Lazzaretti, the visions were real messages from a supernatural world, while to Bunyan they were vivid images that made fit material for books of allegory. In 1869, a "voice" (such a term recalls the heavenly intimations which Joan of Arc's fancy heard) ordered him to go to Rome, and tell the Pope how he had been vouchsafed communications from divine sources. Pius the Ninth listened with good nature, and graciously dismissed him. David wandered to a cave, inhabited by a certain devout German, who also knew heavenly secrets, and, like two crystal-gazers peeping into one glass sphere, they kept each other company in ecstatic reverie. In this cave David met Saint Peter, and the Saint imprinted on his forehead the mystical mark of an upright C, and an inverted C, thus:—

○ + C

As a matter of fact, when David was dead, a local doctor examined the body, which was found freely printed with this emblem by means of a red-hot iron, and the mark on the brow was tattooed.

Thus tattooed by Peter (or otherwise) David was hailed by the simple Tuscans of Arcidosso (whither he had returned) as a religious leader. What more natural, therefore, than to build a tower on the height of Labbro, as a visible token of this inward and spiritual grace? David and his peasant comrades piled up this singular edifice, which, being done in ignorance of the technique of architecture, partially fell down soon after being reared, yet without shak-

ing the faith of the believers. Near this spot, the prophet lighted upon a grotto, in the shades of which he conducted prayers—at all hours of night or day. Collecting money from poor or rich, he raised a fund for the erection of a church and convent, and the convent became the home of his newly founded fellowship—the Society of Christian Families. It was a Commune, after the manner of the Early Christian brotherhood described in the Book of Acts. Cattle, land, and crops were held as common property, and piety and agricultural labor went hand in hand. At sunset the women retired, and the men remained with the prophet to listen to the reflections of David. Sometimes, this devotional assembly would extend through the darkness of the night till Mass was celebrated (there were priests in the brotherhood) at five a.m., and the congregation went out to field-work, as if freshly risen from beds of comfort. David worked also. He was no idle prophet, living on the offerings of credulity. His disciples besought him to desist from manual toil, and attend to heaven rather than the hoe. One day only, he agreed to stay his hand; but a crowd of nearly two hundred people swarmed upon his allotment and did enough to relieve him from such industry for weeks to come.

The home of the Christian Families was not managed on business principles. In the course of a few years, it collapsed in bankruptcy, and the community dissolved, and the little school in which the children were taught was closed.

David Lazzaretti's prophesying was of the Fifth-Monarchy type known to the Puritan period of English history. Here is a fragment from an open-air address to the peasantry:—

"Who are the kings of the world? Are they not falling to dust? O horror-stricken kings, swift is the hand that descends as the lightning to smite to the earth your evil seats of false flatterers. There shall be one king only."

From 1873 to 1876 David and his wife and two children lived in France, at the city of Lyons, where he was maintained by sympathisers. His book, *My Struggle with God*, and his foretelling of the Reign of the Holy Spirit caused the Catholic authorities to suspect heresy, and his manifestoes and hymns were condemned. The secular power also eyed him with uneasiness. He seems even to have visited London, where perhaps the relics of the Sankey and Moody mission may have helped him to feel at home. He was taking the last critical step, when he openly announced himself as "actually Christ, the Leader and Judge."

It may be noticed, in passing, that portraits of David reveal him as possessing a thin black beard, and wistful eyes, resembling the conventional Good Shepherd. Occasionally he seems to have suffered from fits.

It was Harvest-festival (August 18, 1878) in Italian villages when a multitude of Tuscan country-folk surrounded David Lazzaretti on Mount Labbro. Next day, they were to walk down to the village of Arcidosso,—where the butcher's wife bore him in 1834—and enter into the Kingdom of God. Poor souls! Life was hard, and destiny grey. The drunkard has his glass, and so rises to the stars; and the poor have visions.

David sent most of the people home. He would follow in a day or two, he said. And he kept his word. He was accompanied by seven princes,—that is to say, seven disciples who (O wondrous human psychology!) believed themselves transformed into Powers and Dominions. Their costume consisted of grey and red tunics, with blue mantles and red hats. The prophet's hat was blue, on which fluttered three feathers. Twelve Apostles marched after; then a band of Disciples; then a group of Priests; then a crowd of women and children, with banners waving,—the white flag of Christ, the yellow flag of the Levites, and the rest.

Three times this motley host passed round Monte Labbro at dawn.

Meanwhile, the mayor, and the sheriff (Officer of Public Security), and some ten police armed with rifles, were preparing to put an end to a movement which might find its climax in riot. David was predicting a Divine Commonwealth,—“the Kingdom of God, the Law of Right.”

The women began singing. The mayor and the sheriff approached.

A public regulation,—a species of Riot Act,—was read thrice by the officer of law.

David Lazzaretti, the butcher's son, indicated the figure of Christ on a banner, and then said:—

“If it is peace that you desire, I bring it to you; if pity, it is here; if blood, behold!”

So speaking, he threw his arms out.

The sheriff remonstrated; David waved his hand in reply; the sheriff raised his gun. A shout; a shower of stones from the peasants; the crack of rifles.....

David was dying now. His disciples made no further resistance. The prophet was carried to a neighboring village, his wife, daughter, and son weeping as they went.

“He is dying for the glory of God,” sighed the wife, when the doctor (he who examined the tattoo) pronounced the end near. For every Christ, there is a faithful Mary or Magdalen, who believes and compassionates.

At daybreak, he died. The villagers sometimes whisper of him as “Our Jesus.”

In our own age, under (so to speak) our very eyes, this tragedy of a Christ has been enacted; and this Christ was accepted by Tuscan peasants. It is no great difficulty to change the scene to the ancient Roman Empire, and to watch, in some obscure rural quarter, the villagers hailing a fellow-villager,—perhaps a carpenter's son,—as the Son of God.*

F. J. GOULD.

The Haves and the Have Nots.

“To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.”—JESUS CHRIST.

“By the grace of God I am what I am.”—PAUL.

IT seems to be assumed by orthodox people that prosperity and good fortune are the gifts of God, deliberately made by him to those who enjoy these things. On the other hand, who sends to the many adversity and bad fortune? Some Christian people will not go the length of saying that God sends adversity and bad fortune to people—directly, at any rate—though this is a curious commentary on the omnipotence and all-embracing love of God. These Christians say that God *permits* the visitations of adversity and bad fortune, which he over-rules for some undefined beneficent purpose to be made clear by fulfilment at some uncertain future time. Then there is another section of Christians who say that adversity and bad fortune are really sent by God to men just because of his great love for them, as he sees they require “chastening,” and adversity and bad fortune are the very things to bring men to God and into close fellowship with him, and thus to secure for them the best places in heaven; though, in fact, very different effects are usually produced by long adversity.

Well, now, but what of the consistency of these ideas? It was a common idea, we are told, among the people with whom Christ came in contact on earth, that when disasters came upon human beings the sufferers had been guilty of some sin which could only be punished by such disasters. The visitation was traceable to some sin against God. But there is a rather notable utterance attributed to Christ with reference to the death of several people who were killed by the Tower of Siloam falling upon

* Details of Lazzaretti's career will be found in Mr. Ernest Hutton's *In Unknown Tuscany*, published by Messrs. Methuen.

them. He said: "Think you that these men were greater sinners above all others?.....Nay, but I say unto you, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." The Tower of Siloam incident is instructive. The earthquake disasters, the mine disasters, and the great railway accidents of our own time, in addition to the empty, diseased, and squalid lives of the millions of the earth, are equally instructive. How can the Christian of to-day get away from the conclusion which faces him, as the result of his teaching about the eternal problem of good and evil, that the prosperous and happy are the good and virtuous, and that the poverty-stricken and wretched are the bad and vicious?

To that conclusion the Christian is driven by remorseless logic; but it is not true, as the premises are not true. Whether God sends evil himself or permits the Devil to send it, is very much a matter of indifference. But the results of the operation of evil can only be evil. Men are not to be made good and virtuous by whips and scorpions, starvation and unemployment. It is not human nature. The clerical diagnoses of the ills of men are usually wrong because the clerics do not understand human nature. If you have been blessed by a happy and beneficial environment and are happy in work congenial to you for which you are fairly paid, you are to be congratulated on being so situated as to find life a pleasant thing. But what cant it is for such as you to come snivelling to God with your pious and gushing gratitude, when you know, in your heart, that misery is the portion of the many and that you have done little—so little—in the "service of man." Yes; you are very humble in your gratitude, and your expressions are those of a soul who says, like Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." But by what means are the ignorant and unblessed wretches what they are? Are they also what they are by the disfavor of God? For grace is just another word for favor. And it is incumbent upon you, standing now at the bar of humanity, which calls aloud for justice, to explain the reason why *you* in particular are selected as a *favorite* of God, and so many others are the objects of his wrath and curse in this life; and though you piously say that you are a sinner equally with them, for there is no distinction, and God, you say, is no respecter of persons—"All have sinned and come short."

And in the face of these mysterious problems of good and evil, you and your spiritual advisers have the confidence to claim that you have a knowledge and revelation of the supernatural denied to those who are outside the pale of Christianity. But your revelation does not stand the tests which common sense and reason and truth lay down. Is your God not a respecter of persons if your doctrines be true? You say he has blessed you, and you thank him for it. If he, to-morrow, plunged you into poverty you would still profess to thank him, or, at the least, to be resigned to the blow, believing where you cannot see.

Now all these ideas about the interference of a supernatural being, of the existence of whom we have no evidence in human affairs, and that he sends wealth and happiness to some and poverty and wretchedness to others, are being falsified by recent scientific research. We now know positively that if all people had enough knowledge they could combine to live a life on sane and reasonable lines, and thus make a happy and full life possible to *every* member of the community. While men of different sects and creeds wrangle about religious teaching we might be laying the basis of a reformed and full secular education for *every* child, from the elementary school right up to the university. Of course, there is much room for reform. Herbert Spencer wisely proposed that a lot of the dry book learning and cramming of information into younger children should cease, and that we should first teach them the laws of health, the care of their bodies, and allow them plenty outdoor instruction. We have still far to go. But Freethinkers must be as wise in their day and generation as the serpent—even as Christians—and,

if they are wise, they will realise that the future depends very largely upon how the *children* are dealt with *to-day*. These little ones are to be, in a few years, fathers and mothers themselves.

We do not require learned discourses and disquisitions on these problems which have been waiting so long to be tackled. Unemployment and poverty and the squalor of the slums, are as much the enemies of mankind as the tiger, the snake, the shark, and the bacilli of phthisis. Let us set about attacking these enemies. As to the lack of means, it is grimly and painfully true—truer than it was 2,000 years ago—that "unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."

If we were determined to lead a sane and reconstructed life there need not be any poor or wretched human beings in our midst. One of the wise utterances of ancient times is contained in the prayer of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." The very rich and the very poor stand in the way of the reconstruction of society. Let it be repeated with emphasis that the operation of evil can only result in evil. It is an evil for men to be oppressed and tortured by ignorance, fear, anxiety, privation, and equalor; and it is a mockery to offer such men sermons and tracts. In the case of normal human beings vice is almost, without exception, the *result*, and not the *cause*, of adversity and misfortune. Light is what we want—more light; and more light we shall have, despite the efforts of the Churches to induce people to rest contented with the positions in life in which it has pleased God to place them, and to placate them by ill-founded "assurances" of glorious compensation in a future life for the ills they have to endure here. Whether we believe in a balancing and adjustment of accounts at some future time or not, we can at least say that any such prospect is no reason for preventible human torment here and now. And where shall the prosperous and happy stand in heaven?

SIMPLE SANDY.

Acid Drops.

The first battleship of the *Dreadnought* type built on the Thames, the *Thunderer*, is to be launched and christened, on the first of February, by Mrs. Randall Davidson, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury. "It is hoped," a sedately Christian newspaper says (the *Westminster Gazette*, as a matter of fact), "that the Archbishop of Canterbury will be able to attend and conduct the preliminary service." Nothing we ever said in the *Freethinker* against Christianity could beat this. Here is a man whose salary is £15,000 a year for preaching the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich." He is the head of the principal Church of Christ in England—counting wealth, and numbers, and power, and privilege. He knows that Christ, whose head servant he is in this country, taught that whoso took the sword should perish by the sword, that evil was not to be resisted, that when you are smitten on one cheek you should offer the other cheek for similar treatment, that you are even to love your enemies, etc., etc. And yet this man's wife goes to "christen" a battleship in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and he himself may conduct the religious service which precedes her performance. And the Christian world sees no sort of impropriety in such conduct. It is really enough to make Christ turn in his grave, as the saying is; but they know he won't do it,—he is out of trouble and out of mischief—and they carry on the fine paying Company he started without the slightest care about the Articles of Association.

The *British Weekly* quotes with approval Mr. Canton's story of how a Bible colporteur, in 1863, offered a Bible to the Empress Eugénie. "I know the Bible," she said, "and appreciate it. I possess it already, and that is the reason why I do not buy a copy." "Appreciate" it is good. The Almighty ought to feel flattered. Seven years later the gracious lady who paid the author of the Bible such a handsome compliment did her utmost, and successfully, to launch France into war with Germany. "It is my war, my own," grave writers reported her as saying. So much for the noble influence of the Blessed Book.

"Holy Bible, book divine, precious treasure thou art mine." This portion of a familiar old hymn will appeal to Alfred John Heyden, of 12 Wellesley-street, Gloucester. He contracted to purchase a Bible for £2 6s., payable in 2s. instalments. Edward Spellman, who sold him this expensive copy of God's writings, lent him a shilling to pay the first instalment—which is a rare way of forcing business. Alfred John Heyden repented of his bargain and tried to get out of it, but the County Court judge ordered him to discharge his liability at the rate of three shillings a month, with costs. Heyden believes that Spellman "did" him. Spellman believes that Heyden tried to "do" him. And all over the Bible!

There is a demand among teachers for an expurgated Bible. If this goes on the Protestant fetish will be known eventually as the Beastly Book.

Those Atheists will go on committing suicide—as Talmage and Torrey said they would. Here is Mr. Thomas Cook Webdale, leader of the Luton East-end Mission, hanging himself in front of the rostrum. "Jesu, lover of my soul" was his favorite hymn, and on a hymn-book open at the well-known words was found a note addressed to the brethren of the mission, asking them to forgive him for what he was doing, and urging them to continue the work. He leaves a wife and five children. It is so like those Atheists, as Talmage and Torrey say, to desert their wives and children.

A correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who thinks we are all growing too sentimental—which presumably means that we are all losing our love for cruelty and brutality—amusingly refers Mr. H. S. Salt, of the Humanitarian League, to the Old Testament in justification of the "lash," and quotes the text that "stripes are for the backs of fools." Good Lord! What a frightful lot of backs the "lash" will be laid on if that is the case! This correspondent himself might easily be one of the sufferers. For he actually refers to the "scourge of small cords" with which Jesus whipped out the harmless and necessary dove-sellers and money-changers from the unsanctified precincts of the temple. But the gentleman's (or is it a lady's) final folly is the suggestion that the Japanese, who don't allow corporal punishment, not even in schools, are growing so extravagantly humane as to impair the "fundamental virtues of courage and endurance." Fancy the Japanese losing courage and endurance! The people whose sublime disregard for death, during the late war with Russia, was beyond anything else of the kind in modern history.

A correspondent writes to "J. B." of the *Christian World*, concerning the second coming of Christ. Whereupon "J. B." assures the writer that the doctrine is all rubbish. But, he adds, the "second coming was believed in by the first generation of Christians as an event that was to happen in their lifetime. That was the conviction of the leaders, including the apostles and the New Testament writers. We know that they were all wrong." Quite so; but if we know that they were all wrong on this question, what reason have we to suppose that they were all right on others? People who could believe in the insane doctrine of a second coming could believe anything. Moreover, "J. B." conveniently ignores that the doctrine of a second coming is among the plainest of New Testament teachings. "J. B." asks: "Can we not trust Him?"—Jesus. But it was Jesus who foretold his second coming, and "J. B." supplies the answer to his own question.

Any reason is better than none to account for the general slump in the religious world. Among the reasons given for this decline by some *Christian World* correspondents is—smoking. One writer traces a connection between the decline in Sunday-school attendance and the use of tobacco. In some mysterious and unindicated way smoking undermines faith in Christian teachings. Another writer points out how much might be done if the money spent on tobacco were devoted to foreign missions. Much more would be available if Christians went without clothes. Another asks whether we can picture the apostles smoking? Well, no; we can't picture St. Paul giving an address broken by puffs at a churchwarden or by dips into a packet of apostolic "Woodbines." But this is only because we have never thought of the people of those days smoking. They didn't know everything down in "Judea," and smoking was one of the things of which they were ignorant. But we don't know that any of the apostles would have lost their dignity if they had smoked. If tobacco had been used at the last supper it would not have been less friendly. Mark xiv. 23-25 would have read quite as well had it concluded: "And when he had spoken they all did take of the aromatic weed, and

smoked thereat, meditating upon what had been told unto them." A little healthy vice in the shape of smoking might have had a beneficial influence on the unhealthy virtues of early Christian history.

Augustus William Finch was the conductor of a pious mission—a mission for working boys in East London. He loved it so much that he appropriated some £26,000 of his employers' money to keep it going. Messrs. Phelps, Dodd, and Co., of Leadenhall-street, were paying him a salary of nearly £1,000 a year. They generously pleaded for lenient treatment, and the mission-hall thief escaped with twelve months' imprisonment. Lucky man! An ordinary thief would have got years.

"Before God —" said Arthur Henderson in the dock at the Old Bailey. Before he could utter another word he fell to the floor with a crash. Excitement, of course; but not long ago it would have been "a judgment."

Mr. C. Stewart writes in the *Hibbert Journal* suggesting the desirability of a change in the form of prayers used, recognising that prayer has a subjective value only. In other words, there is no objective answer to prayer; and people only benefit by it so long as they can persuade themselves that it is of value. With this we agree, but add that any other method—covering your chest with Sunlight Soap labels, wearing a string of potatoes round your neck, or spending so many minutes per day on all-fours—would be equally effective so long as they are believed in. But Mr. Stewart overlooks the important fact that these methods are only of value so long as we are really deluded by them. The subjective effect of prayer is produced by the belief that it has an objective value. To take an example. If a man believes that God answers prayer objectively, and his wife or child is ill, he may derive some comfort from praying for their recovery. But if he does not believe this, prayer becomes simply impossible. He cannot say: "I know there will be no answer to my prayer; the disease will run its course whatever I may do, but it will comfort me to believe otherwise; therefore I will pray." The whole thing would be too ridiculous for trial. An illusion, to be of use, must be an illusion. No one can recognise a thing as an absurdity and continue deriving the benefit from a belief in its reasonableness. The only justification for prayer is the belief in its objective value. When that belief goes, its practice is an evidence of stupidity or hypocrisy.

In the same journal the Rev. J. Lloyd Thomas makes the discovery that "Rationalism" (what a respectable, indefinite, non-committal kind of a word this is becoming!) is working itself into quite a religious form.

"Even the hard-shelled sceptics are beginning to look wistfully for some spiritual solidarity, and long for that peace which they suspect may still be burning quietly like a sanctuary lamp within the hush and dimness of the Church. Having rebelled like self-willed children greedy for experience, they are at last disillusioned or nauseated with satiety of doubt, and in the last act of their melodrama they turn again with tears to kiss their waiting Mother and be reconciled."

We have heard before of these wistful, restless, disconsolate sceptics, but have never been fortunate enough to meet them. At any rate, they don't flourish round this office. All the sceptics we know are peaceful enough. It is the Christians who are uneasy. The Freethinker knows that the "peace" of the Church is only another name for the stagnation of the tomb. Most of them have been there, and know all about it.

How full of love towards one another Christians are! Some Christians at Manchester proposed that Churchmen and Dissenters should unite for a great mission in 1912. The machinery was to have been carefully elaborated, speakers prepared, the city canvassed, advertising got ready, and in due course there would have been a *spontaneous* outpouring of the spirit. But, alas, it is not to be. The extreme Churchmen are up in arms against working with Nonconformists, and would see the people of Manchester damned first before seeing them saved by a united effort. The *Church Times* says that the Church of Christ is responsible for every soul in Manchester, and cannot hand over the work to others. Manchester people pride themselves on their shrewdness; it is a pity they do not or cannot make both parties realise that the less the city has of those elaborately engineered missions the better for its sanity and orderly progress.

Hell is not quite extinguished. The Rev. W. Schofield Battersby, of Holy Trinity, Blackley, Manchester, asks for "20 Catholic Banknotes in His Name," to save souls from the terrible pit disaster hereafter where the fire is not

quenched." We don't know what a Catholic Banknote is. Probably, as it is to redeem souls from hell, they are printed on asbestos instead of on ordinary paper.

The Principal of Wells Theological College says that Christianity is "the religion of the cross." As practised, it is more often religion on the cross.

The campaign of slander that has been carried on in this country against the memory of Ferrer is evidently to be continued against the accredited representative to England of the Portuguese Republic, Senhor Magalhoes Lima. The *Catholic Times* has a shrieking editorial and a special article protesting against England recognising him as a representative. The *Catholic Times* says:—

"At a time when the work of foreign conspirators has filled London and the entire country with horror we are asked to receive as the representative of Portugal an arch-conspirator, the head of a secret organisation, who makes it his boast that he organised the plot against King Carlos and his son, King Manoel, and that he came to London to spread the Republican Propaganda; in other words, to promote the plot. Is King George to be the next monarch to be plotted against?"

This is quite in accord with the true spirit of Roman Catholic propaganda, although it means very little when analysed. The fear that Senhor Lima is coming to plot against the life of George V. is too absurd for even Catholics to believe. The statement that Senhor Lima boasted of causing the death of King Carlos is simply a lie. As for the rest, the new representative to England would be the last to disclaim having worked for the establishment of a Republic in Portugal. Of course he conspired; but how on earth could the old regime have been overthrown except by conspiracy? Would Manoel have left the country, and the old, admittedly corrupt, and pious government resigned on the strength of a representation? Senhor Lima comes here as one of the organisers of a successful revolution that everyone admits has given Portugal a better government than it has ever had before during its history. Nor must it be forgotten that the revolution was comparatively a bloodless one. Would it have been conducted with so much regard for human life had pious Catholics instead of avowed Freethinkers been its promoters? At any rate, Great Britain, having rightly acknowledged the Republic, can hardly decline to receive its representative on the ground that he was instrumental in bringing the Republic into existence.

Senhor Lima's real offence is that he is a Freethinker and a Freemason. "Thank God," says the writer of a special article in the *C. T.*, "this is a Christian country. Protestants and Catholics may have their controversies, but they are united in condemning the work of those who impiously raise their hands against the Most High, and by treacherous methods carry on a campaign against the teachings of His Son, the Redeemer of Mankind." Dear, dear! Unfortunately for these defenders of the "Most High," the British Government has no concern with the religious opinions of the representatives of other countries, and so the *Catholic Times* will have to be satisfied with working off its spleen by fulminating in the manner of its leading articles, and with exercising its capacity for slandering Freethinkers, whom it would dearly like to deal with in a much more drastic manner. One thing appears certain. Whatever happens in Portugal, the Holy Roman Church can never again wield the power there it once possessed.

The *Christian* is not as pleased as the *Daily Telegraph* was over its summary of popular progress during the last quarter of a century. "We claim," it says, "to have made huge progress of late years; but how largely we have ignored the divine declaration that it is only righteousness that exalteth a nation. In many directions the people have literally forsaken God, and the result is only too evident." Evidently the *Christian* thinks we are going to the dogs, but it doesn't like to say so. From our point of view, what it says is simply much ado about nothing.

The London Missionary Society laments the death of a native Christian preacher, called Hare, in New Guinea, and says that he was killed by "the sorcerers." Very likely. Those gentlemen were always unscrupulous in putting their enemies out of the way. Christian sorcerers have murdered their enemies wholesale. They have been the worst of the whole profession. Christian sorcerers burnt Servetus, and Bruno, and Vanini, and many other lovers of truth and liberty. We agree with the London Missionary Society. The sorcerers are a very bad lot.

"The Interruptions of God" is the title of the front-page article in a religious weekly. How ill-bred these people represent their Deity!

Missionaries don't rely entirely upon Christ being with them. Their chief reliance now seems to be upon "hygiene and treatment." These are the words of Mr. W. D. Armstrong, of the Congo-Balolo Mission, in singing the praises of Livingstone College. "The medical knowledge gained at Livingstone," he says, "has been helpful in many ways, in saving life, saving health, and, by no means least, paving the way to the hearts of both natives and traders, and compelling the latter to acknowledge that 'there is some advantage in having missionaries after all.'" What the natives want, evidently, is not so much new souls as renovated lungs, kidneys, and livers. Heal their sick bodies, and they'll sample your holy spirit. Such is the power of faith in the twentieth century!

Religious riots in Bombay necessitated firing on the mob by the troops, eleven being killed and many more injured. God old religion!

More religious harmony! Johnnie Kensit went to Brighton to protest against the induction of the new vicar at St. Bartholomew's. Johnnie told the Bishop of Chester that he was a traitor, and the Bishop's friends handled Johnnie very roughly, one of them giving him a blow on the face. How they love one another!

Captain R. Brodie, of the Child's Hill branch of the Salvation Army, was doing a poor business, so he clapped an artificial skull on his head, put on a shroud, and walked about with a coffin, and the sensational advertisement brought him overflow meetings. A good many people call this blasphemous and disgusting. But they should bear in mind that even a Salvation Army captain must live. Every branch of the Blood-and-Fire Trust has to pay its own way, and has to remit something to headquarters without receiving anything in return. Captain Brodie's taste may be peculiar, but it may be due to heredity. Perhaps one of his ancestors was a pirate, who sailed under the skull and cross-bones. It doesn't do to be too severe. And the Salvation Army couldn't possibly succeed without some vulgarity.

The Secretary of the Salvation Army tells the *Daily Mirror* that he feels sure he can "rely upon the good taste and sense of Captain Brodie." Certainly—while the people and the pence roll in.

General Booth represents the Government as consulting with him about the reclamation of criminals. He has been hinting at this for some time. But we can hardly believe that Mr. Winston Churchill will want the assistance of religious bodies in the secular work of the Home Office. We read that General Booth told a Belfast crowd on Sunday that the Salvation Army was on the eve of finding how to benefit the criminal in a new way. The new way seems to be involved in another statement that the army has acquired 400 acres of ground near Colchester, and is going to cut it up into five-acre plots, each with its cottage. "I have every hope," the General said, "that the experiment will prove a success." Like the "Colony" at Hadleigh, for instance!

"Providence" continues its activity in the earthquake line. The latest sample is reported from Kebery, in Russian Turkestan. Two hundred and four corpses have been dug out of the ruins—to say nothing of the cattle that have perished. "He doeth all things well."

Plague is still raging in Manchuria. There are 150 cases daily in the Chinese quarter of Harbin. Corpses, half devoured by dogs, are being thrown into the river Amur, and the infection is thus carried along its course.

"Providence" has also been favoring Spain. Passenger and goods trains have been stuck in the snow. At Larasa an avalanche swept the locomotive and eight wagons of a train into the river. Eighty vessels of all sorts have been destroyed or considerably damaged at Vigo. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

A Reuter telegram from Funchal, Madeira, states that the loss in consequence of the cholera is terrible. Destitution has reached such a pitch that trouble is feared, and a Portuguese cruiser remains at Funchal for the purpose of guaranteeing foreign property. With regard to the sailors, it is said that "their attitude towards religious bodies and institutions is far from friendly." We are glad to hear it. But we quite understand that religious bodies and institutions can hardly share our satisfaction.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 22, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: at 7.30, "The Soul."

January 29, Queen's Hall, London.
February 5, Glasgow; 12, Manchester; 26, Birmingham.
March 5, Liverpool; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.
April 2, Stratford Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 22, Public Hall, Canning Town; 29, Liverpool. February 5, Birmingham; 12 and 19, Queen's Hall, London; 26, Glasgow. March 5, Manchester; 12, Queen's Hall; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 22, Birmingham; February 19, Failsworth; 26, Queen's Hall. March 5, Queen's Hall; 12, West Ham; 19, Glasgow; 26, Stratford Town Hall. April 2, Manchester.

THOMAS JONES.—The "discoveries" you refer to do not make the supernatural parts of the Bible any more credible. We know that the river Nile exists in Egypt, but that doesn't prove that Moses was rescued from drowning in it by the king's daughter. We know there was a king called Darius, but that doesn't prove that Daniel was miraculously preserved from death in the lions' den. We may believe there was a prophet called Elijah without believing that he emigrated to heaven in a chariot of fire. We may also (to come farther down the stream of time) believe that Queen Anne existed without believing that she miraculously cured people of the "king's evil" by touching them. There is no real danger to Freethought in the direction you indicate.

SAKON.—Pleased to hear, as you put it, that you "simply swallow the *Freethinker* each week." Your Christian friend talks nonsense in saying that nobody can judge of a Bible contradiction without knowing Hebrew and Greek. Common people, in this country, have got to be saved or damned in English, and must therefore believe or disbelieve in English.

H. J. HYETT.—See paragraph. Thanks.

F. C. WYKES.—Thanks for cuttings.

THOMAS YOUNG writes: "I was among the audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday night, and very much enjoyed your lecture. I was pleased to see you in such good form, and hope you may be able to go on so for many years to come."

F. SMALLWOOD.—The Home Secretary is not the proper person to apply to about oaths or affirmations in courts of justice, or any other parts of the administration of the law. The Lord Chancellor presides over that department. The case you refer to simply means that the judge or magistrate must satisfy himself of a witness's *bona fides*. In claiming to affirm, you must say, either that you have no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is contrary to your religious belief. Pleased to hear you thought Mr. Cohen "great" on Sunday evening at Birmingham.

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

M. RINGROSE.—Sorry to say Miss Vance's eyesight is *not* improving. Glad to have your "hearty thanks" for what you are good enough to call our "splendid efforts," and specially glad that your wife joins in the wish that we "may have health and strength to carry on the noble work for many years to come."

T. MARK.—Will deal with it next week.

ANNIE EDWARDS.—Pleased to have your letter. The enclosure will be used.

W. H. SHAWCROSS.—Thanks; it will be of service.

ISABELLA J. ROBERTS.—Nothing pleases us more than appreciative and encouraging letters, like yours, from ladies. They mark, at least for us, the beginning of the end of superstition.

H. THOMSON.—The *Encyclopaedia Biblica* ought to be in your Free Library. Turn to the article "Paul" and you will find the information you seek. There is nothing but legend as to where and how Paul died—and very superstitious legend too, as you may see in the new edition of our *Bible Heroes* which is on the way to publication.

CONGREGATIONALIST WORKING MAN.—See the articles by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd this week. You cannot have thought the matter out when you say that a man who doesn't believe in a future life is "right" in being a scoundrel. Is that what you would be yourself? We hope not.

J. L. ANDERSON.—Shall appear.

S. STRES (Liverpool).—What do you mean by asking, at this time of day, if the "report" is true that "Mr. J. M. Robertson has left the N. S. S.?" Mr. Robertson has not been connected with the N. S. S. for nearly twenty years. His work lies in other directions.

H. T. HILL.—Thanks for cuttings.

DR. AND MRS. LAING.—Your "congratulations and best wishes" are very welcome.

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.

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.

There was an excellent, though not a crowded, audience at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered the third of his new year's course of lectures, the subject being "Christ." The lecture was a searching criticism of the Gospel story, and of the claims made for Christ as the Light and Savior of the World. Nothing could have exceeded the interest displayed by the audience, which again included a considerable number of ladies; and the applause, especially at the finish, was extremely enthusiastic. Miss Kough occupied the chair, and succeeded in eliciting several questions but no regular opposition.

The fourth lecture of this January course at Queen's Hall will be delivered this evening (Jan. 22) by Mr. Foote, his subject being "The Soul." This is a subject that should prove perhaps the most attractive of all. The "saints" should try to bring orthodox friends and acquaintances along to hear this lecture.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on January 10 was not quite as well attended as the previous year's, but that is easy of explanation. The 1910 Dinner happened to fall on January 11, which was the President's birthday, and there was a special rally on that occasion. Besides, the weather had been very trying for some weeks before this year's Dinner, and a good many "saints" were laid up, or kept at home, by colds or other troubles. One North London "saint" and his wife, who had never missed the Dinner before, had to miss it in 1911. Several old familiar faces were absent. Mr. Foote, in his brief address from the chair, mentioned the case of the veteran Mr. Side, of Walworth, and hoped that, in spite of his age, he would be able to attend the 1912 Dinner. Our old friend will see that, as far as he is concerned, out of sight is not out of mind.

Mr. Cohen had a capital audience at the King's Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday evening. He is to be succeeded there this evening (Jan. 22) by Mr. Lloyd, who should have an equally good meeting.

South Lancashire "saints" are requested to note that Miss Kough delivers two lectures to-day (Jan. 22) at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. They should hear her on our recommendation. They will hear her on her own recommendation afterwards.

A subscriber to the President's Honorarium Fund, who is a scholar and a gentleman, and whose real name is known in the public service of his country, has private reasons for having his subscription acknowledged as "E. B." We venture to quote the following from his letter:—

"I send my mite to your Fund with regrets that I cannot increase the amount owing to the ever widening demands on my purse. But still if *all* who derive benefit from reading your paper would help, I am sure there would not be any difficulty in raising the £300, and that in a few months, instead of a whole year being required to collect the amount. I trust that you will escape all serious illness this year, and that you will maintain unimpaired your energy and vigor to enable you to fight in the cause of truth and progress in the magnificent way you have done hitherto."

This is very generous praise, and we shall try to deserve some of it.

Mr. F. Smallman's subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund should have been acknowledged last week. It was, in fact, the very earliest subscription that came in for 1911. Mr. Smallman—who, we regret to say, has not been very well lately—says that, in his opinion, twice the amount asked for ought to be realised, and without the list having to be kept open for twelve months. Mr. Smallman speaks in the most eulogistic manner of the President's work for Freethought.

We mentioned some time ago that a Rationalist Peace Society was being formed. It is a pity, of course, to have sectarian societies for the promotion of such a universal desideratum as peace; but the Christians compel Freethinkers to act in this way by obtruding *their* sectarianism on Peace platforms and in Peace publications. They claim the credit of every bit of success for themselves, and represent it as all achieved for "Christ's sake." This partisan policy of theirs has become perfectly intolerable, and the Rationalist Peace Society is an absolute necessity. We invite Freethinkers to join this organisation, the prospectus of which will be found on another part of this journal.

The Rationalist Peace Society will hold its first public meeting on Tuesday evening, January 31, at South-Place

Institute, a few minutes' walk from Moorgate-street Station, and the same distance from Broad-street and Liverpool-street Stations. Mr. J. M. Robertson takes the chair, and the speakers are Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. John Russell, M.A., Mr. S. H. Swinny (the well-known Positivist), Mr. J. F. Green, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Further particulars and tickets can be obtained from the hon. secretary, 36 Cursitor-street, E.C. Admission is free. We hope London "saints" will rally well on this occasion, and give the new Society a good start.

The President's Honorarium Fund.

To the Freethinkers of Great Britain.

January 1, 1911.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

We the undersigned appeal to you again in behalf of the above Fund.

There is no necessity for a lengthy letter. You all know that the object of this Fund is to relieve Mr. G. W. Foote from the worst of his financial worries and leave him as free as possible to devote his time and energies to his work as President of the National Secular Society, Chairman of the Secular Society, Ltd., Editor of the *Freethinker*, and leader in general of the Freethought movement in this country.

No salary attaches to the office of President of the National Secular Society. An honorarium of £50 a year is received by Mr. Foote as Chairman of the Secular Society, Ltd. His work on the *Freethinker*, which is so heavy and incessant, yields him no salary or profit; on the contrary, he has to pay out of his own pocket a considerable deficit on the paper and its adjuncts.

This is the fourth year of the President's Honorarium Fund. We suggested that £300 might be realised in this way. The sum of £288 12s. 8d. was realised in 1908, and £277 12s. in 1909. We are happy to say that the full £300 was made up in 1910.

Unfortunately some of the most liberal subscribers to the Fund have been lost through death during the last two years. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the remaining subscribers will rather increase than lessen their donations.

All subscriptions received have been acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*, and will continue to be acknowledged in that way.

Subscriptions for 1911 can be forwarded to either of the undersigned. Those who prefer to do so can send, as before, direct to Mr. Foote himself at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Subscribers who do not wish their names to appear in print should state the form of acknowledgment they prefer.

We conclude with a hope that there will be a prompt and generous response to this appeal. We are aware that all subscribers cannot conveniently respond at once, but many can, and it would be pleasant if a considerable portion of the Fund were subscribed during January, in which the President's birthday falls.

Yours faithfully,

J. W. DE CAUX, J.P.,
92 St. Peter's-road, Gt. Yarmouth.

R. T. NICHOLS,
28 Park-road, Ilford.

A. J. FINCKEN,
66 Mount Grove-road, Highbury,
London, N.

President's Honorarium Fund, 1911.

Second List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £44 0s. 2d. George Payne, £20; F. Smallman, £5 5s.; Dr. and Mrs. Laing, £2 2s.; North Londoner (per Miss Vance), £2; W. Bean, 5s.; T. A. M., £1; Ernest, 10s.; E. B., £1 1s.; Robert Avis, £1; Thomas Young, 10s. 6d.; M. Barnard, 2s. 6d.; G. Smith, 10s.; M. Ringrose, 10s. 6d.; J. Lazarnick, 10s. 6d.

Correction.—K. C. £2 2s. last week should have been K. C. £1 1s. and H. T. C. £1 1s.

Christian Science.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

[This Lecture was delivered by Mr. Mangasarian before the Independent Religious Society, Chicago, prior to the death of Mrs. Eddy—which explains the present tense instead of the past in the references to that lady.]

A SENSE of duty and not a desire for pleasantries has influenced me to select the subject of this morning's lecture. I realise that we could spend the hour more profitably, and in a more self-respecting manner, if in place of so whimsical a "cult" as "Christian Science," for instance, we could discuss together a page from Shakespeare or Goethe. Personally, I would rather present to you the thoughts of these great masters than those of Dr. Dowie, or "Mother" Eddy, notwithstanding that either of these latter commands a much larger following than the immortal Shakespeare or Goethe. If, therefore, I should appear to you to have descended to lower planes, it is the fault of my subject. The fact that both Dowie and Eddy take themselves seriously, and look upon their effusions as strictly divine, does not in the least save the subject from being commonplace and undeserving of the attention of a serious platform.

Then again, the subject makes me sad. It has a depressing effect upon my spirits. I have had to wade once more through Mrs. Eddy's numerous writings. This is too much for a man of sensitive nerves—for a man who loves and believes in humanity. One or two brief extracts from her books will, I am sure, enlist your sympathy on my behalf. Desiring to convince us that God is the author of even the price which she charges for her work, Mrs. Eddy writes:

"When God impelled me to set a price on Christian Science mind healing, I could think of no financial equivalent for the impartation of a knowledge of that divine power which heals, but I was led to name \$300 as the price.....a startling sum for tuition lasting barely three weeks. This amount greatly troubled me. I shrank from asking it, but was finally led by a strange providence to accept this fee.....God has shown me in multitudinous ways the wisdom of this decision."

If people are disposed to protest against the price of "Christian Science," Mrs. Eddy refers them to the Lord. She herself seems to have taken pity upon our purse, for she "shrank from asking" so exorbitant a price; but the Deity would have his way, and dear Mrs. Eddy was prevented from helping us.

To think that the Supreme Being, with the destinies of ten thousand worlds on his hands—with Russian and Turkish affairs which demand his attention, with the Yellow Peril to look after—could also find the time to fix a price on Mary, Baker, Mason, Paterson, Glover, Eddy's book, is, to say the least, amusing.

It does seem at times as if the gods created man for sport. They watch our pranks from their thrones on high, enjoy a good, long laugh at our expense, and then, well, and then,—Dean Swift suggests, that when they have had all the amusement they can get out of us, they turn about and damn us.

Some years later Mrs. Eddy increased the price of "Christian Science," this time, without consulting the Lord. In an article signed by her, in 1888, she explains how she cut down the number of lessons from twelve to seven without reducing the price of the lessons, which means an advance in price. She says:

"As this number of lessons is of more value than twice this number in times past, no change is made in price of tuition, \$800." Thanks! We are glad she was considerate enough not to raise the price while cutting down the number of lessons, and did so without advising with the Deity, who, we fear, would not have shown the same generosity.

After this precious woman had sent into the world thousands of graduates from her Metaphysical College, in Boston—graduates who had paid her big charges for the privilege of going out and healing people at the same rates, she issued the following mandate, in 1897.

"Christian Scientists in the United States and Canada are hereby enjoined not to teach a student of Christian Science for one year, commencing on March 14, 1897."

That this was for the purpose of helping the sale of her own costly books appears from the following:

My works "are the only proper instructors for this hour. It shall be the duty of all Christian Scientists to circulate and sell, etc.," and this:

"If a member of the first Church of Christ, Scientist, shall fail to obey this injunction, it will render him liable to lose his membership in this church."

We feel disposed to protest against Mrs. Eddy's arbitrary method, and her commercialism. But, in criticising her would we not be criticising the Deity? Let us proceed with caution. Mrs. Eddy has a powerful ally.

We wish to give one or two other examples of Mrs. Eddy's mentality which will be found to be as original as her morality. Wishing to prove that the material world is an illusion of the senses she tells us that on a wet day, when there is a downpour of rain, and when mist and fog shroud the land and sea, we can easily assure ourselves that our senses are not telling us the truth, that the weather is really fine, by consulting the barometer which in the midst of cloud and rain points to clear weather.

What shall we think of the mental calibre of a woman who appeals to a barometer—to quicksilver—to prove that matter does not exist? If our senses betray us when they lead us to think that it is raining, what assurance have we that they are telling the truth about the rise or fall of the quicksilver in the barometer? Is not the barometer as material as the rain or clouds? Are we not using the same senses when we consult the barometer? Does Mrs. Eddy think that the whole material world is an illusion with the exception of the barometer? Goodness!

We feel ashamed of ourselves to be caught giving serious attention to such incoherent palaver as the above. I quote again:

"The blood, heart, lungs, brain, have nothing to do with life."

"The daily ablutions of an infant are no more natural than taking a fish out of water and covering it with dirt would be natural."

"Gender also is a quality, a characteristic of mind, not of matter."

"Christian Science is more safe and potent than any other sanitary method."

"The condition of food, stomach, bowels, clothing, etc., is of no serious import to your child."

Such are a few of the characteristic sayings of the now renowned discoverer of "Christian Science."

They remind us of the saying of our great American humorist: "The absurdity which the human race cannot swallow has not yet been invented."

Of course, there are many passages in her writings to which no objection can be made—passages which would be considered sensible—in any book. But no amount of platitudes could atone for the absurdities we have pointed out. If I were to tell you with a straight face and solemnly, this morning, that my lectures are always written for me by the Deity, no matter how many sensible things my lectures might contain, you would be justified in concluding that I was either an impostor or a crank.

I am, therefore, opposed to Christian Science for the same reasons that I am opposed to any and every popularism, which abandon rationality. I have no other motive in my propaganda against the Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan or other creeds. I consider them hurtful to the free and beautiful development of humanity, because they destroy in man his noblest gift—the power to be rational. What grieves me when I see a man with his mouth in the dust before a wooden idol, or clasping a silver crucifix upon his breast, or asking to have the soles of his feet and the pits of his arms anointed with oil before he closes his eyes in death, or to have the ground in which he is to lie consecrated by a priest—these

thing make me sad, because no one can do these things without ceasing to be a rational being, and without rationality there can be no civilisation.

When I see the sects carry their quarrels even to the cemetery, where at least all contention should cease; when I am told that unless a body is sprinkled it cannot be given a resting place in "holy ground"—I,—well,—I feel a lump in my throat, and find relief by giving vent to my feelings. That there should be people willing to have their children denied a decent burial—oh, that is what I do not understand. That is what vexes my soul. It is against this element of imbecility that we must fight if we would save humanity. To be a believer in a woman who puts forth the claims and says the things which I have quoted, one must either be a hypocrite, or relinquish the right to be considered a rational creature.

To preach, for instance, that the material world does not exist, and then to act as if it existed, would be hypocrisy. To believe, on the other hand, that the material world does not exist, and actually to try to live up to it would be stupidity. Think of a religion which limits its adherents to a choice between hypocrisy and stupidity. There seems to be no other alternative. To believe sincerely in a creed which defies reason, leads to imbecility; to merely pretend to believe in it is hypocrisy. Which would I prefer—that my my neighbor should be a hypocrite, or an imbecile? We can laugh at a hypocrite,—he will himself laugh at his own pretensions, but defend us against the man who would in all conscience compel us to live up to his *shibboleth*, or be damned. A wicked world, as you have heard me say before, might be reformed, but there is absolutely no hope for a stupid one. Schiller says the gods deprive us of our reason when they wish to punish us.

Mrs. Eddy teaches that matter is an illusion. Does she try to live up to it? I say, does she try, because really that is all anyone can do, as it is an utter impossibility to live up to such a belief. But the founder of "Christian Science" does not even try to live up to her own dogma. If there is no matter, the human body is an illusion too. Does Mrs. Eddy treat her body as if it were an illusion? Let us see if there is any difference between the way we treat our bodies and the way Mrs. Eddy treats hers. We believe our body exists, and therefore we protect it with clothing—Mrs. Eddy does the same, although she does not believe in the body. Besides she decks her person with jewelry, which not all of us do. We sleep, so does she; we have a roof over our heads, so has she. We close our windows in the winter and make a fire, so does she. We are growing older, so is she. Now and then we feel unwell and apply to a doctor for treatment when we cannot treat ourselves; the Christian Scientist does the same. If Christian Scientists never need any treatment, why are there so many healers among them? How do they make a living if no one of their circle is ever taken sick? I admit that we do not take the same treatment, or go to the same doctor, nor call our troubles by the same name, but, dear me, why make such an ado over mere names? I go to bed at night with severe pains in my head and bones, in the morning when I get up I find that all the pains have disappeared. Who treated me? Last evening the sky was dark, heavy clouds hung over the earth, the winds were asleep, the leaves on the trees seemed dead; this morning the heavens are smiling, the sun shines radiant, the breezes are awake, and the leaves quiver upon the branches. Who treated the earth? There is in man, as there is in nature, a recuperative power, and for anyone to claim a monopoly of it is absurd beyond utterance. In what respect then does a "Christian Scientist" who does not believe in the body, treat hers differently from the way we treat ours? We have to eat to keep ourselves alive, so do they. We have to take liquids with our food, so do they. We bathe our bodies, both because it is refreshing to do so, and because it is cleanly. Why do they bathe theirs? We need fresh air, Mrs. Eddy rides out for the same purpose,—and yet she protests

she does not believe in the body. In her case, does the deed harmonise with the creed?

Let us continue. Mrs. Eddy declares there is no matter, and then she proceeds to write a book. Is not a book—its paper, its cloth, its ink, and its boards—as material as any drug which the chemist manufactures? But Mrs. Eddy goes beyond the drug manufacturer in her Materialism. A scientist invents an instrument to render surgical operations less painful, and patents his idea—not the steel or the leather used in the instrument, but his *idea*. He patents it to protect his profits. Mrs. Eddy discovers mental healing, and copyrights it. What is the difference? A book is as material as a surgical instrument, and a surgical instrument is as much the expression of an idea as a book, and a copyright is the same as a patent. The scientist, however, says his instrument is an instrument invented by himself. Mrs. Eddy declares her book is an immaterial revelation from God. What is the difference? This: the inventor of the surgical instrument is honest; the inventor of Christian Science is a pretender.

But think of copyrighting the idea or ideas of God, as Mrs. Eddy has done. The host of people who shout her name and bend the knee to her do not seem to reflect that to copyright God's thoughts—his latest revelation—is really to copyright God himself. A New England woman has virtually secured a copyright on the Deity, and for commercial purposes,—else why does she charge such high prices for her book?—and not one of her idolatrous followers breathes even a murmur against it. It has been said that this lady has copyrighted her books, and asks a big price for them, netting nearly five hundred per cent. profit, not because she wants the money, but to make the buyers appreciate the work. This reminds me of Whitman's apostrophe to the animals. There is no such charlatanism among them. When I hear given such an answer as the above, I too long to get away from this hypocritical or stupid world to dwell with the animals. I envy the silent, serene, honest, stupid brute! He could never have concocted such an excuse or put on such airs.

If the above evidences are not sufficient to prove that Mrs. Eddy does not believe in matter, we will give a few others.

Not only has Mrs. Eddy written a book and copyrighted the same, but, she who does not believe in sin or evil of any kind, warns her followers that it would be an act of theft to use any of her copyrighted ideas without her consent. Of course, Mrs. Eddy is only laboring under an illusion, like so many of us often do, that she owns a book and a copyright, and that people might steal her discovery. Poor woman!

Mrs. Eddy's precautions against would-be robbers are defended by the argument that, while she herself does not believe in theft, her neighbors do, and it is simply to protect herself against them that she reminds them of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." Then why may not we have the same right in self-defence to compel the "Christian Scientists" to vaccinate their children, to fumigate their homes, and to report contagious cases?

Again, the founder of this new religion commands her followers to refrain from treating patients suffering from contagious diseases, or such as require a knowledge of surgery. Is this another proof that Mrs. Eddy does not believe in matter?

If a headache of a fever is illusory, why may not a sprain, a mutilated limb, or a broken neck be illusory too? If there is no headache, because there is no head to ache, then there ought to be no rupture or fracture of a bone, because there is no bone to break. Why must we go to a dentist to have a tooth treated, and not to a physician for a fever? To this it is answered that, at present, our faith is not strong enough to deny the existence of a tooth, as we can the existence of an ache or a fever, but that by-and-bye it will be strong enough to dispense with the surgeon as well. I join with Whitman, once more, in an anthem to the honest brute!

(To be continued.)

Vistas of Time and Hope.

THE thrones on Olympus are empty,
The holy ones gone.
The hate of the world has extinguished
The light of their sun.

The bowls that with nectar were brimming
For death-scorning lips,
Are handled by foes, and the stranger
Another wine sips.

The stream by the Naiads enchanted,
That merrily ran,
No longer is thrilled into music
By laughter of Pan.

The house of the treasures ambrosial
Now buries her dross.
There rests o'er the star-gleaming portals
The ghost of the cross.

The Man who with sorrow was burdened,
The thorn-crownèd God
Has laid on the beauty of Hellas
The wrath of his rod.

O Christ, when thy body new risen
Ascended in cloud,
There fell on the face of Apollo
The night of thy shroud.

The nails in thy hands, they have piercèd
The mighty and fair.
Thy darkness dissolved but to leave them
The mists of despair.

In lands where thy lovers, O Jesus,
Knew torture and shame,
The strength of thy splendor of sorrow
Has kindled her flame.

O'er peoples and ages have thundered
The wheels of thy car.
The blast of thy terrible trumpet
Has sounded afar.

But though thou art king and thy sceptre
Eternal doth seem,
The might of thy mystical kingdom
Shall pass as a dream.

A dream? Yea, a dream, as thy soul is,
Man's imaged desire.
On altars of hearts that disown thee
Shall perish thy fire.

On peaks of the mist-covered mountains,
On wind-bitten waste
The last of thy temples shall crumble.
Thy doom maketh haste.

The pomps and the pageants of Mammon,
That hail thee as king,
Shall vanish, like spectres unholy
When night taketh wing.

Oh! why in the cup of thy loving
Are wines that destroy?
We thought that we saw in thy spirit
The star-wealth of joy.

The angels that greeted thee cradled
Sang peace to the world.
But age after age has discovered
Thy war-flag unfurled.

A thousand delights by thy coming
To evil were turned.
We call thee to judgment for ashes
Of heretics burned.

If accents of bountiful pity
Thy tongue ever gave,
If flesh of our flesh we may claim thee,
A human heart brave.

Then gladly as men we will render
Our tribute of love.
We hate but the God they have made thee,
Throned grimly above.

As Man thou wert warm in thy mercy,
Thy human heart kind.
As God thou art cold in thy heaven,
As God thou art blind.

The form of thee human has vanished
 To desolate skies.
 The tale of the heart that was broken
 Is darkened with lies.

The power of thy name is the sanction
 For creeds that enslave.
 Men turn into fetters the precepts
 Humanity gave.

Thus ever the gold of the spirit
 Is changed into dross.
 The Christ made an idol is nailed
 Again to the cross.

Oh! what are the best of the sages
 But ashes and clay?
 No Christs can uplift or deliver
 Who pass not away.

Though long is the path we have travelled,
 From moner to man,
 The age of the kingdom of reason
 Is yet but a span.

How dark and how weary our journey,
 Through folly and crime!
 The world of the love that is master
 Far flashes sublime.

If God ever planned the sad story
 Of man upon earth,
 And wrought in the womb of his knowledge
 Sin's horrible birth,

Our conscience shall fix on his forehead
 The murderer's brand;
 Prometheus shall breathe his defiance,
 A God-hater stand.

The blame is not his who has struggled,
 Grief-battered, alone.
 For wrongs the Almighty ordained
 Should weakness atone?

The child of the ape in the forest,
 That gibbered and grinned—
 Say, how can he merit damnation?
 How can he have sinned?

But oh! 'twas a dream of the savage,
 That ghost of the skies.
 The prayers of the good and the evil
 Unheeded arise.

Our souls are the gods that are cruel,
 The gods that are kind.
 The glory celestial is only
 The light of our mind.

We search for a joy in our sorrow,
 A gleam in the mist.
 Our hope blossoms forth into vision,
 We call it a Christ.

Still, still is the spirit in travail
 With beauty divine,
 The Christ of the mighty to-morrow.
 We wait for his sign.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

THE LAST FAITH.

Now, when the heavens are empty and no sign
 Comes from the eternal silence, loudly still
 The blind priest raves, and all the slaves of God
 shriek their approval! "Man," they cry, "is evil."

Lie of lies!

Yet how the hordes of madmen echo it,
 Not knowing that they curse themselves and God,
 Cursing the only thing that death and time
 Spare and preserve divine.

Despite the hate

And anarchy of Nature echoed on
 In his own heart beats, man can love so much;
 He stumbles, being blind, he eateth dust,
 Being fashioned out of dust; flesh he pursues
 The instincts of the flesh; but evermore
 He, struggling upward from the slough of shame
 Confronts the Power which made him miserable
 And stands erect in love.

—Robert Buchanan.

Rationalist Peace Society.

President: J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.
 Chairman: MRS. H. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Executive Committee:

G. W. FOOTE.	MISS KOUGH.
F. J. GOULD.	JOHN RUSSELL.
J. F. GREEN.	H. SNELL.
W. HEAFORD.	S. H. SWINNY.

Hon. Sec.: EDWARD G. SMITH,
 38 CURSITOR-STREET LONDON, E.C.

THE Rationalist Peace Society has been formed to carry on a propaganda in the interest of International Peace on essentially and avowedly Rationalist lines, without reference to religious sanctions of any kind.

On this basis its special objects will be:—

- (a) To promote International Peace by the advocacy of International Arbitration;
- (b) To oppose Militarism in all its forms;
- (c) To promote friendly understandings between the various nations.

It is not intended to act in any way antagonistically towards any existing Peace organisations; rather to co-operate with them, on the lines laid down, on every possible occasion.

The annual subscription has been fixed at a minimum of one shilling, and any persons who already subscribe to existing Peace bodies may, if they choose, become members of the Rationalist Peace Society without subscribing to its funds.

Should you be willing to become a member of the Rationalist Peace Society, please fill in the accompanying form, and send it to the Hon. Secretary at the above address.

To the HON. SECRETARY,

I desire to become a member of the Rationalist Peace Society, and enclose £ s. d. as (an Annual Subscription—a Donation) to its funds.

Signature

Address

Date.....19

Report of Dinner.

THE Annual Dinner of the London Freethinkers took place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday, January 10.

The attendance, owing to the treacherous weather, which is responsible for many winter ailments, was not so good as the previous year, but was nevertheless upwards of 200, and the Society was well represented by members and friends from all parts of London, and by a considerable number from the provinces. The medical profession was particularly *en evidence*, a cheering sign of the advance of Freethought amongst the educated and scientific.

The Chairman's speech was, as usual, the feature of the evening, and was followed by the toast, "The National Secular Society," proposed in a cheery, optimistic speech by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and responded to by Mr. Cohen in a few bright sentences, whose brevity (in my humble judgment) the speakers who followed would have done well to imitate. As usual, I struggled to shorten the speeches and lengthen the musical program; but this time the speakers won, as their eloquence, though enjoyable, carried us so late into the evening that the last musical item, Mr. Will Edwards, was excluded from the program.

The other performers were, however, excellent. Miss Jenny Atkinson and Miss Florence Unwin, the vocalists, were received with hearty applause. The honors of the evening were universally allotted to Miss Helen Mar, the delightful American *reconteuse*, whose witty and racy anecdotes (most of them with a strong Freethought flavor), piquantly and charmingly told, delighted the assembled "saints." Incidental music was supplied by Mdme. Saunders and our friend, Mrs. Allen.

Altogether, we spent a most enjoyable evening, which concluded at 11.40 with "Auld Lang Syne," sung by the whole company.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.**INDOOR.**

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Soul."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (46 Dame-street): Monday, at 8, Discussion Class. Saturday, at 8, Elocution Class.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public (Minor) Hall, Canning Town): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Logic of Life."

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.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, J. T. Lloyd, "Liberty and Religious Persecution."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, H. F. Northcote, "Electricity and the Wireless Telegraph." With lantern illustrations.

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