

# THE Freethinker

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*Man is naturally a savage, and emerges from barbarism by slow degrees. Let us take the streaks of light, and be thankful for them, as they arise and tinge the horizon one by one, and not complain because the noon is long after the dawn of refinement.*—WILLIAM HAZLITT.

## Mother Told Me So.

I AM not going to say anything against mothers. I remember the sweet soul who gave me birth. How often in moments of trouble, of weariness, of disgust, have I longed for a soothing look of those tender eyes that never fell upon me except in love! Despite the long interval of all those years since I stood by her open grave, I see her still in the moonlight of memory. He who has had—alas that one should ever say *had!*—a good mother can never quite lose his reverence for women. That sacred affection will soften all his feelings; and amidst all the disillusion, the bitterness, and perhaps the cynicisms of life, he will be refreshed by the waters of a pure and holy fountain, springing up perpetually from the depths of his own heart. He will also be in touch—perhaps unconsciously, but none the less surely—with the central fact of human civilisation; for the smile of a mother, bending over her child, was the first ray of sunshine on the red struggle of existence.

Let us honor the mothers of the race—the *true* mothers; the women who love, and strive, and sacrifice, and eat the bread of carefulness, and stitch and mend little garments, and sometimes taste the saltiness of tears in the silence of the night. I do not despise the Frenchman—I honor him—who is smitten to his knees at the sound of the words "*Ma mère.*" Cant clings about all our emotions, as the ivy clings about the oak, sometimes smothering and killing it; but the oak itself is grand and noble, and so are our natural emotions. *Ma mère*—my mother! When a man says that tenderly I would pardon even his kneeling, for he is in Nature's holy of holies.

Love is the greatest thing in life, and the mother is its first priestess and missionary. But love is not all. It may even be dangerous if misguided. Thought is necessary too. The head is wanted as well as the heart. And in the past, owing to the necessary course of evolution, the woman has supplied the affective element in life, while the man has done most of the hard thinking. Not *all* men, of course; the majority of them have been mere plodders and acquiescers; but the minority of them have made the valuable discoveries and promulgated the fertilising truths. This is a fact too patent to be ignored. And it is perfectly natural. We are all subdued to what we work in; environment determines organisation; and the greater originality of man has been caused by the greater enterprise of his social functions.

But the very fact that the woman stayed at home more than rectified the balance of power. It gave her the greatest influence over the children. The man saw them occasionally; she saw them every day and all day long. She taught them to walk, she taught them to speak, she gave the first direction to their minds and the first impulse to their characters.

For this reason it has been said that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world.

One class of man stayed at home with the women, while the other men tended cattle, hunted, or fought. These were the priests, and thus they laid the strong foundations of their empire. The priest still rules through the women and children. "The mother, the wife, the sister," as I wrote many years ago, "shield him and his creed; and their white arms and soft eyes are a better guard than all the weapons in the armory of his faith." The mother is the priest's proxy. She rears her children for the Church. "She whispers of God," I wrote, "with accents of awe, that fall solemnly on the little one's mind. She trains the knee to bend, the hands to meet in prayer, and the eyes to look upward. She wields the mighty spell of love, and peoples the air of life with phantoms." She moulds the child for the priest, who burnishes it with catechisms and stamps it with dogmas.

When scepticism comes in later life the priest has always a ready warning. "Don't forsake the religion of your mother." He tries to throw the doubter back at his mother's knee. Occasionally he has the audacity to ask, "Would you call your mother a liar?" And the worst of it is that this irrational appeal is too often effective. Yet this same priest has no hesitation in begging for subscriptions to Missionary Societies, whose agents go through the "heathen" world, which is the largest part of it, endeavoring to make its inhabitants forsake the religion of *their* mothers.

"Mother told me so" is a very good reason up to a certain point. She is likely to tell her child the truth as far as she knows it. But outside the sphere of her interests and affections she is very rarely a thinker. Even in religion it is the worship, and not the doctrines, to which she is really attached. The truth is, she tells the *child* what the priest tells *her*. She is an unwitting instrument of deception. She unconsciously promotes a wretched imposture. She enslaves the beings she loves to an enfeebling superstition. She does not know that she is a tool in the hands of designing priests, who prey upon her and, at the same time, use her to rear a fresh generation of victims.

Well, if the mother's influence is so potent, Freethinkers should recognise the fact as well as the priests. I have no patience with a Freethinker who goes to a Secular meeting and leaves his wife at home, or lets her go to church. Of course, he must respect her freedom. He must not try to govern her will. He must refrain from every shadow of coercion. But he is bound to use every possible persuasion, without being ostentatious or offensive. And if he is a good husband, and a tender father, she is very likely to listen. If a woman both loves and respects a man she will go a long way with him. It was a woman, not a man, in the old story, who said: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And if the Freethought husband can make his wife a Freethinker, he will make his children Freethinkers too. Surely this is worth a strong and patient effort. I invite all my readers who need the invitation to commence this experiment. It is idle to talk about converting the world unless you make a beginning at home.

G. W. FOOTE.

### How Not to Do It.

MANY years ago, in my very youthful days, I came across a type of Christian that is now somewhat rare. He was a devout believer in inspiration and infallibility. I was just discovering how little religious belief I possessed, chock full of the logic of the textbooks, and feeling like a perambulating index system to the various schools of philosophy. Thinking to show my Christian the error of his ways, I ventured to point out a few contradictory statements in the "Blessed Book." To my surprise, he admitted the contradictions. I made the case against the Bible a little stronger. Still there was the same result. Growing desperate, I made the dose as strong as I could. He seemed positively pleased with all I was telling him. I feebly asked him to explain himself. "Well," he said, "you are quite correct from your point of view. You are judging the Bible as an ordinary book; and, of course, it does not come up to your expectations." But all my arguments only proved that the Bible was unlike other books, and this was one of the proofs of its divine origin. I collapsed, powerless. Thinking to weaken his faith, I had been all the time strengthening it. Against stupidity even the gods are powerless; and in that respect, at least, I was on a level with deity. It was a most impressive lesson in the art of doing a thing in the wrong way.

Happily, as I have said, people of the extreme type of this acquaintance of my youth are becoming scarce. Still, they have left a numerous, even though modified, progeny, whose bewildering methods of reasoning, or whose wrong applications of right reasoning, form a constant subject of both instruction and amusement. Illustrations of this may be found in all walks of life—as in a recent police notice advertising for a "wanted" man, which gave his age and then added "but looks older"—but they appear with the greatest profusion in the field of religion. Set a man down to defend religious beliefs, and rules of reasoning and laws of logic are either ignored or applied in a most novel fashion. This occurs not only with men of no reputation, but with men who may properly claim to rank as teachers of their fellows. Either we have a quite different question stated to the one that is really at issue, or we have conclusions drawn that bear no thinkable relation to the premises laid down. Heine's epigram that the most stupid of Englishmen will say something sensible on politics, and the most intelligent one will say something stupid on religion, contains an important truth; but, so far as the last clause is concerned, it applies to people outside the British Isles.

Take, for instance, that very large class of believers who deduce the truth of Christian teachings and doctrines from the good works of people calling themselves Christians. How is one to deal with them? A Freethinker questions the historic actuality of Jesus, the truth of the resurrection, or of the New Testament miracles. The Christian retorts by pointing to the various institutions built by professed Christians—hospitals, asylums, charitable homes, etc.—and asks triumphantly, Could all these things be based on a lie? These things, in their better aspect, result from the existence of human sympathy, although their creation may be often enough due to very mixed motives. But in what way does the building of a hospital prove the truth of the resurrection? How can one establish an equation between New Testament miracles and the endowment of a home for crippled children? How many gallons of soup does there need to be distributed to demonstrate the truth of the story that Jesus fed a large number of people with a handful of loaves and fishes? Or how many blankets must be given away to prove the inspiration of the New Testament? There must be some numerical relation here in the minds of believers, because a single bowl of soup, or a single blanket, or a single act of charity would not be taken to prove anything. It is the number that does it; and, therefore, I ask what

number constitutes a decisive proof. There might be some relation between Christian doctrines and the building of lunatic asylums (Christians tell us, quite unwarrantably, that there were no asylums for the insane before Christianity), but it would be too cruel to press that point.

The converse of what has been said is furnished by the Christian attack on the character of Freethinkers. Some time ago, after a lengthy report of one of my lectures against the Salvation Army had appeared in a provincial paper, an official wrote from the Army headquarters pointing out that the lecturer was an "infidel." And there the reply ended. But the point at issue was not my infidelity, but the Army's straightforwardness. Still, the reply was typically Christian. Freethinkers have been pictured as irredeemably bad. Well, granted. For my own part I do not see why Christians should be permitted a monopoly of all the vices. Freethinkers are liars, drunkards, thieves, they commit every crime in the calendar, with a few others of their own special invention. Granted, again; but it is not his character that the Freethinker is offering the Christian for examination, but his arguments. The Freethinker does not ask the Christian to consort with him, to eat with him, or to sleep with him. He is arguing, not that Freethinkers are paragons of virtue, but that Christian teachings are untrue. The only direction in which a discussion of character would be relevant would be in connection with the doctrine of human depravity. And the Freethinker would probably concede that here the true Christian is sufficiently full of the subject to make him an unquestionable authority.

As a fine example of "How Not to Do It," one may take the orthodox proof of the divinity of Jesus. Jesus, says the orthodox Christian, was very God of very God. The Freethinker asks for proof. Well, he was good, loving, loveable, kind to wrongdoers, sympathetic to suffering, etc., etc. Granted all this, it is quite beside the point. Men in the mass are, more or less, sympathetic, merciful, loving, and loveable. Elaborate these qualities as much as we may, develop them as we may, all we do is to produce a superior *man*. We have not forsaken the category of man, and entered the category of deity. A man does not lose his quality of manhood in proportion as he increases in goodness. Generally, we consider it the other way about. Admit that Jesus was all that the most fanatical believer cares to claim for him, and all that has happened is that he has been proved to be a good *man*, a perfect man, if you will. The Christian has not advanced a step nearer proving him to be more than a man, or higher than a man. His proofs are not merely insufficient to prove his point, they are absolutely incapable of proving it were they multiplied indefinitely.

*Freethinker* readers will all be more or less familiar with the career of Muller, of Bristol. This pious gentleman ran his particular institution, so ran his boast, without asking any human being, individually or collectively, for assistance. He simply prayed for help and help came. He declined to advertise his needs, preferring to trust altogether to prayer. Still, he had no objection to his friends advertising that he would not advertise, and so hold him up as a standing example of the efficacy of prayer. I presume that most Christians were shrewd enough to see through this palpable "dodge," even while they used it as a means wherewith to confound the unbeliever. But, in his way, Mr. Muller only illustrated a fallacy of which all Christians are guilty. I refer to the common argument from moral conversion. Mr. Harold Begbie, a gentleman whose journalistic ability enables him to deal with subjects that are apparently beyond his comprehension, in such a manner as to serve the interests of Christianity, has recently dealt at length with this subject in two widely advertised books. A certain number of people, how large or how small makes no difference to the argument, are induced to turn over a new, moral leaf. Because the impetus to this is ostensibly derived from a religious person, or a religious organi-

sation, we are asked to witness a demonstration of the power of God over the human soul—once the human soul submits to its influence. There are endless variations on this theme, but this is the essence of the argument.

Now, I am not going to dwell upon the consideration that sudden transformations of character do not really occur. Miracles do not occur in the moral any more than in the material world. Characters do not change suddenly, although there is a time when the change has advanced sufficiently for it to become observable, as volcanic fires may eventuate in an earthquake. But in the one case, as in the other, the eruptive manifestation is only the registration of the activity of forces that have been slowly maturing. But without dwelling upon a truth that must be perfectly obvious to all with even a smattering of scientific knowledge, in what way can the moral conversion of a person prove the operation of a superhuman or a supernatural power? People are "converted" from Conservatism to Liberalism in politics, or from allopathy to homœopathy in medicine. People contract the habit of early or late rising, eating, and drinking special beverages, develop a liking or disliking for walking or talking, but there is never any suggestion of a supernatural influence being necessary to bring about any of these changes. Why should a change in morals necessitate, or still more, prove, the agency of God?

The curious thing is that the machinery of the change is so obvious. If people were morally transformed in solitude, and if nothing in their past lives suggested a cause for the change, one could understand the application of the religious argument from ignorance. But the condition of the change is always social—it is always effected through the agency of others. The action of man is obvious and adequate; that of deity is a mere inference, and really adds nothing of any value or importance. We know that human beings do influence each other, and there is nothing strange or incredible that some characters, when subjected to the influence of others, should become modified in the direction of better behavior. By exactly the same means some people are changed in the contrary direction. A thieves' supper may be quite as effective a means of conversion as a revival meeting, the Newgate Calendar as great a source of inspiration as the Four Gospels. If Christians find the agency of man adequate in the one case, why not in the other? It is a curious philosophy which says that human intercourse can only make for evil. It is "heads I win, tails you lose," with a vengeance. And the Freethinker may surely be justified in asking why, if God's power is mighty to save, it was not equally mighty to prevent? Which leads to a story.

A village had been suffering badly for want of rain. After weeks of drought it was resolved to hold a prayer-meeting and ask for a change in the weather. The meeting was called, the prayers were said, and, lo! within twenty-four hours, down came the rain. To improve the occasion a deputation waited on the village sceptic to point out the mightiness of prayer. He listened to their harangue unmoved. "Are you sure," he queried, "that the rain came because you prayed for it?" They were quite sure. "It would not have come when it did, had you not prayed?" Certainly not. "Would it have come earlier if you had prayed sooner?" Most probably, was the reply. "Well," replied the hardened and unrepentant sceptic, "all I can say is that you're a mighty mean lot not to have prayed six weeks ago."

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

### Divine Forgiveness.

THE Bible is full of the doctrine of forgiveness. Jehovah was over ready to "blot out, as a thick cloud, the transgressions, and, as a cloud, the sins," of his people. He is represented as saying to them: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." One of the Psalmists sings thus: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The Christian God also forgives, but not so freely and unconditionally as Jehovah. His forgiveness is conditioned on faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We are all under condemnation because we have broken the Divine law; but the sentence of condemnation is cancelled the moment we believe in Christ, who honored the law on our behalf when he died on Calvary for our sins. In Christ "we have our redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins." Such, briefly stated, is the doctrine of forgiveness as taught in the Bible; and the first impression it makes upon our minds is that it is an essentially immoral and mischievous doctrine. To forgive is to remit the penalty naturally associated with wrong-doing, not to impute his iniquity to the iniquitous man, or, to acquit the guilty. Here is Paul's version of it: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." This is the central dogma of the Christian religion. The worst people on earth may be justified, in the twinkling of an eye, through the blood of him who was unjustly slain. Whatever horrible crimes a man may have committed, let him but believe in Christ, and they are no longer reckoned unto him; God treats him as if they had never been. In the eye of the eternal law he is accounted righteous, holy, and good.

This doctrine is often described as Christianity's crown of glory. It constitutes the preacher's only stock-in-trade. His distinctive message is that in Christianity there is forgiveness for every sin. It is his supreme boast that the Christian God stands absolutely alone as the one who can and does remit the punishment so richly deserved by our sinful race. How often does he assure his hearers that there are no sins so great but that in Christianity they may find forgiveness. We will take a concrete example. Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, lacked the most essential qualities of true manhood. He had a majestic presence, any amount of personal courage, and wonderful skill in military exercises; but he was devoid of genuine nobility of mind and sincerity of motive. After he had conquered his rival, Licinius, he gave his sister Constantia a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that her husband's life would be spared; but the promise was not kept. The vanquished monarch was put to death by Constantine's orders at Thessalonica, which was to have been the place of his exile. Constantine was of a very suspicious disposition, and he had a whole army of informers at his beck and call. His son Crispus, who now shared the purple with him, was exceedingly popular—so popular that his father grew jealous of him. The informers filled his ears with ugly rumors, true or false. Outwardly he and Crispus were on the friendliest terms. The time arrived for the public celebration of the twentieth year of his reign. The emperor removed his court from Nicomedia to Rome, where the banquet was to take place. He was received with tremendous enthusiasm by the people, who seemed to be beside themselves with delight at having him in their midst once more. But Constantine's heart was the habitation of revengeful and murderous thoughts. While the rejoicings were at their highest and gayest, while everybody was apparently as happy as possible, Crispus, the heir to the throne, was suddenly seized and secretly carried away, by his father's orders, and put to death at Pola. In the same way, and probably from the same motive, Constantia's only son, Licinius, was cruelly murdered, in spite of the tearful pleadings of his broken-hearted mother. The empress-mother's grief knew no bounds when she learned of the sad fate of her favorite grandson, and she did her utmost to prejudice Constantine against his wife Fausta, Crispus's stepmother; and it was not long before she too was put to death. Here were four dark crimes the guilt of which lay at the emperor's door, four treacherous

murders for which he alone was responsible. It is no wonder that he became the victim of the most poignant and passionate remorse. It is no wonder that his conscience chastised him as with scorpions. He had no rest either by night or by day, but was a prey to horrible fears and forebodings. What could he do, where could he turn for consolation? He forgot that he was a Christian, and in his despair applied to the Pagan priests at Rome for purification. They listened to his confession, but assured him that for such crimes their religion had no expiation to offer. Disappointed, he sought out Sopater, the distinguished commentator and champion of Neoplatonism, but without obtaining any relief. Thus driven from pillar to post, he remembered that he was a Christian, and came across a curious character, known as an Egyptian magician from Spain, who told him that the Christian Church had mysteries which insured purification from sin, however great. Whoever this man was, Bishop Hosius or another, his message soothed the emperor's troubled conscience, and filled his heart with peace.

Now, the truth is that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness is positively demoralising. The late Dean Stanley was bound to pronounce the popular version of it "the worst corruption of the Christian religion." Commenting on the phrase "In Christianity there is forgiveness for every sin," he says:—

"This may be the hateful Antinomianism which, in the Protestant Church, has taken shelter under the Lutheran doctrine of 'justification by faith only,' in the Roman Catholic Church, under the scholastic doctrine of Priestly Absolution" (*Eastern Church*, p. 212).

Constantine was not entitled, according to any equitable law, to enjoy peace of mind, and no being, divine or human, had a right to acquit him of the blood-curdling crimes which he had committed. He deserved to suffer the most excruciating torments as long as he lived. It is an act of gross immorality to treat the criminal as if he were innocent. He is guilty, and neither God nor man can make him otherwise. There was no forgiveness for Lady Macbeth, and she knew it when she cried:—

"Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

Professor Peake admits that "here we confront a well-known difficulty"; but his attempt to surmount it is ludicrous in the extreme:—

"Does God, then, declare the ungodly to be righteous? Does not this statement mean that God declares something to be true which, as a matter of fact, is false? This charge of immorality has often been urged against Paul's teaching. I believe, however, that when we have understood it, it really does not lie open to such a criticism. We are not moving in a realm of fiction. Paul's language is paradoxical, but it must be read in the light of his fundamental conception. This is, that a man is justified in Christ; that if he is in Christ there is no condemnation for him. But the very fact that the union with Christ has taken place has carried with it the ethical change. The man who is in Christ is a new creature, and it is the new creature who has become such through mystical union with his Savior who is declared to be righteous. He who was ungodly has now ceased to be so."

Paul's doctrine, as interpreted by Professor Peake, is no more reasonable than as it stands in the Epistle to the Romans. What Paul maintains is that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, taking away, at once, the sense of guilt and shame. The Apostle James condemned such teaching as inconsistent with God's character, and as calculated to injure man. Justification by faith alone is simply a theological figment, with nothing in the facts of life remotely corresponding to it. The forgiveness of sins is an emotional delusion, with absolutely no reality at the back of it. The consequences of wrong-doing cannot be interfered with. This is frankly admitted by many modern divines, though they still preach the old doctrine of forgiveness in a modified form. But the doctrine, in every form, is utterly false and morally degrading. It is very gratifying to find that the Rev. Dr. Samuel Green,

in his *Handbook of Church History*, wrote thus of Constantine:—

"The murder of his son, and afterwards of his wife, have left an ineffaceable stain upon his name; and it is told to the honor of the Heathen priesthood that when he sought for expiation at their altars he was sternly repulsed, as 'for such crimes there could be no atonement.'"

The only safe refuge from the doctrine of Divine forgiveness is in thorough-going Atheism. As long as Theism persists superstitious dogmas will inevitably cluster round it. It is only when the supernatural has vanished from faith that it will be possible to discuss human life sanely, and to relate it correctly to Nature and her laws. There is a doctrine of forgiveness which is true and indispensable, and it was beautifully taught by the Stoic philosophers prior to the time of Christ; but it is almost impossible to appreciate it adequately, or put it into practice, as long as the belief in God and his relations with men is cherished. Humanity can have no chance of coming into its own until it refuses to be overshadowed by an imaginary Divinity.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Andrew Lang.

*Historical Mysteries.* By Andrew Lang. Nelson's Shilling Library; 1911.

THE inclusion of a volume from the pen of Andrew Lang in Nelson's popular series will introduce a most fascinating writer to a very wide circle of new readers. Learned men, who find out everything in time, have made the discovery that Andrew Lang is a "divine amateur." Intended, doubtless, as a sarcasm, it misses fire; but as a genuine compliment there are great probabilities in it. In all the arts has not the amateur, now and again, achieved the highest? And if he be not "divine," does not the term describe the ideal of devotion to his theme and the talent that touches it to distinction? To carry a weight of learning gracefully is a rare accomplishment. Andrew Lang has made many enemies by his easy handling of abstruse subjects that in other and lesser hands had made the drowsy pages opiates to those who read.

Turn to his *Letters to Dead Authors and Old Friends: Essays in Epistolary Parody*, and you will find yourself in the presence of a rare and brilliant talent. In these amusing volumes he has proved himself a humorist of the first rank. Moreover, he possesses a complete mastery of language. He set himself deliberately to write in the manner of acknowledged stylists such as Horace, Moliere, Rabelais, Byron, and Thackeray. Nowhere is the assumption forced. There are scores of passages where the reader thrills to an individuality combined with felicity of expression that could not be bettered. Even in his more serious moods this love of parody sometimes asserts itself. It needs a moment's consideration before one can recall whether it was Omar, Fitzgerald, or Lang who wrote the following lines:—

"So still were we before the moons began  
That rounded us and shaped us into man,  
So still we shall be, surely at the last,  
Dreamless, untouched of blessing or of ban."

The truth is that, although he can write anything, Andrew Lang is at heart a poet. It is the genuine poetic atmosphere that comes from his delightful pages. Humorists are often unjustly neglected when they bid us regard their more sober mood. "The Grass of Parnassus" from any other than the balladist of "Blue China" had certainly won more solid regard, and "Ban and Arriere Ban" strikes the iron music of more serious verse. Occasionally Andrew Lang rises to heights of great dignity, as in the majestic sonnet on Homer:—

"From the songs of modern speech  
Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free  
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,  
And through the music of the languid hours  
They hear, like ocean on a western beach,  
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey."

Andrew Lang's work is full of sap. It is also full of quotations, classical and modern, recondite and racy. Macaulay was as fond of quoting, and confessed that it was a dangerous thing for a man with a very strong memory to read very much. With all deference to Macaulay, we doubt it. Apt quotations are the salt of literature, and we rejoice to find them sprinkled all over Andrew Lang's pages.

It seems almost impossible that anyone can be so clever as Andrew Lang appears to be. A reader rises from a perusal of a book, novel, poem, or article from his pen with a chastened disbelief in his own judgment about anything. For to be always and consistently sceptical is to be in a minority and to provoke the criticism of the respectable majority. Bigots, who aim to make life more sordid and mean by their puritanism, and pedants, who glorify the art of boring, and deem unreadable books alone worthy the name of literature, are jealous of Andrew Lang's success and averse to his methods. Maybe they think that such startling versatility leaves little scope for the alleged Author of the Universe. Moreover, there is no doubt of Andrew Lang's genius. He might have written the Bible if he had not been forestalled. Despite his university manner, Andrew Lang is without doubt a Freethinker. This is proved by his capable and scholarly account of the evolutionary character of mythology, particularly in his *Custom and Myth and Myth, Ritual, and Religion*. But, because he has occasionally poked fun at the "eye of faith" of some hot-headed scientists, and has not hesitated to smile at others of them, he has been regarded as a trifle. Sober soldiers of progress are often irritated by genius. They sympathise with Ludwig Borne's comparison of Heine to a boy who, chasing butterflies on the day of battle, got between the combatants' legs.

With nearly every book that Andrew Lang wrote temptingly near, it is hard not to quote a hundred witty things and make this article brilliant by the theft. The mass of wealth forbids the attempt, and any reader can get access to the treasure himself and bolster up a claim for wit. When one reflects that much of Andrew Lang's writings were created with the printer's devil waiting at his elbow, the wonder at the brilliant record is almost beyond belief. To recognise how far above the average they are, one has but to note the failure of his imitators. One must needs own that mere talent, however excellent, is nowhere besides the genius that in a spontaneous flash produces the effect which painstaking fails to obtain.

MIMNERMUS.

### Blasphemy Prosecutions in Austria.

THE readers of this journal may perhaps recall the particulars I gave, in my article of November 20 last, respecting the wonderful vitality of the recent movement of Freethought among the Bohemian people.

To-day, it is my duty to call their attention to the blasphemy prosecutions that have been recently instituted in Austria in order to paralyse the Freethought activities of the Czechs, who, with Dr. Bartosek and Karel Pelant (now indicted for blasphemy) at their head, have done wonders in the work of rationalist propaganda.

Dr. Bartosek points out that after the fall of the clerical party in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, Austria has become the last refuge of the papal power and bids fair to become the seat of the Papacy itself.

The reaction is already in full vigor. Prosecutions for offences against religion are daily becoming more numerous. Finally, the Public Prosecutor at Prague has instituted a prosecution against all the members (sixteen in number) of the Central Executive Committee of the Czech section of the International Freethought Federation. In addition, the printers and publishers of Freethought papers and pamphlets

have been swept into the net. The prosecution is an odious attempt to strangle the Freethought party by ruining it with fines and intimidating it with prison. At present the bigots are confining their efforts to the levying of fines; and as these vexatious proceedings are of daily occurrence in Austria, the matter is sufficiently serious to demand the attention of the Freethought party in every country. The Czech Freethinkers, as the latest organised national revolt against Christianity, look to Europe and America for support and sympathy, and feel confident that the Clerical Government in Austria will cower under the reprobation of Europe, even as did the clericals of Spain recently with Maura at their head.

In the circular letter written by Dr. Bartosek\* as President of his Committee, and which I am asked to bring before the notice of English Freethinkers, it is pointed out that these vexatious prosecutions are helped out by means of bogus documents, forged *ad hoc* by the State employes; by the perjury of the police, and similar pious expedients. The number of these prosecutions is growing a menacing danger. You can get prosecuted to-day in Austria for peccadilloes of this kind: For not removing your hat when a religious procession passes your way; for reciting an extract from an anti-clerical publication; for convening a public Freethought meeting; for daring to utter the name of Ferrer at a public gathering. To Englishmen all this is very absurd; but to the hated Freethinkers in Austria it is a persecuting and harassing nuisance.

Dr. Bartosek and Karel Pelant, two of the accused, are well-known figures at International Freethought Congresses; they are active propagandists, and the actual leaders of the Czech Freethought party; and, as such, singled out for persecution and financial ruin. For that reason they will have the admiration and sympathy of all lovers of free thought and brave speech in England, as elsewhere.

The crimes imputed to their charge are of almost incredible absurdity. They are charged with publishing formularies making the announcements of intended civil marriages; formularies for intimating the fact of having left the Catholic Church; they are prosecuted for having sold Freethought writings; and, finally, for having founded the Czech section of the International Freethought Federation without securing the authority of the Government, with its archbishops and prelates naturally recalcitrant to Freethought in every mood and tense.

Dr. Bartosek candidly admits that all this may seem a mere farce in any civilised country, and he acknowledges that if these proceedings are compared with the violence of reaction in Russia or Spain they may appear matters of slight importance. But, as he points out, these events are symptoms of the reaction in Austria, and at any time they may be followed by proceedings of more brutal character.

These prosecutions may only be the preliminary canters to a more violent *razzia* on the principle of Freethought in Austria, and for that reason he trusts that the civilised world will not view with indifference the struggle of his Czech brethren for the widest freedom of thought and for the overthrow of bigotry and superstition in the land where John Huss died at the hands of the sleeplessly cruel Church. English sympathy can help him in this noblest of true causes.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### COME SEND ROUND THE WINE.

Shall I ask the brave soldier who fights by my side  
In the cause of mankind, if our creeds agree?  
Shall I give up the friend I have valued and tried,  
If he kneel not before the same altar as me?  
From the heretic girl of my soul should I fly  
To seek somewhere else a more orthodox kiss?  
No! perish the hearts and the laws that try  
Truth, valor, or love by a standard like this.

—Thomas Moore.

\* Dr. Bartosek (Sekretariat, České Sekce Volné Myslenky) Kral Vinohrady Korunni 6, Prague.

## Shakespeare's Rationalism.

*His Opinion of the Jew and the Christian in "The Merchant of Venice."*

(A Lecture Delivered at Chicago.)

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

SHAKESPEARE'S rationalism is nowhere so pronounced as in *The Merchant of Venice*. By his rationalism we mean his freedom from unreasoned and unreasonable beliefs. With extreme care and great fairness Shakespeare tests the claims of two of the leading religions of the world—Judaism and Christianity—and finds that they both snap under the strain of human passion. When brought into contact with the real experiences of life, when summoned to make peace between two determined and inveterate antagonists, they break down completely. The story of *The Merchant of Venice* demonstrates that while for professional and decorative purposes these ancient cults may be useful, for practical ends they are an incumbrance rather than a help; indeed, they are an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the fraternisation of individuals and races.

This is radical teaching, and coming as it does from so great an authority as Shakespeare, it should at least command our interest sufficiently to induce us to examine his argument. How does Shakespeare arrive at the above conclusion—a conclusion which must appear even shocking to a great many of his readers who have never found in *The Merchant of Venice* anything more than an exciting racial or religious quarrel between a money-lending Jew and a Christian merchant?

There are scenes in *The Merchant of Venice* which are among the most compelling in the dramatic literature of the world. The meeting between Shylock and his co-religionist, Tubal, for instance, never fails to interest, no matter how often it has been acted. Tubal approaches Shylock with two different items of news—the one that Shylock's daughter, who has fled with a Christian, equipped with her father's jewels and ducats, has not yet been apprehended; and the other bit of news is, that on the Venetian Rialto everybody is talking of Antonio's financial reverses. These two pieces of information produce upon Shylock the same effect that water and wind have upon a burning fire—the one helping to extinguish the flame, the other fanning it into a blaze. At the news of his rival's misfortunes his whole being glows with an unearthly light, and his thoughts and gestures multiply at a rapid rate. This intelligence of Antonio's bankruptcy, when communicated to him, draws from him in quick succession these ejaculations:—

"What, what, what? Ill luck, ill luck?"

I thank God, I thank God! Is it true, is it true?"

But the information about his runaway daughter dampens his spirits, and his voice falls and fades into a moan.

Picturesque, though not as intense, is the casket scene which draws from fair Portia, one of Shakespeare's royal women, the protest of the young against and the living against the tyranny of the old and the dead "O, me, the word choose! I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father."

The confidential, and unaffected, conversation between Portia and Nerissa in the first act is also very interesting. Portia's discontent is unintelligible to Nerissa. Why should so beautiful and so richly gifted a woman be unhappy? Perhaps it is because Portia has too many blessings. *Too many* is as much a misfortune as *not any*.

"They are as sick, that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing."

Where, then, lies happiness? In moderate possessions.

"It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean."

Instructive also are Bassanio's comments on men and things when he is about to decide which casket to choose:—

"The world is still deceived with ornament.  
In law what plea so tainted and corrupt,  
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,  
Obscures the show of evil?"

In the same way religion is invoked to cloak cruelty and to adorn oppression:—

"In Religion,  
What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?"

And many are led to their ruin by mistaking the appearance for the reality:—

"Thus ornament is but the gilded shore  
To a most dangerous sea.....In a word  
The seeming truth which cunning times put on  
To entrap the wisest."

It is while musing thus that he rejects the gaudy gold and chooses the unpromising, humble, "meagre lead," and finds in the neglected casket "Fair Portia's counterfeit." The enthusiasm of Bassanio in describing Portia's beauty and virtues appears to be fully shared by the poet himself. Shakespeare has created a world of women, but of which of them was he fonder than of Portia?

"What if two gods should play some heavenly match,  
And on the wager lay two earthly women,  
And Portia one, there must be something else  
Fawned with the other; for the poor rude world  
Hath not her fellow."

Of course, the most powerful scene of all in the play, and the one which is most nearly perfect in all of Shakespeare's works, is the trial scene presided over by Portia.

(To be continued.)

## Acid Drops.

Christianity, with its doctrine of original sin, has always displayed a deep interest in scoundrels. And do we not read in the New Testament that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance? But even repentance doesn't seem necessary nowadays to make criminals interesting. There could hardly be a worse lot than the poisoner Hutchison. A creature who could not only poison his creditors, but also poison his own father and mother at their silver wedding in the hope of collecting the insurance money, is just "a devil in human form" as the saying is. Yet the Rev. J. Gard, Baptist minister, who conducted Hutchison's funeral at Guernsey, said: "It is better for this young man to have fallen into the hands of God than into the hands of man." Falling into the hands of God was poisoning himself with prussic acid.

William Booth is the finest old showman in the world, and he dearly loves sending telegrams to emperors, kings, presidents, and other big pots. He has just sent one to President Taft. "Ten thousand thanks," he says, "for your sympathy." We suppose he means it is worth at least ten thousand pounds. Booth adds that it (the thanks or the money, or both) "will be helpful in our desperate and world-wide struggle for God and humanity." Fancy the Salvation Army struggling for God! The poor Almighty!

Ilidore, the rampant Russian monk, whose case was referred to in last week's "Acid Drops," has caved in and gone off like a lamb to fulfil his duties as abbot of that monastery in the province of Tula. The monastery is a rich one, and probably that has had its weight.

The vicar of a church not a hundred miles from Brixton is reported (in *Reynolds'*) as having upset the Sunday-school scholars by prohibiting the performance of a little play they were rehearsing. The vicar noticed the word "devil" in it, and immediately applied the censorship to the performance. We shudder to think what havoc this reverend gentleman would play with the Bible, which swarms with "devils."

The glorious free press has been devoting a good deal of space to Dr. Julia Seton Sears, of New York, who is over here representing the New Thought Church—an institution which seems to go one better than the Christian Scientist

Church. We guess the lady does very well from a worldly point of view, but her followers have a very easy way out of their troubles, even if one of the troubles be poverty. If they are poor and unsuccessful, all they have to do is to think that they are *not* poor and unsuccessful, and they become opulent and victorious. Fancy getting thousands—the lady says millions—of people to believe this gospel. Dr. Sears has probably little call to practise it herself. Ladies and gentlemen in her line of business are not usually poor—or anything like it. They make the best of *this* world, whatever their chances may be in the next.

Mr. H. Percy Ward, who is still lecturing on Sundays at the Garrick Theatre, Chicago, seems to have paid a lecturing visit to New Castle, Pa., and delivered a discourse in the Opera House there. We see by a cutting from the local *News* that an editorial article was devoted to Mr. Ward's performance. This article gradually works up to a climax in which Mr. Ward's sense and honesty are fatally involved. It is argued by the editor that if Mr. Ward was a disbeliever when he was a Christian he was a scoundrel; that if he was honest he was, on his own showing, a deluded person who deceived others; and "a man who so completely fools himself can never aspire to become again a public teacher." Evidently the editor did not perceive that this argument could not be confined to the case of Mr. Ward. It makes an end of all the "Converted Infidels" who prey upon Christian credulity and good nature. What is a good deal worse, it applies with deadly effect to the gentleman first called Saul, and afterwards Paul, who was converted from a persecutor to a propagandist of Christianity. If he was *not* honest when he persecuted the Christians he was a scoundrel; if he *was* honest, he was very foolish and ill-advised,—at least the Christians must say so; and, in the words of the New Castle editor, "A man who so completely fools himself can never aspire to become again a public teacher." Poor Paul! A fellow Christian has snuffed him out.

Rev. Mr. Rattenbury is, of course, much superior in every way to the old Pagan, Voltaire, and therefore quite competent to sit in judgment upon him. In an article on "Methodism's Spiritual Life," in the *Methodist Times* for February 16, he quotes from Macaulay to the effect that Voltaire's cabinet at Ferney, "where he used to write, looked not towards Mont Blanc, of which he might have had a noble view, but towards a terrace and a grove of trees." Macaulay, though by no means an ardent admirer of the great Frenchman, was yet fair enough to add: "Perhaps he wished to spare his eyes. He used to complain that the snow hurt them." But Mr. Rattenbury ungraciously suggests that he preferred an eighteenth-century garden to the eternal whiteness of Mont Blanc because of a radical defect in his character, and that his works clearly reflect that deplorable defect. Voltaire's damning defect was his implacable hostility to Christianity. Simply because he was not a Christian, and brought his inimitable gift of ridicule to bear upon the whole Christian system, the divines ignorantly conclude that he could not have been a good man, and that his life was a failure. What overweening conceit and intolerable bigotry! It is only the people who pray and sing hymns in praise of Jesus that can render any genuine service to the world!

A remarkable statement is made by the writer of an article on Heredity in the *Edinburgh Review*. We give it in his own words:—

"The recent introduction of syphilis into Uganda has been attended with effects no less appalling than sleeping sickness. At the present time more than half the population of the Protectorate suffer from the disease, and in parts of the country no less than 90 per cent. The disease, moreover, is far more virulent in character than anything known in European countries. The introduction of syphilis into Uganda was largely due to the teaching of the missionaries. They taught polygamy was wicked, and attempted to introduce monogamy, which, being unsuited both to the past habits and to the present civilisation of the people, led to a great deterioration of feminine virtue, followed by the rise of the terrible venereal scourge."

Christian missionaries care for nothing which conflicts with their dogmatic teaching, or what they consider to be its requirements. Believing, or affecting to believe, that Christianity introduced monogamy and condemns polygamy (both being utterly untrue) they are prepared to impose this social policy, if they can, upon their "converts" in every part of the world! And where they succeed the results are nearly always deplorable.

When a writer wants to say something vicious about Secularism he often knows how he sweetens it to the orthodox palate by professing himself a bit of a heretic—

which makes it look so impartial. This little device is practised by Mr. Price Collier, an American writer, who contributes his impressions of India under British government to *Scribner*. Mr. Collier loudly denounces Secular Education as the breeding-ground of the Indian seditionist. The government of India by a foreign Power has, of course, nothing to do with the matter. But perhaps Mr. Collier means that if the British government had stuffed the natives with compulsory Christianity in their childhood, they would have been more docile and submissive in their manhood. It is a far cry from India to France, but Mr. Collier wanted to say something nasty about the latter, and he considered this a favorable opportunity. "If ever a nation," he says, "suffered from physical and moral dry rot as a direct result of secular education, it is France." This is a statement which rests on no proper foundation. The Paris hooligan, the *apache*, is certainly a very bad specimen; but Paris is not France, and hooligans are bred in every great cosmopolitan city. Taking the whole of France, the official statistics show a great diminution in crime. The increase only exists in the imagination of religious bigots.

With regard to Christian "docility and submissiveness," we may refer to the Rev. Dr. Lazarus's article in the *Indian Review*. He says there are four million native Christians in India. Unfortunately, he adds, the Indian Christian, though scrupulously loyal and paying his taxes promptly, "avoids politics as if that were the Devil himself." He submits, pays up, and leaves all the rest to the gentlemen who take his money.

Professor L. W. Lyde thinks that "the blond White is doomed to disappear off the face of the earth." What a shock this must be to the blond White, especially when his pride of race is intensified by his pride of religion! No doubt he will comfort himself with the egotistic exclamation that "God would never allow it to happen."

That eminent Nonconformist, Sir Joseph Compton Rickett, says the Christian Church is being starved to-day for want of brains. We believe this hits the right nail on the head. At any rate, he comes far nearer the truth than do those who attribute the decline in faith to the divorce between faith and practice shown by prominent Christians. History shows very plainly that a sturdy faith in Christian doctrines is by no means incompatible with loose living—at most this only serves to point a moral for those who have already ceased to believe. But Sir Joseph is sadly in error if he thinks that calling attention to the lack of brains in the Christian Church will help towards a remedy. There is plenty of intelligence in the world, and it is well displayed in business, in science, in literature, in politics. Why, then, is there so little at the service of Christianity? The answer is that in other directions people's beliefs are more or less directly related to the realities of life, and are continually expressing them. But between Christianity and the life of to-day there is a complete divorce. It answers to nothing real in either heaven or earth. And the consequence is that men of intelligence and integrity find less and less attraction in the Church as a vocation. All religions die by the brains leaving them, and Christianity is no exception to the rule.

Dr. Campbell Morgan is an eloquent advocate of the spiritual unity of the Church, but this eminently successful man of God is gradually assuming the *role* of a pope. The unity of the Spirit is broken, he says, "where the absolute Deity of Christ is denied." He can co-operate only with those who agree with him on that subject. All others are enemies of the Cross of Christ, and must be anathematised. As Locky says, orthodox believers in Christianity are bound to be persecutors. If the power were at his disposal, Dr. Morgan would be as relentless a persecutor as Ambrose or John Calvin. As long as a single shred of genuine Christianity remains, it will be a serious obstacle in the way of progress. Our object, therefore, ought to be to sweep clean away the last remnant of the obstructive thing.

It is all very well to regard clergymen as "spiritual personages," but the joke is carried too far (the Rev. W. Morgan Jones has been saying at Bangor) when the "support" some people give to the clergy is "only fit for a spirit." It should be remembered that "clergymen have bodies to maintain and clothe." They have; and Mr. Jones need not fear that they will ever let the world forget it.

Carlyle's splendid phrase, "star-fire and immortal tears," has been appearing as a headline in the *Clarion* under the disguise of "starshine and immortal tears." In answering a correspondent two or three weeks ago, we gave our con-

temporary an easy opportunity of correcting its blunder but, apparently, it prefers to blunder on. We now suggest that "starshine" might be changed to "moonshine." When you alter a great man's words you may as well go the whole hog.

John Bull considers himself the best Christian in the world—and sometimes the only one. He never tires of saying that Christianity is the religion of love, and that Christ came to bring peace on earth—to say nothing of goodwill. Such is John Bull as a talker. As a man of action John Bull spends between seventy and eighty millions a year on his Army and Navy—all to protect him against his fellow Christians, and incidentally to make them do what he wishes, whether they wish it or not. Good old John Bull! Good old fellow Christians!

Strokes of "Providence" like the sudden death of Mary Bailey, a Bradford school-girl, do not often happen in this country. She was caught up by what, following the Bible, we may call one of God's whirlwinds, lifted thirty feet high, and then dashed on the concreted pavement of the school playground. Her thigh was broken in two places, her left arm and jaw were broken, and she received concussion of the brain. The poor girl died in half an hour. What is it the "Holy Scripture" says? "He doeth all things well."

More "Providence." Not far from Harbin, where the plague has been raging so fatally, a Chinese village was found with every inhabitant dead, the bodies lying in the open air covered with snow. A clean sweep that time!

Nine millions of people have died of the plague since 1896 in India. "Our father which art in heaven."

"Providence" doesn't care twopence about its own buildings. Stanley parish church, near Wakefield, has been completely destroyed by fire.

Judge Bacon, at Whitechapel County Court, hasn't much faith left in the "s'w'elp me God-ers." "I sometimes believe people when they are not on oath," he says, "but I very seldom do when they are on oath." The more swearing the more lying.

It is never too late to mend. According to the *Nottingham Evening Post* an old man of 76, formerly a Primitive Methodist, in consequence of a sermon he heard in St. Mark's, Peterborough, has decided to seek confirmation. Presumably he will stand a better chance of what Revivalist Alexander calls "glory" if he travels with a Church of England ticket.

The Bishop of Southwell warns girls against all sorts of friendly looking advertisements, skilfully intended to deceive, entrap, and ruin them. One would think the Bishop was living in a "heathen" country. But he isn't. He is living in a Christian country—nearly two thousand years after Christ.

Churches move when they see reason. That is, when they must, and when it pays. The gramophone is being introduced in Paris churches by express permission of the Congregation of Rites. The cinematograph will come next.

Cheltenham "cabbies" must be a terrible lot, unless they happen to be astonishingly pious. A meeting of theirs, for the purpose of discussing sixpenny fares and other business matters, was opened with prayer. Whether it was intended as a disinfectant or as a help to a sound conclusion is more than we can say. What we are certain of is the fact that "cabby's" general reputation is rather that of a good swearer than that of a good supplicator.

The morning papers of one and the same day (Feb. 24) reported two bad cases of clerical immorality—complicated with what, in the circumstances, must have been downright perjury. The end of the Kemp-Welsh divorce case was the jury's finding that there had been misconduct between the wife and the Rev. Charles Hambleton Crymes, damages being assessed at £1,000, and the husband being granted a decree nisi with custody of the children. The end of the Stainmore case was that the Rev. John George Lax was found, by Chancellor Prescott and three clerical and two lay assessors, guilty of immoral conduct with Miss Renison. The evidence showed the whole affair to be a very vulgar intrigue, without an element of passion or poetry. Report was to be made to the Bishop, who will have to pronounce the doom of the man of God, who seems to be Lax by name and lax by nature.

Ash Parish Council, Surrey, is ahead of some big Town Councils. It has rejected a motion to prohibit Sunday games on the recreation ground.

The Sunday tram question has been before the Tramways Committee of the Dover Town Council. The local bigots seem to have been up in arms against the very idea. They talked about the interests of the poor dear working man, and how horrible it is that he should not be allowed to enjoy his Sunday rest. But all that is the veriest blarney. The people who protest against Sunday trams don't care how much the working man *works* on Sunday; what they really object to is his *playing* on Sunday—doing just what he likes with his own time. It was amusing to see the Church of England's Men's Society, the P. S. A., and other such bodies, imploring the Committee to save the working man from the awful curse of Sunday labor. The upshot was that the question of Sunday trams was shelved again. The people who don't want to ride in Sunday trams keep others from doing it too.

What is a sacred concert? The term has become so broad lately that it almost includes "Up and Down the City-road"—played slow. But the vigilant Alderman Bulley, of Liscard, doesn't mean to let this liberality of interpretation continue. He refused to grant a license for the Scots Guards' Band to play at the New Brighton Tower on Sunday, April 16. He argued that the word "sacred" should convey the idea of religion—and the Scots Guards were not noted for that class of music.

Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, according to Abraham Hayward, was a member of the Athenæum Club, and the committee had often to write him about his selfish behavior. After breakfast at the Club, for instance, he used to collect newspapers and sit upon them, while he innocently read the one he held in his hands. We believe this was the Christian gentleman who twitted Huxley with being descended from monkeys.

The lady secretary of the Christian Women's Board of Foreign Missions complains that Americans spend £3,200,000 on chewing-gum, and only £800,000 on the conversion of the heathen.

Rev. Henry Robert Alder, of St. Wenstons, Malvern, formerly Dean of Capetown, left £71,838. Blessed be ye poor!

Rev. Francis Edmund Wilmot, of the Rectory, Monnington-on-Wye, Hereford, left £20,420. How Judas Iscariot's mouth would have watered at that figure! He wouldn't have sold Jesus Christ for thirty half-crowns if the first Salvation Army, of which he was cashier, had enjoyed Parson Wilmot's resources. Even the odd £420 would have saved the Crucifixion.

All the poeticals, especially the clerical ones, are contributing their feeble efforts towards suitable "poetry" for the Coronation. The Bishop of Durham bursts out as follows;—

"Lo, the King in state and splendor  
Bears the Crown upon his brow;  
Chiefs and Princes homage render,  
Kneeling for the knightly vow;  
Lord of Lords, be his defender,  
Save him ever, save him now."

What a wonderful lot of brains went to the making of that verse! The episcopal poet tells us that the King wears the crown upon his brow. Where else would anybody expect to see it? The third line should read "Princes and Chiefs," in the order of importance; but the episcopal poet made it read "Chiefs and Princes" for the sake of the scansion. And the last line is a perfect gem. God is asked to save the King "for ever" and also to save him "now." Evidently "now" is no part of "for ever" in the cathedral city of Durham, or at least in the Bishop's palace. As for the other clerical versifiers, it is enough to say that they are much of the same quality as "Durham."

Prison Missionary: "Don't you wish you had been a better man?"

Crooks the Burglar: "Yer kin bet I does, boss; and when I gets out'n dis I'm goin' to take lessons in boxin' an' wrestlin'. If I had been a better man dan dat copper he'd never been able t' bring me here."



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 5, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: at 3, "Man's Discovery of Himself"; at 7, "Deity up to Date."

March 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.

April 2, Stratford Town Hall; April 9, Glasgow.

## To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 5, Manchester; 12, Queen's Hall; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 5, Queen's Hall; 12, West Ham; 19, Glasgow; 26, Stratford Town Hall. April 2, Manchester; 23, Liverpool.

W. PALMER.—Sorry for the mistake. We like to be accurate, but don't expect to reach infallibility. You will see the correction is made.

J. E. BATES.—Cuttings are welcome.

THE Birmingham Branch wish to thank the sender of *Freethinkers*, etc., from Teignmouth, in Devon. The papers, etc., have been received for some years, and have been judiciously distributed.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. C. B.—Matthew Arnold was a Freethinker in the sense that he knew and said that supernatural Christianity is doomed. After all, that is the main point. You are in peril of defining a Freethinker as one who agrees with you in everything.

R. CHAPMAN.—We have inserted the announcement, though we don't see details of time, either as to day or hour.

D. J. D., subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "Long live the *Freethinker*! It is the antidote to all the other weeklies."

G. BRADFIELD.—Will give the matter consideration, and write you.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

LANCASTRIAN.—Mr. Foote's voice was all right again at Birmingham. It gave him no trouble whatever, and the Town Hall is a vast building.

A. BURT.—Glad to hear you owe so much of your mental emancipation to the *Freethinker*, and that you regard this journal as the best you ever read. You ask our opinion of the cutting you send us containing a brief report of Archdeacon Sinclair's sermon at St. Paul's on the first verse of Genesis. We borrow a phrase from Carlyle, and call it "clotted bosh."

D. J. T.—Next week.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

ERMONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (March 5) for the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. His subjects are both new to Liverpool audiences; the first being "Man's Discovery of Himself," and the second "Deity up to Date," with special reference to Dr. Russell Wallace's new plea for the God of Nature. Reserved seat tickets for these lectures are 1s. or 6d. each, and can be obtained at the Alexandra Hall, or at the secretary's, Mr. W. McKelvie, 49 Penrose-street, Everton, Liverpool. Admission to vacant seats will be by silver collection at the entrance.

The Liverpool Branch holds its annual dinner on the Saturday evening (March 4) before Mr. Foote's lectures, and he will attend as President of the N. S. S. and the guest

of the evening. This function will take place at the Bee Hotel, St. John's-lane. The tickets (3s. each) can be obtained in the same way as the lecture tickets. "Saints" from the whole South Lancashire district (or even further) will be heartily welcome.

For the convenience of visitors from a distance tea will be provided, at 8d. per head, at the Alexandra Hall between Mr. Foote's afternoon and evening lectures.

Mr. Foote had fine and enthusiastic meetings on Sunday in the great Birmingham Town Hall; especially so considering the weather was so spring-like with the sun shining all day to tempt people into the open air. Many questions were asked after both lectures, but discussion is not allowed under the Lord Mayor's conditions in granting the use of the Town Hall for the day. Sunday's big meetings in the Town Hall ought to advertise and improve the Branch's meetings for the rest of the season in the King's Hall on Sunday evenings.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures in the King's Hall, Birmingham, this evening (March 5) on Francisco Ferrer. No doubt the local "saints" will give him a hearty welcome.

We hear that Mr. Lloyd delivered a very fine lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, which was much applauded. The audience might have been larger, and those who might have been present, and were not, missed a treat. We hope there will be a better attendance this evening (March 5), when Mr. Lloyd occupies the platform again.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (March 5), afternoon and evening, in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. Lancashire "saints" in general, and Manchester "saints" in particular, will see that he has good meetings and a hearty reception.

The South Shields Branch members have arranged, by way of an experiment, a series of weekly meetings to be held in one of the small rooms (second floor) in the Victoria Hall Buildings, Fowler-street, within ten minutes' walk of South Shields Station, and near a car stopping-place. Mr. D. R. Bowe, supported by Mr. Elijah Copland, opens, and there will be a musical prelude by Mr. J. Chapman, violinist. Local friends and inquirers are invited to support the course.

Tickets can now be obtained for the Warschauer-Foote debate at Caxton Hall on Thursday and Friday evenings, March 30 and 31. Front seat tickets are 1s. each—for each evening; back seats 6d. each—for each evening. Only the front seats will be reserved, but the purchase of back seat tickets will save waiting in the pay-box queue. The subject of debate is "Theism or Atheism?" Mr. Foote's qualifications as a speaker are sufficiently known to the readers of the *Freethinker*. Dr. Warschauer's friends (we have not heard him speak publicly ourselves) assure us that he is a good speaker and a keen debater. He has a very good standing, both as writer and preacher, amongst the Congregationalists. Our own friends will be glad to hear one thing about him. He is on grounds of principle strongly in favor of removing religious teaching from State schools, and is on the General Council of the Secular Education League. He was on the Executive Committee until his removal from London to Bradford.

There are to be two Chairmen at the Warschauer-Foote debate. On the first night the Chairman will be the Rev. C. Drawbridge; on the second night, Mr. Herbert Burrows. Each debater will have three speeches each evening—of 30, 15, and 15 minutes; so that they will be driven to close quarters—if any driving is necessary.

Christians always have the last word in these debates. But this is a point on which Mr. Foote has always been very indifferent. In a certain way, of course, it is necessitated; for it seems natural that the Theist (or Christian) should open the debate; and as that is on the first night, it is natural that the Atheist (or Freethinker) should open on the second night—and that leaves the orthodox disputant the last speech as a mere matter of chronology.

Mr. W. H. Deakin, an English Freethinker, mostly located in India, subscribes to the President's Honorarium Fund for

the new year, and writes to us in his usual vein of cheerfulness. We venture to make an extract from his letter:—

"I am sending my subscription with every good wish for your health and prosperity.....Did you get the cutting from the Rangoon paper I sent you, referring to the case of the Buddhist priest against whom the missionary people are getting an injunction to stop him from preaching against their religion? Very Christian like!.....I noticed the good attendance at the Freethinkers' Annual Dinner. The attendance has *more than doubled* since I last had the privilege of being present, which seems a long while now. I live in hopes of being able to meet you all again some day."

We did receive some cutting about that "injunction," but it was not explanatory enough, and we were hoping to hear further from the Buddhist priest, who is, we fancy, a friend and correspondent of ours. Certainly it is a rich joke for the Christians to go out there to destroy the Buddhist religion, and then call on the authorities to stop the Buddhists from opposing Christianity.

### President's Honorarium Fund, 1911.

#### *Eighth List of Subscriptions.*

Previously acknowledged, £137 Os. 8d. W. H. Deakin, £5; H. L. Fisher, 15s.; J. G. Dobson, 5s.; J. H. Gartrell (senr.), £2; D. J. D., £2; James Brodie, 3s.; V. Whitty, 2s. 6d. Correction: W. Palmer 1s., should have been W. Palmer 2s.

### THE MADRAS BEACH IN 1846. A SATIRE.

And so are ye poor triflers of the day,  
From life's gay pageant doom'd to pass away.  
This transient scene the emblem of your lot,  
A moment here, a moment hence forgot.  
Let but one day enwrap thee in thy shroud,  
And who shall miss thee in that heartless crowd?  
Who cease to smile, to trifle, or to jest,  
While yet the turf is green upon your breast?  
Who of that world you've vainly made your all  
Will deign your perish'd image to recall?  
Who even of the friends you loved so well,  
Will care to think as sounds thy passing knell,  
If thou art bless'd in Heaven or lost in Hell?

If in this age of self-styled charity,  
In which plain-spoken truth is a rarity,  
Some, as we doubt not, will cry out, "For shame,"  
To dare to slander so good people's name,  
And thus expose to public notoriety  
The little foibles of genteel society.  
We can but say what oft has been said before,  
Though charity is much, yet truth is more.  
And e'er have vice and folly justly borne,  
And still shall bear, the lash of truth and scorn."

*Anonymous.*

### PROFITABLE EVANGELISING.

That "the laborer is worthy of his hire" is a familiar—and often proper—plea of a minister when trying to collect his back salary.

It would be interesting, however, to know on what basis the amount of the "hire" is calculated in some cases.

By way of illustration: A dispatch from Des Moines states that "Billy" Sunday, the reformed baseball player, now preaching in Chicago, recently received \$8,400 for six weeks' revival work in Waterloo, Iowa.

This is accompanied by the statement that Sunday has received \$155,000 for similar work within ten years. The names of the towns and amount contributed in each case are given, the amounts ranging from \$3,496 in Boulder, Col., to \$17,500 in Jacksonville, Ill.

Sunday's style of evangelisation seems to pay better than baseball playing.—*Daily Journal* (Chicago).

### GENTLE JESUS.

Oh, what have sickly children done to share  
Thy cup of sorrows? Yet their dull, sad pain  
Makes the earth awful; on the tomb's dark stair  
Moan idiots, with no glimmer on the brain;  
No shrill priest with his hangman's cord can beat  
Thy mercy into these—ah, nay! ah, nay!  
The angels Thou hast sent to haunt the street  
Are hunger and distortion and decay. [fleet,  
Lord! that madst man and sendest him foes so  
Who shall judge Thee upon Thy Judgment Day.

*Robert Buchanan.*

### Nature's Curious Contrivances.—III.

(Concluded from p. 140.)

IN considering the causes of animal coloration in general, we are faced with the circumstance that the agency of Natural Selection in the evolution of colors and color patterns is not universally acknowledged; among the various criticisms levelled against it, is one that hesitates to admit the probability of such remarkable results as arising from the accumulation of fortuitous variations. This certainly seems a serious objection, and one of the greatest advocates of the selectionist principle endeavored to meet it in the following manner. "If," he writes,

"the reader will call to mind the vast amount of variability that has been shown to exist in all organisms, the exceptional power of rapid increase possessed by insects, and the tremendous struggle for existence always going on, the difficulty will vanish, especially when we remember that nature has the same fundamental groundwork to act on in the two groups, general similarity of forms, wings of similar texture and outline, and probably some original similarity in color and marking."\*

Whether these powerful illustrations entirely dissipate the difficulty, may be deemed doubtful. After a process of mimicry was once initiated, we may readily conceive how constant animal variation, conjoined with unceasing persecution, might continue to improve the deception until the perfection of the illusion was completed, through the ever increasing acuteness of enemies, accompanied by the elimination of those mimetics whose adaptation was the least advanced. But a successful inception of a favorable variation is impossible, unless a modification arises, which carries at one step the mimetic form some considerable distance towards a resemblance to its model. Otherwise, it is hard to understand how the mimic is to gain any advantage from the change. If it failed to deceive its enemies, any slight variation the mimic made in the direction of the mimicked species would be of slight survival value, with the consequence that it would not be preserved through the agency of Natural Selection alone. It is true that variations far more pronounced than these theoretically required occasionally occur, and some biologists are convinced that these are far more numerous than is usually allowed.

Nevertheless, we are bound to remember that, in all reasonable probability, countless mutations must arise before the requisite resemblance can make its appearance. There is no warrant for the belief that such mutations are sufficiently numerous to lend much scientific color to this solution of the problem. Moreover, those biologists who most strenuously champion the Natural Selection factor as the sole cause of animal coloration are precisely those who dispute the natural selection of variations other than those of a more or less slight character. The strength of the theory of Natural Selection as an explanation of color phenomena appears to reside in the truth that, when once the initial difficulty is surmounted, the theory furnishes a complete explanation of the overwhelming majority of ascertained facts, which certainly cannot be claimed for any of the rival theories which some naturalists have striven to erect in its stead.

These rival hypotheses, although differing considerably in detail, may be grouped under two heads. In the first group may be included the theories which derive coloration from the physical influences of the environment, either through the action of a kind of photographic process produced by the agency of light, heat, and moisture, or from changes set up by the physiological activities of metabolism.

Many years ago, T. W. Wood called attention to the curious color changes undergone by the pupæ of the common cabbage butterfly, when their caterpillars were confined in boxes lined with substances of different tints. Poulton has more recently shown

\* *Darwinism*, p. 244.

that similar changes occur with other pupæ, and also with many caterpillars. But however conclusive this may seem as an explanation of some forms of color change, its application is very strictly limited. Its incompleteness as a solution of the general problem of chromatic adaptation becomes evident when we remember that not only is an explanation of specific coloration required, but also an interpretation of its arrangement into complicated and apparently purposive patterns.\* Moreover, many of the color tints of protected animals are not solely due to pigmentation, but are directly dependent upon the surface structures of organisms. The winter whiteness of Arctic animals, for instance, cannot be traced to the presence of "white pigment," but proceeds from the scattering of the light, due to the presence of minute gas bubbles in the interstices of the animal coverings.

Color and color arrangement, however, are not the only phenomena involved in mimicry. To perfect a mimetic resemblance it is frequently necessary for the mimic to undergo modifications in structure with accompanying changes in habit, as in the case of the *Papilio* butterflies which mimic the labored flight of their sluggish models.

The structural and functional changes undergone in such instances, not only put the photographic hypothesis out of court, but completely crush the theory that adaptive modifications are conditioned by the nature of the nutriment. That appearance, form, and color are all ultimately traceable to metabolism, is not disputed; but it is utterly incredible that the nutritive processes of organisms can directly produce those harmonious blendings of structure, coloration, and habit requisite for completing protective resemblances.

The second series of theories put forward as a substitute for Natural Selection, consists of those which attempt to trace animal adaptation to the progressive action of evolutionary forces, which proceed independently of selective action. These forces are alleged to impel organisms along certain definite lines, determined by "laws of growth," these last being attributed to the never ceasing action of environmental stimuli, to which organisms and their ancestors, immediate and remote, have been subjected. This appears to be the position maintained by Eimer, Karl Semper, and Cunningham; other views, which are mere variations of that just described, have been propounded by various naturalists. But the concept underlying the term "laws of growth," is too vague and indefinite for practical purposes; and even were it possible to inductively establish the existence of such laws, it is doubtful whether they would furnish any satisfactory explanation of the phenomena of adaptation.

By way of illustrating what Professor Eimer calls a "law of growth," we will note his contention that animal color markings are gradually evolved from longitudinal stripes to spots, these subsequently fusing to form crossbars; uniform coloration representing the final term of the series.† Eimer has adduced much evidence to prove that this particular "law of growth" holds good in numerous forms of life, but its universality has been challenged by Dr. Haacke, who discovered a different "law" of color markings in Australian fishes.‡ But whether Eimer's theory is ultimately demonstrated or not, it does not, in its present form, explain how the "laws of growth" are so perfectly adjusted that they produce practical identity in appearance between the male of one species of butterfly and the female of another, while the male of the latter, presumably subject to the same "laws of growth," has undergone no material modification.

In his recent work, *Essays on Evolution*, Professor Poulton has summarised much of the evidence that militates against the theories just discussed. Firstly,

mimetic effects are restricted to those parts of animals bodies which are readily seen; secondly, mimetic appearances are usually due to the combined effects of structure, pigmentation, pattern, form, attitude, and movement; thirdly, resemblances existing between separate forms are quite independent of systematic affinity; and, fourthly, the modified form of the mimic is not accompanied by any changes in the mimicked species, except such as assist in producing a superficial resemblance.

Without here discussing whether Natural Selection, unaided by the transmission of acquired characters, is, in itself, sufficient to guide all the processes of organic evolution, it must be admitted that its supremacy as the controlling factor in color adaptation cannot be gainsaid.

A critical and impartial survey of adaptive and mimetic phenomena compels the belief that animal coloration, as a whole, cannot be ascribed to the unaided influence of the environmental forces, while the vast array of evidence gathered together in the Hope Museum at Oxford, and elsewhere, proves to demonstration that the colors and patterns of animals possess survival value, and consequently play a large and important part in the varied drama of life.

T. F. P.

### Who is a Materialist?

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

DEAR SIR,—I have been very much interested in the recent controversy relating to Materialism, which has been going on in the States during the last few weeks, and which has been greatly enlivened since Mr. Edison entered the arena. It appears to be a controversy between a leading scientific gentleman, who knows he is a Materialist, and a leading theologian, who is a Materialist without knowing it.

If we were to have a religion founded on pure Materialism, no one would make a more suitable pope than Mr. Edison himself, for is it not true that no one has ever known more of the nature of material things, which go to make up this universe, than Mr. Edison? It appears, however, that Mr. Edison is not dead sure as to where there is anything in the universe other than material things. It appears that he has a faint suspicion of the possibility of the existence of something besides matter, but he will evidently get over this in time.

The followers of Mrs. Eddy assert in the most forcible language that there is no such thing as a material universe. They tell us that matter has no real existence, and that even a brick, which appears to us to be a hard, heavy, and unyielding "lump of stuff," is only a figment of our imagination. It will therefore be seen that the beliefs of Mr. Edison and the Christian Scientists are as far apart as one could possibly imagine.

The Rev. Charles F. Aked appears to be a great theological light in the States, not quite, however, so prominent in religion as Mr. Edison is in science; still, he is a great authority. He does not agree with our leading scientist, and never loses an opportunity to ridicule, in the strongest terms, Materialism. This reverend gentleman is never tired of reminding us of our duty: we should leave no stone unturned to combat "gross Materialism," with a strong emphasis on the "gross." Still, notwithstanding all this, Mr. Aked himself is a Materialist of the grossest possible kind, and this I propose to show.

Perhaps no one connected with this controversy, except Mr. Edison himself, has the least idea as to what a non-material universe would be like. It would simply be an infinite vacuum, infinitely dark, infinitely cold, infinitely silent; in fact, an infinite, colorless solitude. There would be no up or down, top or bottom, north or south, east or west. A believer in a universe of this kind would be the exact reverse of a "Materialist," and should be called a "vacuumist."

\* On this point a biologist of European standing informs me that his classic experiments demonstrate that the only conceivable factor in color modification is that of Natural Selection.

† *Organic Evolution*, appendix.

‡ Quoted by Beddard in *Animal Coloration*.

It is quite true that there are certain phenomena in the universe which do not appear to be material in their character, but is it not true that no phenomenon can manifest itself except through the agency of material things?

The attraction of gravitation is an imponderable force that draws large and heavy bodies together with irresistible force, and these heavy bodies of necessity have to be material things, otherwise gravity could not assert itself. Heat, light, and electricity are all imponderable; still, electrical energy never manifests itself except in the presence of matter; it cannot even travel through a high vacuum. A magnet cannot show its force except it has something to attract. Magnetism cannot exist except in the presence of matter. It has no separate existence; it is simply a condition of matter—or perhaps I might say one of the attributes of matter.

Heat is still more easily understood; it is simply a condition of matter. Without matter there could be no heat. The sun, the primary source of all heat in the solar system, is made up of the identical materials we find on this planet. They are in an incandescent state, and are giving off a great deal of heat, but they cannot impart any heat to a vacuum; in fact, the heat of the sun travels through millions of miles of interstellar space without communicating any heat to the space, simply because there is nothing to heat. There is a complete absence of heat in interstellar space, which means absolute zero.

It has often been observed that when a meteoric stone strikes the earth, the outside is very hot—sometimes red-hot—and in a few seconds after striking it becomes very cold. This is because the stone had the temperature of interstellar space before it struck our atmosphere, and the heat due to compression and the friction of the air did not have any time to penetrate; therefore there was a very rapid fall in temperature, and if one touched the stone with a hand that was at all wet, shortly after the stone struck, the hand would be instantly frozen to the stone.

Light can only be produced by some material thing; something must glow in order to produce light. It may be a highly attenuated gas, heated by electricity, or a platinum or carbon rod. Any material thing at a high temperature produces light, providing that the temperature is high enough.

It will therefore be seen that heat, light, and electricity can only manifest themselves through the agency of material things. I think it will therefore be evident to the most pious of your readers that, in the absence of all material things, there would be little left of the universe.

Let us now examine the religion taught by the Rev. Charles Aked, Mr. Rockefeller's highly paid parson, who is taking the leading part in this crusade against the wicked and debasing superstition which he is pleased to call "gross Materialism." He wishes to prevent the spread of this malignant doctrine, which, if not "checked in the bud," is liable to spread with most disastrous results, not only dangerous to our bodies, but fatal to our problematical souls.

I must admit that, like the Rev. Mr. Aked, I have the utmost contempt for "gross Materialism," but we differ widely as to what "gross Materialism" is. Mr. Aked denounces Mr. Edison as a "gross Materialist," while I, on my part, consider the reverend gentleman the grossest kind of a "gross Materialist." If the belief in a material God sitting on a material bench with the second material God on his right hand, and the third material God on his left hand, all held down on to their material seats by the attraction of gravitation acting on their material bodies is not a "gross Materialism," what on earth is? Then, again, can anyone imagine a grosser form of Materialism or a more debasing form of superstition than the belief in a material God working in company—in fact, in co-partnership—with a material Devil? This Devil, who was created especially by

Mr. Aked's God to preside over the hell which this God had created for punishing unbelievers by burning their material bodies in material brimstone, is shown in many illustrated Bibles and other religious books. He is represented with horns, a cloven foot, indiarubber wings, and a shoestring tail—all material things; and, according to Mr. Aked's gross material religion, this Devil was created by a material God to play a necessary and important part in causing the "Fall of Man" in the Garden of Eden, and also in performing certain acts which were necessary in the scheme of Salvation and the Atonement.\*

I think Mr. Edison should take an active part in this controversy and point out to this reverend gentleman that the "gross Materialism" which he believes in is not only absurd, immoral, and impossible, but it is the most debasing and contemptible form of superstition that ever has disgraced this planet; and it is to be hoped that when Mr. Aked appreciates the ridiculous position he has taken up he will reform and become, like Mr. Edison, a pure Materialist, instead of a believer in the grosser form—a form which, in its various manifestations, has caused an infinite amount of suffering and bloodshed in this world.

But it should not be supposed for a single moment that I am depriving Mr. Aked and his colleagues of every non-material influence. It may be claimed by some that faith is not a material thing; still, Mr. Edison would probably show that faith is but a muddled condition of the grey matter of the brain, and he would probably be right. But there is something besides faith left, a very potent non-material influence that has been extensively used by all religious people, especially the Roman Catholics, with tremendous effect, and is to-day the backbone of nearly every religion on earth—and that is, Falsehood. Its use, however, may be overdone. As an example, when Mr. Torrey was in England saving the souls of benighted Englishmen that would otherwise have perished everlastingly, he depended almost entirely upon lies; in fact, his lying was so constant and persistent, that the pious and saintly Mr. Stead reprimanded him severely for not telling the truth.†

I have given this matter very serious consideration, and it would appear to me that the only comfort left for Mr. Aked, and the fraternity of which he forms a bright and shining ornament, is falsehood; and I feel convinced that these gentlemen appreciate this quite as much as I do, and that it will not be necessary for me to advise them to stick to their trade. There is an old French saying which, roughly translated, is as follows: "Lie, lie, lie; keep on lying; some of it will surely remain."

Yours in the true faith,

HIRAM S. MAXIM.

\* I admit that it is quite true that the better class of English and Americans of the present day do not believe in a personal Devil or a literal brimstone hell; neither do they believe in the resurrection of the body. But Mr. Aked is an Englishman, and, if he will consult the English Prayer Book and his Bible, he will find that Protestants do actually have these absurdities incorporated in their Confession of faith, and that the belief is strictly in accordance with Bible teaching. Those who do not believe in these things are simply Atheists, and there are a lot of us, in ever-increasing numbers.

† I do not wish it to be understood that I am placing the Rev. Mr. Aked in the same category as Mr. Torrey. When Mr. Torrey was in England, I repeatedly challenged him to tell the truth about recent American events, and I have no doubt that the poor fellow tried; but every attempt was a gloomy and ignominious failure. He simply could not tell the truth. I do not say that Mr. Aked is a liar in the ordinary sense of the term, and I only spoke of lying as a hint to Mr. Aked in case Mr. Edison should get him into a corner. Moreover, there is no reason why Mr. Torrey and the Roman Catholics should have the exclusive monopoly of falsehood. I feel sure, however, that Mr. Aked will never resort to it except in a case of necessity; and, even then, under the most favorable conditions, he could never hope to even approach Mr. Torrey in the use of this most potent of all religious weapons.

## The Chapman-Alexander Salvation of Toronto.

THE Chapman Alexander Preaching and Singing Company have concluded their four weeks' engagement in Toronto, and left with their pockets full of cash and their mouths full of—well, no, not exactly apologies for failure, but something of that sort—say, only partial success. For there was an inconsiderable deficiency of \$5,000 in the finances, and the number of converts was a difficult matter to estimate. Here, however, are the official figures: No. of Toronto districts, 12; No. of meetings, 480; estimated attendance, 400,000, or more than the entire population of the city.

Of course, the revivalists are not quite so silly as to pretend that the whole of the people of Toronto have passed through their sermon and hymn mill, and they acknowledge that some persons go to many meetings. The attendants at the meetings were probably over 90 per cent. the same throughout the month, and most likely the total number of attendants at the 480 meetings did not exceed 25,000.

The ordinary life of the city has not been disturbed, and the theatres and moving picture shows have had as full a run of business as at other times, so that it seems probable that the chief trace the revival will have left will be the diminished collections at the regular church services.

Apart from the statement that a loss of \$5,000 had been incurred, it was not to be expected that a great many "converts" would have been secured from even 25,000 attendants.

For, you see, these revival services are not like the ordinary church services, which are carried on pretty much on business principles: so many sermons, so much salary; and in which the results are reckoned, not in souls saved, or brands plucked from the burning, but in pleasant opportunities for personal display, and in tea-fights, garden-parties, or other entertainments organised for social intercourse. But in the revival the whole affair turns upon soul-saving or brand-plucking. If few brands are plucked, then the question bobs up: Is it worth while? It is all very well to say that to save one soul is worth the whole world, but when we face realities in the shape of cheque-books, we want to know how much per nob it costs to save the souls or pluck the brands. How many brands ought \$35,000 to pluck from hell? If one dollar's worth of talk would be sufficient to save one soul the problem could easily be settled; and if not sufficient, who shall say whether the result is due to the hardness of the soul or the softness of the soul-saver?

Here, again, we cannot give figures, for Mr. Chapman, the general agent for the show, told an inquirer that he had none to give out. They were not important:—

"We cannot say how many decision cards were signed. (?) They are misleading, and it is impossible to tell from them the impression that has been made. That will develop in months and years to come in your civic life. (!) The signing of a decision card is not always evidence of conversion!"

This sounds pretty much like a confession of defeat. Then Chapman himself was asked, "Are you satisfied?" and he rejoined, "Are you ever satisfied?" But he added, apologetically, "Good work has been done under all circumstances." Under all circumstances! What circumstances could be more favorable than the provision of ample funds, the organisation of an army of 3,000 hustlers and choristers, and the co-operation of the regular preachers? Did he need a John the Baptist to precede him and rouse the people to an excited condition—a necessary preliminary to conversion? Or was it that, like the Lord in the old time, he could not prevail over the enemy because they had—not chariots of iron, but—some little common sense. Then, after complaining that the "preparation" in Toronto had not been as complete as in some other places, he said:—

"My idea is permanency. We do not need a larger church, but a better church. We want to stir up enthusiasm for evangelistic work, so that there will be a permanent continuance of effort."

That is it. Having failed to justify the \$35,000 outlay by increasing membership, Chapman falls back on quality, and leaves the soul-saving work to other and smarter fakery.

Oh, yes; Toronto's civic life will exhibit the good results of the Chapman-Alexander campaign in another generation or two—when the present race of political and religious and commercial grafters and corruptionists has made room for a possibly slightly better one. Then it may happen that such a question will be raised, but we guess it will not. Chapman and Alexander will then be as dead as Torrey, Sam Jones, and the multitude of revivalist showmen that have troubled the religious world for so many decades, and, like them, will be forgotten, and will be replaced by a new generation of the same genus, who in similar fashion will undertake to save

souls and convert them into paying communicants at so much per, and will find ready to hand a new generation of believers willing to pay the price and to accept the faker's excuses for failure. The Age of Barnumism is an endless one.—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEB. 23.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Barry, Bowman, Baker, Cohen, Dawson, Dr. Nichols, Heaford, Leat, Lazarnick, Moss, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Schindel, Thurlow, Theakstone, and Wood.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Birmingham and West Ham Branches, and for the Parent Society.

Financial assistance was given to the Wood Green Branch.

Mr. Heaford called the attention of the Executive to the recent action of the Austrian Government in regard to Free-thinkers and their propaganda, and moved the following resolution:—

"That this Executive learns with regret that Blasphemy prosecutions have recently been instituted against the sixteen members of the Central Executive Committee at Prague of the Czech Freethinkers, and against the printers and publishers of Freethought literature generally in Austria, and views with reprobation the vexatious attempt of the Clericalist Government in Austria to repress the rising Freethought movement in the Empire. This Executive hereby expresses its cordial sympathy with Dr. Bartosek, Karel Pelant, and their fellow victims, and assures them that the persecuting spirit of the Austrian Government is viewed with repugnance by every lover of Freethought in Great Britain; and this Executive further pledges itself to assist the Czech Freethinkers financially should such assistance be necessary."

This was carried unanimously.

Mr. Heaford further reported that the question of the revision of Ferrer's trial would shortly come before the Spanish Government, and moved the following resolution, which was also carried unanimously:—

"This Executive learns with satisfaction that the Spanish Cortes will shortly discuss the question of the revision of Ferrer's trial, and will be armed with the authentic legal documents respecting the accusations made against that distinguished Freethinker and Educational Reformer. This Executive earnestly hopes that, as the result of its deliberations, the Cortes will authorise a revision of Ferrer's trial and thus fulfil the desire of the civilised world for fuller light on the grave issues raised in the late trial. The Executive accordingly authorises the President and Secretary to sign and forward a Petition to the President of the Cortes urging that the Cortes will give a vote in favor of revision."

The President reported upon other matters of interest to the Executive, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

## THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC.

In Portugal the Republic has immense difficulties before it. A revolution carried through by force of arms has more perhaps to fear from dissatisfied friends than from open foes. A sudden revolution has always more of promise than performance: the new regime is compared not with the old, but with the shining ideal conceived at the moment of victory. Where the men practised in affairs are without principle, the leadership necessarily falls to men of principle without experience. And to these common weaknesses of a revolutionary government there must be added in the case of Portugal two others: first, the very completeness of the initial success of the Revolution has led many who are in no sense Republicans to rally to it, in the hope that the game of corruption may still go on; and secondly, the political situation has been rendered more difficult by industrial unrest. That the workers should use their new freedom of combination in order to strike is what might be naturally expected. To obtain a just recognition of the worker's claims, a just moderation in their enforcement will need time and experience. If the provisional government triumphs over these difficulties, so much the greater will be its glory. If it succumbs it will still leave a name honorable for its heroic efforts to put an end to the corruption of the public life of the country; and even in the case of failure, its efforts will not have been in vain.—*Positivist Review.*

**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, J. T. Lloyd, "The Design Argument."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public (Minor) Hall, Canning Town): 7.30, E. C. Saphin, "Christian Truths Untrue."

**OUTDOOR.**

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

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

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, W. Heaford, "Francisco Ferrer and His Martyrdom."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, Zosimus, "Religiosity in Social Reform Propaganda."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): Anniversary Sunday.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote, "Man's Discovery of Himself"; 7, "Deity up to Date," with reference to Dr. Russell Wallace.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen, 3, "The Origin of Christianity"; 6.30, "Man's Search for God." Tea at 5.

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Parry's Temperance Bar, Tony-pandy): 3, Sam Holman, "Do Infidels Recant?"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall, Small Room): 6.45, Music; 7, D. R. Bowe, "Freethought Recollections."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Ante-Room): 6, Business Meeting.

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