

THE Freethinker

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The whole theory of the special and supernatural, and all that was twined with it or educed out of it, departs as a dream.—WALT WHITMAN.

The Freethought Flag.

FREETHOUGHT is as old as history, and perhaps older. Very likely in the pre-historic ages there were exceptional men who smiled in secret, if not openly, at the superstition of their fellows, and wreathed the lip in scorn at their cowardice and slavery. However, we know that Freethought decisively appeared in ancient India. Long before the time of Buddha it may be traced in the discussions of Hindu philosophy. Buddha himself was a resolute Freethinker. He set aside all the problems of theology as idle or pernicious. Above all he warned his followers against bigotry and persecution. They were to persuade their erring brethren into the right road, but never to force them; and hence it is that Buddhism, in the whole course of twenty-five centuries, has never persecuted man, woman, or child.

No doubt there were Freethinkers in ancient Egypt, especially among the priests, who, as a large, hereditary caste, must sometimes have laughed in their sleeves at the reign of imposture. Whether any of them betrayed their heresy and were tortured, imprisoned, or killed, it is impossible to determine. The papyri and the stone records yield us no information. Among the Jews, however, we know that there were Freethinkers. The orthodox conclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes is the addition of a later hand; the rest of the Book is the work of a Hebrew Epicurean.

Freethought arose betimes in Greece. Some of the earliest philosophers were sceptics. Everyone knows the story of Bion, who, on being shown the votive tablets of those who had cried to Neptune in storms and were saved, asked where were the tablets of those who were drowned. In the great age of Greek civilisation, the mightiest of her dramatists, the majestic Æschylus, had an evil reputation for heresy; and, as Leigh Hunt remarked, the tradition of his untimely end was a concoction of pious malice; a sort of foretaste, we may add, of the infidel death-bed stories so prevalent in Christendom. Socrates, that divine man, as Gray calls him, expiated his heresy in an Athenian prison, where he drank the penal hemlock, and died the death of a martyr.

Freethought counted thousands of votaries in the palmiest days of Rome. Julius Cæsar himself, "the foremost man of all this world," the possessor of a grander brain than that of any Christian ruler in history, openly avowed his unbelief. Lucretius, the poetical precursor of Darwin, the first prophet of Evolution, as Mrs. Browning wrote—

"Denied divinely the divine—and died
Chief post by the Tiber side."

Leaping forward nearly two centuries, when Christianity was beginning to wind itself like a serpent around Roman civilisation, we see the brilliant wit and philosophy of Lucian playing like lightning over the superstitions of his age.

Throughout the dark days of the triumph of Christianity the Freethought tradition was never utterly

extinguished, though its history in those ages has yet to be written. We see it daringly emerging at the Renaissance in vigor and splendor. Presently the great Montaigne, so wise, sane, and genial, whispered that a difference of opinion was a small matter to burn a man alive for. Rabelais, the jester, who covered depths of wisdom with robes of folly, and was neither with the Pope nor with Luther, held aloft the Freethought flag though he danced around the pole. Then came the greatest Freethought martyr of all time, one whose glory is growing and will grow with the ages, who will shine a fixed star in the firmament of fame when the Vatican has crumbled into dust—the fiery, daring, and lofty Giordano Bruno.

Bruno's martyrdom marks a new epoch. The spirit of Science sprang like a phoenix from his ashes. The discoveries and demonstrations of Galileo corroborated his intuitions. Less than a century afterwards Pascal exclaimed that if the world did go round, not all the Cardinals at Rome could prevent it—or themselves from going round with it. And the land of Pascal, of Rabelais and Dolet, then gave birth to the great Voltaire, whose name became a rallying cry to the scattered soldiers of liberty. He had his faults—who has not? The very sun has spots. But he held high over Europe, with eagle eyes and the grip of an eagle's talons, the blazing gonfalon of Freethought. Robert Browning, the Christian poet, allows that Voltaire wielded

"the sharpest shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
To death Imposture through the armor-joints."

Bigots and tyrants, Macaulay says, who were never moved by the wailing of millions, turned pale at the sound of his name.

In England the Freethought flag was upheld by Collins, Chubb, Toland, and Bolingbroke. Then it passed to the hands of Thomas Paine, who achieved a reputation only second to Voltaire's. His *Age of Reason* was the subject of many prosecutions; Richard Carlile and his brave colleagues were frequently imprisoned for selling it; but bigotry defeated itself, for out of this turmoil grew the beginnings of organised Freethought. Watson, Hetherington, and Southwell were followed by George Jacob Holyoake, who also tasted the sweets of prison. Holyoake then strove manfully for the cause. Presently the more potent personality of Charles Bradlaugh revealed itself, and for a quarter of a century he carried the Freethought flag from end to end of England.

Charles Bradlaugh founded the National Secular Society. It was a fighting organisation during his lifetime, it has been a fighting organisation during the twenty years that have elapsed since his death, and it is likely to be a fighting organisation to the very end of the chapter. Happily the *Freethinker* was well established when the great "Iconoclast" laid down the President's hammer, and the Society and the journal were able to keep the old flag flying without any solution of continuity. And the flag still flies. The President who succeeded Charles Bradlaugh, who is the same person as the editor of this journal, cannot last for ever; but he is confident that his death or disablement will not stop the flying of the Freethought flag for a moment. Bradlaugh's did not. No man's will. Great ideas find instruments or make them. Let us all be sure of that.

G. W. FOOTE.

How Not to Do It.—II.

(Continued from p. 147.)

SOMEWHAT akin to the fallacy noted at the conclusion of my last article is what is known to Christians as the argument from experience. They do not mean by this that common racial experience to which all may appeal because it is an experience in which all share. It is an experience that one can only have as a Christian—or at least as a religious person. That is its peculiar quality; and the delightful intellectual tangle into which the Christian gets may be briefly expressed as follows. The truth of Christianity is proven by the personal experience of Christians. The Freethinker is a stranger to this experience because he is a disbeliever in Christianity. To gain this experience he must believe. But if one already believes, the experience is unnecessary to *prove* the truth of Christianity, however much it may serve as additional, but unnecessary, confirmation. The Christian does not believe because he experiences, he experiences because he believes. It is the faith that produces the proof, not *vice versa*. And that faith can, with some people, produce proof, Freethinkers would be the last to dispute. The whole business of the quack medicine-vendor is based upon this possibility. Police-courts are constantly furnishing evidence of this kind, and faith, which sees a life saved by bread pills, or rheumatism cured by wearing a "magnetised" ring, is not likely to break down when applied to religion.

But the peculiar thing about the religious argument from experience is, that it does not really rest upon experience. Its real concern is with the interpretation of experience. The editor of the *Methodist Times* said, the other day, that when the soul, caught up in an ecstasy, cries out,—

"Hallelujah! 'tis done,
I believe in the Son;
I am saved by the Cross
Of the Crucified One,"

there is recorded a far deeper truth than any mere historical fact. And other Christian writers and speakers bombard us with their experience of spiritual things, and assure us that when we have reached their state of spiritual development we shall recognise the reality of the "Unseen."

Now all this, as I have said, is not so much an argument based on experience as it is an argument based on the accuracy of a special interpretation of experience. When a man breaks out into the pious doggerel quoted above there is no need to doubt that he is really subject to some unusual feeling. Whether the "Crucified One" is responsible for the feeling is quite another matter. The Christian assumes that if we accept the first as true the second necessarily follows. When the Rev. R. F. Horton explains how God Almighty once joined him in a hunt for a lady's slipper, we need not deny that a lady lost her slipper, that Dr. Horton asked God to help him, or that he subsequently found the slipper. Neither need we accept the story of "divine" help. The communion that female saints declare they have had with Jesus, or male saints with the Virgin Mary, of necessity involved some experience, but the interpretation of that experience is quite another question. When a man, after a heavy and varied meal, comes to a doctor complaining of sickness and internal pains, he is an infallible authority as to whether he has the pains or whether he has been sick. But when he goes on to say what dish made him ill, his interpretation may be all at sea. And when, after a change of diet and a change of air, he feels better, he is again the supreme authority on that point; but whether it was the change of air, of food, of the physic taken, or merely a recovery independent of all three, is more than he, or perhaps the doctor, can be quite certain about.

All the accumulation of "experiences" by the Christian does not really touch the issue raised by the Freethinker. He does not deny that people have seen visions—any vision is, for the one who

sees it, a real thing—he does not deny that people have experienced ecstatic states. He knows all about them; and as the Freethinker has been often a Christian—a condition from which the present writer has been fortunately exempt—he has often had these experiences himself. His whole point is not whether the experiences are real, but whether they are susceptible of a more rational and a more natural explanation than that given by the Christian. A Christian mystic—they seem to be acquiring a vogue just now—sees a beatific vision, or is favored by a visit from the Devil. Well, opium has done the same service for thousands, and a bottle of whisky has created scores of devils for an alcohol-soaked organism. If we are to find an explanation for the one in a study of the nervous system, why not the other? The visions of the opium-taker are as real as those of the saint. His "experience" is quite as strong a piece of evidence. And the Freethinker quite consistently asks why explanations that are satisfactory in the one case are not equally satisfactory in the other. The only reply he gets is a repetition of the experiences. The Christian, instead of replying to the challenge, usually fails even to understand it.

Now let me take another group of arguments that answer nothing and of reasonings that are quite beside the mark. In the course of a savage onslaught on Materialism, the late Professor Goldwin Smith observed:—

"The Materialistic hypothesis is unthinkable. It postulates at the commencement of all things the action of forces unoriginated, with nothing to set them in operation."

Therefore Materialism is absurd. And if Materialism says what Professor Goldwin Smith makes it, there can be no question of its absurdity. But does it? Materialism, of course, says nothing of the kind. It takes existence—matter, force, energy; any name will do—for granted, and simply asserts that all changes that occur can be or may be explained in terms of mechanical causation. In saying this the Materialist may be right or wrong. His reasoning may be logical or illogical; but he certainly has nothing to do with such a self-contradictory conundrum as "unoriginated" forces at the "commencement of all things." The Materialist has argued against theories of the origin of existence, but that is obviously a different thing to making statements about the commencement of all things. The origin of existence is really a Theistic theory. It arises from the belief in a Deity who is responsible for the existence of all things. And the operation of force with nothing to set it in motion is also a Theistic problem. Theists have been asked over and over again to explain, on the theory of a specific creation in time, what caused Deity to change from a state of absolute quiescence to that of active creation. In reply, the Theist presents the problem to the Materialist for answer. It is kind of him; but the Materialist has enough to deal with in the unavoidable problems of existence, without dwelling upon those that are quite gratuitously manufactured. Logically, we cannot say of existence, *per se*, that it is either originated or unoriginated. It simply is. All thinking implies existence. Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," would have conveyed a more fundamental truth had it been "I am, therefore I think." My thinking is, in any case, a consequence of my being; and if this is explained or granted, all else follows of necessity.

But the whole of the attack on Materialism proceeds on a quite fallacious basis. It consists in taking some conception of "matter"—usually a very old one—upon which doubt may be cast, and assuming that Materialism stands or falls by this issue. Thus, the favorite plan is to take the Lucretian atom—a solid, indivisible point—and to dwell upon the fact that the disintegration of the atom is a scientifically justifiable speculation, or to assert that the theory of atoms being formed by vortex rings, set up in the ether, and in either case to declare that Materialism is discredited and dead. The procedure is as reason-

able as to declare that geology is dead because the old theory of cataclysms is rejected, or that biology is no more because the "vital spiri" of earlier generations has received its quietus.

Now while it is perfectly true that Materialism has been, historically, associated with a theory of "matter" as consisting of hard, solid, indivisible points, it does not follow that Materialism as a theory of things, or as a principle of reasoning, is bound up with any conception of the nature of "matter." A Materialist might agree with Berkeley that matter, *per se*, is a figment of the imagination, as mind, *per se*, is a figment of the imagination. We have one class of phenomena—mental states—which gives us the abstraction mind. And we have another class of phenomena—chemical, electrical, gravitative forces, or heat, sound, and light—which gives us the abstraction matter. And if the anti-Materialist jumps at this statement, and sees in it the annihilation of matter as a substantive fact, the reply is that "matter" is as much a hypothesis as the ether, and that the ether is as much matter as is matter itself. In any case some conception of matter is inevitable, some theory of matter is indispensable to the scientist; and it would be passing strange if, while the chemist, the biologist, and the physicist are free to revise their theories from time to time without sacrificing their essential position, revision should be altogether denied to the Materialist.

The essence of the Materialistic position is partly disclosed by its name. Historically it is associated with a school of thought that held to the autonomous action of "spirit" working through "matter" and yet independent of it. Material forces (the expression, it must be admitted, rather begs the question, but its use makes the position clear) were admitted; but it was held that in addition to these there existed another force, spirit, which could neither be developed from nor resolved into material forces or conditions. The Materialist asserted that, given adequate knowledge, it would be found that "spiritual" forces were part and parcel of the cosmic machine, belonging thereto in such a manner that, given the necessary knowledge of the material forces, so-called spiritual phenomena—life, intelligence, etc.—would appear as the inevitable consequence. The essence of the Materialist position was consequently not concerned with the nature of matter in itself, but an assertion that nature as a whole, including of course the phenomena of life and mind, admitted of a purely mechanical explanation.

The full force of this is seen only when we realise that all explanation is a statement of equivalents. A thing is explained when we have shown that a certain number of factors result in the phenomenon to be explained—neither more nor less. If our explanation leaves anything over—that is, if it fails to account for all that is—it is so far inadequate as an explanation. Thus, an explanation of a man's conduct at a given time must show how his nature, in co-operation with other circumstances, resulted in that conduct. A physical phenomenon is explained when we have shown that A, B, C, D result in E. That is, E is the equivalent of A, B, C, D. The man's conduct is the equivalent of his heredity, his organisation, his environment—in a word, of all the forces operating at that time. An explanation is, then, I repeat, a statement of equivalents. The Materialist asserted that the phenomena of life and mind would ultimately be found susceptible of the same explanation as other things. The Spiritualist denied this, and asserted that life and mind, with other things, could never be shown to be the equivalent of mechanical conditions. I do not now argue whether the Materialist is right or wrong, but it is clear that he is not essentially concerned with any particular theory of "matter." He is concerned with the establishment of a mechanical explanation of nature; but in arguing against the solid, indestructible atom, the Spiritualist has, so far as Materialism is concerned, been thrashing the air.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

What if there be no God?

IN the Oxford-road Baptist Church, Manchester, there was recently held a Brotherhood meeting, of which the minister, the Rev. J. E. Roberts, M.A., B.D., gives some account in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* for March 3. The question under discussion was, "Can we know God?" Mr. Roberts, who evidently acted as chairman, makes the following reference to what took place:—

"Some of the speakers having questioned the practical importance of the question, and being inclined to treat it as having only an academic interest, I pointed out that if they could prove to me the non-existence of God I should at once alter my mode of life in several important particulars. To my surprise, this apparently serious statement raised considerable discussion."

What is really surprising is, not that the reverend gentleman's statement should have raised considerable discussion, but that it should have been made at all. A more foolish statement never fell from human lips. The non-existence of God requires no proof. It is Theism, not Atheism, that stands in need of demonstration. Mr. Roberts cannot be ignorant of the fact that no one has ever succeeded in the attempt to prove the Divine existence. He knows perfectly well that it is insusceptible of any proof whatsoever. Anslem, Thomas Aquinas, and Raymond of Sebonde elaborated various ontological, teleological, and moral arguments for it, but William of Occam brushed them all aside as of absolutely no value, declaring that "the existence of God was not a known truth but merely an article of faith." Because Descartes imagined that he saw the idea of a perfect being within himself, and was painfully conscious of his own imperfection, he inferred the existence of a perfect being from whom the idea was derived; but this so-called proof was never treated very seriously. For a time, the argument from design was very popular. Early in the last century, the Earl of Bridgewater bequeathed £8,000 with a view to having it duly strengthened by qualified men, and the famous *Bridgewater Treatises* were the result. So enamored of it was Macaulay that he described it as "that argument which a reflecting mind finds in every beast, bird, insect, fish, leaf, flower, and shell." But the theory of evolution has relegated the argument from design into the limbo of all lost causes. The theologians are doing their utmost to restore it and give it a new shape, but there is no likelihood that their efforts will be crowned with success. The truth is, that the existence of God has never been and cannot become an object of knowledge: it has always been and must continue to be, as long as it persists, merely an object of speculation and faith.

Now, Mr. Roberts, being aware that neither he nor anybody else is able to prove that there is a God, challenges his hearers and readers to prove his non-existence. "If you succeed," he says, "I solemnly declare that I shall at once alter my mode of life in several important particulars." It is quite certain, of course, that if Mr. Roberts got convinced that there is no God he would have to give up his profession, and seek his living in some other direction. What other alterations in his mode of life would be necessary, he is about to tell us himself. First of all, he says, "our Lord Jesus Christ fades at once out of human life." "The fair story of Jesus remains," he adds, "but it remains as a hoax or as a tragedy, either as Nature's huge practical joke or as history's grim crime." The Divine Christ, the world's Redeemer, would, of necessity, share God's fate; but the shock to Christians, to "ministers of the Gospel, or missionaries, or Sunday-school teachers, or Christian workers of any kind," would not be so very severe, because their loss would be amply compensated for by the conviction that all along they had been worshiping and serving a mere phantom of the imagination. Indeed, their only regret would be that they had been the dupes of superstition so long. Even Mr. Roberts himself,

being an honest man, would rejoice at his intellectual emancipation. But the reverend gentleman is talking undiluted nonsense when he asserts that "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the mightiest factor in securing true social reform." Listen to him:—

"If our faith in Christ were dashed to the ground our attitude to social reform would be revolutionised. For the moment I am supposing that we should retain our interest in social reform—a big assumption in a Godless world. But what machinery could we trust to? I might become a revolutionary Socialist, or an anarchist. There are plenty of facts to encourage anarchism if the world is not governed by God and if Christ is a myth. On the other hand, I might become a confirmed Individualist, emphasising the advantages of unfettered competition, with *laissez faire* for my Gospel, instead of God was in Christ."

It is difficult to conceive how a modern man of ordinary intelligence could pack so many errors and misrepresentations into so short a passage. If "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ be the mightiest factor in securing social reform," how is it that any social reform is still required at this time of day, and, in particular, how are we to explain the fact that the present passion for social reform had its origin outside the Christian Church? In a world governed by God in Christ slavery was tolerated and exploited by the Church for six or seven centuries, and when at last it disappeared it only gave place to serfdom, which was scarcely an improvement. Mr. Roberts himself admits that even now "there are plenty of facts to encourage anarchism" in a world which he believes to be governed by God. By making such admissions our friend unintentionally furnishes what inevitably "tends to the disgrace" of the very Gospel he so ardently defends. Furthermore, Mr. Roberts thinks that without the Gospel he might become a revolutionary Socialist, Anarchist, or confirmed Individualist; but is he blind to the fact that the overwhelming majority of Christians are confirmed Individualists, who indulge in unfettered competition without the least compunction, and that some followers of the Lamb are convinced that nothing short of revolutionary Socialism will ever set the world right?

It is an obvious truism that "no God means no Divine Fatherhood"; but it is utterly false to say that consequently there is no human brotherhood. We are members of the human race, whether we have a Father in heaven or not. The curious thing is that the belief in the Fatherhood of God has never been attended by a realisation, in social life, of the Brotherhood of Man.

Mr. Roberts's next point is so wonderfully revelatory that it must be given in his own words:—

"Does anybody suppose that Christians will continue to set aside one-tenth or any other proportion—often a larger proportion—of their income for God's work if they cease to be Christians and if there is no God? Or do you imagine that people would continue to support hospitals and asylums and refuges, to work in the slums, to reclaim drunkards, to visit prisons, to rescue prostitutes, to conduct Bands of Hope, to provide social clubs for lads and men and girls on the present scale if there is no Father in heaven, and if the brotherhood of men is only the dream of visionaries?"

It is self-evident that if there be no God and no Christ there can be no such thing as God's work for anybody to do; but, surely, Mr. Roberts does himself great injustice and dishonor when he suggests that the moment he loses his faith in God he will cease to be a good man. This is one of the saddest and most humiliating confessions that any man or woman can ever make. It is an infamous libel on human nature, and could only issue from a person whose judgment is hopelessly warped by prejudice and whose ignorance of unbelievers is colossal. Mr. Roberts enigmatises what he calls "Christian ideals," without once telling us what they are; but whatever they are, he is quite sure that if God goes, they will go also. If they are the ethical maxims ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels, the reverend gentleman knows that several of them are more honored in the breach

than in the observance, and that those of them which are true and applicable are as old as the hills.

The last point in the article is morally on a par with the preceding ones, and on account of the selfishness that underlies it deserves to be noticed:—

"No God means no immortality. This present life is all I have. In that case I must certainly revise my plans. If I were taking a journey to Switzerland I might accept considerable inconveniences on the journey in the prospect of enjoying a long stay there. If the journey is all, and the end is a smash, I had better enjoy what comforts I can secure for the hours that remain."

Is that equivalent to an admission that, were it not for his faith in God and immortality, the reverend gentleman would prefer being wicked to being good, or would enjoy giving the reins to his appetites and passions much more than keeping them under reasonable control? Is it simply because he loves or fears God and expects to reap an ample reward in another world that he abstains from vice, and "accepts the considerable inconveniences" connected with the work of helping his fellow-beings? If that is what he means, then the inescapable inference is that his Christian faith has exerted, and still exerts, a baneful influence upon his character. Christianity is a religion that fosters the worst form of selfishness, and makes a disinterested conduct practically impossible. It has proved in history the most cruelly individualistic religion that the world has ever seen. Jesus is represented as setting the selfish ball rolling in the words, "Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven," and Paul helped to keep it going by such words as these: "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." As a striking and wholesome contrast take the following from Seneca:—

"How are we to deal with men? What commands do we give? To spare human blood? A fine thing not to injure him whom it is your duty to benefit. Highly laudable, forsooth, for a man to be gentle to man! Nay, but we will further bid him stretch out his hand to the shipwrecked, to show the erring their way, to divide his bread with the hungry. But why should I enumerate all that he must do or avoid doing, when I can shortly give him this formula of human duty: all this that you see, the world of gods and men, is one; we are members of a great body. Nature brought us forth as relations when she produced us from the same beginnings and for the same ends. She it is that inspired us with mutual love and made us sociable creatures. She it is that ordained what is fair and just. It is from her ordering that it is more miserable to injure than to be injured, from her command that helping hands are prepared."

The idea of the brotherhood of mankind was an idea upon which the Stoic philosophers constantly insisted; and they derived it from their study of men as children of Nature. Christianity obscured it by its extravagant emphasis upon otherworldism. The scientific philosophy of to-day is busy disentangling it from its supernatural complications, and giving it its rightful position as the one idea the full realisation of which, through education, is calculated to set the world in every sense right.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Rock Records of Animal Pedigrees.

OVER half a century ago, the Newton of Biology, in surveying the testimony of the rocks, penned the following vivid sentences:—

"I look at the geological record as a history of the world imperfectly kept, and written in a changing dialect; of this history we possess the last volume alone, relating to only two or three countries. Of this volume, only here and there a short chapter has been preserved; and of each page, only here and there a few lines."

Nevertheless, the then known facts of paleontology led Darwin to the conclusion that all the available evidence admirably agreed with the doctrine

of descent through variation and Natural Selection. Since Darwin wrote the above passage a systematic examination of the fossil bearing strata of North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, has brought innumerable discoveries in its train, and the entire trend of this palæontological evidence so strongly supports the doctrine of descent that no other interpretation is rationally possible.

Although our knowledge of the extinct plant and animal populations of our globe is far from complete, the progress made in palæontology in recent years is simply enormous. Volumes would be required to catalogue the wealth of fossils preserved in the museums of Europe and America.

Some of the most complete and convincing illustrations of animal evolution are afforded by the mammalian remains of North America. An ascending series of deposits which embraces the entire Tertiary epoch is strikingly rich in remains. The earliest Tertiary beds—the Eocene—have produced mammalian relics which point to their near kinship with the fauna of the immediately preceding Mesozoic period. With the fossils found above the Eocene we are in touch with the immediate ancestors of living mammalian forms. From the lower Eocene onwards, the evolution of numerous stocks may be traced in almost unbroken continuity. Although the foot-prints of evolution are from time to time obscured by animal invasions from the Old World and the southern half of America, it is fairly easy to distinguish between the incoming forms and those that were native to the soil.

Owing to their social habits and greater abundance, the palæontological history of various hoofed animals has been preserved with remarkable completeness. It is notorious that, in defiance of all antecedent probability, the evolutionary development of the horse has been most fully read in the rock records of Northern America. From a diminutive animal scarcely larger than a cat, short limbed, short footed, and short necked, possessing four functional toes, and one toe in a rudimentary condition in the fore-foot; and with three functional digits and a rudimentary digit in the hind foot has been evolved the noble living horse. Despite the various differences presented by the skeleton of this primitive horse—the *Eohippus*—with that of modern horses, its equine characteristics are universally acknowledged.

Each Eocene and Oligocene layer of the Tertiary strata reveals its distinguishing genus. All the fossils demonstrate a slow and gradual advance towards the extant horses; every part of the skeleton participates in the development. Professor W. B. Scott selects the genus *Mesohippus* as a typical representative of the half-way stage in the evolutionary march. "Comparing *Mesohippus* with *Eohippus*," he writes,—

"we observe that the former is much larger, some species attaining the size of a sheep, and has a relatively longer neck, longer limbs, and much more elongate feet, which are tridactyl, and the middle toe is so enlarged that it bears most of the weight, while the lateral digits are very much more slender.....The brain case is fuller and more capacious, the internal cast of which shows that the brain was richly convoluted."

The teeth of the *Mesohippus*, though obviously derived from the *Eohippus*, have also assumed a more horse-like form.

A still later genus, the *Desmatippus*, approaches in dental and other characters more closely to the modern horse; while two upper Miocene genera, the *Protohippus* and *Hipparion*, are quite modern in general appearance, although their smaller size, three toed feet, and slightly shorter crowned teeth, point to their line of descent.

During the geological periods under review the hungry ocean gained advantage on the kingdom of the shore, but the watery main was in turn repulsed by the encroachments of the soil. In the course of this interchange of state a land bridge was established which connected Eurasia with America. This enabled a partial migration of the equine population

to the Eurasian continent. It is doubtful, however, whether they permanently settled there until the close of the Miocene or the commencement of the Pliocene epoch, when they segregated themselves into the zebras, horses, and asses of the old world continents. At about the same period the equine family extended its dominion to the southern parts of America, and under changed environmental conditions brought into being numerous species and genera, some of which were quite fantastic in appearance. When the Spaniards invaded the New World the horse was long extinct, but now we know that it was the contemporary of the primitive savages who first peopled the Western continents.

Another interesting mammalian group termed the *Titanotheres* possessed many structural affinities to the horses. These animals appear to have been distantly related to them, although they were destined to a very different course of development. The primitive representatives of this group were small and slightly-built organisms. But from lower Eocene to Oligocene times they steadily grew in bulk and stature. In the earliest remains as yet revealed the digits show a reduction to four in the fore-foot and three in the hind, but no further reduction followed. The growing weight of their bodies rendered imperative the evolution of broad and heavy feet. The most completely elaborated representatives of this series almost attained the proportions of the elephant. These creatures carried enormously large and heavy heads, ornamented with hideous nasal horns. There was, therefore, little in their appearance at all likely to appeal to the sense of beauty. The brain growth of the *Titanotheres* did not keep pace with their bodily development, and their puny brain-power supplies an explanation for their sudden extinction.

The genealogy of the rhinoceros family is very richly recorded in American rocks. There are many weighty reasons for the opinion that this huge quadruped found its birthplace in the land of the West. The American group comprises three divisions, which vary considerably in appearance, proportions, and manner of life, and apparently constitute diverging branches evolving from the same ancestral stock. But although their common origin appears obvious, their ancestral form has so far eluded palæontological investigation. But the secret is certain to be disclosed when scientific knowledge of the perissodactyl genera of the Eocene deposits attains fuller completeness.

The llamas and camels comprise another group of mammals long since vanished from North America. Yet these animals presented their first appearance and ran through the longer part of their career on that continent. From the lower Eocene rocks onwards, the pedigree of these organisms is practically complete. Their history displays marked resemblances to that of the horses. The earliest camels were undersized five-toed creatures; the successive forms manifest a gradual transformation in all parts of their anatomy. They show a lengthening of neck, feet, and limbs; a reduction of toes from five to two, with the subsequent fusion of the remaining digits to form the cannon-bone. Through these slowly ascending stages their grinding teeth assumed the ruminating pattern. Upper Miocene times witnessed the splitting of the ancestral trunk into two branches, which bore the camels and llamas. The camels then migrated towards Eurasia, while the llamas journeyed to South America, although both branches lingered in their birthplace until late Miocene times. An interesting lateral division of this group reached its culmination in the Upper Miocene era, and practically attained the proportions of the giraffe, which it probably closely resembled.

The story of the development of the *Artiodactyla* has been mainly read in the Old World rocks. Europe was thickly populated throughout the Eocene, Oligocene, and Miocene divisions of the Tertiary epoch with a vast variety of these mammals. Although the immense wealth of unearthed fossils has as yet outstripped detailed determination of their proper

positions in the genealogical tree of life, various family relationships have been completely demonstrated. The varying degrees of kinship among the true Ruminants furnish an important and instructive illustration of this fact. The processes of evolutionary change are substantially those which the camel phylum underwent in North America. True Ruminants, or Pecora, ranged over wider areas, and exhibited much greater variability than the camels; they displayed more plasticity and adaptiveness. The Ruminating animals now form predominating groups in all parts of the Old World, Australia only excepted; the camels, on the other hand, are steadily approaching the point of extinction. Sheep, oxen, goats, deer, and antelopes were all derived from a primitive Ruminant stock. When these organisms first appear in the Miocene deposits of America they had already reached an advanced stage of specialisation. To their competitive activities has been traced the decline and fall of the camels native to the New World.

The early history of the elephant long eluded the labors of the palæontologist. Until quite recently, the Mastodons appeared to have suddenly presented themselves at about the same geological period in the Upper Miocene of both Europe and North America. Beyond this our knowledge remained a blank, and it was inferred that these mammals had migrated from some other quarter of the earth. Now, however, the missing link has been discovered in Egypt. The Tertiary beds of the Fayoum point to the African origin of the elephant. And, in company with all the other hoofed mammals whose pedigree has been established, the ancestral tree of the elephant displays a series of gradual transformations. The later stages of this evolution, during which the mastodons lost their lower tusks, while their grinding teeth became larger and more complex, are recorded in the fossiliferous Miocene and Pliocene deposits of Europe and Hindostan.

The world of science is likewise indebted to Egypt for the fossils discovered in that country which so materially contribute towards the construction of the pedigree of the whale. Scientific men were constantly baffled when they strove to pierce the darkness that shrouded the origin of the whale. Beyond the remains traced back to the lower Miocene rocks, whale relics were so scanty that no reliable deductions were possible. But now the middle Eocene strata of Egypt have yielded the remains of a small whale (*Protocetus*), which not only restores to us the ancestor of the toothed-whale, but also provides a link which binds these fish-like mammals with terrestrial animals. Although the *Protocetus* was fully adapted to marine conditions of life, its dental organs, cranium, and backbone sufficiently resembled those of carnivorous land mammals to at once suggest a connecting link between these two animal groups. There is every prospect that the immediate future will completely dissipate the difficulties which have hitherto thwarted all efforts to solve this palæontological problem.

The pedigrees of carnivorous mammals are not at present so fully worked out as those of the hoofed animals. As flesh-devouring animals are naturally less abundant than the herbivorous creatures upon which they prey, this is what might be expected. Despite this circumstance, however, palæontological information concerning them is already very considerable. The genealogy of the dog has been fully completed. The primitive dogs of the Eocene period unquestionably represent the parent stock from which practically all, if not quite all, succeeding variations have taken their departure. The pedigree of the cat, however, is not yet complete.

The Tertiary formations of South America are marvellously rich in mammalian relics. Departing widely as they do from their Northern relatives in structural modifications, they all serve to illustrate the ever-present processes of evolution. And when we dip further into the abysses of past time we find that many recently unearthed reptiles of the Permian rocks of South Africa display so many resemblances

to mammals that a genetic relationship at once suggests itself to the unbiassed observer.

The Law of Evolution might readily be illustrated from the fossil remains of reptiles, birds, molluscs, and crustacea, but ample evidence has been submitted from mammalian sources alone. It is a highly significant fact that, while every fossil brought to light since the publication of Darwin's masterpiece has substantiated his doctrine, not one has served to invalidate it. As a distinguished living palæontologist has so well said: "The main significance of the whole lies in the fact that just in proportion to the completeness of the record is the unequivocal character of its testimony to the truth of the evolutionary theory."*

T. F. P.

Acid Drops.

Here is another case of impudent intolerance on the part of Christians. Our readers will remember Sir Hiram Maxim's article on Missionaries, which we drew attention to a few months ago. Will it be believed that a man named Jackson, at Shanghai, has (according to a *Morning Post* telegram) been bound over for two years, and ordered to pay the costs of the prosecution, simply for translating a portion of Sir Hiram Maxim's criticism of Missions and Missionaries into Chinese as a leaflet. The authorities call this "deriding and insulting the Christian religion." Yet the friends of those authorities are trying to raise a special big fund in England in order to destroy Buddhism and other religions in China and set up Christianity in place of them. Could cool impudence go further? —

The University of Oxford is preparing a special Prayer Book for the Coronation, and is dedicating it, with permission, to King George. It will be a gorgeous affair. And of course we are glad to see Christianity keeping up its reputation in this way as the worship of a God who is no respecter of persons. —

Enormous sums of money are to be spent at the Coronation of King George. When the "King of Kings" entered Jerusalem, the sole decorations were palm-leaves; and afterwards the King and Court were sold for "thirty pieces of silver." —

Court dress-suits, complete with sword, are being sold at £25 if of velvet, or £20 if of cloth. Is this the Christian country which worships a carpenter-god? —

The Congress of the Russian nobility, meeting at St. Petersburg, urge that the Fatherland should be protected against the Jews. They propose that Jews, even if they change their religion, shall not be admitted for State service in any capacity, and shall not be allowed any legislative or administrative privileges, not even electoral rights. The Monarchist leader, the pious and rabid Markoff, compared the Jews to rabbits, urged that all Jews should be confined to the pale, also prohibited from entering the legal and medical professions, and finally expelled from Russia. How these fanatical Christians do hate the countrymen of Jesus Christ! —

Rev. F. B. Meyer, secretary of the Free Church Council, professes to be very cheery over the present religious situation. Needless to say, he does not dwell upon the declining number of attendants at both church and chapel. He says there is more religion in the country than some people think. This may easily be the case without it indicating a religiously flourishing state of affairs. We might retort that there is more unbelief in the country than many people think; and in saying that we should be on very firm ground indeed. Unbelievers are everywhere; and if they are not openly so it is because of the social and other punishments that Christians inflict upon all who dare to say exactly what they think. We regret that all are not strong enough to dare the punishment and speak out; if they did, their very numbers would make punishment a practical impossibility. But, after all, we have to take human nature as we find it, and behind all of us there is the long religious heredity that has carefully bred from the mentally weak and credulous instead of from the strong and self-reliant. Properly looked at, this is Christianity's crowning crime against the well-being of the race. Imprisoning, and even killing, men and women is a mere bagatelle in comparison.

* Professor W. D. Scott, *The Palæontological Record*.

Mr. Meyer believes there is more religion about than people think, because, he says, they fail to take into account the Brotherhood movement and the various great humanitarian movements. But both of these are really indicative of the weakening of religion. After all, it is the social side of the Brotherhood movement that attracts young men, not its religion. Drop the social aspect, and the movement would soon decay. As it is, there are numerous complaints that the movement does not make for the strengthening of church or chapel. And isn't it a piece of Christian "cheek" so calmly to annex "great humanitarian movements" as evidences of the power of Christianity? Perhaps Mr. Meyer will explain why it is that these movements have usually commenced during a period of Christian weakening, and have developed side by side with a decline of belief in Christianity. The truth is that humanitarian movements are an expression of social and scientific changes that are quite outside the sphere of Christianity. It is their growth that forces Christians to become more humanitarian in both their teachings and occupation. The gods do nothing for man; it is man that does everything for his gods. And not the least important of the things he does for them is to modify their character in accordance with the more civilised times in which he happens to dwell.

Elaborate arrangements have been made for the Alexander-Chapman Mission in South Wales. We should have thought that the Evan Roberts outbreak would have taught even Welsh Christians a lesson; but such people learn but slowly. Even if they learn at all. So there is all the usual talk of the great results anticipated, there will be the usual idiotic behavior during the progress of the mission, and there will be the usual consequences when it is all over. Some people will have had a debauch of emotionalism; those who make it a business to get converted at every mission that comes along will offer the usual testimony; and in the end a few will get disgusted with the whole thing, and lend a more sympathetic ear to Freethought teachings. It requires no great skill to make this prediction. History repeats itself too frequently for any but the most stupid to go astray on such a topic.

The New Theology weekly, with its sentimental, silly, and insincere patronage of great Freethinkers, especially dead ones, is really more distasteful than Christian journals of downright bigotry. It is also really more insolent. Praising the religious service at King's Weigh House, our pious contemporary says that "Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, Huxley and Tyndall, Haeckel and Robert Blatchford, could hardly fail to be beneficially impressed." The cool cheek of these Christian egotists! Just think of Charles Bradlaugh, for instance, being "beneficially impressed" by the preaching of Campbell, Lewis, & Co.—men whose minds, as well as their knowledge, are so feeble and scanty in comparison with his. Those who have read the *Riddle of the Universe* will be able to smile broadly at the idea of Haeckel sitting at the feet of the Oracle of the City Temple. It is really too absurd.

"No church is truly catholic," the same article says, "unless it welcomes the reverent agnostic and the devout unbeliever." Well, as far as we are concerned, any church on earth is welcome to all the "reverent agnostics" and all the "devout unbelievers."

The New Theologians are just as tricky, in their day and generation, as the old ones. They are just as expert in treating the Bible as a wax nose, and pulling it into any shape that pleases them. Here is the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, for instance, preaching on "The Miracle at Cana," and telling us that we must regard the story as symbolic. Jesus never turned real water into real wine. What he did was to turn the water of life into the wine of life. That is, he "enabled men to find the religious value of life." How pretty! But how fantastic! The New Testament originated amongst people who believed precisely what it said; and those who wrote it, and circulated it, must have been equally ingenuous—unless they were the most designing liars.

Rev. R. J. Campbell has been down at Cambridge addressing a society called "The Heretics"—whoever they are. "I am the most conservative force in the British pulpit today," he told them. And in a certain sense he is. For he persuades a number of people, perhaps like "The Heretics," that reason and faith can be reconciled in the sloppy mixture called Liberal Christianity—a name which illustrates Dr. Johnson's dictum that the adjective is always the enemy of the noun. We also see by the *Christian Commonwealth* report that Mr. Campbell "elucidated his position, and especially his adoption of Pragmatic Mysticism." What

absurd verbiage this is! The Gospels are incredible nowadays, but they are clearly written in simple and easily intelligible words. Mr. Campbell's "elucidation" reminds us of Hamlet's "words, words, words."

The Convocation of Canterbury had a long discussion the other day on cremation and the Burial Service, without coming to any definite conclusion on the subject. It was decided to wait for an expression of outside opinion—which means, we presume, waiting to see which way the cat jumps. It was suggested, in the course of the discussion, that the service should read, "We therefore commit his body to the fire to be dissolved, looking for the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come"; and one of the Bishops said that so long as cremation was treated "reverently, and in such a way as to assert the unquestioned assumption of the resurrection of the body," there could be no objection to it. There is, however, an important psychological consequence that none of the speakers noticed, although it may have been in the minds of some. In an ordinary burial the body is still there, and those who already believe in a resurrection see nothing in the ceremony to cause them to question their belief. In the case of cremation the body is obviously destroyed, and is represented by a mere handful of ashes. This fact alone would nowadays bring the glaring contradiction of a resurrection with current knowledge into strong relief. Every cremation is thus a note of interrogation to a believer. The nature of the miracle required is made manifest; and miracles, under the most favorable circumstances, stand examination badly. Today any critical examination is positively fatal.

We wonder how much is being paid for the special articles inserted in nearly all the papers on the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*? They are really advertisements, although they are not stated to be such. Needless to say, the religious press is as full of these articles as other papers. What a delightful thing our press is, to be sure!

Rev. W. D. Trevelyan, of Liddon House, says that Christians are often put to shame by the keen interest in moral and social questions taken by people who call themselves Agnostics. The rev. gentleman appeared surprised at this being the case, and yet it is natural enough that it should be so. The Agnostic, the Atheist, the Freethinker, have not their attention diverted from important to unimportant issues. Man's life here is the great human fact constantly before them, and the spare energy to social questions given by the fervent Christian is replaced by the thorough-going activity of the conscientious Freethinker. If Mr. Trevelyan looks into the matter he will also find that, in the majority of cases, the Freethinker's anti-Christian effort is only the other side of his keen interest in social questions. He fights Christianity because he believes it to be a bar to social development. His iconoclasm is not the desire for mere destruction, it is the work of one who realises that to pull up weeds is essential to serviceable growth.

Some of the clergy are advocating the use of prayer as a preventive against small-pox. They might as well try to tempt an earthquake with a hot-cross-bun.

The *Clarion* has at last quietly corrected its "star-shine" heading, quoted from Carlyle, into "star-fire." We don't expect to earn its gratitude by inducing it to toe the line. No doubt it is pleasant for journalists to feel themselves infallible; but, after all, accuracy is better than inaccuracy, respect for a great writer is better than the contempt of careless quotation, and sense is better than nonsense.

Some time ago, when the New Theology weekly was affecting to look down upon the *Freethinker*, we took it to task for its bad English. It used to announce that Mr. Snowden "contributed an exclusive article" every week to its pages. This was disgraceful composition. What our contemporary meant was that Mr. Snowden contributed an article every week exclusively to its pages. We pointed this discredit blunder out again and again, but our contemporary kept a stiff upper lip, and wouldn't accept correction from what it would doubtless have been glad to call—and, better still, to consider—an "Atheist rag." But the time came when it could hold out no longer, and the discredit blunder was silently corrected.

Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., has been telling a joke—though it isn't much of a joke—about an old conversation between himself and King Edward VII. The King wanted to introduce him to the King of Siam, saying that this eastern potentate "knew a tremendous lot about European politics."

Mr. Crooks asked whether the dusky one "knew anything about Siamese politics." "God knows; I don't," King Edward replied, and he and Will Crooks laughed together. The dear *Daily News* printed this story, like other papers, but it changed "God knows" into "Heaven knows." What a sensitive lot of readers it must have! And what a vigilant editor!

Mr. Bernard Shaw has been stating that "people are going less and less to church and more and more to the theatre." We hope he doesn't regard this as a novel announcement.

According to the *Dublin Express*, the Archbishop and Bishops of Ireland have sent out a circular pointing out that the marriage legislation of the Roman Catholic Church declares that, a promise of marriage made by a Roman Catholic is not binding unless signed by a Roman Catholic parish priest and the parties concerned. Even then the promise is not binding unless the parties agree to be married by a Roman Catholic priest; nor is a Roman Catholic validly married unless the ceremony be performed by a Roman Catholic priest. From one point of view, these regulations matter very little. A breach of promise action is not likely to fail, unless the jury is packed, because the priest was not a party to the contract. Nor would any Roman Catholic be permitted to evade the obligations entered into by marriage because he was not married by a priest of his own religion. From another point of view, however, the matter is serious enough. A church that simply declines to allow its members to be regulated by the civil law of the country to which they belong, particularly in such a matter as that of marriage, becomes a source of grave social danger. After all, marriage is a civil contract, whatever else some people may care to add to the ceremony. And when a church deliberately sets itself to override the civil law of a country it need cause little surprise if it is brought to a proper sense of its position in a drastic, and perhaps unpleasant, manner. Perhaps this latest action of the Roman Catholic Church may serve to bring us a step nearer the complete abolition of recognition by the State of all religious ceremonies in connection with marriage. If people want a religious ceremony, that is their business, and we should be the first to resent any interference with them on this score. But the business of the State should be to insist upon the civil contract, and, that undertaken, its concern should come to an end.

The "Appeals" column of religious papers furnishes curious and amusing reading. Here are a couple, taken haphazard. One frantic appeal comes from Japan, where, owing to the burning of a Church school, £7,600 is needed for rebuilding. Well, but if all is true in the reports sent home by those in charge of these schools, the Japanese Christians ought to be able to rebuild their own schools. At any rate, there does not seem any pressing reason why the money should be sent from England. There should be no lack of wise ways in which the money could be spent at home. Another appeal comes from Manchester, and is sent out by the Rev. W. Schofield Battersby. This gentleman seems in a desperate way for "795 sovereigns, 15,000 shillings, or 80 Catholic Banknotes." He also wants £2,000 for a new chancel, and plaintively complains, "My cassocks and surplices are so shabby after 10 years' wear." Poor beggar! His distress is so great that he would be content if only "500 Catholic ladies would beg for at least one sovereign each." Perhaps some of them would volunteer to darn his cassock or patch his surplice. The moral seems to be that Mr. Battersby doesn't care much where the money comes from, or how it is obtained, so long as it finds its way to his address.

The voluntary offerings of the Church of England for the past year have been estimated at about £8,000,000. This is not so bad considering that its alleged founder was a tramp.

Rev. Dinsdale Young was at Burton-on-Trent the other day, and one of his exhortations to the Burtonians was to be dogmatic in their religious expressions. "Adopt 'I know,'" he said, "instead of 'I think,' or 'I hope so.'" It does not matter in the least which expression is employed, because, although circumstances alter cases, language never alters facts. A man may repeat "I know" till he is black in the face, but the fact remains that he does not know. Even Mr. Young, despite his notorious cocksureness of speech, does not know that there is a God and that we shall live. He knows neither more nor less than the rest of us, which is—NOTHING.

Had God existed there would have been no ministers of the Gospel. There would have been nothing at all for them

to do. The word "sin," which is the foundation upon which their profession rests, would never have been coined. As it is, the one business of preachers is to affirm the existence of God, and cudgel their brains perpetually for plausible excuses for his masterly inactivity. That popular Baptist minister, the Rev. Charles Brown, declares in a polished sermon that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save lost people. "Jesus Christ is seeking," he says; "he cares and he loves. He is looking for the jewel among the dust, the gem in the mire, and the sheep in the desert." In the same paragraph, however, Mr. Brown gives the game away by admitting that people are not saved, because "we are content to let them be lost," because "we do not sufficiently care." What a lucky thing it is for ministers that the God in Christ they preach does not exist to stand out for his rights: it would go hard with them if he did.

Stories of converted infidels generally have an ancient and fish-like smell. One of the oldest and most pungent we have encountered is published by the Scottish "Monthly Visitor" Tract Society. It is entitled "Uncle Sandy; the Atheist"—and tells how a nasty, bad-tempered profligate, who "gave up all religion," was brought to Christ and made a most edifying end. But it all happened over a hundred years ago, and is hardly capable of being investigated now. The date, however, doesn't matter to the sheep in the penfolds of faith, and we daresay it keeps some of them from looking outside.

The trouble with preacher Aked seems to be that the New York Church which pays him £2,500 a year doesn't plank down the money to enable him to outshine other preachers. He wants a big church, something like a cathedral, built expressly for him, and even Rockefeller kicks against that idea; so it looks likely that Aked will go off to San Francisco, where the sun is nearly always shining, and where he will be able to shine with it.

Rev. Dr. Jowett's sensational farewell to Birmingham is characteristic. The airs he gave himself, under an affectation of modesty, were absolutely nauseous. One would think that all heaven was looking on, and all the angels weeping, at the reverend gentleman's emigration to New York.

Nearly all Watch Committees, from one end of England to the other, are worked behind the scenes by Church and Chapel; and Coventry seems to be no exception to the rule. The Watch Committee there decided, and adhered to its decision, against cinematograph shows being open on Sundays. Their decision, however, was rejected by the Town Council, after a debate in which there was some very plain speaking against the bigotry of those who not only preferred a dull Sunday themselves, but did all they could to force it upon their fellow citizens. As the cinematograph shows are all extremely "proper," and often instructive and sometimes clever and artistic, it is clear that they are only opposed on Sundays in the spirit of pure Sabbatarianism.

"Squire" Vernon has been edifying the Wolverhampton Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association. He was great on prayer, which he called telephoning to God. He told the ladies that he was once watching a cricket match at Lord's, in which his brother was captaining the Harrow eleven. Silently he prayed that his brother might bowl out the best batsman of the opposing eleven, and the prayer was immediately answered by the best batsman being clean bowled. "Squire" Vernon ought to be ashamed of himself to tell such a story. Could anything be more unsportsmanlike? Eleven against eleven, and one of the spectators introducing God Almighty to take an invisible hand in the game. If the umpire had known of it he would have been obliged to decide "no ball."

The newspapers say the Pope has ordered his tomb. His Holiness had better order another for the Christian religion.

MODERN METHODS.

Uncle: "Has mamma ever told you where you will go if you are a good boy?"

Willie: "Oh, yes; she's goin' to take me to see the pantomime."

The Suppliant: "O Sultan, live for ever!"

The Sultan: "Dog! How often must I tell you not to ask me to do anything that might offend the Christian powers?"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

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

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

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 12, Queen's Hall; 19, Stratford Town Hall.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 12, West Ham; 19, Glasgow; 26, Stratford Town Hall. April 2, Manchester; 23, Liverpool.
- G. MANCO.—Thanks for the cuttings. Glad you were so pleased with Mr. Lloyd's lecture at Queen's Hall, and thought it in every way worthy of a much larger audience.
- FELIX HERBMAN.—It may be useful.
- JOHN GRANGE, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "This is not regarded as a gift, but only as part of a debt I owe you for intellectual value received.....Every man who values liberty is your debtor. Think of this. There is solace and satisfaction in such a reflection."
- T. J. OLLETT.—Serviceable cuttings are always welcome.
- ROBERT BEAVIS.—We cannot supply you now with a copy of the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* for which we were prosecuted and imprisoned under the Blasphemy Laws in 1883. Glad to hear you have derived so much profit from reading our pages. Sorry we are unable to assist you in the other matter you inquire about.
- J. A. BATES.—Cuttings may be useful even when they cannot be used immediately.
- T. WILMOT.—We commented on that Waldron cutting several weeks ago. It is hardly worth returning to.
- C. G. VAUGHAN.—You are mistaken if you suppose that Free-thinkers want to work seven days a week. They are not so fond of it as all that. Most of them would far rather see two Sundays a week than none at all. We don't owe our weekly day of rest to Christianity either. It existed long before Christianity, and will survive it.
- A. F.—The State does not maintain the Church of England directly, but the Church was created by the State, and is still controlled by the State, and is legally liable to disestablishment and disendowment. You should read (say) Cobbett's little *Legacy to Parsons*. You will understand the question better then.
- A. GORDON, sending us some cuttings from Canada, says: "Your paper, the *Freethinker*, has become a fixture with me. I go seven miles each week (and pay eight cents) for it, but I wouldn't do without it."
- E. B.—Thanks.
- J. MATSON.—The verses you refer to are partly romantic and partly founded on fact. There are giants, and there are men with an abnormal number of fingers. Lion-like is probably a metaphor. Glad you have gained enlightenment and liberty from reading the *Freethinker*.
- AMERICAN.—Much obliged. Will find room next week.
- W. P. ADAMSON.—All the letters we have received from Frederick Dixon have been typed on Christian Science paper and signed officially by that gentleman. If he denies this, as apparently he does, he is not worth your (or any man's) attention. Glad to see you active with your pen when you find an opportunity.
- A. CORINA.—Glad to be of assistance, even in the shape of advice. We have much sympathy with advanced bodies of all kinds, whether we quite agree with them or not, in their fight against the "authorities" for equal freedom of speech.
- F. D. writes: "It may interest you to hear that since I first heard of your highly valuable paper—about two and a half years ago—I have not missed a single copy of it, and I always look forward to Thursday morning."
- V. M. HARDY.—It is not possible to carry out your suggestion. We could not bear the cost, which is far more than you imagine. Glad you consider the *Freethinker* "gets better every week."
- H. W. MATTHEWS.—A better report reached us from another source. But thanks all the same.
- C. BOURCHIER.—Pleased to hear from one who has read the *Freethinker* for twenty-seven years, and has "had a rich intellectual treat every week."
- B. BLACK.—Pleased you liked the article so much.
- A. HOPKINS.—So liar Dixon is over in London again repeating his slanders on Ingersoll. We settled his hash some years ago in the *Freethinker*, and Mr. W. T. Stead did the same service for him in the *Review of Reviews*. We thought he would lie quiet after that, but he appears to have resumed his dirty tricks, and we may have to expose him again—this time, perhaps, in pamphlet form, as we did liar Torrey.
- 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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had fine audiences at Liverpool on Sunday, in spite of the beautiful weather, and he was in good form, letting himself go without reserve in the evening, when the hall was packed to suffocation, and the meeting was as "live" as could well be imagined from beginning to end. Mr. J. Hammond presided at both lectures, and made eloquent appeals for new members and general help to the Branch.

There was a good attendance at the Liverpool Branch's Dinner on Saturday evening (March 4). Mr. J. Hammond, the Branch president, occupied the chair, and Mr. G. W. Foote was the guest of the evening. The toast of "Success to the N. S. S." was proposed by Mr. J. Green, "Success to the Liverpool Branch" by Mr. W. McKelvie, and "Our Guest, the President of the N. S. S." by the veteran Mr. J. Ross. Mr. Hammond responded to the second toast, and Mr. Foote to the first and third. The musical program was ably rendered by Messrs. Duffy, Thomas, and Ross, and the Misses Ida and Edith Palphreyman. A most enjoyable evening was spent, and the company broke up a little before eleven with "Auld Lang Syne."

Mr. Foote is spending a Sunday at home to-day (March 12). Next Sunday he resumes lecturing at Queen's Hall, where he closes the three-months' course with two special lectures, which will be fully announced in our next issue.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Queen's Hall platform this evening (March 12.) His subject is one that should attract a good audience just now.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner lectures for the Birmingham Branch at the King's Hall this evening (March 12). She should have a large audience and a very hearty welcome.

With regard to the Warschauer-Foote debate, we omitted to state that there are some reserved seat tickets at the price of 2s. These seats will be strictly reserved up to any time. We hear that the announcement of this debate is causing a good deal of excitement, and that very large audiences are likely. Some "saints" are coming up from the provinces to hear it, and a great many more are anxious to have a verbatim report to read. We fear, however, that this cannot be promised them. The cost would be too great for the probable sale.

Another course of Sunday evening lectures under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., starts next Sunday (March 19) at the Stratford Town Hall. The lecturers are Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Foote, and the subjects will be found in our advertisement pages. The West Ham Branch, as usual, is co-operating in this effort. We also venture to ask all the local "saints" individually to do their best to advertise this course of lectures, especially by circulating the small printed announcement which can be obtained of Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

The Secular Education League held its Annual Members' Meeting on Tuesday evening, February 28—the National Liberal Club having kindly granted the use of its Conference Hall for the occasion. In the absence of Lord Weardale, who had to resign the presidency of the League on account of advancing age and the growing burden of public obligations, the chair was taken by Mr. Halley Stewart, who was also elected afterwards as President, amidst general acclamation. A motion by Mr. Adams to the effect that the Secular Education League should henceforth be called the "Secular Solution League" was lost; in fact, it was only seconded formally for the sake of etiquette. Routine business having been transacted, there was a public meeting, which was very well attended. Mr. Halley Stewart delivered an elaborate, able, and eloquent address, which was much applauded. The meeting was further addressed by Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. H. S. Swinny, Rev. Stewart D. Headlam,

Mr. Herbert Burrows, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Amongst the ladies present we noted Miss E. M. Vance, Miss Kough, and Mrs. Bridges Adams. It is a pity that one of them was not asked to speak. Mr. Snell, the secretary, will perhaps secure a lady speaker next year.

A pleasant feature of the evening was the announcement that the Secular Education League had just received its first large donation of £100.

A few weeks ago we referred to the late Serjeant Cox's book on *The Arts of Writing, Reading, and Speaking* as by far the best we ever saw on that subject. We regretted to say that the book is out of print. Mr. George Payne is kind enough to inform us that he has just seen amongst the "Received" in the *Manchester Guardian* a new edition of this book, published by Horace Cox, at 3s. 6d.

We see by the *Positivist Review* that Comte is gradually ceasing to be the Pope of Positivism. His disciples are beginning to see that wisdom did not exactly end with him—great as he undoubtedly was. Mr. Philip Thomas proposes the revision of the Positivist Calendar, and in this he is supported by Mr. H. S. Swinny, the editor. Incidentally, Mr. Swinny observes that "the adherents of the Religion of Humanity are still few." Technically, yes; substantially, no. Thomas Paine and Shelley anticipated Comte in the use of the phrase "The Religion of Humanity," and many people now who like it know very little of the founder of Positivism.

The *Humanitarian* for March (the organ of the Humanitarian League, and ably edited by its honorary secretary, Mr. H. S. Salt) announces to its readers the formation of the Rationalist Peace Society, and its "capital 'send-off' at a fine meeting held at South Place Institute on January 31." Reference is also made to the Archbishop of Canterbury's statement on his officiating at the launching of the new battleship the *Thunderer*,—namely, that these warlike monsters "were in the highest degree a guarantee of peace." The *Humanitarian* remarks that—"If each nation is thus to assume that its own engines of destruction are 'guarantees of peace,' why not christen the ships accordingly, e.g., the *Olive Branch*, the *Peacemaker*, or even the *Archbishop*?"

We often quote from our valuable (and—such is the oddity of language—invaluable) contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*, edited by that convinced and steadfast Freethinker, George Macdonald, who is a keen observer and a shrewd thinker, happily saved from all crankiness by good old Mother Nature, who endowed him with a nice sense of humor. We see no reasonable objection to our quoting from Mr. Macdonald's paper. Our readers get the benefit and nobody is injured, for Mr. Macdonald quite approves of our action, and returns the compliment by giving his readers something now and then from our own columns. Our article on "Dying like a Dog" was reproduced in the *Truthseeker* of February 18, with the following editorial introduction:—

"This article, by Mr. G. W. Foote, editor of the *London Freethinker*, is considerably shortened that it may find room in the "Children's Corner," though it is a pity to lose any of it. Our younger readers are entitled to the best that is written, on whatever subject, and, in our opinion, no writer excels Mr. Foote."

Perhaps it is only a practised writer who can fully appreciate the neatness of that last sentence.

"Theology in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*" was the heading of an article in a recent number of *Truth*. It dealt with no more than the commonplaces of Biblical Criticism, nevertheless it must be an eye-opener in such a journal. May such articles increase and multiply!

A few correspondents have made inquiries about the Malthusian prosecution in the north of England, which was referred to in our columns some time ago. We regret to say that we were never supplied with any information afterwards, except on one occasion, when we received a notification by post, reaching us many hours too late, informing us that the case was to be heard that very day in the Court of Appeal, which, we understand, confirmed James White's sentence of a fine of £20 and costs or in default three months' imprisonment. From a public point of view, we never knew of a case in which the defence was so grossly mismanaged.

President's Honorarium Fund, 1911.

Ninth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £147 6s. 2d. John Grange, £2 2s.; F. D., 10s.; B. Black, 2s.; C. Bouchier, 10s.

Shakespeare's Rationalism.—II.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

(Continued from p. 150.)

LET us imagine ourselves in old Venice on the day of the trial. The picturesque court-room as well as the approaches to the palace of justice are densely crowded by an eager multitude, clamoring to get within earshot of the speakers. Close by is the gentle Adriatic, smiling upon everyone who is thoughtful enough on that busy day to turn and look at her. In the court-room the magistrates, the clerks, and the witnesses have taken their places, and are breathlessly waiting for the case to open.

The eyes of all the spectators suddenly turn toward a strange-looking man—slight and stooping—though striking in features, walking with a loud step into the presence of the court. Something akin to terror falls upon the audience when it meets the eyes of Shylock, which are like two raging fires under his thick, black eyebrows. In this hostile assembly the accuser of Antonio takes his position, supported by a mingled sense of personal insult and hate which has at last climbed up to his lips and is ready to burst forth as a torrent, menacing the life of everyone that steps in its path. It is evident that he will not be reasoned with. Appeals in the name of charity and humanity shall move him less than the waves the rooted rock. They will pray to him, or plead with him in vain. He is Shylock, who solitary shall stand his ground against the whole court—yes, against civilisation itself. His opportunity has come, and he will not lose it for the price of humanity. Can we imagine the sensations of the spectators in such a presence!

As the trial proceeds, it becomes evident that there is no weapon in the possession of the court that can pierce his almost sublime obstinacy. He stands rooted in his thought, and will not budge. He is like an ancient and gnarled tree; straighten him if you can. In his purpose he is so firmly knit and compact that no room can be found for an invading idea. He is unwedgable.

At first it seems as if everything is about to give way to the onslaught of his will. His grip tightens upon his adversary; the whole court is cowed into dismay. And feeling himself in control of the situation, his master passion out-distancing all the timid efforts of his judges, he prepares for the act of premeditated revenge.

Just then Portia, dressed like a doctor of law, is ushered into the court room. The atmosphere of the room changes immediately. Both parties to the strange suit, as well as the judges and spectators, find themselves in a new presence—radiant, wholesome, luminous! For a moment, at least, all other interests are swallowed up in the spontaneous admiration which her person provokes in the minds of the people gathered in the court room. She bursts upon them like a revolution. With what grace and puissant emphasis she must have given her noble definition of charity—a definition which can never be improved!

"The quality of mercy is not strained."

There is, in this one line, as much truth and beauty as thought can create or words can carry.

Swiftly, Portia drives the complainant, Shylock, to the crucial question: Is he capable of a great act of magnanimity? Will he rise above passion and prejudice to the dignity of reason? Will mercy flow from his heart, unrestrained, like the medicinal gum from the Arabian trees, or the gentle rain from heaven? No? Then he shall have justice. By an unexpected stroke she swamps the scales in Shylock's hands. He who stood immovable in his purpose is suddenly, as it were, lifted off his feet and sent tossing to his fate. The abyss closes over him, and he is heard of no more.

All this the poet has set forth with so consummate an art that no one knows how many times during the last three hundred years the play has been witnessed,

still, neither the touch of time nor the frequency of repetition, has in the least aged its beauty or made its impressions upon us less intense.

Woven in with the sombre issues which form the stratum of the play, we find a number of golden threads. There is, for instance, the wooing of fair Portia by a train of spectacular suitors; the three caskets of gold, silver, and lead, in one of which is concealed Portia's picture, the finder of which may claim her hand in marriage. Then there is the love scene between Lorenzo and Jessica, and the piquant story of the rings, with which the play closes. But, of course, the death struggle between Antonio, the Christian, and Shylock, the Jew—the representatives of a world-wide hate between two races and religions—is the theme of the play.

Why did Shakespeare select such a theme? In the opinion of some, Shakespeare intended to show the superiority of the European races over the oriental, and of the Christian religion over Judaism. Others have argued that the purpose of the play was largely ethical, being an attempt to illustrate the value of charity and kindness in our relations with one another. Still others see in the play Shakespeare's intention to advocate a human fellowship, which shall extend beyond the boundaries set by creeds and races. There have even been those who have quoted this play to show that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite, writing to nurse the popular prejudice against the Jew; while, with equal assurance, others have interpreted the play as an argument against the Christian for his treatment of the Jew. It is not easy to agree as to why Shakespeare wrote this play—if he had any specific purpose at all. In all likelihood, he had no other motive than the desire to avail himself of an ancient legend in producing a popular comedy. Being a man of genius, the theme developed into a masterpiece under his treatment, to which we may all repair for instruction, each carrying away as much as his mind will hold, and precisely the kind of thought that will best accord with his prejudices. In some respects a masterpiece is like one of Nature's resources: it can be tapped to fill a thimble, or to quench the thirst of a world. In offering our own interpretation, we do so in no spirit of dogmatism, as we have no access to any infallible means of knowledge which are denied to others.

While Shakespeare may have selected this theme accidentally, we believe that the manner in which he deals with it is not only characteristic of his art, but it is also a revelation of his thought. "Poetry," says Matthew Arnold, "is a criticism of life." The great author of *The Merchant of Venice* has given us in this play his criticism of the institutions of which Antonio and Shylock were leading representatives.

The bitter conflict which forms the heart of the play, in our opinion, is not between Jew and Christian in reality, nor between Judaism on the one hand and Christianity on the other, but between normal human nature, and the same as perverted by religious institutions.

As we are about to discuss a very delicate, as well as important, subject, I wish to defend myself against any misunderstandings which my remarks may give rise to. The fact that Iago, in the play of *Othello*, represents one of the worst types of men, is no reflection upon Italians in particular, or upon Catholics in general. In the same way, Shylock, one of the wildest and most ungovernable of human beings, is no reflection upon the Jewish people or their religion. If Shylock was a Jew, so was Nathan the Wise. Shakespeare did no more intend to make this brutalized Jew a representative of his race than to make the "eternal villain" and "dog," Iago, a type of his. There are, it is needless to say, good and bad people among all races. Only a bigot would contend that all Jews are Shylocks, or that all Italians are Iagos.

To show how one of the most firmly established and deeply venerated institutions plays havoc with human character, the poet invests his Antonio with all the natural virtues—generosity, honor, loyalty, fortitude, equanimity of mind, and a capacity for

friendship which approaches heroism. He is introduced as the "best conditioned, unwearied spirit in doing courtesies," in whom "the ancient Roman honor becomes reincarnate." Yet Shakespeare also represents this Nature's gentleman stooping to practices which would not be tolerated even in a barbarian. Antonio has the soul of a nobleman, and the manners of a bigot. His education, that is to say, the influence of his environment, namely, the institutions under which he lives, have made nugatory the great qualities of mind with which nature has equipped him. His religion, more than anything else, has made him a sectarian and a persecutor.

Shylock, on the other hand, is by nature a mean man, and the institution he prizes most, his ancestral religion, has not helped him in the least. On the contrary, it has given scope to the perversity of his nature, and, what is worse, has cajoled him into the belief that his vices are virtues. When he hates his brother in the name of his religion, he does so from a sense of duty, which is the gloss religion has given to his perverse nature.

Thus we have in *The Merchant of Venice*, on the one hand, a good man spoiled by his religion, and, on the other, a bad man made worse by his. We hardly know of a commentator of Shakespeare who has called attention to this as the central thought in *The Merchant of Venice*. On the contrary, the majority of Shakespearean critics, like Professor Hudson, for instance, have maintained that the play shows the superiority of the Christian spirit of love over the Judaic law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." In the meantime, few unprejudiced readers can escape the obvious drift of the comedy, which is to show how ineffectual either Catholicism, which educated Antonio, or Judaism, which educated Shylock, was, in preventing the deadly clash of interests. Instead of making for reconciliation, religion, as either of the two principals of their adherents professed it, changed their neighborly relation into open and vulgar hostility. The play furnishes ample opportunities to see how Antonio and his Christian friends withheld from Shylock the most elementary consideration to which he was entitled as a man, whatever the nature of the religion he professed. But he was not a Christian, and that was paramount to not being a human being. Shylock, on the other hand, had grown nearly old feeding on the hate he bore Antonio and his confreres, because they were Christians. Such is the corrupting influence of professional religion upon human nature. It degraded the noble Antonio, and it was helpless to reform Shylock.

"Now infidel, I have thee on the hip,"

cries Gratiano to the Jew; and Shylock, on the other hand, rubs his hands with glee, thinking of the time when he shall feed fat his ancient grudge against the Christian.

"O, be thou damn'd, inexorable dog!" is the prayer of the Christian for the Jew; while Shylock, on the other hand, prays for a pound of the Christian's flesh "to bait fish withal." What has Judaism done for Shylock? What has Christianity done for Antonio?

The situation is not without humor, inasmuch as both Antonio and Shylock are laboring under the impression that each owes it to his religion that he is not as depraved as the other, while in reality it is the evil influence of the national faiths they profess respectively that one of them is perverted from virtue, and the other is confirmed in his depravity. If religion—the Christian and the Jewish—could not preserve Antonio's virtue nor curb Shylock's vices, of what use is it to society? This is the searching problem of *The Merchant of Venice*.

When the Jew remonstrates with Antonio for the ill-treatment he has received and the hard names he has been called, the Christian replies:—

"I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too."

We see how little religion has done for Signior Antonio. Though a gentleman by birth and breed.

ing, he will "spit on" and "spurn" Shylock. For what reason? Let the Jew answer:—

"You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine."

And again:—

"You that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur over your
threshold.....

And why?—'Because I am a Jew!'

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands,
organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions,
Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons,
subject to the same diseases, healed by the same
means, warmed and cooled by the same Winter and
Summer, as a Christian is?"

Is it not absurd, then, for religion to put asunder what Nature has joined together? Nature offers a thousand reasons, each of which is of universal import, why men should dwell together in peace and mutual respect; while religion, on the other hand, upon pretences of the flimsiest character, such as theological tenets, mysteries, rites, and ceremonies, fans the fires of persecution, intolerance, sectarian wars, and irascible hatreds. There is not only one, there are a thousand touches of Nature which make the whole world kin. But, then, religion, Jewish or Christian, shuts its eyes to this glorious truth and insists that before the question of humanity there is the question of *faith*, and that he who has not the right creed is a heathen, and shall be damned.

Shylock himself is, of course, unconscious of the sweet meaning of the words the poet puts in his mouth. He does not realise that for the same natural reasons for which he claims justice at Antonio's hands, he should himself be just to the Christian. But his Jewish religion has taught him to look upon the rest of the world as meant for exploitation and extermination. From his viewpoint, the Jew alone is the chosen one; his own God is real, but other people's Gods are idols, and the milk and honey of Canaan has been promised exclusively to him and his co-religionists. Thus sectarian teaching twists and contorts human nature and makes enemies out of brothers.

To show further the worthlessness of the religions professed by Antonio and Shylock, respectively, the great poet uses the following argument:—

"If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his
humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew,
what should his suffrance be by Christian example?
Why, revenge."

Where, then, is the boasted power of Judaism or of Christianity to induce men to forgive injuries and to love their enemies? Is this all that religion divinely given can do for man? If revenge is the cry and desire of both Jew and Christian, in what respect would they have been worse without a revelation? If religion cannot humanise Shylock, nor prevent the perversion under false teaching, of Antonio, what is it good for? This is Shakespeare's pressing question in his *Merchant of Venice*.

The poet proceeds to take in hand the remaining threads, so to speak, of his great theme, before proceeding to tie them up in a final knot.

Antonio hates the Jew because he believes him to be wicked; in the same way, Shylock hates the Christian because he cannot believe that a Christian can be virtuous. Religion alone is responsible for this.

Nothing but religion such as Antonio professed could have instilled into his mind the idea that Shylock was wicked because he was a Jew:—

"I pray you, think you question with the Jew.
You may as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bait his usual height;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb.

You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that (than which what's harder?)
His Jewish heart.

In the same fantastic key is the screech of Shylock:

"What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice."

To the Jew every Christian was a serpent.

Again, when Shylock, hiding his evil motive as best he can, consents to the loan of three thousand ducats with a smiling face, Antonio says:—

"The Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind."

This is one of Shakespeare's most pregnant observations. Antonio's religion has confirmed him in superstition to such an extent that he imagines that no one but a Christian can be kind—that to be kind is "to turn Christian," which, in reality, means nothing more than to believe as Antonio does. "This Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind" is also witheringly sarcastic. Shakespeare had just shown how discourteous and abusive Antonio, the best of Christian gentlemen, has been to an alien in faith, and the suggestion that the Jew is going to change his Hebrew manners to Christian manners, which, judging from Antonio's conduct, consists of kicks, cuffs, and abuses, is a superb piece of irony.

Judaism, on the other hand, with all its pretensions, has been just as powerful to effect a change in Shylock as Christianity has been detrimental to the humanity of Antonio. When Antonio appears upon the scene Shylock is heard whispering to himself at one end of the stage:—

"How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian."

He has, as the text announces, other reasons for hating Antonio:—

"He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice."

But he cannot keep religion out of his mind very long, so he adds:—

"If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation.....cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him."

But the thought that his neighbor is of another religion, for which reason he should be hated, springs to his lips first. How magnificent is the protest of immortal Shakespeare against religious bigotry and hatred! Shylock would never have dreamt of hating another human being living in the same city with him for professing a different religion from his own, had he not been tutored and trained therein by his ancestral faith. Think of a religion which inspires hatred of one's fellows! It is not the abuse of Judaism which is responsible for this religious hatred to which Shylock gives expression, for the Bible is full of alleged divine commandments to hate, despoil, and murder, the unbeliever. There is no getting away from these regrettable texts, texts which have dipped the world in blood. No educated, liberal Jew will defend Judaism; it is, and was, a persecuting religion.

Shakespeare also shows that whenever Shylock or Antonio—or the Jew and the Christian—come together for the transaction of any business, they do so with the idea of hurting instead of helping each other. So completely has religion alienated them, that to insult and injure one another has come to be a sort of religious duty to both the Christian and the Jew. Antonio asks for the loan as from an enemy, and is not surprised at the terms exacted, for it seems quite natural to him that the Jew should desire his death. Knowing this, Antonio receives the money as one would a stab from a dagger.

(To be continued.)

OTHER-WORLDISM DYING.

When I was a boy the Churches preached Heaven and Hell as realities, the certainty of which should govern every action of men on this earth. To-day you may attend a hundred churches without once hearing an appeal from the pulpit based upon life beyond the grave.—*W. T. Stead*, "Review of Reviews."

But faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.

—*Thomas Moore*.

Correspondence.

THE RHONDDA COUNCIL AND THE CLOSING OF LICENSED HALLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Please allow me space in your invaluable paper to say a few words on the above subject.

The action of the Rhondda Council in prohibiting the opening of all licensed halls and theatres within its area is decidedly outrageous and far-reaching in its effects. The bigots on the said Council were splendidly supported by that heavenly body, the Mid-Rhondda Free Church Council. The outcome of this pernicious action is of paramount importance. For example, owing to concerts not being allowed on Sundays, it has deprived the Rhondda strikers, their wives and little children, of hundreds of pounds; workers are prevented from holding meetings which would be conducive to their interests; the National Secular Society is denied by the Council's action the opportunity of hearing either Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, or Mr. Lloyd lecture in these parts.

The Rhondda Freethinkers and seekers after truth will now have very little chance of hearing lectures on the Laws of Evolution and the brilliant discovery of Natural Selection by the immortal Charles Darwin. We want the liberty to conduct lectures on the educational influence that such great men as Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and others have had on society. Farewell to lectures on Secular subjects if the will of the bigots on the Council be permitted to prevail.

If propounders of the Christian dogma are lovers of liberty and free speech—as they certainly claim to be—why do they deny us the same right? Obviously they can't believe in liberty and free speech, and at the same time object to Freethinkers having the use of halls which are only at their disposal on Sundays.

Now that brave men like Roger Bacon, Galileo, and Paine cannot be persecuted as in generations gone by, a new device has been manufactured. It obtains in the closing of the halls, thereby preventing people hearing exponents of the N.S.S. These religious fanatics have always advocated retrogression and obscurity. One fanatic on the Council said, if he had his way, he would stop trains and trams running on Sundays.

Let people throughout the country keep an eye on the Free Church Council, which is only out to crush liberty and preach the gospel of tyranny and superstition. That the ratepayers of the Rhondda will show their abhorrence of the bigots on the Council by compelling them to repeal such a pernicious and monstrous act is the sincere wish of

FREETHINKER.

A DOWN EAST JURYMAN.

Ethan Spike contributes to the *Portland Transcript* a sketch of his experiences as a juryman. The first cases he was called to try were capital ones, the criminals being a German and a "nigger" respectively.

"Hev you formed any opinion for or against the prisoners?" asked the judge.

"Not portikler agin the Jarmin," says I, "but I hate niggers as a general principle, and shall go for hanging this old white-wooled cuss whether he killed Mr. Cooper or not," says I.

"Do you know the nature of an oath?" the clerk axed me.

"I orter," says I, "I've used enough of 'em. I begun to swear when I was only about —"

"That'll do," says the clerk. "You kin go hum," says he; "you won't be wanted in this 'ere case," says the clerk, says he.

"What," says I, "ain't I to try this nigger at all?"

"No," says the clerk.

"But I am a jewryman," says I, "and you can't hang the nigger unless I've sot on him," says I.

"Pass on," says the clerk, rather cross.

"But," says I, "you, Mister, you don't mean as you say; I'm a regular jewryman, you know; draw'd out of the box by the seelick man," says I. "I've ollers had a hankering to hang a nigger, and now, when a merciful dispensatory seems to have provided one for me, you say I shan't sit on him; ar this your free institutions? Is this the nineteenth century? And this our boasted —?" Here somebody boggled "Silence in the Court!"

"The Court be —!" I didn't finish the remark, for a couple of constables had holt of me, and in the twinkling of a bed-post I was hustled downstairs into the street. Naow, Mr. Editor, let me ask what we are coming to when jewrymen—legal, lawful jowrymen—kin be tossed about in this way? Talk about Cancers, Mormons, Spiritualism, Free Love, and Panics, what are they in comparison? Here's a

principle upset. As an individual, perhaps I'm of no great account; 'tain't for me to say; but when, as an enlightened jewryman, I was tuk and carried downstairs by profane hands just for asserting my right to sit on a nigger, why it seems to me the pillows of society were shook; that in my sacred person the hull State itself was, figgeratively speaking, kicked downstairs! If thar's law in the land, I'll have this case brought under a writ of *habeas corpul icksey Dicknit.*" —*New York Paper.*

FIFTY YEARS' CHANGES.

In my father's household in my youth the literal accuracy of the Mosaic cosmogony was believed to be vitally bound up with the truth of Christianity. What volumes did I not read to prove that the whole human race, excepting a single family, had been blotted off the earth about two thousand years before the birth of Christ! Even as late as the last quarter of the nineteenth century, I was assured by a sainted lady, the founder of one of the most practical and energetic of the religious societies of our time, that if once she were compelled to admit that the world, the sun, the moon, and the stars were not created out of nothing in six days of twenty-four hours each she would feel bound to give up all faith in the Christian religion! To-day persons holding such a creed are few and far between. When I was a boy they were to be found everywhere.....

Most of the controversies which disturbed the peace of the Protestant churches when I was a boy have ceased to interest mankind. Instead of discussing predestination and free will, the Christian Church is turning more and more to questions which concern the welfare of society. Sixty years ago the salvation of the soul of the individual sinner was the preoccupation of the preacher. To-day the regeneration of collective humanity, the redemption of society, take the foremost place.—*W. T. Stead, "Review of Reviews."*

RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY IN MONTREAL.

On the 30th of December, by a vote of 15 to 13, the Montreal City Council retained the services of Dr. Laberge as the Medical Health Officer, a position which he has held for many years with almost universal approval. The vote was the result of a bitter campaign carried on by the Roman Catholics for several weeks past against the doctor on the ground that he was a member of the late Emancipation Masonic Lodge. The Board of Control had recommended that the doctor's services should be retained as usual by the City Council, but the latter body, after much angry discussion, had returned the report to have the name expunged. The Controllers objected, and to overcome their objection a two-thirds vote of the Council was needed. The Catholics tried to score a victory by suddenly springing on the Council a motion to dismiss the doctor, with the result mentioned above. This is a distinctly liberal gain, and shows to what lengths the Catholics are prepared to go in order to injure their religious opponents.—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

War's broke out—have 'e heard that, Sammy?" asked Grills.

"I only know it too well," answered the other.....This here blasted war's eating up 'osses, and while these fools be cutting each other's throats, or blowing each other's heads off, the precious hay's crying out for 'osses to cut it....."

"'Tis only too true that war hurts all sorts and conditions," said Cottle. "And for my part, as a man of peace, I could wish God A'mighty would lift us above such a way of settling our quarrels."

"He invented it," declared Aaron Cleeve. "He was a fighter from the beginning. 'Twas 'whichy should' betwixt Him and the Enemy, and life itself be war, come to think of it. You can't live without fighting. Grills fights the other bakers, and your master fights the other farmers, and Billy Cottle fights the rival house.—*Eden Phillpotts, "Demeter's Daughter."*

MADE HIM FEEL QUITE AT HOME.

A tourist in the Welsh mountains who had been caught in a violent rainstorm, and who after much difficulty had succeeded in making his way to a solitary cottage, congratulated himself on his good fortune when he was asked by the man of the house to stay for the night. After donning a suit of his host's clothes, so that his own might be dried, he proceeded downstairs, and on his way met the mistress with a big Bible in her hand. In the fading light she mistook the stranger for her husband and gave him a thump on the head with the book, remarking, "That's for asking the man to stay all night."

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, C. Cohen, "Militarism and Freethought."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public (Minor) Hall, Canning Town): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Christian Falsification of History."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Mr. Nicholson, a Debate.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "The Fourth Centenary of Michael Servetus, the Victim of John Calvin."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "Science and the Hope of Immortality"; 6.30, "The City of God and the City of Man."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): J. Fredk. Green, "Some Cruelties of Civilisation."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, E. Archbold, "The Philosophy of Theosophy."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Fred Morgan, Dramatic Recital.

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Parry's Temperance Bar, Tony-pandy): 3, Thomas Evans, "Evolution of Thought."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall, Second Floor): 6.45, Music; 7, Jos. Bryce, "The Heathen Chinese."

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THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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