

THE Freethinker

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The dreams of the great middle classes of this country, as recorded in Mr. Myers's two bulky volumes on the subject, and in the Transactions of the Psychical Society, are the most depressing things that I have ever read. There is not even a fine nightmare among them. They are commonplace, sordid, and tedious.—OSCAR WILDE.

Kingdom Come.

THERE must be some fifty or sixty thousand ministers of religion in Great Britain. We have no means of ascertaining how many there are on the continent of Europe, but the number must be vast, and their total cost an enormous burden to the people. It is only in the prospectus that Christianity is "without money and without price"; in practice it is remarkably expensive. We will not quarrel with Christians when they say that their religion is *dear* to them, for undoubtedly it is so.

We should be less inclined to grumble at the extraordinary cost of the Black army if it were engaged in useful warfare against the multitudinous evils of this world. There is plenty of work for men of learning and leisure, shielded by regular salaries from the pinch of want, in stirring up discontent with the countless wrongs and mischiefs of society, and in studying how to redress them. But this is not the special work of the ministers of Christ; it is rather the business of the scientist, the statesman, and the social reformer. The white-chokered gentry of every denomination are occupied, week after week, and year after year, in preaching Kingdom Come; teaching the geography of an unknown world, revealing its unascertainable secrets, and telling us how to reach a place that they themselves have never seen except in "dreams of the night." These professors of skyology are worse than useless. Not only do they not inform us of what we wish to know; they do inform us of what they do not know themselves. They are blind leaders of the blind, and if both fall into the ditch it is not surprising; nor is it surprising, even in this predicament, that the dupes are at the bottom and the quacks on the top.

We repeat that the sky-pilots are worse than useless. They block the way to better things. The people cannot support *two* Churches. While religion is well-fed science is starved. While the next world is studied this world is neglected. Priests take the honors and profits, and men of genius, who illuminate history and accelerate the progress of mankind, too often suffer poverty and reproach.

Longer than history records, ever since cunning began to trade upon credulity, the mystery-mongers, the quacks of superstition, the charlatans of theology, have been preaching Kingdom Come, and living handsomely on the occupation. But what have they contributed to secular progress—to the removal of poverty, the extirpation of ignorance, the growth of culture, the development of industry, and the elevation of the people? Nothing. They have always, or nearly always, been identified with reactionary movements. What great cause, which has triumphed, have they not resisted? What great cause, which is now struggling, do they not oppose? They have a marvellous facility in patronising everything that

succeeds—when it has succeeded; but history shows that they have, with striking uniformity, set their faces against liberty and progress in every struggle in which they have been engaged.

Theology has never assisted mankind, but has always been a hindrance. How could it be otherwise? It is only a mental disease, and at best it is like the pearl of an oyster—a splendid malady. Look at a noble church dedicated to God, or a mighty cathedral erected by architectural genius, wrought by cunning hands, and adorned by the arts of painting and sculpture. In itself, like the pearl, it is a glorious sight. But when you look at the hovels and slums where the worshippers live, too often amidst hunger as well as squalor, you see that the gorgeous church is also, like the pearl, a sign of unhealthiness and suffering.

Why talk to us of Kingdom Come? It will be time enough to study it when we get there. All the guide-books we have now are merely bundles of guesses. What we really want is knowledge of *this* world. Knowledge, as Bacon said, is power. Ignorance means barbarism. Science means civilisation.

Theology disappears before culture. Religion has been called the poetry of unpoetical natures, and theology may be called the science of the unscientific. Who that has studied the wonders of nature cares for the miracles of the creeds? Who that has steeped his mind in the highest poetry cares for the fairy tales of the pulpit? You and I (Schiller said to Goethe) have art and do not need religion. Has any earnest student of Shakespeare retained much respect for priestly teaching? What are the dreams of theologians in comparison with the magnificent dramas of the loftiest of poets, the mightiest of the sons of men? Jejune, fantastic puerilities, fit for the nursery or the asylum.

Among the thoughtful theology is falling into disrepute; among the educated and thoughtful its claims are derided. Myriads of people see that the sky-pilots themselves display no real belief in the doctrines they preach. They go into skyology as other men go into trade, law, or physic—simply for a living. They teach the little orthodoxy of the sect that finds them in bread. So little do they think for themselves, either from want of inclination or from want of capacity, that scarcely one in a thousand ever finds reason to alter his opinions in the slightest degree. Another characteristic they have in common is this. They believe in making the best of both worlds—beginning with this one. They try to get as much of the good things of this life as possible, and to enjoy them as long as possible. Kingdom Come is a great attraction, but, after all, there is no need to hurry! Heaven is a delightful place, but why go there prematurely? Sufficient unto the day is the good as well as the evil thereof!

Such is the actual faith that the preachers of Kingdom Come display in their own teaching. Why, should it be strange, then, that their example is being followed by the multitude, whom they used to lead by the nose like asses, but who are now growing more wide awake. When the doctor throws his own physic to the dogs, is it surprising that the patient refuses to swallow the concoction?

G. W. FOOTE.

The Doom of Religion.

As a Freethinker I have a considerable interest in those venerable psychological fossils that are classified under the general name of religion. Nor is this interest in them untinged with respect, so long as they are left in their proper and natural setting. A religion amongst an uncivilised people is an interesting thing. So is a tiger prowling amidst the jungle grass. In either case one can admire the adaptation existing between the thing itself and its environment. But when a tiger forsakes its native jungle and intrudes into my dining-room, on the lookout for a baby or some other human tit-bit which it inconveniently assumes has been created by Providence for its maintenance, then a tiger ceases to be an æsthetically gratifying object. So with religion. So long as it exists in its natural and uncivilised habitat, while I may think the world would have been none the worse for its absence, still I can contemplate it with respectful interest. It still remains one of man's greatest mental blunders—on all-fours with the tiger's assumption that man was made to be eaten—but one can realise that the blunder was inevitable, and the conditions are before us that gave it birth. But when religion intrudes into the civilised State I feel much as I do with regard to a tiger in the dining-room. My respectful interest in the thing is apt to fade before the desire to get rid of it as quickly as possible.

Above all, I dislike the artificial—in the meretricious sense of the word. I feel towards that much as I do towards an ancient and picturesque building that some jerry builder has been "renovating." If a building is ancient its marks of antiquity, in the shape of worm-eaten beams and crumbling walls, should be shown with the pride of an old warrior displaying the scars of honorable warfare. How on earth can one picture some ancient knight clad in suit of mail—and one somehow thinks of them *sleeping* in their ironware habiliments—dreaming deeds of derring-do, or plotting some dark intrigue, in a building lately restored by Waring and Gillow, and where reams of builders' accounts seem to occupy the wall space that should be sacred to antique tapestry? If a building is ancient it should look and feel ancient; if it is new, let it look new, and as though it is proud of its newness. Imagination may work freely in either case, but it loses its force before an antiquity that obviously owes its age to the skill of a "Brummagem" mechanic.

So, to give the moral to my musings, if we have religion, let us see that we get it. By preference, amongst the uncivilised to the mental atmosphere of whom it properly belongs; but if we must have it amongst civilised people, then, once more, let us see that we have the genuine article. The religious man in our midst would then command all the respectful interest that is evoked by a crumbling and picturesque remnant of mediæval architecture. We could study both in the same calm spirit of scientific curiosity. Freethinkers might even establish a Society for the Preservation of Surviving Religionists, as social reformers might subscribe to the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments or humanitarians protest against the slaughter of man-eating tigers. The religionist would represent a study at first hand of a disappearing type, and Freethinkers would value the preservation of specimens as naturalists do the maintenance of a dying species of bird.

When I talk about religion, I, of course, mean religion—not the restored and renovated article that is to-day called religion, and which can only claim the title in the same way that St. Paul's Cathedral can claim to be the alleged Pagan temple that preceded it—because it occupies the same site. What is nowadays called religion—by popular preachers, at all events—is made up of nineteen parts of flabby humanitarianism with one part of sloppy sentiment concerning a supernatural being whom no one in practice bothers about in the least degree. When

we are gravely informed that although people seem to be less Christian, yet they are really more so, because they are paying increased attention to the social welfare of the country, when we learn that people really believe more heartily in God than they did, because they have ceased to ask or to expect him to do anything alone, and when pious M.P.'s tour the country explaining that the Old Age Pensions Act, and the new scheme of National Insurance is a direct outcome of Christianity, one hardly knows which to admire most, the folly of the speakers or the credulity of those who listen. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God.....and all these things shall be added unto you," said Jesus. The message now is, "Seek ye first efficient sanitation, a living wage, decent hours of labor, old age pensions, the reform of the House of Lords, and the kingdom of God shall surely follow."

The point of the situation is, that these attempts at "restoration" are curiously and instructively ineffective. They are like adding a perfectly up-to-date annexe to a very old house. Those who like the old dwell in one part, and those who like the new dwell in the other part. The association of the two classes is a mere physical contiguity, not a chemical combination. The really religious remain attached to the old, and drift off to some extreme form of Christian faith. The other type looks down upon the orthodox as being mentally fossilised, and gradually ceases to be religious in any genuine sense of the word. It is part of the folly of the opportunist religionist to believe that he can revise, or restate, or remould religious belief in such a way as to make them permanent. This simply cannot be done. The only way in which religion can be made permanent is by perpetuating the mental environment to which it is suited. But every revision of religious belief sets up a new form of disintegration or else adds to the strength of those already existing. A Christian preacher keeping his religion alive by rationalising it, reminds one of an arsenic eater. A man may accustom himself to eating arsenic, but on condition that the dose is gradually increased. Should he cease suddenly, the last dose settles him. So a congregation that is habitually fed on doses of reason inevitably demands an increase in the portion served out. But, in the nature of things, the preacher has to stop somewhere; and wherever he stops, the last dose signs his death warrant.

To quit metaphor for fact, religion is quite out of place in a modern environment. Not because the environment is bad, but because religion belongs in essence to the past. There is an unconscious recognition of this truth in the retention of archaic forms, formulas, dress, and language in religious services. It is seen also in the endeavor to keep a sharp dividing line between things secular and things sacred. If a broker on the Stock Exchange were to say, "In the name of Jesus Christ I offer Caledonian debentures at 109," and another replied, "Taken, in the name of the Holy Ghost," both would be accused of profanity. If the most pious of Nonconformist M.P.'s were to offer a contribution to a debate in the House of Commons in the shape of a prayer, he would be sharply called to order. But, really, if religion were a vital thing, there is nothing out of place in either of these cases. They are only out of place because religion does not answer to any vital fact in our lives. The Chancellor of the Exchequer feels called upon to provide for an extra outlay on ships, soldiers, and armaments. He does not seem greatly impressed with the necessity of providing more military and naval chaplains. The carrying power of bullets is a serious problem in warfare; but the carrying power of prayer is apparently a negligible quantity. Tommy and Jack are, after all, practical fellows, and both feel safer behind good guns than behind chaplains. The Bible may be a "Shield of Faith," but it is a miserable substitute for armor-plate.

And the worst of it is—from the religious point of view—that it can no longer be claimed that those who reject religion, consciously and deliberately, are

lacking in either intelligence or character. Some of our religious leaders tell us that the most painful aspect of the religious situation is that those who reject religion often lead upright and honorable lives. Freethinkers can well appreciate the painfulness of the fact. The Christian really has no objection to an unbeliever who is bad. He could even work up an affection for him. In this case, the Freethinker is filling the program so thoughtfully drawn up for his guidance by philanthropic Christians. But the unbeliever who is good! What is to be done with him? He does not fit in with the Christian scheme at any point. Instead of being in prison and thus burdening the tax-paying Christian, he remains outside and cheerfully pays for the incarceration of believers, and for the salaries of chaplains who see that even in gaol Christians are not lacking in that spiritual sustenance to which they have been accustomed. Naturally, the believer gets depressed. For when all is said and done, one of the crowning proofs that religion is not essential to life is that people can be good without it.

Nothing can save religious beliefs from ultimate destruction. That is one of the surest of facts to all who realise the true nature of religion and the force and tendency of modern civilisation. It is possible to galvanise a dying creed into a semblance of healthy activity; but stimulants only stimulate; they add nothing to the vital force of the organism. And against the transient effects of casual stimulants there is the steady, unceasing influence of the host of forces, mental, moral, and social, that are summed up in the word civilisation. To destroy these religiously disintegrating forces is impossible. Even to control them is becoming yearly more and more difficult. And to the failure of efforts in the present the believer has the discouraging knowledge of failure in the past. A glance over past history shows it littered with the bodies of dead gods and the remains of worn-out theological systems. And the man who can believe that our own theologies have any greater prospect of achieving immortality than those that went before has failed to read the most pregnant lesson that history offers.

C. COHEN.

"The Call of the Age."

SUCH was the announced subject of a special discourse recently delivered by a youthful and popular Doctor of Divinity. It was an unique address, and one was surprised to hear it from a Christian pulpit. It was based on no text in Scripture, nor did it contain a single appeal to the authority of God's Word. Another of its peculiarities was its utter contempt for systematic theology. It was given in a church which until recently was famous for its rigid allegiance to orthodoxy; and yet the large congregation that listened to it received its main points with unmistakable tokens of approval. This is a significant sign of the times. The old orthodoxy has fallen into manifest disfavor among Protestants. What is to take its place remains to be seen. It is already quite obvious that the New Theology has no future. Thoughtful men and women are eagerly asking final questions which no theology ever framed can finally answer. Whence came we? Why are we here? Whither go we? These are the unread riddles of the world, the solution of which is inaccessible. Such admissions, made by a Christian minister, betoken a radical change of front within the last few years on the part of the Protestant Churches. Although connected with a denomination which has always gloried in its championship of Pauline, Augustinian, and Calvinistic dogmatism, the clergyman under consideration is deeply convinced that all theological dogmatism, of whatever kind, is doomed, and that no religious teacher is justified in offering his hearers anything better than tentative statements. He emphasised the fact that in the expression of his views he repre-

sented only himself, and that the time might come when such views would be considerably modified. On the latter point there can be no manner of doubt, because the views enunciated were extremely vague, indefinite, and unsatisfying.

The preacher frankly acknowledged that modern criticism has vehemently assailed all Christian dogmas without distinction. Beyond this, he contended, criticism cannot go. It has touched its extreme limit; and its success has been so complete that the old dogmatic orthodoxy can never be restored. This is doubtless true enough, but the preacher was surely mistaken when he declared that out of the ruins of the old doctrines there shall arise such a spiritual religion as will satisfy all the cravings of the human heart. An undogmatic Christianity, of which we hear so much in certain quarters, is a chimera, an unrealisable dream. Professor Harnack, the European champion of this impossible position, is undeniably a first-class scholar, and has done much to weaken and discredit the orthodox cause; but it is indisputable that the Gospel Jesus stands before us as a thoroughgoing dogmatist. There is no trace of tentativeness in the teaching attributed to him. With him there were no open questions, no unresolved problems, no fathomless mysteries. He claimed to speak on every subject with absolute and final authority. The word "peradventure" was not in his vocabulary. It was his mission in the world not to speculate about God, but to reveal him, and to reveal him with the intimate knowledge of one who had ever dwelt in his bosom. It was as an unadulterated dogmatist that Jesus was persecuted, as the following extract shows:—

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying he shall no more see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing; it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 51—56).

The Gospel Jesus always speaks in the same strain. It is not opinions, hypotheses, or theories, but items of positive information and definite knowledge, that he offers to the world; and nothing can be more absurd than the assertion that a Christianity founded upon his reputed teaching is undogmatic. In his way, Jesus was fully as dogmatic as Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, or Calvin; and the same comparison might be instituted between Professor Harnack and the Pope of Rome.

Now, it necessarily follows that to say that dogmatism has collapsed is equivalent to stating that Christianity has had its day. "I do not wish to dogmatise," cried our preacher; and yet he did nothing but dogmatise from beginning to end. As a matter of fact dogmatism has not collapsed, though in the eye of criticism it has been entirely discredited. The Catholic Church, which is still, both numerically and influentially, by far the most powerful Church in Christendom, is practically as dogmatic as ever. She pooh-poohs the findings of criticism, and calls upon all to repose completest faith in her deliverances. Before the bar of reason all dogmatism looks indefensible and foolish enough; but the bulk of mankind are still the slaves of blind credulity. It will be a long time ere reason assumes her sway as the rightful queen of our life. Our only comfort is derived from the fact that the leaven of criticism is steadily working in the meal of humanity, and that ultimately it shall transmute the whole mass. Meantime, Protestantism is clearly undergoing the process of disintegration. The heresies of yesterday are the truths of to-day, and already there are vivid hints that the truths of to-day will be the heresies of to-morrow. The advanced wing of the

Protestant Church still deals in dogmas; but they are inexact, ambiguous, and evasive dogmas. It retains most of the old terms, but divests them of their old meanings without infusing into them any intelligible new significations. It affirms the existence of God, for example, quite as dogmatically as Catholicism does; but the moment you examine the contents of the word, you find it impossible to determine what they are, for they are in a state of constant flux. Scarcely any two men employ the term in the same sense; and even on the lips of the same speaker it is marvellously kaleidoscopic. Our Doctor of Divinity, however, attempted to account for this by the subterfuge that the revelation of God is progressive from age to age, or, in other words, that the Deity speaks more clearly and fully to the mind and conscience of this generation, at least to those of the New Theology section of it, than to those of any former one; but he shrank from the task of telling us what God is, or how he knows that he exists.

At this point the preacher had recourse to contemptible quibbling. It is true, he said, in effect, that our religious utterances are marked by great incertitude or vacillation, or that theological terms are much less fixed and stable and clear-cut than they used to be; but precisely the same thing is true in the realms of science, the science of to-day being little more than a recantation of the science of yesterday. But this is by no means true. It is accurate to say that during the last fifty years science has been advancing at a most astounding pace; but it is an unmitigated falsehood to represent it as now contradicting what it so confidently affirmed fifty years ago. In the main, each discovery has tended to confirm its predecessors. The fundamental principles of Darwinism are still maintained by the overwhelming majority of the biologists of the present day. Evolution is still regarded as the great law of the Universe. Even now, exclaimed the preacher, science cannot tell us what matter is; indeed, it is more ignorant on the point than it was twenty years ago. In point of fact, however, science never did pretend to tell what matter is, but has confined itself to showing how matter works. The scientist takes the existence of matter for granted, and devotes himself to the study of its various phenomena, in so far as they come under his observation. But the preacher was inclined to deny the existence of matter altogether, and to suggest that it is nothing but a form of thought, mind being the only reality known to us. We will not follow him into the quagmires of Idealism, because Idealism is merely a philosophical speculation; but it may be expedient to remind him that the ignorance of science cannot be looked upon as being in any sense a verification of the truth of religion. Science and religion never touch at all except at unessential, trivial points, where the latter unlawfully encroaches upon the domain of the former. At all such points science has gloriously triumphed over religion, and compelled it to retreat in disgrace. It is true that in its own peculiar sphere theology is beyond the reach of science; but it is also true that the very existence of that realm is insusceptible of any sort of proof.

Now, fully aware of this, the preacher ended his discourse in an exceptionally evasive fashion. "The call of the age," he said, "is not for dogmatic theology, but for the service of love; and by rendering that service you shall learn that God is love." From the pulpit, that was, in the circumstances, an eminently proper utterance; but it was only an echo of a similar expression in the first Epistle of John. The only fault that can be found with it is that it is not true. Love is a human passion shared by Theists and Atheists alike; and the call of the age is that love be enthroned as the highest and best thing in life. Strictly speaking, love has no existence at all except as a happy relation between individuals living in society. There are multitudes of people leading beautiful lives of love who are totally destitute of the sense of God. Why do they do it? Simply because they realise their responsibility to the community, or because their social instinct is well

developed. If there be no God but love, it follows that the Christian God must be stripped of all his personal attributes, in which case there is no advantage in calling love God. St. John is wrong when he says that "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Genuine lovers only know that love is the greatest and strongest and pleasantest relation in the world, and that when this relation obtains in the fulness of its power and glory, life is purged of all sordidness, meanness, and selfishness, and becomes radiant with the beauty of healing sympathy and ennobling service. J. T. LLOYD.

Humanity and Heaven.

VERY few respectable people now believe in Hell. I lead a not inactive life, read a large variety of literature, and move about among meetings, groups, committees, clubs, and all sorts and conditions of men; and I cannot recall, for years past, any serious reference to Hell by any educated man, except Father Bernard Vaughan. This good man's allusions to Hell and Devil were strong, ripe, and unmistakable, and sent a quite visible thrill through the assembly. Part of the thrill was a smile.

The case, however, is different with Heaven. Logically, Hell and Heaven should decline together out of human faith. As a matter of fact, the belief in Heaven persists, and will continue to persist, in spite of the clearest arguments against its rationality, so long as two important developments linger. One of these is a conviction of the power and efficiency of humanity; the other is an improvement in the economic condition of the masses. In order to secure the removal of Hell from the catalogue of human credence, all that is necessary is progress in compassion. Happily, our age is marked by this progress, as evinced in tender treatment of animals, of children, of the sick, and lunatic, and of the backward races of mankind. This same movement carries away Hell on the tide of its generous sentiment.

It is otherwise with the fate of Heaven. Generosity itself inclines to leave untouched the walls of Jerusalem the Golden. Freethought has a complete siege-train for the reduction of this ancient citadel. Orthodoxy does not now carry on any definite propaganda on its behalf. Pulpits tell us no more of Heaven than was contained in Wesley's note-books, or Bunyan's visions. So here is an institution which offers but the feeblest defence to the questions of the Rationalist (for instance, Where is Heaven?) and of which the Churches make no attempt to expand the popular conception. Nevertheless, as a doctrine, it does not budge. The whole explanation flashed upon me the other day when I visited a home where the husband had for ten years lain bed-ridden, his fingers twisted with rheumatism like the roots of an old beech-tree; and in the same house, a young daughter is affected by goitre in the neck. The burden of this invalidity falls upon a long-suffering wife; and she, poor soul, clings passionately to the Christian altar and the Christian Heaven. This scene is but a symbol of innumerable tragedies east and west. The martyrdom of man—to use Winwood Reade's phrase—covers our planet with daily crucifixions. That is why the innumerable crucified ones, whether just men or thieves, see the open skies, and the glory of God. Nietzsche jibed at the "slave-morality" of the Christian millions—their humbleness, their abject thought, their deferential acceptance of the assurances of priests. I do not say his irony was ill-aimed. But there is nothing astonishing in the "slave-morality." It is the natural consequence of cruelly hard destinies, of infirmity, of lack of hygiene, of poorness of blood. Under such circumstances, the people console themselves with the hope of Heaven. To them, Paradise is a happy clinic, where physicians may be consulted gratis, and remedies are sure; where rents are never demanded, debts unknown, and the morrow's bread—celestial

bread—is a certainty as stable as Wordsworth's "most ancient heavens."

But as humanity grows in strength and insight, and as human providence meets the material wants of the multitudes, the anthem of Zion will die away into faint echoes, and finally become as obsolete as the broken text of a Babylonian clay-tablet. Antiquaries will examine the song, and learnedly discuss its curiously remote language. Note the condition. Humanity must grow in power. It can grow. It will grow. Science will not attain its true dignity till it finds its most splendid achievement in the alleviation of human misery, and abandons the ignoble pride in weapons—marine, sub-marine, aerial, and the rest—of destruction and warfare. Politics will consecrate itself to the sane ordering of industry, so that the earth shall be fertile for the laborer and not the mere owner, and the throbbing machinery of the civilised world shall feed and clothe the machine-makers and minders rather than the exploiters. The social genius will act as a flaming sword that turns all ways against disease and poverty. It will throw its ray of scrutiny into every corner of the habitable earth, searching out grief and relieving it, detecting filth and consuming it.

"Thank Heaven," sobs Misfortune, as she accepts the gifts of Mercy.

Yet Mercy only comes from hands that were shapen in the wombs of mothers. So weak is our confidence in the bond of brotherhood, that, even when help manifestly arrives from a human source, we shrink from a true acknowledgment to Man, and murmur that God is gracious. That most noble Englishman, William Blake, gave us the right music a hundred years ago:—

"For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love the human form divine,
And Peace the human dress."

Nietzsche (for whom I have the greatest respect) was so conscious of the imperfection of humanity that he endeavored to goad us into courage, audacity, and victorious passion by loud reproaches, and a mighty shout of "Thus spake Zarathustra." Men who possess Nietzsche's discontent without his genius seek, by ourmudgeon fault-finding, to make us mindful of our impotence. We shall conquer. Slowly, but as invincibly as the all-penetrating sun, man will gather his forces. Point by point, the general human conscience—France leading, it may be—will widen its sense of responsibility until civilisation, acting as one strong soul, will claim the whole round of human experience as its domain, and denounce the treaty with Heaven. There shall be no village without an ear for the tale of despair. She that now leans wretchedly over the midnight bridge and asks if life is worth living will then seek the open gate of the Civic Magnanimity. Pain,—it must always be. Tragedy,—it will never forego its awful privilege. But this at least shall also be,—that the ear of Superman shall so diligently hearken and the trained hand of Superman so swiftly tender its aid, that no disaster shall be embittered by the memory of neglected devices of help, and no sickness unilluminated by a comrade's smile. As we become accustomed to the glory of this future, we—we children of five continents and five oceans,—shall resolve to realise in fraternity schools, industrial organisations, cities of sweetness and light, international peace. For every wrong suppressed on earth a beam of the house of Heaven will fall. Veil after veil will lift from the majesty of human capacity and self-evolving art; and at the rise of each veil, a dream-mansion of Paradise will close down for ever. As each new Garden City springs up on earth, an avenue of the cloudy Zion will cease to appeal to the imagination of the desolate and oppressed. When the economic salvation of the people is at length completed, and humanity inaugurates the era of Co-operation and Beauty, the "baseless fabric of this vision" on high shall dissolve, and there shall be no more Heaven.

F. J. GOULD.

How Can God Exist?

BRITISH Freethinkers will, doubtless, be interested to learn about the latest and important manifestation of *Libre Pensée* that took place in Paris on Saturday, May 6. Sebastien Faure, the keen old fighter for the cause of social progress and the bugbear of the black army, successfully organised a public and contradictory meeting. The subject of the debate was "Twelve Proofs of the Inexistence of God." The interest roused by this discussion was so great that long before the orator stood up to speak not a seat was left in the vast hall.

It is not my intention to give you either a biography of the orator or a semi-verbatim report of the debate, which would necessarily lack interest. The points raised in the discussion are as old as the hills and have been discussed over and over again by European Freethinkers, but Sebastien Faure presented his thesis with such force, precision, and originality of evidence that I deem it interesting to give an abridged account of same.

When Faure rose to speak, the mathematical precision of his arguments, his calm and wonderful eloquence impressed everyone, and my thoughts took me back to other meetings I had the pleasure of attending in London, and recalled Mr. Foote to my memory. I could not help making comparisons, and was glad to observe how both these prominent Freethought leaders resemble each other from a philosophical and elocutionary point of view. The same clearness of speech—few words but bristling with generous ideas, deep and to the point—briefly, both present the eternal problem of Religion v. Truth in a true, scientific spirit, which must convince all those endowed with sufficient common sense, culture, and a broad mind to appreciate the value of the explanations given.

According to Sebastien Faure, the problem of the existence of God can be solved as follows: there are twelve facts which constitute sufficient evidence to completely wreck the "God hypothesis." These facts can be divided into three distinct groups under the following headings:—

- A. God the Creator.
- B. God, Governor of the Universe or Providence.
- C. God the Magistrate or Dispenser of Infinite Justice.

The first hypothesis will be reduced *ad absurdum* by six arguments, the second by four, and the third by two.

A.—God the Creator.

1. Matter, as understood from a chemical point of view, is eternal; therefore, when we talk of "creation" in relation to the universe we are making use of a faulty definition. To create is to make something out of nothing, which is totally impossible. Add up a column of 0's and the total must be 0. As Lucretius said, *ex nihilo nihil*; moreover, the word creation implies the notion of time, which is contrary to the definition of God, "who is of all eternity."

2. According to the theologians, God, being a pure spirit, gave birth to the universe, *i.e.*, matter. A pure immaterial spirit cannot engender matter.

3. God, being infinite perfection, created an imperfect universe, *i.e.*, another theological self-contradiction.

4. If God exists, he is, according to his disciples, immutable, never has and never will change; we are, therefore, in presence of this absurd proposition: in nature nothing is permanent, life is an unending series of changes, of transformations, and dogma teaches that an immutable, permanent being created a finite and non-permanent world.

5. Christians say there are only two things to consider: cause and effect. The universe is the effect, therefore, God is the cause. This argument is worthless indeed; if a cause produces a certain effect, this effect in its turn becomes the cause of another effect, and so on *ad infinitum*. Therefore, if God is the cause, he is at the same time the effect of something else, *quod erat absurdum*. Instead of solving the problem, religion simply puts the solution a step further back.

6. If God exists, he is eternally active and eternally necessary; but creation implying the notion of time, there was a period when God was neither active nor necessary, which constitutes another, among many, self-contradictions.

B.—God, Governor of the Universe or Providence.

1. All revealed religions are based on the necessity and efficacy of prayer. God, being infinite knowledge, requires his children to tell him what to do; he is reminded by them when he neglects his duties, as in the case of praying for rain, sunshine, etc.

2. According to statistics, there are at present about eight hundred religions or sects in the world, all of them fighting each other with the utmost ferocity. History teaches us that religion has spilt more blood and been the cause of more crimes than anything else we can think of. Therefore, Providence cannot exist, and an almighty God, endowed with infinite knowledge and justice, is a myth.

3. If God were infinite perfection, there would be nothing wrong about the universe and the necessity of a Providence is eliminated.

4. The God, Providence, after creating humanity, condemns the greater part of mankind to suffer eternally in hell; this is what is known in religious circles as infinite goodness.

C.—God the Magistrate.

1. If God exists he has no right to judge us. He is responsible for all our actions. He knows that evil exists but does not stop it; therefore, he is either a perpetrator of the harm done or incapable to prevent it—which is absurd.

2. How can God judge us? Are we wholly responsible for our physical and moral nature? Certainly not. The "Freewill" theory is absurd from a theological point of view. Either God created us, and is, therefore, entirely responsible for us, or he did not create us and cannot exist.

Conclusions.

God is a myth created by primitive man's ignorance and imagination. The God hypothesis varies and evolves with the progress of mankind, and is in direct ratio with the degree of intelligence and culture of those who practise such and such a form of adoration.

Humanity must be taught the dangers and falsehoods of religion which breeds in mankind injustice, hypocrisy, and egotism.

Our duty is to fight and work, not for heavenly justice, but rather for human justice, based on experimental science. The fraternity of mankind can only be conquered at that price.

F. O. RITZ.

Acid Drops.

The Kaiser had a good time, with fine weather, in London; and so far as his visit tends to strengthen the bonds of peace between Great Britain and Germany we are heartily glad of it. The King and the Kaiser went to lots of places together, but we didn't read of their going to church during the week. Perhaps they were both loaded up with enough religion on the previous Sunday to last out the visit. We don't exactly know how King George stands with regard to the mystery-mongers and their business. His father was not exactly enthusiastic about them. On one occasion he allowed so high a Church dignitary as the Bishop of London five minutes for his sermon. And the Bishop accepted it,—which shows where the Church is now.

What a fuss Nonconformists are making about the small number of tickets dealt out to them for the Coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey. Sir Robert Perks complains of the "scant recognition of the Wesleyan Church," which is next in point of numbers to the Established Church. They were not invited at all to the unveiling of the Queen Victoria Memorial, and they have only got two tickets for the Coronation. Poor dunkeys! They have our sympathy.

The Congregationalists are a little luckier. They also have two tickets. These are allotted to two official representatives. But a third ticket was wanted for the Rev. Dr. Jowett, who is coming over from New York in June—not being able, of course, to let such a great occasion slip. A third ticket, however, could not be obtained from the Coronation Committee, and Dr. Jowett was left lamenting. Fortunately the King has squeezed out one of *his* tickets for the reverend gentleman. So all's well that ends well.

It took two Fathers in God—the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London—to perform the "dedication" ceremony at the unveiling of the Queen Victoria Memorial. It is difficult to see what is the object of this ceremony, except to give the Church a look in at the performance. The prayer they offered up contained one fine phrase—a reference to God "by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice"—but that was borrowed from the Prayer Book. The rest of the prayer was flabby in conception and in expression. At the finish "with a loud voice"—something perhaps like that of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus—the Archbishop of Canterbury cried:—

"To the glory of God, and in memory of our Gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, we dedicate this memorial in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" is the name of the firm of which these reverend performers are agents. Altogether the "dedication" turned a rather imposing ceremony into a screaming farce.

Monarchy, of course, is part of the general superstition of the world. The real meaning of it was, perhaps unconsciously, confessed in the *Daily News* report of the "command" performance of *Money* at Drury Lane Theatre before the King and the Kaiser:—

"The Royal circle made a brave show as all stood while the National Anthems were played. It is on these occasions that one feels there is something in the decorative show of Royalty. These still figures, some of them ordinary in appearance, and some of them quite commonplace, have one thing that glorifies them. They are, in a sense, the symbol of the might of a nation."

What does this mean but that monarchy, like theology, is the worship of an idol? The idol may be as plain as you like. The worship is the thing. It endows the idol with all the virtues and graces that are appropriate.

When the Maories acclaimed King George the other day they hailed him as "the hero of many victories." Probably they knew that King George had never wielded a sword in earnest and never fired a shot except in the way of "sport." They were simply using their stock language for such occasions. With them, as with other people, idols were made to be flattered.

Lord Justice Vaughan Williams joins the chorus of astonishment at the number of fluent liars revealed by the recent election inquiries. We, for our part, are astonished at his astonishment. This is a Christian country.

The Archbishop of Paris (Catholic, of course) has passed a ban upon Gabrielle d'Annunzio's new mystery play, the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*. This ought to ensure its success at the Châtelet.

Mr. Julius Hopp, director of the Wage Earners' Theatrical League, arranged in association with Mr. Daniel Frohman to give a private theatrical performance at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, on Sunday evening, April 30. News of this dreadful "desecration of the Sabbath" reached the liberal ears of the Rev. George W. Grannis, secretary of the Lord's Day Alliance, who wrote to Mr. Frohman informing him that this "desecration" was "especially objectionable to the moral and religious sentiment of the community" and telling him that the performance must not be given. Mr. Frohman handed the letter over to Mr. Hopp, who happens to be very little burdened with religion; and Mr. Hopp favored the reverend protector of the Lord's Day with a lively reply, in which the following passages occur:—

"To begin with permit me to state that I do not believe in anything that savors of the church. The church has closed its eyes and ears to the terrible economic conditions prevailing to-day; the church is not taking care of the happiness of human beings on earth; people who work for a living are being burned, murdered, exploited, robbed day by day in factories and mines, and under such conditions for any 'minister of the gospel' to speak of 'divinely appointed Lord's days of rest and worship,' 'desecration of the Sabbath,' 'moral and religious sentiment of the community' is hypocrisy.

If you wish to go to church and pray and at the same time permit misery to exist and to be perpetuated in the world you are at liberty to do so, as are members of your society. But do not undertake to tell the community to be equally deficient in moral purposes, and do not accuse us of lacking morality, who are fighting for betterment of the world right here. This much for the explanation as to my views.

Concerning the law, permit me to state that the law prohibits all public entertainment of any sort. You, gentlemen of the church, are now opposing the violation of the law taking place every Sunday when vaudeville houses, burlesque theatres, places of vice, give entertainment under the name of Sacred Concerts to the general public. Why don't you exert your efforts along that line?

A drama is far superior in conveying a moral lesson to ministers' eloquence in pulpits for which the minister gets paid on Sundays. This is business, pure and simple.

Our performances are private and are attended to by people who prefer the theatre to the church. We don't ask you to close your church because we think you are out of joint with the age, why should you assume the right even to suggest that we do what you wish? The churches belong to the past and have now no moral effect on the community, and they know it.

We are fully informed as to what to do. The German Theatre on Irving Place, the Yiddish Theatres downtown, cheap theatres all over the city are wide open every Sunday with the full knowledge of the police. Ours, as I said, is a private performance, and none of your business."

A hit, a hit, a palpable hit! Poor old Granny! We beg pardon—Grannis. We wish a similar lesson could be read to some such Sabbatarian bigot in England.

An amusing story occurs in Mrs. C. W. Earle's *Memoirs and Memories*. A letter written by a maid on her way out

to India, to a lady in the Girls' Friendly Society, and dated from the Red Sea, contained the following sentence: "It is now very hot, and I perspire a great deal, but you will be pleased to hear I am still a member of the Church of England."

A resolution was moved at the London Diocesan Conference protesting against picture theatres being open on Sunday, and also against hospitals sharing the Sunday takings. The Rev. J. A. Magee, who moved the resolution, said there was no intention of calling in question the character of the entertainment. This, in itself, marks an advance. Once upon a time the clergy, with Pecksniffian tears in their eyes, would have been talking of the *immoral* character of such exhibitions. Evidently we are moving. What they wanted, said Mr. Magee, was "the Lord's day for the Lord's people." Well, no one desires to stop the "Lord's people" having their own day in their own fashion, and enjoying a nice miserable time together. But what they are really asking for is the Lord's day for everybody, and that a great many people naturally object to. Mr. Magee said the picture shows opened "just when people might otherwise be going to church." Otherwise! What a confession of impotence! Now, if the picture theatres worked on the same plan as the public-houses, and opened between hours on Sunday, the clergy would not be nearly so irritated. It is opening at the same time as the churches that rouses the clerical anger. And people will not attend church if there are reasonable facilities for going elsewhere.

Probandary Gurdon, in supporting Mr. Magee, said that hospitals should refuse money derived from these Sunday shows because they offered opportunities for financial and every other form of hypocrisy. Ye gods! Talk about pot and kettle exchanging compliments on each other's complexion! Is there more hypocrisy connected with any subject than is mixed up with the clerical protests against Sunday entertainments? When did the Churches inquire how money was obtained, so long as they got it in the end? Sweaters, slum landlords, shady financiers, all and sundry may give to the Church, and the last question that is asked the donors is how the wealth was obtained. We even believe they would wink at Sunday shows if they were legally compelled to give them a share of the takings. But when hospitals benefit by certain Sunday shows, clerical virtue is outraged, and it is found that Sunday secular entertainments open the way to hypocrisy. Well—one wants to be in a room with closed doors and without an audience to give proper expression to one's feelings on such an occasion.

"We remember," says "J. B.," of the *Christian World*, "More than thirty years ago, listening to a lecture by Charles Bradlaugh on 'Is the Bible True?' His assertions shocked the orthodox among his hearers, and yet there was scarcely one of them which the Biblical student of to-day would not accept." We are glad to record the admission, and only add this is not the only instance in which Freethinkers have forced Christians to recognise plain truths about their own creed. And this is one of the ways by which Freethought advances. A Freethinker initiates a reform, fights for it, suffers for it, and finally establishes it. Christians are compelled to adopt it, and then they impudently ask, where is the Freethought of fifty years ago? Well, it is often being preached as advanced religion. Meanwhile, Freethinkers have gone on a step, and are trying to drag Christians farther still.

"J. B.," in the same article, raises another point of some importance, and one which has a distinct bearing on Christian ethics. He points out that our view of the Bible to-day is not the Christian view of past years, nor is our view of the Old Testament that held by the writers of the New. And yet the Christian Church is sending the Bible all over the world as God's revelation to man without a word of explanation as to what is the opinion of many Christians concerning it. He asks whether we are right in doing this, and answers his own question with the reply that we have no right to offer the Bible to non-Christians as anything but what we know it to be. We quite agree with this; but it is a question that not only affects the non-Christian peoples to whom the Bible is offered—it affects the population at home also. And in both instances there is an illustration of that lack of a sense of strict intellectual rectitude that has always accompanied Christianity.

So far as the people of India and China and Japan are concerned, the Christian approaches them in a substantially similar spirit to that in which he approaches the native African. They are not Christians, and are therefore a benighted, ignorant lot to whom anything may be taught so

long as it is called Christian. And being what he thinks they are, the Christian missionary feels he is quite safe in putting before them views of the Bible which he quite well knows are discredited at home. It is a ridiculous attitude, of course, but it explains a great deal. The Chinaman, the Hindoo, and the Japanese are at least on as high a level of intellectual development as is the average missionary, and he is not long in detecting the worth of both the man and his message. And this way of dealing with people abroad is only a repetition of the general practice at home. The Christian preacher deals with the young and the uneducated in exactly the same spirit. What is *known* about the Bible is kept away from them as long as is possible. What he wishes them to *believe* about it is impressed upon them, and only in after years does the pupil discover how he has been duped. For people associate strict accuracy about religion so little with the clergy that few expect them to tell the truth concerning it. They hide the truth about it, and no one seems surprised. If one here and there behaves in a little better manner, so much to the good, but the feeling of the average layman is that no preacher is called upon to tell the truth when the truth tells against orthodoxy. And, properly appreciated, this is the most damning fact that could be cited against the value of Christian influence.

Judge Hans Hamilton has settled the conscription question. Addressing a meeting of the Executive of the National Service League at Preston, he urged that England should follow the injunctions of the Bible with regard to military training. God had ordained that every young man up to the age of twenty should be trained. That's all right. We know now.

Australia is excited. Rev. R. J. Campbell is going there—only on a visit. There may be less excitement when he leaves. A similar treat is in store for America. We don't hear of much excitement in the States. Aked and Jowett got in front of Campbell over there, and the Yankees are not to be had in the same way often.

Rev. R. J. Campbell seems to be steadily returning to orthodoxy. In reply to a question, after an address to the Christian Social Union at Church House, he said "he believed that the next ten years would see a very great revival of belief in the miraculous. They had gone too far to the other extreme, and were now swinging back." This is Mr. Campbell all over. He is one of those who, as Carlyle said, cannot say "Yes" or "No"—but always want to say "Yes" and "No." The reverend gentleman evidently thinks a compromise is possible between the miraculous and non-miraculous—between the natural and the supernatural. But there are some things that, to be at all, must go the whole hog. The poor curate's egg, to be at the bishop's breakfast, was good in parts. Mr. Campbell seems to think that nature can be miraculous in parts. He might as well say that a woman is partly chaste.

The Rev. Dr. Ambrose Shepherd thinks that "if a third of the churches in Glasgow were sold, and the ministers sent out to Christianise the Colonies, Glasgow would be a much better city than it is." It is rather rough on the Colonies, but we do not like to be outdone in generosity by Mr. Shepherd, and so cordially advocate the closing of the other two-thirds, and the dispatch of the ministers to any place that will put up with them.

"The anti-Mormon campaign in England is doing splendid work in demonstrating the hypocrisy of the great body of Christians. The blatant bigot Vaughan shrieks that 'the Mormons should be taken by the scruff of the neck, rushed across the island and dropped into the sea.' This is a specimen of the much-vaunted brotherly love of the followers of Christ. At Birkenhead, a gang of Christian thugs, endeavoring to carry out the advice of their clerical inciters, attacked the Mormon meeting-house, and stoned and smashed the windows. An ultimatum was issued by the leaders of the criminal mob, requiring the Mormon missionaries to quit town within eight days. This is the famous British respect for personal rights, as modified by religious fanaticism. Such hoodlumism in China or Turkey, as applied to missionaries of other sects, would cause immediate interference by the British Government."—James Morton, in *New York Truthseeker*.

The *Guardian*, remarking on the dislike of "Clericalism" in France, ingenuously adds: "Of course this 'Clericalism' is entirely different from what goes by that name in this country." We beg to differ. It is the same thing under different conditions. Every clergyman, whether Roman

Catholic, Episcopalian, or Dissenter, is one of its representatives. For Clericalism is nothing more than the desire to control the secular forces of the State in the interests of a religious organisation. And every Church in Christendom is aiming at this. The Roman Catholic is taken as the representative of Clericalism simply because its aims are more apparent, and because in certain countries conditions are more favorable to their realisation. But what essential difference is there between, say, the Roman Church in Spain and any of the Protestant Churches during any period while one of them enjoyed supreme power? Are not the Protestant Churches in England all striving to control the State in the interests of their respective creeds? There is nothing else than this in the Sabbatarian movement, or in the demand for religious instruction in State schools. The difference between English and French Clericalism is not a difference of kind, but of degree. Ours is a less virulent form of the disease than the other, but morally it is even more objectionable, because it gains in hypocrisy as its virulence declines.

Colonel Seton Churchill says that in thirty-three years' service in the Army he came into contact with many religions, but with none that is based, like Christianity, on the principle of self-sacrifice. Buddhism, he admitted, might have the theory, but he had not found the practice. Colonel Churchill adopts the usual Christian plan of placing Christian *theory* alongside of the *practice* of other creeds. Practice for practice, we do not think Buddhism need fear comparison with Christianity. Most authorities on the subject would probably say that Buddhism would challenge comparison.

A correspondent in the *Schoolmaster* thinks that "the increasing demands of progress" in the schools "will not permit the abolition of any subject save the Scripture lesson." Shocking!

The Rev. J. D. Jones is one of the dare-devil thinkers of the Congregational Union. He does not believe in a policy of "hush up"; a ministry, he says, must be perfectly frank, honest, and open-eyed, and must not blind itself to any fact. It must do all this, and yet "held to the simple faith that none can save except Christ." Simple, indeed! And yet not quite so simple as the people must be who look for guidance to men of this stamp. Perhaps the chief thing that makes the pulpit a thing of contempt to thoughtful men and women is this parade of liberality that means nothing in practice. You can believe as you like, and must blink no fact—so long as you believe in Christ. Could anything be more ridiculous? And is there any place but the pulpit where such men could occupy positions of importance with their sayings chronicled as though they contained matter worth bothering about?

A person called D. W. Cox, styling himself secretary of the Wood Green Christian Evidence Society, has written a letter about the *Freethinker* to the local *Sentinel*, which the editor of that paper declines to print as written, on the ground that there is a limit to what even Christians should say of other people in the public press. Mr. Cox wants the *Freethinker* kept out of the local Free Library, and he threatens that, if it is admitted, he and his friends will make desperate efforts to follow it up with the *Truthfinder*. We suppose he thinks that threat is enough to keep the *Freethinker* out for ever. But the local Freethinkers, for their part, have no objection to the admission of the *Truthfinder* or any other Christian paper. Nor have we. We merely ask the conductors of the *Truthfinder* to let us know when they find any new truth. We expect to have to wait a good while. In the meantime, we beg to thank the editor of the *Sentinel* for insisting on toleration and fair play in the public life of Wood Green.

At last the Supreme Court of the United States has ordered the dissolution of the Standard Oil Trust as a conspiracy and monopoly in restraint of trade. As everybody knows, the leading spirit of this abominable Trust is the pious J. D. Rockefeller, who goes to church regularly and teaches a Bible class. This commercial pirate understands Christian Churches as well as he understands the oil business. Having some eighty millions at stake in the Standard Oil Trust, he found it convenient to give a few millions away in promotion of Christian objects as a kind of insurance—against opposition. The trick worked very well on the whole. It staved off the day of reckoning. And even now it will help to dull the edge of the sword of justice. We

do not believe for a moment that the Standard Oil Trust will disappear. The name may go, but the thing will remain. It pays too well to be dropped without further struggles. And what "pays" is mightily dear to the modern Christian heart.

How the great J. D. Rockefeller must smile at the simplicity of those who signed a petition to the United States Congress in 1864, praying that "a stop may be put to the irreverent and irreligious proceedings of various citizens in drawing petroleum from the bowels of the earth, thus checking the designs of the Almighty, who has undoubtedly stored it there with a view to the Last Day, when all things shall be destroyed."

The Bishop of Thetford, presiding over a meeting at Thorpe Hamlet, had something to say about "sky-pilots." It was the annual meeting of the local Branch of the Missions to Seamen Society. Our old friend, Mr. J. W. de Caux, of Great Yarmouth, in sending us the newspaper report of the Bishop's speech to this assembly, sends us also a very pertinent criticism of it in his letter,—which, as it deals with the matter quite satisfactorily, may well save us the trouble of writing a criticism ourselves. This is what Mr. de Caux says:—

"The meeting in question was held in the suburb of an inland town whose inhabitants know as much respecting seamen and sea fishermen as they do about the man in the moon. The Bishop declared that the Mission was doing a 'splendid piece of religious work at Yarmouth and Lowestoft.' What nonsense! The Mission's boats are up-to-date trawlers, which occasionally sell their catches at these ports, and this trawling should be a paying concern. At sea no religious work can be done, for no sailor or fisherman would be allowed to leave his vessel to attend service on board these trawlers. As for the services ashore, they are of the usual sectarian type. The Bishop said that 'the Society's chaplains were often spoken of by sailors as sky-pilots,' and this he considered to be 'the highest compliment which could be paid them.' Is he so ignorant as not to know that the term 'sky pilot,' like the term 'coward's castle,' is spoken by everybody sarcastically? A pilot is one who not only knows his way to a port but knows also what sort of a place it is. What parson ever went to heaven, either by himself or with others, and returned to earth to describe the delights of the other world to his flock?"

The Bishop of Thetford didn't expect to be criticised in this fashion. Of course he won't answer. "Mum's the word" and "The least said the soonest mended."

While we were suffering in England from a bitterly cold snap in May, the Americans, from the Rockies to the Atlantic, were suffering from a terrible heat-wave, the temperature being from 90 to 95 degrees in the shade. A good many deaths were recorded. At Chicago the public schools had to be closed for the sake of the children. Such is the wisdom of "Providence."

What a state literature has fallen into when publishers jump at a favorable notice of a book by such a poor creature as the Bishop of London! Messrs. Burns & Oates, the publishers of the late Francis Thompson's poems, advertise that "The Bishop of London has pronounced 'The Hound of Heaven,' to be 'one of the most tremendous poems that has ever been written.'" Not the Bishop of London *thinks* it so, but the Bishop of London has *pronounced* it so. That settles it. The oracle has spoken. But what a pity it is that the oracle cannot imitate in some degree the style of the poet it praises. The episcopal criticism is poor enough, but its expression is (if possible) even worse. It is simply "rotten" writing when five words are used instead of two. The words "that has ever been written" should be reduced to "ever written." The sentence gains in terseness and strength by the change. The three superfluous and weakening words show that the Bishop of London is simply a gabbler.

The *Essex Weekly News* has a fine satirical leaderette on the "Sunday observance crusaders" at Southend. "I wonder," the editor says, "what will be the fate of Southend as a holiday resort if these people have their way. A town which depends upon visitors wanting recreation is to be made as dull as a churchyard on a wet night! With no trams, no pier, no music on the cliffs, no rational means of amusement, Southend would be a very good place to avoid. But, of course, I had almost forgotten one thing—there would still be the public-houses."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended for the present.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged, £237 11s. 9d. Received since:—G. B. Taylor, £1; Robert Stirton and Friends, Dundee (quarterly), £1 14s.; H. C. B., 10s.; A. Clarke, 10s.

G. B. TAYLOR.—Your good wishes are cordially reciprocated. We can picture you as a British "sea-dog" wandering about Rome and seeing all the sights, including the Bruno statue, and appreciate your reflections on how much better off the world would be if the wealth and talent devoted to the glory of God had been devoted to the glory of Humanity.

S. J. COOK.—Your Islington Branch lecture notice postcard bore the London, E.C. postmark of May 16 (Tuesday) 5.30 p.m. How could you expect it to be possibly in time?

HARRY SHAW.—See paragraph. Thanks.

T. FOWLER.—Thanks all the same, but Mr. Arthur Henderson's religious ideas have lately been criticised in our columns. Labor religion is no better than Liberal or Conservative religion. Mr. Henderson had one lucid moment. He said he might be old-fashioned. He is.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. G. B.—Your view of the moral of the *Methodist Recorder* story is as legitimate as ours, only ours necessarily had to appear in our journal. Much more might have been written on the matter, if there had been time and room for it. It is obvious, for instance, that the "infidel" recipient of the two smacks on the face might have passed them back to the donor, with a request that he would return them to the party who sent them on.

A. S. VICKERS.—We note your view that—"Dr. Warschauer put up the strongest case I have read, but of course he got weaker as he went on."

W. STEWART.—The only objection to the *Freethinker* is that Christian Evidence people don't like it—and that objection is a compliment.

BECCLES.—The book you quote from is unworthy of attention. The facts about Bradlaugh's parliamentary struggle can all be found in his *Life* by his daughter, now published at the low price of 2s. 6d.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place at Birmingham on Whit-Sunday. The Town Hall is not available on this occasion, the application for its use having been refused; but an excellent substitute, if not so large, has been secured in the King's Hall, Corporation-street. The business sessions of the Conference—morning at 10.30, afternoon at 2.30—will be only open, of course, to Branch delegates and individual members of the Society—except in the case of special applications, which the Conference would have to decide upon. Mr. Foote will strike the President's hammer on the table punctually at 10.30, and delegates and visitors are requested to be in their places then.

The N.S.S. President's hammer, by the way, has a history. It was wielded at public meetings by the lion-hearted Richard Carlile, who fought so hard for the freedom of the press that he had to suffer nine years and seven months' imprisonment altogether in Christian gaols, mainly for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*. Subsequently it fell into the good hands of James Watson, another hero of the free press. Then it was held for many years by Charles Bradlaugh, who finally passed it over to Mr. Foote as his successor in the N.S.S. presidency. It is just a neat little hammer, with those four names inscribed on it; worth perhaps a shilling in the open market—but it isn't for sale, and isn't likely to be.

But to get back to the Conference. The evening public meeting always held in connection with it will take place in the large King's Hall, which is handsome and commodious. No doubt it will be crowded from the platform to the doors. For the platform will hold a great array of speaking talent. Besides the President there will be Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, Mr. Heaford, Mr. F. A. Davies, and perhaps other speakers. And all seats are free, with just a collection towards the expenses.

Mr. Foote can ill afford to spare the time, but in response to a general request he is going to join the Conference excursion on Whit-Monday. This, indeed, is in every way a special excursion. It is to a place of pilgrimage which will be visited by devotees from all parts of the world long after Jerusalem is forgotten; to Stratford-on-Avon—where the mighty Shakespeare was born, where he spent his youth and his last years, and where he died. If there are "sacred" spots anywhere, this is the most sacred spot on earth. Excursionists will go by train from Birmingham and return there in the evening; they will be provided with a hot luncheon at Stratford—a good meal being an excellent basis for higher pleasures; they will have a trip on the river Avon; and they will visit Shakespeare's birthplace and the memorial theatre and museum. And a ticket costing 5s. 6d., we believe, is to cover the whole of that program. Excursionists will get tea for themselves where they please, as they will probably prefer to scatter when the official program is finished. Some, of course, will be visiting the church where Shakespeare's body is buried.

Delegates and individual visitors to the Conference, desiring hotel or other accommodation at Birmingham, should communicate as promptly as possible with the local Branch secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, who will attend to their requirements. Trains will also be met as far as possible if visitors will inform Mr. Partridge, in reasonable time, when they expect to arrive. The committee room will be at the Colonnade Hotel.

One thing now is omitted. The Conference luncheon on Sunday is fixed up at the Colonnade Hotel, where most of the "saints" will probably be staying. The tickets are 2s. each, and should be obtained beforehand.

We are happy to state that Miss Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, who has been seriously ill lately, is fairly well on the road to recovery now, though her progress is necessarily slow. Even when she is on her legs again she will have to "go easy." A little work is a tonic for one of her temperament, but it will have to be no more than a little for some time, and the President will take care that it is so. Miss Vance's many friends may rest satisfied that she is in good hands in every way—in the sick chamber and outside it.

The Glasgow Branch holds its Annual Excursion on Sunday, June 4, to Mearns Castle. "Saints" intending to join will meet at the head of Jamaica-street at 10.15 and take Giffnock cars. Tea will be provided as usual.

Our attention has been drawn to a mistake in the N. S. S. Executive report in the issue of April 16. Members of the Executive who happen also to be members of the Executives of the Rationalist Peace Society and the Secular Education League are referred to as "delegates." They are not so, however,—they were not appointed by the N. S. S. Executive, either directly or indirectly, but elected solely by the other bodies referred to. As a matter of fact, there are no "delegates" on the Executives of the Rationalist Peace Society or the Secular Education League. Mr. Foote simply mentioned to the N. S. S. what the League had been doing publicly, a thing which the Executive is entitled to know, seeing it subscribes £5 a year to the League's funds, and is the only organisation, we believe, that subscribes anything at all.

A few weeks ago we mentioned the case of M. Andrew Niemojewski, the first Freethought publicist in Russian Poland, who was being prosecuted under the law of "blasphemy" for publishing a *Freethinkers' Catechism* and *Explanation of the Catechism*. We now learn that M. Niemojewski has been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in the fortress at Warsaw. His *Catechism* will probably appear (in English, of course) in our own pages presently. Our readers will then see what is called "blasphemy" and punished with twelve months' imprisonment in Holy Russia. We know not how to send our sympathy and admiration to M. Niemojewski. Perhaps the friend who sends the news from Warsaw will be able to manage it.

It is to be hoped that Professor Hacckol will make a rapid recovery from the effects of the accident he suffered at Jena on May 16. Standing on a stool to reach down a book from a high shelf, he overbalanced himself and fell to the ground, breaking his hip bone. Considering his advanced age—he is seventy-seven—such an accident must be regarded as serious. But his face and complexion show that he has led a very temperate life and that his blood is pure; the healing of the fracture may therefore be quicker in his case than it would be in most men's.

The Religion of Faraday and Newton.

"If you speak to the most stupid Englishman about politics, he always knows how to say something rational. But so soon as you turn the conversation on religion, the most sensible Englishman will deliver himself of nothing but absurdities."—HENRICH HEINE, *English Fragments*, p. 79.

"The world's greatest follies and darkest untruths, especially while in the process of dissolution, have always found some justly honored authority in theology, in literature, in philosophy, in law, and in science itself—a Matthew Hale, a Lord Bacon, a Wesley, a Cotton Mather, an Elliotson, a Hare, a Gregory, a Wallace, an Emerson, an Agassez, a Zollner, committees of learned academies, professors in great colleges—to stand by their bedside, armed with syllogisms, trusting their senses, and conscientiously striving to nurse them back to vigorous life."—DR. GEORGE BEARD, *Popular Science Monthly*, 1878; vol. xiii., p. 338.

"History teems with delusions, and neither talent nor integrity, piety nor singlemindedness, religion nor law, nor all of them combined, have proved a safeguard against them."—BREWER, *Dictionary of Miracles*, 1884; p. 14.

MANY of the writers paraded by Mr. Tabrum in his book, *The Religious Belief of Scientists*, themselves cite the names of other scientists to countenance them in their religious belief, and one of the most often cited names is that of Faraday.

Let us see what the testimony of Faraday to religion amounts to, and whether we are justified in taking him as a guide in this matter. Did the scientific researches in which Faraday engaged lead him to his belief in religion? They did not. Did Faraday write any work demonstrating the truth of the Bible, the existence of God, or the reality of a future life? He did not. Faraday never applied his reasoning powers to his religion; his belief was as much a matter of faith as that of any ordinary man in the street. We have his own words for it. In his *Lectures on Education* he declares that the truth of a future life cannot be brought to man's "knowledge by any exertion of his mental powers, however exalted they may be," it is made known to him "and is received through simple belief in the testimony given." That is the testimony of the Bible. And the same with regard to belief in a Deity. Faraday says:—

"As if man, by reasoning, could find out God. It would be improper here to enter upon this subject further than to claim an absolute distinction between religious and ordinary belief. I shall be reproached with the weakness of refusing to apply those mental operations which I think good in respect of high things, to the very highest. I am content to bear this reproach."

Faraday then goes on to testify to the simple faith that is in him. Professor Tyndall puts the facts of the matter very plainly, as follows:—

"In a letter to a lady he [Faraday] describes himself as belonging to 'a very small and despised sect of Christians, known, if known at all, as Sandemanians, and our hope is founded on the faith that is in Christ.' He adds, 'I do not think it at all necessary to tie the study of the natural sciences and religion together, and in my intercourse with my fellow creatures, that which is religious, and that which is philosophical, have ever been two distinct things.' He saw clearly the danger of quitting his moorings, and his science acted indirectly as the safeguard of his particular faith. For his investigations so filled his mind as to leave no room for sceptical questionings, thus shielding from the assaults of philosophy the creed of his youth. It was implied in the eddies of his blood and in the tremors of his brain; and however its outward and visible form might have changed, Faraday would still have possessed its elemental constituents—awe, reverence, truth, and love."*

So it is clear that Faraday did not found his faith upon his science, he expressly tells us that he kept them apart. The fact is, he was taught to believe in this obscure creed before his reasoning powers had developed, and he adhered to it afterwards because he declined to allow his reasoning powers to bear upon the subject. So far is the case of Faraday

from proving the compatibility of Science with Religion that it proves exactly the opposite.*

Another great name, constantly cited as being on the side of religion, is that of Sir Isaac Newton. In considering the theological ideas of Newton, we must bear in mind that Newton lived before the days of Evolution, he necessarily knew nothing of the Origin of Species, of the Descent of Man, or the Nebular Hypothesis. His religious ideas must have been profoundly modified in the light of these new scientific conceptions. Even with the imperfect scientific knowledge of his time, Newton would laugh at the theological ideas of many of those who cite his name in defence of their religious beliefs. For instance, Sir William de Abney, who cites Newton as a Christian believer, tells us, in the same letter, "that so far from there being antagonism between the Bible and physical science, the reverse is the case."†

Newton believed in some foolish things, as we shall see, but he did not believe in anything so foolish as that. His biographer, the pious Brewster, tells us that "He [Newton] considers the account of the creation in Genesis as adapted to the judgment of the vulgar."‡ That is, it would do for the ignorant and uneducated, but it was not scientifically true. Nor was this the whole of Newton's heresy, for we learn from the same work:—

"Newton's religious opinions [says Dr. Thompson] were not orthodox, for example, he did not believe in the Trinity. This gives the reason why Horsley, the champion of the Trinity, found Newton's papers unfit for publication; but it is much to be regretted that they have never seen the light" (vol. ii., p. 270).

And with all his transcendent intellectual powers, Newton had a strong vein of mysticism and superstition in his character. This led him to dabble in alchemy and the search for the "Philosopher's Tincture" for turning base metals into gold. It also led him to the study of that nightmare which forms the grand finale to the Bible: the Revelation of St. John and the Prophecies of Daniel. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* devotes eleven pages to Newton's life and scientific discoveries; and we learn that his work, *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, was published in 1733. And that is all the space devoted to the great Newton's exposition of two books of Holy Scripture: the date when it was published. The fact is, Newton's theological writings are wholly worthless. In the seventh chapter of this work, the eleventh horn of Daniel's fourth beast is shown to be the Church of Rome, and in studying the Apocalypse he discovers that the Pope is meant under the mysterious figure of Antichrist!

Voltaire, whose admiration for Newton's scientific work was unbounded, observed:—

"It would seem to have been his intention, by this commentary, to console the human race for his individual superiority."§

Newton's theological works have been explained as the result of the spell of insanity from which he suffered a few years after writing the *Principia*. Carl Snyder observes:—

"He [Newton] spent a goodly share of his remaining days writing theological dissertations and tracts. They betray no gleam of the new light he himself had brought. Coming from such a mind, they are amazing products; they would be inexplicable if we did not know of the unhappy fatality which befel him shortly after the publication of the *Principia*, and to all intents closed his scientific career."||

* Bence Jones, in his *Life of Faraday*, tells us that Faraday sometimes preached at the Sandemanian Church. He also speaks of "the entire separation he made between the subjects of religion and science. Generally, perhaps, it might be said that no one could lecture like Faraday, but that many might preach with more effect. The reason why his sermons seemed inferior to his lectures is very evident.....The overflowing energy and clearness of the lecture-room were replaced by an earnestness of manner, best summed up in the word devoutness" (*Life of Faraday*, 1870; vol. ii., p. 100).

† A. H. Tabrum, *Religious Beliefs of Scientists*, pp. 22-23.

‡ Brewster, *Life of Newton*, 1860; vol. ii., p. 58.

§ Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, vol. ii., p. 253.

|| Carl Snyder, *The World Machine*, 1907; p. 263.

* Tyndall, *Fragments of Science*.

Another critic, M. Biot, "with a view to showing that Newton's theological writings were the production of his dotage, has fixed their date between 1712 and 1719." But, as has been pointed out, it was in 1716 that the philosopher Leibnitz submitted a most difficult problem for solution "for the purpose of feeling the pulse of the English analysts." Newton made short work of it. He "received this problem about five o'clock in the afternoon, as he was returning from the Mint; but, though he was fatigued with business, he solved the problem the same evening."* This was at the very time that Newton was engaged on his foolish theological works.

The fact is that, apart from his marvellous mathematical faculty, perhaps the greatest the world has ever seen, Newton was not above the level of the culture of his time, and in some points below it. Along with a relative he set up furnaces and spent several months at work in quest of the "philosopher's tincture." Brewster found an astrological work, entitled *The Metamorphoses of the Planets*, and numerous pages of alchemical poetry, copied out in Newton's own handwriting; also a copy of *Secrets Revealed*; or, *An Open Entrance to the Sheut Palace of the King*, a contemptible work by a man styling himself "Anonymous or Euræmus Philaletha," who, by inspiration and reading, attained to the philosopher's stone at his age of twenty-three years, A.D. 1645," which, says Brewster, "is covered with notes in Sir Isaac's hand"; and he adds:—

"We cannot understand how a mind of such power, and so nobly occupied with the abstractions of geometry and the study of the natural world, could stoop to be even the copyist of the most contemptible alchemical poetry and the annotator of a work the obvious production of a fool or knave."†

Newton's fame rests, and will last as long as civilisation lasts, upon the *Principia*, which has been printed and reprinted and has been translated into all civilised languages. But his mystical and theological works are not reprinted; they are unknown except to scholars, and no one but a madman would dream of reprinting them. It is, therefore, useless to use his name as a great scientific discoverer to try and foist his religious opinions upon us.

We have now seen the value of Newton's theological writings to Religion. What was the value of his scientific discoveries to Religion? We know that the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo were denounced by the Churches, both Roman and Protestant; but it is not so well known that Newton's discoveries were also opposed and denounced in the same manner, although the Churches no longer had the power to deal with Newton as Galileo was dealt with.

Copernicus, when he wrote his book *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, was charged with having "withdrawn the seat from under the body of the ancient Hebrew and Christian Deity by means of his system of the Universe."‡ Strauss observes that this is not quite accurate; anyhow, he dethroned the earth from its central position and placed the sun in its place, and, by giving the earth many equals and some superiors, diminished her claims upon the Divine regard. Professor Tyndall says:—

"The total crash of Aristotle's closed universe, with the earth as its centre, followed as a consequence; and the 'earth moves' became a kind of watchword among intellectual freemen."§

It was not only the teaching of Aristotle that suffered, it was the teaching of the Bible also; and it was opposed as such. And when Galileo, by bringing the telescope to bear on the heavens, proved the truth of the theory by actual demonstration, the Church put forth all her strength to suppress the new opinions by forcing Galileo to deny

the truth he had demonstrated, and denouncing it as a dangerous heresy and contrary to Scripture.

Now, although Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler had discovered the motion of the earth and the central position of the sun, they had no scientific explanation of how the earth and the planets were held in their orbits in their journey round the sun. The hand of God or his agents was still necessary here. Kepler himself believed that each planet was guided by a spirit.

It was the great glory of Newton to find the natural explanation of the revolution of the heavenly bodies by identifying gravity with the force of attraction and formulating the law of the mutual attraction of one mass for another throughout space. It was this very principle which the ancient Greeks lacked in their marvellous anticipations of the concepts and theories of modern science. As Carl Snyder remarks:—

"What we may regard as the crowning discovery, they missed. The conception of a single mechanical force, acting across the furthest confines of the universe, alone was wanting. This idea, which was finally to banish the crude notions of the intervention of gods and demons in the course of the heavens, which eventually was to destroy the notion of the intervention of gods and demons in the affairs of men, finally and for ever to establish the idea of a universal order and universal law, they lacked. Let us not on this account belittle the splendor of their deeds."*

And, as the same author observes:—

"In the sixty or eighty years intervening between the discovery of the telescope and the publication of Newton's *Principia*, mankind penetrated more deeply into the mystery of his surroundings than in all the previous years of his intellectual life. These sixty or eighty years saw the establishment of the Copernican system, of the science of mechanics, of the law of gravitation, of the true dimensions of the solar system; with it the littleness of the earth, the grandeur of the sun, the almost infinite distance of the stars. It was within this period that man learned to know at last his true place in creation" (p. 401).

It was not until Newton had discovered the laws of attraction that any rational explanation of the origin of the world could be formulated. We know that Newton vainly sought for a clue, but, says Snyder:—

"Too heavily weighted by prevailing dogma, too deeply occupied, perhaps, during the period in which his mind was really active—that is to say, before his mental illness—with the immediate mechanical theory of planetary movement, he could discover no opening. The problem passed to a newer generation, upon whom tradition had less weight."

Buffon, the great naturalist, was the first in the field, and his ideas upon the subject, contained in his *Theory of the Earth*, were founded upon the calculations of Newton. Like Galileo he was forced to recant his views. Five or six years later came Kant's *General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*; or, *A Research in the Construction and Mathematical Origin of the Entire Universe on Newtonian Principles*, in which the Nebular Hypothesis was first propounded. Three years later still, in 1796, Laplace published his *Exposition of the System of the Universe*, and later, his *Celestial Mechanics*. In these famous works he lays down the "Nebular Hypothesis"† of the origin of the heavenly bodies, a process which accords so well with the known facts and calculations of astronomy that it is held, with some modifications, by all astronomers to-day. This work completed the circle, gods and spirits were warned off; no room could be found for them. Laplace presented a copy of his book to Napoleon, and, upon the Emperor observing that he could see no mention of God in it, Laplace replied, "Sire, I have no need of the hypothesis." That was the direct and natural outcome of Newton's discoveries carried to their logical conclusion.

Galileo suffered imprisonment for his discoveries, but the times had changed. Newton was rewarded

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Article "Newton."

† Brewster, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton*, 1855; vol. ii., pp. 371-4-5.

‡ Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New*, 1874; p. 123.

§ Tyndall, *Fragments of Science*, 1876; p. 489.

* *The World Machine*, p. 150.

† It is believed that Laplace knew nothing of the previous work of Kant.

with the Mastership of the Mint. But the Church was bitterly hostile; not only the Romish Church but the Reformed Protestant Churches, the churches which so loudly boast their devotion to liberty and enlightenment, and which to-day skulk behind the great name of Newton, whose discoveries they opposed during his lifetime and would have been glad to suppress. As Carl Snyder observes:—

"The work of Newton was far more atheistical than that of Galileo. Leibnitz, then rising to his place as one of the most widely read of philosophers of Europe, declared that 'Mr. Newton robs the Deity of some of his most excellent attributes, and has sapped the foundations of natural religion.'"

It was charged upon him that by his law of gravitation he "took from God that direct action on his works, so constantly ascribed him in Scripture, and transferred it to material mechanism," and that he "substituted gravitation for Providence."† In 1724, John Hutchinson, Professor at Cambridge, published his *Moses' Principia* in opposition to Newton's *Principia*. He founded his system upon the Bible and "assaulted the Newtonian theory as 'atheistic,' and led the way for similar attacks by such church leaders as Horne, Duncan Forbes, and Jones of Nayland."‡ And as Luther had called Copernicus an old fool, so Wesley declared that the new ideas of Copernicus and Newton "tend towards infidelity."§ They would have none of it.

But Newton's work was founded upon eternal truth; proposition succeeds proposition in an unbreakable logical sequence; it is, in fact, the application of Euclid to the astronomy of the heavens. "What Newton taught will not cease to be the truth so long as the world lasts."¶ Once again the Churches found the truth too strong for them, then they turned round and pretended to discover a support to religion in the very system which they had unanimously declared to be Atheistic! And presently we find Pope singing:—

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night
God said let Newton be, and all was light."

The same struggle, in all its phases, was repeated when Darwin gave a natural explanation to the origin of man. Sir David Brewster, the pious biographer of Newton, himself accused Darwin of "poisoning the fountains of science and disturbing the serenity of the Christian world," and that his hypothesis had a tendency "to expel the Almighty from the universe.....and to render the revelation of his will an incredible superstition."¶ But now that his theory has triumphed in spite of the virulent and unscrupulous opposition of all the churches, we again find them, with unblushing dishonesty, claiming that far from evolution being inconsistent with their astonishing dogmas, it is only a further proof of the Divine wisdom and benevolence.

Like the Russian Army in the war with Japan, the churches never admit defeat, every retreat is a falling back to take up a better strategic position.

To conclude, the fact is, that all that Newton contributed of real value to science was Atheistic. With the aid of a single principle he explained the sun, with its circling planets, as a vast yet simple mechanism, every movement of which could be predicted, not only for years but centuries in advance; no miracles operated here; God and the spirits were dispensed with. To quote Carl Snyder's valuable work again:—

"Newton was not merely the founder of celestial mechanics in the broadest sense, he was the founder of molecular mechanics as well. He gave, moreover, to general mechanics the last of the great conceptions needed for the perfection of the science; he saw the action and reaction were equal."**

In place of mystery Newton introduced simplicity and law, and at last the human mind could reach to

clear and practical knowledge of its origin and destiny.

Since then science has gone on from strength to strength; position after position, once occupied by religion, has been captured until the whole of science has been emancipated from the bondage of the supernatural; whatever the opinion of the scientist may be, in *practice* he is always a Materialist; in his text-books and laboratory he deals only with force and matter, he makes no allowance for the slightest interference from the supernatural, and to this state of things no one contributed more than the great Newton. His religious speculations are worthless, his scientific discoveries remain; with their help we shall pull the last of the Gods from his Throne.

W. MANN.

The Apocalypse.—X.

(Continued from p. 326.)

IN chapter xiii. we come to a symbolical narrative which many critics consider the main purpose of the apocalyptic vision—the great "beast"—though, like chapter xii., it is a later addition to the original Apocalypse. There are really two beasts described in this chapter—the master and his subordinate. I will, however, keep to the principal beast for the present, more especially as he is never called anything but "the beast," while the second beast is afterwards called "the false prophet." The Apocalypticist says:—

"And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads.....And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the Dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority" (Rev. xiii. 1—2).

Here we have "the four beasts" of one of the visions of Daniel rolled into one, as may be seen by the following:—

Dan. vii. 3—7.—"And four great beasts came up from the sea.....the first was like a lion.....and behold another beast, a second, like to a bear.....After this I beheld, and lo another like a leopard.....and behold a fourth beast terrible and dreadful.....and it had ten horns."

Looking at these two accounts, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that if Daniel had given his fourth beast a name, we should have found some portion of it worked in by the Apocalypticist as a characteristic of his own beast. The last-named writer further says:—

"And the whole earth wondered after the beast..... and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?.....And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God..... And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation" (Rev. xiii. 3—7).

Without reading further, it must be plain to every reader who was the person or persons whom the Apocalypticist has symbolised under the term "beast." This great "beast," then, to whom the Satan-Dragon had given power, authority, and a throne, who ruled "every tribe and people and tongue and nation," who uttered blasphemies against the god of the Jews, and who made war with, and overcame, the Jewish "saints"—this "beast" represented the Roman power, and referred either to one particular emperor or to all the emperors that had reigned up to the time when chapter xiii. of the Apocalypse was written.

This "beast," it will be remembered, had "ten horns and seven heads." The "ten horns" were taken from the book of Daniel, and had therefore no particular signification; but the "seven heads" were inserted by the Apocalypticist as an important part of the symbol. But here a slight difficulty meets us. In chapter xiii. the word "beast" is employed as referring to only one of the heads; whereas in chapter xvii. it is said to refer to the whole seven. The

* *The World Machine*, p. 263.

† White, *Warfare of Science*, vol. i., p. 16.

‡ White, vol. i., p. 148.

§ White, vol. i., p. 128.

¶ Carl Snyder, *The World Machine*, p. 265.

** E. B. Aveling, *Darwin Made Easy*, 1887; p. 43.

** *The World Machine*, p. 261.

following are the statements upon this subject in chap. xiii. :—

Rev. xiii. 3.—“And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death, and his death stroke was healed.”

Rev. xiii. 12.—“the beast whose death stroke was healed.”

Rev. xiii. 14.—Men “should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived.”

Rev. xiii. 18.—“Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.”

In chapter xvii. we are told that “the seven heads are seven mountains.....and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition” (Rev. xvii. 9—12).

In chapter xiii. a problem is set for those who “have understanding.” This is: Find the name of the “beast” that was wounded almost to death, yet recovered; the answer to be in accordance with the data given. The first point to be noticed is, that this name “is the number of a man”; that is to say, the name and title of a man. In the Greek and Hebrew, numbers are denoted by letters. What the solver of the problem has to do is to select a historical name and title for the beast, the letters of which, when added together as arithmetical figures, will reach the exact total of 666. We have, then, to find the name of a Roman emperor, the sum of the letters of which will amount to the total named. The author of this chapter of the Apocalypse was afraid to write the name openly; he therefore described it in a way which would be understood by the initiated, but not be recognised by the Roman authorities. This name, it would seem, was unknown to the Christians who took over the Apocalypse, and never became known to the early Christian Church, nor even to the later Church through all the centuries down to A.D. 1835, in which year it was discovered independently by four rationalistic critics.

In the days of Irenæus (A.D. 185) the “number of the beast” was in some MSS. given as 616: that writer says of the number 666:—

“And this number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies of the Apocalypse, and those men who saw John face to face bearing their testimony to it —”

The words in italics are a “terminological inexactitude,” and illustrate one of the methods employed by Irenæus to add confirmation to his own opinions. That writer then says that the name Evanthas, Lateinos, and Teitan answer to the number 666; but he declines to say that either of them was the name intended by the writer (Her. v. xxx. 1, 3). The letters of each of the names mentioned by Irenæus give a total of 666 in the Greek; but that is just where every would-be solver has come to grief. The Apocalypse being written in Greek, it was naturally assumed that the name must also be computed by the Greek system. This is not the case: the name has to be written in Hebrew characters or letters, and the Hebrew numerical values of those letters are to be reckoned. That is all.

The names of the first seven Roman emperors are the following: Augustus, Tiberius, Caius or Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, and Otho; though it is doubtful whether the last two were those which the Apocalypticist regarded as the sixth and seventh. Now, of these seven monarchs, the one—and the only one—of whom it might be said that he was “wounded unto death, and his death stroke healed” is Nero, who was designated by the Jews and Christians of Asia Minor and Palestine Neron Kesar. This king, according to the popular opinion in Asia, was not killed, as had been given out; but had merely taken refuge amongst the Parthians, and would shortly return at the head of a great army, and retake the throne. So widespread was this view that several pretenders (who knew that Nero had died in A.D. 68) took advantage of the circum-

stances. In A.D. 69 a pseudo-Nero appeared, and raised commotions in Asia Minor and Greece, but was defeated and slain. About A.D. 80 a second pseudo-Nero appeared on the Euphrates, and for a time was acknowledged by the Parthian king Artabanus. In A.D. 88 a third pseudo-Nero made his appearance among the Parthians; but this claim, like the others, came to naught. Thus, the “beast whose death stroke was healed” was Nero Redivivus.

The name by which Nero was commonly designated in Asia—Neron Kesar—should in the Greek be written Neron Kaisar. And there can be little doubt that the latter name must often have suggested itself to would-be solvers; but the numerical value of the eleven letters in the Greek amount to only 607. Taking, now, the value of the letters Neron Kesar, according to the Hebrew system of computation, we get the following and the required total—666.

N	e	R	O	N	K	e	S	a	R
50	200	6	50	100	60	200			

Only the Hebrew characters corresponding to the letters printed in capitals have a numerical value in Hebrew, the words “e” and “a” being indicated by “points.” With regard to the number 616, which is still found in some ancient copies of the Apocalypse, it would have surprised the ancient scribe, Irenæus, to have been told that it was quite correct, and represented the Latin form of the name—Nero Kesar or Nero Cæsar—the omission of the final N in Neron reducing the total by 50. The idea of John the apostle, who knew nothing whatever about the Apocalypse, informing anxious inquirers that the correct number was 666 is one of the best jokes I have heard for some time.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Declining Church Attendance in New York.

(Reprinted from the New York “Truthseeker.”)

UNDER the head of “Melancholy Statistics,” the *Christian Advocate* of March 23 gives the returns of the Church News Association, which, for two years, counted the church attendants in this city for three successive Sundays and averaged the results. “On Sunday last,” says the *Advocate*:—

“the Association’s men counted the attendants in total, and also of men in certain test churches where there were no special preachers or musical services to attract unusual crowds. They found that 531,100 communicant members of Christian churches on Manhattan Island did not attend worship on Sunday morning last. Of these 286,000 were men. Of the absent members 453,800 were Roman Catholics and 77,300 Protestants. Of the absent men 250,600 were Roman Catholics and 35,300 Protestants. It is to be noted that the Catholic churches have 650,400 members and the Protestant churches 151,000 in Manhattan.”

From these figures we learn that of the 2,365,000 population of the borough of Manhattan, 801,400, or a little more than one-third, are church communicants; and that of these, the number of 270,300, about a third of the communicants, and a little more than one-tenth of the population, go to church. The Catholic attendance was but one in three, or thereabouts, of the Catholic population; which shows that the priests are not holding their communicants as well as is generally believed; while the Protestant attendance was nearly one-half the Protestant population, which also is unexpected.

For this state of affairs the *Advocate* finds a partial cause in sickness and absence from home, or the necessity of staying there. “But,” the editor comments, “after all the natural deductions are made, it cannot be denied that attendance upon regular church service is constantly, in some places, rapidly, and in others slowly, declining.”

A COUNTRY PARSON'S FAREWELL.

Brothers and sisters, I have come to bid you good-bye. I don't think God loves this church because none of you ever did; I don't think you love one another because I never married any of you; I don't think you love me because you have not paid me my salary. Your donations have been musty fruit and wormy apples and decayed cabbage, and by their fruits ye shall know them. I go to a better place. I have been called to be chaplain of a penitentiary, and where I go you cannot come now, but I go to prepare a place for you, and may God have mercy on your souls. Amen!

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.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Philosophy of Life in the Twentieth Century."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "The Jew."

FINSBURY PARK: 11.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Walter Bradford. Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Gods."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. Davidson, "The Church and Slavery."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Allison, "Morality and the Bible."

COUNTRY.

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LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): Saturday, at 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Jesus Christ."

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Secretary—Miss E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

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