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All speculative errors must be allowed to state themselves without hindrance, allowing for the special repression of the practical disturbances they would cause.

—AUGUSTE COMTE.

Moses' Rock.

WE have heard of Edinburgh rock, and Southend rock, and various other rocks, but we did not expect to hear of Moses' rock, which Archdeacon Wilberforce assures us is to be seen, though it is not on sale, at Westminster Abbey.

When we published our *Bible Heroes*, more than a quarter of a century ago (how time flies!) we devoted a chapter to Jacob; one of the oddest "heroes" that ever lived,—having been a liar, a cheat, a thief, and a coward.

It will be remembered that Jacob, in running away from his brother Esau, whom he diddled, to his uncle Laban, whom he diddled still more brazenly, slept one night on the ground with a heap of stones as a pillow; that this uncomfortable bed naturally disturbed his repose; that he was troubled with something like nightmare; and that he had a vision of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels (who, being able to fly, must have been moulting) going up and down it, with God—that is to say, Jacob's God—standing at the top. The deity (that deity) made Jacob some fine promises, and when the hero awoke he "took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it." Then he made a vow that if the Lord would feed him, and clothe him, and look after him on his travels, and bring him safe back again, the Lord should be his God. And he undertook that if God supplied him with unlimited capital he would give God ten per cent. of the profits.

We could not overlook that stone pillow, but we had to leave it with the following remarks:—

"The Arabs say that Jacob's stone pillow is now at Jerusalem. It is also alleged to be in Westminster Abbey. Somebody conveyed it to Scone, where it was used for the consecration of the Scottish kings, and Edward I. brought it to London, where it remains till Jacob sends for it."

It never occurred to us that we should live long enough to see a dignitary of the Church of England boasting that they had really got not only Jacob's stone pillow but also the rock which Moses smote in the wilderness, in order to produce a miraculous fountain of water for the Israelites who were dying of thirst. We say that we never expected this. But, as the French say, it is the unexpected that happens.

Archdeacon Wilberforce referred to this "stone" in the course of his sermon at Westminster Abbey last Sunday. It is the Coronation stone. The kings of Great Britain have to sit on it at a certain stage of the hocus-pocus which goes on at Westminster Abbey when they are crowned and sceptred, and holy-oiled, and loaded up with the grace of God. During the late Coronation preparations the Archdeacon took "a well-known antiquarian"—meaning antiquary—to see the stone. This antiquary had

"made a study of the stone's history," with the following result:—

"He was convinced that it was the stone on which Jacob rested his head when he had the vision of angels at Bethel, and that from that night it was considered sacred and carried from place to place. Further, he believed it was this stone that Moses struck, and that it was carried by the Israelites during their forty years of wandering. He showed me a big cleft in the back, from which he believed the water gushed out. He showed me, also, two much-rusted iron staples deeply sunk, one at each end, which I had never noticed before, by which it was carried. He traced the stone to Solomon's Temple, and from thence, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, to Spain; thence to Ireland; thence to Scone, in Scotland, and from Scotland to Westminster Abbey."

The Church dignitary who, perhaps honestly, palms all this childish nonsense off upon the British public, is one of the dabblers, we believe, in Christian Science, and the "occult" generally. He is also one of the clerical protesters against the Wells and Johnson fight, which he considers a brutal spectacle. We suppose he will never see that brutality is the natural companion of imbecility, and that nothing could be more imbecile than this pulpit chatter about Jacob's stone and Moses' rock. It almost makes one despair of his species. Christianity eventuates in such puerility as this after nearly two thousand years of boundless opportunity. Is it any wonder, then, that a religion which softens the intellect also hardens the heart? A purely human moral training would have lifted man above this vulgar level.

The more you look into this pulpit imbecility the more contemptibly ridiculous it appears. Not a word is said about evidence. The antiquarian gentleman went to see the Coronation stone and was convinced—seemingly by looking at it—that it was this very stone that Jacob slept on; although present-day Biblical criticism almost universally declares that Jacob is not an historical, but a legendary, figure. What possible suggestion of Jacob's noddle could there be on, in, or around that old stone brought from Scotland—of all places in the world? The two "much-rusted iron staples," if they are actually there, do not prove that the stone was even "carried about." They may have held it in its place in some ancient building, or some ancient altar belonging to the Druids. And the "big cleft" in the back of the stone may mean anything or nothing. Why should it point to Moses (another legendary figure!) and his miraculous water supply? What but a pious imagination could induce the antiquary to "believe" that the hollow in the back of the stone was made by the rod of Moses, and was the mouth of a public fountain? As for the remaining history of the stone, its figuring in Solomon's Temple, its wanderings in Spain, Ireland, and Scotland—all this is simply pious imagination—sheer, disgraceful superstition, that would be laughed at if it came from African or Asian "heathen." Yet a lot of people have visited Westminster Abbey to see the Coronation stone since Archdeacon Wilberforce gave it that despicable advertisement. And if the Church of England, which is intellectually quite as fatuous as the Church of Rome, were only in a position to be as regardless of common honesty as its older rival, it might sell scrapings of Jacob's pillow and Moses' rock at a guinea a grain.

G. W. FOOTE.

Our Mystery-Mongers.

It would not, I think, be inaccurate to say that the more commonly a word is used the greater is its liability to be misunderstood, or to be used without there being any corresponding idea in the user's mind. In the latter case it plays the part of an opiate, and unfortunately this kind of drug-taking is encouraged rather than condemned. A word such as "Evolution," for example, which at first people would use with some care as to its meaning—at least they would be careful to mean something by it—gradually drops into the Mesopotamian category, and is used as a bar to further thinking, or to save inquiry. "It came by evolution" is a common expression, and often those who use it would be puzzled to say just what, even in their own opinion, the process of evolution is. Or when something is meant by a word, the meanings are often so diverse that it serves as the source of endless confusion. Everyone, to take another illustration, talks about religion; but what everyone means by religion no one exactly knows. One uses it in the sense of a belief in God; another means belief in an ideal, no matter what; another means no more than morality; and yet another probably means nothing at all. It is a word of respectable antiquity, and a great many are as much afraid of being seen without it as they would be discovered strolling up the Strand in nothing but their nightshirt.

The other day I had a striking illustration of this habit of using words without troubling whether they represented or conveyed an idea. At the conclusion of one of my lectures a gentleman, educated and courteous, offered a little opposition. His main point was, not that what I had said was capable of disproof, nor that it was possible to prove that the Christian beliefs challenged were true, but that I was asking for proof of things that were in their very nature unprovable. Christians had never held, he asserted, that certain teachings were true in the sense that a mathematical proposition was true. They were mysteries, and people were asked to believe them as mysteries. And to this was added the familiar plea that the world was full of mysteries, and that as we believed many of them, and could not help believing them, our not understanding all about the Christian mysteries, or our inability to demonstrate their truth was no valid reason for rejecting them.

This is, of course, a common line of defence with religious apologists; but it falls to pieces on a very little critical examination. To begin with, suppose we were to grant that there are certain things we cannot understand, and yet are forced to believe. In that case it would be our plain duty to reduce these non-understandable things, which we are yet bound to believe, to as small a compass as possible. There is nothing elevating in such a position, and nothing inspiring. It does not urge us to fresh efforts, because in the face of the non-understandable we are admittedly powerless. It does not give us any better idea of our strength and dignity, for it is a confession of sheer impotence. We have reached the limit of our resources, and further effort is either impossible or useless. Anyway, the fact that there are such baffling obstacles to human intelligence, obstacles that we can neither escape nor surmount, is the worst of all possible reasons for adding to them, particularly when, as is the case with religious mysteries, they do not help us in the slightest to understand either ourselves or the universe in which we live.

These religious mysteries are positively useless from any point of view except that of a professional priesthood. If I do not understand how the world came into existence, what information is there in the assertion that God created it? The world, we are told, is a mystery. Granted; but does the mystery become less when "God" is placed as its creator? Is God less a mystery, more easy to understand, than is the world? How does one mystery become less

of a mystery by adding another mystery to it? Double nothing, and the product is nothing. Add mystery to mystery, and the result can be nothing but mystery. Or if I cannot understand the relation between mental and bodily processes, do I understand them any better by assuming a directing soul which is neither mind nor matter? The facts remain as obscure as they were, and are made the more difficult of understanding because we have added to them a perfectly unknown and even inconceivable agent. You can explain the unknown by the known, but to explain the obscure by the inconceivable is a form of procedure worthy only of a lunatic asylum.

The fact is that in such cases people are using words of a thoroughly anæsthetic character, which serve but one purpose, and that is to stop criticism by lulling inquiry. When I assert that a given thing is a mystery, the matter remains precisely where it was before the statement was made. For it is not the fact itself that is the mystery—that is a portion of knowledge. The mystery is concerned with something connected with the fact. To take a concrete example. The Christian asserts a belief in the Virgin Birth. When asked for an explanation, he replies that it is a mystery, and so belongs to the region of faith or belief. What, now, has happened? A man, Jesus Christ, is born. Granting this, there is no problem about his existence. They who profess belief in a Virgin Birth and they who reject it are agreed on this. But it is said that in his case no human father was concerned in his production; and this is the mystery. But it is not a mystery at all—unless this be only another name for sheer verbiage. It contains no more information than if we were told Jesus grew on an apple tree. For so long as we bear in mind the known facts of procreation, it is impossible to conceive a human child coming into the world without male and female progenitors. And if we do not know the facts of procreation, the statement stands for no mental concept whatever. We first state a mentally inconceivable proposition, and then use a mere word, also standing for nothing, to bank inquiry and criticism.

But, it is said, we are bound to believe many things we do not understand. We believe in life, in existence, in electricity, in gravitation, without understanding what they are. I deny this entirely. Belief does not imply the absence of knowledge; it implies rather the presence of knowledge of a quantity short of completeness, and of a kind insufficient to command absolute conviction. I may believe that to-morrow will be hot or cold, dry or wet; and I believe one of these things on the ground of my knowledge of previous days. Had I absolute knowledge of all the conditions governing weather changes, I should not say I believe, but that I know what to-morrow will be like. There is an element of knowledge in every act of belief, and the belief is the more pronounced as the knowledge is more complete.

But what is more important in the present instance, our belief does not, in reality, outstrip our knowledge. When Sir Oliver Lodge says we are bound to believe in electricity, although we do not know what electricity is, I reply that this is reading into our belief more than it actually contains. I observe the behavior of matter under certain conditions, and scientists tell me of the velocity of an electrical current, its direction, tension, etc. All of these go to make up what I mean when I speak of electricity. And these things cover, absolutely cover, all that I or anyone else mean when a belief in electricity is expressed. I do not believe in known electrical phenomena plus an unknown mystery called electricity. Electricity is a general term covering all electrical phenomena, and when I express a belief in it my belief is, as it always must be, based upon my knowledge of certain facts. But I cannot believe in a mystery; and when I say I cannot I mean the feat is beyond the power of the human mind. To believe a thing we must be able to mentally realise the thing believed; and in so far as

the thing is believable, it is mentally realisable. Belief stops short at the point where a mental realisation of a statement or a proposition is impossible. It may be that this is the point at which mystery begins, but it is evident that there is here nothing but the chatter of mere words that mean nothing to those who speak or to those who listen.

To speak of believing in a mystery is pure nonsense. It is a sheer impossibility. Belief is not possible in such a case. All we can do is to say we believe in a mystery, as we can say that we believe in a square circle, or in a line without breadth. The religious profession of belief in this matter is the mere mouthing of words. For we not only cannot believe in a mystery, we could not put to ourselves even what it is that we believe in. In the absence of knowledge the mind remains a blank, however much we may school ourselves to the utterance of formulæ.

Belief in a mystery does not help in any direction. We do not know what it is, we do not know what it does, we do not know how it acts. It cannot help to explain anything, because so far as its connection with other things can be traced, it ceases to be a mystery. It cannot serve as a guide to our own actions, because we do not know its own mode of operation. It cannot act as an inspiration, since its existence is the register of our weakness and unconquerable limitations. We cannot even know that there is a mystery in which to believe, because as things are only known by their properties, so far as we know these properties, it ceases to be a mystery.

Mystery-mongering is, after all, the oldest aspect of the religious game. It began with the earliest priesthood, and it remains with the latest. But mystery attaching to earlier religions was not such a meaningless thing as current apologists would make it. The mysteries were things hidden from the ordinary person, but open to the priest or the initiate, and there is something significant in the definition of the derivative word, *mistify*, "to perplex, to bewilder, to befog"—for that is the gist of all the talk to-day about our lives being built upon a mystery. It is an attempt to bewilder, to perplex, to befog. The power of the priest is breaking, and he can no longer, with security, lay claim to powers that are not possessed by the ordinary man. And as the ordinary man places himself on a level with the priest, all that remains to be done is, instead of asserting that the things of religion are beyond the understanding of the uninitiated, to assert that they are beyond the understanding of anyone. In this way it is hoped that security may be gained. And it is the only way in which security may be gained. For once let instructed human intelligence play on religion, and the gods vanish like mist before the rising sun

C. COHEN.

The Argument from Feeling.

MR. R. J. CAMPBELL asserts that "the Atheist starts with the eternity of matter," while the Theist starts "with the eternity of God"; but this assertion, like many others made by the reverend gentleman, is quite false. The Atheist may believe in the eternity of the substance of the Universe; but that belief is by no means the starting-point of his Atheism. Indeed, many firmly advocate the eternity of matter who are pronounced Theists. It is true that the eternity of matter is a proposition that is insusceptible of verification; but that is truer still of the eternity of God. Moreover, not even the existence of God is capable of any proof whatever, whereas the existence of matter, in whatever sense the word is used, is incontrovertible. "To speak of matter as self-existent and eternal is," according to Mr. Campbell, "as incomprehensible for the mind as to speak in the same way about God. The existence of a simple lump of clay is just as much a stupendous mystery as an infinite Creator." Exactly so; but

then, the lump of clay is visible and tangible, while God is neither. Theories of matter are numerous, but its existence is a self-evident fact. There are many theories about God also, but they are all formulated on the bare assumption that he exists. And yet, speaking of the existence of "a single lump of clay," Mr. Campbell says:—

"It is utterly unaccountable. Where did it come from, and why should it be? Why should anything be? If I am compelled to assume a primal reality as the starting-point of all Cosmic order and development—as I certainly am, I shall choose to assume not matter, but God."

We are not all surprised at the reverend gentleman's choice, nor at his admission that the assumption he chooses to make is vulnerable, and that "a child can baffle him thereon." What we maintain is that his assumption is a perfectly gratuitous one, and that he makes it solely in the interest of his Christian faith. The only argument to which he appeals is the one from feeling, which he admits to be evidentially valueless. He grants that "spiritual experience is merely subjective and therefore carries no conviction to those who do not possess it."

Let us critically examine this so-called argument from feeling or experience. Present-day divines candidly acknowledge that there is no other argument, and when reminded of its weakness their only retort is that "the whole case of the Atheist rests upon feeling and nothing else, and that as all experience is subjective none should be flouted if its fruits be good." But they are entirely mistaken. The Atheist's case does *not* rest upon feeling at all, but upon firm intellectual convictions. Multitudes of Atheists did at one time enjoy what is known as spiritual experience. There was a time when religion was seemingly as true to them as it now is to the most radiant Christians; but as the result of seriously facing the undeniable facts of the world of life their belief in God vanished, and their spiritual experience came to a sudden end. Their Atheism, so far from resting upon feeling and nothing else, is an intellectual conviction, one of the first fruits of which is the complete extinguishment of their religious feeling. It would be most interesting to learn, therefore, in what sense "the whole case of the Atheist rests upon feeling and nothing else." Atheism has its roots deep down in the soil of Reason, and it is the wind and rain of Reason that feed its branches. Now religion, on the other hand, not only rests upon feeling, but *is* feeling and nothing else. The Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, M.A., a Baptist minister, delivered a lecture, not long ago, before the North London Christian Evidence League, on "Religion as an Art compared with Religion as a Science." The supreme emphasis of the lecture is upon the distinction between religion and theology. Here are Mr. Rushbrooke's own words:—

"I want to indicate more clearly and carefully the distinction between religion and theology. We have noted the fact of the universality of religion, and the variety of conceptions that man has formed of God. Now we must come to the distinction between religion and theology as it is pressed upon us in our own day; and for us the practical distinction between the two is, that *religion is actual experience, whereas theology is a theory about that experience.*" (The italics are our own.)

The beauty of that definition of religion is that it nullifies itself. It is true that religion is feeling and nothing else; but it is not true that it is anterior to theology. The curious thing is that in a former part of the lecture Mr. Rushbrooke supplies us with a different and more accurate definition of religion. "By religion," he says there, "I mean this: man's belief in his relation to a being, or beings, distinguished from himself, distinguished from other men, distinguished from the physical world, and supposed to exercise influence on his fate." According to this definition religion and theology are identical. Religion is theology emotionalised and put into ritual practice. At any rate, apart from theological belief there can be no religious experience. Does Mr. Rushbrooke deny this? Here is a deaf and mute American lady who

had no conception of a Supreme Being until she received theological instruction in mature years, as Herbert Spencer informs us in his *Principles of Sociology*; and as Mr. Rushbrooke well knows, that great work contains several other instances of the like import. Surely the reverend gentleman does not hold that religious experience is possible in the absence of theological beliefs; and yet he cannot help doing so if his distinction between religion and theology is valid. It is true that the ordinary Christian has very little theology; but it is also true that he has as little religious experience; and where a man has no theology at all, he is wholly non-religious.

Now, everyone who believes in God is to that extent a theologian. He may know nothing about the various and conflicting systems of theology championed or denounced at the different schools; but he has some conception of God which alone makes his religion possible; and the religious experience varies in the same proportion as the theology. Mr. Rushbrooke is wrong when he says that "religious experience, being matter of fact, is unchangeable." The religious experience of a Calvinist is by no means the same as that of an Arminian, while an Unitarian's experience is radically different from both; and most certainly the experience of a Buddhist or of a Mohammedan cannot be said to be identical with that of a Christian. Indeed, the late William James wrote a book entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*; but there are no varieties of an unchangeable reality. Mr. Rushbrooke is equally erroneous when he says that "only the man with a religious experience has an ultimate right to be heard respecting religion." It is the man that has outgrown his religious experience who has the best right to speak about religion. He occupies the most favorable point of view for understanding Christianity.

We have now reached the last point in the reverend gentleman's lecture, and a most interesting one it is. The lecturer puts it thus:—

"It sometimes happens that a Christian is reduced to silence when talking with friends, or in the workshop, when objections are brought against his faith. It may be that he has not so ready a wit as they, has not read so much, or cannot reason so accurately; and therefore he can find no satisfactory answer. But it is one thing to have a true experience, and another to be able to explain it fully. The man who finds himself thus perplexed can always fall back upon his experience, even though he is brought to confusion in trying to give an explanation of it. He can say, 'Although I cannot express my meaning, there is one thing that I know: a new light has come into my life, and that light has its origin in Jesus Christ. I am sure of so much, and my faith cannot be shaken.'"

That a man feels sure of a thing is no proof that the thing exists. We frankly admit that a man may be sure that a new light has come into his life and that it has its origin in Jesus Christ; but his having such a profound conviction is no evidence that he is right. It is quite possible, to say the least, that he is the victim of hallucination. The Jesus Christ in whom he believes may be but the shadow of a dream, a dream out of which so many of his fellow-beings have finally awakened. In any case, his experience tallies with his beliefs; and the circumstances under which the supposed new light from Jesus Christ came to him were such as to throw strong suspicion upon the accuracy of his inference. Both his experience and his beliefs may be perfectly sincere and genuine; but his inference from them may be radically false. There are no insincere beliefs, and all experiences are genuine. No Christian can be a hypocrite, though thousands may make a hypocritical profession of Christianity. A hypocrite is a person who is not what he professes to be. In this article hypocrites are excluded from the Christian category. What we wish to express concerning Christians, in this connection, is the conviction, not that they are hypocrites, or frauds, but that they are self-deluded; that they are imposed upon, duped, or made fools of by their own imagination. If they were not so self-

assertive, so opinionated, and so overweeningly conceited, they would be deserving objects of pity. Even Mr. Rushbrooke speaks of them as if they possessed some special faculty or organ which all non-Christians lack. He says:—

"Religion must start with experience, and until you have this you will never have the right point of view for understanding religion. A blind man will not get a full conception of light and color, even though he work for a lifetime. A deaf man will never enter into the mystical realm of harmony and be entitled to pose as a critic of music. This truth holds in every department of life. The investigator must be in sympathy with his subject, must look at it from within, before he can make the best of it."

As a matter of fact, believers and unbelievers have precisely the same number of mental faculties; and the latter are better qualified to sit in judgment on religion than the former because they are determined to listen to reason rather than to feeling, and because they are persuaded that they ought to walk by natural knowledge, and not by supernatural faith. Feelings are never to be trusted unless they are overshadowed by enlightened intelligence. What is quite clear to the emancipated intellect is that neither God the Father, God the Son, nor God the Holy Ghost has ever done the slightest thing to justify the faith reposed in them by Christians. They have never taken any active interest in the administration of the Universe; and as proof of this statement we offer the history of the world, and particularly the history of the Church.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Science of Earthquakes.

IN company with every other branch of science, the study of seismological phenomena serves to substantiate the law of mental evolution. All early explanations of terrestrial disturbances were supernatural in character. The natives of Kamtschatka revered a god called Tuil, who led a life akin to their own amid the ice and snow. Whenever Tuil felt in need of exercise, he took a walking excursion with his dogs. These animals were troubled with vermin, and when they scratched themselves the earth trembled. Professor Milne, in his important work on Seismology, somewhat sarcastically reminds us that—

"after the earthquake which in 1883 alarmed the inhabitants of Charleston, the negro preachers told their congregations that the disturbance had visited that city in particular in consequence of its sins.

Again, in 1891, after the great earthquake which devastated Central Japan, evidence of a selective providence was found in the fact that a few of the houses tenanted by Christian converts happened to remain standing amongst the ruins of their Buddhist and Shinto neighbors."

The pall of superstition, which settled upon Christian Europe on the downfall of Pagan civilisation and culture, for many centuries prevented all inquiry concerning the natural causes of earthquakes. Aristotle, Plato, Pliny, and other Pagan philosophers, prove by their writings that they attributed these perturbations to the escape of wind or vapor previously imprisoned within the earth's crust. A kindred opinion was expressed by the early philosophers of China. But the superstitions fostered by the Church prohibited any return to the doctrines of the ancients until the eighteenth century. Even then, the pioneers of science—for sundry weighty reasons—were extremely careful to avoid an open conflict with the religious prejudices of their age.

The earthquake investigations of recent years demonstrate that the great majority of seismic disturbances originate in the ocean depths. The submarine areas more specially susceptible to them lie along bases of the steep declivities of the continents. Nevertheless, earthquake chronology appears to prove that since the advent of man scarcely

* Prof. Milne, *Seismology*, p. 27.

any country in the world has escaped the experience of earthquakes of local origin. But the dangerous and destructive seismic disturbances have been, and are, confined to what have been termed "the unstable belts of the globe."

The first comprehensive earthquake catalogue was prepared by the French scientist, Alexis Perrey. This publication was the outcome of a life's labor. The main motive of Perrey's researches was his ambition to determine a possible connection between earthshakings and the varying phases of the moon's surface. Positive evidence of disturbance due to lunar gravitational influence has not yet been adduced. But Perrey's data have been invaluable to seismologists, and still form the basis of a rapidly improving earthquake geography. Seismic geography has now established the existence of two great circle zones of earthquake activity. With very rare exceptions, the earthquake districts of the globe are included within these. The more important of these two circle zones embraces more than half of all ascertained shocks. This zone includes the Alps, the Mediterranean area, the Caucasus and Himalayan mountain ranges. The minor zone encircles the Pacific Ocean, accompanies the great Cordilleran mountain chains of the Western Hemisphere, and the island countries that fringe the continent masses of Eastern Asia and Malaysia. This second earthquake belt includes over 41 per cent. of all known shocks; over 94 per cent. of all shocks studied are thus included within one or other of these two great circle zones.

The order of occurrence of great earthquakes within the just described belts was determined by the Japanese seismologist, Professor Omori, in 1907. The world-shaking earthquakes of the two preceding years were shown by Omori to have occurred in such a way as to suggest the theory of their determination by physical causes alone. Omori discovered that seismic disturbances do not follow in regular succession along their belt. But when the forces which cause the earthquake have found relief in one province, the next perturbation is much more likely to occur at a distant point than in a neighboring province. This view has found strong support in innumerable observations since made. Omori visited California after the earthquake of 1906, and while there he predicted that the next heavy shock on the Pacific Coast of America would be experienced within the seismic belt to the south of the equator. Professor Omori was still journeying towards Japan when the disastrous Chilean earthquake ruined Valparaiso. The Mexican calamity of 1907 was also within the same earthquake zone, its geographical position being intermediate to those of California and Chili.

The proximity of earthquake areas to those of active volcanoes is a very striking fact. This coincidence is particularly noticeable in the Pacific "fire-girdle." Some 400 active volcanoes are distributed in and along the margins of the oceans, while numerous eruptions occur in the sea itself. None, however, is known to take place at distances exceeding one hundred miles from the oceans or large inland seas. Little astonishment need be felt at the general assumption of a special relationship between earthshakings and the dischargings of fire mountains. It is obvious that this association is no mere accident, and we will now consider its meaning.

Although in the light of recent knowledge it becomes necessary to abandon the belief that volcanic eruptions are solely accountable for earthshocks, or that earthshocks are necessarily responsible for volcanic activities, we are driven to the deduction that the same or similar causes underlie both. Seismic disturbances and volcanic discharges are alike due to the action of those earth forces and energies which have built up the neighboring mountain masses;—

"To form such mountains it was necessary for great strips of the earth's crust to be pushed up in successive movements between lines and fissures. The jolting movements of the earth-blocks as they have slipped

over each other accounts for the earthquakes, and the melted rock material which, as a result of the movement, has been squeezed out, either along the fissures, or, as is more frequently the case, at their intersections, has built up the volcanoes. Wherever mountains are still growing, earthquakes and active volcanoes are to be found. Where they have ceased to grow, there the earth does not shake—it is dead—and lava is no longer exuded through the fissures in the surface."*

It has been urged that, prior to a volcanic eruption, there have been various ineffectual attempts to establish a vent, and these abortive efforts make themselves manifest in sudden shakings of the surrounding soil. When the volcano ultimately breaks forth into eruption, this is frequently accompanied by earth movements of more marked character. A very weighty authority, Professor Milne, who devoted many years of his life to the practical study of "the ubiquitous breathings of the earth's surface" in the most unstable islands in the world, is of opinion that volcanic phenomena in general compel the conclusion that a certain percentage of earth tremors is the immediate outcome of subterranean volcanic energy. When volcanic activities are conducted on a giant scale they may lead to such a calamity as occurred in Krakatoa in 1883, or to a disaster similar to that which overtook the Japanese island of Bandaisan a few years later.

But such phenomena fail to explain the larger and more widely felt earthquakes. The areas disturbed by earthshocks in volcanic districts are comparatively small. As Professor Milne contends, it is difficult to imagine how the primary impulse which occasions earthshocks, which may be registered thousands of miles from their seat of origin, can conceivably originate at any known volcanic focus. Volcanic discharges always appear to arise from the concentration of underground energy at some focus or other, while in order to produce a world-felt shock the initial effort should be exerted upon a much more extended surface than that afforded by any volcanic base.

A further serious obstacle to the acceptance of the opinion which assigns the major earthquakes to volcanic energy is to be found in the circumstance that seismic phenomena are by no means unknown in the Swiss, Himalayan, and other non-volcanic areas. Milne's analysis of some ten thousand earthquake records in Japan shows that remarkably few of these disturbances took their rise in the neighborhood of the native volcanoes. As Sir Archibald Geikie points out, the line of seismic disturbances in Japan lies out at sea, where the waters plunge into the great abyss known as the Tuscara Deep. In this depression the sea bottom reaches the stupendous depth of 24,000 ft. below sea-level. This appears without exception to have been the originating centre of all the calamitous earthquakes which have afflicted Japan. The western seaboard of South America has been convulsed by earthquakes, many of which have proved the most terrible within human experience. Here, again, the coast-line most susceptible to shocks plunges down with great abruptness into the ocean deeps while comparatively near the land. On the other hand, coast-lines like those of Scandinavia, Australia, and the eastern shores of South America, which gradually descend into deep water, are almost free from seismic convulsions.

The modifying influences of geological structure upon the effects of earth-waves is a point worth considering. During the passage of the earth-wave from its focus of origin through the earth's crust it is subjected to considerable deflections and delays, owing to the varying nature of the rocks. Even at the earth's surface—

"one effect of differences of material may be seen in the apparently capricious demolition of certain quarters of a city, while others are left comparatively scatheless. In such cases it has often been found that buildings erected on loose, inelastic foundations, such as low

* Professor W. H. Hobbs, *Earthquakes*, p. 56.

ground overlying soft sand, are more liable to destruction than those placed on solid rock, especially where dry and hard."

The above considerations were well exemplified by the disaster which ruined Port Royal in 1692; those parts of the town erected on solid structures escaped destruction, while those built on sand were shattered to fragments. Similar phenomena have been strikingly illustrated during earthquakes in the Japanese capital.

A brief reference may be made to the possibility of predicting earthshocks. Japan has rendered greater services to seismological science than the rest of the world combined. When the celebrated Japanese Earthquake Investigation Committee was created, its objects were thus stated:—

"In the first place to investigate whether there are any means of predicting earthquakes; and in the second place to investigate what can be done to reduce the disastrous effects of earthquake shocks to a minimum, by the choice of proper structures, materials, position," etc.

The Committee has included many of the ablest Japanese scientists, and much important work has been done. One far-reaching fact emerges from the study of seismic phenomena. Magnetic disturbances are now known to almost invariably precede earthquakes—particularly in Japan—by periods more frequently measured in days than in hours, and in this lies the hope of amassing sufficient data regarding them to enable science to predict an impending convulsion by a time interval sufficient to very materially reduce the sacrifice of life and property.

Professor Arrhenius and other eminent experts conclude that earthquake observations lend powerful support to the view that the interior of our globe is a molten mass. The dislocations to which the solid rocks which overarch this liquid interior are subject, in all probability explain those internal movements responsible for seismic disturbances. It seems reasonable to suppose, with Geikie, that various conceivable causes may, at different times and under different conditions, communicate shocks to the subterranean regions. Although, as yet, the initial causes of earthquakes can only be plausibly conjectured, the science of the future will doubtless reveal the true genesis of these interesting, if uncomfortable, manifestations.

T. F. PALMER.

How a Christian can respect and reverence his God and believe him to be the author of the Bible is a problem that we are unable to solve. A man who would write the stuff contained in the book of Genesis and publish it to the world would be regarded as beneath the notice of decent people. Do Christians forgive in God what they condemn in man? What is there about the story of Lot and his daughters that makes it necessary to a divine revelation? Will some clergyman please tell us?

If the account of the birth of Jesus were true, such account would not be fit to read to a mixed audience, or to children; but when the account is manifestly false, the motive for reading it cannot be a pure or moral one. Are clergymen clean and honest men, who recommend indiscriminate Bible-reading to the young? Are not ministers guilty of circulating obscene literature when they put the Bible into the hands of men and women? It is time that the world thought about these things.

A manufactory helps a town more than does a church. A manufactory gives men money; a church takes it. A manufactory builds up a town; adds to its taxable property, hires and pays the laborer, helps the tradesmen, and encourages thrift and ambition. A church adds nothing to a town, dodges its taxes, takes away the money the working man earns, helps nobody but the priest, and stands only for superstition and salvation in another world.—*L. K. Washburn.*

"My dear boy," said a Methodist mother with a poker in her hand, "God is everywhere." "Is God in that poker, Ma?" asked the boy. "Yes, my dear," said the mother, "God is even in that poker now." "Then stick it in the fire, Ma," said the little fellow, "stick it in the fire!"

* Geikie, *Geology*, vol. i., p. 375.

Acid Drops.

The London County Council does not meet again till October 2. On that very evening the glove fight between Johnson and Wells was billed to come off at Earl's Court. The Chairman of the London County Council, however, means, for his part, that the encounter shall not take place if he can help it. He has warned—that is, threatened—the Earl's Court management that "if the proposed contest takes place at the Earl's Court Exhibition it may very seriously imperil the renewal of the license by the Council in November next." Now this is simple impudence. What right has "Edward White" to exercise this sort of censorship over licensed places in London? If the Johnson and Wells' contest is illegal the police should prevent it. When the question becomes merely one of taste, we fail to see why the London County Council's taste should override other people's. We have no love for such exhibitions as Johnson and Wells will give, and would not accept a free ticket to see it; but we are not so egotistic as to try, except by moral suasion, to make other people like and dislike what *we* like and dislike. We quite agree with Mr. Bernard Shaw on the Censorship—whoever wields it; least of all would we entrust it to a body like the London County Council, composed of men for the most part of a commonplace and even philistine type of mind. They would soon apply the Censorship to everything that the Rev. Dr. Clifford or the Rev. Dr. Meyer objected to. The Chairman of the Council plainly says, indeed, in the present instance, that the ground of his interference is "a resolution passed unanimously at the meeting of the Synod of the Second London District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church."

Dr. Clifford and Mr. Meyer both declare that it is not as religious men, still less as professional religionists, that they interfere in this boxing business. They are opposed to the brutality of two men standing up in public and trying to knock each other to pieces. What refreshing innocence! Fancy two boxing men entering the ring with *that* ideal! They are after the money, and not each other's personal injury; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the loser is able to walk away in much better health than most men of God enjoy.

These two refreshing innocents don't appear to know that lots of Church Institutes and Y.M.C.A.'s have boxing as one of their recreations. Father Herlehy, President of the Bermondsey Athletic Club, whose trainer is "Jim" Sullivan, middle weight champion of England, says that "all this opposition" to the Johnson-Wells meeting "is quite unreasonable. A properly conducted exhibition of boxing does nobody any harm." We suggest that Father Herlehy and either Dr. Clifford or Mr. Meyer should put on the gloves and settle their difference in that way. They will never settle it in any other.

Johnson pertinently asks what all the rumpus is about. He put this query to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*. "The fight between Wells and myself," he said, "is no different from dozens of others which have taken place in London and to which no objection was taken. Why should this one be made an exception?" The answer is simple. In the first place, the objectors don't want to see a white man beaten by a black man—which is practically a foregone conclusion. In the second place, this fight offers Messrs. Clifford, Meyer, & Co. a better opportunity than the other fights referred to. It is a big affair, and there is a big advertisement in fighting this fight.

Johnson talks in a straightforward way. He plainly says that he is "over here to make money." They offered him five thousand dollars to fight Wells at the National Sporting Club, and he asks why he should appear for five thousand dollars when he can make fifteen thousand dollars elsewhere? He may be in a brutal business, but this is honest language. We wonder when Clifford, Meyer, & Co. will talk as candidly? They take all the cash they can get, which is a good deal, and are ready to take more. The avarice of men of God is proverbial throughout the world.

We don't deal with mere politics, and especially party politics in the *Freethinker*, but the question of the payment of members of parliament doesn't really belong to politics at all. It is a mere matter of common sense and common honesty—as pretty well every civilised nation has already discovered. Nothing in our opinion could be more contemptible than the attitude of some wealthy members of the House of Commons towards their poorer fellow-members. They profess to loathe the idea of taking money for their

work in the House, although if an official job worth thousands a year came their way they would jump at it with the greatest avidity. One refuses to sign his receipt for the first quarter's payment. Others take the money and pay it over to charities or something in their own constituencies—which is sailing very close to the wind of bribery. Such disposers of the money, however, do not refuse it; if they control it they accept it. So much should be obvious even to their intellects. On the whole, it may be said that there are no ill-manners like the ill-manners of a "gentleman," when he isn't a gentleman. The poor are far better behaved than the rich as far as class passions are concerned.

One of these "gentlemen" of the House of Commons who affect to disdain their financially less flourishing colleagues for taking moderate payment for service rendered is Mr. Arthur Fell, member for Yarmouth, a town which all who know it are perfectly aware is saturated with political corruption. The town is also noted for its piety—which we believe its parliamentary representative shares. Mr. Fell, a solicitor (mark!) intends to divide his House of Commons salary amongst the Yarmouth hospitals. That will help him to "wipe out the humiliation" of having the money forced upon him,—just as if he were not entirely free to forego it if he pleased. Mr. Fell's financial virtue is apparently like Cæsar said his wife should be, not only above reproach but above suspicion. But is it so really? Alack and alas! *Reynolds's Newspaper* has done a serious public service by publishing a list of thirty-nine joint-stock Companies, of which this sensitive gentleman has been or is a director. Of these Companies three have paid a dividend, fifteen have paid no dividend, twenty have been liquidated, and one is a private undertaking. There's a record for the pious cash-disdaining member for Yarmouth!

A Spiritualist called Rundle, at Southend-on-Sea, has had the effrontery to deliver a public address as the mouthpiece of Charles Bradlaugh. Through the lips of that little squeaky medium the great Atheist orator was supposed to say "I done it" and to refer to himself as the "member for Bradford." Perhaps the enterprising but careless Rundle didn't count upon being reported in the local *Standard*.

A correspondent of the *Southend Standard* pertinently asks why Bradlaugh should send messages from the "beyond" through Rundle, and remarks that Mr. G. W. Foote (whose powers of oratory are more adequate) is still living.

General Booth describes himself as "the best beloved leader connected with any movement." See the report of his Chesterfield speech in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. The great "William's" worst enemy never accused him of modesty.

"One thing befalleth them; yea, they have all one breath." Mr. Samuel Dennis, a Neath bookseller, and a deacon of the Waesycyhap Independent Church, Neath, died suddenly in his pew during the after-meeting following the ordinary service. He couldn't have died more suddenly if he had been an Atheist.

"Providence" is giving Italy another treat. Sixteen new craters have opened in Mount Etna, belching forth dense smoke and showers of stones and ashes. Rivers of white-hot lava are advancing at the rate of a mile per day towards Linguaglossa and Castiglione, destroying the superb pine forests and all the fields and vineyards in their track. Frequent and alarming shocks of earthquake are felt, and terrible consternation prevails in the thickly populated villages studding the 460 square miles which Mount Etna covers. "His tender mercies are over all his works."

It must be admitted that "Providence" is impartial. The whole Ottoman Empire is in the grip of cholera. Deaths are numbered by myriads. Whole villages have been wiped out in Northern Asia Minor. Constantinople itself is being decimated.

After the drought thunderstorms. Half of Europe, after being burnt up by sunshine, is now being deluged by rain. Ruinous floods are now the order of the day. Clearly the imperial government of the universe has too much work to do. We want Home Rule for this planet.

We have heard of "muscular Christianity" before and now we hear of a "muscular Christian." This is what the *Daily News* calls the Rev. Sidney Swann, who crossed the Channel in a twenty-foot sculling skiff—under the friendly

protection of a motor launch. What one fails to see is where the "Christian" comes in? We fancy a muscular Jew, a muscular Mohammedan, a muscular Brahman, or a muscular Buddhist, might have performed the task as well as a muscular Christian. Or, for that matter, even a muscular thief or murderer. The function of religion in rowing a skiff is certainly not obvious.

There seems to be no end to the follies and falsehoods of "true believers." Here is Colonel Carlyon, for instance, presiding at the annual meeting of the Cornwall Branch of the English Church Union—a local body whose balance-sheet shows "a credit balance of 4d."—and bewailing the ever increasing desecration of the Sabbath; which, alas, can't be stopped now, as the rich indulge in it even more than the poor. The gallant Colonel is evidently one of a very old school. He attributes the falling-off in Sabbatarianism and religion generally to the "Godless education of the Board Schools." Bless his heart! And bless his silly head! Has he never seen an official syllabus of religious instruction in public elementary schools? If he will only look at one he will see that it is pious and stupid enough to please even himself.

We understood that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was very unorthodox in religion. But we must have been mistaken. It took four men of God to officiate adequately at his wife's funeral. Dr. Clifford and the Rev. F. B. Meyer conducted a private service in the house, and the Rev. W. E. Moll, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the Rev. F. L. Donaldson, of Leicester, conducted a public service in the Crematorium Chapel. Quite a religious demonstration! And yet—!

More Christian charity. The county magistrates at Chichester sentenced an old laborer to ten days' hard labor for stealing six potatoes—valued at sixpence, on the owner's sanguine calculation. It was rather more than a day and a half for each "spud." The four magistrates on the bench included the Rev. Chancellor H. M. Davey. This gentleman defends the sentence. When a *Daily News* interviewer suggested that "it was hard to make an example of such an old man who was a first offender," the reverend gentleman took quite a different view of the chronological argument. He said that the prisoner was "old enough to know better." A man who could say that is hopeless.

Clergymen should never be allowed to act as magistrates. They are generally harder on "offenders" than laymen are. And what a farce it is for a clergyman to talk on Sunday evening about forgiving one's brother, not seven times, but seventy times seven, and on Monday morning to give a poor old man ten days hard labor for pocketing six potatoes, after a heavy and we may be sure ill-paid day's labor in a potato field.

Priests are no fools. Many of the people in the district of Braga, Portugal, take advantage of the new law whereby births, deaths, and marriages need no longer be registered in churches. Some of them, however, have a sentimental taste for a priest at funerals. But the priests won't have anything to do with such discriminating customers. Their terms are, all or nothing; if we can't marry you we won't bury you. It is a clerical strike.

Rev. A. J. Waldron's anonymous fugleman, whose artful praise of that great infidel-slayer crops up from time to time in various publications, got it inserted in last week's *M. A. P.* Little bits of invention are added with the progress of time. Mr. Waldron's pretence of having been a teacher of Atheism himself in his younger days at Plymouth is now improved upon. The artful fugleman has begun to represent his client as "the young friend of Charles Bradlaugh." There is no end to the "face" of these people, and their handling of the truth is distinctly Christian.

Mr. Waldron is "more than a match for any Atheist." Who is the fugleman that says this? One would like to be sure of his name. It may begin with a W.

Professor Richter, who was captured by Greek brigands, and ransomed for £4,000 (the captors wanted £40,000!) is now safe and sound in his home at Jena. While in captivity he had an opportunity of studying the compatibility of piety and crime. The bandits were extremely pious gentlemen. They kept their fasts, never forgot to cross themselves properly, and always put a candle before their patron-saint before starting on a fresh marauding expedition. They were not Turks, but Greeks; not Mohammedans, but Christians.

Rev. Henry Roper, vicar of Armley Hall Church, is suffering a great bereavement. He had a dog that showed a great fondness for the flesh of children. Two police officers visited the vicarage and asked the reverend gentleman to destroy the animal. This he declined to do. He also refused to produce his dog license. At the Leeds Police-court, on September 12, he denied that his dog had bitten more than two persons,—which he evidently thought was a very moderate performance. But the magistrates took a different view of the matter; they ordered the dog to be destroyed, and its owner to pay the costs of the prosecution. The Chairman also expressed the view that the reverend gentleman had shown a lack of courtesy to the police—who had nothing to gain personally by restricting his dog's endeavors to dine off the local inhabitants. "I object," the reverend gentleman said, "to being spoken to in that fashion." "I have no doubt," the Chairman replied, "you have objections to a great many things."

What reputation the Christian missionaries have earned in China may be seen from the following story. The *Daily Chronicle* publishes a letter received by a Herne Hill resident from a friend who is in Chungking. It appears that the partition of China is talked about in the streets as if it were an assured fact. Many of the people talk about joining the Christian religion, as they hear that "when the foreigners come to take over our province the missionaries are all to be made officials." What a flood of light that apprehension throws upon missionary work in China!

Monsignor Louis Duchesne's *History of the Church*, after circulating freely for twenty years, is now placed under a ban by the Consistorial Congregation at the Vatican. It is now forbidden to all Catholic colleges and seminaries throughout the world. Even clerical students are forbidden to read it, and may not even keep it for purposes of reference. The cream of the joke is that Duchesne's book consists of lectures which he delivered to Catholic students in the Paris University, and every edition of it has been issued with the express authorisation of the ecclesiastical authorities! The Papacy is really making itself the laughing stock of the civilised world—and nothing can survive that, not even the "Great Lying Church."

The late Mr. F. Smallman, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, was a member of the Cremation Society, and once startled Manchester by hoping that the local Crematorium would do increased business by incinerating the bodies of hopeless sufferers who should be eased out of life and agony by scientific means. This problem has just arisen in America. Amongst the Shakers, near Kissimmee, two members terminated the sufferings of a third who was in the last stages of consumption. Brother Gillette and Sister Sears administered two ounces of chloroform to Sister Marchant at her request. Brother Gillette's story (says the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent) was as follows:—

"One of her lungs had been destroyed. She had been suffering terribly for several weeks, and we all knew that the time was short before she would be called to her final reward. The climax came on August 20. She was seized with chills, hæmorrhage, and other symptoms. Sister Sadie had always told us to let her die in peace without pain, and asked Sister Elizabeth that day to let her get out of her body. Sister Sadie refused to eat anything more after that Sunday night. On the 20th she was in agony, and towards morning begged us to kill her. She said she was at peace with God and all on earth, and was ready to go.

I went to St. Cloud at daylight and got some opiates to ease her. I gave her all I brought. They seemed to relieve her. I went to St. Cloud for more, and when I gave them to her she could not keep them in her stomach. She suffered, and I got 2 oz. of chloroform, which I gave her on a cloth. She went to sleep. Later on I gave her another dose. She passed away in about ten minutes. Before giving her the last sleeping potion I made it a special point to tell her that if she wanted to wait longer and suffer we would do everything we possibly could to help her. She implored us to give her the chloroform."

The matter was taken to the courts, and Gillette and Sears were released on bail of £1,000 and £400 respectively.

A lively discussion arose as to whether the action of these Shakers could ever be justifiable. Ingersoll's lecture, which brought him so much orthodox hatred and denunciation, on "Is Suicide a Sin?" has evidently done its work. In less than twenty-five years a great change has come over the scene. Public opinion supports the lenient view taken by the Court. Many doctors throughout the country take the view that chloroforming sick people out of existence is not justifiable, as no one can tell for a certainty when all hope is gone. But the famous medical

jurisprudent, Dr. W. J. O'Sullivan, of New York, pronounces a decidedly different opinion:—

"There are many cases in which there can be no shadow of doubt that the sufferer should be given the relief of death. In cases of hopeless injuries, certain stages of cancer, tuberculosis, and hydrophobia, developed beyond all hope, euthanasia would be more than justifiable. It is simply brutal to let the suffering continue when there is no hope of recovery. In some countries, notably Japan, this is recognised, and euthanasia is practised. The feeling is surely growing that kindness demands, when the case is beyond remedial skill and prolongation of life means only intense suffering and no gain to our knowledge for the benefit of others, that the sufferer should be killed."

This question, however it is settled, will have to be debated reasonably. The orthodox bigotry which was hurled at Ingersoll has had its day. "To be or not to be?" is the question now. Ingersoll's crime was simply being a pioneer.

The *Streatham News* is working up an agitation against Mr. H. Boulter's lectures on Streatham Common. After calling him many bad names, it mentions the *pond*; and, as if that remedy might possibly fail, and the wrong persons get dipped, it calls upon the London County Council to take action against the "blasphemer." Not that our Streatham contemporary objects to "free speech." Oh dear no! It positively delights in free discussion. Mr. Boulter's fault is not his unbelief but his "lewd" way of advocating it. We know he is not exactly an elegant speaker, but we could not find the "lewdness" in our contemporary's report of his last Sunday's lecture. We venture to suggest that it is as well to be fair, even to Mr. Boulter. We also venture to say that our Streatham contemporary has peculiar ideas as to what is "unprintable." It actually describes Mr. Boulter's extracts from Morley, Mill, Mallock, and Bernard Shaw as "of a character unsuitable for reproduction." We quite understand now the real value of our Streatham contemporary's love of free speech.

We believe, of course, in Mr. Boulter's right to express his opinions in public, and we are utterly opposed to the idea of suppressing him by means of the Blasphemy Laws. But as he is not being prosecuted at present, and does not seem likely to be, we may take the opportunity of suggesting that he might usefully spend less time in tickling the ears of his groundlings and more time in propounding Free thought in a worthy manner. There is no need to be dull—and wit is a capital sauce to a lecture. But it should be real wit. To say "I am a Yorkshireman, all the best men come from Yorkshire, Charlie Peace was a Yorkshireman" is only a sample of what to avoid. We believe Mr. Boulter could do better if he tried. Nevertheless we say, and say advisably, that the least defensible of his utterances is better than the horribly malignant language of those who are in this instance seeking to close his mouth.

The house of God which is known as the parish church at Newnham, a village near Faversham, was taken possession of by a dense swarm of flies on Sunday, September 10, so that it was impossible to hold any service in the building. The next day the holy edifice was taken back from Beelzebub (the god of flies) and restored to Jehovah (the god of fools) by means of the sulphur treatment.

Rev. R. Chadwick, preaching at the mid-day service in Central Hall, Manchester, observed that "a recent number of the *Freethinker* secured its most telling shot against the Christian faith from the lips of a teacher of the Gospel." This was in reference to what Mr. Chadwick called running-down the Church. That ought to be left, he said, to "the devil and his followers"—amongst whom we appear to be reckoned. Well, in that case, we follow a good lead. We have Shakespeare's word for it that "the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman." Which is more than can be said of all his professional opponents.

During the course of a sermon which the late Mr. Moody, the American evangelist, preached at San Francisco he referred to his "late lamented" grandmother, and remarked that although she was what the world would regard as a "good soul," yet she had never received the grace of God in her heart, and sad and fearful to contemplate as the confession was, he was afraid she had gone to hell. This was too much for one young man present, and he made for the door, when Moody, spotting him, exclaimed, "There goes a young man who will not listen to the truth as it is in Jesus; he will go to hell!" The young man stopped, turned round and asked, "Have you any message I can take to your grandmother, Mr. Moody?"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

October 1, 8, 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, Birmingham Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.

November 5, Leicester; 12, Manchester; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.

December 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £290 7s. 9d. Received since:—D. Wright, 5s.; K. C. Rigin, 2s. 6d.; Fred Collins, 2s. 6d.; T. W. Hicks, 2s.

THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Previously acknowledged. £135 4s. Received since:—Definite Article (2nd subscription), 10s.; Jas. Brodie, 1s.; M. J. Charter, 10s. 6d.; W. Banner, 2s.; F. Lucas, sen., £1 1s.; J. Robertson, jun., 10s.; W. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; J. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; T. W. Hicks, 2s.; A. H. Fawn, 2s. 6d.; T. E. Willis, 2s. 6d.; A. W. Coleman, £1.

E. GWINNELL.—We note your wish that Mr. Cohen's lecture at Finsbury Park could be printed.

W. W.—What is it meant to be? It is not verse, anyhow.

ANONYMOUS (Liverpool).—Whoever told you that Dr. Dallinger "shattered the theory of spontaneous generation" must have been joking. Proving that life comes from life now does not affect the question of whether life arose spontaneously on this planet in primitive times and conditions. As to your argument that "if life comes from life there must be a God," you must try to excuse us for saying that it is a mere absurdity. There is no connection whatever between the premises and the conclusion.

J. K.—You are quite right.

E. B. FOOTE (New York).—Letter received. Will be writing you shortly.

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

E. B. points out that there was a mistake in Sir Hiram Maxim's article which we reproduced lately from the *New York Truth-seeker*. Sir Hiram said that "an English working man" gave utterance to the phrase "the law is a hass," whereas it was Mr. Bumble (see *Oliver Twist*, chap. li.). It is useless going back on a misprint, especially in a joke. You also have "admiration for the ingenuity with which compositors frame mistakes."

DEFINITE ARTICLE.—Shall be pleased to see you at both functions. We are quite ready for the winter lecturing campaign.

W. H. HARRIS.—Thanks for the cutting. We rejoice at all signs of wisdom and humanity in these oriental religions, but we have no sympathy with the supernaturalism or mysticism with which they are associated.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad the Ridgway family were so pleased with our tribute to their father.

W. H. DEAKIN (India).—Thanks for letter, cuttings, etc. Mr. Foote is keeping well. Miss Vance is much benefited by the phenomenal fine weather and rest and change. Both would be delighted if you could be at the Bradlaugh Dinner.

H. SMALLWOOD.—Sent as desired. Thanks. We are always glad to receive the names and addresses of persons to whom we might usefully send six consecutive copies of the *Freethinker* gratuitously and post free.

J. SCOTT.—See paragraph. Thanks. The joke you cut from the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* about the missionary, who preached hell and carried samples—in the shape of terribly hot condiment—used to be told by Mr. Foote in one of his early lectures on "An Hour in Hell," and was published in our columns some twenty-five years ago. We believe jokes are dug out of old volumes of the *Freethinker* now for the ordinary newspapers. Such is the progress of scepticism.

SUBSCRIBER.—Let the man Marsh prove his statement if he can. The local hospital shall have the half-crown, or more, if he succeeds.

R. PAIGE.—Too late for this week; in our next. Thanks.

A. H. FAWN.—Pleased to hear of your "admiration for Miss Vance's services."

A. W. COLEMAN, as a "laggard" subscriber, hopes the £150 will be made up before the Vance Testimonial is presented on October 5.

C. T. SHAW, newsagent, 51 Worcester-street, Wolverhampton, has the *Freethinker* on sale weekly, and would be pleased to meet any local "saints."

G. D.—(1) We don't think it is bowdlerised. It seems to be a reprint of the first edition of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam, which is out of copyright. The later editions are still copyright, and the fourth (last) contains many more stanzas than the first, besides many alterations. (2) The other book was written by one of the men figuring in Wheeler's *Dictionary*. We forget his name at the moment, but will look it up shortly.

S. LINDEN.—We regret, but we are not astonished at, the fact that St. George's Town Hall, Stepney, is officially refused to you and your friends on the pretence of tenderness to the religious susceptibilities of orthodox Jews.

ANDREW MILLAR.—Part of the gentleman's letter is sensible enough, but what a foolish idea that those who deny the Bradlaugh "watch story" should prove their denial! Those who affirm must prove.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Glad you liked Henry Fleming's article and wish for more from the same pen.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

London "saints" are reminded that the fresh course of Queen's (Minor) Hall lectures starts next Sunday evening (October 1). Mr. Foote opens the season with three special lectures on "Modern Female Prophets." The first, on Mrs. Annie Besant, should greatly interest veteran Freethinkers who knew her in the old Hall of Science days, and attract those of the younger generation who would like to hear something of her career and personality, her former teaching as an Atheist and her present teaching as a Theosophist.

This is the last time we can call attention to the Bradlaugh Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday evening, September 27. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside and deliver a special address on the life and work of Charles Bradlaugh. We hear that there is going to be a big muster. Those who mean to attend this function should not delay obtaining their tickets.

The Testimonial to Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, will be presented by the President at the "social" which is to take place at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, on Thursday evening, October 5. No doubt there will be a crowded gathering on that occasion.

Another N.S.S. demonstration will be held to-day (September 24) at 5 p.m. in Finsbury Park. The speakers will be Messrs. Cohen, Moss, Davies, and Heaford, and Miss Kough. Mr. Wilson will supply the "platform" as before.

We have just heard from our old friend Captain Thomson, of Stockholm, who took a brave part in the defence of Free-thought during the "blasphemy" prosecutions in Sweden in the early eighties, and to whom we have had pleasure in forwarding the *Freethinker* ever since, as a small mark of great respect. Captain Thomson met with an accident some time ago which nearly ended his life. He was unable to write to his friends for a good while, but he is getting better now and hopes to be abroad again shortly. We wish him health and good luck during his remaining days, which we trust will be just as many as he desires.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association was incorporated at New York on September 6, 1905, and has done good work since in collecting and preserving records and mementoes of the great Englishman who did so much for the independence of America. The President is Prof. T. B. Wakeman; the secretary, Mr. W. M. Van Der Weyde; the corresponding secretary, Mr. J. B. Elliott; and the treasurer, Dr. E. B. Foote. The Association's letter-forms contain at the left side a column of neat small type setting forth Thomas Paine's services to the world,—and the list is astonishing and even overwhelming. It was he who first proposed or suggested, among other things: (1) the abolition of negro slavery, (2) protection for dumb animals, (3) arbitration and international peace, (4) justice to women, (5) the reality of human brotherhood, (6) old age pensions, (7) international copyright, (8) the education of the children of the poor at the public expense, (9) the land for the people, (10) the religion of humanity, (11) the United States of America, (12) and on the scientific side he was the inventor of the arched iron bridge. And this list could be lengthened! What a mind Paine possessed! What fecundity! What lucidity! What energy! And what a spirit of humanity animating all his faculties!

We have just received a genial letter from Mr. Van Der Weyde, the secretary of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association. "Your *Freethinker*," he says in one passage, "is wonderfully fine and every number interests me tremendously. More power to you!" We have not modestly enough to prevent our appreciating the compliment.

"Christian Preacher" writes to the *Yorkshire Evening Telegraph* stating that he saw "a large crowd" listening to a young man lecturing from the Monolith at Sheffield "on the subject of Atheism." "I noted with regret," he says, "that the lecturer held his hearers in rapt attention." (It was Mr. Joseph Bates.) "What are the churches doing? Is it not possible to combat Atheism on organised lines?" the writer asks. We hope so.

The New York *Truthseeker* of September 2 contains a poem called "The Freethinker," by Miss Eva Ingersoll-Brown, the grand-daughter of Robert G. Ingersoll; also a portrait of the young lady, who was a child when we first saw her in the Ingersoll household in 1896. The portrait accompanying the poem shows a strong resemblance to her mother, whose beauty, amiability, and intelligence were so striking. "The verses," as Mr. Macdonald says, "are not pretentious; they are simple and heartfelt, and all the better for being so. Beyond all value is their testimony that the degeneracy of conservatism is not blighting the descendants of Ingersoll."

Ingersoll's family life was the admiration even of his religious opponents—when they were not professional. The following passage is from an address at the Ingersoll Memorial meeting in Philadelphia on August 11, by Mrs. Hannah Luce:—

"Robert G. Ingersoll was a man full of love—the love that makes home happy, the love that makes wife happy. He did forget the vows he took when he made Eva his wife. His altar was erected in his home, and that is the place to know a man—in his home. I care not what his religion is, the man that loves wife and family and tries to make them happy is religious enough for me; and if you want to know what kind of a man Robert Ingersoll was, ask Eva Ingersoll. She knows."

This is profoundly true. Never trust the man whose wife and children do not trust him. Renan wittily said that the final judgment upon us would be "the verdict of our women folk, countersigned by the Eternal."

The *Kansas City Journal*, in an eloquent tribute to Ingersoll, with relation to a statue being raised to his memory in Peoria, allows that he was an "Agnostic" but affirms that the term "Atheist" so often applied to him is "incorrect." But the correction is incorrect. We have Ingersoll's word for it that "Agnostic" and "Atheist" were to him the same thing. It is no use trying to be kinder to Ingersoll than he was to himself—or to label and unlabel him in his own despite.

The *Times* notice of the first performance of Sir Herbert Tree's production of *Macbeth* said that "the theme of the play is the darkest ultimate mysteries of human destiny, the agonies and disasters without remedy or atonement." The following passage is interesting and outspoken:—

"It is because the superhuman, because the mysterious power of the Spirit of Evil must always be felt that we have so much of strange arresting symbolism, so much of apparition. The hand of the Lord of Hell is ever upon Macbeth. You might call his tragedy Shakespeare's story of the fall of man. 'Why God not kill the Devil?' the black fellow asked his missionary. Shakespeare has no answer to the unanswerable. He does not seek, like Milton, to 'assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to men.' He says only that in our world the Prince of Evil is given power over the noblest souls, and that for those who let him conquer there remains only a ghastly life and a hopeless death. To the eternal 'Why?' we have no answer, because in life there is no answer, and Shakespeare had no message of faith."

That is the plain truth—"Shakespeare had no message of faith." As the master of tragedy he had done with all that flimsy stuff.

Our attention has been drawn to a public statement that the *Literary Guide* is the only advanced journal that is self-supporting. Statements about one's own paper may be accurate; statements about other papers are very likely to be inaccurate. We have repeatedly said that the *Freethinker* alone—if it could be printed and distributed like any other paper, which it cannot be because of the insecurity of its position, in consequence of the Blasphemy Laws and the taboo following upon them—would more than pay its way. It could easily be proved, we think, that our circulation is far larger than that of any other Freethought journal in England. But we lose most of that advantage by having to pay the penalty of our uncompromising and relentless fight against Christianity. Fortunately our circulation is still improving, slowly but steadily; and if we live long enough we shall in all probability see a brighter prospect. Meanwhile we wish well to our less burdened and hampered contemporaries.

"The Foundations of Belief."

"If at any particular point science finds a present limit, what is beyond science is not therefore beyond nature; it is only unknown nature; when we cease to trace law, we are sure that law remains to be traced. When science imposes a limit, it can only do so provisionally. The case may be beyond present views, but not beyond future discovery. The limits of the study of nature do not bring us to the confines of the supernatural."—PROFESSOR BADEN-POWELL, *The Order of Nature*, p. 231.

"I confess that my admiration of Hamlet is somewhat dulled by reason of that ill-advised remark to Horatio about there being more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies. The occultist always seizes upon that citation to refute the scientist. He prints it as his motto on his books and journals, and regards it as a slow poison that will in time effect the destruction of the rabble of scientists, and reveal the truth of his own Psycho-Harmonic Science or Heliocentric Astrology.....The man of woman who flies to the things not dreamt of in our philosophy quite commonly does not understand the things which our philosophy very creditably explains."—PROFESSOR J. JASTROW, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, 1901, p. 42.

OF the apologies offered in defence of religion of late years, it is not necessary to deal at any length. Professor Drummond's *Ascent of Man* probably promoted more scepticism than it allayed. The confiding believer who went to it for support against the inroads of Darwinism, found Darwinism and the animal origin of man preached with Gospel fervor. The added tag about it being a process of love, that the object of evolution was love, in fact, that it was a love story, was too preposterous to impose on even a Y.M.C.A. class.

Mr. Kidd's *Social Evolution* is a kindred work, in which he attempts to discredit reason as an untrustworthy guide. The statement, "The general mind, so often more scientific than our current science" (p. 17), is a characteristic sample of the book, which attempts by the aid of reason to overthrow reason. If we throw away reason as a guide, what have we to depend upon?

Mr. Balfour, in his *Foundations of Belief*, caters for those who are ready to run up any wall to escape from the "naturalistic prison-house," as he terms the reign of order and law with which science replaces the reign of gods and spirits. Mr. Benn tells us, in the preface to his *History of English Rationalism*, that he had intended to examine the work, and continues:—

"But I cannot find that Mr. Balfour's book, with all its literary brilliancy and controversial ability, has exercised any perceptible influence on contemporary opinion. Nor indeed is its failure very surprising. For any sort of belief, or of no-belief, might with equal plausibility be built upon such foundations as the late Prime Minister has laid. In principle, his method amounts to assuming that, nothing being certain, what agrees with our wishes ought to receive our assent. In practice, it means so disposing the lights and colors on the system of belief most endeared to us by early associations as to make it seem the most agreeable of all. Such a method may be good enough for theology, because there it can be applied to the further use of passing off defeats as victories. But if the same method were applied to commercial enterprise, it would soon lead to bankruptcy" (vol. i., p. xi.).

And he adds, if applied to party government or international politics, it would "bring about the industrial or military ruin of any country blind enough to entrust the philosophic doubter with the conduct of its affairs."

The ordinary plain man, unacquainted with philosophical gymnastics, could not understand Mr. Balfour's book; and the philosophers who could, would marvel, not at the novelty of its arguments, for there is nothing new about them, but at their flimsiness and shallowness.

Mr. Balfour draws a mournful picture of the end of the world and the human race, for which science can hold out no hope of a future existence. As if that were an argument. A sincere man would not ask "Is this a pleasant belief?" but "Is it true?" As if a man could say, "I must believe in a future life because if I do not I shall feel very uncomfortable."

Listen to the words of a greater than Mr. Balfour, a hero who has often faced death unflinchingly in the great frozen Arctic seas, one, moreover, who is the equal of Mr. Balfour in diplomacy, for he has represented his country as Ambassador at our Court. We refer to Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, who believes neither in God or a future life. In his lecture on *Science and the Purpose of Life*, dealing with this very question of the ultimate end of the human race, he declares:—

"The search for truth should not be a phrase; it has to be *sincere*. However disconcerting and distressing the view of existence arrived at by science may seem to some people, it cannot therefore be doomed. Where was it written that truth is not allowed to be disconsolate? Ah! you weak minds, you will trifle with truth in the distance; but when you meet her on the narrow path, where there is no room to pass outside, then you run away. But you ought to understand that she is not to be trifled with. We either seek the truth and take the consequences, or we do not seek her. There is room for no compromise here" (p. 13).

As Dr. Nansen says, and as every Freethinker says, the young should be taught the truth on this matter, and not be taught, as truth, that which, when they grow older, they will find to be a delusion.

Suppose a child were brought up to believe that, upon coming of age, he would inherit a large fortune; and when the time arrived he was told that it was all a delusion—that there was no fortune to inherit, that it had never had any material existence outside the brain of his teachers. No doubt the young man would be keenly disappointed, and in his despair might do something desperate. So, when a child is brought up to believe that after this life he will inherit another, where the utmost joy ever known in this poor earthly existence will fall far short of the ineffable bliss he will experience for all eternity in this transcendent future life, and when he attains years of maturity and finds there is no basis for any such belief, then, of course, he is liable to be very much disappointed, and, if he gives way to despair and pessimism, who is to blame? Why, those who instilled such false promises into the mind of the helpless child.

Mr. Balfour makes great play, of course, with the "Unknown"; it is there that the modern pietist finds a home for his God who has been disinherited from the known. He says: "If the certitudes of science lose themselves in depths of unfathomable mystery, it may well be that out of these same depths there should emerge the certitudes of religion" (p. 288). It is a more refined form of the old familiar argument so dear to the heart of every Christian Evidence lecturer, namely: "If you cannot manufacture life, or consciousness, or mind, in your laboratories, or explain how they arise out of dead matter, then that proves that God made them, as the Bible tells us; therefore the Bible is true."

Du Bois Reymond, the famous German scientist with the French name, who was perpetual secretary of the Berlin Academy of Science, declared, in his celebrated discourse on "The Limits of Natural Science" at Leipzig in 1872, known as the "Ignorabimus speech," which reverberated from all the pulpits of Europe, that of the ultimate constitution of matter and force we are not only ignorant—which was true; but he went further, and declared that not only were we ignorant, but that we always should be ignorant—which was not true; for we know a great deal about it now, and there is no doubt in the mind of anyone acquainted with the enormous advance made in this direction during the last few years that the problem will be solved in the not distant future. And when we know the constitution of matter we shall know, or be in a position to know, how matter "comes under certain conditions to feel, to desire, to think," as it does in a human being; which was another problem which Du Bois Reymond declared to be insoluble.

As Professor Haeckel has well said:—

"Almost every great and difficult problem of knowledge seems to most or all contemporary thinkers insoluble, and every path to the solution of it seems

closed, till at last the bold genius appears whose clear sight detects the right path which till then was hidden, and which leads to the required knowledge."*

Look at the problems declared to be insoluble which science has solved. Comte, one of the greatest of the world's thinkers, declared that we should never be able to discover the composition of the stars; but with the spectroscope we can determine the elements of which a star is composed with as much accuracy as those of our own planet. Dr. Wallace has pointed out that in the middle of the last century "so great a man of science as Sir John Herschell spoke of the mode of origin of the various species of animals and plants as being the "mystery of mysteries,"† a mystery which was shortly afterwards cleared up by Darwin and Dr. Wallace himself. Then—

"We are reminded of Kant's famous pronouncement that psychology never could be a science, because it was impossible either to apply mathematics to its problems or to perform experiments upon the minds of others. Kant's dictum is a classical instance of the danger of prophesying the impossible."‡

For psychology is one of the most progressive of the sciences, and its professors are appointed to chairs in all the universities of the world.

And as for Mr. Balfour's "unfathomable mystery," even a clergyman of the middle of the last century repudiated this refuge in ignorance. The Rev. Baden-Powell, Savilian Professor of Geometry in Oxford University—"an eminent and courageous thinker," says Mr. Benn, "no less a hero in speculation than his illustrious son, the defender of Mafeking, has shown himself in arms"§—observes:—

"In the field of physical inquiry there still remain doubtless vast regions of discovery unexplored: the amount of what we know is trifling indeed compared with that of the unknown; but the inductive spirit assures us that it is only waiting to be made known, and that what appears now most obscure will assuredly some day be as clearly understood as what is now well known, though once equally obscure: and further, that there is no real *mystery* in nature, nothing which is in itself essentially incapable of being understood."||

He also denounces "the spirit of invoking the supernatural to cover our ignorance of natural causes, and then ungratefully discarding its aid whenever natural causes are found sufficient" (p. 163).

We also commend to the notice of these "mystery" men the verdict of Sir Oliver Lodge upon this point. He says:—

"Even though the whole process of evolution is not completely understood as yet, does anyone doubt that it will become more thoroughly understood in time? And if anyone does doubt it, would he hope effectively to bolster up religion by such a doubt?"¶

We have dealt with this matter, some may think, at unnecessary length; but it is rarely that a sermon is preached or a book published dealing with religion and science but what the Rationalist is not taunted with his inability to solve every problem of the past, present, and future. Religious apologists are very fond of quoting Sir Isaac Newton's saying that, with all his knowledge, he felt like a child gathering shells on the shores of an infinite sea. As Carl Snyder says:—

"It has been employed to break down the atheistical tendencies of modern science. It seems a sort of aggressive agnosticism, behind which the most curious fancies find a convenient shelter. Sometimes such modes of thought are to be found associated either with an ignorance of the real conquests of science or with a lack of what may be called a logical imagination."**

And, as he further points out, science has made an immense advance since Newton's time, and that in the very problems that he gave up in despair. Since Newton's time science has explained the origin of suns and planets; it has explained the origin of

* Haeckel, *Freedom in Science and Teaching*; 1879; pp. 101-2.

† *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1908.

‡ *Nature*, April 13, 1911.

§ A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism*; 1906; vol. ii., p. 31.

|| Professor Baden-Powell, *The Order of Nature*, p. 167.

¶ *Man and the Universe*; 1908; p. 11.

** Carl Snyder, *New Conceptions in Science*, p. 291.

plants, animals, and man; and it is now engaged in explaining the constitution of matter and force, over which Newton brooded so long without success. If Newton could return now he would be utterly astounded at the immense strides science has made since his time. As Carl Snyder remarks,

"he would probably have regarded a man as clean daft who would have told him that this simple device [the spectroscope] would one day tell us what the sun is made of, and measure the speed of the most distant stars; would reveal to us new kinds of matter, new substances of whose existence no one had dreamed before, and perhaps give us a clue to the origin of worlds. Were he shown Professor Langley's wonderful bolometer and told that it will measure the heat of a candle a mile or more away, he would be sure you were making game of the old man" (p. 293).

And, as he rightly observes, "Between the discoverer of the law of gravitation and a man of like powers of mind living now, lies a gap almost as great as lay between Newton and an aboriginal inhabitant of Great Britain" (p. 294).

Mr. Balfour has a quite undeserved reputation for scepticism, which is often attributed to him by men who should know better. No doubt they are led astray by the title of his earlier work, *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, which, never having read, they take to be a Freethought work, whereas it is in reality a defence of philosophic doubt in the methods and results of modern science. Mr. Winston Churchill has been reported in a newspaper as speaking of "the atheist leader of the Unionist party"; and Mr. Harold Begbie, in an article in the *Daily Chronicle* (January 29, 1910), publicly accused Mr. Balfour of insincerity and hypocrisy in his religious beliefs. (By the way, how is it that a, in many respects, up-to-date paper like the *Chronicle* employs a writer of Mr. Begbie's calibre, who was evidently intended by nature for a Sunday-school superintendent? That they pay for such utter drivel is one of the mysteries of modern journalism.) Mr. Begbie's article drew a reply from the Rev. Dr. James Robertson, minister of Whittinghame and Moderator of the Church of Scotland, from which we give this extract:—

"He [Mr. Balfour] is a member of my congregation, and attends worship and Communion regularly in his home here. I have pleasure in his presence whenever I preach, for I know that I have in him a believing, responsive, and eminently understanding hearer. He is a regular and liberal subscriber to the enterprises of the Church, and has done the Scottish Church service for which a multitude of its ministers are grateful" (*Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 4, 1910).

It seems to us that we have a right to criticise all opinions, but that it does not follow because a man differs from us that he is a hypocrite and insincere; that is only following in the footsteps of the religious bigot, of which Mr. Begbie seems to be a flourishing example. If you do not credit your opponents with sincerity, unless there is proof to the contrary, how can you expect them to believe in your own?

W. MANN.

The Atheist.

IN the midst of a gently undulating, picturesque district in mid-Hampshire, surrounded by stately conifers and majestic beeches, and within sight of a charmingly sequestered blue lake, there stand two pretty but unpretentious villas. In one of these lives a wicked Atheist, a blasphemous unbeliever, a—but I should outrun my space if I retailed all the opprobrious epithets applied to this man by the alleged followers of him who taught people to become meek like children. The name of this Atheist is whispered in the neighborhood with bated breath. It is said that weird noises may be heard in the evening among the pines that surround his house, and old ladies, whose way takes them by those villas after dark, hurry along with soft footsteps and cast timid glances among the trees. For

this man has a reputation, and the Christians take care that it shall be well sustained.

Being of a daring and adventurous disposition, I frequently spend a week-end with this bold, bad man. I, too, am a sinner travelling to my doom by express route, and my friend's shameless talk and blasphemous books are to my taste. At my last visit I found the usual periodicals lying about the drawing-room. A glance revealed such names as the *Freethinker*, *Clarion*, *Truthseeker*, etc.; and, as I ran my eye over the bookshelves, I found the names of Voltaire, Haeckel, Paine, Huxley, etc. Now, it is not surprising that any man whose reading is of so questionable a type should be a very undesirable character in the eyes of a provincial Christian bookseller, and I was not startled to learn that the virtuous tradesman who supplies this infamous customer with literature keeps him under close observation for fear of incurring a bad debt. Yet my friend tells me (and I have no reason to doubt the statement) that the bookseller has never realised his fears. Incidentally, though, I may mention that the Sunday-school superintendent under whom this wicked Atheist served when a Christian—a man respected and beloved throughout the town—could only be induced to settle a long-outstanding boot-bill (payable to another Sunday-school superintendent of the same town) by the gentle persuasion of a threatened police-court prosecution.

One would think it a highly dangerous policy for an unbeliever, with no faith in the restraining power of an Almighty Hand, to live near a drinking-saloon. But this reckless sinner has deliberately chosen to reside exactly opposite a quiet country hotel, with every inducement to participate in those bugbears of belligerent browbeaters—baccy, beer, and billiards. Yet he is as innocent of the inside decorations of that hotel as a Zulu.

Indeed, he stubbornly persists in running counter to all the Christian views of what he ought to be. He is, for some unaccountable reason, an abstainer; he refuses tobacco in all its forms; and he obstinately spends his evenings indoors or in quiet walks with his wife among the pines. During my visits I have gleaned hints that the alleged "weird noises" in the evening are traceable to his scrambles with his little daughter on the dining-room floor. His wife (you should see his wife—the rotundist, pinkest, merriest, little bundle, in full possession of that trinity of wifely virtues—good sense, good temper, and affection) has managed to get into her head the erroneous idea that he is a model husband. His baby waves him a kiss on his departure in the morning, and runs to meet him in the evening with a merry "Here comes dear daddy," just as if he were a respectable member of society. The deceitfulness of these blasphemers is really wonderful!

I was told in confidence, and after a promise that I would not divulge the name, that a certain deacon of a Congregational church had set a limit of ten years to the happiness of this bad man's married life. "But," my host added with a quiet smile, "that was only because he knew me and had been a personal friend of mine—the other Christians put the limit at ten weeks."

In the course of an evening's talk I also learned that the Christians in his neighborhood are busy manufacturing a third post-mortem convenience for this enemy of the faith. "They don't know where to put him," said his wife. "They cannot have their heaven spoiled by the presence of an unbeliever, and yet, when they come to know James, they are forced to get him out of hell."

Enlightened orthodoxy has many labels for such an abandoned infidel, and one of the mildest of these reads "Stupid and eccentric." That he is a man of most uncommon views is undeniable, and I should like to entertain the reader with a few selections. But as my space is limited I must content myself with mentioning only two examples. One of his silly views is that he owes some sort of duty to posterity. He is interested in some stupid sort of thing called "eugenics," and he pretends to trace some connec-

tion between his dry studies and the bright-eyed little maiden whom he nightly fondles and carries to her bed. Another of his queer ideas is that it is wrong to murder animals for food, and his meals consist chiefly of fruit, nuts, and vegetables—watery stuff with no "backbone" in it. But I saw several butchers' shops in the neighborhood displaying blood-dripping carcasses—with backbone complete—for the satisfaction of the humane Christian appetite.

R. NORTH.

Correspondence.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In a most able article by the late J. M. Wheeler, entitled "Shakespeare and the Devil," published in your issue of even date, I notice the statement that "Sir Thomas Browne gave evidence at Norwich which led to the hanging of two poor old women by Sir Matthew Hale."

I have always been under the impression that this trial, which disgraces my native town, took place at Bury St. Edmunds.

The alleged witches were natives of Lowestoft, and would, therefore, come under the jurisdiction of the Suffolk Assize Court.

I have taken the liberty of calling your attention to this small discrepancy for two reasons. First, because I know the *Freethinker* studies accuracy down to the smallest detail; and, in the second place, because I would be glad if you could help me to discover the beauties in the Doctor's life and works which so many readers appear to have found, and which have entitled the exposé of vulgar errors and believer in witchcraft to a statue in the Market Place of Norwich, although that town cannot claim him as a native.

After due consideration, I conclude that my inability to appreciate the learned Doctor may arise from one or more of several reasons, the most probable of which, is my lack of intelligence which renders me unable to understand fully the subject matter; or it may be prejudice against the man who was the principal means of disgracing my town by the only case of witch murder, as far as I am aware, on record. Or, again, it may be that my unbelief is the stumbling block which prevents me getting in touch with the man who possessed a mind, to quote the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "willing to yield itself up without reserve to the requirements of faith."

Or, after all, can it be possible that there is really nothing in the works of Sir Thomas Browne except a quaint and forceful style to entitle him to rank above the host of his contemporary scribblers, who filled our shelves with a mass of learned nonsense?

Browne's style always reminds me of a coco-nut shy. The ideas, like the balls supplied by the 'shy proprietor, have an appearance of great gravity, but, when examined, are found to be very light; but, like the impact of the ball against the nut, they make quite a rattle in contact with empty skulls.

But, alas; I am haunted by the suspicion that the fault may lie, not with the lightness of the ideas, but with the density of my cranium. Can you help me to drive in a few faint rays of light so that I may not feel quite out in the cold when I hear those who have never attempted to read *Religio Medici* lauding the great Doctor, whose beautiful faith in the goodness and love of God induced him to murder poor, harmless, helpless women?

If you think the subject of Sir Thomas Browne of sufficient interest to your readers, you are quite at liberty to publish any portion of this letter.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I enclose herewith a small subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund.

Long may he be with us to carry on the noble work and to occupy the proud position of Leader of Freethought in this country.

WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS.

[We have not had time yet to look up the evidence as to whether the trial for witchcraft, at which Sir Thomas Browne was a witness, took place at Norwich or at Bury St. Edmunds. J. M. Wheeler was generally correct in such matters. With regard to Sir Thomas Browne's works, we can only say that a man's beliefs do not weigh in estimating his genius as a writer. Browne was a great master of style, with noble ideas (apart from theology) couched in musical and majestic language. He has been a great formative influence in English prose. We regret that we cannot develop this note into an article at present.—
EDITOR.]

Mollycoddle Freethinkers.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

I SUBMIT these few words of protest against that school of Freethought which seeks to maintain that opposition to priestcraft is unnecessary. It seems to me that these people are evading what they consider an onerous duty. I am of the opinion that Freethought, without aggressive hostility to the frock-coated brotherhood, is an innocuous propaganda.

Science, unless it frees us from the incubus of priestly domination, will be, for the most part, useless; science must be a means, not an end, and that end the emancipation of the race. If science is to reach us through the hands of a priest, we may as well keep what we have—Religion.

I believe that the Cloth can take any mere *world view* and make it serve their end, that end being the oppression and enslavement of mankind.

And let it be remembered that there are sundry species of priests; there are priests other than those of religion; priests who do not button their collars behind; yes, there are priests within the very ranks of Freethought.

There are too many philosophers and Freethinkers who would, as it were, become priests, usurping the priestly office and taking the reins from their hands. Since we have broken the shackles of ancient superstition and told conjurer, rain-maker, and medicine man, his proper place, we do not wish to encounter a priest of another hue. To the latter class belong those authors, journalists, orators, and educators who, it seems, are afraid to teach the real facts of history and science; or, if they do teach them, they would not let us form our own conclusions. To them I would say: Let us search unfettered the fields of fact and thought; in the paradise of knowledge there should be no forbidden fruit. Give us your facts; give us your opinions, your thoughts, but give them frankly, candidly—not, as it were, on the condition that we yield the throne of our reason to you.

One thing more. There are Freethinkers who say they love Christianity; they would not destroy it, or if they did destroy it they would "put something in its place." Now, if a farmer were weeding his cornfield, and one of these velvet-gloved philosophers were to happen along, on his vacation tour, perhaps, and begin to question his host thus wise: "Why, John, you are actually doing destructive work. What are you going to put in the place of this quackgrass, these thistles, and these nettles?" I imagine he would suggest that his questioner be brought before a lunacy board; or he might excuse his ignorance on the grounds that he came from the city.

Christianity, like any other lie, is simply to be exposed. The fact of the matter is that these fellows are ashamed to be orthodox, and afraid to be heterodox; but, if you would preserve the semblance of manliness, you must identify yourself with one camp or the other. I would be either an Ingersoll or a Talmage, a Calvin or a Bruno. J. N. LENTZ.

Mrs. J. H. Riddell, the novelist, in *Above Suspicion*, gave the following extraordinary prayer as offered up by "a staunch Presbyterian" on behalf of the late Queen Victoria:—"O Lord, save Thy servant, our Sovereign Lady the Queen! Grant that as she grows an old woman she may become a new man, strengthen her with thy blessing that she may live a pure virgin before Thee, bringing forth sons and daughters to the Glory of God; and vouchsafe her Thy blessing that she may go forth like a he goat on the mountains."

An elderly woman, having experienced the effects of a prosy sermon, in a Scotch church, unfortunately fell asleep. The minister, observing her, paused in his discourse, and in a loud voice thus addressed the delinquent: "Woman! there is no preaching in hell." "Perhaps not," was the reply, "but it's no for want of parsons."

"Satan died here," read a Pittsburg sign. The good news petered out when it was found that it should read "Satin dyed here."

"It is impossible to preach any kind of a sermon to such a congregation of asses." "Is that why you called them dearly beloved brethren?"

"Thank God," the old lady said, "for putting Sunday at the end of the week, when he might have put in the middle, and made a broken week of it."

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 Bandstand): 3.15, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, W. Davidson, "Morning Mountains."

FINSBURY PARK: 5, a Demonstration.

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, W. J. Ramsey, "Life of Charles Bradlaugh."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Davidson, "Things the Parsons Dare Not Tell."

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Herbert Pochin, "The Discoverers of Europe."

OUTDOOR.

LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): Saturday, at 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Genesis and the First Week's Work"—II.

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

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.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

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