

# THE Freethinker

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*He that speaks against his own reason, speaks against his own conscience.*—JEREMY TAYLOR.

## Poor "God."

THOMAS CARLYLE, in his old age—as Mr. Froude relates—used to say that "God does nothing now." Had the Sage of Chelsea begun his intellectual career at that point, instead of in the slough of Scotch Presbyterianism, he might have learnt that God does nothing now for the simple reason that he never did anything at any time,—being, indeed, a mere figment of the human imagination, varying from age to age and land to land, according to the mental and moral character of his worshipers.

There was a time when God did everything. Strictly speaking, of course, he was *supposed* to do everything. He wielded the thunder and lightning, he gave life and took it, he settled everybody's lot, he created good and evil. "I, the Lord, do all these things." He even counted the sparrows and the hairs on people's heads, and kept a ledger account of both.

Unforeseeable accidents used to be the "Act of God." Someone was killed by lightning, damage was done by storms, fish was turned stinking by delay which was not the railway company's fault,—and the "Act of God" covered it all. All sudden mischief was attributed to the Deity. Which seems to be the universal tendency of mankind. For if a man loses his wife in a train or tram-car smash, or drops all his savings in a failing bank, or falls down stairs and breaks his legs, the people who hear of it exclaim "Good God!" And it is noticeable that "the Devil you did!" is nearly always reserved for some pleasantness or jocularity.

Things are very different now. The "God" who did everything once, and does nothing now, is sinking still lower into sheer contempt. We have the authority of the Browning Brotherhood for it. That body has passed a resolution condemning Italy's attack upon Turkey as "an act of barefaced international burglary, and a deliberate defiance of God." This is what the Deity has come to in the senile decay which precedes death—and oblivion. It is sad, shockingly sad, terribly sad. One's sympathy goes out to the famous old personage. He used to make holocausts of his enemies, and now he has to put up with the defiance of a minor European Power.

According to the Bible the inhabitants of this planet are all sinful worms. Well, a lot of worms crawling about on the boot-shaped peninsula that runs from Europe towards Africa in the Mediterranean Sea, have lifted their little heads up from the earth and informed "God" that he may go to Hades. They have defied him. And he lets them do it. "Oh, what a fall was there!" It is too melancholy for words. But one thing is obvious. We shall either have to get a new God or do without one altogether. The first course is recommended by the New Theology. The second course is recommended by Atheism. It is the difference between the half-heart and the whole-hog. For, as Stendhal said, the only excuse for God is that he does not exist.

Italy has flung "defiance" in the face of God. So say the Browning Hall Brotherhood. And what do their fellow-Christians say of it? What does the Rev. F. B. Meyer say? This gentleman begged all Christian Churches to pray to God that the Wells and Johnson glove-fight might be stopped. He doesn't beg them to pray to God that Italy may be stopped. The reverend gentleman's trust in God, like his moral indignation, ended with the spoiling of the black pugilist's chance of licking the white pugilist. He makes a perfunctory protest against Italy's piratical enterprise; and there, as far as he is concerned, the matter ends. No restless agitation, no moving heaven and earth, now. Baiting Italy is a different job from baiting Jack Johnson. Besides, there is no particular advertisement in it. What is more, the Foreign Office does not take its cue from clerical busybodies.

What is the use of talking of God at all in the present European crisis? Our father which art in heaven keeps no sort of control over his household on earth. His children are constantly quarreling with each other. There is mutual spitting and swearing when there are no actual hostilities. Every now and then they break out into violence,—punch each others' heads, smash each others' noses, break each others' jaws, make each others' blood flow, get each other down on the ground, and kick and rob each other to their hearts' content. And the dear papa never reads the riot act, never checks his unruly children, never takes their hands from each others' throats, never stops the bloodshed. He looks down on the brutal scene with the greatest equanimity. He is "the one above." That is to say, he is nowhere; for there is no "up above" in nature, where gravitation acts in every direction with equal intensity.

It was a bitter but true observation of the profound and implacable genius of Swift that most people have religion enough to make them hate each other. Were he living, observing, and writing now, he would probably admit that religion seldom did anything else. Christianity, for instance, has not made Christians love each other; but it has made them hate other religionists with a perfect hatred. The pulse of the priests of Christianity is not quickened by the sight of injustice and cruelty inflicted on Mohammedans. They are only "heathen" followers of the "Great Impostor" or "Arab Thief" as John Wesley called him for robbing Christendom of so many of its flourishing provinces in Asia and Africa, and even in Europe.

One aspect of the present crisis is positively amusing. The greater European nations, having to save their faces, and perhaps salve their consciences, in some way or other, are reading Italy moral lessons. England has her own reasons for being in India and Egypt; Germany has her own reasons for being in Africa, Samoa, and other foreign places; France has her own reasons for being in Algeria and Morocco; and these reasons are all highly moral. We govern and exploit foreign lands for the highest good of their inhabitants. But a small thief, like Italy, cannot be permitted to argue in that way; so the big thieves preach at her—and that is all they mean to do. What a hypocritical set of scoundrels these Christians are!

G. W. FOOTE.



## Personal Identity.

A CORRESPONDENT has been good enough to forward me the report of a paper by Professor E. Compton, printed in the Transactions of the Ohio College Association, and asks me whether I can see my way to replying to the author's attack on the Materialist position. The criticism raised is an old one, but I do not think an insuperable one. At any rate, whatever strength there is in the attack, and whatever weakness there may be in the defence, are both due to the imperfections of our knowledge concerning mental phenomena. And in such a case it would seem to be a sound rule that the balance of credence should rest with the theory that makes least use of unknown forces and qualities, while resting upon the largest number of known and verifiable facts. From this point of view I do not think that Materialism—properly understood—has much to fear from adverse criticism.

Professor Compton's criticism may be reduced to a very brief form, but to understand his criticism a word is necessary concerning the position criticised. With numerous sub-divisions, there are two main heads under which all theories as to what constitutes the "self" may be grouped. One is, that all states of consciousness are grouped or fused into a coherent whole by a transcendental entity, the soul. Although nourished by experience, this soul, or ego, is independent of it. It is the true unity which underlies and synthesises all diversity. The other theory is that what is called the "self" is a pure abstraction made up of the sum total of mental processes at any given time, including, of course, the memory and consequences of all past mental processes, as well as the expectation of processes to come. I can best give this theory in the words of one of the clearest of English philosophers. In the essay on "Personal Identity," in his *Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume says:—

"There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our Self; that we feel its existence and its continuity in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity.....It must be some one impression that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea.....For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself without perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a non-entity. If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him.....But.....I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement."

This is admirably put, and later writers have added nothing to the essential clarity of the statement. Additions and reservations have been made, and the teaching has been powerfully enforced from the physiological side, by greater knowledge of the nervous system than existed in Hume's day, and by

actual experimentation, of which more will be said later. But substantially the theory holds the scientific field. The self is not an entity existing prior to experience, and superior to mental states, it is the sum total of mental processes.

Now, against this position Professor Compton brings a very old criticism. Not that a criticism is of necessity invalid because it is old, but it is well to bear in mind that the objection is not a new one. If, he asks, I am merely the sum of my mental states, how do I come to be aware of the fact? If the self is a product of a series of conscious states, the knower of the series must be something different from the series. For a series has a beginning, a middle, and an end; and this must be known as such by someone or something who contemplates the series as a whole. But without a something that knows the different stages of a process and relates one to another, a series, as a series, cannot exist. All we have is a number of disconnected impressions. A sensation comes and goes. It cannot relate itself to a preceding one—that is dead. It cannot relate itself to a succeeding one—that is not born. What is needed is something that will cognise each sensation as it arises, and relate it to that which has gone and that which is to follow.

Those who are conversant with the historic controversy over the doctrine of Mental Association will recognise the above as being a restatement of a stock objection. And my first comment is, that the hypothesis of a transcendent self or ego, independent of experience, really does nothing to solve any difficulty we have in understanding the nature of mental processes. So far, Professor Compton is following the common plan of emphasising the difficulties connected with an opposing hypothesis, without troubling over the equally great, if not greater, difficulties connected with his own. In the first place, any difficulty that lies in the way of our accepting the self as a fusion of mental states on the ground that this cannot be the known and the knower at the same time, applies with equal force to this assumed ego. How does the ego become aware of itself? If it knows itself prior to experience, it is in the position of being both that which knows and that which is known, and the objection against the sensationalist theory falls to the ground. If it knows itself because of the sensations experienced, it is only conscious of a stream of sensations, and the doctrine attacked is reinstated under another name. The ego's consciousness of itself is built up from experience, which is exactly what the modern scientific theory teaches. There is no greater difficulty in realising how a multitude of sensible experiences become blended into a unity that appears as "self," than there is in understanding how a something independent of experience blends experience into an unity. To say that we know the ego does connect these mental states, because we know they are connected, is only stating the same fact twice over. We know they are connected because there is the admitted fact of continuity. *How* they are connected is the question at issue; and this question, I hope to show, is answered well enough by the neurological theory of mental phenomena.

Altogether the soul theory gives no help. It only adds a difficulty to those already existing. It is, as William James says, "a complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the actually verified facts of consciousness goes.....is an outbirth of that sort of philosophising whose great maxim, according to Dr. Hodgson, is: Whatever you are totally ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else." And Professor MacDougal, in his recently issued *Body and Mind*, says:—

"It is matter of common knowledge that science has given its verdict against the soul; has declared that the conception of the soul as a thing, or being, or substance, or mode of existence, or activity, different from, distinguishable from, or in any sense or degree independent of the body, is a mere survival from primitive culture, one of the many relics of savage superstition that obstinately persists among us in defiance of the clear teachings of modern science."



Professor MacDougal's bulky volume is an attempt to disprove this position; but the recognition of the teaching of modern science on this point is nevertheless welcome.

My second comment is that Professor Compton makes too much of the necessity for a series being known as such. For the fact is that a complete series is seldom, if ever, recalled. It is usually more or less blurred, with many of the members of the series actually forgotten altogether. Far too much is made of the sense of personal identity, or the continuity of the idea of self, by psychologists who are much more alive to the necessities of a theory than to the actual facts. The testimony of parents and friends assures me that "I" am the same person that existed when I was an infant. But so far as my personal consciousness is concerned that "I" has no existence whatever; or if it exists, it does so only in the way that other persons exist to me. But I am no more identified in feeling or in memory with the infant of twelve months' old than I am with the German Kaiser. And as there is this great time gap that shuts me off from a certain early portion of my existence, so there are time gaps right through my life. Some experiences are forgotten altogether, others are confused. It is not a complete series of sensations that are registered and cognised, but only certain members of the series, or certain aspects of the series.

It is not even accurate to speak of the self of the moment as being identical with the self of all past moments. No man is the same self to-day that he was twenty years ago, a year ago, or even a month. His ideas, his feelings, the range, application, and direction of his emotions, all undergo more or less profound modifications. All of us look back upon our "self" of other days, sometimes with regret, sometimes with satisfaction, sometimes with pride, sometimes with shame. There is no such continuity of self as the theory of an indwelling ego, superior to experience, requires. There is a self continuously undergoing change, with a memory, more or less accurate, of past selves. It is memory that provides the real basis of personal identity, and, as will be seen, this is quite covered by the nervous theory of mental action.

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

### Namby-Pambyism.

CONSIDERABLE, in various ways, is our debt to Henry Carey, the eighteenth-century dramatist. In no sense great, he was yet exceedingly popular as a musical composer and humorous poet. It is to him we owe that most elegant and natural of English lyrics, *Sally in Our Alley*, of which we never tire. He was also a notorious wag, in which capacity he coined the well-known sobriquet, *namby-pamby*. This nickname was applied to Ambrose Philips, a distinguished man of letters, and a close friend of Steele and Addison. He was "one of the wits at Button's." He did a great deal of miscellaneous work, but ultimately won distinction as a pastoral poet. In this department he was believed by some to have out-rivalled Pope himself. It is interesting to recall the fact that Philips did good work on the *Freethinker*, one of the many short-lived would-be rivals of the famous *Spectator*. For ease, fluency, felicitous diction, and warmth of sympathy, his *Pastorals* have seldom been surpassed. His odes also are distinguished by the same fine qualities; but, unfortunately, the sentiment is frequently weak, almost mawkish, a defect at which both Swift and Pope fired some very satirical shots. Some of the sentimental verses were addressed to Lord Carteret's children, and the weakness of these was so obtrusive that Carey could not resist the temptation of playfully dubbing the author Namby-Pamby Philips, in imitation of a child's attempts at pronouncing Ambrose. This was a sweet morsel which Pope rolled in rapture under his tongue, and poor

Ambrose came to be known ever afterwards by that uncomplimentary epithet.

Now, Namby-Pamby as an adjective is defined in the dictionaries as "affectedly pretty; weakly sentimental; finical, insipid." When we characterise talk or writing as Namby-Pamby what we mean is that it lacks virility and is ineffectual. The sentimental weakness of Ambrose Philips impelled Macaulay to characterise him as "a middling poet," in spite of his being "a good Whig." Thackeray too had nothing but contempt for that species of expression. And yet there are those in every generation who affect it, and regard it as the only permissible style. Strong language, born of strong conviction, is an abomination unto them. To call a spade a spade they look upon as an offence against good taste. They love to deal in euphemisms, in which they succeed in hiding their real thoughts. They simply bewilder those with whom they have to do with sweet nothings. As we read their writings or listen to their talk we are irresistibly driven to ask, "What on earth do you mean?" There is such a thing, we fear, as namby-pamby Freethought, of which the best we can say is that it is genuine enough, at heart, but weak-kneed, limp, flaccid, evasive. We do not like it, though we may be very fond of its promulgators. We prefer Freethought with a firm, unbendable backbone, the very reverse of an angle-worm. Freethinkers of the calibre and temper of Diderot, Voltaire, Paine, and Anthony Collins are the best promoters of our cause. There is no mistaking where such men stand, or what they mean. Collins's *Discourse of Freethinking* was a mighty thunderclap, and the storm that followed deluged the whole country. Collins knew what he wanted to say, and said it in a simple, clear, unambiguous fashion. He was strong without being vulgar or abusive, and emphatic without being coarse. It is only by such men that a Freethought propaganda can be carried on to a successful issue.

The attitude of Freethought to-day is one of unqualified and uncompromising opposition to every form of supernaturalism. Let no one draw the false inference, however, that opposition means persecution. We are undaunted advocates of complete religious toleration. Our watchword is liberty of thought and speech, and it is under its banner that we wish to do all our fighting. But it must be clearly understood that we are obstinate enemies of the prevailing superstition, and are resolutely set upon doing our utmost to stamp it out. Far be it from us to assert that the Churches do no good, for we know that their good works are both numerous and substantial; but that knowledge does not weaken, in the slightest degree, our conviction that the Churches are founded upon a lie, and are seriously handicapped, by that lie, in their philanthropic activities. We are convinced that the good they do would be more than trebled were they but heroic enough to eject that lie. As long as that lie is harbored and cherished, the Churches neutralise the good by the evil they do. Instead of producing men and women of sterling qualities, they breed cowards and slaves. It does not follow, however, that because we condemn the Christian Church as a lying institution, we are blind to the practice of virtue by many Christian people. The object of our attack is supernaturalism as embedded in the Church. It is for pretending to be what she is not, and to do what is beyond the range of possibility, that we raise our voices against her; and it is on this account that we rejoice in her present decline.

It is becoming fashionable, in certain quarters, to decry the nineteenth century. Its science, its Rationalism, even its ideals, we are said to have outgrown. Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, Bradlaugh, and Ingersoll served their day and generation to the best of their ability; but their teaching is of but little value to us. In the nineteenth century reason was hailed as the supreme guide of life, and the Bible was seen to be historically incorrect; but the Rationalist of the twentieth century informs us that he feels "oppressed" by all that. What, then, is



Rationalism? Is it not the doctrine that reason is the finest human faculty, and should be our practical guide? To set any other faculty on the throne is to forswear Rationalism. The great thinkers just named are not quite out of date yet, nor are they likely to be for some time to come. It is a radical mistake to speak of Bergson as a Rationalist, his one object being to abolish Rationalism. His chief business consists in depreciating the intellect, in glorifying intuition, and in urging his disciples to put their trust in mysticism. Indeed, it is safe to assert that Bergson is an anti-Rationalist, and that the Rationalists who take him as their leader unconsciously deny their own principles.

The position we hold is impregnable. If Christianity is not true, we are in conscience bound to attack it. In this respect Freethought is to-day exactly what it was fifty years ago. Our ideals are the same now that they were then. The only difference is that our knowledge of Nature is much greater and more accurate than it was fifty years ago. We are better equipped for the warfare than we ever were before. The minds of men are widening with the process of the sun, and the light of reason is shining with ever-increasing clearness. One is not amazed to find Bacon concluding that "Sacred Theology ought to be derived from the words and oracles of God, and not from the light of Nature, or the dictates of reason"; but it is most surprising to come across Rationalists in the twentieth century who confess that they "feel oppressed by the narrow Rationalist thesis that reason is our guide, and that the Bible is not historically correct." That is essentially the position occupied by the Christian theologian. He too boasts of intuition as an infinitely higher faculty than the reason, and so he believes that Christianity is true when he has no means whatever of testing its truth. But what is intuition? Even Bergson himself does not know. Sometimes he calls it instinct, and sometimes sympathy; but he fails to make it an intelligible reality. In point of fact, we have no faculty that gives us direct knowledge of supernatural objects. Every scrap of knowledge that we possess has come to us through our bodily senses: we have absolutely no other means of getting into communication with what is outside of us. Belief is of necessity blind, else it would not be belief. To believe in God and immortality, in Christ and his salvation, is to act blindly; and in the nature of things such faith cannot blossom into knowledge. Now, what reason finds out is that such action is both foolish and hurtful, and that however inevitable and excusable such action may have been in the childhood of the race, it now stands utterly condemned, and by the thinker is seen to be wholly irrational.

The question that remains is, Is it no longer necessary to dislodge supernatural belief by exposing its unreasonableness? There are a few indifferent Freethinkers who do not think it worth while to disillusionise their less favored brethren. Some of them are even reluctant to give any expression at all to their unbelief. But such people are not ardent lovers of their kind. The sense of brotherhood is, to say the least, dormant within them. There is no tie that binds them to their fellow-beings. But, surely, the altruistic instinct ought to be sufficiently developed in all to make it impossible for those who are intellectually free to enjoy their freedom while others are still in bondage. Freethought Societies are purely altruistic establishments, whose one motive is the love of man. The outstanding fact is that Christianity has done incalculable harm in the world. For one thing, it has prevented ethical science from growing. All it has given the world is what Nietzsche aptly calls slave-morality. The alleged dependence of morality upon supernaturalism has sadly crippled it. The moment it gets emancipated it becomes a growing science. In this case, a destructive process must precede a constructive one. Sometimes we are accused of flogging a dead horse; but the charge has not a grain of truth in it. The horse is still alive and marvellously active. Even

the old orthodoxy needs a lot of killing yet, while the newer orthodoxy imagines that it has secured a long lease of life. Destruction is by no means pleasant work, but it must be done before there can be any constructive progress to speak of. Supernaturalism is a menacing obstruction lying across the road of progress, and our first duty is to remove it as speedily as possible; and then we can march breast forward, and mature our philosophy on Secularist lines.

Let us throw namby-pambyism to the winds and stiffen the back of our philosophy. Having set reason on the throne in our own lives, let us induce and help others to do the same. It is the most glorious work in which we can engage, and great is the reward of those who give themselves to it.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Science versus Superstition.

THE early Fathers of "the Great Lying Church," almost without exception explained the occurrence of hurricanes, hailstones, and lightning as Divine visitations upon sinful man. The early ages of Christianity witnessed a curious contest between Pagan and Christian superstition. When the second century was nearing its close, the philosophic and humanitarian Pagan emperor, Marcus Aurelius, was engaged in deadly battle with the barbarian Quadi, when a terrible storm arose. The issue of this great engagement still hung in the balance, when a blinding storm suddenly smote the faces of the barbarians. This gave a great advantage to the Roman legions, and a decisive victory was won. The devotees of each of the leading religions claimed that this providential storm was sent by the divinity of their special adoration and worship. The Pagans were satisfied that Jupiter had answered their prayers, and the commemorative figure of Olympian Jove hurling his thunderbolts, and emptying torrents of rain from the heavens upon the enemies of Rome, is still to be seen on the Antonine Column in the Eternal City. The Christians, on the other hand, proclaimed that the deluge had been sent by Jehovah in response to their supplications.

With the evolution of Christian doctrine, the Fathers elaborated this view with many confirmatory texts from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Jupiter was transformed into Jehovah, "wrapped in thunder, and sending forth his lightnings." So sedulously was this superstition fostered throughout the long, dark ages of religious ascendancy, that it permeated all mediæval theology, and the sins particularly punished by this Catholic storm-god were specifically defined.

A Cistercian monk of the thirteenth century, Cæsarius of Heisterbach, devoted his great intellect to a careful consideration of meteorological science. Some of his anecdotes are remarkably queer when approached from the standpoint of the modern mind; but the work containing them appears to have been the favorite light reading of the convents throughout three centuries, and materially moulded the beliefs of the later Middle Ages. In his work he assures us

"how the steward of his own monastery was saved from the clutch of a robber by a clap of thunder which, in answer to his prayer, burst suddenly from the sky and frightened the bandit from his purpose; how, in a Saxon theatre, twenty men were struck down, while a priest escaped, not because he was not a greater sinner than the rest, but because the thunderbolt had respect for his profession! It is Cæsarius, too, who tells us the story of the priest of Treves, struck by lightning in his own church, whither he had gone to ring the bell against the storm, and whose sins were revealed by the course of the lightning, for it tore his clothes from him and consumed certain parts of his body, showing that the sins for which he was punished were vanity and unchastity."\*

\* Professor A. D. White, *Warfare Between Science and Theology*, vol. i., pp. 332, 333.



In the succeeding centuries this theory of divine storm guidance was further developed. Even after the so-called Reformation, divine direction of atmospheric phenomena was universally assumed by Catholic and Protestant alike. In the seventeenth century the Catholic Bishop of Voltoraria, in Southern Italy, produced a ponderous work on this subject. He declares that thunder and lightning are bombs for the wicked, and that "of all instruments of God's vengeance, the thunderbolt is the chief." The pious bishop asserts that Luther was struck by lightning in his early youth as a warning against his desertion of the true faith, and that blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking are the sins for which this chastisement is particularly intended. At an even later date the Swabian Protestant Pastor, Georg Nuber, completely outdistanced the bishop. He intimates in his entertaining volume of weather sermons that hail and lightning, storms, droughts, and floods are God's direct punishments for human misdeeds. But the divinity doubtless discriminates, for there are five sins which are specially punished with lightning and hail. These are: incredulity, impenitence, neglect of the repair of churches, fraud in the payment of tithes to the clergy, and oppression of subordinates.

Side by side with the above outlined superstition, others of a kindred character flourished. From the fourth century onwards, the outward manifestations of Paganism were remorselessly uprooted by the all-powerful Church. But heathen and Pagan customs and beliefs survived under other names, and the ecclesiastics soon adopted them and turned them to profitable account. With the Pagans of the Roman civilisation, as with the barbarian Huns, Goths, and Vandals, it was an easier task to introduce the new gods than to drive out the old. The discrowned heathen and Pagan divinities reappeared in the form and figure of demons. St. Jerome proved from Scripture that the air was densely peopled with evil spirits. St. Augustine regarded their aerial presence as an incontrovertible fact. When we reflect that demon and divinity are but two aspects of the same belief, we readily realise that the doctrine of the diabolical origin of storms was certain to secure wide acceptance. The demons of theology, so long as they remain creatures of genuine belief, are much more likely to occupy the thoughts of the ignorant and superstitious than those milder deities who are just as likely to send blessings as they are to send curses upon mankind. Bede was firmly convinced that devils directed the storms. St. Thomas Aquinas gave this fancy his all-powerful support. In his *Summa* he writes: "Rains and winds, and whatsoever occurs by local impulse alone, can be caused by demons.....It is a dogma of faith that the demons can produce winds, storms, and rain of fire from heaven."

The infallible heads of the Church repeatedly sanctioned this eerie superstition. The doctrine of diabolism developed until its blossoms were displayed in multitudinous treatises from the pens of the most learned Catholic and Protestant divines. Its poisonous fruits subsequently ripened into the torture chambers and scaffolds which indelibly stain the history of the Churches. If we credit the statements of a more or less truthful Jesuit, Martin Luther was a zealous supporter of this baleful superstition. He asserts that the winds are really good or evil spirits, and alleges that a stone flung into a certain pond near his native place would produce a terrible storm because of the devils imprisoned therein.

In addition to prayer, various other methods were employed to frustrate the malicious imps of the air. The cunning arts of exorcism were extensively used. In an exorcism attributed to Gregory XIII., the following formula occurs:—

"I, a priest of Christ,.....do command ye, most foul spirits, who do stir up these clouds,.....that ye depart from, and disperse yourselves into wild and untilled places, that ye may be no longer able to harm men or animals or fruits or herbs, or whatsoever is designed for human use."

Another curious contrivance devised to save men from the machinations of fiends was the "conception billet." These billets were extensively sold by the Carmelite monks, and consisted of a formula placed upon consecrated paper, which was warranted to frighten the Devil himself. It was only necessary to bury a billet in a corner of a field to secure full protection against evil weather and insect pests.\*

But the most marvellous charm of all appears to have been a piece of wax—the Agnus Dei—blessed by the Pope's own holy hand, and stamped with the famous device portraying the "Lamb of God." Its powers were so potent that Pope Urban V. considered that three of these wax cakes formed a suitable gift from himself to the Greek Emperor. The Holy Father's patronage of these fetishes endowed them with immense value in the eyes of the faithful. Their power in overcoming storms, pestilences, conflagrations, and other terrible things, was so wonderful that the manufacture and sale of this justly celebrated fetish was, by a Papal Bull of 1471, reserved for his Holiness himself.

A mournful commentary upon the boundless credulity of mankind is furnished by the Catholic custom of carrying statues, relics, and sacred emblems in procession for the purpose of circumventing the evil powers of the air. In benighted countries where this religious mummery still survives, the statues and reliquaries of patron saints are prominent features of the procession. Some of these excel as sun charms; other command the rain to fall.

But the clanging of church bells was probably the most permanently popular means of outwitting and overthrowing the devils who infested the circumambient air. As early as the ninth century, bells were continually rung for this purpose. Towards the close of the tenth, Pope John XIII. "gave it the highest ecclesiastical sanction by himself baptising the great bell of his cathedral church, the Lateran, and christening it with his own name." Chiefly through the medium of the pulpit, this craze was speedily developed. Innumerable Latin inscriptions were placed on the church bells throughout Europe, which celebrated their efficacy in driving away demons and in staying the lightning flash.

And yet, as Lecky scornfully remarks, the wire invented by the sceptic Franklin now protects the crosses on our churches and cathedrals from the lightning stroke of heaven. When, in 1752, Franklin carried out his experiments with a kite on the shores of the Schuylkill, and attracted the electric spark from the clouds, the entire structure of meteorological quackery, reared and fostered by the fathers, popes, and sacerdotal obscurantists generally, crumbled to the dust. The Church, as usual, indulged in her time-honored game of sly insinuation before bowing to the inevitable. Old-fashioned people continued to shake their orthodox heads at Franklin's lightning rod. The American earthquake of 1755 was widely attributed to Franklin's impiety. But the painful necessity for protecting churches and public buildings became more and more apparent. That able historian, Dr. A. D. White, informs us that, in 1783, it was stated on excellent authority that in Germany, within the space of thirty-three years, nearly 400 towers had been damaged and 120 bell-ringers killed.

On the summit of the tower of St. Mark's, at Venice, is perched an angel. The bells were fully consecrated to render them invulnerable to the demons of the air; relics reposed in the cathedral close by. Nevertheless, the tower was repeatedly injured by lightning. In 1388 it was shattered; the wooden spire was destroyed by fires caused by the lightning in 1417, and again in 1489. It was seriously injured in 1548, 1565, and 1653, and in 1745 was so extensively damaged that the entire tower, which had been reconstructed in brick and stone, was splintered in 37 places. Franklin's invention had been introduced into Italy by the sceptical

\* Rydberg, *The Magic of the Middle Ages*.



Beccaria, but the tower continued to remain at the mercy of the elements. It was heavily damaged in 1761 and 1762; and not until 1766, fourteen years after Franklin's discovery, was it protected by a lightning conductor; and it has never been injured since. Thus does secular science triumph over sacred superstition.

T. F. PALMER.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Justice Lush's injunction stopped the Wells and Johnson encounter without deciding whether it was illegal or not. The only question at issue, before him, was whether the contest would endanger the Earl's Court license—and that could hardly be denied after the threatening letter of the County Council's Chairman. This way out of the difficulty was peculiarly English, and extremely welcome to the many good English Christians whose real objection was that the black man was bound to win.

Jack Johnson offered to debate with the Rev. F. B. Meyer on any subject from the Bible to the stars, and said he would bet that his own education was as good as the reverend gentleman's. Being informed of this, Mr. Meyer replied, through a *Daily News* interviewer, that he would "discuss the new comet" with Johnson, but he couldn't (as a poor parson) put down a thousand pounds,—only fighting men could do that; and the discussion might take place "on Primrose Hill at night time." Mr. Meyer said this with a comic intention, but we doubt his beating Johnson even with the tongue. The black pugilist's cross-examination of that police superintendent at Bow-street was wonderfully good. Every word—and there wasn't one superfluous—touched the spot. He seems almost as good with his tongue as he is with his fists—and more than a match for Mr. Meyer with either.

The *Chronicle* gave some snapshots of Johnson at Bow-street, and one of Mr. Meyer. The wicked black boxer looked jolly and good-natured. The white parson looked as if he had trained on vinegar and crab-apples.

Johnson feels quite as sure of heaven as Mr. Meyer does. He told the *Daily News* interviewer that the stoppage of boxing contests in England wouldn't make much difference to him, though it would to many others. "I've earned enough money," he said, "to last me till the Good Father calls me Above." Probably the "Good Father" would find the boxer better company than the preacher. A joke is so much nicer than a sermon—especially when accentuated by a big smile on a jolly black face.

Rev. F. B. Meyer and his pious friends were congratulated by the *Daily Chronicle* as deserving the thanks of the community for the agitation that (accidentally) stopped the Wells and Johnson glove fight. We don't hear that they have made any protest against Italy's brutal attack upon Turkey. Jack Johnson was a black man: that was his crime. Turkey is Mohammedan: that is her crime—and it is enough to alienate all the sympathy of the clerical gentlemen whose moral indignation was so overwhelmingly against a contemplated boxing match.

Margaret A. Gilliland, M.A., Head Mistress of Aske's Haberdashers' School, Acton, contributed a two-column article to the *Daily Telegraph* of September 28 on "The Bible in School." At the very outset she notes a "practical difficulty" in Bible teaching. "We will not treat the Bible," she says, "as we would any other piece of great literature." Quite so. The clergy of all Churches will take care of that. If the teachers were not only allowed, but ordered, to treat the Bible as they would treat other famous books, we should soon have Secular Education. Moreover, the value of the Bible as great literature would soon suffer a great depreciation. There are fine passages in it, and these throw a glamor on a lot of indifferent matter—not to say filthy and repulsive matter. And the giving of moral lessons from the lives of Abraham, and other legendary beings, which Margaret Gilliland waxes so eloquent over, is a mere absurdity. Human history has plenty of authentic heroes whose lives could much better be used to illustrate the cardinal virtues from. Nor do we see why so much is made of Paul's "My love be with you all." It is a nice but not a novel sentiment, far better expressed by some great poets. And when the lady winds up by declaring that "the Bible is our greatest heritage," she simply shows how

impossible it is to avoid sectarian teaching without banishing religion altogether from the State schools.

Another good charitable Christian. Miss M. S. Forbes, of Lower Belgrave-street, stipulated in her will that legacies under her will shall not be paid to any beneficiary professing the Roman Catholic religion previous to or at her death. "Believe as I do or be damned."

Rev. H. M. Ingram, rector of Aldrington, Sussex, left £22,976. He can hardly be with Lazarus. And the alternative place is more than tropical.

The *Streatham News* is a funny paper. By way of "boycotting" Mr. Boulter it gives him another page (and more) of editorial advertisement, and prints another photographic portrait of him. A stranger might think that Mr. Boulter and the *Streatham News* understood each other.

We clip the following paragraph from the *Observer* :—

"Ever since the appearance of the Comet, a Field Preacher, well known in the neighborhood of Paddington and the New Road, for his persevering attempts to reclaim the numerous frequenters of the tea-gardens in its neighborhood, has been indefatigable in inculcating the necessity of immediate reform; as the destruction of the world by fire was at hand. During the last week, led by an extravagant and mistaken zeal, he entered several Dissenting Chapels, and rising in the midst of the service, addressed himself to the Minister, and the Congregation, on the subject of the ruin which hung over them; the nightly appearance of the Comet being, in his opinion, manifest indication of the wrath of Heaven. His text on such occasions was the 3rd and 4th chapters of Jeremiah; and he never fails to dwell with censurable indecorousness on the illness of our venerable Sovereign. Being attended by many weak persons, who fully believe in the truth of his representations, his ejection is a matter of difficulty, and when it takes place, he never fails to console himself, and annoy the neighborhood, by haranguing the passing spectators."

This nameless prophet might have made a big reputation in the days of old. But it is too late for him now. Jeremiahs and Jonahs are sadly out of date in these prosaic times when people laugh at the most earnest prophets. Even churches and chapels throw him out.

Rev. Dr. Orchard's Correspondence Column in the *Christian Commonwealth* occasionally furnishes interesting reading. In a recent issue he prints the following portion of a letter received :—

"I have never been able to love my mother; not that she is a bad woman; on the contrary, she is one of your good, religious women who seem to have the knack of driving so many people to the other extreme. Ever since I can remember, everything we, her children, wanted to do was sure to be wicked. If we wanted to go to a dance, it would be called the devil's carnival. Did we propose the theatre, it was the devil's chapel. If we said anything in fun, every idle word must be accounted for. Oh, how I hate these good, religious people! If my mother had not been religious there might have been some hope for her family, but as it is we none of us believe in anything."

Dr. Orchard's correspondent is not the only one, we imagine, who might write in a similar strain. And when we read so much of the purifying and elevating influence of Christianity, it is well to bear in mind such cases. For here is a case of Christianity distorting even the influence of a mother, souring her children's lives, and turning harmless enjoyment into evil. The effect of such teaching on character goes far to outweigh any possible benefit in other directions.

In reply to the same correspondent, Dr. Orchard has a cut at the old problem of evil and God. This is his method :—

"If it is impossible to believe in God, then we ought first of all to recognise where we are. It means that the presence of pain and evil forces us to conclude that we human beings have accidentally or fatally emerged in a universe which holds nothing answering to our aspirations, our hopes, or our moral sense. Let this conclusion be faced. It entails that there is no meaning in the universe at all. There is such complete divorce between us and nature that it is of no avail our trying to understand nature. If love can emerge as an imperative impulse in man from a scheme that is loveless and against love, then the fundamental axiom of science has gone by the board. It is no use striving, it is no use thinking, for truth is then as phantasmal as hope."

If it is not blasphemy to say it, this appears to us nothing but sheer verbiage. Our aspirations, our hopes, and our moral sense are not at fault if there is not a belief in God, because these are properly concerned with our fellows. We do not hope anything of a stone except that it will behave like a stone. If it began to behave like a performing bear,



then we should feel that our hopes concerning it were wrong. And so long as men and women behave like men and women our hopes and aspirations concerning them are not likely to be seriously or permanently disappointed. And in realising this we are understanding nature in the only intelligible sense of the term. What Dr. Orchard means by saying that the fundamental axiom of science has gone by the board if love can emerge from a loveless universe is not clear to us—perhaps it is not clear to him. If love emerges, it emerges. If Dr. Orchard does not understand its emergence, this only means that Dr. Orchard does not understand its emergence. But science will not break down on that account, and Dr. Orchard may cheer up. Love is in the universe; it is so far a part of the universe. But it does not emerge from the inanimate, but from the animate, part of it. And if Dr. Orchard will cease blinding himself with words, and confusing his readers with empty phrases, he may not find it difficult to derive the highest form of love from the normal forces expressed in animal life.

The Rev. Professor Sanday has shown his hand only too plainly in his opposition to the Rev. J. M. Thompson's innocent book on New Testament miracles. As is well known, Mr. Thompson has been inhibited by the Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Sanday justifies that inhibition by saying that in the New Testament questions of fact are so bound up with theological dogmas that it would be an act of disloyalty to test them in the ordinary critical way. True or false, they must be believed and defended. And yet we are living in the twentieth century.

Mr. R. J. Campbell is of opinion that people are in too great a hurry to dispose of miracles. And he adds, "Unless I am greatly mistaken, we are on the eve of a rehabilitation of the credibility of the Bible miracles, or at any rate of most of them." Our desperate City Temple heretic seems racing back to the orthodox fold at quite a breakneck speed. After all, the real test of a man's mental temper is not the pronouncement of a heresy, but persistence and development in heresy. Any chance combination of circumstances may lead to a man expressing a heresy; it takes strength to keep at it. Mr. Campbell's utterance is only interesting as an indication of character. It is too puerile otherwise for serious criticism.

The New York *Sun* announces a new religious movement in America to be financed by Mr. Pierpont Morgan and a score of other millionaires. Five hundred of its missionaries have been sent out already. Their departure was marked by a banquet under the presidency of Mr. James G. Cannon, the head of the Fourth National Bank. Mr. Frederick B. Smith, the head of the new Salvation Army, bewails the "deep general corruption" in America. "Bankers and politicians," he says, "have been shown to be dishonest and immoral. You can buy United States senators in Illinois like sheep on a ranch." And all efforts to uplift America from the moral slough into which it has fallen "will be useless until we employ a dynamic force that is rooted in religion." The religion of the poor Carpenter has failed; the religion of the Millionaires is to take its place. Will it succeed? We must "wait and see." But we have our own opinion.

The Lord Mayor of London and mayors of other cities and towns were entertained by the Mayor and Corporation of Bournemouth during the centenary celebrations last year. Most of these gentlemen would own up to being good Christians. They seem also to be good consumers of victuals and drink—especially drink. The bills of their consumption and drink—especially drink. The bills of their consumption have lately been challenged by the Ratepayers' Association, who objected to payments amounting to £451 18s. 8d.—including £161 13s. for hire of horses and carriages—£161 16s. 3d. for lunch at the Hotel Mont Dore—£112 2s. 6d. for tea at the Winter Garden—and £17 6s. 11d. for wines, spirits, etc., after Sunday service. What a dismal service it must have been to render so much "consolation" necessary after it!

Albert Edward Lesk, one of John Kensit's clerks, destroyed himself by drinking spirits of salts. He was described, at the inquest, as "a devout young man, who never drank intoxicants, never went out in the evening, and read the Bible much when alone." He left a letter stating that he had found life too hard, and had come to the conclusion that if there were a God he was not as good as he was represented.

An anonymous writer in a contemporary says, with reference to the Leeds "blasphemy" case: "A plethora of pristine innocence (or ignorance) induced many of us to

fondly imagine that the historic pronouncement of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, which marked the conclusion of G. W. Foote's arraignment for 'blasphemy' in the year 1885, had given the *coup-de-grace* to the perfidious and musty old statutes of the third William." Mr. Foote's trial was in 1883. Lord Coleridge's summing-up on that occasion had nothing whatever to do with the William III. Statute (not Statutes), under which there has never been a single prosecution. All "blasphemy" prosecutions have been at Common Law. It was the Common Law of Blasphemy that Lord Coleridge laid down afresh. According to that judgment—accepted, as a matter of course, by Mr. Justice Phillimore and Mr. Justice Darling in the Boulter case—every doctrine of Christianity, or any other religion, may be openly and freely attacked, but this must be done with a proper regard to "the decencies of controversy." Blasphemy, therefore, is now a question of *manner*, and not of *matter*. But trouble arises from the difficulty of getting religious partisans—on the bench and in the jury-box—to discriminate justly and accurately. Juries have to give no reasons for their verdicts, and unless the judge is a man of the strictest judicial honesty, the "twelve good men and true" are very apt to regard a defendant who attacks *their* religion as a providentially appointed victim of their religious prejudices. Unless he criticises their faith with "bated breath and whispering humbleness" they may think his "manner" is unpardonably offensive. It is next to impossible to get them to feel that the Freethinker's mouth and pen should be exactly as free as the Christian's in public debate. They may admit this theoretically, but unless they *feel* it they will probably indulge their own bigotry at the Freethinker's expense.

Is not a little too much being made of the Rev. R. Roberts? He will do good as far as orthodox Christians can be induced to hear him. But he has really not *discovered* the Collapse of Historical Christianity. All he says on that subject has been said from the Freethought platform and through the Freethought press any time during the last sixty years. The only novelty of his deliverances is that they come from a gentleman who still calls himself a "Rev." and is ostensibly a Christian preacher.

Over 300 persons left Holborn Viaduct Station the other day to take part in the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. The "Virgin" has a bigger family to look after now than she had when she was on earth.

The Church of Rome, with its celibate clergy, has an advantage over its Anglican sister-in-law. A pound a week will keep an ordinary priest. Unfortunately, celibacy means, as Horace Smith long ago pointed out, "a vow a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."

Why is it that so many of the advertisements in the religious press emanate from quack medicine manufacturers? These passionate "appeals to the ruptured" and "pills to cure earthquakes" appear with extraordinary frequency in their columns. Maybe the manufacturers think that people who believe in a three-headed deity are silly enough to buy anything.

St. Gabriel's *Parish Magazine*, Cricklewood, says that "Our Bishops are the most sweated members of the classes who work in England to-day." What open pores they must have!

There is an old Christian saying that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. It was in relation to this that the Earl of Shaftesbury uttered a felicitous *mot*. He was told that cremation was contrary to Christian ideals. "You say it is unchristian," he remarked; "but do not forget that all the best Christians have been burnt."

*Rip Van Winkle* has been revived at a London theatre. The Italian Rip Van Winkle who lives in the Vatican had better hurry up or he will be too late.

The Berlin Academy of Arts is to be enriched with a statue of the Kaiser. This illustrious obscure monarch is to be represented wearing the dress of a Roman warrior, but with a periwig instead of a helmet. The result should be as pleasing as the ridiculous fancy dresses of the apostles in the old paintings.

Torrey isn't setting Bristol on fire. But he has discovered a fresh bit of Christian evidence. We will put it in the form of a conundrum. "Why is the Bible true? Because Jesus Christ says so." And who says that Jesus Christ says so? Torrey. See?



The Bishop of London, at a large meeting of the Church Missionary Society at the Albert Hall, spoke of Mohammedanism as follows—according to the *Daily Telegraph* report:—

“He was convinced—not that the Mohammedans were their foes—but that the Mohammedan religion was the greatest enemy they had to fight throughout the world. Some things in Mohammedanism were a tremendous object-lesson to Christians. There were certain things which the Moslems did which he wished every Christian did. One was to be absolutely open in one’s witness. He would like to order prayer mats for all the bishops to use at twelve o’clock in the Athenæum before their fellow-members, and also for Christians to use in factories and warehouses. (Laughter and cheers.) Moreover, every Moslem was a missionary. What a power it would be if every Christian could not help being a Christian missionary. The Moslems succeeded, in a way which we had not yet found, in creating the spirit of brotherhood. We could not intermarry with every nation as they did, but there was something wrong in that after years of preaching, India looked upon Christianity as the alien faith of a conquering race. Moslemism was the only faith which had made progress against Christianity in different parts of the world. His heart went out for the fate of the millions of Moslem women, and God forgive English women—who were treated like queens—if they did not lend them a helping hand. They must throw breakwater after breakwater across the path of this religion, which was the most difficult and dangerous foe that the Christian Church had in the world to-day.”

The Bishop’s comparison is nearly all in favor of Mohammedanism. The principal exception is phrased rather oddly. English women are said to be “treated like queens,” including those, we presume, who carry about black eyes and white faces; while Mohammedan women are treated—well, the Bishop does not say how, but he darkly hints that it is something very frightful. His lordship hints because he dare not affirm; unless, indeed, he is a victim of the orthodox Christian idea on the subject,—in which case we should advise him to read Lane’s *Modern Egyptians*, a book that will give him quite new ideas as to the relations of men and women under Mohammedanism.

The Bishop of London is frightened at the report of his own speeches and tries to counteract it. In a letter to Monday’s *Times* he says that the most careful summary of a speech “is often misleading.” True. But the passage quoted by us is ostensibly verbatim. His lordship now talks about Moslem cruelty to slaves. We advise him to remember something more recent—Christian treatment of worse than slaves in Congoland. His lordship also talks about the Moslem soldier’s treatment of “infidel” women. We advise him to remember something else more recent—the Christian treatment of heathen women during the last punitive expedition organised by the European Powers in China,—which is almost without parallel in the whole of modern history. “Physician heal thyself.”

Do young men go to church? The newspapers are asking the question. Some of them do; but more wait outside for the girls to come out.

The wholesale slaughter of birds for millinery purposes continues. The eagle eye of “Providence” only attends to sparrows.

The average Christian who lolls on his cushions at church on Sunday, and confesses himself a miserable sinner, would start a libel action if you called him one on Monday.

Last week a news vendor was sentenced to a month’s hard labor for disseminating false news. No notice is taken of the many thousands of parsons who stated that “God” was hammered to two pieces of wood with three tenpenny nails two thousand years ago.

Mr. John Redmond’s speech at the unveiling of the Parnell monument was very eloquent. But he forgot one thing. Parnell got the Irish movement right out of the hands of the priests. It fell into the hands of the priests again at his death, and has remained there ever since. What the priests want is not Home Rule, but a perpetual agitation for Home Rule. That enables every bog-trotting “father” to pose as a “patriot.”

The farce of blessing the herring nets was performed last Sunday at the parish church of Great Yarmouth. A number of herring nets were festooned about the chancel, and at the close of the evening prayer the old fisher’s song, “Come messmates, ’tis time to hoist the sail,” was sung. This was followed by the Bishop of Meath—who was evidently imported for the occasion—taking a net in his hand, and saying: “May God’s benediction rest abundantly upon these

fishing nets and all the others which they represent, upon the work they are to do, and upon all who shall use them throughout the coming season.” What a pity the Bishop did not know that at that very time thousands of nets were being destroyed, and fishermen were being drowned, by the wild waves. What fatherly care the Christian God exercises over his children! The Bishop, in the address which he uttered, said that “probably the herring fishing off Yarmouth was carried on in the days when the miraculous draught of fishes took place in the Sea of Galilee,” and that “probably the Romans in their camp at Burgh Castle caught glimpses of the Yarmouth herring boats sailing up the estuary.” Only a member of the black-coated army could be so impudent and ignorant. At the time it is said—only said—that the miraculous draught took place, Yarmouth was not in existence, and no Yarmouth herring boats, or, for that matter, no herring boats belonging to any other port, ever sailed past the Roman encampment in the estuary which swept past it for miles inland. These foolish statements give one an idea of how the legends of the more or less distant past have been formed.

We have pleasure (of a sort, of course) in making the following extract from Mr. James Douglas’s article in Monday’s *Morning Leader*, dealing with the unprovoked attack of Christian Italy upon Mohammedan Turkey:—

“If we leap ten centuries ahead and ask what will be the judgment of the historian upon Christendom in the Twentieth Century, can we doubt the answer? We know that it will be a stern condemnation. There will be no pity and no mercy in his verdict. He will calmly describe Christian Europe as a group of barbarian tribes among whom might was right, violence was law, and truth was expediency. He will define Christendom as a colossal hypocrisy and Christianity as a stupendous sham..... He will not put the Christian tribes under a microscope. He will survey them as a whole. The petty divisions of dialect and of dogma will be blurred. The tribal names will be merged in the broad reality that Christianity in its racial subdivisions was a failure. For the historian in those days will be free from the illusion of locality. He will group the British, the French, the Germans, the Austrians, the Russians, the Italians, the Spaniards, and all the lesser tribes as Christians. In the long perspective of the past he will see Europe as a den of wild beasts, and hanging round the neck of each beast he will see the Cross.”

The professional champions of Christianity have taken this lying down.

The European Powers are like vultures to the rest of the world. It is not surprising that this fact is emphasised by a leading Constantinople newspaper, the *Tanin*, which wrote as follows on the news of Italy’s ultimatum to Turkey:—

“The Tripolitan question brings on the tapis the whole question of the relations between Christianity and Islam. The Turks have trespassed on nobody’s rights, yet Italy is preparing to occupy a Turkish vilayet on the pretext that Germany and France have taken away the independence of Morocco. While giving assurances of friendship, Italy is hastening on hostile preparations. Such conduct is a violation of the principles of international law, humanity, and civilisation. It is evident that the word ‘justice’ is a lie in Europe, that protests of amity from the Powers have no meaning, and that treaties are merely instruments of deception which may be destroyed when any advantage is to be gained thereby. The Italian aggression is really the outcome of the animosity of Christianity towards Islam.”

Italian aggression is not exactly the outcome of the animosity of Christianity towards Islam. That is only an item in the total. The truth is that Christianity is the finest religion in the world for thieves and hypocrites. It never restrains them, and it lends itself so easily to insincerity. The Pope, for instance, blesses the Italian expedition to Tripoli as a “triumph of civilisation.”

#### THAT REMINDED HIM.

The pastor of a colored congregation was warming up to the climax of his sermon, and his auditors were waxing more and more excited. “I wahns yer, O my congregashum,” exclaimed the exhorter, “I wahns yer against poachin’, I wahns yer against de sin in whisky drinkin’, and de sin of chicken raisin’, an’ I wahns yer, my breddern, against de sin in melon stealin’.” A devout worshiper in the rear of the church jumped to his feet and snapped his fingers excitedly. “Whuffo’ does yer, my brudder, r’ar up an’ snap yo fingers when I speak of melon stealin’?” asked the preacher. “Kase yo jes ‘minds me whar I lef’ mah overcoat,” replied the devout worshiper, as he subsided into his seat.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 8, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.; at 7.30, "Modern Female Prophets: (2) Mother Eddy."

October 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.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 15, Birmingham; 22 and 29, Queen's Hall, London. November 5, Stratford Town Hall; 12, Hammersmith Ethical Society; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 8, Manchester; 15, Glasgow; October 29, Birmingham. November 5, Queen's Hall, London; 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 26, Stratford Town Hall. December 31, Harringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £295 2s. 2d. Received since:—H. Boll, 5s.; E. A. Hammond, 2s. 6d.; W. R. Snell (S. Africa), £1; A. Yates, 1s. 6d.; A. Shiel, 10s.; H. Organ, 1s.

THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £142 13s. Received since:—Vera, 1s. 3d.; D. D. B., 10s. 6d.; R. Johnson (2nd subscription), £2 10s.; Mr. & Mrs. C. Pegg (2nd subscription), £1 1s.; E. A. Hammond, 2s. 6d.; W. R. Snell (S. Africa), 10s.; John Latham (S. Africa), £1; J. K. Harris, 4s.; R. Barnard, 1s.; J. T. Jones, 10s. 6d.; Hypatia & Martineau Pankhurst, 2s.; T. Thomson, 2s.; A. Yates, 1s. 6d.; "Archie," 2s.; H. Organ, 1s.; Horace W. Parsons (2nd subscription), £1 1s.; W. Reed, 6d.; F. B., 2s.; W. Stewart, 2s.; R. Lloyd, 2s. 6d.; H. J. Earthy, 2s. 6d.; W. D., 1s.; C. D., 1s.; Viola, 5s.; M. Thurlow, 3s.; Donald James, 5s.

J. D. BROOKFIELD.—The *Freethinker* does not, to our knowledge, enjoy a "substantial subsidy," or any subsidy at all. For the rest, we have nothing to withdraw and nothing to add, except that by "circulation" we mean *bond fide* sale over the counter.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

M. E. PEGG.—We are glad that Mr. Lloyd's audiences in Manchester improve, but they ought to improve faster than they do. See paragraph.

H. & M. PANKHURST.—Miss Vance is much better in general health and we trust that she will continue so, but we fear we cannot hold out any hope of the recovery of her eyesight.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

R. H. GRANT (Edmonton).—A lady speaker is, as you say, an attraction. Pleased to hear Miss Pankhurst held your audience so interested.

W. BRADBURN.—You mistook him. Mr. Standing said that Bradlaugh at his death was only two years older than he (Mr. Standing) was now.

A. MILLAR.—Your letters will do good. Will you please send us, if it appears, the editor of the *Ardrossan Herald's* "proof," which he says he has, of the Albion Hall edition of the Bradlaugh "watch" story?

R. BARNARD.—You don't say what it is for. We have put it to the Vance Testimonial.

J. T. JONES.—We hope all your good wishes for Miss Vance will be realised.

H. BOLL.—We note the subscription is "A small token of my admiration for the splendid manner in which you are fighting the battle of Freethought."

A. FAGG.—We already had a paragraph in type, which you will perhaps agree is as much as it deserves.

F. A. PARSONS.—There is not a word of truth in it. But if there were, what would it matter? Is it supposed that every Christian advocate in London has a rightful claim to hold a public debate with the President of the National Secular Society? Pleased to hear from a seven-years' reader who met with the *Freethinker* accidentally—from the hand of a Christian.

L. D. HEWITT.—Thanks. The details had already appeared in last week's *Freethinker*, as you will have seen by this.

C. BOUCHIER.—We do not believe it. We have seen the complaint in Christian papers, and reproduced it from time to time in our columns, that black members are not allowed in American churches and Y. M. C. A.'s, but have to belong to churches, etc., of their own.

A. YATES.—There must be other members beside yourself who endorse our criticism of the Association's attitude.

A. SHIEL.—Pleased to hear from a *Freethinker* and his wife who have both read this journal from the first issue "and enjoyed it every time," and still more pleased to hear that you have to wait for it now as the young people are so eager to read it first. Yours is the sort of letter that gladdens our heart.

H. ORGAN.—You appear to think our article was a "knock out."

HORACE W. PARSONS, sending a second donation to the Vance Testimonial, writes: "How grandly the flag flies! The *Freethinker* improves week by week; at least, it seems so to me; the last two numbers are really splendid."

W. STEWART.—We note that Miss Vance has been "of great assistance" to you as secretary of the Wood Green Branch.

W. BARTON.—You might send it on to us. It will be useful. Thanks for good wishes.

J. D. STEVENS (Johannesburg).—See acknowledgment in this week's list. Delighted to hear the Sunday evening meetings of the S. A. Rationalist Association are "still going strong." We have heard the same news from other sources.

R. WHITEHOUSE.—It is not without merit, including terse expression, but where is the metre? And the last line is very faulty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

The new series of Queen's (Minor) Hall lectures opened extremely well. There was a capital audience, including a considerable number of ladies, and Mr. Foote's lecture was greatly enjoyed and enthusiastically applauded. Miss Kough occupied the chair, and two lady Theosophists took advantage of the opportunity for discussion. Their reception by the audience was all that could be desired. They spoke like ladies and were treated accordingly. Both were Theosophists and friends of Mrs. Besant's. Mr. Foote's reply was very polite, very careful, and very firm. The second lady was remarkably frank. She blamed the lecturer for turning ridicule upon a serious subject, but she admitted that she "had enjoyed it as much as anybody in the meeting"—for "some of the illustrations were irresistibly funny."

Mr. Foote's second lecture on "Modern Female Prophets" will be delivered this evening (October 8), the special subject being "Mother Eddy"—the famous Christian Scientist. There will be music before the lecture as before.

This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of some of our London readers in time to remind them of the "social" at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, and the presentation thereof of the Testimonial to Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary.

The Bradlaugh Dinner, which is reported elsewhere, was a great success. Everybody seemed delighted. The dinner was good, the music was good, the speeches were good, and a good company sat at the tables. Amongst the speakers who did not speak was Mr. J. T. Lloyd. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner looked in better health than when we last saw her before. Her son, Charles Bradlaugh's grandson, was heartily welcomed to "make his maiden speech among his grandfather's friends." He won the applause of the gathering and a compliment from the chair.

We regret to state that owing to a curious accident to the reporter's notes we are unable to publish the verbatim report that we announced of Mr. Foote's speech at the Bradlaugh Dinner. The descriptive report, by another hand, appears in another column.

The *Southend Telegraph* gave a column report of the Bradlaugh Dinner—carefully and fairly done. Is this the beginning of the end of the general press boycott? The *London Star* announced the Bradlaugh Dinner beforehand and briefly reported it afterwards, but the *Star* has always been an exception to the usual run of newspapers.

Mr. Lloyd opens the new lecture season at the Manchester Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, to-day (October 8), and we



hope the local "saints" will see that he has good audiences and a hearty welcome. Those who don't hear him will suffer a real loss

The Birmingham Branch has engaged the King's Hall again for its lectures during the forthcoming session. The opening lectures will be given by Mr. C. Cohen on Sunday, October 15. The secretary, J. Partridge, 183, Vauxhall-road, will be pleased to send tickets and programs to anyone who is willing to undertake the distribution of them.

Andrzej Niemojewski, on September 14, started undergoing his sentence of twelve months' imprisonment in a fortress for "blasphemy." He will not be treated like a common felon. That sort of treatment for press offences is, we believe, confined to England and America. He will suffer detention, and all that it means, but not vulgar indignities. His periodical will continue to appear, apparently with contributions from his pen, his wife acting as the responsible editor. "The battle," he wrote on September 13 to his friend M. Hins, editor of *La Pensée*, Brussels, "The battle will not be interrupted for a single moment."

The *Journal de Charleroi* published a French translation of the Secular Education League's leaflet on "Labor and Education" which was circulated at the recent Trade Union Congress.

We believe our friends like to see the tributes which we occasionally print in this part of our paper. Here is the latest:—

"I have been a reader of your paper, the *Freethinker*, ever since I knew there was such a paper. And I am likely to continue. I read other periodicals, but there is none I look forward to so anxiously. I am something like the boy who 'won't be happy till he gets it.'"

It gives us pleasure to know that we have so many devoted readers.

An aged inmate of a Midlands workhouse, who is only able to get the *Freethinker* occasionally, informs us that he read "The Winding of the Clock" aloud to the inmates of his ward, and they enjoyed it as much as he did.

We seem to be gaining more lady lecturers at present. One who has fairly established herself already, Miss K. B. Kough, lectures to-day (October 8) for the Kingston-on-Thames Humanitarian Society, at Fife Hall, Fife-road, at 7 p.m. Readers of ours in that district will probably like to hear her.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON SEPT. 28.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Barry, Bowman, Cohen, Cowell, Davey, Davidson, Davies, Dawson, Heaford, Miss Kough, Messrs. Lazarnick, Moss, Neato, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Thurlow, and Wood.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly balance-sheet was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for Bethnal Green, Edmonton, Kingsland, and Nelson Branches and the Parent Society.

Mr. Cohen reported on behalf of the Committee elected to deal with the Liverpool resolution, and it was resolved that type-written copies of the report should be supplied to each member of the Executive to enable the matter to be thoroughly dealt with at their next meeting.

Applications from Provincial Branches for the assistance of an organising lecturer were discussed, and the Executive adopted a suggestion from the President, upon which he would report at the next meeting.

The prosecution for blasphemy at Leeds was then dealt with, and the Executive, having expressed their view, this matter was also left in the hands of the President.

The Secretary reported that successful demonstrations had been held in Brockwell Park, Victoria Park, Finsbury Park, and Parliament Hill Fields.

The hearty thanks of the meeting were accorded to Mr. Wilson for his generous assistance.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange for the Annual Dinner and future Social Meetings.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

### Elliott's Old Button.

DURING my visit to America last summer, I sojourned for a few days in Rhode Island State, and, one June day, went with friends to the seaside village of Bristol Ferry. Coasts and sands and islands and silver-streaked inlets shone in the sun, and the tree-clad hills were brightly green. Among these hills rose one particularly conspicuous, and my companions pointed this out to me as Mount Hope, the scene of the death of King Philip. When they said "King Philip," my mind confusedly called up ideas of King Philip of Macedon and King Philip of Spain and patron-saint of the Armada. Of course, I waited to hear fuller details, and learned that this King Philip was a famous seventeenth-century Indian chief who had made, at Mount Hope, a last and fatal stand against the colonial English. In such journeys as mine, one collects a thousand odd scraps of history and incident which can never be amplified by larger knowledge; and so I passed on, with the merest vague reminiscence of the green hill and the dead chief. But, happening to take up, in a London library, Mr. Norman B. Wood's *Lives of Famous Indian Chiefs*,\* I lit upon a chapter entitled "King Philip, or Metacomet," and soon recognised the ghost of my summer-day's excursion to Bristol Ferry. From this I gathered that an English governor had been asked by an Indian chief to give European names to his two sons, Wamsutta and Metacomet, and the White Man related to the Red Man the story of Philip of Macedon and his illustrious son, Alexander; and concluded by naming the two young braves Alexander and Philip.

Alexander came to a miserable end. The colonists accused him of plotting against their peace, and an armed troop arrested him at Mount Hope, and forced him, at the muzzle of the musket, to march in front of his captors. The insult broke his soul, and he collapsed so suddenly that he was placed in a litter and borne on the road to Plymouth. Death visibly gained upon him. They laid the Red Man under a tree. His wife held his hand, wiped his beaded brow, and wailed over his corpse.

Philip assumed the leadership of the Pokanoket Indians, and gradually became acknowledged lord of all the Red Men of New England. Stern, masterful, and brave, he bitterly brooded over the wrongs inflicted by the strangers whom sectarian persecutions or commercial impulses had brought from England to America. He was a patriot, and the White Men called him "caitiff," "hell-hound," "fiend," and "arch-rebel"—gentle names which they had learned, perhaps, from the recent excitements of the Parliamentary struggle and Civil War in the Mother-country.

At this time, the Rev. John Elliott, the celebrated "apostle of the Indians," had entered the conversion of King Philip as an item in his evangelical agenda. With equal energy and piety he applied himself to the difficult task, and, at moments, thought he perceived possibilities of success; for Metacomet was sometimes observed in an attitude of reflection, as one who, like Agrippa, was "almost persuaded" to be a Christian.

"But yet," wrote Mr. Goodkin, a colonist, "though his will is bound to embrace Jesus Christ, his sensual and carnal lusts are strong bands to hold him fast under Satan's dominion."

And Mr. Goodkin was at least right in his calculation of the Apostle's failure, even though he may have erred a little in his depreciation of the Indian chief's character. Metacomet always listened with courtesy to the Rev. John Elliott's discourses, though the kindly Goodkin would probably have considered that a courteous Satan was worse than a rude one. But the time came when even courtesy could not prevent the painful truth from coming out. King Philip took hold of a button on Elliott's ministerial black coat, and said, quietly and firmly:—

\* Published at Aurora, Ill., in 1906.



"I care no more for your religion than I do for that old button. Let me hear no more about it."

This closure was decisive. Philip's heathenism—though not his property—was severely let alone during the rest of his career.

It is an undeniable fact that Metacomet made a most resolute effort to put an end to the English rule. He purchased muskets from them, with the intention of shooting the vendors when opportunity offered; and he made ineffectual attempts to manufacture gunpowder. At a conference held at Taunton, painted braves occupied one side of the chamber, and short-haired Puritans the other; and King Philip accused the White Men of robbing his corn-fields, and encroaching upon the lands of his people. However, he sullenly surrendered seventy muskets, retired to temporary peace, and was finely labelled as a hell-hound. Everybody could see that war was on the way. To an English friend, the indignant Metacomet exclaimed:—

"The English who came first to this country were but a handful of people, forlorn, poor, and distressed. My father did all in his power to serve them. Their numbers increased. My father's counsellors were alarmed. They urged him to destroy the English before they became strong enough to give law to the Indians and take away their country. My father was also the father to the English. He remained their friend. Experience shows that his counsellors were right. The English disarmed my people. They tried them by their own laws".....

And the rest, leading up to the sad and angry lament "Tract after tract is gone." History tells not what Elliott thought of the complaints of the pagan who cared no more for the Gospel than for the Apostle's old button.

A Red Indian convert to Elliott's instruction had illustrated his newly found convictions by revealing Philip's councils of war to the governor of Plymouth; and shortly afterwards, the spy was found dead, having had his neck broken after the Indian manner. Three Indians were haled up before a jury of eight English and four Indians, and found guilty of the spy's murder. When Metacomet heard of their hanging, he vowed war, and war duly followed with the familiar incidents of burning houses, slaughters, mutilations, and captures. The most terrible battle of the campaign was fought at the palisades and blockhouses in a swamp at South Kingston, Rhode Island, when Philip and three thousand Indians desperately met the Christians, and the remnant of the Red Men struggled out into a snowstorm, leaving friends, wives, children dead amid the burning remains of the fortress. The hell-hound's cause was losing. The widow of his brother Alexander was captured in open fight against the English, and her head was cut off and stuck on a pole in the street at Taunton. Philip's wife and son—his only son—were captured, and sent by ship to West Indian slavery.

"My heart breaks," murmured the hell-hound, "now I am ready to die."

His medicine-men, strong in magic and faith, told him no Englishman would ever kill him, and he retreated to his last refuge in the woods and marshes of Mount Hope. Wolves, deer, and wild cattle swarmed in this lonely spot, and a small band of loyal Red Men clung to Metacomet to the end. When one of his followers suggested making terms with the English, he was struck down dead by the chief's own hand. The dead man's brother deserted to the Christian side, and guided an attacking force to the Red Man's final hiding place. The medicine-men had told the truth. Not an English musket, but a shot from the deserter's weapon, closed the tragic chronicle of Metacomet's patriotism. Furthermore, King Philip's head was preserved in rum, and carried about New England for the pleasure and educational benefit of the Puritan crowds.

One white woman, at least, might have shrunk from gazing at the head in the case of rum, for Metacomet had acted towards her as a gentleman. Mrs. Rowlandson had been made prisoner, and spent some time in Indian camps, and was at length

brought into the chief's presence. He invited her to smoke, meaning it in pure politeness, and gave her a shilling for making his son a shirt. She also sewed the lad a cap, and was asked, in return, to dine with the chief; and, with his own hands, Metacomet cooked for her a thick pancake of parched wheat and bear's grease, and "never tasted pleasanter meat in my life" was Mr. Rowlandson's opinion. Taking her hand, he said, "In two more weeks you will be free." And he kept his word, like the heathen hell-hound that he was.

Moreover, it is told that a certain honest Englishman—a blacksmith named Leonard—never had anything but kindness from the dreadful king. And for why? Leonard, being a man of the better sort in mind and heart, had behaved with respect and friendship towards Metacomet and the Indians, repairing their guns, and presenting them with useful tools. The word went out from Philip that, in all his realm, no Red Man should lay violent hands upon any member of the Leonard family. Houses blazed red at midnight, and scalps were torn from Puritan heads, but the home of the Leonards was as safe as a sacred shrine. Such were the strange manners of the heathen.

So this was the Philip whose death-place I had seen on that tranquil and sunny afternoon.

F. J. GOULD.

### Secularist Work.

*An Address Delivered at the American Secular Union Congress, Chicago, by*

JAMES F. MORTON, JNR.

AT the outset it is well that terms should be carefully defined. The word "Secularist," standing for a distinct movement with an explicit purpose, has come in this country to have a meaning slightly different from that in which it has been understood abroad. In England, for example, a Secularist is taken to mean almost precisely what we define as a Rationalist or a Freethinker. In fact, it has in some instances been used as synonymous with the term "Atheist." The anti-theocratic movement abroad goes commonly by the name "Anti-Clericalism." The different conditions under which Liberalism carries on its struggle against the common enemy create in different lands different methods of work and a different terminology. In Europe, the Rationalist must assume the position of an iconoclast. The union of Church and State, established for many centuries, is accepted as almost axiomatic; and the opponent of such union is compelled to sustain the burden of proof in behalf of his innovatory ideas. The purely secular or neutral State is understood by few even of the foremost European Liberals. A large percentage of the anti-clerical combatants seek simply to reverse the existing status, and to establish not a neutral, but an anti-religious State, invading the right of free religious worship almost as grossly as the Christian Conservatives to-day invade the rights of non-believers.

In the United States, conditions are altogether different. Here, the Secularist, whose fundamental aim is to neutralise the State with regard to religion, and to place believers and non-believers in any or all creeds on an exact level, contends for no innovation in principle, but simply for the logical and honest application of the basic principles of the Republic. He appeals not merely to those of his own views on theological subjects, but to all believers in fair play and justice. He demands no favors for himself or for his fellow-thinkers, but the simple abolition of unjust and immoral special privileges now granted to the sects. He invites the American people not to accept a new and untried theory, but to be consistent in carrying out the doctrines of our democratic forefathers. He would have our nation wholly democratic, instead of merely democratic by



half. Democracy means the rule of all the people. This is not identical with unlimited majority rule, nor with mob law. Abolishing arbitrary and artificial class distinctions, democracy can find its full justification only in safeguarding in completest measure the equal rights of all. This necessarily involves the maximum of personal liberty in private matters, and the rule of the majority in collective affairs. If a highway is to be used in common, democracy is best served by building and maintaining it in such a way as to satisfy most perfectly the greater number, if all cannot be equally contented. A man's belief or disbelief in a God, however, concerns himself alone, and is of no possible interest to the collectivity. The interference of a majority in matters of private conscience is as criminal and insufferable tyranny as would be that of a single despot. Not only is this true as a matter of principle, and so self-evident as to be beyond the possibility of rational dispute, but the evil of any union of Church and State is demonstrated by the entire course of human history.

Passing over the abhorrent and blood-sprent records of priestly rule in the nations of antiquity, we may appropriately date our researches from the age of Constantine, the monster of crime, who, with hands reeking with the blood of his nearest of kin, first established Christianity as a State religion, and in so doing dealt the death-blow to whatever of purity and moral grandeur it may have possessed. The evil deed bore its legitimate fruit. For ten long centuries, the human race lay under a pall of worse than Egyptian darkness, its finer sensibilities crushed, its intellectual energies paralysed, its liberties overthrown, its moral instincts unspeakably perverted. That blackest period of humanity activity has, by common consent, received the appellation of the Dark Ages. And why were these ages so fraught with evil, and unproductive of progress? It is not that the race as a whole was decadent and hopelessly degenerate. The slaves of mediævalism were the sons of the great Roman civilisation, and the fathers of the enlightened men and women of to-day. No Renaissance, no Reformation could have availed to restore the decaying vigor of a degenerate race, after ten centuries of stagnation. It is plain that the life was there, although choked by the deadly miasma of ecclesiasticism. Nor did the period lack great thinkers and natural leaders of mankind. It gave birth to Charlemagne, one of the mightiest of conquerors and rulers, and on the whole one of the noblest-minded of sovereigns, as liberal as his age allowed him to be. In all essential qualities of genuine greatness, he as far surpassed Napoleon as Julius Cæsar excelled Constantine. Intellectual giants were not wanting, as witness Roger Bacon, whose genius in scientific research and interpretation of natural phenomena has been equalled by few, if by any, in any age. Nor did Giordano Bruno, though greatest and noblest of them all, stand by any means alone as a sublime philosopher and a type of moral grandeur. Nor can the backwardness of the age be attributed to political despotism; for, though human liberty was but little understood, the kings and emperors of the Middle Ages exercised at least no greater tyranny than their forerunners in periods infinitely more fruitful of human progress.

There is but one factor, separating the Dark Ages from other periods of history, to which the abundant horrors of that epoch can fairly be attributed. That, of course, is the complete union of Church and State. The Dark Ages began with Constantine; and the end came with the reawakening of the human mind, and its revolt against priestly aggression. It cannot even be said that the guilt lies wholly at the door of the Roman Catholic Church as such. Her dogmas, puerile and monstrous as many of them are, average fairly well with those of her rivals. The tyranny of the murderous Calvin was precisely identical in kind with that of Phillip II., although less power for evil remained in the hands of the bigoted Genevan. The horrors of the Inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the atrocities

of the fiendish Alva, were but the legitimate fruit of the false doctrine that the function of the State is to compel uniformity in religious beliefs and practices. In proportion as we recede from this doctrine, we find the world advancing in enlightenment and in the establishment of civil liberty. Every step, however short, reacting toward the mediæval dogma of union of Church and State, brings a curse with it. Even on the assumption of the truth of the Church's creed, entire separation from the State would be its one hope of accomplishing its ideals. Secular power is poison to the Church itself, destroying its moral fibre, and developing selfish ambitions and greed at the expense of moral principle.

(To be continued.)

### The Bradlaugh Dinner.

ON Wednesday last the Bradlaugh Fellowship held its Annual Dinner to commemorate the birth of one of the "Immortals."

Seventy-eight years ago Charles Bradlaugh came into this world. Twenty years ago he left it; and the Bradlaugh Fellowship, through a bequest of the late James Dowling, is able to do its share towards keeping his memory green by holding this annual festivity. This year the chair was occupied by the President of the National Secular Society, Mr. G. W. Foote.

Who fitter to preside on such an occasion than the "lineal Freethought descendant" (to quote Mr. George Standring) of the great Charles Bradlaugh?

Mr. Foote may certainly take credit to himself for drawing together the largest number of actual Freethinkers that has been present at these gatherings.

Perhaps on former occasions the political aspect of Bradlaugh's life-work has been insisted upon to a greater extent; but his admirers (upwards of 150) assembled at this Eighth Dinner given by the Fellowship, were Freethinkers to a man, and the speakers took care to emphasise that it was the Freethought side of Charles Bradlaugh that they intended to celebrate this night.

When the assembled guests had done full justice to the excellent dinner provided at the Holborn Restaurant, Mr. G. W. Foote proposed the first toast, "The Memory of Charles Bradlaugh," and made a humorous allusion to the universal anxiety of the sporting world as to whether the Johnson-Wells boxing match would come off on Monday. "Johnson," said Mr. Foote, "is the heavy-weight champion of the boxing world, but we are here this evening to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the heavy-weight champion of his time, who fought for something far more valuable to humanity than what may be at stake on Monday."

Mr. Foote, proceeding, said he did not want to speak at too great length, though the theme invited him to do, especially as he could say he knew more of Bradlaugh than anyone in the room, save one other.

There was no greater name than Charles Bradlaugh's enrolled in the list of fame, or mentioned on the page of English history. As the beauty and grandeur of the Alps seemed more impressive from a distance, so Charles Bradlaugh's greatness increased the further we were separated from it by time.

To those who knew him "in his habit, as he lived" his attributes were best expressed in Hamlet's words:—

"A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man."

Charles Bradlaugh was a man from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and no one ever confronted him in serious combat without finding him so.

Mr. Foote then referred to the eloquent tribute to Charles Bradlaugh's gifts as a speaker recorded by John Morley in his *Life of Gladstone*. Morley recounts how, in his daily letter to the Queen, as Premier, Gladstone describes Bradlaugh's appearance at the Bar of the House of Commons, and, speaking of his defence, says: "It was the address of a consummate speaker." No higher tribute than *consummate* could be given. Mr. Foote then went on to say that he had heard all the great orators of his time, and in his opinion Bradlaugh was the greatest speaker of his day. The guests were amused by the description of Lord Halsbury (in Bradlaugh's time Sir Hardinge Giffard), who has received £10,000 a year for sitting on the Woolsack and £5,000 a year for not sitting on it. The Chairman, continuing his tribute, said that, as a lawyer, there was no man that could beat Bradlaugh. A great lawyer must be a man of judgment, and dispassionate judgment, and persons who sought Charles Bradlaugh's advice—and they were



many—on some matter of profound importance to themselves, were astonished to find how detached that judgment was. But what was far greater and more uncommon, he had always detachment of judgment for himself as well as for others.

Mr. Foote threw scorn on the people who said Bradlaugh's ideas would not be on the level of the advanced thought of to-day, calling them "political lunatics," and pointing out how a mind like Bradlaugh's, so capable of expansion, would have been abreast of all the best thought of all time. He was in every way an heroic personage, far above the clever, astute politicians of the present day, with just enough idealism to lend a little fight to their public oratory. He was heroic in action, and a leader. He did not say "Go on," but "Come on." Heroes were very rare, but Bradlaugh rang true from beginning to end. Incorruptible when he died, penniless, as when he began his career in the same condition. A truly heroic figure. "And," said Mr. Foote, "everyone who ever spoke to him, or shook his hand, may cherish that memory to the last spark of conscious life." "Ingersoll," continued Mr. Foote, "once said: 'A statesman is one who wants to do something for the People. A politician is one who wants the People to do something for him.'" Bradlaugh was a statesman, and his memory becomes more and more powerful to-day, when statesmen are rare. To-day in the House of Commons the wish is often voiced, "Oh, for an hour of Bradlaugh!" He was of those who make themselves servants to mankind, not mankind servants to them.

In closing, Mr. Foote said that it seemed as though Bradlaugh had stepped out of the pages of Plutarch, so much did he seem to belong to a grander age, a loftier generation. His supreme desire was to spur others on to do great things also, and to those who spoke their admiration to him he would say, "If I have done any good, do not praise me, but go and do good yourselves."

The Chairman resumed his seat amidst enthusiastic applause, and the speakers who followed all voiced the sentiments of the guests in expressing their admiration of his speech.

The Bradlaugh Fellowship was proposed by Mr. A. B. Moss, who expressed his delight at seeing so many young Freethinkers present, and complimented the Fellowship on the great opportunity it had for bringing the example of Charles Bradlaugh before young men and women. He hoped that it might be possible for the Fellowship to provide lectures on Bradlaugh's life, so that the noble career of the great Freethinker might inspire others to try to follow in his steps.

Mr. George Standing, in response, remarked that the quality of the speeches made by the various occupants of the chair at these dinners had immensely improved since the first meeting at which he had presided, but they had never reached the level of Mr. Foote's speech that evening. He expressed the pleasure he felt at seeing the President of the National Secular Society, the lineal descendant of Charles Bradlaugh, presiding on this occasion.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner followed, and in a brief speech, expressed her gratification at hearing the eloquent tribute paid to her father's memory by the Chairman. Speaking of her own work for the last twenty years in the defence of her father's name, and referring to the time when, in the nature of things, her life-work would have to be relinquished, she expressed happiness in the knowledge that there was someone to take her place—her son.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner then introduced Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, saying that he would have the advantage of making his maiden speech to his grandfather's friends.

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner hoped that his grandfather's friends would be his also. In a graceful and charming speech he deeply regretted that the memories he had of that grandfather were but second-hand, gathered from his home life, the lips of friends, and the books he had read. He modestly hoped that he might follow humbly the example set him by the great man whose descendant he was proud to be.

Charles Bradlaugh's old friends were greatly moved by the sight of this lad of twenty, who in feature, voice, and expression recalled his grandfather in his younger days; and Mr. Foote voiced the sentiments of all present when he congratulated Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner on his maiden speech, and hoped that he might follow in his grandfather's footsteps, and do battle for the cause Charles Bradlaugh had loved on the Freethought platform.

In respectively proposing and responding to the toast "Freethought at Home and Abroad," Miss Kough and Mr. Davies briefly referred to the present position of Freethinkers here and in other countries in comparison with the days of Charles Bradlaugh.

The toasts were interspersed with songs from Miss Rene Mayville, who sang "Twickenham Ferry" and "The Old Side Car" very charmingly, and Mr. Harry P. Hayward, whose humorous sketch was greatly appreciated.

The proceedings concluded with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne," led in true Scotch fashion by Mr. J. Robertson, one of "the Old Guard."

Many old Freethinkers were present, and we were greatly pleased to see the veteran Mr. Side, who has reached his eighty-seventh year, looking hale and hearty.

The number of those who actually knew Charles Bradlaugh dwindles, alas! year by year, and it is sad to miss the well-known faces. But there is a young and vigorous generation springing up to carry on the old traditions—a generation endeavoring in its turn to follow the example of the great man whose memory we revere, and whose motto was "Thorough."

K. K.

## Correspondence

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The heresy in regard to Sir Thomas Browne, voiced by Mr. William H. Reynolds, is sufficiently striking as to be noteworthy even in the heterodox *Freethinker*. It is in no way derogatory of the merits of his works on *Common Errors*, *Urn Burial*, and the *Garden of Cyprus*, to say that Sir Thomas's fame as a literateur rests on his *Religion of a Medical Man*. This book is the apparently frank confession of the religious beliefs of a cultured man couched in felicitous terms. Care is apparent in every sentence; indeed, when its history is considered, it is seen it could not be otherwise. The Doctor for years had the work in manuscript, and in that form sent it to those whose literary taste and religious knowledge he respected. The resulting friendly criticisms must have added to the beauty of the book. The book appeared in print, too, before it was officially published, and the criticisms on those alleged pirated editions must also have been of great value to the writer when he determined to prepare for the press an authorised version. Mr. Reynolds, as a reader of the *Freethinker*, is presumably interested in matters religious, and it is perplexing that he cannot find the reason why the genial Doctor occupies an exalted niche in literature's fame. But as there is not, and cannot be, in the nature of the thing, a criterion and set of hard and fast rules for literary taste, no good would result from a lengthy exposition of why others admire when Mr. Reynolds does not. It is a matter of personal equation and temperament.

What I want to point out is that Sir Thomas Browne's action in the witchcraft case is precisely what a diligent reader of the *Religion of a Medical Man* would expect. In his statement of what he regarded as the authority for religious belief, he placed the Church of England first; if the Church was silent, he fell back on tradition and the Bible. Failing to get guidance from any of these, he used his common sense. In each and every case the verdict was against the witches. The Church and tradition stoutly maintained that witches existed and ought to be destroyed. The Bible is equally emphatic. "Suffer not a witch to live" is the stern injunction; and the Witch of Endor plays not a small part in its pages. Sir Thomas's common sense, too, was on the same side. In his confessions he cogently argues the existence of witches, and from what I take to be the religious view, I can find no flaw in the argument. A denial of witches, he says, is a denial of a form of spirituality, and is, therefore, practical Atheism. Had he refrained from helping the prosecution of the alleged witches he would thereby become, not an intensely religious man, but a practical Atheist.

Mr. Reynolds sneers at Sir Thomas Browne's unreasoning veneration for authority in religion. Whereas I think that very fine passage wherein he states he loves to lose his reason in the exultation of religious faith, is not only beautiful in its symphony but accurately expresses the experience of religious persons and is in logical sequence of the Christian faith. Men and women—especially women—love to be drunk with religious fervor. "I believe because it is impossible" is not a paradox. It is a short statement of the credo. Did the Deity of the Christians exist, one who could be moved by prayer, whose compassion was aroused by supplication, benevolence, by fulsome adulation, and anger by a renunciation of his authority, the impossible would become the normal, miracles would everywhere and at every time abound. As a last word in this connection, his lucidity and frankness makes lampooning an easy task; for some time I had an idea that all jibes and gibes at Christianity were dug out of his works, paraphrased and distorted.

My apology to your readers for using my own language instead of the Doctor's charming words is, I have not now a copy, and although a public library exists in the town where I reside, it has been closed for several months and is unlikely to open for many more.

W. J. LIVINGSTONE-ANDERSON.



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Modern Female Prophets. II.—Mother Eddy."  
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7, Miss K. B. Kough, "Immortality."

### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Devil."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, W. Davidson, "New Gods for Old."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.15, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh."

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Rowney, a Lecture.

### COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, J. Dick, "Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Paul Descours, "International Arbitration as a Means of Preventing War."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Philosophy of Death."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The Silence of God"; 6.30, "The True Attitude Towards Death." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, Fowler-street): 7, Organisation and Lectures.

### OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Haymarket): Saturday, Oct. 14, at 8, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Kingcraft: Past and Present."

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

LIVERPOOL (Wavertree Park Gates): 3, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Booth's Bunkum: Sidelights on Salvationism." Edgehill Church (outside): Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 7.45, "Credulities in Decay." Islington-square: Thursday, Oct. 12, at 7.45, "The Tragedy of the Cross."

## Second Anniversary of the Death of SEÑOR FERRER ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 13, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, Mr. Joseph McCabe

will deliver a Memorial Address at  
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Subject:

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At the conclusion of the Address there will be brief speeches by Mr. JOSEPH FELLS, Mr. HERBERT BURROWS, & Mr. W. HEAFORD. ADMISSION FREE. Reserved Seat Tickets 6d. each, application for which should be made to the Secretary of the R.P.A., Ltd., Nos. 5 & 6 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, E.C., or at South Place Chapel, as above.

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

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