

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 46

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1911

PRICE TWOPENCE

There is no absurdity so palpable but that it may be firmly planted in the human head if you only begin to inculcate it before the age of five, by constantly repeating it with an air of great solemnity.—SCHOPENHAUER.

The Bible and the Koran.

IN view of the everlasting Eastern question, which is once more in an acute stage, it may be well to state the truth about the Mohammedan religion, as founded upon the Koran, in comparison with the Christian religion, as founded upon the Bible. Ignorance and misunderstanding, not to speak of downright misrepresentation, are extremely common on this subject. The average Christian is very imperfectly acquainted with the contents of his own Scriptures. It is not surprising, therefore, that he believes anything he is told about the Scriptures of the Moslems. His general idea is that everything connected with Christianity is divine, while everything connected with Mohammedanism is devilish; and that Jesus Christ was an absolutely perfect character, while Mohammed was a low, cruel, and cunning impostor.

John Wesley, in a hymn which is not included in the modern collections, referred to Mohammed as "that Arab thief." The founder of Islam, however, was not a thief. In a competition of thieving between Mohammed and Wesley, supposing the possibility of such a thing for the sake of argument, it is extremely probable that the Arab would be worsted by the Englishman. "That Arab thief" simply meant that the founder of Wesleyanism was disgusted at the thought that the devotees of the Crescent swept the devotees of the Cross out of Asia and Africa; took possession of Alexandria, Carthage, and Constantinople, three of the four great sees of the early Church; and left to Rome the undivided supremacy over the Christian world. This does not constitute Mohammed a "thief." The Christians were always as ready to fight as the Mohammedans, and if they got the worst of it, their failure does not prove their moral superiority. Nor does the fact that the banner of Christ went down in blood on hundreds of battlefields before the banner of Mohammed, in any way prove the superiority of the carpenter of Nazareth over the camel-driver of Mecca.

Mohammed was a far greater man than Jesus Christ. He showed no weakness in adversity. No agony of fear wrung the sweat from his proud brow. He never prayed that the cup of trial might pass from him. He did not cry out that God had forsaken him. When he fled from Mecca, with only one disciple, who complained that they were only two against the world, Mohammed exclaimed: "No, there are three of us; we two, and God." When his companion complained of the heat of the burning sun, Mohammed grimly said: "It is hotter in hell." And if he displayed fortitude in adversity, he also showed self-control in prosperity. When he returned to Mecca, no longer a fugitive but a conqueror, at the head of a victorious army of ten thousand men, he did not sully his triumph with the least excess. Not a house was robbed, not a woman was molested.

His life as an uncrowned king was one of great simplicity. He mended his own clothes, and milked his own goats. His ordinary food was dates and water, or barley bread. His occasional luxuries were milk and honey. True, he took several wives, but not until the wife of his youth was dead; and he lived in a polygamous age and country, where the practice was orthodox. His form and face were of the manliest beauty. His complexion was fine to the last; for, besides his temperance in eating, he abhorred strong drink; and this abhorrence was made a principle of his religion.

Mohammed did not pretend to work miracles. It is a Christian calumny that he kept a tame pigeon to sit on his shoulder and pick peas out of his ear, pretending that the bird whispered divine inspirations. The story is without the slightest foundation in fact.

The reproach that he used the sword to propagate his faith comes with an ill grace from the champions of a creed which has shed more blood than any other on earth. "We do not find of the Christian religion either," sneers Carlyle, "that it always disdained the sword, when once it had got one." Christianity was longer in getting the sword, but it made up for the delay.

No doubt Mohammed had a genuine belief that he was inspired by God. So had Jesus Christ, so had the prophets of Israel, so had all the Popes, and so have a number of mediocrities still living. We must allow for the time and the circumstances. Of course we may smile at the notion that the contents of the Koran were copied from a book supposed to exist in heaven in the handwriting of God. But the Christian has no right to laugh at it; for does he not believe that God gave Moses ten commandments, written with the divine finger on two tables of stone? Both the Bible and the Koran claim to be inspired, and the Christian need not call the Mohammedan credulous. As a matter of fact, the Koran is not disfigured like the Bible with a multitude of often puerile miracles. Mohammed appears to have accepted some of the wonders of the Jewish traditions, but he did not add to the stock with wonders of his own. Nor did he assert, like Jesus, that all who went before him were thieves and robbers. He was more modest. He admitted that Moses and Jesus were true prophets, and only claimed that he himself was commissioned to complete the revelation. That he did not rise to the conception that he also might in time be superseded, is but a proof that he was human, and that he had not grasped the full meaning of evolution.

It is not our object to compare the Bible and the Koran in every respect. The Koran is the work of one man; the Bible is said to be the work of sixty-six men. Naturally the latter is more varied, and in that respect more interesting. But whether the poetry of the one book is finer than the other, only experts have the means of judging. The Arabic of the Koran is said to be singularly beautiful and melodious, but the book has not been translated like the Bible. Our Authorised Version is the work of centuries, and was completed when the English language was at the climax of its youthful vigor. Sale was a great scholar, but his version of the Koran is rather wooden. The translations of Rodwell, Palmer, and Stanley Lane-Poole give us a

higher idea of the original. Take the following specimen from the chapter on *Light* :—

"But those who disbelieve are like a vapor in a plain; the thirsty thinketh it water, till, when he cometh to it, he findeth nothing; but he findeth God with him; and He will settle his account, for God is quick at reckoning:—

"Or like black night on a deep sea, which wave above wave doth cover, and cloud over wave, gloom upon gloom,—when one putteth out his hand he can scarcely see it; for to whom God giveth not light, he hath no light."

But this article is not intended to be a literary criticism. Let us revert to our main purpose, and compare the Bible and the Koran within the more definite range of their teaching.

We will take first the matter of temperance. In my pamphlet entitled *Bible and Beer* I have gone, I believe, with great thoroughness into the question of how far the Bible favors or discommends drinking. Readers who wish to study the subject carefully should master the information and arguments I have there advanced. For the present, I content myself with remarking how absurd is the attempt to found Teetotalism on the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ himself drank wine with his disciples. At a certain marriage feast he is said to have turned a vast quantity of water into a more exhilarating beverage. Saint Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. In the Old Testament the Jews are told that they may spend their money on whatsoever their souls lust after, on oxen, sheep, wine, or strong drink (Deuteronomy xiv. 26). Solomon, the wisest of the sons of men, and the supposed author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, says:—

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7).

According to this text, the poor and unhappy should drink themselves into a state of oblivion. Nor is the prescription confined to the unfortunate. Here is another text:—

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart" (Ecclesiastes ix. 7).

In some respects the Bible might be called the drunkard's text-book. But how different is the Koran! Mohammed put drinking and gambling together as twin curses, and forbade them absolutely. In the second chapter of the Koran he says:—

"They will ask thee concerning wine and lots: Answer, In both there is great sin, and also some things of use unto men: but their sinfulness is greater than their use" (Sale's translation).

Some think that this text only forbids drinking to excess and too frequent gambling. But the general opinion is that even the moderate use of strong drinks by the Mohammedan is absolutely unlawful. There is a more explicit text in the fifth chapter of the Koran:—

"O ye who believe, verily wine and gambling and statues and divining arrows are only an abomination of the Devil's making; avoid them; haply ye may prosper" (Lane-Poole's translation).

To say that a man is a Christian is to tell us nothing as to his conduct. To say that a man is a Brahmin is to tell us, for one thing, that he does not eat anything that is killed. To say that a man is a Mohammedan is to tell us, for one thing, that he does not drink intoxicants. Even the late Sultan of Turkey—weak as he was, and therefore cruel—was extremely abstemious in eating and drinking, and never took any liquor stronger than coffee; while more than half the Christian princes of Europe know what it is to go to bed "elevated," and to wake in the morning with a sour stomach and a heavy head.

Mohammed, like most other religious teachers, enjoined almsgiving. Old Testament passages on this virtue will readily occur to the reader's recollection. In the New Testament, at least in the teaching of Jesus, it is carried to excess. According to the Prophet of Nazareth, we should give to everyone that asketh without discrimination, and the counsel of perfection he gave to an honorable young man was to sell all he had and give to the poor.

(To be concluded.) G. W. FOOTE.

A Desperate Defence of the Bible.

THE Rev. P. T. Forsyth, M.A., D.D., Principal of Hackney College, Hampstead, is a brilliant phrasemonger. All his books, magazine articles, sermons, and addresses are distinguished for their cleverly-constructed, expressive, and often antithetical sentences. A fine specimen of his diction is furnished in an article which he has contributed to the decennial number of the *Hibbert Journal* on "Revelation and Bible." It is not with his phraseology, however, that we are now concerned, but with his theological speculations. These, as expressed in the article just mentioned, are peculiar, and might be further characterised as startling, if not revolutionary. Dr. Forsyth is pre-eminently a speculative theologian, though he pretends to rise above and despise speculation. To assert that "the Gospel is the one central and final revelation which gives real and eternal value to all else we call revelation" is to play the speculator with a vengeance. The Gospel, or Christianity as Dr. Forsyth conceives it, is a tissue of wild conjectures, and necessarily makes its supreme appeal not to reason, but to faith. The reverend gentleman seems to realise this himself when he states that "the Word of God is not merely illumination, either rational or spiritual." Then he suggestively adds:—

"Revelation is not a matter of reason apart from faith; nor is it a matter of spirit, of spiritual subjectivity, apart from the apostolic Word. More Rationalism, apart from the Christian revelation, is bound to end, where historically it has ended, in Agnosticism, or in a Monism which comes to much the same thing in practice."

Theologians only use their reason in defence of the Christian superstition and of their own systematic and hypothetical presentation thereof, and in dogmatic criticism of every construction of it that differs from theirs. If they employed their reason apart from faith, they would certainly adopt Agnosticism, or Monism, as Dr. Forsyth admits: there would be no alternative for them.

Now, the Gospel, as understood by the Principal, rests on the authority of the Apostles. Had it not been for their testimony the world would have been without Christianity. God's coming down to live for a season in history, his miraculous career in the flesh, his super-historic death on the cross, his triumphant resurrection and ascension, his becoming by his own act the Savior of the world, all must be accepted on the mere word of a few men who differed in no essential sense from ourselves; and that word would never have reached us but for the Bible. Yet the Bible is not the Gospel, nor the revelation. As Dr. Forsyth puts it—

"The Gospel gift from God is neither a book nor a genius, but a Christ. It is Himself. It is a person, an incarnation. It is Himself in history, that is to say, Himself in personal, moral action, Himself acting with all his holy might in sinful humanity and on its scale, Himself made sin for us. The gift, then, is not a book but a fact, a Person and His Consummatory Act."

For that extraordinary story our sole authority is what the Principal calls "God's true, but not pure, word of interpretation in the apostles." And yet it is that in itself incredible story that constitutes the Gospels. "In the strict sense, revelation has to do only with God, and with God only in his personal relation to us." The Gospel, or the revelation, consists in the momentous declaration that Almighty God descended into history in Christ and by one historic act, consummated on the cross, redeemed the world. The Bible merely contains an imperfect version of that Gospel.

We now come to what is peculiar, if not original, in Dr. Forsyth's teaching. His theology is undoubtedly that of Paul; but he makes an admission which is not found in the New Testament, an admission which, in reality, undermines the Faith:—

"The mere crucifixion of Jesus was no revelation. Many people saw it to whom it meant nothing more

than any execution. It does not reach us as a religious thing, as revelation, till it receives a certain interpretation. And not any interpretation, allegorical or fanciful, will do, but the interpretation which saw God in it, and especially saw what God saw in it; which saw not what He had to put up with but what He did in it, and saw with the whole person and not with the vision alone, with an act of will and final committal and not of mere perception. Not a soul saw it in that way when Christ died. No one saw or answered it as the Act or Purpose of God, only as the failure of another Messiah. Therefore, besides God's Act we must have God's version of His Act."

In appearance Jesus was a mere man. Watching him day by day no one would have suspected that he was a Deity in disguise; and when he came to die there was outwardly nothing to distinguish his death from that of an ordinary human martyr. That is the fatal admission made by Dr. Forsyth. It never occurred even to the disciples to think of the death on Calvary as anything but the horrible end of their Master's career. Indeed, there was a considerable interval between the crucifixion and the invention of its interpretation as God's Act of redeeming the world, an interpretation which is said to be God's very own. It must be confessed that there is some foundation for this strange view in Paul's account of his own conversion to Christianity. He assures us that on that dramatic occasion he received his Gospel by a direct revelation from heaven; and everybody knows that the Gospel he preached was an interpretation of the death on the cross. That Gospel is to be found to-day in its completeness in the Epistles, but not in a perfect form. The Principal frankly acknowledges that there are errors in the Bible, even in its versions of the Gospel itself; but he claims that *on the whole*, or *in the main*, the Bible is true. "I ventured once to say," he tells us, "that we need not take *the whole Bible*, but we must take *the Bible as a whole*." He maintains that the presence of mistakes in the Scriptures is not to be wondered at when we bear in mind that "the death of Christ, which consummated God's purpose with the race, was yet a judicious murder and a national crime," and that "the sinless Son of God Himself was by His own consent, by His emptying of Himself, limited and wrong on certain points where now, by His grace, we are right, points like the authorship of a Psalm, or perhaps the Parousia." But because the Bible contains the Gospel, though in a human and imperfect shape, we are exhorted to continue to regard it as on the whole the Word of God. "The Bible is there," he says, "for the sake of the Gospel within it. Anything might happen to the Bible if only it glorified the Gospel." There is a vast amount of dross in the volume, but mixed up with it, if you diligently and prayerfully dig for it, you will find precious nuggets of Gospel truth, and for the sake of these hold the whole book in reverence.

We do not wish to deny that the Christian Gospel is in the Bible, and that Paul assured his hearers that he had received that Gospel from God's own mouth. What we affirm is that the Bible is as wrong about the Gospel as about the creation of the world and the fall of man. Everybody now treats the latter as pure legends, if not as myths; and a rapidly growing number of people put the former in the same category. The truth is that the Gospel story is wholly irrational and absurd. In the first place, if the Christian God existed, there would have been no Christianity. The very existence of an imperfect and wicked human race is a convincing argument against the existence of a perfect Creator, because a perfect Creator could not have helped producing perfect creatures, quite incapable of going or doing wrong. We repeat that if the Christian God existed there would have been no lost world to redeem, and no need of his undergoing the humiliation of an incarnation, a sorrowful life and a shocking death in human flesh. In the second place, even on the assumption that the world was fallen and needed restoration which could have been effected only by the death of God in Christ, we would have

had neither Church nor Bible, because both Church and Bible are witnesses to God's lamentable failure both as Creator and Redeemer. Dr. Forsyth makes God look unspeakably ridiculous when he represents him as unable to make his consummate act of redeeming known to mankind without a Church and a Bible, but the most astounding fact is that in spite of both Church and Bible two-thirds of our race have never heard of it. By the death on Calvary God forgave all sinners everywhere, and yet two thousand years after the event very few are aware of it. If God saved Paul without the instrumentality of either Church or Bible, why did he not save all others, without any delay, in the same way? If he could make a direct revelation of this saving act to one man, surely he could do so to all alike everywhere; and had he existed he would have done so, and we would have been living to-day in a perfect world. The talk about God's inability to work except through imperfect instruments is the merest twaddle.

The criticism that discredits the Bible disproves Christianity at the same time. Many believers make much of the fact that so great a scholar as Harnack now confirms the tradition as to the authorship and dates of the Gospels and the Acts, as if it made the greatest difference whether they were written early or late. While supporting the orthodox views on that subject, Dr. Harnack still repudiates the Gospel so eloquently but so ineffectually advocated by Principal Forsyth. He repudiates it because all its history stands up as a witness against it. It is quite true that "the Bible is to be judged by its Word, and its Word by its Christ and His work—the Book by the message and the message by the Act in Jesus Christ"; but it is also true that so judged, in the dazzling light of history, both are utterly and finally condemned as worthless and injurious superstitions. As Dr. Forsyth himself allows, if we make our supreme appeal to reason, apart from faith, we shall most assuredly land in positive unbelief; but we must not forget that in proportion as faith in God and Christ and another world dies, faith in man and his natural resources grows and waxes in strength and glory. Supernaturalism has always hindered the world's progress; but now that it is tottering to its rightful doom mankind are learning to walk on their own feet and to establish healthier and happier conditions of living.

J. T. LLOYD.

Democracy and Religion.

WHAT we may call the plan of historic Christianity is very simple in outline. Over nineteen centuries ago the preparation in history was complete and Christianity was born. Jesus, God of very God, came into the world with a definite mission before him. He accomplished his mission, was killed, buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. He left behind him a band of devoted disciples, the recipients of his pure and lofty teaching. Burning with inspired zeal, these disciples carried his teaching throughout the whole of the civilised world. They came, they saw, they conquered. Their influence was such that they restored morality to a corrupt world, brought back hope to a despairing race; and this influence has served as the motive force of all that is good in European history since.

The centuries roll by, and a startling discovery, or rather two startling discoveries, are made. The first is that, in spite of its almost obtrusive virtue and powerful influence for good, Christianity is not holding its own. Many have given it up altogether; others hold to it in a very lukewarm manner, animated by not the purest of motives. The prospect in the near future—for doctrinal Christianity, at least—is anything but cheerful. The slump is not peculiar to one class of the community; it is common to all. It is visible even in the Churches. For let a preacher have the courage to announce some heretical doctrine, and he is at once backed up by a large number

of other Christians who appear to have been only waiting for some "respectable" person to give them a lead in order to throw off the mask of a hypocritical conformity.

The second discovery is that we—that is, the world—have been all along on the wrong track. For centuries the world was under the impression that the main mission of Jesus was to save men's souls for the next world. Jesus said so, the disciples said so, the early Christians said so; all the Churches have been reared upon that as a foundation. But all this, we learn, is wrong. The main object of Christianity was to save men's souls here, in this world. Its mission was a social one, its gospel a social gospel. Its misfortune was that it was misunderstood from the first. And those who were nearest the time of its founder misunderstood it most. The real purpose of Christianity is to found a new earth, whether there is a heaven or not. Social betterment, not post-mortem salvation, is the essence of Christianity.

Now, if there is any meaning in the columns of sentimental gush published by one of the religious papers week by week anent the Brotherhood movement, it means all that has just been said. This discovery has been expressed in numerous ways, but this is its essence. Here, for instance, is what one of the said journal's regular contributors has to say concerning historic Christianity—which is the only Christianity that has ever existed, and therefore the only Christianity on behalf of which anything may be claimed:—

"It has, in the main, identified itself with the idea that the natural man is evil.....It has given us the idea of a frail and evilly disposed man living in a world whose very substance is evil.....It has presented its founder as pre-eminently a Man of Sorrows. It has taught self-renunciation as almost the only way to self-realisation. It has laid extreme emphasis upon death and sacrifice. For hundreds of years it has taught us to call ourselves 'miserable offenders'; so much so that.....it has almost persuaded us to believe that there is positive virtue in self-abasement, self-limitation, and suffering. It has flung a shadow over the world.....Its gospel has been particularly directed towards weak, wayward, foolish, diseased people; there has been no gospel for the strong, until strong people have come to think that Christianity is not for them, and to regard Christian Churches as in the manner of nurseries, hospitals, or the last resting-place of the intellectually and morally infirm."

The picture is certainly not overdrawn, and one might well ask what has Christianity contributed to the world's welfare that compensated for these admitted evils? Apparently all this evil is atoned for by the discovery that Christianity is a gospel of brotherhood and social reform, and so provides unlimited opportunities for the sloppy sentimentalist of religious tendencies and limited brain power. The discovery, even if a genuine one, comes too late in the day to save Christianity. It reminds one of the many useful "visions" and inspirations that have been miraculously vouchsafed Christian saints in the past. Devout Christians see a divine leading in the fact that the discovery coincides with the necessity for it. Undevout onlookers fancy they can detect that it is the necessity which leads to the discovery. Had the democracy stuck to the Churches, the gospel of social brotherhood would never have been heard of. As they are leaving the Churches, the gospel is no more than a rather palpable attempt to bait the theological trap.

The Brotherhood movement is triumphantly paraded as proof that the working man is not hostile to religion. Not hostile, maybe. But the hostility of a class is not the worst thing that can befall religion. Indifference is a greater disaster still. The average working man is not frantically hostile to anything, and he takes religion as part of the established order, treating it with a kind of indolent contempt that is more dangerous than avowed enmity. Almost intuitively he realises that it fails to touch the real issues of his life. He does not trust religious professors, as such. In the recent

railway strike it was notorious that church and chapel were completely ignored. And one of the leaders of Nonconformity confessed that none were invited to interest themselves in the matter because none were trusted. Probably, too, many of the Labor leaders who advertise their religious opinions so assiduously would be surprised did they know their followers' real opinion of them. I do not think I am far from the truth in saying that the attitude of most of the men towards them is, "It is true he is religious, but he is a very decent fellow." The "but" is highly instructive.

How does the Brotherhood movement prove that the working man is attached to religion? It is pointed out that the gatherings prove that men will go to church or chapel if the preacher will talk about the right kind of things. Certainly. So will a confirmed drunkard attend a tea-meeting if you provide a certain variety in the drinkables. Working men will attend church, it is said, if the parson leaves out heaven and talks about earth, if he talks about industrial organisation instead of the heavenly army, the housing question instead of New Jerusalem mansions, a living wage instead of celestial crowns. Probably; but this is only another way of saying that he will attend a religious meeting if the religion is left out. He is attached to the play of *Hamlet*, but prefers it minus the Prince of Denmark. The curious thing is, not that intelligent working men should favor this state of things, but that religious people should proclaim it as proof of the vitality of religious belief. Probably they are not so simple as would appear on the surface. Their position is not unlike that of a tradesman who advertises a flourishing business, with a constantly decreasing turnover, at the moment he is calling together his creditors. This is, perhaps, excusable as a mere advertising dodge, but there would only be one opinion of the man who obtained credit under such circumstances. Unfortunately, religious morality has not yet reached the level of commercial ethics.

One would not give much for the intelligence of such of the working class as are really captivated by this empty talk of brotherhood. There has never been any lack of the profession of brotherhood right through the history of Christianity. And those who look at things and not names can see clearly enough, not only that all sorts of social evils grew up side by side with the profession of brotherhood, but that the talk of spiritual brotherhood was very often a cloak for social exploitation. And it is a little more than this to-day. The real object of the Brotherhood movement is not social at all; it is religious. The preachers are not using religion to lead men to social betterment; they are using the desire for social betterment to maintain religious organisations. Many appear too stupid to see this. Others flatter themselves that by this means they can "noble" the Churches. They need be very careful. At the game of capturing social movements and robbing them of all utility, the Churches are past masters. And history would only be repeating itself were they once more successful at the game.

And, after all, one cannot think that the clergy really believe the growth of the Brotherhood movement a proof of the vitality of religion. That, too, is an old game under a new form. At one time it is a Christian Endeavor movement that is going to capture the democracy. Then it is the P. S. A. crusade. Or, again, a gigantic mission is engineered. At present it is the Brotherhood craze. But anyone who observes knows that all these movements are recruited from the same class. There is no increase in strength, there is only a new combination of existing believers. And, meanwhile, the democratic army outside all religious influences grows steadily larger. Nothing affects that—except to add to its numbers. It is this army that the Churches really have to dread. For it is an army of the mentally free; and those who have once tasted the delights of mental liberty do not readily bend their necks again to the yoke.

C. COHEN.

Louis Cazamian, "The City of Dreadful Night," and "B. V."

THOSE who, like myself, have read and re-read James Thomson's works during these many years, have come to love the memory of the man even more than we admire his writings; for whether in his poems or his prose, we feel the presence of a tender, passionate heart, an intelligence as candid as it was lucid, a sense of ironic humor only surpassed by the boundless sympathy of his rich imagination.

To many of us, I believe, there has been something inexplicable in the long postponement of Thomson's recognition by French writers, since we have never doubted that in them so supremely logical an intellect as his must eventually find its most numerous and whole-hearted admirers; for clear thinking is, across the Channel, certainly more habitual, if not more a national, gift than with us—they are less "timid and inconsequent in ratiocination" than are we.

Thirty years—a whole generation!—is surely an unconscionable time for a masterpiece of English literature to take to reach Paris! True, the *City of Dreadful Night* is not a poem one would lend to indifferent readers; indeed, the magisterial treatment of a mighty theme is not food for infantile minds at all; but it is not that Thomson should be as unknown to the mass of the French as to the mass of English readers, for that will ever be largely the case; but that with a so much larger and finer critical audience in France he should not, before now, have been well on the way to be hailed there as a philosopher and poet worthy of their praise; for Thomson's philosophy is of that frank daylight kind that our bright-witted neighbors suffer gladly.

At last, however, Paris is awaking to the fact that for some thirty years we have been enriched by—and have, of course, neglected—a great poet; and it may be that, as the French discovered Pöo to the Americans, so they may discover "B. V." for the British.

I hope it will be so; but, in any case, we can at once acknowledge, with warm gratitude, our debt to M. Louis Cazamian for his review of Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* in *La Revue de Paris* of the 15th September.

M. Cazamian's review is one quite after Thomson's own heart, for M. Cazamian, with the enthusiasm of a warm admirer and the insight of a true critic, generously devotes the much greater part of it to quotations from, and paraphrases of, Thomson's verses, restraining his own criticism and eulogy within less than a tenth of the space allotted him in *La Revue de Paris*.

When M. Cazamian writes of the "symphonic orchestration" of "B. V.'s" poem and of the "logic of its architecture" and the "symbolic complexity of its life" and of "the human pity which softens its austere teaching," as "the most modern and moving note" of its "grandiose monotone," he sets before us in a few short words the essential beauties of the *Dolent City*. And when he writes:—

"At least we know enough of Thomson's life to affirm the nobleness of heart before which the sovereign realities were love and death, and, also, the sincerity of a mind led to the supreme negations by the sense of human wretchedness, as much as by the blows of fate,"

he depicts the man.

"Ignored while living, he has not yet reached his proper glory; his reputation with an *élite*, which ever grows more numerous, will perhaps never extend to popular renown: on the road leading to his poem the powers of blasphemy and despair mount a redoubtable guard, frightening away tender souls, timid or submissive, to the useful gods."

So writes M. Cazamian, and in this passage only in his review is there a word with which Thomson would have quarrelled. "Having no God, how can I blaspheme him," he once wrote. On the other hand, a believer might blaspheme by degrading or deriding

the being in whom he believed: in Thomson's eyes Augustine was the arch-blasphemer who libelled his God so atrociously as to make him more bloodthirsty and cruel and insensate than any Moloch of them all. So the ferocious monster of Calvin was the creature of Calvin's blasphemy; in sooth, to attribute to a God that one believed in the most shocking of human crimes seemed to Thomson such blasphemy as no unbeliever could approach, since "in contemning that in which I do not believe, I merely condemn that which for me has no existence" (1878).

Perhaps it was not quite worth while to refer to this, but at any rate my remarks may clear Thomson from a charge of coquetting with Theism of any kind. As he wrote in 1881, "Man created God in His own image, in the image of Man created He him; male and female created He them."

It may interest M. Cazamian to know that "B. V." thoroughly enjoyed a "jolly outburst of Rabelaisian laughter," and that his love for Rabelais and Montaigne was less only, if less at all, than his love for Heine—"B. V.'s" Saint Heinrich—and Göthe—"cool Göthe," as "B. V." called him—and perhaps Leopardi and Dante. I do not think Novalis influenced Thomson greatly, but the influence of Shakespeare over "B. V." was much greater than most critics have suspected. Paul Louis Courier was a great favorite of Thomson's, and in a lesser degree Balzac—"the terrible" was "B. V.'s" epithet—and Flaubert; but Baudelaire, amongst the moderns, in Thomson's opinion, was the touchstone by which the true critic could be detected from the false.

M. Cazamian may think that I am digressing in referring briefly to some of Thomson's literary tastes; but he will not be hurt, I hope, to learn that Thomson's admiration for the French people and their literature was warmly expressed by him to the writer of this short article on many occasions, and he often regretted that we had not an English Rabelais, Montaigne, or Villon.

To conclude, I quote a short piece of "B. V.'s" which may be new to M. Cazamian:—

"I do not hate a single man alive;
Some few I must disdain;
I have loved heartily some four, or five;
And of these there remain
Just two for whom I gladly would outface
Death—for one, death, and disgrace."

And a distich:—

"I ask not for Tokay;
Only give me toke."

Which is pathetic, and humorous too.

I wonder whether M. Cazamian knows Thomson's *Essays and Phantasies*? If not, I would gladly post him my copy, since one only knows part of "B. V." unless one has tasted his prose; and the *Essays and Phantasies* are, I believe, out of print.

SIRIUS.

"There is no foolishness about religion in south-western Missouri," says a St. Louis man. "I had occasion, recently, to visit a town in that section, and while waiting the pleasure of the president of the bank I had business with, caught sight of the following notice posted on the door of a church across the way.

"There will be preaching here next Sunday, Providence permitting; and there will be preaching here whether or no on the Sunday following upon the subject, He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned at 11.30 a.m."

Terrible shrieks issued forth from the nursery. The fond mother burst into the infantile room. Johnny and Amy were sitting on the floor howling, with Tommy, the eldest (age 7), seated on a cushion on the table.

"Goodness, my dears, what is the matter?" cried the devoted mother.

"Boo-oo-oo," sobbed Johnny and Amy. "We were playing the Garden of Eden."

"Yes, dear," said mamma, stroking each of their little curly heads. "I told you the story yesterday; but why are you both crying?"

They suddenly withheld their tears, and pointing contemptuously at their brother Tommy on the table, said, "The Serpent has eaten *all* the apple."

Acid Drops.

Llanfyllin Board of Guardians have been discussing the arrangements made for the spiritual consolation of the inmates of the workhouse. One member asked whether the ministers who visited the house paid any attention to the vagrants. Mr. Astley, the master, replied that they rarely went into the vagrants' ward, and when they did they were usually insulted. Bibles were sometimes distributed amongst the vagrants, but they usually lit their pipes with them. Evidently *those* copies of Holy Writ were useful. The Chinese are said to find Bible leaves useful as boot-socks—and for still lower purposes.

"What is Christianity?" There seems to be a great deal of doubt about it, even two thousand years since it was introduced in the world by no less a person (Christians say) than God Almighty. But one would think it was hardly reserved for the Rev. A. J. Waldron, of all men, to throw a satisfactory light upon the question. And the place where he spoke, and the audience he addressed, were just as strange. The place was the Concert Hall of the Cavalry Canteen at Aldershot, and the audience consisted of some 600 military recruits from 18 to 20 years of age—mere boys in uniform, got together presumably by Mr. Waldron's pious "pals" from several different regiments; for in the matter of religion common soldiers are hectored by their officers, and compelled to attend "divine worship" whether they want to or not. Well, these boys in uniform listened to Mr. Waldron and gave him a cheer at the finish. So the *Daily News* says, but it gives no report whatever of the reverend gentleman's answer to the distracting question which was the title of his discourse, and thus the outer world is left to linger in ignorance. When Mr. Waldron sat down he invited questions. It was a rare joke. Officers from various units were scattered over the hall, the Senior Chaplain was present, with Major-General Lawson, the General of the Division. Only one recruit mustered the courage to ask a question. And we dare say the reverend gentleman went away feeling that he had triumphed all along the line. Brave Waldron!

"It was a strange subdued crowd," the *Daily News* said, "that surged from the Cavalry Music Hall." Very likely. They may have wondered how much more of that sort of stuff they would have to listen to.

We have much pleasure in quoting this news item from the *Daily Chronicle* of November 4, the reporter being its correspondent at San Francisco:—

"Under the new woman suffragist law passed by the State of California, the first trial has been held at Los Angeles, where the jury was composed entirely of women. It was the trial of Mr. A. A. King, the editor of a newspaper of that city, charged with circulating obscene and improper matter.

"The jury of women, after a trial lasting two days, acquitted the editor, and gave their reasons for doing so. The forewoman said that the verdict was unanimous, and that they had decided that the matter published was not obscene but profane. 'Honest and clean profanity,' ran the decision. 'cannot be considered seriously objectionable when it is published, because it is not necessary that anyone should read it.'

"'On the other hand,' declared the jury, 'profanity spoken in the streets must unavoidably be heard. The law, however, does not punish for such an offence; therefore it would be unjust to punish an editor for a similar offence when published in a newspaper.'

This is a triumph of common sense. The jury of women hit the bullseye with the first shot. Yet jury after jury of men, directed by men on the judges' bench, have gone on without a break, generation after generation, finding perfectly "clean profanity" *indecent* and *obscene*. It looks as though we ought to have some women juries in England.

The Bishop of Carlisle has just been saying that he will occupy a better position when he is dead. At present he is hampered by his body. When he gets out of his body he will be as free as air—and less substantial. One wonders why his lordship goes on living, when he would be so much more useful to himself (and perhaps to others) dead. But this strange world abounds in contradictions.

We commented last week on the Archbishop of York's opinion that the Church was not an organisation for inquiring into the truth of its teachings. It is only fair, therefore, to give, on the other side, the Bishop of Carlisle's regret that most clergymen resemble "an advocate holding a brief rather than a scientist searching for truth." The Bishop professes

adherence to the latter ideal, and we appreciate his aspiration. The only fault with it is that it is an ideal quite irreconcilable with both the traditions and interest of the Church, and, indeed, with theology itself. A scientist searches for the truth because he has no other aim than the truth. His theories, whatever they may be, have no other value except so far as they arise from and explain the facts. And he is appointed to a post, not to champion a theory, but to find out what is the truth concerning the facts that come under his survey. But a theologian is specially appointed to teach certain things that must not be questioned. His concern is not the facts, but the theory. Facts have no value save so far as they support a theory, and those that do not support it are ignored. Hence the complaint about unsettling doctrines; hence the desire of the clergy to keep their flocks free from the contaminating influence of scientific facts; hence, too, the fact that the mental—and often moral—calibre of the clergy as a class is lower than that of any other educated class in the community.

The Lord Mayor presided the other day at a meeting in aid of the Queen Victoria Clergy Fund. It was perhaps a sense of humor that led him to remark "the clergy never appealed to the public for extra remuneration, or threatened to strike if the public did not more liberally reward their efforts." The first half of the statement is scarcely accurate. The clergy are always agitating concerning their low wages, which is an appeal to the public, in a way. It is true they do not threaten to strike, probably because the general public would let them remain on strike until the day of judgment. If dock laborers, railway workers, or tramway men go on strike, that is a serious matter, and the public quickly gets interested. Which really means that either of these are vastly more important to society than are the clergy. This is a humiliating truth for the clergy to face, but it is the truth. Moreover, the clergy did go on strike—in a fashion—when the general public believed their functions essential to social well-being. They excommunicated people, and even nations, until the excommunicated ones toed the line. And this was a strike—of a kind. Then people trembled. Now they would laugh. They know that a clergyman's denunciation would have about as much effect on their lives as the yapping of a terrier has upon the motion of the moon.

The material world is more or less illusory, and we are quite wrong in regarding it as having a separate and independent existence. So says the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and we congratulate him on being so certain in a direction where certainty is an absolute impossibility. We congratulate him also on having discovered the real method of posing as a profound thinker to a certain type of mind. This is to use unintelligible language, and get sufficiently far from facts to avoid all risk of flat contradiction. For instance, Mr. Campbell is quite sure that one day "the material world will disappear like a dissolving view, absorbed into its spiritual background, and made absolutely one therewith." Now, if anyone can form any intelligible conception as to what on earth this means, we should be pleased to hear from him—an invitation which includes Mr. Campbell himself. We should be most interested in learning how there can be an opportunity for cognition, or even for perception, where everything is absolutely one thing. Or, when foreground and background become one, what on earth becomes of the background? Religious philosophising seems a ludicrously easy business. Glib speech, plenty of words, unprovable propositions, and unintelligible propositions, constitute the outfit. And the rule of practice is, Keep away from facts. Given these things and the only limit to the output is the patience of one's audience.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell preached on "Christ Transcendent" in the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, New York, on Sunday, October 29, and his sermon was published in the *Christian Commonwealth*, the organ of the New Theology movement, on the following Wednesday. Not only the sermon, but the prayer as well. It is hardly to be supposed that the expense of telegraphing both prayer and sermon was incurred, so that it is fairly safe to guess that both were communicated to the newspaper before Mr. Campbell departed from these shores. He had evidently made up his mind a good time in advance what he was going to ask the Almighty for on behalf of the Americans. Quite an intelligent anticipation of events, as the *Times* would say. Amongst other generalities, he prayed that his hearers might be delivered from Materialism, whatever that may mean. Does that term include a motor car, and town and country residences? Mr. Campbell, like many others of the preaching ilk, differs in practice from the leader he claims to follow, who is said to have nowhere to lay his head; and yet in his prayer he claimed kinship with the highest. One

can imagine the bored American responding: "Mr. Campbell, you make me tired."

The *Methodist Times* thinks that the writings of Professor Bergson "may yet result in revivifying theistic thought." It is difficult to prevent the truth slipping out, and we note the hope that Theistic thought may yet be revived. It is an admission that it is not at present very virile. As for Professor Bergson accomplishing the miracle—well, there are stories of dead *men* being brought to life again; but even legend has never recorded the bringing to life again of a dead god. A dead god is the most hopeless of all subjects for a resurrection.

A significant characteristic of M. Bergson's philosophy of the universe is that there is no room in it for design or purpose. Though the super-physical source of organic life possesses consciousness and will, yet it has no plan of operations, no distinct goal towards which it works, but goes on endlessly creating new forms without having any definite object in view, blindly obeying some mysterious "drive," "impulse," or creative "effort." The amazing thing is that this distinguished thinker does not realise the absurdity of ascribing aimlessness to the creative consciousness and will. As Mr. Balfour points out, it is extremely difficult to perceive what function is performed by consciousness and will; or, in other words, what advantage Idealism has over Naturalism. On the assumption that they exist, consciousness and will ought to be thoroughly ashamed of working towards no destined end. Of what use are they at all?

And yet M. Bergson is much nearer the truth than a shallow writer in Harmsworth's *Popular Science*, who, evidently a disciple of Bergson, delivers himself of the following foolish statement:—

"For ages unimaginable the universal forces had been building a theatre, and setting the stage for the play of Life—a drama which will reach its appointed end, through and beyond us, the actors and spectators—when the idea is fulfilled of the Omnipotent Author, whose power and purpose are behind the timber of the stage, the line and pigment of the canvas, every atom and iota of the setting of the scenes. All the world's a stage, and all the living things the Author's players."

That is not science, but dogmatic theology, with its roots in the air.

Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, we believe, claims descent from William Shakespeare. Oh what a fall was there! But we must get on as we can in the circumstances. And so must the reverend gentleman. But why *does* he talk such nonsense about the Bible? Recently, at a Bible Society meeting at Norwich, he said that we didn't go in for red flags, bombs, and barricades in England, because "all ranks and classes of the people had in the Bible a divine standard of wisdom and conduct by which they and their action must be judged." Have they, indeed? Did anyone hear the Bible appealed to, even once, during the late strikes—either by the employers or the employed? When the reverend gentleman declared that there was no future for "people whose lives were not controlled and guided by the Bible" he overlooked the fact that if this be true it is all up with England already. Did not a late Bishop of Peterborough, the Rev. Dr. Magee, express the opinion that any society which tried to base itself on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount would go to pieces in a week?

Some religious busybodies have been carrying out a house-to-house visitation in Liverpool to discover the religious opinions of the people visited and the churches they attend. The visitors report that "churlish" treatment was not common, and was mainly confined to the better class districts. We suppose "churlish" means that some people were sensible enough to tell these busybodies to mind their own business. Naturally, those who would do this would be those who were most—economically—*independent*. In poor districts, thanks to the charities controlled by the Churches, there would be less hesitation in refusing information. Something might be lost when occasion arose for assistance, and we know enough of these religious administrators to believe that something *would* be lost. But it is one of the manifestations of Christian impertinence that a self-elected body of men and women should feel themselves fully authorised to carry out such an inquisition. If a political inquiry of a similar kind were suggested, every one would recognise the impudence of calling at every front door to ask whether the occupier was a Liberal or a Conservative. But so long as it is done in the name of religion almost everything seems right and proper to some people.

People are fond of justifying this inquisitiveness in matters of religion on account of its importance. Well, a

man's opinions on social subjects, or the kind of diet he follows, is also important, but no one ever dreams of instituting a house-to-house inquiry on either topic. We write, and lecture, on these subjects, and those who are interested read or listen, and we are all content to let the work be done in this way. Anything further would be an impertinence. The real reasons why religion is the subject of this kind of inquiry are manifold, but the main one at this time of day is that any fool feels equal to the task. For instance, if one were to engage a number of men and women to go round inquiring people's political opinions, each one of the inquirers would feel that he, or she, ought to know something about politics, and would probably devote some time to a study of the subject. But any fool feels that he, or she, knows enough about religion to catechise other people about the state of their souls. All that is necessary is for them to feel that they have "got religion," and when this is allied with a fussy, prying disposition, the worker is ready for the task. And the work gives them the feeling that they are in some way public benefactors, when, as a matter of fact, they are really public nuisances.

An appeal to "Save Sunday" was issued to the electorate of West Ham, by "the clergy and ministers of the borough," during the recent municipal elections. A long string of the names of parsons was appended to the document, which appears to be aimed at the Sunday picture palaces. We suggest to the proprietors of the picture palaces a reply circular imploring people to stay away from church and chapel. One appeal would be as good as the other, or, as the Irishman said, better. "The clergy and ministers of the borough" frankly ask for the picture palaces to be closed in the interests of "those who desire Christian worship." The other appeal might be made on behalf of those who desire larger attendances at the picture palaces, although we admit that the Churches are in the more desperate state. Still, it would be a trade appeal from either side. The Churches complain that the picture shows rob them of their congregations, and the picture shows might as reasonably complain that if the Churches were closed more people would visit their establishments. Trade against trade. Pull Devil, pull baker. If the proprietors of the picture shows decide on the issue of such a circular we promise a subscription towards the cost.

We clip the following leaderette from the *Rochdale Times* of Saturday, November 4:—

"As a sequel to the recent Atheist lectures on the Town Hall Square, all the religious denominations in Rochdale are combining in an organised campaign against the anti-Christian movement. The project was set on foot at a very successful meeting held in the Town Hall last night, the Mayor (Sir James Duckworth) presiding over a gathering composed of representatives of all the Churches. Probably a movement on such a scale as that contemplated has not previously been organised in any part of the country, and it is intended that the campaign against Atheism shall extend over several years. The project has been started under very favorable auspices, and it will be warmly welcomed by the many people who have been shocked by the blasphemous language lately heard on the Town Hall Square.

We are delighted to hear of this campaign against Atheism, though we don't believe it will last several years. The campaigners will probably tire of the fight before their adversaries do. Besides, it is so hard for men of God to agree for long about anything—and there is quite a crowd of them (Church and Free Church) in this affair.

Mr. Ferens, M.P., attributes his success in life, financial and otherwise, to his always having devoted a tenth of his income to religion and charity. For this reason God blessed and prospered him. We are afraid Mr. Ferens imagines God Almighty is more concerned about his welfare than is really the case. If true, it would be a short and easy method of getting rich. Give ten per cent. to the Lord and your balance at the bankers is certain to grow larger. Besides, there would have been no need for Mr. Ferens' charity if the condition of the people had not demanded it. And are we to assume that God kept other people poor in order that Mr. Ferens might get rich by giving them a tenth of his income? We invite Mr. Ferens to think the matter out and let us know the result.

"Man's life without God," says the Rev. J. D. Jones, "is miserable and desolate." Really *we* manage to bear up very well. And we meet many thousands in the course of a year who seem to be fairly cheerful. Poor Jones! What a naturally miserable man he must be to feel in this way. We extend to him our sincere sympathy, and trust that he will soon recover from his melancholia.

Mr. Frederic Harrison's article in the November number of the *Positivist Review* on "The Anglican Establishment"

is in some respects too flattering, but there are some keenly critical passages, and the following is one of them:—

"We never hear a protest, hardly a doubt, coming from the Church officially, rarely even from any eminent person in the hierarchy, against any form of national aggrandisement, any public crime or policy, however immoral, unless it touch the wealth and privileges of the Church. Prelates and priests bless any war, any aggression, any tyranny which the governing orders choose to start; they send their sons to join in the buccaneering adventures in Africa and Asia..... We seldom find the Church, or any eminent body of churchmen, take the lead in seeking to prevent a war, to abolish cruel sports, to put an end to social wars, to assuage the violence of strikes and lock-outs, to check the greed of capital and the anarchy of its victims.....The Church, as a body and officially, and apart from a few isolated persons, sticks to its masters—the governing majority, and to its 'patrons'—the rich owners of its livings."

Mr. Harrison concludes that the Church of England has "grown to be a branch of the Conservative caucus—a sort of Clerical Primrose League of the Cross." It is "a form of reaction" and must be disestablished and disendowed.

Mr. Harrison's flattering passages may be sampled by the following:—

"The great achievement of the Church is the English Bible. The Bible is the grandest linguistic triumph in the history of literature, or comparable only to the Iliad. For exactly three centuries it has kept our English language, over the English-speaking peoples, pure, permanent, noble. The Church had the good fortune to be founded at the crisis of the development of our English tongue, and thus to be associated with the perfection of the English language."

We are sorry to see Mr. Harrison endorsing this orthodox absurdity. In doing so he falls into a sad confusion. The reference to the Iliad is unintelligible,—for the English Bible is a translation, and what translation of the Iliad holds a similar place in our literature? We venture to say that the Authorised Version has had far less influence upon the English language than Mr. Harrison (following the clergy) seems to imagine. It is written in a special kind of English, devoted to the Bible; an English that was never spoken or written for other purposes; an English that was gradually moulded by several generations of translators, until it was consummated and stereotyped in the Authorised Version. That, indeed, is very largely the secret of its great success within its own limits. Anybody can see that the English of the editors under King James is not in the least like the English of the Version that they produced. And to represent the Authorised Version of the Bible as having a greater influence than Shakespeare on English literature is a foolish blunder, which we have no hesitation in saying is due entirely to religious prepossessions derived from the days of childhood.

So the truth is out at last. We have it in the current issue of the *Occult Review*. Harry Houdini, the handcuff king, according to a correspondent in that journal, is a spiritualistic medium, and he is enabled to get out of sealed cabinets and rivetted iron cylinders by the aid of the "spirits," who dematerialise or melt Houdini in order that they may liberate him and then materialise him again when he is outside the cabinet. It counts for nothing that Houdini is an absolute disbeliever in spiritualistic phenomena, and has repeatedly stated, both publicly and privately, that his feats are pure and simple tricks. But it is hardly to be expected that he should know anything about it when the *Occult Review's* correspondent comes on the scene. Mr. Stead differs from the correspondent in question. In his opinion it is the apparatus that is dematerialised, not the medium. Why stop at an iron cylinder or wooden box? The burglar of the future will be a spiritualistic medium who can dematerialise a brick wall and steel safe, take what he wants, and then step aside to let the spirits "build up" the wall and safe again, taking such steps as may be necessary to prevent the dematerialisation of the "swag."

Thomas Burnett, fifty-nine, a clerk in holy orders, was charged at Bow-street with being drunk and incapable at High Holborn, where he fell upon the pavement. A bottle of whisky was afterwards taken from his pocket. He was fined 5s. with 7s. 6d. doctor's fees. Perhaps the reverend gentleman was only taking Solomon's advice to drink and remember his misery no more. Or was it his poverty that he was trying to forget?

William Rowlands has been sentenced at Llangollen to six months' hard labor for obtaining money, board, and lodgings at the Waverley Hotel by false pretences. During his stay in the town he went to Calvinist chapels announcing he had an inspired message to deliver, and once took charge of a service. There were previous convictions against him. Evidently an old stager—at an old game.

Samuel Featherstone, for forty-four years parish clerk of Tuxford, and sexton at the parish church, committed suicide by hanging himself in a shed at the back of his residence. The jury returned the usual verdict of temporary insanity. How these Atheists (consult Talmage and Torrey) do destroy themselves!

Rev. J. Arthur Partington, of Yeovil, committed suicide by strangulation in a lavatory of a Great Western train. In one of his coat pockets was a copy of that pious publication *Great Thoughts*, on the margin of an inside page of which he had apparently written, "Would God I could right all the wrongs of my life." Our readers will repeat the reflection of our previous paragraph.

Rev. Dr. Warschauer has been visiting Leicester and telling his audience how victorious he was over Mr. Foote at the Caxton Hall debate, how the disorder of the "infidel" part of the audience was "engineered from the platform," and how Mr. Foote "confessed he could not answer" Dr. Warschauer's questions. The reverend gentleman, in short, has been acting like—well, like what he is—a converted Jew. What more can be said?

"Billy Sunday," ex-base-ball player, and evangelist, is said to be the best-paid laborer in the United States department of the Lord's vineyard. His income is reported to be £15,000 a year. "Carry neither scrip nor purse," said Billy's Master. Billy doesn't. He carries dollar bills and a cheque-book. So *that's* all right.

Poor Jack Miller, who perished in the shaft of his mining claim near Bridgeport, California, kept a sort of diary while he was dying of slow starvation. "God help me," he wrote on the third day. God did *not* help him. On the fifth day he wrote "Our great Creator has done all things well." What beautiful faith! the Christians would say. What childish faith! say we.

"Professor Zodiac," a black man, called Robert Scott Blair, thirty-eight years of age, has been sent to prison for six weeks for "pretending to tell fortunes by palmistry." How about the Catholic priests who take money for hurrying dead people's souls through purgatory? When will the police start on them?

Ahmed Riza, who was recently elected for the third time in succession as the President of the Turkish Chamber of Deputies, is a Positivist, and that fact shows how the principle of toleration is triumphing at Constantinople under the new régime. It also lends an extra pathos to his noble letter to Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, which appeared in *Tuesday's Daily News*; a letter that is calculated to make every honest Englishman hold down his head with shame for his own country. Ahmed Riza points out that Italy is not the sole culprit in this act of international brigandage. "The other Powers," he says, "are her accomplices, as the blow that was struck had been prepared by them." The Young Turk Party have been loyally engaged in reforming their unhappy country, but Europe gives them no help but words, which sound hypocritical in view of recent events. Europe is teaching them "that real progress is in the increase of bayonets and cruisers, and that real patriotism consists of sacrificing everything to the budget of war." No wonder the great Turkish reformer writes "with very heavy heart."

Willie (who has just eaten his apple): "Mabel, let us play Adam and Eve. You be Eve, and I'll be Adam."

Mabel: "All right. Well?"

Willie: "Now you tempt me to eat your apple, and I'll succumb."

On the occasion of the connection of Elysium with Earth by wireless telegraphy Adam was, by right of seniority, permitted to be the first to speak with Mother Earth.

"Hullo! Are you there?"

"Yes; who are you?"

"Adam."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to come back again."

"What for?"

"To turn over a new leaf."

Female Spirit: "And have I got to wear that tinsel robe?"
St. Peter: "That or nothing."

Magistrate (to small boy witness): "Do you know what an oath is?"

"Yes, sir, I'm the telephone boy at our office."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 12, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: at 3, "Marie Corelli and the Life Everlasting"—at 6.30, "The Crescent and the Cross."

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

December 3, Stratford Town Hall; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 12, Hammersmith Ethical Society; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 10, Fulham Ethical Society; 31, Harringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £308 15s 8d. Received since:—T. Burns, 10s.; T. S. White-way, 7s. 6d.; Mrs. E. Adams, £2 2s.; Leicester Friends, per Mr. Ainge: D. Winterton, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Wade, 2s. 6d.; W. Leeson, 6s.; W. Wilber, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Hopkins, 1s.; Mr. Ainge, 5s.; A Friend, 1s.

ANONYMOUS letters, however well-meant, cannot be answered or noticed.

R. AXELLEY.—Thanks for your letter. We know there are some picture-show films depicting historical scenes—as the burning of witches—unfavorable to Christianity. Mr. Moss wants to see more of them.

H. BOULTER.—We have already said all that was to be said about the Streatham Common affair, and do not see how we can add to it. We are very sorry, of course, though not surprised, that Christian bigots continue organised rowdism against your lectures, and that there was such a disgraceful scene of violence last Sunday afternoon. It is first of all the duty of the police to afford you adequate protection; if they cannot, or will not, and you have an unmanageable situation before you, you could ask the N. S. S. to deal with it in a formal manner. Regular Sunday scimmages are no solution of the difficulty.

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

A. MILLAR.—Glad to hear your promising young friend is "saturated with Ingersoll." He could not be saturated with anything better. Perhaps you will bring him up and introduce him after one of our Glasgow lectures in the new year.

W. PALMER.—Shall be sent. Thanks. Always glad to receive names and addresses of persons to whom we may send six consecutive free copies of this journal, with a view to their becoming regular readers.

J. C. GOODFELLOW.—Shall be seen to.

G. BRADFIELD.—Glad you were so pleased with Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's lecture at Cheltenham on "Servetus."

A. L. M.—We did not take sides in the matter. We merely stated the facts as reported in the newspapers. It was Arthur Roberts who suggested that the reverend gentleman had supplied the "indelicacy" himself. We did not suggest it, as we think you will see if you read the paragraph again. After all, music-halls are licensed, and it is for the authorities (not the clergy) to see they are properly conducted.

T. BENNETT.—Glad to hear from a fifteen years' reader, who looks forward more eagerly than ever for his weekly copy of the *Freethinker*, and regards it as "the most honest and courageous paper of to-day" and as "possessing the uncommon virtue of a staff of contributors who write pure English."

DUDLEY WRIGHT.—Thanks for your outspoken and encouraging letter, which we propose to refer to next week. Also see this week's "Acid Drops."

THOMAS STEWART.—By way of helping you to defend yourself against an indictment for "blasphemy," we are sending you, as requested, our speech to the jury before Lord Coleridge in 1883. It is the only one of our speeches at that time which is now in print, or we would send the others too. You must bear in mind, however, that Lord Coleridge's judgment makes "blasphemy" entirely a question of *manner*. That is the Common Law now.

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.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 12, afternoon and evening) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. His subjects are fresh and attractive. The evening one on "The Crescent and the Cross" should crowd the hall from the platform to the doors.

The Leicester Secular Hall was crowded on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered his new lecture on "The Crescent and the Cross." Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, the Leicester Secular Society's president, who occupied the chair, evoked cheers afterwards in referring to "Mr. Foote's magnificent lecture." Mr. Gimson succeeded in eliciting several questions from members of the audience, which were suitably answered. We are glad to know that the Society is holding its own well in point of numbers and work.

We publish on another page an appeal from the Leicester Secular Society, which we hope will find a ready and generous response. Considering the long and gallant struggle this Society has maintained, and is still maintaining, it certainly deserves support from those who can afford it, even outside its own locality. We would not ask our readers to withdraw support from any body that at present receives it, but some of them are probably able to give something in the way of a special subscription, and this is an excellent opportunity. We shall send a small donation to Mr. Gimson ourselves, to show that our sympathy is practical; and we should be happy to send with it any subscription with which our readers may entrust us for the same purpose.

Mr. Foote returns to the Queen's (Minor) Hall next Sunday (Nov. 19), taking for the subject of his lecture "The Crescent and the Cross." He will also lecture there the following Sunday evening (Nov. 26) on "The Dying God" with special reference to the latest published volume of the new edition of Professor Fraser's great work, *The Golden Bough*.

Mr. Lloyd's audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening was naturally somewhat affected by the weather. We hope the conditions will be more favorable this evening (Nov. 12) when Mr. Lloyd lectures there again on a subject which should prove attractive.

The Stratford Town Hall course of lectures opened well on Sunday evening. Mr. Cohen had a very good audience. This evening (November 12) the lecturer is Miss Kough. It is her first appearance there. We bespeak for her a good audience and a cordial reception.

Miss Kough had a good meeting at Birmingham on Sunday evening in spite of the boisterous weather, and her lecture was highly appreciated. Mr. A. B. Moss occupies the Birmingham platform to-day (November 12).

East London "saints" are doubtless making a note of the special course of Sunday evening lectures at the Shoreditch Town Hall in January, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.

Mr. W. Heaford, who represented the National Secular Society at the Ferrer Demonstration at Brussels on Sunday, sends us a brief note on a postcard—which will be supplemented next week. The demonstration was a grand success. The procession passed through the principal streets. Tens of thousands of people were out. The famous firm of Pathe took a cinematograph film of the proceedings. The evening papers gave long accounts of the ceremony. The next morning's papers were to print full reports of the speeches.

Mr. Tom Bennett, a well-known Freethinker, of Mountain Ash, boldly described on the bills as "Atheist," is to hold a two nights' debate with Mr. W. J. Strato, described as "Spiritualist," on "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" The debate is to take place in the Lesser Town Hall, Pontypridd, on the evenings of November 27 and 28.

Fourteen years ago, when there was trouble in East Europe, Mr. Foote wrote a careful article for the *Freethinker* on "The Bible and the Koran." We are reproducing it for the readers of to-day, who will probably find it interesting and informing in view of the war (if it can be called so) between Italy and Turkey.

There is some advantage in an early announcement of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, which takes place on the second Tuesday in January (as usual) at the Holborn Restaurant.

Noah and the Flood.—II.

(Concluded from p. 717.)

THE Lord, we are told, shut Noah in (Gen. vii. 16); and then the work of destruction commenced. A cloud of inky blackness spread over the whole earth, made blacker still by the lightning which ever and anon lit up the whole expanse, whilst thunder rolled around, carrying consternation to every heart. Rain descended in sheets of water, as though poured down from heavenly Niagaras, and hurricanes of wind blew. The oceans encompassing the entire globe broke their bounds, and, raising themselves into tremendous billows, rolled far and wide, destroying everything in their wild career. Tears, and prayers, and shrieks, and groans were unavailing. The forces of nature—let loose by the Creator of all flesh—were as merciless then as they are now; and ere long no sound of man or beast was heard, whilst over the watery waste the spirit of God brooded in peace—in peace, though the earth had become a charnel-house, where life survived, but where death reigned supreme. Oh, it was horrible!

“But first one universal shriek there rushed,
Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hushed,
Save the wild wind, and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.”

—Byron's "Don Juan."

Commentators, I say, accept this Biblical story as and for literal truth, and vainly strive to prove it to be so. Until the commencement of the nineteenth century the belief was general that the Deluge was universal. Dr. Willoughby has written thus:—

“Learned men suppose that the number of mankind at the time of the Flood was twenty times as great, or at least vastly superior, to what it is at present. Some compute the antediluvian world to have been inhabited by at least two millions of millions of souls. The waters must consequently have overspread a larger quantity of the earth than that now inhabited, or else some must have escaped the divine vengeance, though God positively assures us the intention of the Deluge was to ‘destroy every living substance that he had made.’ The truth of this important fact is shown by evidence subsisting at this day. The highest eminences of the earth, the Alps, the Apennines, the Pyrenees, Lybanos, Atlas, and Ararat, every mountain of every region under heaven, where search has been made, all conspire in one uniform, universal truth, that they had all had the sea spread over their highest summits; for they are found to contain shells, skeletons of fishes, and sea-monsters of every kind. The moss deer, a native of America, has been found buried in Ireland; elephants, natives of Asia and Africa, buried in the midst of England; crocodiles, natives of the Nile, in the heart of Germany; shellfish, never known in any but the American seas, together with entire skeletons of whales, in the most inland regions of England; trees of vast dimensions, with their roots and tops, and some also with leaves and fruits, at the bottom of mines and marl-pits; and that, too, in regions where no trees of the kind were ever known to grow—nay, where it is demonstrably impossible that they should have grown; which must have been occasioned by the fountains of the great deep having been broken up; for the rushing forth of these subterranean waters must have excited a prodigious commotion in the sea, sufficient to force the heaviest bodies, natives of the element, from the bottom of the ocean, which, joined to the incessant deluge of rain, and the agitations of the tides, transported the most ponderous bodies, as well as the more light, to the greatest distances; which is abundantly sufficient to account for any effect of the Deluge now observable on the greatest heights of the earth.”

The value of the suppositions and computations of and by these “learned men” can be easily tested. Let us take the statement that the antediluvians numbered “at least two millions of millions”; this is, two billions—2,000,000,000,000—of living beings. Now, the dry surface of the globe—including rocky mountains and all other uninhabitable places—is, in round figures, 51,000,000 square miles, which reduced to feet, give 1,421,798,400,000,000 square ft. Each

antediluvian, therefore, had to subsist on a piece of ground about 27 ft. square. What arrant nonsense! How wise these “learned men” were!

Kirwan supposes that by the “great deep” is meant the southern ocean; and that the great rush of water was from the south, or south-east; because all large mountains and ranges of mountains have their southern sides much steeper than the northern. Sir Harry Englefield accounts for the Deluge thus:—

“The diameter of the earth being taken at eight thousand miles, and the highest mountain being supposed four miles high above the level of the sea, the quantity of water requisite to cover them will be a hollow sphere of eight thousand and eight miles diameter, and four miles thick; the content of which, in round numbers, is eight hundred million cubic miles. Let us now suppose the globe of earth to consist of a crust of solid matter one thousand miles thick, enclosing a sea or body of water two thousand miles deep; within which is a central nucleus of two thousand miles in diameter; the content of that body will be 109,200,000,000 cubic miles, or about one hundred and thirty-seven times the quantity of water required to cover the surface of the earth, as above stated. Now water, by experiment, expands about one twenty-fifth of its whole magnitude, from freezing to boiling; or one hundredth of its magnitude for forty-five degrees of Fahrenheit's thermometer. Suppose, then, that the heat of the globe, previously to the Deluge, was about sixty degrees of Fahrenheit's, a temperature very near that of this climate, and that a sudden change took place in the interior of the globe, which raised its heat to eighty-three degrees—a heat no greater than the marine animals live in, in the shallow seas between the tropics—those twenty-three degrees of augmented heat would so expand the central sea as to cause it to more than cover the surface of the globe, according to the conditions above-mentioned; and, if the cause of heat ceased, the waters, of course, in cooling, would retire into their former places. The above hypothesis, which does not in any way contradict any law of nature, singularly accords with the Mosaic narrative of the Deluge; for the sudden expansion of the internal waters would, of course, force them up through the chasms of the exterior crust in dreadful jets and torrents; while their heat would cause such vapors to ascend in the atmosphere as, when condensed, would produce torrents of rain beyond our conception.”

What imaginations these commentators must have had! We know now that the solid crust of this earth is not a “thousand miles thick,” and that it does not enclose “a sea or body of water two thousand miles deep.” As a matter of fact, the crust of the earth is not fifty miles thick. And it does not enclose any water whatever, for the simple reason that, at a temperature of 212 degrees water ceases to exist, and becomes steam or the two gases of which it is composed. One has only to go down a deep mine to prove this, for the deeper you go the warmer it becomes. And this heat increases until it becomes incandescent, and all matter is in a molten state. This is the cause of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and all other terrible seismic disturbances.

Other vain statements of a similar nature, by wise and learned sky-pilots, might be produced; but these must suffice. They were written in ignorance by superstitious men. Geology, as a science was then in its swaddling clothes. Nowadays, we know better. The science of geology has taught us as to the structure of the earth; and we know now that the presence of shells and skeletons of fishes at the tops of high mountains, and of other similar appearances, are due, not to a universal flood, but to upheavals of the mountains from the bottom of the sea. That enormous floods have occurred, even in historic times, is well known; and to some such occurrence in the misty past are due the hoary traditions respecting a deluge which are to be found in ancient mythologies—traditions which are now looked upon on all hands as simply fables.

What sky-pilots have to prove is that, less than six thousand years ago, dating from the present time, a universal flood covered the whole earth and destroyed every living thing; that such flood was brought about by the direct intervention of God with the forces of nature; and that Noah and his family, with fourteen of every kind of clean beast and bird,

and two of every unclean, were preserved in the Ark.

Now, we have absolute proof that the author of Noah and the Flood not only wrote from hearsay, but, as is generally the case with story-tellers, that he added to the yarn himself. The Jews were not in existence at the time of Noah; and the distinction between clean and unclean beasts was a Jewish ordinance—an ordinance that was not heard of, according to the Bible, until eight hundred and fifty-eight years after the Flood. The statement, therefore, that Noah took clean and unclean beasts into the Ark is a falsehood—a falsehood which throws a lurid glare upon the rest of the story.

These sky-pilots might also explain, when they are about it, by what means Noah gathered together these clean and unclean beasts from all parts of the earth—the polar bear from the arctic regions, the grisly bear from the Rocky Mountains in America, the Bengal tiger from India, the rhinoceros from Central Africa, the kangaroo from Australia, and all the other beasts, reptiles, and birds, both large and small, which made up his grand menagerie—a menagerie which must certainly have been the grandest show on earth that was ever controlled by human power. And, also, they might tell us by what means Noah kept the ferocious beasts apart from one another, and especially how he separated them from the gentler members of the animal kingdom. Also, they might tell us how, with the little assistance which Noah had in the Ark, he contrived to feed and water these animals—no, the Bible says nothing about water, that prime necessity of life, only food (Gen. vi. 21)—and, above all, how he managed to keep the interior of the Ark pure and sweet, when there was only one window for light and ventilation, and to throw away the very small quantity of dirt and slops which must have accumulated there daily.

These are crucial points, so crucial that sky-pilots never attempt to explain them; and for the very simple reason that they cannot. And as they cannot do that which they would do if they could, it follows that the story itself is a fable or myth, and being such is nothing more than a vulgar imposture.

The truth of this latter observation is borne out by a most remarkable circumstance; a circumstance that cannot be contradicted; a circumstance which shows how necessary it is that forgers and liars should have long memories. The circumstance to which I allude is the fact that, although Noah lived for three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, no mention is made of his existence during that long period. When Noah died Abram was fifty-eight years old. The same remark applies to Shem, Noah's eldest son. When he died Jacob, Abram's grandson, had lived half a century. Noah and Shem, therefore, for a very long period, must have been the most interesting and wisest individuals in the world; for they knew, from personal experience, more than any other man did. How comes it that they were unknown to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their immediate descendants? The only answer is that the story is a myth—this, and nothing more.

Latter-day Christians, of the Bishop of London type, tell us that the Flood was not universal; and that, so long as it accomplished its object, by removing the bad, there was no need for it to cover more than the comparatively small space which historical research points to as being the cradle of the human race. Now, if such a statement had been made by a Freethinker, it would have been denounced as "rank blasphemy"; for, not only does it deny the truthfulness of the Bible, but actually charges God with that which he ought not to have done—in removing the good as well as the bad. The Bible says that the Flood was universal; that "all the high hills that were under the whole were covered; and that all flesh died that moved upon the earth" (Gen. vii. 19, 21). Which is to be believed? The Bishop of London or the writer of the Bible? For myself, I believe neither of them. Here let me remark that, if the Flood were not universal, how could it have

covered the high mountains? And how comes it that it took so long to disperse? A mass of water four or five miles high, with a diameter, say, of five hundred miles, would, according to the law of gravitation, as soon as its supports were taken away, disperse itself in the surrounding countries in a very few hours.

The Bishop of London, in his little book entitled *Old Testament Difficulties*, tells us, in a moment of forgetfulness, that

"an ounce of fact is worth pounds of theory, and that it is a well-known fact that, in 1609, one Peter Jansen built a ship of the exact proportions as used by Noah, only on a smaller scale; and that, although he was laughed at by the ancestors of the very people who now think they could have managed the whole business so much better than Noah, yet when it was launched it proved to be able to bear a third more freight than other ships of the same measurement, and sailed far faster. The result was that the Dutch built many others like it, calling them Noah's Arks, and they only ceased to be used after the close of the truce in 1621, because they could not carry cannon."

Here's a pretty yarn—a yarn whose author might have been Captain Marryat—who could tell "whoppers" with the most serious face. But fancy anyone, having only the slightest knowledge of sea-going vessels, being foolish enough to believe it. It reminds me of a statement that I once saw in print respecting herrings. The writer thereof coolly assured his readers that red herrings and white herrings were distinct species, and that they were caught in different parts of the sea. Any outlandish-looking vessel is invariably dubbed a "Noah's Ark." The vessel built by Jansen was not of the same shape or exact proportions of the Ark built by Noah, for the simple reason that nobody knows what its shape and dimensions were. The measurements we have of Noah's Ark in nowise indicate, as every ship-carpenter knows, its shape and dimensions. Besides, did Jansen make the entrance to his vessel by a door in the side? An American would bet his bottom dollar that he did not. Dutch schuyts, specimens of which are still to be seen, always were cumbersome slow-sailing vessels, with flat bottoms, so as to stand upright when aground, and were built for weight-carrying and not for speed. A Dutch schuyt is, and always has been, a marine tortoise, and would carry not only such cannon as were cast in the reign of James the First, but the biggest breechloader that is now on board any one of his Majesty's men-of-war. So much for the Bishop's "ounce of fact."

There is one other statement in connection with this subject which attracts attention. It is that which has reference to the rainbow. Now, the rainbow, as every schoolboy knows, is a natural phenomenon which has taken place ever since the sun first smiled upon a shower of rain. But the Bible claims that the rainbow is the sign of a covenant that was made between God and Noah, and "every living creature that was with him in the ark" (Gen. ix. 12). Fancy a God making a covenant with the beasts of the field! The idea is simply preposterous. "I do set my bow in the cloud" are the words. Now, here again is displayed the ignorance of the writer of this fable. If these words mean anything, they mean that God there and then, and for the first time, produced a rainbow in the sky; but this all science denies. Sky-pilots assert that it means that God then adopted it as a visible sign between man and himself. But, if so, he should have said so. He did not, however; neither did he "set his bow in the cloud," for the very simple reason that a cloud has no more to do with the production of a rainbow than a fountain has. It is true that water falls in drops from the clouds; but showers of rain also take place when there is not a speck of cloud visible in the blue sky; and it is then that the rainbow is seen in all its glory. Sometimes, on a summer's day, many rainbows are seen at the same moment, one within the other. As, therefore, the statement is not true, the value as evidence is worthless.

I have not exhausted the subject—far from it—but I have called attention to such facts as will enable anyone to form a just opinion of it. If the story be true, then the Jewish God was a malignant fiend. If it be not true, then it is a libel on God's justice and mercy. I believe it to be not true; and I am not prepared to libel a man, much more a God.

J. W. DE CAUX.

Heredity and Human Society.

THE far-reaching influences of hereditary transmission form themes of unending interest. The resemblances which children almost invariably bear to their immediate parents or more distant relatives are universally recognised. The transmission of family characteristics may sometimes appear capricious, but the astonishment occasioned by any marked departure from the general features of the parent stocks proves a common expectation of family resemblance.

That distinguished Freethinker and biological investigator, the late Francis Galton, laid the firm foundations of the science of social heredity with his *Hereditary Genius* and *Natural Inheritance*. Galton's inquiries have been immensely extended through the recent observations and experiments of the Mendelian school of biologists. But whilst the general facts gathered together by Galton's careful and patient inquiries induced him to generalise concerning hereditary phenomena, the new light thrown upon the problems of transmission by Mendel's law sadly restricts the power of generalisation.

The successful application of Mendelian methods depends upon the possibility of isolating specific characters, and of studying each separate character as a special problem. In the present stage of these studies, as pointed out in previous articles, the phenomena of human characteristics are much too complicated to admit of conclusive treatment. In any department of science, and, above all, in a growing one, the student must patiently proceed from the simple to the complex.

One or two other maladies and malformations which are amenable to Mendel's law may be mentioned. Deafness, for example, seems to run in families, and in those instances in which children do not inherit this affliction there is frequently a decided predisposition to the disease. Very remarkable results have been disclosed by Moos's inquiries into the history of a certain family. A deaf and dumb man married a normal healthy woman, and the children born to them were two deaf-mute daughters and one unafflicted son. One of these daughters wedded a deaf-mute man, and gave birth to a deaf-mute boy. Her normal brother married a normal woman, but their only son was a deaf-mute. Thus we find in this family history not merely direct transmission of this affliction from parent to offspring, but its reappearance in a grandchild born to two normal parents.

The study of another family pedigree furnished even more startling results. In this family the disease was in both maternal and paternal branches, and every member of the second and third generations is both deaf and dumb. Even with some infectious diseases, the predisposition to inherit the complaint is very common. And while the infectious nature of consumptive disease is constantly dwelt upon, very little attention is usually paid to its hereditary qualities. Yet the evidence for transmission of at least a tendency to tubercular disease appears well nigh conclusive.

Tuberculosis proves fatal to some ten in every hundred of the population. In a group of people selected at random, one or two in seventeen would probably be found suffering from this disease. These figures are far exceeded in other instances; while, on the other hand, certain groups would prove to be

quite immune from the malady. The circumstance that tuberculosis is an infectious disease necessitates the most careful inquiry when we are bent upon determining its solely hereditary activities. Certain ascertained facts, however, are very valuable to the scientific investigator. Tuberculosis is a disease which develops in early mature life; it affects comparatively few children or elderly people. Obviously, infection is favored, if anywhere, by the relations which exist between husband and wife. Yet the statistical inquiries of Pope and Pearson appear to prove that this mode of infection is so rare that it does not materially affect statistical results. In a town such as London, no one can possibly, for any length of time, escape the infectious influences of so prevalent a disease. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the overwhelming majority of the population continues immune to its baleful sway. It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that the hereditary powers of tuberculosis are much greater than those bound up with the environment.

The steadily diminishing birth-rate of the British Isles has given rise to many mournful moralisings. Numerous writers and speakers, mainly of those classes in society which seldom or never experience the strain of the struggle for economic existence, demand the immediate production of more children. We are constantly warned of the dangers arising from the undiminished birth-rate of the slums, while the fecundity of the more prosperous and more intelligent members of the community is decreasing. Nearly all these lamenting publicists ignore or overlook the circumstance that two factors, and two factors alone, are involved in heredity. These are, firstly, the parental plus the near family influences and predispositions, derived from the general ancestral stock; secondly, the influences exerted by the surrounding conditions. And with the amelioration of these last, which are no more and no less than the living laboratories in which the materials for subsequent hereditary transmission are being unceasingly moulded, for good or ill; with this amelioration, fewer of the black and dismal hereditary qualities will tend to be perpetuated.

Many years ago, Herbert Spencer remarked that the philosophical sociologist is more concerned with the quality than the quantity of the social units which compose human societies. And it is surely far better to improve the lot of those we have than idly speculate concerning the possible well-being of those we know not of. It is notorious that diseased parents display a general tendency to beget diseased children. But many maladies are already amenable to medical treatment, and as science advances the decimating ravages of disease will become more and more susceptible to the healing hand of the physician.

Dr. and Mrs. Whetham, in their pessimistic work, *The Family and the Nation*, betray a sad lack of sociological insight, together with a superabundance of class bias. These writers allege:—

"That in past ages, in general, selection has probably worked well. The stronger, abler stocks had more offspring, and a better chance of rearing them. The weaker, unsound stocks were kept down, and their bad qualities tended to be bred out of the race.... As long as all sections of the community bred at their normal rate, nature unaided looked after the quality of the stock by the severity of her treatment."*

But in these degenerate days all this is changed; the unfit multiply with unbecoming recklessness, and honest and respectable Mrs. Quiverful is about to become a vanished glory of a one-time vigorous and fruitful upper and middle-class race. Men and women of sound and serviceable stock now decline to bear the burden or undertake the responsibility of rearing large families, while the rapid increase of the undesirable elements of our people is most certain ultimately to swamp the few surviving remnants of the better stocks.

The Golden Age of Britain's prolific powers appears not to have entered the shadow of its coming eclipse

* *The Family and the Nation*, p. 124.

until the fateful year 1875. But since the middle 'seventies, with constantly increasing menace, the birth-rate has steadily fallen. With the upper and middle classes small families are less the exception than the rule: with the aristocracy of labor the same circumstance applies. But large and burdensome families remain the order of the day in "the thriftless ranks of unskilled labor, and among the feeble-minded men and women still at large in our midst." One generation only, we are told, has so far suffered, and possibly there is yet time for repentance and safety. The sole remedy, therefore, for this untoward state of affairs rests with the better instructed and equipped members of the community. They must forthwith increase the dimensions of their family ties.

Nor is this children famine confined to the larger island of Britain. France, Belgium, Germany, and large areas of white America point the same moral. Town and country have alike participated in the change. Excluding Ireland, the Local Government Board figures prove, that for the remainder of the United Kingdom, the number of births per annum has fallen from 36 in 1,000 in 1876 to 27 in 1,000 in 1907.

Now these are precisely the results that any intelligent observer of social and industrial phenomena would have anticipated. Those of us who remember or have read the history of the bitter and unscrupulous antagonism and hatred aroused by the public-spirited activities of the pioneers of neo-Malthusianism very naturally expect to see the fruits of their labors first manifested among the more thoughtful and intelligent members of the body politic. The lower ranks of the great industrial army have as yet not fully realised the importance of the question. But even among the most poverty-stricken masses of the people gleams of light struggle through. Even the too high birth-rate of the poorest sections of society is not nearly so menacing as it on the surface seems. An appreciable percentage of the people who are numbered among the "undesirable" are the victims of the burdens too grievous to be borne which are certain to arise from the disabilities and disadvantages associated with the rearing, housing, and clothing of superfluous offspring. In many instances family encumbrances prevent men from rising into a better social grade. The unskilled ranks are also constantly recruited from other classes of the community, many members of which pass their earlier lives on the verge of the social swamp, and have at last been plunged into it. Moreover, thousands of "desirable" citizens date the commencement of their decline and fall from the bursting of some bubble company, the exposure of some fraudulent bank, or the adjustments and readjustments of mercantile affairs, to name a few only of the innumerable economic and other accidents to which society is prone. To tender the injunction to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, to such as these is either the counsel of mockery or of folly.

Dr. Whetham has evidently been too much immersed in the study of solutions to pay much heed to the adamant realities of industrial and commercial life. And when turning to the biological aspect of this question, one is driven to conclude that Whetham has never heard of Spencer's masterly survey of the population problem. Whetham concludes that the fall in the birth-rate is almost exclusively due to what he is pleased to term "artificial selection." But surely it is more than a coincidence that so large a number of men of outstanding eminence have in all ages been—so far as we can tell—barren to posterity. As a matter of biological fact, individuation is opposed to genesis. Quite apart from artificial restrictions upon procreation, the higher animals and the higher plants produce far fewer offspring or bear fewer seeds than their more lowly relatives. Inferior fruit trees usually crop heavily; but choice cultivated apples, peaches, and pears seldom or never bow down their branches with fruit. Organisms low in the zoological or botanical

scale produce eggs or spores in incredible abundance. But as we ascend the ladder of life, smaller and smaller amounts of vital power are expended in the sacrificial processes of procreation. Instead of the relatively simple animal which sometimes sacrifices its very life in reproducing its kind, we observe in the higher animals, and most notably in man, a subordination of the reproductive activities to the more pressing demands of individual body and mind. Only through the application of human intelligence to the hereditary and environmental evils that afflict us can wrongs be righted or grievances be redressed. The elimination of the "unfit," except in very rare instances, is almost entirely a question of improved economic, social, and mental conditions. The real saviors and sustainers of all that is worth preserving in human communities are far more likely to arise from the ranks of men of moderate leisure than from those which are weary-laden and bent down with the puckering cares which are indissolubly associated with a superfluous army of underfed, underclothed, and ill-developed children.

T. F. PALMER.

To Friends of Rationalism and Freethought.

THE Leicester Secular Society claims to be one of the oldest Rationalist or Freethought Societies in the United Kingdom. The earliest minute of a meeting of the Society is dated May 19, 1852, the year following that when the word "Secularism" was first used by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake to denote that philosophy of life which places no dependence on theology.

Even at that date the Society was not a new one. The new name was adopted by a group of young men and women who had been drawn together by a common interest in the teachings of Robert Owen.

Since 1881, the Society has occupied a beautiful and convenient Hall. The Lecture Hall has seating accommodation for 600 people, and during the lecture season is frequently crowded to excess. All seats are free. A Sunday-school, with a competent staff of teachers, meets each Sunday; also a young people's group (ages 15 and upwards). On Saturday evenings an Ethical Guild meets, and throughout the week every evening good club rooms, where no alcoholic liquor is sold, are open for the members generally. The club has a valuable library of over 1,500 volumes.

The annual expenses of the Society are just over £400 per year, and no further economies could be effected without injuring the best work of the Society. The members at present are raising an income of about £320, and are earnestly trying to increase that amount so as to place the finances on a sound basis. The late Mr. Philip Wright, of Quorn, left the Society £50 per year for ten years; the last payment was received from his trustees last year. Years ago a considerable income was secured by letting the Hall on weekdays, even in 1908 so much as £76 being received, but last year, owing to the competition of many more halls and places of amusement in the town, less than £20 was taken. These two reductions of income have placed the Society in a very difficult position. The members are doing their best to meet the situation, and amongst other things they propose to hold a bazaar in March, 1912.

Considering the position of the Society and its important influence not only on public opinion in Leicester but, as an example of what earnest, persistent effort can do on the Rationalist and Freethought movement generally, the members feel they may be excused if they ask outside friends to help them to the best of their ability. In the past, friends from a distance have given generous help, but at the moment there are none but local subscribers to the Society's funds.

Donations, annual subscriptions, help, or promises of help for the Bazaar will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged if addressed to the President, SYDNEY A. GIMSON, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester.

COWARDLY.

"When I arose to speak," related the martyred statesman, "someone threw a base, cowardly egg at me."

"And what kind of an egg might that be?" asked an attentive listener.

"A base, cowardly egg," explained the statesman, "is one that hits you and then runs."

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, J. T. Lloyd, "The King of Terrors Unmasked."
STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "What is Belief?"

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, Mrs. Boyce, 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.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Dying Struggles of Christianity."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, C. R. Clemens, "The Evolution of Morality." With lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. F. W. Bennett, "An Ice Age." Lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 6.30, A. E. Killip, "The Failure of Christianity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "Marie Corelli and the Life Everlasting"; 6.30, "The Crescent and the Cross." Tea at 5.

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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.

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