

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Others may raise and destroy,—  
Tear down, demolish and waste ;  
Others may frame and construct,  
Fitting together the stones,  
As they think, of the city of God.  
Mine be the lowlier task,—  
Mine be the dropping of seed  
In the long silent furrows of earth,  
Where she bringeth forth fruit of herself.*

—ERNEST CROSBY.

## Shakespeare and Jesus Christ.

I WAS once lecturing on the Freethought view of Jesus Christ, and the then secretary of the Christian Evidence Society came on the platform to oppose me. He did not argue, but he told a story relating to Charles Lamb, who remarked in a certain conversation that if Shakespeare entered the room they would all stand up, but if Jesus Christ entered they would all fall upon their knees.

I am an intense admirer of Charles Lamb. He was an infinitely more beautiful character than Thomas Carlyle, who sneered at him, and I believe that some of his prose is as sure of immortality as any written in the nineteenth century. I flattered myself that I knew every scrap of Lamb's writing, and almost every scrap of what had been written about him. But I did not remember Mr. Engström's anecdote. All I could do, therefore, on the spur of the moment, was to assume its truth and reply to it accordingly. I said that standing up if Shakespeare entered the room would be a natural mark of respect to his colossal genius. The very attitude of sitting would be too slovenly at the first accost of that tremendous spirit. All our faculties, mental and bodily, would be strung to their highest tension by his sudden advent. But going on our knees was an irrational attitude, and if we fell into it at the approach of Jesus Christ it would only show the humiliating nature of superstition and the power of early religious training.

It is always well, however, to suspect the accuracy of Christian Evidence speakers. They are not trained in a school of precision, and are apt to be as loose in statement as they are flimsy in argument. I knew that Lamb was a Deist. He did not accept Revelation or embrace the deity of Christ. Consequently I felt certain there was a mistake somewhere; perhaps not a very great one in mere form, but probably a considerable one in substance. That feeling has since been justified. I have recently been dipping again into William Hazlitt—a fine writer, though not so profound and quintessential as Lamb. Hazlitt is very voluminous, and one of his essays had escaped my attention. It is on "Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen," and is an account of one of those famous evenings at Elia's. Lamb got into one of his subtle and solemn moods, shot through with a certain fantasticality which so often annoyed solemn people who were not subtle. He said that he would like to see Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot. This rather startled the company, but the reasons

given were allowed to be excellent. "Oh! ever right, Menenius—ever right!" exclaimed Lamb, who was now in the full tide of his wild profundity. What followed shall be given in Hazlitt's own words:—

"There is only one other person I can think of after this," continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. 'If Shakespeare was to come into this room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment.'

The story in this form evidently does not serve the Christian's purpose. Lamb said nothing about falling on one's knees in the attitude of worship. No doubt he would have regarded that as a species of blasphemy, or at least of idolatry. Kissing the hem of Christ's garment is quite another matter. It is a token of overwhelming respectful affection, not of prostrate slavish adoration. It is an expression of feeling by gesture which goes beyond words, just as a lover who kisses his mistress's glove, or a bit of lace that has adorned her dear person, betrays his love more convincingly than he could do by the finest sonnet or the most rapturous epistle.

For my part, I do not accept Jesus Christ as a really historical character. I do not say—I am not in a position to say: no one is in a position to say—that there was or was not an actual personage who served as the nucleus of all that collection of legend and mythology which appears in the Gospels. But I am confident that the picture of Jesus Christ handed down to us is an ideal one, wrought by the pious fancy of many generations. On the whole, it is as imaginary as Hamlet or Othello, as we find them in the plays of Shakespeare; or, to take a more appropriate parallel, as King Arthur, the fabulous hero of early English romance.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, is indubitably an historical personage. Those who say we know very little about him talk ignorantly. We know more about him than about any other playwright in the mighty constellation of which he was the central sun. The wonder really is, not that we know so little, but that we know so much.

Take all the best things in the Gospels, and suppose them to have been really uttered by Jesus Christ, though nearly all of them were current before he appeared. What proportion does the sum total bear to the gold and jewels of Shakespeare's genius? We are somewhat blinded to the depth of Shakespeare's humanity by the splendor of his intellect. He dazzles us so that we are apt to lose sight of the streams of tenderness that sweeten the territory of his mind. Wordsworth wrote of Milton as one whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart. But the soul of Shakespeare was no solitary star—"pinnacled dim in the intense inane." It was a royal sun, raining out its beams with inexhaustible generosity. He took the whole world in his loving embrace; he blessed the saints and heroes, pitied the cowards and villains, and smiled benignly on the very fools. The world will have to change, and human nature alter itself, before his vivifying glory grows dim. Ben Jonson was most inspired when he said that Shakespeare was "not of an age, but for all time."

G. W. FOOTE.

### Professor Thomson on Science and Religion.—III.

(Concluded from p. 772.)

MAN, says Professor Thomson, has three pathways to religion—practical, emotional, and intellectual. The curious thing is that, having told us this, he proceeds to point out—presumably, unconsciously—that these are not pathways at all. Concerning the practical pathway, we are told "Many a man has become religious when he reached the limit of his practical endeavor. Of the emotional pathway, we learn, "At the limit of his emotional tension man has often become a worshiper." And man finds religion along the pathway of science because he needs answers to questions "which lie beyond science"—that is, he gets off the pathway altogether.

It is a strange thing, but whenever apologists like Professor Thomson grow unusually solemn in their treatment of religion, they almost invariably end by being funny. And it is certainly laughable that a man should set out to describe the pathways that lead to religion, and go on to point out that people land in religion because they have not the strength or the courage to travel along the roads indicated. For clearly, if man could put up with the emotional strain of life, or bear the disappointment of failure, or submit to inevitable ignorance, then, on Professor Thomson's own showing, the need for religion would not arise. Man does not reach religion along either of these pathways; he simply travels along them as he feels inclined, and then, feeling tired, turns to religion. And he might as well and as profitably have taken to religion before he commenced the journey. All that Professor Thomson has done is to indicate that the main support of religion is human helplessness and ignorance. This may not have been his intention, but it is the only conclusion that really emerges.

It is tolerably plain that Professor Thomson is under the impression that the great field for religion is feeling or emotion. This is indicated in the remark that "just as the great mathematicians and metaphysicians represent the aristocracy of human intellect, so the great religious geniuses represent the aristocracy of human emotion." In essence, there is nothing new in this claim; neither is there any evidence forthcoming of its truth. And there is more in this distinction than meets the eye. But as a mere matter of fact, there is no reason whatever for the distinction. Coleridge's dictum that poetry is the proper antithesis to science is open to serious objection; but there is much more in it than there is in the distinction of Professor Thomson's. Scores of religious geniuses have pursued their work with as much attention to scientific method and precision as they were capable of, and have even prided themselves on the fact that they made no appeal to mere emotion. They have only fallen back upon emotion when intellectual justification has not been forthcoming. The "heart" then becomes a substitute for the head. It has become popular to-day, partly for the reason just stated, and partly because it is one easy of use by mediocrities and even by stupid people. It gives a comfortable feeling of superiority to a preacher to parade his feelings as decisive disproof of the reasoning of such men as Darwin and Spencer. They enjoy all the pleasure of feeling wise, without enduring the travail that often accompanies the getting of wisdom. It enables inherited prejudices to rank as reasoned conviction. In addition, there is nothing that cannot be proved or disproved once the soundness of the rule is admitted.

The plea that religion is supreme in the emotional sphere, that the emotions represent a superior court of appeal, and that the religious genius is the great interpreter of human emotion, meets us in various forms, but in whatever form it is encountered, it is quite fallacious. Intellectual activity is not, and cannot be, divorced from feeling. There are states of mind in which feeling predominates, and there are

states of mind in which reason predominates. But all intellectual activity involves a feeling element. The often made remark that feeling and intellect are in conflict is true only in the sense that ultimately certain intellectual states, *plus* their associated feelings, are in conflict with other intellectual states and *their* associated feelings. But there is a strong pleasurable feeling in merely intellectual activity, just as there is a decided painful feeling in its obstruction. To realise this one need only consider the keen pleasure that results from a rapid and easy sweep of the mind through a long chain of reasoning, and the positive pain that ensues when the terms of a problem baffles comprehension. Professor Thomson gives an instance of this when he says that man at the limit of his endeavor has fallen back upon religion for relief. Quite so; it is the painful feeling arising from intellectual failure that has thrown some men into religion. In this they have acted like those who fly to a drug for relief from a pain they lack the courage to bear. They have taken a narcotic when they needed a stimulant.

Really, religion is no more peculiarly connected with emotion than are other subjects of investigation. One may even put the query whether there would be any investigation at all in the absence of emotion to serve as driving power. Action, even intellectual action, is prompted by feeling, although it should always be guided and justified by reason. And the feeling for truth, the emotion roused in its pursuit and discovery, is as intense and as overmastering as is emotion when linked to religious belief. Those who have made the pursuit of "cold scientific truth" their life's work have shown every whit as much ardor and passion as those who gave their lives to religion. The picture of a man giving his life for religion is easily paralleled by a character like Vesalius, haunting the charnel-houses of Europe, risking the most loathsome of diseases in the interests of scientific research. The abiding passion for truth that animated a character like Bruno easily matches, if it does not surpass, the peripatetic propagandism of the missionary monk. The passion and enthusiasm and sacrifices of scientific workers is less advertised than the passion for religion, but they are none the less real, and certainly not less valuable. And as the search for truth is inspired by feeling, so its discovery excites and gratifies the most profound emotion. The state of mind of Kepler on discovering the true laws of planetary motion is hardly less ecstatic than that of a religious visionary describing his sense of personal communion with God. Only it is emotion guided and justified by reason, not reason held in check and partly throttled by emotion.

When Matthew Arnold described religion as morality touched with emotion he substituted a fallacy for a definition. Religion was assumed to supply the emotional element necessary to give morality force and passion. But this is only another form of the fallacy under consideration. Religion does not take its rise in emotion, although there are very clear reasons why, once existing, it should arouse strong emotions and, in time, rest upon them for support. Primarily, however, religion is as much an intellectual conviction as is the Copernican system of astronomy. Religion exists first as an idea or a belief; it afterwards appeals to emotion. There are no religious emotions, only emotions connected with religion. There is, however, a religious idea, and its genesis is easily discoverable. The determining powers of nature that are conceived by the modern mind in terms of mechanical force are by the primitive mind conceived as living agents. The pressure of facts not otherwise explainable by uninstructed intelligence, suggest the action of living beings. There is no reasonable doubt of this. And could primitive man, by some lucky accident, have hit upon the true theory of nature, the history of religion might now be written in the words of the famous essay on Snakes in Ireland.

All religious belief is thus of the nature of an inference drawn from experience. The inference is

false to fact; but in the conditions of its origin this is inevitable. But, being an inference, religion is not primarily an emotion, but a conviction: and it must stand or fall by its intellectual sanity. Whatever emotional value it has is of a secondary value, and even that must be tried by intellectual tests. And it seems like dwelling on a truism to say that unless men first *believed* something about religion they could never have emotions connected with it. Hope and fear may color our convictions, they may obstruct the formation of correct opinions, but they arise in connection with a belief, and not independently of it.

What is true is that religion is a subject in which the feeling element usually predominates. In science feeling is kept more under control, because it is recognised as a cause of bias. In religion bias, instead of being decried, is a desideratum. It is, in fact, the mental bias, that is usually indicated in the appeal to feeling. The cry of an unintelligent patriotism, "My country, right or wrong," becomes in the present instance, "My religion, right or wrong." In science criticism is not discouraged, because it is recognised that the road to safety lies by way of criticism and investigation. In religion all the inducements are in the other direction. Criticism is an impertinence, and investigation may cause disaster. The result is that, whereas in science feeling is kept under proper control, or restricted to its legitimate functions, in religion it dominates all else. And it does this largely through the element of fear. From the earliest time this is one of the strongest characteristics of religion. It is the unpleasant aspect of things that quickens religious convictions. Fear sets man worshiping, and fear prevents him criticising the object of his worship. In this way it is of the very essence of the religious idea to arouse one of the strongest of human emotions.

But this does not mean that religion springs from emotion, nor does it mean that religion can satisfy human emotion more thoroughly than aught else. Neither does it prove that religious geniuses are the aristocracy of emotion. Naturally, while religion forms a large and intrusive portion of the environment, some people suffering from what Professor Thomson calls "strain" will be inclined to turn to it for help. But that is a mere accident of the environment. Other people will find the same relief in non-religious pursuits, and a fresh inspiration in the human life around them. And these, one finds some comfort in believing, are an increasing number. They realise that even emotion, if it is good, must be susceptible of intellectual justification. And when it is not so, when mere emotion is pleaded as a ground for rejecting rational conclusions, we have irrationalism driven to its last ditch.

C. COHEN.

### "The Reality of the Cross."

THE Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D., of Enfield, is a New Theologian of considerable note. He has, perhaps, the subtlest intellect and the least prejudiced judgment of all the prominent divines of the day. It is always his desire to be fair to his opponents, to state his case honestly and to employ sound arguments in its support. His one ambition is to penetrate through the hard crust of dogma, on every subject, and seize the truth which is supposed to be embedded within it. He is out in search of realities, especially the realities of religion. Whether the quest is successful or not is a highly debatable point. For example, in the *Christian Commonwealth* for Nov. 29, there appeared a condensed report of an address he recently delivered on "The Reality of the Cross"; and inasmuch as the Cross is the central Christian doctrine, it may be profitable to inquire whether Dr. Orchard has succeeded in discovering any reality in it or not. He admits, at the outset, that the teaching which the orthodox Church has so vigorously cham-

pioned through all the ages is "unintelligible to the great majority of people to-day." Theories of the Atonement he brushes aside with admirable courage; even texts of Scripture he ignores in his eagerness to get to where all scriptures and dogmas first came from—"to the experience in the heart of man." But how does he get "to the experience in the heart of man?" The path along which he pretends to arrive there is certainly an illegitimate one. He assumes the full historicity of the Gospel Jesus, and selects certain alleged incidents in his life as typical of "the experience in the heart of man." Surely, Dr. Orchard cannot but acknowledge, as a candid man, that such a course is utterly unworthy of a genuine critic. He knows full well that a large number of Christian scholars not only doubt, but positively deny the historicity of the four Gospels. It is certainly not through *them* that we can find "the experience in the heart of man."

But we must follow our would-be guide to reality, although we know that he is on the wrong road. His point is that "the Cross was certainly a real issue for Jesus, whatever we are going to make of it. The shadow fell upon his life very early." Then he proceeds thus:—

"The shadow fell when, at twelve years of age, Jesus visited the Temple. He felt that here in these things was his calling, not back again in the narrow little village from whence he came. And then his parents found him and asked him to go back with them; and he surrendered his vision at the calling of duty, and went back to Nazareth. He meant to be utterly true to the immediate things of life, trusting they would lead him to the truth. So he went down to Nazareth 'and was subject unto them.' That is the first shadow of the Cross."

Of course, Dr. Orchard is aware that the Temple-episode occurs only in Luke, and that many Christian critics treat it as legendary. Strauss did not hesitate to pronounce the story obviously untrustworthy; but even on the assumption of its historicity, the fact that stares us in the face is that it is only by putting an imaginative interpretation upon it that Dr. Orchard can see any shadow of the Cross. Taking the incident as it stands there is nothing to indicate that Jesus was unwilling to return to Nazareth with his parents. The same remarks apply to the allusion to the Baptism and the Temptation as furnishing another instance of the shadow of the Cross falling on Jesus. Granting a historical basis for these tales, it is yet impossible to tell where fact ends and legend begins. And in any case the shadow of the Cross becomes discernible, even to Dr. Orchard himself, only in the light of his own interpretation of the alleged events.

Our divine discerns the shadow of the Cross at various stages in the period known as the public ministry of Jesus. The shadow continued to develop until it reached its climax in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here Dr. Orchard falls back upon his ingenuity:—

"It seems to me there is only one possible meaning in Gethsemane. His 'bitter cup' was that he should have to fail with his work undone. There was no way out save by compromise, by lowering the standard. He rose from his knees, determined to go on and leave the rest to God. That, as I understand it, was the issue of the Cross for Jesus; to win by false means, or to fail by the only means that he believed he ought to trust in and act upon.....Why do we bother about doctrines of the Atonement? The Atonement is not a doctrine, it is something that is *done*. The fact of the Cross is a universal fact in the life we are living."

Dr. Orchard may rail at doctrines as much as he likes, but there is no getting away from the fact that what he offers in the above extract is a definite doctrine of the Atonement, such a doctrine as robs Jesus of every scrap of uniqueness and reduces him to the stature of ordinary men. Furthermore, the moment Jesus ceases to be a Divine Being he becomes a very commonplace man. If, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was not God sweating blood under the awful load of the world's sin, then he was less than a great man on the eve of a martyr's doom. You read of no weak Gethsemane whimpers

prior to the martyrdom of Socrates, of Giordano Bruno, or of Francisco Ferrer. Divesting Jesus of his Deity, Dr. Orchard strips him of his perfect humanity at the same time.

In spite of his undoubted scholarship the reverend gentleman is pre-eminently a man of feeling. In fact, his emotions run away with him. Listen to this rhapsody:—

"How does the Cross save men? Not by any theory. But in this way, that the life of God comes there into absolute victory in the soul of man, and the moment we dare stand in front of it without reservation, then that same life wakens in our hearts too. It is life touching life, a vital process, beyond all theories, beyond all descriptions. And so, while I reject all theories, I know that fact, and I glory in the Cross."

When a man works himself up into that mood it is useless to reason with him. He is in a state of emotional inebriation, and scarcely responsible for his words; but the fact remains that the only theories he rejects are those which differ from the one he has adopted himself, and when sober he will surely admit that, on his own showing, the death of Jesus, in the absence of all theories, cannot be differentiated from that of any other human martyr. And yet Dr. Orchard exclaims: "It is the Cross of Christ which makes me feel I am a sinful man. It makes me penitent because it discovers to me my cowardice and failure. Jesus had to die because there are men like me in the world; he had to suffer because hundreds of us would not suffer." At this point the reverend gentleman pours out a flood of contempt upon himself. He cannot find words strong enough for his self-condemnation. "The very bread I eat, the clothes I wear are touched with blood," he cries; "and within me I find a spirit beseeching me to give myself utterly in service to my fellows, and I dare not, for very cowardice." Surely, when he penned those words he must have been in the blues, suffering from a fit of hypochondriasis. We are quite certain that he is not a coward, but very brave and noble. In any case, why does the death of Jesus awaken a sense of sin in him, any more than the death of Bruno, or of any other man who has ever laid down his life for his conviction? The only explanation is to be found in the fact that Dr. Orchard was born in a Christian country, and brought up in Christian beliefs.

Numerous questions crowd into the mind at this point, and all must prove extremely puzzling to a Christian believer. Dr. Orchard has painted a horrid portrait of himself, which we know is untrue to life; but he alleges that the Cross of Christ means that God will never let him go. But if God has had him in his grip all along, how on earth can he have been and be the wicked fellow he describes? If the picture he draws is a true one, God has held him to very little purpose. If God sheds blood to bring us round to his way of thinking, it follows that God's self-sacrifice is practically nothing but cruel waste. Even according to Dr. Orchard's admissions, God's existence has been of no benefit to mankind. If the reverend gentleman calls himself a failure, the God who is said to hold him is an infinitely greater failure. And if God holds one he holds all, and so we come to the intolerable absurdity of God-held lunatics filling our asylums, God-held criminals crowding our prisons, and God-held landlords and employers grinding the faces of their God-held tenants and employees! If such a God exists he must be more insane than the worst lunatic, more criminal than any deliberate murderer, and more cruel than the hardest landlord or employer that ever lived.

The Cross is anything but a reality. There are hundreds of conflicting interpretations being served out to the credulous at the present time, and they are all alike but idealisations of a perfectly natural occurrence. We are firm believers in vicarious ministries, and we rejoice in the knowledge that the altruistic spirit is steadily growing. We are surrounded by people who do suffer in the service of others, whose greatest joy is to witness beneficial results, and who are animated by no other emotion

than human love. This emotion is their only incentive to heroic conduct. Many there are who carry heavy crosses, and carry them vicariously, and humanity is slowly reaping the benefit; but the theological cross, in every one of its multitudinous forms, Dr. Orchard's not excepted, has done incalculable harm by cramming men's minds with all sorts of notions which become embodied in all sorts of nefarious deeds. Why, again and again it has drenched the earth with the blood of her noblest sons and daughters; and yet, in spite of its ugly history, Dr. Orchard informs us that he glories in it and urges others to do the same. The only thing worth glorying in is the honest human effort to uplift mankind, the struggle for individual and social well-being. The Christian sects spend most of their time in enlarging upon and condemning the weakness and failings and heresies of one another. Happily they are being gradually supplanted by that scientific Humanitarianism the only aim of which shall be to make every human being an active member, in faithful service, of the social organism.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Nonconformosis.

THIS interesting disease is found mostly among members of the Lower-Middle-Class-Liberal-Backbone-of-the-Nation community. Apart from the work of a few pioneers, who have never failed to din into the ears of a preoccupied public, but little has been done until recently to arrest its growth or even to investigate its peculiar characteristics. Several causes have contributed to this inactivity, not the least of them being that stupid British conventionalism which has always rewarded enterprise with obstruction and dishonor. The consequences have been two-fold—firstly, ignorance of the real nature of the malady; and, secondly, a paucity of physicians sufficiently qualified to administer correctives. It is agreeable to find, however, that the fences erected by a timid conservatism are gradually being forced further back, and that the social preserves upon which adventurers may not trespass are becoming more and more circumscribed; and to this salutary process is due the increased knowledge of Nonconformists, of which I shall give a few particulars in this article.

One of the earliest symptoms—the presence of which is, perhaps, the surest guide to a correct diagnosis—is the smile. However slight the affection may be, this particular symptom is rarely missing. It may be seen in varying degrees of intensity, corresponding to the amount of functional derangement, but it attains its perfection only when the disease has become well established. After a long period of years it has been known to become completely ineradicable, and it is then termed, in popular parlance, "the smile that won't come off." This appropriate phrase is true in more than one sense, for it has been found that this singular contraction of the features, once so seductive in conjunction with the utterances of some enthusiastic mission preacher, does not "come off" nearly so frequently as it used to.

Every physician knows the value of judicious questioning. A correct history of a case from a patient's own lips is of great importance. Now the following question will be found materially to assist in distinguishing the disease under notice—"Which do you consider the two worst forms of wickedness?" If the patient answers, "Horse-racing and intemperance," he should be treated for Nonconformosis.

Not the least curious feature of this curious complaint, and one which has given rise to considerable differences of opinion among members of the medical faculty, is the frequent reiteration by the patient of some half-dozen terms which are believed to bear reference to his religious persuasion. "Salvation," "righteousness," "sin," and a few other cognate expressions, are ever on his lips. The theory

has been advanced that this peculiarity is the direct outcome of the disturbance, and is inseparable from it; and for many years this plausible and apparently natural explanation was pretty generally accepted by the medical profession. The recent researches of Professor Truthisgoode, however, which have thrown such a flood of light on this part of the subject, have failed to substantiate this view. That eminent and painstaking specialist collected evidence from upwards of 10,000 cases, and his investigations prove that the extraordinary symptom under notice is but the manifestation in a particular direction of a weakness which is general and constitutional. After eliminating all those cases which were known to be hereditary, no less than 97½ per cent. of the Professor's remaining patients were found to have possessed a scanty and indiscriminative vocabulary, and a very limited capacity for ideas, *before contracting the disease*; and in the other 2½ per cent. the peculiarity was either entirely absent or imperfectly developed. The real value of this inquiry lies in the proof it affords that, apart from transmission, the disease finds practically all its victims among those whose mental organism is already inherently defective. A mentality accessible to ideas, capable of independent thought and reason, and able to express itself through the medium of an extensive vocabulary, is seldom or never affected.

Attempts have been made to classify the various stages of the disease, so as to correspond with the varieties of clothing worn by the patient. Nothing approaching exactitude has, however, been established. The question of apparel is largely governed by personal idiosyncrasy, and the influence of Nonconformism upon a patient's dress cannot be determined with any certainty. The most that can be said may be conveniently put into two by no means universal rules: (1) A severe attack will often advertise itself in a soft hat and trousers which have abandoned the vertical crease for a series of horizontal rings and a certain inflation at the knees. (2) On the first day of each week the patient can frequently be seen carrying a black book. This latter symptom, although liable to appear at any time, occurs most frequently in chronic cases, and, from its recurrence every seventh day, it has been called the "hebdomadal symptom." Nonconformism is the only disease distinguished in this manner, though "enneatic," or ninth-day, symptoms are known to accompany some other disorders. If, therefore, the diagnosis should leave any room for doubt, the appearance of the black book will afford unmistakable proof of the nature of the disease.

An experienced practitioner, attending upon a neurotic patient, will be ever on the watch for those strange delusions which his professional training will have prepared him to expect. Nonconformism, being a mental and nervous disorder of a particularly obstinate nature, is not without its characteristic delusions. A singular and interesting phenomenon, however, which differentiates the complaint under notice from all others of a kindred nature, is that the same specific delusion is common to nearly every case. The patient persuades himself into the belief that he and his fellow-sufferers are healthy, normal individuals, and that those who are free from the disease are the unwholesome members of society. It will be readily understood that this unfortunate perversion of the truth renders a patient rebellious under treatment, and not infrequently engenders a violent dislike for the attending physician. Indeed, history provides many instances in which a number of sufferers, drawn together by the supposed injustice of some wholly imaginary ill-treatment, have sought the protection of the law against their medical advisers; and, as the plaintiffs have never been without their representatives among the legal profession, such actions have sometimes led to the conviction and imprisonment of useful and unoffending members of society.

Loquacity and a tendency to exaggeration are symptoms which are seldom lacking, and their appearance is an indication that the malady is

making headway in the system. The garrulity of the patient is a fairly safe guide in determining the age of the disease. Indeed, by carefully noting the progress of the talk, an expert practitioner can often fix the approximate date of the seizure when the patient himself is totally unable to do so. Young physicians are warned that great caution is desirable in conversation, for it has been observed that certain terms, harmless enough when employed among normal subjects, will aggravate these particular symptoms and produce unlooked-for agitation. Such words as "Catholicism," "Licensing," and "Dis-establishment" should be used with the greatest possible care, and only when absolutely unavoidable; and it may be stated, as an invariable rule, that the word "Education" should never, in any circumstances whatever, be made use of in the presence of a patient. The utterance of this one word alone has been known to produce a sudden rise of temperature, violent gesticulations, and a volubility highly detrimental to the welfare of the sufferer.

Little need be said as to the treatment of the malady. The only method of any efficacy is now well known and widely practised. It was once thought that the disease was incurable, and it was only in the early stages of the disorder that the physicians offered any hope of recovery. But wider research and greater accuracy of information have resulted in such an improved treatment that complete cures of what would once have been regarded as hopeless cases are not uncommon. The curative work, however, is the least important part of the war now being waged against this malignant disease. The valuable discoveries of Professor Truthisgoode, referred to above, have concentrated the attention of the medical profession upon *predisposition*, and the measures now adopted are, as all the world knows, preventive rather than remedial. At the very earliest suspicion of an attack, an immediate and widespread course of reading is prescribed, and a study of the scientific attainments of the past century is often particularly advised. It is a satisfaction to know that this treatment, which is rendered the easier by the enormous increase during the last decade of sound literature at cheap rates, is meeting with considerable success. By taking advantage of this wide dissemination of good books, many thousands have been saved whose predisposition to attack would in all probability have led to a definite seizure. Year by year the official returns of sufferers show a consistent decline, and some of the more sanguine among medical specialists prophesy that, in the not far-distant future, the last remnants of this distressing malady will be banished from our shores.

R. NORTH.

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## The Christian God.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

I HAVE read everything I could get hold of about this God, and I have only confirmed my first impression, that man has never made a worse Deity, a more heartless, inhuman brute and called him by the name of God. While there is cruelty, cold and pitiless, in nature; while there is strife, deadly and merciless, in nature; while there is vengeance, relentless and wicked, in nature; its cruelty ends with death; its strife ends when the victim is still; its vengeance ceases when the struggle is over. Not so with the cruelty and vengeance of the Christian God. He hates after death; he carries his torture and punishment beyond the grave; he pursues man with pain and suffering through all eternity.

The raw material of all theology is the world about us; the universe of things mirrored in the human mind; but look into this mirror and, notwithstanding you see sad pictures, beautiful pictures, horrible pictures; pictures of men burning at the stake, with priests gloating over their agony; pictures of women killed by the savage blow of the barbarian, who laughs

at their shrieks of anguish; pictures of crime that make the blood run cold; pictures of sufferings that open every pore of pity in the human heart—these altogether cannot express the merciless horrors inflicted by the Christian God upon unbelievers. The hell of Christianity is all the pains and pangs of time multiplied into eternal torment.

We judge a father by the way he treats his child. We have the right to judge God by the way he treats men. If Christian teachings are true, then the Christian God will doom the larger part of the human race to everlasting punishment.

Bad men must have made such a bad God; that is, men with a bad religion.

We are told that the Christian God had a son; that this son was born under divine influences; that he was acknowledged by God to be his "beloved son," in whom he was "well pleased," soon after he was baptised by John, but from that hour God showed no interest whatever in his life or in his career, and even let him die a cruel death without making any attempt to save him or to help him, although Jesus had cried out in disappointment, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

No human father would treat a child as the Christian God treated his "only begotten son." A man with the affection of a parent for his offspring would have done everything in his power to rescue his child, and would have risked his life to save him, and, if he failed, he would have stood by and taken the dear, dead body, with its red wounds, and placed it lovingly in its grave, and when he could do no more would have wept upon the sacred mound the tears of helpless love.

Will not God do as much as man? Is not divine love as faithful and true as human love? Can man trust a God who will desert his own son when in trouble? Read the story of Jesus, and you will find no evidence of divine love and care in it. Why, if Jesus had been that son of God, the only child of heaven, when wicked priests, through hatred and revenge, had him condemned to die on the cross, his heavenly Father should have hurled the cross to the ground and then and there confounded his son's enemies by rescuing him from defeat and death. The cross became a crucifix, and that dead body of God's son nailed to it is the eternal witness against divine love. Wherever it stands to-day it denies that there is a Father in heaven who cares for the children of women.

Not a tear of God fell upon the face of his son as he hung dying upon the cross. No sign of grief was seen in the heavens when Jesus "gave up the ghost." There was no divine mourner at his bier. A woman wept for him. A woman's love went to his grave, but from the hour he died to this hour his Father in heaven has never visited the place where he was buried.

If such desertion and cruel indifference is the way of God, then let us rejoice that we are men.

L. K. WASHBURN.

### Obituary.

We regret to announce the death of Mr. Walter James Casey, which occurred on Sunday, November 26, at the age of fifty-four years. For thirty years Mr. Casey was a zealous and useful member of the N. S. S., availing himself of every opportunity to promote the dissemination of Free-thought principles. In recent years ill-health prevented him from taking an active part in propaganda work, but his love for the cause was a bright flame to the end. He was an ardent admirer of Charles Bradlaugh, to serve whom, in every way possible, he regarded as the supreme privilege of his life; and subsequently he proved equally loyal to the present honored head of the N. S. S. The interment took place on Friday, December 1, in the Islington portion of the Finchley Cemetery, when a Secular Service was conducted at the graveside by Mr. J. T. Lloyd. The N. S. S. was represented by Mr. T. Shore and Miss Stanley.—J. T. L.

### Acid Drops.

Two of the biggest hypocrites in England—the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who take £15,000 and £10,000 a year respectively for preaching the gospel of "blessed be ye poor"—have issued an appeal against Welsh Disestablishment. They "call upon Christian men and women everywhere to render impossible the accomplishment of an act so disastrous to the religious life and well-being of the country." We can understand its being disastrous to the well-being of the country if that is identified with the material well-being of the clerical gentleman who runs the present Church. But how on earth can disestablishment—or even complete disendowment, which is not at all likely to happen—be disastrous to the religious life of the country? The Archbishops' statement implies that all the Church clergy in Wales are mere hirelings, and that all their flocks are at heart entirely indifferent. It also implies that position and money cannot be compensated for by the power of Christ and the assistance of the Almighty. All this may be quite true, but is it wise on the part of the Archbishops to emphasise it in this way?

Mr. Israel Zangwill has been telling a *Christian Commonwealth* interviewer a story of his childhood which illustrates the evil power of religious prejudice. It was on the Day of Atonement, and his mother wanted to spend the day in the synagogue, so little Israel was left in the charge of the nurse. The rest must be told in his own language:—

"When I was seven weeks' old and resident in the goody city of Bristol," he says, "my mother (who is, of course, the authority for the story) was induced to entrust me for a day to the care of a Christian nursemaid—an uneducated girl of 16; but, becoming uneasy, she returned unexpectedly to inquire after me.

"She found the girl playing in the street, and was assured I was asleep; but, insisting on entering the house, she found me screaming in my cradle, my head covered with a pillow, my face black, and my mouth full of blood. The girl confessed finally that, in revenge for the death of Christ she had, with pins, pricked a bloody sign of the Cross on my tongue."

Mr. Zangwill does not point out, nor does the *New Theology* organ, but we will, that this cruel deed was done in the spirit of the New Testament. One of the many impossible, and clearly invented, things in the Gospel account of the trial and execution of Jesus is the conversation between Pilate and the Jewish mob. They called upon Pilate to crucify Jesus, and overcame his reluctance by crying "His blood be on us and on our children." That cry was invented by Christian malice to cover the Jews with infamy. But there it stands in the record, and the servant girl had no doubt read it or heard it, and she only wreaked her hatred on one of the "children." And she was by no means alone. Christian Churches had perpetrated awful, and sometimes unspeakable, cruelties upon the Jews for hundreds of years in the name of that abominable text.

The *New York Times* published misrepresentations of Ingersoll in its issue of October 9, and has refused to let them be corrected. One of the misrepresentations is very odd. The *Times* said that Ingersoll's defence of the Star Routers, in a famous law case tried in 1882, "wound up" his legal career. This overlooks the fact that several years later Ingersoll conducted for a client a libel suit against the *Times* and forced the publishers to pay nearly 22,000 dollars. We suppose the *Times* conveniently forgot that.

Pastor Russell, the Brooklyn preacher who is being so industriously advertised in London, is suing the *Brooklyn Eagle* for one hundred thousand dollars damages. Evidently, in his own opinion, he has an extremely valuable character. There are some curious statements about Pastor Russell in the *New York Truthseeker*. One of them is that his wife obtained a separation from him for "cruelty." Surely that cannot be true. Men of God are so frequently persecuted in that way.

According to the *Truthseeker* (New York) the women of Los Angeles have been induced to register by the registration board meetings in churches and at prayer meetings. The women are expected to vote as the clericals want them to in the December election. More than ninety thousand of them have registered.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer has just changed his opinion about theatres and music halls. He has discovered that we all need recreation, and he is quite willing for his followers to visit the places of amusement approved of by him. Judging by recent incidents, if at any time they observe any suspi-

clous item they are to let him know, then he will go and see it for himself and report to the County Council. The real censor of plays and music hall turns, he maintains, should be the Church. In fact, the reverend gentleman seems to imagine that the true censorship centres in himself. He is also resolutely determined to oppose, tooth and nail, the slightest competition on the Church's field day. There must be no amusement on the Sunday. He knows that he would soon be lost in *that* competition.

Providence again! According to a *Christian World* writer, the present situation in China has been "providentially prepared" to pave the way for the Christianisation of the people." We don't know how this is, but we do know what would be thought of a man, or a body of men, who initiated and maintained bad government and oppression in various forms, then created a revolution costing thousands of lives, in order to prepare for something else. Of course, men do create revolutions, but then the same people do not create the conditions that call for the outburst. But, on the hypothesis of providential preparation, God creates the evil in order to apply the remedy. It is social vivisection on a colossal scale—without even the excuse of the vivisectionist. And we have heard of other preparations. The Spanish and Russian Governments have before now "providentially prepared" revolts in order to realise their aims. But they have not received great praise from outsiders for their efforts. Admire the methods of God, but don't imitate them, appears to be a very good rule in such cases.

In the appeal to the British public to find £250,000 for a university for China, there is displayed rather more than the usual amount of cant and hypocrisy. The plea is put forward that China is not able to found universities of the Western type, and she must rely upon Western initiative. We do not believe that there is any great necessity for universities of the type of Western institutions. What China needs in the shape of Western knowledge and ideas she will take if she is left alone. And if her taking is to result in real benefit, it will be modified in accordance with the needs, and applied in a manner suitable to the genius, of the Chinese people. It is an example of English—and American—impudence and arrogance to assume that a country is not civilised unless its institutions are copies of our own. It may be convenient for Greenwich to fix the world's meridian, but there is no reason whatever for Clapham preparing a moral barometer for the universe. Given free intercourse between the nations—and China, when treated fairly, has never seriously objected to this—and the people of any nation are the best judges of what they need and the best architects of their own institutions. There is no more justification for forcing our institutions upon China than there is for forcing them upon Japan. And we only try to do so in the first case because China, not being a Christian nation, is by teaching and tradition a peaceful people.

The humbug of the whole thing is that the real object of the appeal is theological. The larger number of those who subscribe would not do so unless the idea of conversion was there. But as a number might be prevented subscribing if the theological aim was openly and honestly professed, the appeal is issued in the name of civilisation. Not that the theological side is neglected. Whichever card is played depends upon the audience. In the secular press it is the need for learning, culture, social development, that is stressed. In the religious press people are warned that unless something is done education in China will follow the lines of education in Japan. Which means that in Japan the Christian game is up, but there is still time to nobble China. But if Japan has not sunk into a horrible condition without missionary supervision, why should China? Or if Japan is in such terrible straits, why do the missionaries not say so? Or is it because it is not so safe to *lie* about Japan as it is to lie about China? The quarter of a million appeal is riddled throughout with humbug. It is one more attempt of the missionary societies to "spoo" the British public in the interests of their propaganda. The pity is that we have no prominent politicians with sufficient courage to denounce the imposture.

Mr. W. Grinton Berry, M.A., has been harrowing up the souls of the readers of *Sunday at Home* by assuring them that the "governing authorities and the Government of France are positively, deliberately, and actively hostile to the Christian." It would be right and just and fair if they were *friendly* to the Christian religion; it is wrong, wicked, and unfair when they are *hostile* to it. Such is the difference of the point of view.

Mr. Berry complains of changes made in certain text-books. Just as if text-books ought to be used to promote Christianity, but not used to oppose it, or even to treat it with indifference. One story book for very young school children depicted two children doing a tour of France; they rested under a fir-tree one night, and prayed before they slept. In the new edition the prayer is omitted. "The beauties of Nature must raise our thoughts towards God" loses the last two words, and instead of "prayer gives us courage and hope" the new edition says, "Let us help each other." Such are the awful sufferings of Christians at the hands of the "infidel" French Government.

"My rich brother with idle hands," said another school-book, "I am a son of God as much as you." It now reads, "I am a man not less than you." Shocking! The modern Christians' martyrdom is really terrible.

In one of the school-books, Mr. Berry says—though we should like to see it to make sure that it is *official*, which at present we rather doubt—the children are taught that no knowledge of "God" exists, and that "all we can do in these matters is to make suppositions." They are even told that "the Gospels contain moral conceptions which shock the modern conscience" and that "immortality is merely the continuance of our memory in the hearts of those who love us." For our part, we do not approve of such things being taught by the State, which should, in our opinion, take the view that religion is entirely a personal and private matter, and itself remain neutral. But if teaching about religion is to be given at all in State schools, surely the views of the majority should predominate in France as well as in England. The notion that you may teach that Christianity is true, but not teach that it is not true, is one of those egotistical conceits which Christians indulge in where they have long been accustomed to playing the part of the upper dog.

Mr. Birrell apologised to an audience the other evening for using the word "religion" in connection with sectarian troubles in Ireland. He said these people had no more religion in them than billiard balls which meet one another in collision on billiard tables. The apology was unnecessary, and quite misplaced. To argue that people should not fight because they are religious is offering the worst of all possible reasons for their desisting. Men fight more savagely, if not more heartily, over religion than over any other subject under the sun. Mr. Birrell knows this as well as we do, and it is little more than affectation to express surprise when religious sectarians quarrel. Mr. Birrell also added that religious differences should not prevent our dealing with political questions in a sense of justice. Again we have to remark that religion always has prevented people dealing justly with political and social questions. Mr. Birrell himself is a case in point. His own religious prepossessions prevented him, while at the Education Office, from dealing with the Education question in what most now agree is a *just* manner, and which is the only way by which a lasting settlement may be effected.

The *Daily Chronicle* has been calling attention to the fact that a performing horse, belonging to Bankes, a servant of Lord Essex (Elizabeth's Lord Essex) was really *too* clever and was burnt, with his master, for witchcraft. That was during the lifetime of Shakespeare. Just think of it! And think of this—Shakespeare was writing his greatest plays while the Royal Commission of divines were preparing the authorised Version of the Bible. It almost looks like Nature's effort to rid the world of the Christian curse.

We take the following from the *Chronicle* :—

"Baron Gustave de Rothschild had a pleasant mixture of caution and waggery. Once, while in the synagogue, his neighbor suddenly plucked him by the sleeve and whispered hoarsely, 'I have come away this morning without locking the safe!' 'Don't worry,' replied Rothschild, looking round at the vast congregation, 'we are all of us here!'"

Good! But suppose the wrong one of them got back first!

It is worth noting that the leaders of the rowdy section of woman suffragists are religious. Mrs. Pankhurst is fond of talking about God, and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence recently declared that her suffragette raiders were going forth in the spirit of the Lord. We don't dispute it. Perhaps the lady was right. We simply note it.

Eli Erichsen, a Dane, and an ex-monk of the Marist Monastery, Dundee, has gained damages for libel against the

Rev. Father Spink, of New Barnet, and two lay Catholics. In the local edition of *St. Andrew's Magazine* they had called him a "foreign adventurer" and his statements about the morals and manners of the monks "a tissue of lies." One witness testified to hearing Erichsen, as a Protestant Alliance lecturer, tell his audience that life in the monastery "so far from being pure and holy was one round of drunkenness, immorality, and filth." That's pretty strong, anyhow; yet the jury gave their verdict in spite of it. Or should we say because of it?

The wife of a London parson, Mrs. Percy Dearmer, has written a sort of miracle play entitled *The Soul of the World*, which has been produced at London University. Miss Henrietta Watson played the Virgin Mary, and Mr. Farquharson the Angel Gabriel,—the first act representing the Annunciation. This must have been the most ticklish part of the performance; for all sorts of things have been written about Gabriel's rôle in the original transaction.

Mr. Cocoa Cadbury's kept paper, the dear *Daily News*, is so fond of filtering the information it gives its readers that it shut out the whole Streatham Common case from beginning to end. How could it stain its pages with reports about an "infidel" even if the police and the magistrate did act in a way that was in utter defiance of the English tradition of personal freedom, and thereby set a precedent that might be used against all "advanced" men in the future? But the dear *Daily News* never fails to report its proprietor's pious utterances. "Our Own Correspondent" was sent down to Bournville on Tuesday, November 28, to report a certain function taking place that evening. A site in the centre of Bournville was formally presented to the Anglican Church, and Mr. Cocoa Cadbury was, of course, very much in evidence. He made the presentation, and he had a lot to say, as usual; including the influence of himself and his beverage on the piety of Bournville. "A larger proportion," he said, "of the inhabitants of Bournville attended places of worship than in working-class quarters of our cities. Coming into touch with nature brought men into closer touch with nature's God." The statement may be true and the explanation false. The real explanation, we take it, is twofold; first, the strong Cadbury influence, which naturally drives the inhabitants in the Cadbury direction; second, the lack of rivalry to churches and chapels on Sunday.

"Such things are unfortunately inevitable in war." That is what Lord Roberts says about the Italian atrocities at Tripoli. And it must be remembered that his is a typical military mind, which runs as naturally to the Christian religion as rivers run to the sea. All the famous British soldiers in India have been of that type.

It must be admitted, however, that Lord Roberts refuses to believe that women and children were massacred. But what is the use of his denial? He was not there, and he knows no more than he hears. Reputable newspaper correspondents, belonging to journals of England, Germany, and the United States, that could be in no sort of collusion, testified to what they saw with their own eyes; and more than one of them handed back their papers to General Caneva, refusing to be associated any longer with an army capable of such things. Lord Roberts is simply talking nonsense. He is very apt to talk it in his old age.

The new Dean of St. Paul's (Dr. Inge) has what Shakespeare would call a "hanging countenance." It is one of the most macerated and dismal we ever saw. But why should Christians quarrel with him because he does not prophesy smoothly? They call him "the gloomy Dean" and the "pessimistic preacher." Well, was not Jesus Christ "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and was he not a thorough-going pessimist with regard to this world? Man's happiness, in his scheme of things, only existed in the world to come. Paul distinctly said, indeed, that if there was no resurrection of the dead the followers of Jesus Christ were of all men most miserable. Dr. Inge may not be good company for people who want to enjoy themselves, but he appears to be a very good Christian. He sees, for instance, that if progress is a reality in this world, it is all up with the doctrine of another world.

Dr. Inge has just delivered himself of one truth at least. "The Church as an institution," he says, "has always been disposed to truckle to the powers that be." The only necessary qualification is that the truckling must be profitable to the Church. It fights tooth and nail against any "powers" that threaten its social and financial privileges.

With reference to the sudden death of the Rev. Mr. Cameron, minister of the United Church at Robertson, near Hawick—whom "Providence" permitted to give out the text but not to deliver the sermon—we should like to point out that Christians attach no importance to such events nowadays. What a rumpus they would make, though, if a Freethought lecturer were to say "Mr. Chairman and Friends" and then drop dead on the platform. That would be a "judgment." The "infidel" would be arrested in the midst of his "wicked career." The hand of God would be visible enough then.

Another reverend gentleman's sudden death is reported. Canon Blogg, vicar of Frodsham, Cheshire, was moving a vote of thanks to the chair at a political meeting. He had just said "I move with much pleasure" when he fell back into his chair. In a few minutes he was a corpse. Thus "Providence" treats the household of faith as if they were mere heathen. "As the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath."

Mr. W. B. Baggaley, a leading Nottingham lace manufacturer, and a magistrate, has attended church for 60 years and heard some 6,000 sermons; and he has been asking what good they have done him or others. "Not that much," was his reply, holding up a piece of blank paper. We quite believe it, but why did he waste sixty years in discovering so obvious a truth?

Rev. J. D. Jones, speaking at Muswell Hill in support of a Congregational Fund for improving ministers' salaries, told a pathetic story of the poverty of a Nonconformist minister who kept a wife and family (and himself, we presume) on £70 a year. The worn-out wife fell ill, and as she lay dying she struggled to make the mourning clothes to be worn by the family after her death. Sad, no doubt. But is not the Rev. J. D. Jones aware that millions of families in Christian England have to live on less than £70 a year? Why all this pity for the men of God? Especially when they are enlisted in the service of a Master who had not where to lay his head, and who taught that poverty was the first of blessings.

There seems to be a "poor clergy" problem in America. Rev. A. S. Shaw, an eminent Baptist preacher, of Cleveland, Ohio, has just been saying that many soul-savers over there are not given enough salary to live on. "The saving of souls," he said, "is unprofitable, and many people do not care to have their souls saved. Under present conditions the Churches ought to shoot or poison aged clergymen, because such a course would be far more merciful than the present one of allowing them to starve to death." We differ from the reverend gentleman. Soul-savers, on the whole, get more money than they would earn in other professions. Even if they did not, why should they complain? It seems to us the height of impudence to complain that you are not paid well enough for preaching "Blessed be ye poor."

Rev. George William Hudson Shaw (we stop to take breath), of Alderley, Cheshire, has been appointed to the living of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, London, E.C. The gross income is £3,090, and the net income £2,000. Pity the poor clergy!

#### THE PIETY GAME.

The piety game is the game to be playing;

While daily you greedily add to your pile.

Ignore the harsh things that your critics are saying

And wear your lip curved in a heavenly smile.

Let your eyes have a roll that is upward and saintly;

If you violate laws make your clerks bear the blame;

The world will in time learn to chide you but faintly

In case you are playing the piety game.

Be a warden somewhere or a mild-mannered deacon,

And your ventures will prosper, whatever they are;

It pays in these days to be classed as a beacon

Whose glorious light may be seen from afar.

Crush other men where you may pounce on them slyly,

And if you are caught now and then in your shame

The world will forgive and keep praising you highly,

As long as you stick to the piety game.

Preach kindness and fairness and sweetness on Sunday,

Let the prayers which you utter be lengthy and loud,

And if your transactions are shady on Monday,

On Tuesday your goodness may still be avowed.

Learn to let your eyes roll in the saintliest fashion,

And if those whom you wrong raise their voices in

Be ready to smile with the sweetest compassion; [blame

There is profit in playing the piety game.

—S. E. Kiser, in "Life" (New York).



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 10, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.; at 7.30, "The Star of Bethlehem."

December 17, Queen's Hall, London.

January 7, Shoreditch Town Hall; 9, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner; 14, Shoreditch Town Hall; 21, Glasgow.

February 18, Manchester.

March 24, Leicester.

April 14, Glasgow.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 10, Manchester; 17, Liverpool.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 10, Fulham Ethical Society; 31, Harringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £326 10s. 2d. Received since:—W. R. Angell, 2s. 6d.; E. Pinder and Other Leicester Friends, £1.

A. C. LUNN.—We would strain a point for a lady, but we are obliged to make our rule absolute. We simply cannot find time to coach correspondents up by post for spoken or written controversies they expect to be engaged in. We are far too busy already. And when our reply is requested "by return" it looks as though our correspondents imagine that editing this journal, and lecturing, and attending to all sorts of party business, are nothing. We cannot even write to say that we cannot write. This intimation must suffice—and we hope others will make note of it.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. A.—It is a "chestnut." Thanks, all the same.

J. TOMKINS.—Shall have early attention.

J. W. HARTGILL.—See paragraph. Thanks.

E. D. SAYS: "It is now twelve months since I first read the *Freethinker*, and I am glad to say that I enjoy it now more than ever." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

E. PINDER.—It is good of you to take the trouble. We thank you for your good wishes, which we know to be so sincere.

E. RAGGETT.—Reply next week. The number has to be looked out.

T. GRIFFITHS.—See paragraph.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear Mr. Heaford had a good audience.

E. CHOATES.—Sending as desired. Will write at length on Nietzsche in the new year.

TOM STOREY.—Not quite in our way—and rather far-fetched. Better luck another time. Pleased to hear you have been tackling Mr. W. T. Lee.

H. R. E.—The human body is daily changing by waste and repair. Some parts change rapidly, some slowly, but there is nothing really scientific in the statement about "an entire change every seven years," though it may be allowable as a common expression.

J. MATSON.—Under consideration.

G. M. DOWELL.—Yes, a good hit in the circumstances, but hardly suitable to our columns.

WILLIAM OWEN.—Alteration duly made. Leap year was overlooked. Thanks.

JOSEPH BATES.—Thanks for cuttings.

MARCEL LECLERCQ.—We don't edit this journal for any one reader. Sorry you don't agree with us—but did we ever undertake to agree with you? There is a jocular side to the difference; for, in fact, you completely misunderstand all that we have written on the subject.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers the last two lectures (this side of Christmas) at the Queen's (Minor) Hall. This evening (Dec. 10) his subject will be "The Star of Bethlehem." The following Sunday's subject will be "The Shadow of Calvary."

The audiences at Stratford Town Hall have not been quite as good as usual during the recent month's course of lectures—probably for various reasons, but there was a big rally on Sunday evening when Mr. Foote delivered the extra lecture on "The Crescent and the Cross." And it was a live meeting from beginning to end. No audience could have been more appreciative and enthusiastic. Mr. Rosetti took the chair, and a baby girl was presented to Mr. Foote for "naming." The little one looked at the "namer" with big open eyes all the time, but wasn't frightened and never murmured; indeed, being rather older than usual at such a ceremony, she stood the talk over her remarkably well. She bears the name of Romola Pankhurst. Her parents are old and highly respected members of the West Ham Branch.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on the second Tuesday in January (the 9th) at the Holborn Restaurant. The tickets are 4s. each, as usual. This includes both dinner and entertainment.

Somehow or other Mr. Heaford's lecture at Birmingham did not appear in last week's *Freethinker*. Notice might have reached our office, but we don't remember seeing it. Mr. Heaford will accept our assurance that the omission was accidental.

The *Humanitarian* (organ of the Humanitarian League) for December contains an interesting "spar" between Mr. H. M. Hyndman and Mr. H. S. Salt on the attempted vegetarianism (at one time) of George Meredith. Mr. Hyndman also drags in, quite gratuitously, such exploded superstitions as vaccination, for which he is prepared to stand sponsor at any moment. Mr. Salt's task in replying to all this is not difficult but it is well performed. Mr. Hyndman says he has given most of his time to the advocacy of Socialism. That is true, and we all honor him for his life-long fidelity to his economical principles. But there are other things than economical principles in life, and certain forms of Socialism rather tend to encourage an authoritarian view of the rights of society over the individual—even in matters where the compulsion is only the expression of the pride and profit of professional experts.

Mr. Cohen lectures, afternoon and evening, to-day (Dec. 10) at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. We hope the South Lancashire "saints" will give him the large audiences and the hearty welcome that he deserves.

We have received the following fresh subscriptions for the Secular Hall, Leicester:—H. T. Clarkson £1 1s., Mrs. Clarkson, £1 1s. Mrs. Hatty's subscription (printed 2s. 6d.) should have been 1s. Mr. Gimson informs us that Dr. E. B. Foote, of New York, has sent him £2 2s. in response to the first *Freethinker* paragraph. Dr. Foote is truly a citizen of the world.

As long as we violate no confidence and inflict no injury we feel at liberty to use any material that may be of use to Freethought. We omit from the following letter all that could possibly lead to identification:—

"DEAR MR. FOOTE,—I am writing to you this time with the hope that you will be able to spare a moment to-morrow and send to Miss — and me your good wishes. For we are to be quietly married the next morning, and we both feel that there would be something incomplete about our happiness if at such a time we were not in the thoughts of one with whom we are proud to be acquainted, to whom we owe a good deal of our strength and inspiration, and for whom we have only love, admiration, and gratitude."

How strange this must appear to the Christians who never weary of talking about the "grovelling materialism" of Freethinkers. Those two young people, who take our very earnest good wishes with them into their new life, have read our writings and heard some of our lectures. They have nothing else to thank us for—and they thank us so warmly for that! If they value our "blessing" we value their attachment. Their letter delights us beyond the applause of millions.

The *Church Times* gives the following answer to a correspondent:—

"K. L. S.—Blasphemy is an offence punishable by the common law as well as by statute law, but since Lord Coleridge in the Foote case decided that Christianity did not any longer form part of the law of England, it is not an offence to attack the fundamentals of religion, provided that the decencies of controversy are observed.

This is quite correct substantially. But the Statute of William III. still remains unrepealed, although no proceedings have ever taken place under it; and "the decencies of controversy" is a perilously elastic expression.

This is not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but we have nowhere else to put it. A telegram from Mr. Stewart informs us that the Leeds "blasphemy" cases are down for hearing to-day (our press day—Tuesday). We cannot, therefore, give any report in our present issue. As far as the *Freethinker* is concerned our readers will have to wait till next week—for either news or comment.

### Special Postscript.

Just as we are closing up we have received from our old friend John Grange, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents—a considerate telegram—stating that Mr. Gott has been sentenced to four months' and Mr. Stewart to three months' imprisonment. The telegram adds, "without hard labour"—which could not, however, be part of a sentence for "blasphemy," which is technically only a "misdemeanor." This is all we can say now. But we shall have something to say before our lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, and more in next week's *Freethinker*.

### The Bible and the Bishop.

THE Bishop of London has written and published, for the special benefit of "working men," a small, theological pamphlet, intitled *Old Testament Difficulties*, in which he professes to consider and solve all such difficulties. Coming from such a personage, one might have reasonably expected that "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," would have been stated. But this is far from being the case, and one is obliged to conclude that the Bishop, to use the mildest expression, is neither more nor less than "a blind leader of the blind." This is all the more surprising seeing that, on p. 40 of his little book, he declares that "an ounce of fact is worth pounds of theory"—an important admission that will serve as the keynote of our investigation.

Part 1 is mainly introductory, the matters referred to being beyond human ken. He assumes that there is an Almighty God who created the heaven and the earth, and who foreknew from all eternity "the things which must be hereafter" (Rev. iv. 1). This, of course, is purely imaginary; nobody knows, or ever knew, such a being. Is it not more reasonable to believe that this universe never had a beginning, than to believe that, at some period in the distant past, it was created by an Omnipotent Being who, on the completion of his work, forthwith and forever disappeared?

The Bishop also assumes, p. 15, that the Bible is the "Word of God"; that it was written by men who were specially inspired by God so to write (p. 17); and that they wrote as they did because, "in the childhood of the human race" (p. 18), it was necessary that all men should be treated as "children." In answer to which, I refer the Bishop to St. Paul, who declared: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. xiii. 11). It is in this spirit

that I purpose to compare the statements of the Bishop with the statements of the Bible.

The Bishop assures us (p. 23) that although "the Bible was not meant to teach us science," yet that (p. 24) "the popular summary given in the first chapter of Genesis is *wonderfully scientific*." Is it so? Let us see if there be "an ounce of fact" in this statement.

The Bible states that the earth was "created" (Gen. i. 1); that it was created *before* the sun was "made"; that light was produced on the first day *after* the earth had been created (v. 3); and that the sun and moon were "made" on the fourth day (v. 16).

Science, on the contrary, teaches that the earth was "made" and *not* created; that it originally formed a portion of the sun, from which it was detached by natural processes, and, therefore, could not have been "created"; that the sun is the *sole* source of light and heat in our system; that the sun was made *before and not after* the earth; that the moon originally formed a portion of the earth, and was detached from it in the same manner as was the earth from the sun; and that we must accept things as they *really are*, and not as we choose to *imagine them to be*.

Now, the crucial question is *not* "Is the Bible the Word of God?" but "Is it true?"—that is, Did the events which are spoken of in the Bible as being real occurrences take place, or did they not? Now—adays we are told by certain clergymen that the Bible is *not* the Word of God, *but* that it *contains* it—a statement that should be supplemented by a list of the chapters—or is it verses?—which are the Word of God. Until recent times the Bible was read literally, and to me it is a matter of astonishment that professing Christians can do otherwise—for did not Christ read it literally? Did he not believe in the statements regarding the Flood (Luke xvii. 26, 27); in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt (Luke xvii. 28, 29, 32); and in Jonah, who lived in the belly of a great fish three days and three nights? (Matt. xii. 40).

The Bishop declares (p. 22) "that the truth of Christianity is to be decided by the truth or falsehood of the Resurrection"; that is, that "the truth of Christianity" depends on its being proved beyond all doubt that *a corpse rose from the dead, and walked, and talked, and ate, and digested what it ate, and finally rose into the air and disappeared behind a cloud*" (Luke xxiv. 42, 43; John xxi. 4-13). Where is the "ounce of fact" in support of such a statement?

The Bishop says (p. 64) that these "difficulties" mostly arise from judging and criticising the Old Testament writings as if they had been written in the nineteenth century—a *test which we never apply to any other documents outside the Bible*." A single illustration will suffice to show that this is a palpable error.

We read that, on a certain occasion in ancient Rome, there suddenly opened in the Forum "a gulf which the augurs affirmed would never close up until the most precious things in Rome were thrown into it"; that thereupon a heroic man named Curtius "leaped with his horse and armor boldly into the midst, saying that nothing was more truly valuable than patriotism and military virtue"; and that "the gulf immediately closed, and Curtius was never seen after." With whom does the *onus probandi*—that is, the task of proving this story to be true—rest? With the historian who wrote it, or the student who reads it? With the historian, of course. Let us dissect the story, and use experience and common sense in arriving at a conclusion.

That "a gulf suddenly opened in the Forum" we may readily believe, for we know that such gulfs have been on various occasions caused by earthquakes. We can also readily believe that a man named Curtius did leap therein, for we know that fanatics have often courted what they believed to be a glorious death. But what sane man believes the concluding part of the story—that the gulf closed up at the disappearance of Curtius, and did so because

of his so-called heroic act? Not one! Why? Because experience tells us that such an event never occurred, and common sense teaches that it is altogether incredible.

Apply this reasoning to the Gospel legend of the Resurrection. And, when doing so, let it not be forgotten that the question is purely a *physical* one. Either the corpse rose from the dead or it did not. Which was it? The Bishop is silent on the point. Why?

The difficulties, then, which the Bishop has undertaken to solve refer solely to supernatural events—that is, to events which are said to have occurred in direct violation of the known forces—miscalled laws—of nature. All statements relating to mere ordinary matters, whether individual or national, are beside the question, even though the writers thereof may have prefaced them with the words "Thus saith the Lord."

Who was Adam? is the first question asked by the Bishop. Is it not passing strange that he utterly ignores Eve, the mother of the human race according to the Bible? For he mentions her only when he says (p. 26) that "men are quite at liberty to believe or disbelieve the whole story of Adam and Eve, if they like." Of course they are; but then, to disbelieve the story is to deny the truthfulness of the Bible, which it is his duty, according to the creed of his Church, to uphold.

"The one mistake which men should avoid is," he says, "to disbelieve it on *historical* grounds." Why so? Because, he says, "history has been only able to trace human language back to three great divisions"; and because "traditions of a primitive state of innocence reflect in every age and nation the truth of the Bible narrative." Indeed! Traditions of the hoary past are not historic, and only prove that the first inhabitants of the earth were mere savages, utterly ignorant, and but little above the beasts of the field; whereas, according to the Bible, both Adam and Eve were splendid specimens of humanity, endowed with intellectual faculties of the highest order, and able to converse not only with each other, but, as the Bible tells us they readily did, with God himself (Genesis, first three chapters).

The Bishop has carefully avoided the initial difficulty. In the first chapter of Genesis we read (v. 27) that Adam and Eve were *created at the same time*. But, in the second chapter, we read (v. 7) that Adam was *created before* (v. 9) the "trees that were pleasant to the sight and good for food"; *before* (v. 19) "every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air"; and that (v. 21, 22) Eve was *created after* them, and from a "rib which the Lord God had taken from the man." If this were so, and if, as has been argued by learned professing Christians, the word "day" means, not twenty-four hours but an æon of time, Adam would, at the lowest computation, have been millions of years older than Eve.

The Bishop evades all other crucial points of the "difficulty"—the serpent's conversation "with the woman"; what the fruit was that grew upon the forbidden tree; and, above all, the Lord God's reason for driving Adam from the garden, which reason was because "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Gen. iii. 22). And well he may, because, as every man who reads and thinks knows, science proves beyond all doubt that the human race was evolved by nature and not created by a God, and that it has existed upon this earth, not a mere 5,915 years, but for tens of thousands of years. Such persons as Adam and Eve never existed, and, as this is a scientific fact, it follows, as a matter of course, that the religion that is based on this fable is simply untrue.

The Bishop believes in the Lord God of the Bible, and proceeds on the assumption that what he believes must be true. But is it? He claims that God is omnipotent and omniscient, but he asserts that "God forces no man's free will" (p. 31), and that (p. 82), although "God knows what our actions will be between now and the end of our lives, we shall be free to do, or not to do, His will." Where is

"the ounce of fact" in support of such an assertion? To say that God knows what a man will do, and yet that he does not compel him so to act, is a statement that embalms its own contradiction. Oh! but, says the Bishop, "foreknowledge is not foreordination," that is predestination. Is it not? A simple illustration will suffice to prove that such an assertion is repugnant to reason and common sense.

One stormy, wintry night, not long ago, a train rushed out into the darkness upon the bridge of Tay. The bridge tottered and crumbled, and the train was hurled into the stream below, and all within it perished. Ten thousand years ago—ten hundred thousand years ago—did God foreknow that that event would happen? If he did not, his knowledge is not infinite, and he not God; but, if he did, then follows surely, as the day the night, that he ordained it, planned all the circumstances, and foreordained—that is, predestinated—all the unwilling actors in it.

That man is the creature of circumstances is beyond all doubt; but that his lot in this life, and in a future state of existence of which nothing is known, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, as is the Christian creed, is as incredible as it would be unjust.

As a matter of fact, man knows nothing of a Supreme Personal Being, nothing of a future state, nothing of what may happen to him, even to-morrow. All he knows is that he is a child of nature—that his birth, his parents, his mental and physical endowments, and all other circumstances of his environment are due to the fatalism that is popularly termed "luck"—for fatalism and predestination are widely different things—this, and nothing more. The Bishop himself is a living proof of what is meant by "luck," for where and what would he have been had he been born in slumdom, instead of having been favored by fortune at his birth and favored by fortune ever since?

J. W. DE CAUX.

(To be concluded.)

## The Catholic Church and Science.

THE half-yearly meeting of the Catholic Truth Society has just been held. It is unnecessary almost to say that very little if anything of the truth relative to the past history of the Church was related at that gathering, which was presided over by Dr. Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster and embryonic Cardinal. One very interesting statement, however, was made by Mr. James Britten, the honorary secretary of the Society, to the effect that Dr. Windle, President of the Cork University, is preparing a series of short *Lives of Christian Men of Science*. As the work seems to be only in preparation, it is, perhaps, not too late to make a few suggestions as to who ought to be included in this series of short lives, and I therefore venture to suggest the following:—

Copernicus, the Canon of Frauenberg and Doctor of Medicine, whose works were placed on the Index and remained there till 1835.

Galileo, persecuted by the Church although an ardent Catholic.

Thomas Campanella, the Dominican, who was put to the torture seven times for having stated that the number of worlds is infinite.

Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake.

Kepler, accused of throwing the whole Kingdom of Christ into confusion through his foolish speculations.

Newton, attacked for having dethroned Providence.

De Clave, Bitaud, and de Villon, whose works were ordered to be destroyed. These authors were banished from Paris and prohibited from living in towns or going into public places.

Buffon, whose writings were condemned because the doctrines taught did not conform to those of religion, and who was forced to abandon publicly

his theories relating to the formation of the earth.

Vossius, the geologist, who was condemned by the Congregation of the Index.

Bishop Clayton, whose theories on the Deluge were condemned.

Jacopone de Todi, who was imprisoned by Boniface VIII. for dissecting bodies in the interests of science.

Vesalius, who was condemned by the Inquisition on an unproven charge of dissection, and forced to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He died on his way home. His real offence was not finding one bone less in the male skeleton than in the female, as, according to the teaching of the Church, he ought to have done, since woman was formed from a male rib.

Bernouilla, who was compelled to expunge from his published work a statement that the human body undergoes a continuous renewal.

Aragarian, who was pursued by the Inquisition and afterwards burned at the stake for teaching the circulation of the blood and likening the arteries to the "tree of life."

Verigil, an Irishman (afterwards Saint Virigile) Bishop of Salzburg, who was condemned by Saint Boniface for daring to express the opinion that the "other side" of the earth might be inhabited.

Pierre d'Apone, who was persecuted by the Congregation of the Inquisition for teaching the existence of the Antipodes.

Francesco Stabili, who was burned alive at Florence for his belief in the Antipodes.

Christopher Columbus, who discovered America, and who was imprisoned by the Church.

Honorius III., who, although not claimed as a scientist, ought to find a place in this collection since he prohibited all ecclesiastics from taking up the study of physics, medicine, and natural science under pain of excommunication.

St. Dominic, who condemned all experimental research.

Jean Barillon, the chemist, whom the Church imprisoned for his scientific opinions.

Corneille Agrippa de Nettesheim, several times imprisoned on an accusation of magic.

Jerome Cardan, who was accused of impiety and imprisoned at Boulogne, although, in his Autobiography, he declared his belief in God, the Virgin Mary, and his guardian angel.

Roger Bacon, the Franciscan, condemned by Saint Bonaventure, imprisoned for many years and only released to die from his sufferings. After his death his works were nailed to posts and left to rot.

J. B. Porta, who founded a Society for Physical Research which was dissolved by Paul III.

Prinelli, who was beaten with rods for having said that the stars did not fall.

Nicholas Remy, who executed 900 alleged insane people in Lorraine alone, within a period of fifteen years.

Boquet, who executed 600 insane people in Jura.

Michaelis, the inquisitor and torturer of the insane.

What voice did the Church raise against the cruel treatment of the insane in past days? The remedies ordered by the Church were pilgrimages, flagellations, exorcisms, and the like, which resulted in an extension of the disease.

I do not know whether the expression "Men of Science" is intended to include members of the other sex, but the Catholic Truth Society will undoubtedly wish to do honor to the Church's hygienic saints. We may, therefore, expect to see biographies of St. Hilarion, who is praised in the Breviary (Oct. 21) for not having, during his life, washed the sack which he wore as a garment; St. Anthony and St. Abraham, who are famed for never having washed their feet; St. Sylvia, for only having washed the tips of her fingers; and St. Mary the Egyptian, for never having washed at all. If "cleanliness is next

to godliness" these creatures must indeed be "far from the kingdom."

The proposed issue of biographies of "Men of Science" will be awaited with interested expectation.

DUDLEY WRIGHT.

## The Romance of "Mary Fitton."

*The Women of Shakespeare.* By Frank Harris. Methuen.

SINCE poor, mad Delia Bacon fumbled at midnight among the graves at Stratford-on-Avon, there has been no more preposterous theory started concerning Shakespeare than that which Mr. Frank Harris has introduced in his two books, *The Man Shakespeare* and *The Women of Shakespeare*. There are some stupidities so absurd that they can only be attacked by the weapon of ridicule. We deliver ourselves bound hand and foot if we take stupid people seriously. It is not helpful to argue in all seriousness, for it helps them and does not assist us. It is wiser, though not easier, to laugh. This country is full of earnest persons who ought to be assisted to make themselves ridiculous. Instead of which, we do our best to make them dignified. It is, after all, best to fall back on our sense of humor when we hear the cry of the crank or the squeal of the faddist.

The world has long agreed to regard Shakespeare as the greatest of all writers; as head and shoulders above even Homer and Dante. His writings prove him to have been among the sanest of men. Mr. Harris pretends to find evidences that he was an erotic lunatic, a man of "overpowering sensuality." Indeed, so keen is Mr. Harris to prove his case that he has discovered the poet's light of love in the person of Mary Fitton, who was Pembroke's mistress. She comes, like the poultry of a conjurer's hat, from the sonnets; and, to give some kind of substance, Mr. Harris has to identify "the dark lady" of those poems with many allusions in the plays. Mr. Harris further contends that this "imperious gipsy wanton" was worshiped by Shakespeare for twelve years with a passionate devotion, "now in the seventh heaven of delight, now in the lowest hell of jealousy, rage, and humiliation." With a mind racked by sensuality, "erotic mania" gradually clouded his brain. "All the plays from 1597 on reek of her presence." As if this were not enough, not only masculine lovers, but even Helena, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, pours out her love for Mary Fitton; it is Mary Fitton's faithlessness, not his mother's, that stirs the rage of Prince Hamlet.

It will be seen that Mr. Harris's language throughout is colored, not plain, and rivals the brush of the pantomime scene-painter when it is dipped in crimson lake. Indeed, the ordinary reader, being an instructed citizen of a highly educated nation, will realize that Mr. Harris's observations, like Rudolphe in Gautier's story, lack *le sens commun*, though, like Rudolphe, they make up for the want by the most brilliant qualities. Whatever Mr. Harris may say about "the professor mandarins," his own language is remote from that of "Truthful James," who was something of an authority on matters Chinese. In the old cookery books, when a recipe for rabbit pie is given, the instruction starts, "First catch your hare." In the portraits of Mary Fitton at Arbury, the lady is depicted as possessing a fair complexion, brown hair, and grey eyes. Where is the "dark lady" in all this? In the initial stage of an inquiry we see the warping of the judgment. So eager is Mr. Harris to prove that Shakespeare was a sensualist that he leads off with a dissertation on the animalism of "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," which were written years before the poet is supposed to have met the lady. These two poems, by the way, are not carnal writing in the sense that the Song of Solomon is so. These two verse-narratives are elaborated with a cool, steady attention to detail which proves that the poet was

thinking more of his verse than his subject. Indeed, Hazlitt described them as "a couple of ice-houses," and the author of *Liber Amoris* was a more trustworthy guide than Mr. Harris.

Scandal seldom fails to make itself felt, nor does it often vanish entirely from the memories of men, and it is singular that the name of Mary Fitton was never identified with that of Shakespeare until Mr. Harris's preposterous claim is urged three centuries after Shakespeare's death. Shakespeare's career in London was known in Stratford. His marriage and his after life in his native town was patent to all. His wife lived with him and was buried beside him, after the "churl, Death," had covered his remains with dust. No breath of scandal has spread its corrosive influence over his wedded life, and the utmost indefiniteness surrounds all the accusations brought against his moral character.

Shakespeare's bust is one of the most interesting of the poet's memorials. The face is full, ample, rounded, and healthy-looking. It is bland, cheerful, ripe, massive, and English. Haydon, the painter, and Chantry, the sculptor, both agree in saying that the bust appears to have been done from a cast taken after death. Yet, in an instant, as if at the touch of an enchanter's wand, this greatest of men is to be transformed into a very Caliban and his works turned into a horrible treatise on corruption, a sickening and repelling Psychopathia Sexualis. The life of William Shakespeare is to be regarded as a story of lost and morbid deviations. John Calvin was a Merry Andrew compared to the author of this theory, and Calvin's little jest was that the human heart is evil, happiness a temptation, and the flesh a snare.

In his slavery to an obsession Mr. Harris would have us believe that Shakespeare was an erotic maniac, and that the mind which created *King Lear* and *Hamlet* was a continual prey to sexual impulses. The comic spirit comes to our aid, and instantly the burden of the accusation falls from our shoulders. The mind's eye roves down the ages, and sees the forms of the kings of thought, and of the man who was kingliest of them all. "Oh, justice! thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason" if the greatest man of all this world is but a satyr and a moral degenerate.

In his extravagances Mr. Harris has outdistanced the Baconians. As Macaulay would say, it is a case of "Eclipse first and the rest nowhere." There is not one solitary proof that Shakespeare ever met Mary Fitton. All this conjecture, forced interpretation, dogmatic utterance on the part of Mr. Harris is simply word-juggling and literary sleight-of-hand. He accuses students of Shakespeare of having "no heads"; but he writes as if he believed they had no heads. And when he has daubed ordure on the reputation of Shakespeare to his heart's content he calls the process "an act of worship, a dedication of the spirit in love, and an interpretation of the divine." One is irresistibly reminded of a devout preacher ranting against Freethinkers. Outside religious circles such maudlin methods only provoke a smile. It is not by such means that we shall ever unravel the mysterious personality of the author of *Hamlet*.

Shakespeare's humor is one manifestation of his veracity; and who that looks honestly at the world can help seeing its absurdities? Shakespeare saw them, as he saw so much else; but he could scarce have imagined that anyone would have thought that he was an artist bewildered by his ambitions and ruined by his passions. It is anachronistic in every sense. It is Lucifer, Star of the Morning, hurled from heaven, and nuzzling with ignoble and superb stupidity among the litter and abominations of the gutter.

MIMNERMUS.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOV. 30.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Barry, Bradford, Cohen, Cowell, Davidson, Davies, Dawson, Heaford, Leat, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Miss Stanley, Messrs. Thurlow and Wood.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly balance-sheet was accepted and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Birmingham, Kingsland, Liverpool, and West Ham Branches, and for the Parent Society.

The Secretary reported on the Birmingham resolution *re* courses of study in Freethought that some additions had been made to the list of books which had already been received as a working basis. Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd were elected as a sub-committee to make further suggestions and report to the Executive.

Mr. Heaford, N. S. S. delegate to the meeting in connection with the International Freethought Congress, gave an interesting report, which was formally adopted.

Reference was made to the prosecution of H. Boulter, and the Executive cordially endorsed the remarks appearing in the current number of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Lloyd reported on behalf of the sub-committee appointed to deal with the Liverpool resolution *re* Scholarships, and submitted the following resolution:—

"The Sub-Committee unanimously recommend that the South Shields Branch Scholarship Scheme be accepted as drafted and that the Executive draw up a preparatory list of subjects to be studied and the rewards offered, and that the Branches be invited to nominate candidates to apply for the terms and conditions."

This was formally adopted, the original draft ordered to be filed, Mr. Shore's name was added to the committee, and the matter again referred to them for some practical suggestions as to the means of carrying out the scheme.

The Secretary was instructed to engage Anderton's Hotel for a Social Evening on February 1, 1912.

The meeting then adjourned until the first Thursday in January.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

## The Seeker After God.

I SOUGHT for God through all the world, and wandered through the towns

Where souls of men are bought for gold, and women sold for crowns,

And I saw the children growing old to die ere they were young,

But all I found were hungry hearts for a song that is never sung.

So I turned my face to the high road, and I left the town below,

And tramped through fields and gardens where the glad white blossoms blow;

Then I came to the wide, wild moorland, and old earth smiled again,

And the little streams were chuckling to the little clouds of rain;

And I sought where the shining peewit was crying to the moon,

Where the bluest bells were ringing soft a tinkling, tinkling tune.

I sought Him in the gold of noon a-shimmering on the hills,

And in the gold of buttercups, and the cups of daffodils,

In the sun's light, and the moon's light, and the light of star-fire seas.....

But I sought in vain till I heard a voice come sounding on the breeze—

"A fool thou art, for Beauty is God, and He lives in all of these."

THOMAS MOULT.

"Well," said St. Peter to a bent shape that toiled up to the gate of the hereafter, "what luck?"

"Dead-heat," cried the veteran. "Send me back, and I'll run it over again."

Life is not so bad for the man who meanders down the path leading to eternity hand in hand with a sympathetic woman.

School Teacher: "Who dwelt in the garden of Eden?"  
Top Boy (holding up his hand): "The Adams's."

The Cannibal King: "Take that missionary away."

Nigger Chef: "Why, sire, what displeases you?"

Cannibal King: "After being eaten he might start preaching a sermon, and I want no miracles performed on me."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Star of Bethlehem."

#### 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.

BIRKENHEAD (70 Argyle-street): Saturday, Dec. 9, at 8, J. Arthur, "Has Man a Soul?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, H. Thompson, "The Borderland of the Unseen." Illustrated.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Rev. R. Roberts, 12 noon, "The Kingdom of Man"; 6.30, "The New Advance in Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, John M. Robertson, "The Bible in British History."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 6.30, F. G. Jones, "The Hereafter."

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANOE.

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

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

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