

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXI.—NO. 58

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1911

PRICE TWOPENCE

All truths wait in all things.—WHITMAN.

The Star of Jesus.

NINETEEN centuries ago, according to an ancient tale which is accepted as serious history by Christendom, a wonderful star appeared somewhere in the East to some nameless "wise men," who, perceiving from its size, shape, lustre, or some other quality, that it was of a miraculous character, and portended something extraordinary, followed it along some unknown route to Jerusalem. On arriving there they inquired for the new King of the Jews, for they had concluded that the travelling jewel of light was the star of his nativity. Nobody in the city, however, had seen the star, or heard of any illustrious birth. But King Herod, who ruled there at that time, very obligingly convened a meeting of the most influential citizens, who came to the conclusion that if any remarkable child had been born anywhere, it was most probably at Bethlehem.

During these proceedings, the star halted in the heavens; but as soon as the "wise men" set out for Bethlehem, it resumed its journey; until at length it arrived at that interesting little town, and stood still over a public-house. Entering this novel palace, they found, not only the king of the Jews, but the king of the universe, just born and cradled in a manger. His mother had found the establishment full, and as no gentleman would go outside to oblige a lady, she had been confined in the stable, and was literally "in the straw."

The "wise men" gave the little king a cartload of presents, which his parents took charge of until he was old enough to enjoy them; and after they had dropped on their knees and worshiped the infant, they got on their feet again, and walked home. No one knows where they went to, and nobody ever heard of them again. There is, also, only one document in the world that relates this pretty story, which escaped the notice of all the other biographers of this wonderful child. This document is supposed by the vulgar to have been written by a gentleman named Matthew, but those who have studied the subject more deeply tell us that nobody knows who was its author, or when and where he composed it.

There are, indeed, sceptics who ask how a star could stand over a particular house, and how a few miles of the earth's surface could make any difference to an object so remote. They even inquire, with a jocular expression which is quite out of keeping with such a sublime subject, whether following a star is not like chasing the moon.

The marvellous child who was worshiped by those "wise men" grew up like other boys, although we hear little of him, except that he went with his parents to see "the great city" in his twelfth year, and had a slight misunderstanding with his mother. But at the age of thirty he left his father's shop, where chairs and tables were manufactured for the retail trade, and took to open-air preaching. His sermons are still in print, and his numerous miracles prove their truth and beauty. He turned water into wine; fed five thousand hungry people with five penny rolls and as many sardines; cast devils out of human beings and sent them into the bodies of pigs;

healed the sick without medicine, and the lame without surgery; cured blindness with ointment made of clay and spittle; and raised several persons from the dead without any other appliances than his tongue. His fame spread far and wide, and excited the envy of his rivals in the ministerial profession, who entered into a conspiracy against him, and finally nailed him upon a cross, where he bled to death.

There were many miraculous signs and convulsions of nature at his death, but we are chiefly concerned with the celestial luminary that heralded his birth. The Star of Bethlehem was the morning star of human redemption. It is true the world is not much wiser or better now than it was then; that later philosophers have not eclipsed the wisdom of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; later poets the glory of Homer, Æschylus, and Sophocles; later orators the splendor of Demosthenes and Cicero; later statesmen the ability of Pericles; nor later sovereigns the greatness of Julius and Augustus. Nay, it is even true that the happiest period recorded in history is that in which the Star of Bethlehem had scarcely risen over the world's horizon, and was only seen by a few. If we contract our survey to the petty affairs of this life, it is difficult to show that the birth of Jesus was any advantage to us.

Those "wise men of the East" had faith or how could they have followed a wandering star! Faith is necessary to us who follow the Star of Bethlehem to-day; and as it led them to the cradle of Christ, so it will lead us to his throne in heaven. Faith is the one thing needful, and Christianity has through all the ages secured this blessing to mankind. For faith it extirpated Paganism under Constantine and his glorious successors. For faith it suppressed heresy with fine, imprisonment, and death. For faith it burnt the Alexandrian library and murdered Hypatia. For faith it drove men and women from the domestic hearth to monasteries and nunneries, to exchange the delicious smiles and prattle of children for prayers and hymns. For faith it palmed upon the world a multitude of pious frauds. For faith it concocted creeds, and damned all who disbelieved them. For faith it persecuted the unbelieving Jews, and tried to exterminate them from the face of the earth. For faith it strewed eastern Europe and Asia Minor with the bones of millions of Crusaders and Saracens, who fought the great battle of the Cross against the Crescent. For faith it devised the rack, the thumb-screw, and the wheel. For faith it lit the fires of the Inquisition. For faith it incited Calvin to burn Servetus. For faith it manured French and Italian fields with the ashes of Bruno, Vanini, Dolet, and other pestilent infidels. For faith it wrought the Bartholomew massacre, and the Dragonnades of Louis the Fourteenth. For faith it kindled the flames of Smithfield. For faith it broke Calas on the wheel, and burnt De LaBarre at the stake. For faith it ruined homes, divided parents from children, and husband from wife. For faith it drenched the earth with blood and tears. What but a religion inspired by faith could have done these things, which are so repugnant to our ordinary feelings? Yes, the fruits of Christianity prove it to be divine; and the Star of Bethlehem shines with supernal glory over an ocean of blood.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Unity.

I HAD once a curious experience in a railway train. It was during a night journey from Newcastle-on-Tyne with a solitary fellow-passenger. We fell into conversation, and I discovered that my travelling companion was recently home from China, and that he had returned in consequence of a supernatural visitation. He had, he said, received a message from the Lord, by way of a voice, to return to England in order to heal the divisions among Christians. True to his message, he had thrown up a lucrative appointment and had come home to attend to the work. He was perfectly serious over the matter, and although on other subjects he was sane and interesting—two things that do not always run together—on this point he was as mad as the proverbial hatter. I wished him success in his work, but ventured the suggestion that he need have no immediate fear of any lack of employment. This incident occurred over a dozen years ago; the Christian world is still as it was—perhaps more so.

Most Christians would agree with me in calling this person a monomaniac, although his form of mania is a common occurrence in Christian history, and has served in no small degree to keep the "religious consciousness" alive. Yet this man's persuasion of a divine commission to unite Christians was only an extreme form of a delusion that seems to possess many people not usually classed as insane. A large number of Christian writers and speakers seem to regard it as proof of advanced and clear thinking to dwell upon the possibility of uniting all Christian sects, if they will only disregard—as they say—unimportant differences. At one time this basis of union took the form of a common belief in the Bible, although there is hardly anything upon which they are more hopelessly divided than upon the question of what the Bible actually teaches. At another time it is the common belief in Jesus that is to serve as a bond of union, ignoring the fact that the name of Jesus stands for a whole gallery of characters of the most irreconcilable description. Yet again, Christians are to unite on a common belief in God. Certainly, so far as a belief in some deity is concerned. But when we inquire as to *what* deity, we find the difference to be vital. Mr. Campbell denounces the orthodox deity as a blundering monster, while other Christians retort that his deity is an impossible abstraction. Others plead for a purely idealised human character figuring as deity; and yet others argue for a vague "Power," with a capital letter, so that it may look the more imposing. Many write and speak under the obvious impression that the more hazy and indefinite they are, the greater the chance of harmony.

But real union between men rests upon definiteness of conception, not upon indefiniteness of meaning. A thick fog is not a good medium for combination, although it may be useful for stopping a fight. A strong and lasting union between people is formed when certain ideas or ideals are clearly seen and strongly held. And those Christians who suffer from the delusion of unity neither see clearly nor hold strongly. Their liberality of speech is the outcome of their indefiniteness of conviction. To use a rough figure, their thinking is like a river that has broken down its banks. It acquires width at the expense of depth. The advanced Christian, while in some respects a pleasing sign of the times, is in other respects an indication of the "sloppiness" of modern religious opinion. He is a slave to phrases, lacking either the courage or the ability to look facts in the face.

The truth is that a common Christianity is a mirage of the Christian ages. There never has been such a thing, and one may safely say there never will be such a thing. Even in the pages of the New Testament we can hear the echoes of acrimonious discussion as to what on earth Jesus said, and what on earth he meant when he said it. In the course of the first three centuries of Christian history there

were hundreds of sects formed, all desiring unity, and seldom hesitating to resort to fraud, forgery, or even murder, to achieve it. Nor would it be correct to represent these divisions as being due to disagreement in trifles. Far from being so, some differences went to the root of the whole Christian faith. There were vital differences concerning the divinity of Jesus, whether his resurrection was physical or spiritual, and even whether he ever existed at all in the flesh. And, as is common with Christian differences, the longer the discussion the more numerous the sects and the more disorderly their behavior. And whatever unity was finally produced was brought about, not by a harmony of conviction, but by the Church bringing the secular power to its assistance, and crushing discussion with the point of the sword. And this, as St. Louis said, is the only effective argument against heresy—at least, it is the only one that Christianity has ever discovered.

Even the Catholic Church, at its strongest, was unable to secure harmony of opinion or conviction. It was only able to secure uniformity of expression, and even that but for a time. Heresies sprang up every now and again, and were suppressed—thanks to the co-operation of such eminently Christian agencies as stake and torture-chamber. And then came the Protestant Reformation, with its open Bible and rejection of papal rule. But this was a still more ghastly failure. Like the older Church, it aimed at securing uniformity of belief, and, like the older Church, it adopted the method of force. As a means of securing unity among Christians, the infallible Bible was a more ghastly failure than the infallible Church. The only thing on which Protestants really showed any agreement was in their hatred of the Catholic Church. And they were just as unanimous in hating each other. Indeed, in spite of all the sloppy sentimentalism concerning Christian love, nothing has ever been so effective in uniting bodies of Christians as dislike and persecution of a common enemy. Hatred has always been a far more effective source of union among Christians than goodwill. Making a ladder of moonbeams or a rope of sand would be child's play compared to the task of bringing peace and harmony into the Christian camp.

In face of Freethought criticism, Christians sometimes retort that their differences have arisen over unimportant things. It is not true; and if it were, the apology only aggravates the offence. One can forgive the quarrels of eminent men fighting over things they regard as of supreme importance. But to be told that this eternal sectarian squabbling, with its waste of time and energy, its hindrance to progress, and its cultivation of ill-feeling, is all about nothing in particular, makes the whole thing supremely ridiculous. From the Freethinker's point of view, the apology contains a solid truth. Religious quarrelling is truly about things that are of no real value to anyone. Whether one ought to be baptised by total immersion, or merely sprinkled, whether Jesus suffered for our sins, or because of them; whether a clergyman should wear this or that kind of dress, pray in this or that attitude; whether even there is a God or not, are all questions that are, so far as the conduct of life is concerned, not worth the trouble of discussing. It is only the distorted intelligence of a Christian that could allow such matters to interfere with the real business of life, and determine the relations existing between members of the same society.

If Christians would only seriously face the question of why there is not, and never has been, unity in religious beliefs, and why there is a progressive unity in other directions! Not complete unity, of course; that can only come with complete knowledge. But there is a unity on certain things, and the area of unity, so to speak, extends. Men of science may have discussed their differences with heat, but they have never demanded that their opponent's lips shall be silenced by prison or the stake. And the longer the discussion the greater the body of accepted truth. The reason for this is obvious. Everything

except religion rests its teachings upon a basis of observed and verifiable fact. The teachings have no value apart from the facts. And although men may ignore facts for a time, ultimately their existence is recognised and appreciated. But in religion there are no facts to which appeal may be made. The mind runs riot, and there is nothing to bid it halt. Personal idiosyncrasy usurps the place of observation, and religious opinions are, in the main, little more than an expression of a personal equation. It is for these reasons that while in science and sociology the tendency is towards a greater uniformity in opinion and practice, in religion we have a growing diversity and confusion.

A study of Christian history makes at least one thing clear. This is that agreement among believers is a practical impossibility. The mere tradition of eighteen hundred years quarrelling is not likely to be eradicated with ease, or to be neutralised by brotherhood meetings overflowing with sloppy sentiment and pious gush, and engineered by chapel politicians. Of Christians we may truly say, "Where two or three are gathered together, there is the prospect of an intellectual Donnybrook." Like the man who said that every man in his church was tainted with heresy, except his brother John, and he was "just a little bit doubtful about John," every Christian gazes at his neighbor with a distrustful eye. A real Christian can no more resist the opportunity of forcing his opinions upon others than a cat can avoid going for a mouse. It's bred in them, and the hereditary pre-disposition is strengthened and developed by a misdirected education.

Christian unity there never has been and never will be. "A common Christianity" no more exists than does the centaur. It is a shibboleth with which Christian speakers gull their hearers and themselves. There is nothing they have in common except the name, and even that is a condition of quarrelling, not a symbol of peace. There are, indeed, only two ways by which Christian unity may be secured—by force or by agreement. The first was tried, under the most favorable conditions, and its failure was complete. We still have the ghost of the old despotism with us, but believers now invent excuses for using force, and veil its operation under various devices of a social character. There remains only agreement; and that, too, is becoming more and more difficult. Modern science, modern life, and modern Freethought, have so undermined the ground beneath the believer's feet that he no longer feels secure of his footing. He professes belief, but there is an uncertain note in his affirmation. He is certain of nothing but his own uncertainty, and with each step of mental development this becomes more pronounced. And, meanwhile, confronting the Christian stands the menacing figure of Freethought, flashed with a consciousness of past victories, strong in the certainty of its teachings, and confident in the ultimate triumph of its ideals.

C. COHEN.

Immanuel.

BIBLICAL scholars are profoundly convinced that Isaiah vii. 14 cannot legitimately be regarded as a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and that Matthew's Gospel claims it as such without the slightest justification. In the Revised Version the text reads thus:—

"Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Placed in its historical setting this passage bears a plain and simple meaning. The Hebrew *almah*, translated here virgin, is a word that includes all classes of women. Some critics identify *almah* with the wife of King Ahaz, or with some member of the royal harem; while others infer an allusion to "the prophetess" who bore a child to Isaiah. There are some who understand by the maiden the people

of Israel, who are often spoken of as the bride of Jehovah. The point is, however, that the term is a comprehensive one, and may be applied to a young woman of any class. Now, this portion of Isaiah was probably written during the Syro-Ephraimitish war (735-734 B.C.). The object of this war was to force Ahaz to join the alliance already concluded between Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Damascus, "for the purpose of opposing a barrier to the aggression of the Assyrians." Jerusalem was besieged, and the greatest alarm was experienced by all within its walls. Ahaz, in a state of desperation, appealed to Assyria for protection. Isaiah totally disapproved of the king's policy, and urged him to keep calm, trusting in Jehovah. "Have no fear," he said, "the plot against thee shall surely fail. A young woman, who shall become a mother within a year, may call her babe Immanuel; but as surely as thou livest, before the child has learned to distinguish between foods the lands of Pekah and Rezin shall be laid waste." Such is the natural exposition of the words in order to fulfil which Jesus is said to have been born of a virgin and named Immanuel. Isaiah contemplated no supernatural event of any description, but merely the birth of an ordinary child whose name might happen to be Immanuel.

It is true that the English for Immanuel is With us is God, and it is also true that the people of Israel believed that God was present with them; but we must not lose sight of the fact that, like most other nations, Israel suffered from many vain delusions. One of these, no doubt, was the belief in Jehovah's constant intervention in the national life, his friendship for Israel, and his hostility towards all others. A similar belief in the Christian God obtains in Christendom to-day. Thousands upon thousands of people are set apart to prevent it from dying out, and an extremely tough job they find it to be. In the attempt to accomplish it they indulge in all sorts of extravagances. The new Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Wakefield, for example, preaching in the Parish Church, St. Martin's, recently, expressed himself in the following rhapsodical fashion:—

"In a special way God is with us in Christ. The influence of God through Christ is seen throughout the whole world to-day, not merely the influence of the Divine Being, not merely the fact that people recognise that there is a great God, but the influence of God through Christ is seen even by those that will not acknowledge the Christ as the Redeemer of the world. They will all admit, when they are perfectly honest, that the result of Christianity to the world has been to completely change the ideals of man as to the world and the world's management. God's love is very different through God being with us in Christ."

One's temptation, in characterising such a silly utterance, is to resort to more emphatic than refined expletives. The whole extract is grossly untrue. What has God, in or out of Christ, done for the world since history began? What is he doing for the world now? Is his lordship proud of the world as it is at this moment? Can he rejoice in his own Birmingham as a God-governed and Christ-led city? If not, what on earth does he mean by saying that "God has been in this world and for the world through its whole career, and that, in a very special sense, God is with us in Christ in the sense of a general thanksgiving, in the world specially for the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ"? Such words are not only empty but lying words. What did God do for the world in the tenth century when it touched the lowest depth of degradation in its whole history? Even the Rev. Dr. Green, in his *Handbook of Church History* (p. 414), in describing the Popes, draws the following humiliating picture:—

"The crowning scandal was reached in the accession of Sergius III. through the influence of Adalbert, Marquis of Tuscany, and a noble and wealthy lady named Theodora. This woman, beautiful and depraved, had two daughters, Theodora and Marozia, of like character to herself; and among them they disposed of the Roman See for more than half-a-century. Sergius III. paramour of Marozia, began the vile succession (904), and, after two of inconsiderable name, was followed by

John X. (914), paramor of Theodora the younger (or, as some say, the elder). Marozia, who in the meantime had married Alberic, son of Adalbert, caused this John (who had acquired some military fame by victory over the Saracens) to be imprisoned and put to death in the castle of St. Angelo."

One might take almost any period in Christian history and find the conditions of life almost as bad. Yes, it is quite pertinent to ask what God in Christ is doing for the world to-day, and it would be eminently interesting if the Bishop of Birmingham, quitting his glowing generalities, would enter into a few details on the subject. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is reported as saying that "the trouble of these times is that nobody believes in any religion at all," and as characterising the present as "this accursed materialistic age." And Dr. Wakefield has surely not forgotten that in welcoming Bishop Gore to the diocese of Oxford the Nonconformist Ministers' Fraternal stated that "the growing indifference to religion in this country seems to make it incumbent on Christian people to stand together against their common enemies." In the face of such dismal confessions can the Bishop of Birmingham still give God a testimonial?

To say that Christianity has completely changed man's "ideals as to the world and the world's management" is to betray either inveterate prejudice or fathomless ignorance. Christianity brought absolutely no new ideals into the world; and no minister of religion has now the thinnest shadow of excuse for not knowing this. And yet only the other day a preacher asserted before a large congregation that we knew nothing about brotherhood until Christ came and revealed it. As a matter of simple fact, the Gospel Jesus never once referred, directly or indirectly, to the universal brotherhood of mankind, nor did Christianity for sixteen hundred years, at least, ever rise to the moral elevation requisite to perceive it. Human brotherhood is not a Christian conception at all, although it was a truism among the Stoics long before Christianity appeared. "But the spirit of Christianity is love," someone exclaims. If we consult history we shall soon learn that, in practice, the spirit of Christianity has been the direct opposite of love. At what period did the spirit of love dominate the Christian Church? When it made war upon, and cruelly exterminated, the true-hearted and noble-minded Albigenses? When, within a comparatively brief period, it burnt 81,000 persons for heresy in Spain, and condemned more than 290,000 to punishments scarcely less severe; or when, in the Netherlands, in the reigns of Charles V. and son, it put 75,000 to death for daring to think for themselves? The Christian spirit of love exercises itself only within the narrowest possible limits, *only among those who think alike*. Towards all others, Christianity sternly maintains an intolerant and persecuting attitude. Disbelieve in it openly, attack it in public, and you shall be pelted with detraction, obloquy, and vulgar abuse, and perhaps clapped into prison for months. Toleration never has been, and never can be, a virtue exemplified by any sect of really believing Christians.

Bishop Wakefield is too hopelessly steeped in Christian prejudice to realise how glaringly he contradicts himself in one short sermon. After dwelling upon the beneficent, transforming, and regenerating influence which Christianity is alleged to have exerted on the whole world through all the ages, after saying that Christ "really makes known to each one of us how we are to behave one to another, what our attitude to one another is," after emphasising that all this "is intensely influenced in this land of ours through Christ," and that it is also "intensely influenced everywhere where human beings are," the right reverend gentleman coolly adds that "the world, no doubt, is very evil. Admittedly." But this need not make the Christian feel in the least depressed. Oh dear, no. Let him go on thinking and talking about the glorious influence of God through Christ as "seen throughout the whole world to-day." Is such a course possible to people who

use common sense? Surely the people of Birmingham are too wideawake to be taken in by such palpable trifling. According to this divine, God has been in the world through Christ for nigh two thousand years; and yet this selfsame divine says, with the same breath, that the world is still, "no doubt, admittedly very evil." No wonder that the world is displaying "a growing indifference to religion."

"God with us" may now be dismissed as a superstition too absurd to be entertained by thinking people. The belief enshrined in it has been of no service to mankind at any time. It is a falsehood to represent those who do not acknowledge Christ as the Savior of the world as yet admitting that Christianity has completely changed man's ideals. What Christianity set itself to do was to stereotype ideals already in existence, and so prevent them from developing, and to foist upon humanity wholly impracticable rules of its own. What we need to realise this Christmastide is, not that God is with us, but that it is our privilege, because it is within our power as intelligent beings, to gradually get rid of the numerous individual and social disabilities and disharmonies which now fill the world with pain and sorrow, and to attain to that state wherein the ways of life are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.

J. T. LLOYD.

Secular Morality.

I.

THE war between Science and Religion which started a few centuries ago is ever going on. Many pitched battles have taken place, the blood of many brave warriors has been spilt for the noble cause of human liberty, and it is more than probable that this desperate fighting will continue for many years to come. No quarter is given, and the war will only end when one of the antagonists has bitten the dust, never to rise again. Which party will be victorious? Such a question will bring a knowing smile on many lips, for it is obvious that Reason and Truth will conquer in the long run. Although at first the champions of the supernatural had it all their own way, and took advantage of their position to send their opponents to a glorious martyrdom, things have somewhat changed since the last sixty years. The countless scientific victories have sadly disabled and reduced religion's artillery, the black cloth army is retreating, fresh recruits are difficult to find, entrenchments once thought to be impregnable give way when the banner of science is in sight, the ammunition stores are getting more and more depleted, and the remaining Church legions, after abandoning most of their weapons in the enemy's hands, are wondering how and with what they can continue the fight.

The passionate appeals of the clergy enjoining the people to return to the good old staunch faith, *credo quia absurdum* of days gone by, are met with growing indifference. The absurd theories of hell and paradise have been abandoned; these ideas have served their time; they are now considered too ridiculous and childish to be taken into consideration. The situation had grown so alarming that the Church, in order not to die, had to find some fresh excuse to justify her existence. Turning away from pure religious dogma, she has taken up a new line of business, adapted herself to modern necessities—*i.e.*, taken up a class of work for which she is quite incompetent—and is ever playing the part of a parasite. Indeed, religionists now claim that they are solely responsible for the modern development of a larger consciousness of social duties and responsibilities. However, an elementary knowledge of history and the study of present-day politics easily proves this assertion to be false.

Another favorite argument often thrown at Free-thinkers is the following: "Religious dogma may not stand on a very sound basis; modern archaeological researches and the greater knowledge we possess of

the rise and evolution of the various cults of the past oblige us to admit that, after all, the Bible is not the rock of truth we thought it to be; but, in spite of all, Atheism must be checked and destroyed on account of its evil social consequences. Religion stands as a beautiful symbol of human virtue, Christ is the greatest moralist of the world, Christianity created morality, and if you destroy the virtuous illusions of supernaturalism you will lead humanity to an abyss of moral degradation and corruption."

How often have we been told this!

In this present study I want to show the absolute falsehood of the above argument, and endeavor to demonstrate that between morality and religion there is the same contrast as between black and white; that the habit of worshiping the Unknown leads to hypocrisy and to a serious lack of the social consciousness which we must cultivate in ourselves in order to perform our duties as man and citizen.

II.—RELIGION NEVER CREATED MORALITY.

At the present day the word "religion" has practically lost its original and etymological meaning, and is used to convey many various and often contradictory ideas. We shall therefore be obliged at the outset to clearly define "religion," and for that purpose I propose to adopt Professor Tylor's definition, which, in my opinion, is the briefest and most concise of all: "A belief in supernatural things."

Let us now look back to history, where the endeavors and errors of humanity are written in letters of blood, let us observe the rise and fall of past civilisations, let our hearts beat with deep emotion at the recollection of our early ancestors fighting as best they could, with the paltry weapons at their disposal, the terrible struggle for life against an impassible nature which man only conquers by understanding and obeying its eternal law. What shall we find? That all religions have a common basis: primitive man's incapacity for understanding natural phenomena. A few years ago I remember hearing Mr. Foote lecturing on that subject with his usual eloquence, calm and precise: What all impartial students of history and anthropologists agree upon at the present day—

"the savage is now resting in his hut or cavern after a tiring day's hunting and fighting wild beasts, sleep has closed his eyelids, when suddenly he is roused by claps of thunder, lightning rends the skies, in the distance he sees the red smoke of burning forests, the howling of the wind mingles with that of terrified animals..... Panting with fear before these manifestations of a terrible unknown power, the savage throws himself on his knees and his lips cry out, 'Oh! spirit of fire, thou who blatest the mighty rocks and burnest the forest, have mercy upon me, spare me!'"

The first cause of man's belief in the supernatural is therefore fear—the fear of bodily pain, the fear of death. Those who claim that religion stands as the evidence of man's yearning towards the divinity from which he descended are therefore in the wrong. It is undeniable that ignorance was originally the best and most fertile ground for the growth and development of all the religious errors that depress and poison our life.

What is morality? It is the means whereby a gregarious society protects itself against the egotistical tendency of the individual. Its object is twofold: (1) By combining the various elements of the community to increase the resisting power of same in the struggle for existence. (2) At an early period in the history of evolution nature taught men the value and necessity of unity, therefore primitive communities enacted laws by which the individual was restrained from committing certain acts detrimental to the welfare of the clan, tribe, or community.

Was it religion that taught man that murder, robbery, etc., were criminal acts? No, a thousand times no. These elementary notions of right and wrong were inculcated in man by the force of circumstances, by the pressure of natural necessities. In order to continue living a gregarious life, the only one possible for humanity, its members realised the

power of discipline and its beneficial consequences for each in particular and all in general. This is so true that travellers who have lived among Esquimaux tribes report that, in spite of the fact that this race has little or no religion, it is governed by strictly moral rules. For instance, war is an unknown thing among Esquimaux tribes, and pauperism does not exist. These people practise a kind of communism, whereby food supplies—fish principally—are divided among the members of the communities according to their respective wants.

This is so unmistakably true that Kropotkin, the celebrated naturalist and geographer, showed in a wonderful book, entitled *Mutual Aid*, that morality is not only to be found among men, but is also easily traceable among animals, especially those classified as the superior mammals. For instance, in the frozen steppes of Siberia the reindeers, when migrating, never travel isolated, but always in vast herds. They are thus able to resist the savage attacks of famished bands of wolves. It is also to be noted that the latter never go hunting alone, but also in large troupes, and are thereby more efficient as regards offensive and defensive movements.* Is it religion that taught these animals the noble virtue of helping each other?

Volumes could be written on the subject of the natural growth and development of morality.

Now that we have shown that morality does not depend on religion we must indicate the reasons which allow us to affirm that secular or natural morality is the only true one, and is logically opposed to the so-called morality of religion in general and of Christianity in particular.

Dogma orders man to do this or that because this is right and that is wrong. But why? "Because we priests to whom God has revealed the truth know how to differentiate between good and evil. You must not inquire further; your duty is to obey us." The result of this disastrous teaching naturally leads to intellectual atrophy and the complete extinction of human initiative, and to the degradation of one's dignity in the practice of our moral courage.

History shows us the terrible tyranny exercised by Christianity during several centuries. It was a crime to think, to express one's opinion; the man of science bold enough to search for truth was publicly tortured and put to death.

How did Christianity receive the wonderful discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, and Harvey; the philosophical teachings of Giordano Bruno, Michel Servetus, and countless others? The memory of these days of crime was painfully revived only three years ago, when another glorious victim of religion—Ferrer, I mean—was cruelly murdered by order of the Spanish Catholic party! And what was his crime? He wanted to make a better, nobler humanity, emancipated from the errors of the past; but he had the impudence of fighting for truth, and this religion never forgives.

Even in England of the present day, one of the freest of European countries, we find religion and God officially protected against those bold enough not to believe in him, and who doubt whether the stereotyped moral rules given by the Church are the best for humanity. We have not yet forgotten those brave warriors, Carlile, Bradlaugh, Foote, and others who suffered in prison for having proclaimed the truth.

Does not history show that Christianity has ever been on the side of the strongest? For what purpose did she use the tremendous political power she once possessed? For the methodical oppression of the people, of the nation at large.

We Freethinkers claim that secular morality is not only possible and realisable, but that this code of human morals based on truth is nobler and more efficient than the precepts derived from supernaturalism—i.e., the worshiping of the Unknown—the religion of fear, hostile to the glories of life.

* "La Science et la Morale," by M. Berthelot, *Revue de Paris*, February, 1895.

III.—SCIENTIFIC AND SECULAR MORALITY.

Without giving a lengthy account of the great variety of definitions attached to the word "morality" and the theories expounded by the great philosophers of antiquity and modern times, I think we shall all understand more clearly what is meant by "Scientific and Secular Morality" by quoting a few extracts of a famous article written by M. Berthelot, the greatest French scientist and Freethinker of modern times:—

"I insist on the fact that science ought to be considered as the unique basis of morality; up to the present day, brute force and religion were the only known directing factors in human societies: brute force looking after the material order of things, religion the spiritual. But slowly at first, now with increased progress, a new directing principle has arisen which has firmly taken root and gradually developed itself all over Europe—Science, *i.e.*, our knowledge of the laws governing the material and moral world in which we live, and to which we must adapt the acts of our private life and the direction of human societies.

"Human morality as well as science does not recognise a divine origin; the social instincts, the sentiments and duties which derive from same are common both to mankind and to the superior animals. They have not originated from an exterior and divine revelation, but are part and parcel of the cerebral and physiological constitution of man. The hereditary perfecting of these instincts through evolution and adaptation to environment constitutes the real basis of morality and the starting point of the organisation of civilised societies. Secular morality cannot, of course, remain immutable; it can never become a dogma, but is gradually and constantly modified by the perpetual advancement of the physiological, psychological, and sociological sciences. In the same way as there exists next to positive science an ideal science derived from the former, which precedes and inspires the progress of same, we also find an ideal morality which announces and precedes the evolution of future moral rules. This was the ideal morality of the Greek philosophers whose precepts Christianity appropriated for its own use [the Fathers of the Church have admitted this fact, which they attributed to some anticipated divine revelation]; it was also that of the eighteenth century philosophers whose principles of justice and equality were proclaimed to the world by the French Revolution. It is the morality of present-day thinkers who fight on behalf of the beautiful hope of the future: the fraternity of nations, the universal solidarity of mankind."

We may conclude this study by stating the following principles, which all Freethinkers will endorse, and for the realisation of which we must all stand united and with dauntless courage in the great battle for truth.

Human morality, above all, must be secular, and not subjected either to religious superstition or to metaphysical theories.

The basis of morality rests on the conscience and the reasoning powers of the individual; its principles are: respect for the human personality, tolerance, solidarity, liberty, equality, fraternity—principles which can be resumed in these two words, "Justice and Truth."

Morality must be taught by the objective interpretation of history, art, and philosophy, but especially by the daily example and practice of human and natural virtues.

Experimental science constitutes the basis and the directing factor of modern secular morality.*

F. O. RITZ.

The Epic of Judaism.

The Source of the Christian Tradition. By Edouard Dujardin. Translated by Joseph McCabe. Watts & Co.; 1911; pp. 308; 5s. net.

THIS book tells quite a fascinating story—perhaps we had better call it a story, and no more. The facile elegance of Mr. McCabe's translation bears one along from start to finish; but this very feature,

indeed, is perhaps rather a defect than otherwise in a criticism of Christian origins that should make its appeal primarily by its abundance of demonstrated verities rather than by the mellifluous flow of its eloquence. Every page of the book is so fluid, so interesting, and always so suggestive; but then, at last, the question fatally arises: On what basis is the fine superstructure built? For a book that delivers such a demolishing frontal attack on the orthodox Old Testament position, explaining its origin by reference to the growing political and social conditions of the small Bedouin bands that dumped themselves down upon Palestine, the corroborative materials offered either in the shape of documents or records are surprisingly small. For instance, there is much legend rejected, and a slight modicum accepted, from the Old Testament narratives without, however, any adequate critical or documentary aid to help us to understand the author's principle of selection. For this reason, one feels at times lost in the clouds after reading this fascinating book, and that precisely because the author (or is it the translator?) is so sparing of references to his sources of information. Surely a second edition can remedy this.

To begin at the beginning. Our author points to Abimilech as "the first Israelitish sheik" who sought to subdue the population surrounding the Jews. His attempt failed, and later it was renewed by Saul, "the chief of the Israelitic tribe of Benjamin." This, and more in the same strain, quite fails to convince the critical reader who looks for facts in lieu of finely spun theory.

For all that, Edouard Dujardin is no apologist or trimmer. He stands, indeed, in quite a different category. "Jahveh," he tells us, "who afterwards became the one God of the Jews, the Eternal of the Christians, and the Absolute of the philosophers, cannot have been a less abominable idol than Camos or Milkom" (p. 7).

The descriptions of Jahveh given by our author are not too flattering to the cloudy Deity of old Israel. The images of Jahveh were manifold; he was an ærolith; at Jerusalem he was a brazen serpent; in Ephraim a young bull. His sanctuaries were numerous, and "masculine, as well as feminine, prostitution formed part of the cult of Jahveh" (p. 10).

We are told that of ancient Hebraism no monument of the slightest interest has come down to us. Apart from a few stones of Jerusalem, apart from what the future may discover in the deeper soil of Palestine, nothing has survived the ages. Dujardin's view is that no history is more pitifully obscure than that of the petty kings of Ephraim and Judah, down to the day when they were swallowed up in the flood of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. The absorption and dispersion of the Jews by these conquering empires gave birth to Judaism as a history and an influence. The resurgence of the race began in 588 B.C., when the Babylonians, under Nabuchodonosor, made Jerusalem a heap of ruins.

According to Dujardin, the Restoration was the work of the Jerusalemites who had remained behind, in and around the town, rather than of the descendants of the exiles of 588. There was no captivity or slavery. The Jews had been forcibly transferred to the banks of the Euphrates, but had settled there and now lived there in freedom. The Babylonian colony, the first of the Jewish colonies, remained, grew, and lasted for centuries.

The salvation of Judaism really came from Cyrus, who broke the Babylonian power. The Persian Government expressly restored life to the small States; its policy aimed at their development concurrently with the prevention of the formation of large ones. Under the Persian dominion there was, from end to end of Palestine, a re-awakening of the stricken populations. This awakening of the Jews centred around Jerusalem, which stood amidst a number of petty Palestinian States; it all happened, not through miracle, but by a natural process similar to the development of the Athenian Republic among

* *La Morale Laïque*, by P. A. Hirsch, Paris.

the republics of Hellas, or that of Rome among the cities of Italy.

The renewal of Israel centred in the work associated with the name of Esdras. According to our author, the story of Esdras is, like almost all Biblical stories, a doctrinal legend. Dujardin is not clear whether he was a real personage; his figure is, at any rate, shrouded in irremovable obscurity. But whether what is called the work of Esdras was that of one man or of many, "or, better still, the collective work of the nation," it is, at any rate, the first affirmation of the nationalism which was the point of departure of Judaism as a commanding religious influence. After the foreign yoke fell upon them, the gloomy faith of the men of Jerusalem declared that Jahveh was the terrible master who had thought fit to chastise his people, and now thought fit to restore it. They affirmed that their disasters and their ruin and oppression were the work of their national God himself, and the remaking of Judaism flowed out of that leading idea and created its literature and religion.

This was the radical revolution of thought that changed the character of the old tribal Jahveh. Jahveh, henceforth, was no longer a mere territorial God, sitting in the Ark, a lover of fat. He appeared to Esdras, to the Esdras group, in the agony of their humiliation, as the terrible master who had done everything (p. 28), and exacted every sacrifice in return.

The unutterable name then became identified with the Jewish nationality. The standard to which the patriots of the Restoration were to rally was the name of the God. Henceforth, declares Dujardin, to offer outrage to Jahveh would be to insult the flag. In a fine analogy he tells us that in great nations there is a blind and fierce idol, with sword in hand, the Fatherland, which demands human sacrifices, and to which fathers must bring their children as holocausts. At Jerusalem, the local idol was named Jahveh. The brutal, exclusive spirit that animated the new idolaters is set forth in Deut. xiii. 6-16—a text which Dujardin places about a century later than Esdras. And even as the purpose of the Inquisition was to establish a religion, so the purpose of the atrocities of Deuteronomy was to found a nation. And this idea is skilfully worked out in an admirable series of illustrations drawn from the literature which sprang out of the inventive Esdras school and its successors.

Our author's view is that the Persian suzerainty was the providential factor which enabled the Jewish theocracy to develop. By what process that development took place is acutely, if not accurately, indicated in Chapter II.—an extremely suggestive one, by the way. It serves as a fitting preface to a remarkable chapter on the Books of Moses conceived as forming the national epic of a new theocratic imperialism. It is pointed out that the formation of the Jewish epic cycle arose in a way characteristic of a crafty theocracy. While Rome relied solely on military force and administrative power, Jerusalem used the devices of churches; its leaders began by annexing the traditions, the ancient glories, the legends, the national reminiscences of their neighbors and rivals before humiliating their gods, annexing their consciences, and ultimately their territory. First, they appropriated the name and traditions of Israel and exploited the faded glories of that ancient name. But are we to insist that the priests of Jerusalem would deliberately, shamelessly forge the Mosaic history? Dujardin's reply is emphatically yes. "We must," he says, "not forget that we are dealing with Orientals; that we are dealing with priests, with rulers who have no idea of writing history in the modern fashion, but write merely to establish dogmas, give a divine character to laws, legitimise institutions, preach a national faith to a people, and create for it a sublime past" (p. 55). The whole chapter, which is devoted to the demonstration of this position, is very ably conceived, and—in a large part, at least—might have been made more convincing if an appropriate array of notes,

authorities, and illustrations had been furnished to give confidence to the stumbling faith of the sceptical reader.

This work, which is a sort of natural history of Jewish supernaturalism, is a book to read—but especially to reread. On a second reading of some of its sections its general appeal (judging from my own impressions) seems to grow stronger on one's mind. At any rate, the publication in English of this book (which from certain internal evidences would appear to be a first volume of some larger study) is a distinct enrichment of our Freethought literature.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Acid Drops.

We see by an American cutting that a wonderful book is coming out by a wonderful German thinker, Rudolf Martin. The theme of it is "the remarkable decline of religion and the almost complete disappearance of religious influence among the peoples of Europe." The author will also "predict the early disappearance of religion as a potent factor in the practical affairs of the world." Further, he raises the question, but does not answer it, whether mankind will go to the dogs or find some efficient substitute for the past and present religious restraints. We don't think he need trouble himself over that question. Morality is a necessary part of the general course of human evolution. It existed before religion and will outlive it.

Father Carr, of Formby, has had to be taught that the Catholic Church cannot use in England all the means it employs to raise money in Ireland. Lotteries and raffles are illegal on this side of the Irish Channel, and after repeated warnings Father Carr had to be prosecuted for selling raffle tickets for a set of china in order to "raise money for good work." He defended himself with some spirit, but the law is the law, even for Catholic priests, and the Birkdale Bench fined him £2 and costs, and refused to state a case.

Dr. Russell Wakefield, the new Bishop of Birmingham, told the recent diocesan conference that "the great mass of people outside the Churches constituted a great and grave problem." No doubt. And you won't settle it by shutting Freethinkers' mouths under the Blasphemy Laws.

Dr. Boyd Carpenter, the new Canon of Westminster, says that the world is "hungering for religion." It must be a very dyspeptic hunger then.

The following "Acid Drop" appeared in our issue of December 10:—

"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 statements in that paragraph appeared in the newspapers. Only the comments were our own. Yet the reverend gentleman picks us out for correction,—which is, after all, perhaps, a kind of a compliment. He writes to us as follows:—

"Alderley Rectory,
Chelford,
Cheshire.

'PITY THE POOR CLERGY.' [no date]

"To the Editor of the *Freethinker*."

"Dear Sir,

Your facts are not quite accurate. The gross income of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, is not £3,090, but rather £4,230. The net income at my disposal will probably be, not £2,000 a year but £1,300 a year. Instead of scoffing at my multiplicity of Christian names, for which I am not responsible, and sneering at the largeness of my prospective income, for which I have no responsibility either, could you not add to your free thinking a little fair-dealing, and ask for the facts? The facts are that less one-third part of the gross income of St. Botolph's is reserved for his personal use, and that the bulk is allotted for good purposes outside Bishopsgate. If you care to know in a year's time how the Rector's personal income has been expended, he will publish his balance-sheet if the Editor of the *Freethinker* will publish his side by side.

Yours faithfully,
G. W. HUDSON SHAW."

The newspaper figures we relied upon were incorrect, then. We understated the gross income of St. Botolph's, but we

overstated the cash going annually into the Rector's pocket. It turns out to be £1,300 instead of £2,000,—which is still enough to give point to our "Pity the poor clergy!" Besides, the words of that cry are not ours; we are only responsible for the note of exclamation. We regret, however, that we inadvertently placed the reverend gentleman £700 a year further off from the Sermon on the Mount than he really is. With regard to the balance-sheets, we may state at once that the *Freethinker* does not yet yield us anything either as proprietor or editor, though we hope it will in time. Our income is derived from other sources, and is hardly within measurable distance of Mr. Shaw's. We spend it as we please. Mr. Shaw may do the same as far as we are concerned. We have no impertinent curiosity on that subject. Not how Mr. Shaw spends his income, but how he receives it, is the point. It seems hardly the thing to pay a man even £1,300 a year for preaching the blessings of poverty.

Rev. Everard Digby, who gave evidence for the defence in the recent boxing contest at Birmingham, has since opened a picture theatre at Coventry, which is to be opened on Sundays, but not so as to be a rival to the churches and chapels, as it will not open until the evening after the hours of religious service. It will thus be possible, the reverend gentleman said, to go to church first and attend the cinematograph show later; which is an admirable arrangement for those who want the double dose (piety first, and amusement after), but not so convenient for those who, having to go to work on Monday morning, and not requiring the piety, would prefer their share of the amusement earlier in the evening. For the rest, the reverend gentleman spoke very sensibly. He said that attendance at a wholesome entertainment was far preferable to wandering aimlessly about the streets, as some young people did; and that "if the Church could not hold its own against picture palaces it was time they had a fresh lot of parsons.

The *Telegraph* reported "an interesting and pathetic incident which took place immediately after the christening at the cataract of Princess Kaw-paw-qua ('Morning Beauty'), daughter of Mr. Louiss Palmer, of Cleveland, Ohio. The tiny girl is the grand-daughter of Chief Oghema Niagara ('Thunderwater'), an Indian of the Oscanbee tribe of Kansas, and after the ceremony, which took place in the Cave of the Winds, under the Horseshoe Fall, Thunderwater, who, in 1866, had been christened at the same spot, gathered the few remaining members of his tribe about him and journeyed to Table Rock, on the Canadian side. There, with his face to the setting sun, the chief said: 'The Christian says the pagan is a fool. I was raised pagan, I have lived pagan, and I'll die pagan. I have seen Catholics warring against Protestants, Protestants warring among themselves, and both warring against the Jew. Indians never warred among themselves about religion. My grand-daughter is christened because she lives in a Christian nation and will have to obey Christian laws, but later she will be named a pagan, and when she is old enough to decide for herself she will choose between Christ and Manitou.'

The Bishop of Madras preached at a great Church parade during the Coronation Durbar at Delhi. He assured his congregation that the King-Emperor "reigned as God's representative over all Indians, Christian and non-Christian. He held the firmest belief in his Majesty's divine authority." *That's* all right. There's nothing like knowing for certain.

The Rev. F. C. Spurr, of Melbourne, is a highly amusing theologian. In the *Baptist Times* for December 22, he trots out the oft-refuted argument of "the changed world." "The coming of Christ," he says, "has undoubtedly changed the world." He piously rhapsodises thus:—

"Christ is changing the world. The world is His. He owns it. He died for it. He loves it. He would dwell with men and be their God. He would wipe away tears from all eyes. He would establish His Kingdom upon the earth, even the reign of righteousness and love."

For nineteen hundred years has Christ been owning, loving, and changing the world; and yet the following is the humbling confession which Mr. Spurr himself is forced to make in the self-same article:—

"But the world at this Christmastide, 1911, seems to many to be in a very bad way. The Churches are neglected, organised infidelity grows, nations are at war, other nations are preparing for war, and social unrest is greater than ever it has been before. The world seems out of joint. And men are asking with contempt whether *this* is the boon that Christ has brought!"

The second extract demonstrates the rich reality of the first

At last the secret is out. As long as we are in this world sorrow is a necessity from which there is absolutely no escape. Therefore to banish sorrow would be the greatest of sins. This we know because Mr. Coulson Kernahan and the Rev. Thomas Phillips tell us so. Mr. Phillips goes the absurd length of asserting, in his own dogmatic style, that "to banish sorrow would be to misinterpret the ends of life." One thing is certain, namely, that the banishment of sorrow would quickly bring about the extinction of churches and parsons. The object of science, on the contrary, is to eradicate everything that makes life sorrowful and sad, and bring into play all the forces that make for health and happiness, peace and joy. Of course, when science achieves its end, men like Mr. Phillips will have to look for another job.

Rev. Clarence Richeson, of Boston, U.S.A., who is charged with the murder of Miss Avis Linnell, to whom he had been engaged before he saw his chance of getting engaged to a wealthy Boston girl, tried to commit suicide in his cell, and had to be taken to the prison infirmary in a very precarious state. It is said that a signed confession was found lying by his side.

The subject of a bowdlerised Bible was discussed at the recent conference of head masters at Sherborne School, Dorset. Rev. Lionel Ford argued that certain parts of the Bible should be omitted in the earlier stages of Scriptural education. That was a nice way of putting it. He stated that much would have to be left out "for which young boys might not be benefited through reading." That was a nicer way of putting it. It left the road open for "old boys" to the curried dishes of Holy Scripture. But such dealings with the Grand Old Book were far from satisfying the Rev. J. R. Wynne Edwards, of Leeds Grammar School. "Are we," he asked, "as the headmasters of England, to say that the Bible is an immoral book?" Were they to declare that "the Bible is unfit to be put before little boys?" Perish the thought! Knowing the Bible is unfit is one thing; admitting it is quite another thing. Let the old smut be offered to the young boys as the Word of God, as it always was and always shall be. Amen.

The Beautiful Garden.

THEY lived in the beautiful garden,
The children of high degree;
The one was the wife of the other
The "*she*" was the rib of the "*he*"—
Up above with his face at the window,
Was their Heavenly Father, J.;
He wanted to catch them tripping,
So he watched them day by day.

He'd planted some trees in the garden,
And loaded the boughs with fruit,
And said, "You can gather from that one,
And that one, and that one to boot;
But the tree that you see over yonder
I shouldn't advise you to climb;
It is bearing some capital apples,
But to eat them's a capital crime."

"Old Harry" came into the garden,
In the form of an upright snake;
He'd instructions to try and induce them
To pluck the fruit and partake.
He offered them some and they took it,
And the Lord at the window spied,
For the ways of the Lord are narrow,
And the range of his vision wide.

As soon as they'd eaten the apple
It opened the eyes of the pair;
Each one then looked at the other,
And they saw that both were bare.
"The voice of the Lord they heard walking
In the cool of the day"—so they "guyed"
For those that he loveth he spanketh,
And the palm of his hand is wide.

They were chucked from the beautiful garden,
And the gate of the garden slammed;
And you're all well aware of the sequel—
We are most of us doomed to be damned.
A few will be "*crowned*" and "*feathered*";
But the rest will all be "*fried*";
For the gates of heaven are narrow,
And the mouth of hell is wide.

—Albert Roscoe, the "Beacon."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

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.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 31, Harringay. January 7, Edinburgh; 14, Liverpool; 21, Shoreditch Town Hall; 28, Battersea. February 11, Glasgow.

W. E. HOPKIN.—It was Pope who wrote "An honest man's the noblest work of God." It was Ingersoll who wrote "An honest God's the noblest work of man." Your epigram is not bad, but Pope and Ingersoll cannot be improved.

RAND SAINT.—We should like to see the report if you would kindly send it. We fear the local speeches would not greatly interest our readers at such a distance.

W. H. JACKSON (N. S. Wales).—Change of address noted. The work you mention will be published early in the new year. Remittance passed to shop manager.

D. D. B.—It is poor stuff and behind date at that, so we can hardly turn back to it usefully. Thanks for your new year's good wishes.

H. T. C.—Token of remembrance arrived duly and safely. Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

H. MEINS.—We cannot write paragraphs on newspaper cuttings a month old. You say the fact that some of your best friends are Christians "only proves that religion has not much to do with the making of the man." It may prove that in the case of your friends. But religion is like other diseases; some take it mildly and others badly.

OWING to the Christmas holidays much correspondence naturally stands over till next week.

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.

Owing to the Christmas holidays, which printers expect to enjoy as well as other people, this number of the *Freethinker* is got out under considerable disadvantages, and is, therefore, not quite up to our usual level. But the next number, being the New Year's issue, will be a special one, and will more than compensate, we hope, for all the shortcomings of the present issue.

We intend to pay more attention to the literary side of Freethought in the new year. Notices of important new books will appear from time to time, and a chatty column kept more or less regularly open for minor publications, etc. This feature of the *Freethinker* used to be highly appreciated by many readers.

F. O. RITZ, the writer of an article in this week's *Freethinker*, is a French journalist now residing at Paris. For some years he resided in London. He continues his membership of the National Secular Society. His article is not a translation; it was written in English.

East London "saints" and North London ones too are invited to make note of the January course of Sunday evening lectures at the Shoreditch Town Hall under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd. Mr. Foote opens the course, and will be followed by Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd.

The admission is free, with a collection. Some front seats are reserved at a shilling each.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner is very near now. It takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 9. The four shilling ticket covers the dinner, the speeches, and the musical entertainment—quite a four hours' program. Those who like to wear evening dress can do so; those who don't can dress otherwise. Mr. Foote will preside, and be "supported" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Heaford, Moss, Davies, Roger, and other "pillars of Israel."

There was a whisper that the Home Secretary would be doing something in the Leeds "blasphemy" cases when they were no longer before the Court of Appeal. We hardly dare to hope that this is true. "Blasphemy" prosecutions all take place under Liberal governments, and Liberal Home Secretaries are generally as hard as nether millstones in such matters. But we shall be delighted if we find we were mistaken in this instance.

The Secular Education League has just issued a new number of the *Secular Education Chronicle*, a copy of which will be forwarded free to applicants by the Secretary, Mr. Harry Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C. The new number contains some useful and interesting matter, including a statistical article on "Secular Education and Crime." We think a good many of our readers would like to see this publication.

We are glad to hear that the South African Rationalist Association, Johannesburg, is still holding successful Sunday evening meetings, and has sent a series of carefully prepared resolutions to the Sunday Observance Commission which was then nearing the end of its inquiries.

In our issue of December 17 we mentioned the case of a reader afflicted with consumption who had been obliged to give up buying the *Freethinker*, which was about the greatest consolation left him. We would not let him lose that, so we ordered it to be sent him weekly from our free list. Having received his first number, he writes us a note of thanks. "Sir," he says, "you have given me a new lease of life. No doctor could have given me a better prescription." He wishes us and all our readers a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

The *Freethinker* has readers and friends in all parts of the world. Here is an extract from a letter just received by us from a medical reader dating from Mississippi, U.S.A.:—

"I find your paper to be in every way the best one I take in, and I take in a good many; your style is so satisfactory to my mind. I would not be without it for anything. I had a controversy with a 'Baptist' here the other day, who was letting off a lot of gas with regard to the 'deathbed terrors of Atheists,' and especially of Voltaire, whom the good man did not seem to know was a Deist. I said to him, 'My dear fellow, wait a minute' and went over to my house, got your book *Infidel Deathbeds*, and returned. I said, 'I am now prepared to give you the deathbed of any Freethinker you feel an interest in, and I would like you to name your choice.' He declined the favor, saying he did not want his faith disturbed. Everyone laughed at him, and he walked off. It was a case of 'calling his bluff' as they express it here."

A pretty triumph over an orthodox braggart.

CLERICAL HUMOR.

A local preacher who occasionally got his metaphors mixed was preaching on self-righteousness, and ended his discourse by saying, "Let us remember that, after all, our righteousness is but filthy rags hanging on the branches of barren fig trees." On another occasion he was preaching on besetting sins, and when comparing these to obstacles in our path, exclaimed, "Let us beware of these stones by the wayside, lest they turn again and rend us."

The at one time well-known preacher among the Wesleyans, Peter Mackenzie, in reading the third chapter of Daniel invariably abbreviated the fifth verse wherein are enumerated the instruments of the Babylonian band, most of them with hard names, to the "cornet," etc., and when the names were repeated in verses ten and fifteen, said, "The band as before."

He was a lay preacher of the old order who was admitted on to full plan without having read the prescribed "Wesley's Sermons," etc. He boasted of his lack of "book learning," and scornfully told a student of the new school who was learning Latin, that "English was good enough for Paul; ain't it good enough for you?"

The Causes of the Glacial Epoch.

ONE of the most fascinating of all scientific studies is that which deals with the causes of the various Ice Ages which have in past periods devastated what are now the Temperate Regions of our earth. The date of the last glacial visitation is indeed remote when judged from any ordinary historical standpoint. Nevertheless, its occurrence is of quite recent date when geologically considered. Science did not even suspect the former glaciated conditions of the globe until the nineteenth century of our era. But with the accumulation of geological data, countless facts were revealed which pointed to their former existence, and astronomical science subsequently lent her aid in plucking out the heart of their mystery.

During these frigid epochs immense areas of Northern America and the whole of Northern Europe were overlaid by tremendous ice sheets. It is true that some authorities have argued that Northern Europe and America did not simultaneously suffer from these invasions of extreme cold, but the great majority of those best competent to judge are of opinion that the glacial visitations were general in their nature. "Great Britain and Scandinavia were not alone at the time of their desolation; around Europe and America, around the Old World and the New, the great Ice Age wrapped its deadly mantle."*

The prince of geologists, Charles Lyell, strove to explain the vicissitudes which the earth's climate has undergone in terms of the pronounced differences of distribution of land and water which our globe's surface has from time to time presented. But as the general configuration of continents and oceans is now known to have undergone very slight changes during the most recent geological eras, this attempted explanation must be abandoned. As a matter of fact, no strictly terrestrial agency seems in any way adequate to account for the occurrence of an Ice Age.

Of all the theories yet advanced, those associated with the names of Adhémer and Croll, which were afterwards supplemented by that of Sir Robert Ball, must be considered as the most conclusive so far advanced. This astronomical theory has one immense advantage, inasmuch as it possesses a firm mathematical basis. It is a logical deduction from the ascertained laws of gravitation. Without any exaggeration whatever it may be said that, if geological science had not detected the former existence of a glaciated Northern Hemisphere, the deductions of astronomers would have compelled the geologists to invent it.

The great central luminary of the solar system occupies the pride of place in any inquiry into the problem of glaciation. Were our earth denied the beneficent beams of the sun, life would immediately come to an end. In the absence of the genial warmth which great Sol showers down upon us, the temperature of our terrestrial abode would sink to some 200 or 300 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. The animated earth would then become a floating graveyard indeed.

What, then, were the causes of the arctic conditions which an Ice Age makes manifest? A glance at the constituent bodies of the solar system will help to make this clear. Were the earth the solitary satellite of the sun, the path of its annual journey round its central luminary would undergo no material change from year to year. But the earth is but one of many planetary bodies whose centre of attraction is the sun, and its movements are complicated by the forces exerted by its neighboring worlds. The earth is merely a fifth-rate planet; Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, and Jupiter are the giants of our system. Venus is nearly the size of our globe; Mars and Mercury are considerably smaller. In addition to these, hundreds of minor planets wander along paths distributed between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars.

* Ball, *Ice Age*.

Kepler proved that the paths pursued by planets are elliptical in form. Newton demonstrated the necessity for these elliptical motions in terms of gravitation. The law of gravitation pronounces that the attraction between any two masses varies directly as their product, and inversely as the square of the distance by which they are separated. Practically all the motions of the planets have been completely explained by the Newtonian law.

One is, however, apt to forget, that though the sun attracts the planets, the planets also attract the sun. Planetary gravitation has frequently been overlooked owing to its utter insignificance when compared with the sun's attractive power. The solar orb is 1,047 times heavier than that of the giant planet Jupiter, while if the sun "were subdivided into a million equal pieces, the mass of each one of them would be greater than the mass of the earth." And just as a mutual attraction exists between the planetary bodies and the sun, so an attraction exists between the planets themselves. The path of each planet is thus mainly determined by the gravitational pull of the sun, but it is also appreciably modified by the attractions of the other planets. Fortunately, however, the problem under consideration is largely simplified by the overwhelming preponderance of the sun's mass over that of all the other members of our system put together. As a result, the orbital revolutions of the planetary bodies are almost what they would be in the absence of the additional planetary bodies which make up the sun's retinue.

Nevertheless, the perturbations set up in a planet's orbit are distinctly measurable. The circumstance that the perturbations which observations of the path pursued by Uranus disclosed, subsequently led to the discovery of Neptune, is sufficient to demonstrate this. Yet the fact remains that the attraction exercised by the sun upon his entire family of planets is so vast that no radical modification of their orbital movements is conceivably possible.

The planetary perturbations to which the globe's orbit is susceptible are sufficient to bring about very material changes in the earth's climatal conditions. Two of our planetary neighbors are mainly responsible for this. Our nearest and brightest neighbor, the peerless planet Venus, constantly tends to pull mother earth from its natural orbit and cause it to swerve in its journey round the sun. Estimated in tons, the pulling power exercised by Venus reaches the stupendous figure of 180,000,000,000 tons. Tremendous as this attraction is, it sinks to utter insignificance when compared with that of the solar orb. It only amounts to the twenty-seventh thousandth part of the sun's attraction. The perturbing influences of Jupiter must also be considered. The immense distance of the Jovian planet from the earth materially reduces his perturbing powers. Still, the enormous mass of this planet, which is 1,000 times that of Venus, renders his perturbing influence very considerable. As a matter of fact, it is about half that of Venus, while the attractions of the remaining planets are comparatively unimportant. Jupiter and Venus must be held very largely responsible for those perturbations of the earth's orbit which cause those catastrophes of extreme cold which form the subject of this article.

As all are aware, the earth travels in an elliptic path around the sun. The shape of this orbit, however, is subject to certain changes. At times, the orbit gradually changes from that of a nearly circular form into that of an ellipse, and then, in the course of hundreds of thousands of years, slowly reassumes a nearly circular shape.

Through vast intervals of time, a gradual increase and decrease in the ellipticity of our earth's orbit takes place. These orbital changes exercise a profound influence upon the earth's climate. It is, therefore, necessary to estimate the possible thermal changes which result from these variations in the shape of the earth's orbit. When the eccentricity of earth's path has attained its highest possible form, the globe is then, on the whole, nearer to the sun.

This is due to the circumstance that, while the major axis of the ellipse is unchanged, the minor axis is at its minimum. And the shorter the minor axis, the nearer is the earth to the sun and the greater the quantity of heat received by our planet during its orbital revolution. Obviously, the total light and heat received from our central luminary can vary very little. The variation is indeed so trifling that some scientists have urged that it is utterly inadequate to account for such stupendous climatal differences that a Glacial Epoch demands. But the totality of annual heat received by the earth is far less important than its mode of distribution. A complete failure in grasping this all-important circumstance has vitiated nearly all negative criticism of the astronomical theory of Ice Ages. The proposition that the total heat received by the whole earth from March to September is equal to that received by the whole earth from September to March has been misunderstood as implying that the heat derived from the sun in either the Northern or the Southern Hemisphere during summer is precisely equal to that derived during winter. The real facts of the case are strikingly different from this, as Sir R. Ball puts it in his chapter on the Astronomical Theory of the Ice Age: "Of the total amount of heat received from the sun on a hemisphere of the earth in the course of a year, 63 per cent. is received in summer and 37 per cent. is received during the winter."

Mathematical and physical considerations necessitate the conclusion that during the various past ages of the earth's life the Northern Hemisphere basked in a summer of 199 days, which was succeeded by a winter of 166 days. At other periods this seasonal arrangement was completely reversed, the winter comprising 199 days and the summer 166 days only. But it must be borne in mind that in each instance 63 per cent. of heat was received in summer and 37 per cent. in winter. The climatal conditions in the two cases were of necessity widely different.

The earth now stands in a position intermediate to the two extremes cited above. Those who dwell in the Northern Hemisphere enjoy a summer period of 186 days with a winter of 179 days. Our summer days are thus longer by seven than the winter. In the Southern Hemisphere, however, the winter slightly exceeds the summer in length of days.

So long as the earth's orbit retains a nearly circular form no extensive glaciation is possible. The seasons are then bound to follow each other under the same conditions which now obtain. But when, owing to the disturbing influences of the other planets, the earth's orbit passes from a practically circular to an elliptic state—and such a condition is only reached after immense intervals of time—then it endures through a period which is amply sufficient for several Glacial Epochs.

When the earth is so poised that its Northern summer is exhausted in 166 days and its winter lingers through 199, its Northern regions will be the scene of a brief and intensely hot summer, during which the sun is at its least possible distance, and to a prolonged and pitiless winter, during which the sun is at its furthest possible distance. Under such conditions, the merciless rigors of the winter would facilitate the accumulation of mountains of ice and snow, while the succeeding transient summer would fail to liquefy the amount of snow and water which had been transformed by cold and pressure into ice during the reign of winter. Thus the ice waxes from season to season, and its sheets extend far beyond their present confines.

But solar heat is essential to the drawing up of the moisture of the oceans before this can descend in Northern latitudes in the form of snow. And the astronomical theory guides us in our search for the source of this heat. When the earth's orbit has attained its highest possible degree of eccentricity, and when the Ice Age has reached its maximum intensity, the total quantity of heat which the earth as a whole receives, is not reduced. But as the ice-imprisoned Northern Hemisphere derives less, the

unglaciated Southern Hemisphere receives more. It follows from this that greater volumes of aqueous vapor will be produced in the Southern Hemisphere, which, having been put in circulation by the air currents, will be finally deposited in the form of snow where the ice sheets are extending their imperious dominion.

The blind forces of Nature, which produced the great Ice Ages of the past, are still in operation. Our earth is now a few millions of miles nearer the sun in winter than in summer. But the precession of the equinoxes will slowly but inevitably alter the relative duration of the seasons of the year. From their present position of slight summer ascendancy they will pass towards equality. This will be succeeded by a period when the summer of the Northern Hemisphere will be seven days shorter than the winter, which will fall at that period of the year when the earth is at its greatest distance from the sun. There seems to be no rational escape from the melancholy conclusion that at some distant, but most certain date, the eccentricity of the earth's orbit will attain so high a value that desolating glacial conditions will return. Past ages have witnessed numerous arctic encroachments upon the Temperate Regions, and we have every reason to anticipate their recurrence. Ice sheets over a thousand feet in thickness have enshrouded Northern Europe and America in days long past. And, as the centuries roll on, the ice-fields will again glide southwards from their polar home, and a death-like stillness will invade the dwelling-places of the most cultured and refined races of mankind.

T. F. PALMER.

Egyptian Religion.

"The Pagan Egyptian embalmed his dead because he believed that the soul would return to the body after death The Christian Egyptian believed that at the resurrection he would receive back his body, changed and incorruptible, and that it was necessary to preserve.....that which he would obtain, without any trouble on his part, by faith through Christ."

THE Guide to the Egyptian Collections in the British Museum, printed by order of the Trustees, is of great interest generally, and much of it of special interest to the Freethinker. The book contains 53 plates and 180 illustrations.

The Predynastic Egyptians evidently believed in a future life, for they "buried with the dead food and flint weapons for the chase in the 'other world.'" Their religion at this remote period was of African origin.

"Earth, air, sea, and sky were believed to be filled with spirits.....every object, both animate and inanimate, was inhabited by a spirit, which could assume any form it pleased and occupy the body of any man, woman, quadruped, bird, fish, insect, reptile, tree, etc. All classes were intensely superstitious, believed in the existence of spirits—good or bad—witches, fiends, and devils, which they tried to cajole or placate with gifts, or vanquish by means of spells, magical names, words of power, amulets, etc."

The incarnations of these became gods. Symbols of spirits were fashioned and were worshiped as fetishes. These they either admired or feared, and the earliest known religion consisted of rites and ceremonies for propitiation of them; gifts being made much as offerings are now made at shrines and in the Roman Church.

"At a very early period an attempt was made to group the gods into families containing husband, wife, and son." (The common Egyptian word for God was Neter, and in the Dynastic period this probably meant high, exalted, sublime, or divine.) Osiris was the man-god who rose from the dead, was deified, and became king of the "other world" and judge of the dead. In addition to this man-god were a host of others. There was, for instance, the god of the primæval watery mass out of which the world was made; "Thoth," who created the world and all

things in it by a word; "Hathor," who existed in seven forms; "Menu," god of virility and generation; "Bast," the cat-goddess (the word for cat was Mau, seemingly onomatopoeic); and over a thousand gods are actually named in that famous production called the *Book of the Dead*.^{*} At one period it is evident that the priests attempted to give their religion a Monotheistic character, and this is exemplified in the doctrine of "Oneness," or "Unity." Ra was, therefore, the "Lord of heaven, lord of earth, maker of beings terrestrial, the 'one God' creator of man," etc. We are told:—

"It has been argued that the Egyptian idea of the oneness of a god is a totally different thing from Monotheism; but taking the facts as they stand, we are justified in saying that when the Egyptian declared that his god was 'one,' his meaning was identical with that expressed by the Hebrew in the words 'The Lord our God is one' (Deut. vi. 4), and by the Arab in his declaration 'God, He is one' (Kur an Surah cxii.)."

The following reads like Genesis:—

"*The Creation*.—In the beginning.....he felt the desire to create this universe.....he spake a word expressing this desire, and the world came into being. The first act of creation was the appearance of the sun from out of the water; the light separated the heavens from the earth, and the sky was placed upon four pillars," etc.

But while our Genesis records the making of man out of the earth itself, the Egyptians believed that he was formed out of the tears which fell from the eye of Ra, which, dropping upon members of his body, turned into men. "After Ra had been reigning for a time, men and women began to speak contemptuously of him, and to blaspheme him"; so they were destroyed, with the exception of a small company. In the *Book of the Dead* a general destruction is recorded, caused by the Flood. And there is a significance for us in the following:—

"The only beings who survived were those in the 'Boat of Millions of Years,' i.e., the Ark of the Sun-god with the god Temu. After the earth was covered by the Flood, Temu sailed over the waters to the Island of Flame, and took up his abode there. Subsequently he was succeeded by Osiris, whose authority was disputed by Set, the god of Evil; but eventually Set was overthrown, and Osiris ruled triumphantly.....He was regarded as the god-man who suffered, died, rose again, and reigned eternally in heaven. He was the 'king of eternity, lord of the everlastingness, the prince of gods and men, the god of gods, king of kings, lord of lords, prince of princes, the governor of the world, whose existence is everlasting.' To the Egyptians, Osiris was the god who 'made men and women to be born again'he was the resurrection itself, he was both god and man."

The phrase "They shall be weighed in the balance and found wanting" was once believed in, for in the Judgment Hall of Osiris sat the great judge of the dead, and the soul of every man was brought there and weighed in the "Great Balance." But in those times the *soul* of man was believed to be the *heart* of man, and the heart was weighed against a *feather*, which was the symbol of righteousness. When the heart failed to counterbalance the feather it was cast to the "Eater of the Dead." On the contrary, when they corresponded the soul was taken into the presence of Osiris and questioned, to which the answers were:—

"Hail, Long-striders, coming from Annu, I have not committed iniquity."

"Hail, Eater of Shades, coming from Qerti, I have not stolen."

"Hail, Bad-face, coming from Re-stau, I have killed neither man nor woman."

* The *Book of the Dead*, originally *Book of the Coming Forth of the Day*. It contains formulæ of a semi-magical character, written in hieroglyphics, collected by some Egyptian priests about 3300 B.C. A large number of these formulæ were in existence long before this period. Some series of the formulæ were copied on to coffins and sarcophagi down to about 200 B.C. (such coffins are now on view in the Egyptian Rooms, British Museum). The Theban Recension was generally written upon papyri and was used during the 18th, 19th, and 20th Dynasties, i.e., from about 1600 B.C. to 1133 B.C. (Note.—The First Dynasty was 4400 B.C., and the Thirty-first—the last—336 B.C.).

"Hail, Flame, advancing and retreating, I have not robbed God."

"Hail, Uamemti, coming from the house of slaughter, I have not committed adultery."

"Hail, Two-thorns, coming from Sais, I have not multiplied words overmuch."

—Book of the Dead, chap. cxxv.

The Egyptian idea of sin differed from that of Western nations. It was merely the breach of ritual law, atonable by the handing over of possessions. There is really no idea of *repentance* in Egyptian texts, and no word in Coptic for it. The translators of the New Testament were obliged to use a Greek word, and this seems sufficiently significant to the Freethinker of to-day. Certainly, later on came the doctrine of *retribution*; and those who dealt out retribution "carried slaughtering knives and had cruel fingers"—they cut the dead into pieces and threw them into the "Lake of Fire." In the judgment of souls the righteous were rewarded. Eternal happiness was the lot of the blessed, but *annihilation* (not everlasting punishment, as in later faith) was the lot of the wicked.

Heaven was situated over a large slab of iron (or alabaster?), which was also the sky. This slab was supported on four pillars, and the four gods supporting them were regarded as the four cardinal points. The stars were not exactly stuck in the sky, as the Revelation of St. John almost suggests, but were hung from the slab by hooks through holes, like lamps from a ceiling. And the righteous—Jacob-like—ascended to this heaven by means of a *ladder*. What a ladder, O ancient Egyptian! What a ladder, O ye of infinite faith to-day! If any Christian should be inclined to question the truth of the *ladder*, we can only point him to the models of ladders which are found in tombs and are commemorative of this belief or of nothing.

"Recognition in Heaven" was, if we mistake not, the title of an effusion by Canon Farrar, but it came late in the day, and was like selling old goods for new. Why, the ancient Egyptians by statements made on papyri and on coffins believed they would know and recognise each other in their other world! In the Papyrus of Anhai (1040 B.C.) we can see Anhai meeting her father and mother in the Elysian Fields; and in the Papyrus of Ani (1050 B.C.) the husband is seated with his wife playing draughts."

Amulets played an important part in Egyptian religion. Stones were believed to possess magical properties,* which were acquired by the wearer. Even Theosophy probably retains or embraces some of this idea, and the famous ring of Madame Blavatsky may, for what we know, be still worn by Mrs. Besant. This kind of magic has been believed by spiritists, and even many Christians indicate a hankering that way. Seers and diviners of the modern school have declared that, being enabled to handle a gem originally worn by a missing person, they can locate that person or get *en rapport* with him. Well, there's nothing new under the sun. But the Criminal Investigation Department ignore it silently.

The girdle of Isis assured the wearer of protection. In the much later time, in England, good old Dr. Culpeper told us that the "Sapphire stone was good to resist necromantic apparitions." However, the only girdle we can think of as having been an actual physical protection to the wearer was that contrivance of the Middle Ages called the "Belt of Chastity." Because this wasn't miraculous, it was some good. It may be held that the girdle of Isis meant stability, because the pillow typified raising of the head, the collar gave strength to breast, heart, and lungs; and the sceptre meant vigor of youth and abundance.

The Egyptians, from the time of the fourth dynasty (about 3600 B.C.) believed that their existence in the other world depended upon the mummification of the body. They believed in the resurrection of the material body itself; so it was

* "The Egyptians attributed magical properties to stones..... which gave protection against moral and physical evil."

necessary to preserve the body's identity, ready for the soul which was awaiting it. Spices, unguents, bitumen, etc., were preservatives, though we may be at a loss to know how they reconciled the occasional practice of the sucking out of the brain by the embalmers. After all, the idea of body preservation may have been so vague in their minds that the perpetuation of the *external physical likeness* was doubtless in itself satisfying. And we see even now that Christianity incorporates this idea of preservation by occasional embalmings and by frequent burial in vaults in leaden coffins, while the method of disposal of the dead by cremation is often held in abhorrence by Christian devotees.

That part of man which the Egyptian believed was everlasting was Ba or Soul. It was associated with Ka, which was genius or character. The Book of the Dead says: "Let not be shut in my soul, let not be fettered my shadow, let a way be opened for my soul and for my shadow, and let them see the Great God." But as the valuable treatise from which we have quoted remarks: "Under influence, primitive views became modified.....but in all essentials the Egyptians believed what their ancestors believed 5,000 years before." Perhaps so. But a few years now is probably equal to many then, in so far as actual progress by *religion* towards *fact* is to be hoped for.

A. FAGG.

Prayers and Shekels.

"Elijah" to End His Wild Career in Gaol.—Six Fanatics Starve to Death.

THE extraordinary career of the Rev. Frank W. Sandford, the self-styled "Modern Elijah" and leader of the "Holy Ghost and Us" society, has culminated ingloriously at Portland (Maine) in a sentence of ten years' hard labor for causing the deaths of six of his followers. These unfortunate dupes had perished of scurvy and starvation while on a fanatical cruise with the schooner-yacht *Coronet*.

This is the vessel, it will be remembered, that on September 29 last held up the Red Star liner *Lapland* in mid-Atlantic by flying the urgent distress signal, "We are starving." The captain lost no time in dispatching a boat laden with provisions to the distressed craft, and also offered those on board a passage to New York on the *Lapland*. The provisions were eagerly welcomed, but the passage politely but firmly declined.

The vagrant vessel is the identical "mystery ship" which puzzled Australia some three years ago. Unsignalled and unannounced, it crept stealthily one night into Sydney Harbor, in all probability in search of eleemosynary supplies. It was crowded with a motley assemblage of men, women, and children; the officers wore long clerical coats and white ties, and only the harbor-master and the medical officer were allowed on board. For some months previously she had been cruising among the South Sea Islands, under the command of the enterprising "Elijah."

The career of this astute impostor has been, if anything, even more extraordinary than that of his late rival Elijah, the arch-humbler "Profit" Dowie. Eighteen years ago Sandford started alone to excavate with pick and shovel among the sandhills of Maine, the foundations of a colossal temple. Neighboring landowners came to deride the new "prophet"; they stayed, held by the strange magnetic spell of Sandford's personality, and became his faithful disciples and staunch champions of his peculiar creed. Indeed, so obsessed did they become by the weird preachings of the newest Elijah that they actually realised their every dollar and handed all over to the "prophet."

Then arose the vast temple, erected at a cost of £20,000, and "Elijah" began to boom. He dispatched emissaries to the ends of the earth, and willing—and wealthy—converts flocked to his feet.

Led by his lieutenant, "Moses" Holland, disciples of both sexes prayed incessantly with uplifted arms for periods of incredible duration, being fed by others when on the verge of collapse, and all the time a continuous avalanche of shekels poured into "Elijah's" coffers. At last the authorities began to grow curious with regard to the administration of the huge temple on the Hill of Beulah. Eventually they raided the temple, and literally rescued therefrom a number of weird, emaciated, and semi-demented beings in all stages of collapse, among their number being Sandford's faithful right-hand man, "Moses."

One would naturally imagine that this drastic official action would have written "Finis" to the career of the Modern Elijah, but it didn't. Sandford had discovered a lucrative source of income, and he had no intention of losing his grip on it. Therefore, he lost no time in acquiring a tract of land near Joppa, likewise a couple of yachts and a barquentine that had seen better days, and a lot of them.

Taking on board these crazy vessels seventy adherents who still remained faithful to the "prophet," the "Holy Fleet," with "Admirals" Elijah and Moses in command, sailed from America to the Holy Land. Whatever happened in Joppa, these fanatics appear to have been sailing the seas ever since in a state of chronic destitution. What has become of the vast "pile" Sandford is known to have accumulated and lodged in various American banks it is hard to say, but there is no doubt that this enterprising charlatan has opened up quite a novel profession in begging on the high seas, for no fewer than twenty vessels provisioned on the *Coronet* during her last few months at sea!

When Sandford last month made up his mind to end the inhuman cruise, and put into Portland Harbor, his followers had not sufficient strength to take down the sails as the anchor was dropped. An officer of health was speedily on board, with the result that criminal proceedings were immediately instituted against the self-styled "prophet."—*Daily Chronicle*, Dec. 21, 1911.

The Honor of Being a Cardinal.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

WE hear much of people who are elevated to positions of "honor" when they show no brains or merit in rising to such positions or in filling them. A great ado is made over one who is appointed a cardinal; yet cardinals do nothing requiring intelligence. On the other hand, the position requires much superstition and subserviency. No one can be a cardinal who does not believe a lot of nonsensical trash (unless he is a hypocrite). He must prove his intellectual incompetency. He cannot be a scientist or a rational being, but must be one who can be fooled. He takes stock in fakes and must be a faker himself and have fooled others. A profound thinker or well balanced man cannot obtain this "distinction." One must be a fool to be a cardinal, though he may have lucid intervals or healthy spots.

He may dress in fine robes and have other imbeciles follow him and may be shown deference by a multitude of dupes, but there is no ability required for this. About all he does is to say Mass, which does not require any brains, and persuade people to bow down to various "divine" things; but this requires nothing but deceit, or, if sincere, nothing but stupidity.

We ought not to consider it an honor to have among us a fraudulent person, as many newspapers trucklingly do, or allow a high place to a humbug. We should not encourage men who merely fool people, and who are given their place by fools. Americans should esteem what is worth esteeming, and discriminate between those pursuits which are useful and those which only brutalise. Honoring such is like honoring the insane or confidence men. One's opinion of worth must be low who sees anything in the cardinal work to esteem.

A cardinal helps to elect the Pope, who has great influence; but this influence is over imbeciles. We would not think of specially honoring the leader of a band of thieves, or of the red-light district; yet there is no difference, except that he is chief of more such despicable persons than they are.

A cardinal must be a scholar, but what must he know? He must be learned in knowing what vessels, wine, candles, etc., must be used in ceremony; what days certain "saints" were born, or what relics still exist of martyrs, and the like. These things are no more important than whether a man has two horses or one, or who raised the largest pumpkin. To be learned in such things is not to be a scholar. One cannot be educated by being taught the trifles of the Church. Most people ignore them because they are not worth learning, and, if men pick them up, it is like picking stuff out of a sewer which others allow to be thrown away and forgotten.

AUSTIN BIERBOWER.

A LOST CHARACTER.

"There's a scandal in th' neighborhood."

"Phwat is ut?"

"Did you see th' black eye th't Mary Flanagan has, an' her not married."

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*Company Limited by Guarantee.**Registered Office—2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.**Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.**Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President: G. W. FOOTE.

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

Principles and Objects.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

"I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects."

Name.....
 Address.....
 Occupation.....
 Dated this..... day of..... 190.....

This Declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

Immediate Practical Objects.

The Legitimation of Bequests to Secular or other Free-thought Societies, for the maintenance and propagation of heterodox opinions on matters of religion, on the same conditions as apply to Christian or Theistic churches or organisations.

The Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, in order that Religion may be canvassed as freely as other subjects, without fear of fine or imprisonment.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Churches in England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Abolition of all Religious Teaching and Bible Reading in Schools, or other educational establishments supported by the State.

The Opening of all endowed educational institutions to the children and youth of all classes alike.

The Abrogation of all laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for the purpose of culture and recreation; and the Sunday opening of State and Municipal Museums, Libraries, and Art Galleries.

A Reform of the Marriage Laws, especially to secure equal justice for husband and wife, and a reasonable liberty and facility of divorce.

The Equalisation of the legal status of men and women, so that all rights may be independent of sexual distinctions.

The Protection of children from all forms of violence, and from the greed of those who would make a profit out of their premature labor.

The Abolition of all hereditary distinctions and privileges, fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood.

The Improvement by all just and wise means of the conditions of daily life for the masses of the people, especially in towns and cities, where insanitary and incommensurable dwellings, and the want of open spaces, cause physical weakness and disease, and the deterioration of family life.

The Promotion of the right and duty of Labor to organise itself for its moral and economical advancement, and of its claim to legal protection in such combinations.

The Substitution of the idea of Reform for that of Punishment in the treatment of criminals, so that gaols may no longer be places of brutalisation, or even of mere detention, but places of physical, intellectual, and moral elevation for those who are afflicted with anti-social tendencies.

An Extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty.

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