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# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*It is not to be conceived how many people, capable of reasoning, if they would, live and die in a thousand errors, from laziness; they will rather adopt the prejudices of others, than give themselves the trouble of forming opinions of their own. They say things, at first, because other people have said them, and then they persist in them, because they have said them themselves.*

—LORD CHESTERFIELD.

## The Greatest of Freethought Martyrs.

OVER three centuries ago, on February 17, 1600, a great heretic was burnt alive in the Campo di Flora at Rome. He was "butchered to make a Roman holiday," in a worse sense than Byron's gladiator. It was the Pope's jubilee, and the Eternal City was thronged with pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. Soldiers, monks, priests, statesmen, and the common rabble were all present to witness the delectable sight. Women held up babies in their arms to see the "infidel" tortured in the name of Christ. It was a most splendid entertainment, and Holy Mother Church was kind enough to present it gratuitously.

At one point of the burning a crucifix was presented to the victim to kiss. It was probably red-hot, according to the sarcastic mercy of the Church. But the victim did not kiss it. He spurned it. As a hostile eye-witness said, he turned away his head with a terrible and menacing gesture. He had done with such things, and his courage was equal to the cruellest of deaths. Not a groan, not a plaint, escaped him to make music in the ears of his enemies. He died as he had lived, with a bold front to fate. He was always fearless, and he never trembled at the end, when he stood against the world without one drop of the balm of sympathy, or the vision of one friendly face to lighten the mists of anguish.

Nearly eight years before, he had been arrested by the Inquisition at Venice. Several months had been spent in prison there. But a demand was made for his body by the Inquisition at Rome, and the procurator who advised that he should be handed over reported that "His errors in heresy are very grave, though for the rest he possesses a most excellent rare mind, with exquisite learning and wisdom." For the next seven years his story is a blank. He was in the clutch of the vilest and bloodiest tribunal that ever disgraced and cursed the earth. During the whole of that time he probably saw no human face save that of the gaoler who brought his food, or those of the cowed inquisitors who came to extract his recantation. No doubt he was frequently tortured, as Campanella was, and as Galileo was not long afterwards. He was kept alive in order that he might confess his errors and make his peace with the Church. It would have been a grand thing to break the spirit, and compel the submission, of such a famous and distinguished heretic. But the attempt was a failure. He bore his seven years' Gethsemane with invincible fortitude. At last they tried him, and sentenced him to death "without the shedding of blood"—the hypocritical formula for burning alive. Even at that supreme moment his matchless

spirit lifted him up above his judges. He raised his head proudly, and told them that they pronounced his sentence with more fear than he heard it. Then he went out to pass through the shadow into the light of immortality. Not the immortality of the Christian's fabled heaven, but the immortality of the world's loving remembrance.

"He died the most desolate of deaths," said Tennyson. It is true and finely said. But the desolate Gethsemane was worse than the desolate Calvary. He who had drunk the cup of pain daily for seven long years might well clasp with a certain joy the cup that held the last fiery draught. It was fierce and racking, but it brought "endless oblivion and divine repose."

Giordano Bruno's life ended in the flames of the stake, and it lasted through storm and combat. From the moment he doffed the garb of a Dominican monk and fled from the persecutors who had drawn up an indictment for heresy against him, containing a hundred and thirty counts, he was a wanderer over the face of Europe. City after city received him and cast him forth. After a wearisome Odyssey of fourteen years he was lured back to his native Italy, where the Triumphant Beast with the great bloody jaws was awaiting him. For eight years its fangs were in his flesh, and then it crushed him to death.

It is pleasant to know that England furnished the one oasis in the desert of his career. The three years he spent here in the house of the French Ambassador were sweet and fruitful. He lived without fear of a hand upon his shoulder, and wrote his principal works in his native tongue.

Bruno was rather a pioneer than an epoch-marking philosopher. Several historians of philosophy have likened him to a comet or a meteor. Coleridge praised his "lofty and enlightened piety," which was "unintelligible to bigots and dangerous to an apostate hierarchy." Tennyson's opinion of him is expressed in a passage of our great poet's biography by his son:—

"Walt Whitman had sent my father a little book containing two addresses on Giordano Bruno by Daniel Brinton and Thomas Davidson. The death of Bruno was a subject which my father thought might be good for a poem. Of Bruno he said: 'His view of God is in some ways mine. Bruno was a poet, holding his mind ever open to new truths, and believing in an infinite universe as the necessary effect of the infinite divine Power; he was burnt as a heretic. His age did not believe in him. I think he was misunderstood, and I should like to show him in what I conceive to be his right colors: he was the author of much of our modern philosophy. He died the most desolate of deaths.'"

Tennyson seems to us right in saying that Bruno was a poet. He was the poet-martyr of the new philosophy, which consisted first in an appeal to reason against authority, and secondly in a recognition of the might and majesty of science. Bruno warmly embraced the astronomy which is associated with the serener names of Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo. He perished chiefly for proclaiming that the earth is a planet, that the sun is the centre of our system, and that space is strewn with constellations. All this is cheap knowledge now, but it was a blasphemous novelty then, and Bruno was killed for proclaiming it.

This noble scholar did not believe in whispering the truth. He was for publishing it even in the

market-place. He saw that the mind must be ploughed up to receive the seed of thought. In his own words:—

"By stirring, stimulating, surprising, contradicting, exciting men's minds, they are made fruitful; and this, according to Socrates, is a salutary vocation."

He laughed at the protests of habit and indolence, and ridiculed the orthodox appeal to antiquity, as Bacon did after him:—

"The title of innovator which is bestowed upon us is not ignominious. There is no doctrine in antiquity which was not at one time new; and if age is the mark of truth, our century is fuller of dignity than the century of Aristotle, since the world has now attained a greater age by twenty centuries."

He called men from idle speculation to fruitful study. "Why lean upon vain fancy," he asks, "when experience herself is our teacher?" Certainly it was easier to believe than to investigate. The gold of truth could not be obtained without digging and sifting. And if the common man was too lazy to think for himself, the more active minds should at least be free to carry on the great tradition of progress:—

"Difficulty is ordained to deter mean spirits; rare, heroic, and divine men pass over the road of difficulty, and compel necessity to yield them the palm of immortality."

Tennyson was right, too, in saying that Bruno was "the author of much of our modern philosophy." He caught foregleams of modern Evolution. Against all the tendency of his time, he declared that reason and instinct are fundamentally the same; and that the difference between the "soul" of a man, an animal, and a plant, is in quantity, not in quality. His language was generally Pantheistic, but he also said that:—

"A time would come, a new and desired age, when the gods should lie in Orcus, and the fear of everlasting punishment should vanish."

It was charged against him by his Venetian accuser, the stupid and bigoted Mocenigo, that besides sneering at the miracles of Christ, including the miraculous birth from the Virgin, he had actually asserted that "not to do to others that which we desire them not to do to us, suffices for good living; and that he laughs to scorn all other sins." He was evidently far in advance of his time. That was his misfortune, and his glory. His personal loss was our universal gain. It is ennobling to think of that fiery, daring spirit which flamed against the most terrible obstacles. We can imagine the light in his splendid eyes as he penned this lofty invocation:—

"O worthy love of the beautiful! O desire for the divine! lend me thy wings; bring me to the dayspring, to the clearness of the young morning; and the outrage of the rabble, the storms of Time, the slings and arrows of Fortune, shall fall upon this tender body, and shall weld it to steel."

His prayer was answered. Strength and courage were his to face the worst martyrdom in history. He stood alone at the stake against the world. And he stands alone still—the supreme martyr of all time.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Bankruptcy of Science.

"THE bankruptcy of science" is not an expression that one finds in the mouths of scientists. They know their own work, its methods, its limitations, and its triumphs too well for that. It is a phrase that is religious in origin and application. Like "practical Atheism," it is an expression hard worked and greatly beloved. The chief distinction is that "practical Atheism" is uttered with a simulated sorrow. "The bankruptcy of science" is expressed with undisguised pleasure. It is rolled round and round in the mouth like the tastiest of morsels. The preacher announces it as glad tidings of great joy. Instead of regret at the assumed fact that science

is compelled to confess its inability to solve certain problems, he is pleased, and seizes every opportunity of making his happiness plain. It is his one chance of triumphing over the enemy that has defeated him so often. There is no sight more affecting than that of a preacher who knows little or nothing of science, demonstrating to an audience as well informed as himself, that science breaks down when tested by the creeds of the Churches. It reminds one of Swift's strictures on Homer for showing such a deplorable ignorance of the Church of England's Articles.

But what, after all, does the expression mean? Or does it mean anything at all? There are many questions, we are told, to which science can give no answer. Granted; no one is more alive to this than the scientist himself. But bankruptcy is conditional upon inability to meet one's creditors. And a creditor is made by a debtor assuming a certain responsibility. But science never undertook the responsibility of answering even every legitimate question that might be asked, still less the large number of questions that never ought to be asked at all. All that has ever been claimed on behalf of science is that it possessed a method which would in time give an answer to all valid questioning. That it cannot do so at present is obvious. But it is part of the discipline enforced by science to teach us to wait for an answer as well as to teach us what to ask. And to wait for an answer is often the only sure method of getting a correct one. In this sense science is compelled to admit its impotence. But the impotence of science is here no more and no less than the impotence of the human intellect. Where science fails religion certainly cannot succeed. For religion has nothing that is true to tell man that it must not first of all acquire from elsewhere, and which man cannot learn without its assistance. The pietist is not so much congratulating himself on the bankruptcy of science as he is on the permanence of ignorance.

It is said that the bankruptcy of science is shown in the moral sphere. How? Morality is, in fact, and in a peculiar sense, quite independent of science. And it is certainly independent of religion. Morality antedates science in the same sense that man antedates the scientist. The essence of morality is to be found in the mutual reactions of human beings, and, consequently, morality is practised long before it is reasoned about. The function of reason—whether it be religious reasoning or scientific reasoning—is not to create morality—but to guide it, to control it, and to aid its development. And in this connection science is anything but a failure. All that we know of the nature and history of morality is entirely due to scientific investigation. Religion leaves man as ignorant on these points as it finds him. Science shows us what morality is by affiliating it to already ascertained laws of life. It shows us how its development has been consequent upon a development of social relations. And it shows us also the nature of the conditions upon which morality in the individual really depends. For in showing the dependence of mental states upon physiological health, and the dependence of physiological health upon adequate feeding, sanitation, and hygiene, in relating psychology to sociology, science has shown itself the great moral instructor of the human race. More than a thousand years of Christian preaching left the world as morally undeveloped as it found it. Less than two hundred years of scientific activity has served to create a quickened moral and social consciousness that has forced even the Church to recognise its existence.

What science lacks, says one preacher, is "moral dynamic." A truly "blessed" phrase. In the act of repudiating science, "dynamic" yet gives the preacher an air of being a profound student of science and of scientific method. And yet, what does it mean? Does it mean that a love of science does not develop the spirit for great deeds, or the courage for devotion to an ideal. The whole history of science is a lesson to the contrary. With only a tithe of the probable reward in this world, and with none at all promised

for the next, innumerable scientific investigators have spent, and are spending, their lives in pursuit of knowledge. If the truth were known, there are probably more men at the present moment risking their lives in the hopes of discovering a cure for some deadly disease, or to solve some intricate problem, than are risking their lives on behalf of religion. But *their* risks are not trumpeted on the platform and in the press. Enterprising journalists do not find them picturesque copy. If they die, a stray paragraph is their only monument, and the man in the street, fed on the arid literature of religion, sees nothing heroic in their death. The preacher visits an epidemic stricken people, and his courage and devotion forms the theme of countless sermons. The doctor and nurse fight disease face to face, and step by step, and their courage and devotion is taken as a matter of course. The world is never without its army of experimenters and investigators animated by the thirst for knowledge and the desire for improvement. The "moral dynamic" created by science is obvious to all who care to look. The slothfulness of a religious people is one of the commonplaces of the pulpit.

Of course, science does not inspire its votaries to go out with a collecting sheet, mouthing maudlin sentiments about misery and vice. It does not eventuate in the formation of moral purity committees, by means of which the disguised pornographic nature of its members may be satisfied. Instead, it sets to work in a more drastic and effective manner. It finds sanitation more effective than prayer, prevention better than cure, and the creation of intellectual interests a better safeguard against bad habits than prayerful *preying* upon bad habits once they have been acquired. And it is from these means that all real improvement has resulted. The "dynamic" inspired by religion has never cleared the world of a single evil or a single disease. Medical and sanitary science killed the plagues of the middle ages—not religion. Anæsthetics and antiseptics diminished the pain and danger of the operating table—not piety. Better communications between different nations are abolishing national hatreds—not the possession of a common creed. Economic and social science are teaching us how to deal with poverty and destitution—not faith in the supernatural. And the world's clearest and most fruitful thinkers are those who are least interested in those religious questions that once converted Europe into a combination of artificial hell and lunatic asylum.

The scientific view of life alone cannot satisfy man! For more than twenty years I have been assured of this much, at least once a week. And yet, if my own testimony is worth anything, it satisfies me, and I am more convinced than ever that on that road alone lies safety. And I am secure from the charge of abnormality by the fact that there are millions of others in the civilised world who feel the same way. We cannot all be abnormal. On the face of it, the millions who actually do without religion are more likely to be correct than are those who still have it, but who say they could not get along without it. The proof of whether men can do without a thing must be decided by those who have dispensed with it, not by the testimony of those who still use it. We do not prove the need for tobacco by the example of smokers, or the need for alcohol by the example of the confirmed drunkard. Why, then, argue that all men need religion because some still possess it? May they not be in exactly the position of the drinker or smoker lecturing the teetotaler or the non-smoker? Their religion is not an indication of their essential needs, but of their education and habits.

Of course, if a man goes to science expecting that his religious desires will be gratified, he is doomed to disappointment. If he expects science to support his belief in God or a devil,—heaven or hell, in miracles or providence, he will be disappointed. For science knows nothing of these things—or rather, it knows all about these things. It can tell him how they came into existence, and what is their moral

and intellectual value. But the demand that science must gratify the very requirements that are challenged, is absurd. What the religionist must do to prove his case is to show that the feelings and ideas called religious are legitimate, useful, and cannot be gratified save through religious belief. What science has shown, either actually or inferentially, is that the feelings which masquerade as religious are misapplied social and domestic feelings. And also that the ideas upon which religion builds are mistaken inferences by people who were not in a position to know the truth, and perpetuated by others who have little desire to discover it.

It is not the bankruptcy of science that the world is witnessing, but the bankruptcy of religion. Religion has shown itself absolutely incapable to lead men aright on any subject under the sun. In physics, in astronomy, in geology, and in biology its failure has been complete and unquestionable. In sociology it has aggravated ills instead of diminishing them. There is hardly a serious-minded reformer who turns to religion for any lesson of real guidance. He may himself play with religious phrases, and talk vaguely of the value of religion. But his rules of life are drawn from other quarters. He knows that ultimately it is science that points the road along which reform must travel. That indicated by religion is traversed by a rapidly decreasing number of wayfarers.

C. COHEN.

### A Theologian in a Fog.

CICERO expressed the opinion that he would rather be mistaken with Plato than be in the right with those who differed from him; and Dr. Osler, Professor of Medicine at Oxford, takes his stand beside the great Roman. Dr. Osler would rather be wrong with the Bible and Milton than be in possession of the truth with Herbert Spencer and Darwin. It is a curious, inconceivable position for a man of the Professor's intelligence to occupy in the twentieth century; but he stoutly maintains that there are questions on which "the only enduring enlightenment is through faith." He says: "'Only believe,' and 'he that believeth,'—these are the commandments with comfort; not 'only think,' and 'he that reasoneth,' for these are the commandments of science." Yes, "only believe," and "he that believeth,"—these are the commandments of Christianity. Thinking poisons faith at its roots. When a prominent London minister declared recently that the true preacher must dare to think, he was violently condemned by many zealous defenders of the faith for uttering such a damnable heresy. As a matter of fact, however, the trend of the age is away from blind belief and dogmatic faith, away from docile submission to priestly tyranny, and towards rational thought and sober reflection. Even those who attend church and chapel, as well as the larger crowd outside both, are beginning to ask awkward questions and to offer harassing criticisms; and the theologians are in a perfect quandary. For example, in Dr. Orchard's "Correspondence Column" in the *Christian Commonwealth* for February 7, a "Sceptic" writes:—

"I find it almost incompatible with reason to accept the Christian teaching with regard to Jesus being the Savior of the world. For nineteen hundred years we have had him in our midst, the God-exalted and the God-degraded, just as the wind of popular fancy and priestcraft made him. Yet he seems to have failed in his mission.....As I look around at the despair, sickness, and sin on every hand can it be wondered at that I doubt the dogmatic teaching that he was the Savior of the world?"

Even Dr. Orchard boggles at this veritable poser. He finds himself in a dense fog; and his vain attempts to extricate himself from it are both amusing and significant. Let us keep as close to him as we can.

His first dash for liberty is not worthy of him. He says: "The use of such a title does not necessarily

imply that he *has* saved the world. It might only imply that he *can* or *will*." Then he instantly recovers himself and courageously rejects two or three plausible ways of escape. He has no sympathy whatever with those who sought a way out by declaring that Jesus *had* redeemed the world by offering himself up a sacrifice for its sin on Calvary. He is equally out of touch with the ultra-Calvinists who hold that God never intended to save the whole world, but only an elect number out of it. He is as fully at variance with the advocates of "the moral freedom" argument, though he contends that these have some truth on their side. These, he tells us, "held so firmly to human freedom that they did not think it betokened any real failure of Christ's mission that his salvation was refused by a corrupt and faithless world." Thus, the doctrine of man's freedom of choice was framed for the double purpose of shielding God against the charge of being the author of evil and Christ against that of having failed to remove it. As for Dr. Orchard, he cannot "remain contented either with the idea that man would refuse such a salvation or with any conception of a God who could be satisfied while one soul remained outside his purposes of good."

Let us now examine what Dr. Orchard looks upon as the right way out of the theological fog. His first essay to free himself is open to serious question. He says:—

"That Jesus Christ has been one of the greatest redemptive forces in human history few, save those who are in angry reaction from higher claims, will be found to deny."

Can Dr. Orchard conscientiously make that statement with the history of Christendom in his mind's eye? It may be admitted that the Christians of the first two centuries were commendably kind and generous in their treatment of one another, especially of the sick and the poor. Their isolated position in the Roman world naturally conduced to the growth and development of the social virtues. But it is incontrovertible that whilst they loved and served one another most nobly, they cherished the vile feeling of hatred and contempt for the rest of the world. Their narrow-mindedness, bigotry, and intolerance were proverbial. It is conceded by many apologists that the purest and most creditable period in the whole history of the Christian Church was that prior to its establishment as a department of the Roman state. What the value of that concession is may be judged from the numerous passages in Paul's Epistles and other Christian literature. The pertinent point is that subsequent to its alliance with the State the Church steadily sank in the moral scale. Indeed, with our eyes on the facts as disclosed by ecclesiastical historians themselves, we are forced to the conclusion that Jesus Christ has been one of the greatest reactionary forces in human history. The curious thing is that having made the statement just quoted, Dr. Orchard proceeds to make another of a contradictory character:—

"But in the present condition of the world, with its vast suffering, misery, and injustice, and knowing what doubt, impotence, and dark unrest afflict the great majority of our fellows, it is impossible to think that Jesus has saved the world, and hard to believe that he would see in such conditions 'the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.'"

We fully agree. But a minister of the Gospel of Christ is bound to explain this statement entirely away. He cannot preach a Savior who does not save in some sense or other. So he has recourse to a cunningly devised subterfuge. In the sense in which the words were originally employed, Dr. Orchard argues, Jesus Christ is not the Savior of the world; but inasmuch as we must continue to ascribe such a title to him, we will do so by attaching a different meaning to the words. But is this quite honest? Is any man justified, not only in slightly modifying, but in completely transforming the Gospel simply because history gives it the lie direct in its original form? Surely, the correct thing to do would be to fling it away as a discredited superstition.

And this is, in effect, what Dr. Orchard himself does. He still employs the supernaturalistic old terms, but now in a naturalistic sense. Theology, philosophical systems, even reasons, common sense, instinct, self, he has ruthlessly thrown down the winds because of their untrustworthiness. Fancy a Doctor of Divinity talking in that wild fashion! What has he left? Nobody can tell. And yet, strangely enough, he goes on to describe how Jesus taught him "to find God in the desire to do a will beyond his own"; but having parted company with theology, philosophy, reasons, common sense, instinct, and even self, how on earth does he know anything about a will beyond his own? The Gospel Jesus was a metaphysician, who talked dogmatically about a supernatural world from which he claimed to have himself descended, who affirmed that he stood in unique relations to the Father in heaven, and to be authorised to make him known to the world. Surely, Dr. Orchard cannot pin his faith to such transcendental speculations, having formally abjured metaphysics and all its brood; and as he distrusts even common sense one is not at all surprised at his saying that his very scepticism is, to him, "quite sufficient evidence that he is in touch with a reality much greater than all the things" he is sceptical about "can express." If this is not mysticism run mad, or metaphysics in its most injurious form, or theology at its lowest and worst, it is beyond the power of man to characterise it. When a man speaks of a will higher than his own he merely gives the reins to his fancy. Is not man's will the highest known to us, and the impulse to love, is it not the social instinct which man has gradually evolved during his evolutionary career? The only thing which we know we must obey or perish is the law of Nature. What we require to get into tune with is not a supernatural will, but a natural environment, both physical and mental.

The truth is that Dr. Orchard has not been emancipated from theological and metaphysical bondage. He cannot write a line without showing that he is a slave still. The very words "Savior," "Salvation," and "God," which he tries in vain to justify as terms expressive of realities, are purely theological terms, utterly out of place in this scientific age. What he really means by "God" is the moral ideal, by "Salvation" the gradual realisation of that ideal, and by "Savior" the ministry of sympathy and love as exercised by the highest and noblest human beings on behalf of the less highly developed. And yet there is an atmosphere about the reverend gentleman's utterances which leads one to infer that he is by no means consistent. He says, for example, that "God must win man by long, slow persuasion," from which the natural inference is that God is a person from whom, in some mysterious manner, man has been alienated. Then he naively adds: "Why this way should be necessary we do not know." In reality, what we do not know is that there is a God seeking to "win man by long, slow persuasion." What we *do* know is that the evolution of human society has been a painfully long, slow process; and beyond this we know nothing. We believe that Dr. Orchard is an exceedingly good man, who really loves and wishes to serve his fellow-beings; but we are also convinced that the few rags of faith which still cling to him hinder rather than help him in his social service. Man needs to be won, not to fellowship with an unknown and unknowable deity, but to right relations with his brothers and sisters on the earth. As the reverend gentleman's correspondent truly says, we have had Christ in our midst some nineteen hundred years, and we are still obliged to confess that social justice and fairplay have not been secured. There are many people who profess to be the redeemed of the Lord, and to enjoy sweet communion with the heavens; but history tells us that these very people have often been and often are capable of meting out to their brother-men the worst forms of oppression, injustice, and cruelty.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Bible Blasphemy.

AT a great meeting held at the South Place Institute on Monday, January 15, to protest against the late revival of the Blasphemy Laws in London and Leeds, among the many fine speeches that were delivered on that occasion there was one sentence in the powerful address delivered by Mr. W. T. Stead, which, coming from the mouth of a Christian, struck me as very bold and original. It was this: he said that he claimed it "as a fundamental and indefeasible right of every Christian to blaspheme." By blasphemy he meant the right of every man to utter his honest thought on religion without the interference of the policeman or the judge. And what Mr. Stead claims for the Christian I as strongly claim for the Freethinker. I claim to utter my thoughts on religion, whoever they may offend or please. Blasphemy has always been a very peculiar kind of offence. Only a believer in the being whose reputation is attacked can commit it, and even then time and circumstance have to be taken into account. The Jew cannot blaspheme the Christian God because he does not believe in him; indeed, if a Jew were to say that Jesus was an impostor or a myth, or sneer at or ridicule the absurd story of his alleged miraculous birth or the equally ridiculous story of his alleged resurrection, no one would propose to indict him for blasphemy because he had never had the misfortune to have been educated and trained into the belief of Christianity. In the same way the Christian may say what he likes about the gods of the Brahmin or Buddhist, and the Mohammedan may speak disrespectfully of all the gods of the various nations of the earth save his own. But all these people must be careful that they give utterance to their blasphemy at the proper time and place. The Jew must not attack the Christian Deity in an English Church, nor the Christian rail at Jehovah in a Jewish synagogue, nor either of them ridicule the Mohammedan Deity in a mosque in Turkey; but in their own city and at the proper season each may blacken the Deity of the other.

Ridicule has always been the great offence. You must not laugh at the cherished beliefs of your friends or neighbors. Although ridicule has always been considered a powerful weapon in eradicating false impressions from the human mind, pious persons now declare it to be a crime when it is used to show the absurdities of their own belief. But if it is wrong to laugh at the ideas and cherished beliefs of Christians, is it not wrong to laugh at the equally sincere and cherished beliefs of Freethinkers? It appears not.

Years ago, did not Christians laugh immoderately at what seemed to them to be the absurd notion of the great Charles Darwin that man had evolved from lower forms of animal life, and especially that man and the ape had one common ancestry? Did they not also ridicule the idea of the Materialist that Nature was the universal mother that produced all phenomena as the fruit of her own womb, without the meddling of the gods? Did not they pretend that the Freethinker believed that the universe came by chance, and ridicule the idea accordingly? Did they not say that a man without belief in God was "a nondescript monster made by Nature in a moment of madness"? And if they found ridicule an effective weapon in controversy, why should the Freethinker disdain to use it? The statesman uses it when he is replying to the arguments of his opponent, the historian employs it, and the social reformer and the popular orator know its wonderful power in exposing false theories and absurd ideas. But real blasphemy is an attack by a believer upon the reputation of his own Deity. It does not matter that he does it to flatter the power or vanity or caprice of his God; the blasphemy is none the less real. It does not appear to have ever occurred to the Christian that his Bible is full of such blasphemy—especially the Pentateuch.

The cry of the Christians was always a cry for blood, and the story of many of the books of the Bible is a story of savagery and bloodshed.

As a boy I witnessed many old-fashioned melodramas at the "Old Vic." The "gods" in those days wanted strong fare for their money; indeed, they were never satisfied with less than one or two murders in each act, and a frightful slaughter at the end of the play. And the management always supplied them with exactly what they wanted. Evidently the writers of the early books of the Bible acted upon the same principle, and supplied their readers with some very exciting incidents and terrible tragedies. Let us, then, for a while, look into the pages of the Holy Bible, and we shall find that it reeks with records of human bloodshed.

In those early days the "Holy Land" was a slaughter-house, and Jehovah a gigantic butcher. Take the terrible and merciless slaughter of the Egyptians, and I doubt whether we could find its parallel in profane history. We could, of course, find worse cases of individual cruelty; but for sustained slaughter it would be difficult to find its equal. Not content with depriving the Egyptians of water by causing Moses to turn it into blood; not satisfied with afflicting an unoffending people with plagues of frogs and flies and lice; not content with destroying harmless cattle with a grievous murrain; not satisfied with supplementing these with frightful plagues of hail, locusts, darkness, and the slaughter of the first-born, the Bible God allowed the Israelites to utterly "spoil the Egyptians," robbing them of jewels and other valuable property, and ultimately bringing them to the Red Sea to perish in the waves, that the Israelites might exult over their destruction. And all this to show that *Jahveh* was the great God, and that the Jews were exclusively his "chosen people."

For what had the Egyptians done to deserve such treatment? That God had hardened "Pharaoh's heart" is the only explanation vouchsafed to us respecting this Bible horror.

And so the poor Egyptians had to suffer, not through any fault of their own or of Pharaoh's, but through a fault attributable to the Bible God alone.

Wanton slaughter recorded in the Bible is of two kinds—that which was perpetrated by the hand of Jehovah himself and that to which he gave his explicit sanction. The slaughter of the Amalekites by Joshua had the approval of Deity; the uplifted hand of Moses, tightly clutching "the rod of the Lord," was enough to win the support of Jehovah, who was always on the side of injustice and tyranny. This, in all conscience, was frightful enough. But mark what soon follows. Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders have had an interview with the Lord. From the summit of an exceedingly high mountain they had witnessed his great glory. They beheld the feet of the Infinite God!

Moses even received the commandments written by the finger of God upon great tablets of stone. While Moses is thus interviewing the great God of the Jews, Aaron is down on the earth among the people, seeking to satisfy their craving for a real God—one they could see and handle, and one who could assist them in the time of trouble; for, notwithstanding their piety, their minds were sorely disturbed by doubts and misgivings concerning the God whom Moses had spoken of so often, but who appeared to be so far above the clouds that nobody could get at him. Aaron, with Jewish simplicity, thought that a golden god was the most appropriate for the children of Israel; he therefore undertook the task of making them a golden calf. Retribution, however, followed quickly; but, as is usual in Biblical matters, it fell on the wrong shoulders. No sooner did Moses discover that the "God in the skies" was doubted than he took a most effective way of removing all scepticism—a method which has been frequently adopted since his day.

Consider well these words:—

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of

Israel: Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exodus xxxii. 26-28).

Well might Jehovah in his commandments say, "I am a jealous God, who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children." And might he not have added "the sins of the priests upon the people"? No wonder the great poet of Freethought, Shelley, in a moment of inspiration, exclaimed:—

"The name of God  
Has fenced about all crime with holiness;  
Himself the creature of his worshipers;  
Whose names and attributes and passions change—  
Sveva, Buddha, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord—  
Even the human dupes who build his shrines,  
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world  
For Desolation's watchword; whether hosts  
Stain his death-blushing chariot wheels, as on  
Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise  
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;  
Of countless partners of his powers divide  
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke  
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,  
Unarmed old age, and youth and infancy,  
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven  
In honor of his name; or last and worst,  
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,  
And priests dare babble of a God of peace  
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,  
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ  
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,  
Making the earth a slaughter-house."

Yes, all this men have done in the name of God; and yet, if there be a God, such deeds must be regarded as the greatest blasphemy that could be conceived or uttered against such a being. Fortunately for man, we now know that all the gods are but figments of the imagination, and, like the baseless fabric of a dream, will ultimately vanish for ever from the human mind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### Acid Drops.

What a farce was that Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's Cathedral! Thousands of people voyage from one part of the world to another daily; indeed, it is too common an occurrence to attract any attention. But ordinary travellers do not enjoy all the precautions for safety that were taken on behalf of the King. He had a first-class liner, thoroughly overhauled, splendidly found, and more than amply manned, all to himself; and the first-class liner was closely attended night and day by several battleships. Accident was as far as possible eliminated. King George was as safe as ever a man was on the high seas. Science and art did their utmost. As little as might be was left to Providence. And in these circumstances it was a ridiculous thing to organise a big Thanksgiving Service in the biggest church in London for the King's safe return to what is grandly called the capital of his empire.

The chief performer at this Thanksgiving Service was the Archbishop of Canterbury. His sermon was a short one, for royalty doesn't tolerate too much of that sort of thing, not even by the Chief Priest of the Church of England. Nor was the Archbishop's utterance at all worth listening to. It consisted of extremely platitudinous matter couched in the most washy, sentimental language. We suppose His Grace studied the style of the *Daily Mail* for the occasion.

It was quite a relief to turn from the verbal slush of that histrionic old Anglican priest to the simple, earnest, and natural words of the Lady Mayoress of Belfast, begging the Protestant women of that city to do all they could towards preserving the peace on February 8. Nobody on earth could have improved it. From the first word to the last it rang true and perfect. Contempt for the Archbishop of Canterbury! But hats off to the Lady Mayoress of Belfast!

The Wood Green District Council, having before it a petition got up by the local Branch of the National Secular Society for the placing of the *Freethinker* upon the Free Library tables, has returned a negative answer. The petition included 161 signatures of ratepayers and residents, and more could have been obtained but the number was

thought sufficient as it stood. The letter accompanying the petition stated that "the *Freethinker* is a widely read journal whose principal aim is the discussion of theological and ethical matters freely and rationally with a view to the elimination of all superstition and hypocrisy." The Council's reply gives no reason for the decision to keep the *Freethinker* still excluded. Logically, therefore, it is presumable that the Council objects to the elimination of superstition and hypocrisy. We understand now.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton's centenary tribute to Dickens in the *Daily News* contained the following passage:—

"There is something about Dickens that is very great and in nothing more than this: that like that Master to whom he committed his soul in his will, he had a strong note of failure."

This is very slipshod writing. And the pious part of it is inaccurate. Dickens in his will did not commend his soul to "that Master." He "committed" his soul to "the mercy of God." We suppose "the Master" means Jesus Christ. So that personage, according to Mr. Chesterton, was in a way a failure. We more than endorse "G. K. C.'s" judgment. Jesus Christ was a failure in many ways.

Mr. William Watson, who went over to New York to read a new poem of his at the great Dickens celebration there, told the interviewers that the love of literature was at a low ebb in England:—

"There is absolute apathy and stagnation on the part of the English upper and middle classes in regard to literature. It was noticeable twenty-five years ago, and grows progressively more characteristic. English writers, except for a few popular novelists, are the most obscure people in the country, and are quite eclipsed by any member of the House of Commons, however precarious and brief his stay at Westminster. They do not read, and they do not care about reading. Everywhere muscle is put above mind. Young men are centred in athleticism, and those who do not participate in athletics are absorbed in watching those who do. In many circles an English gentleman who talked of books would be scorned."

This is true, but not the whole truth. Dickens still has an immense vogue, if we may believe publishers' reports of the sale of his works. Still, it is painful to read Mr. Watson's indictment.

The *Daily News* is the political organ of the Nonconformist Conscience. In its Dickens centenary article, however, it let the cat out of the bag as to the real value of party politics. "After all," it said, "the legislators are only the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. It is the seers, the prophets—the 'sentimentalists,' if you, Mr. Gradgrind, please—who send the spirit abroad that changes the thought of the world."

The same number of the *Daily News* reported the "Tragic End of a Reading Ex-Mayor." It was the case of a magistrate eighty years of age who died suddenly from heart failure. Nothing could be commoner. One wonders where the tragedy comes in—and why the *Daily News* cannot show decent respect to the English language.

The Archbishop of Canterbury comforts himself with the reflection that Catholics are not increasing in England in proportion to the population, but he warns Protestant parents against allowing their daughters to be educated at convent schools. Perhaps we should warn freethinking parents against allowing their children to be educated in Church schools. The Archbishop will know why without our telling him.

One of the immediate practical objects of the National Secular Society is the extension of the moral law to animals. What will its members think of the following figures taken from the *Daily News* of Wednesday, February 7? The Pasteur Institute in Paris uses up 20,000 guinea pigs a year in vivisectional and other "experiments." It also uses up 20,000 mice, 15,000 rabbits, 10,000 rats, 500 monkeys, 400 dogs, 400 to 500 chickens, 400 to 500 pigeons, 100 cats, 50 goats, 100 sheep, 100 horses, 20 geese, and 50 pigs. What a holocaust! These poor helpless animals are considered a "sacrifice to science." They are rather a sacrifice to a lust of knowledge which is no more respectable than any other lust. One is rather glad, on the whole, that Pasteur was a friend of religion and a patron of the Church.

Rev. C. W. Screech (ominous name!) has been preaching at the Peckham Rye Tabernacle on the late discussion on another reverend gentleman's motion that the Camberwell Borough Council should open its proceedings with prayer. The preacher is distressed, nay annoyed, nay angry, at his

religious beliefs being treated without due solemnity. They are serious to those who believe in them; therefore they should be serious to those who don't believe in them. Such is the reverend gentleman's logic. His accuracy and honesty are of a similar character. He parades a quotation from Mr. Foote—taken from a pamphlet which we are confident he has never read or seen—without telling his readers that it was written nearly forty years ago, and that Mr. Foote has unsaid it again and again since. Mr. Screech's methods would prove Sir Edward Carson a Liberal, Joseph Chamberlain a Radical, and Sir Conan Doyle an anti-Home Ruler. Perhaps we should excuse him on the ground of his religious training. What is Christianity but a worship of the past at the expense of the present?

Fortunately the *Camberwell Advertiser* which reports Mr. Screech's sermon prints directly after it a capital letter from Councillor A. B. Moss. Mr. Moss complains that the local ministers of religion prefer to answer him from their "coward's castles" rather than in the local press. This is cruel, Mr. Moss,—cruel! Why should you expect them to court danger? Don't you know that self-preservation is the first law of nature?

Natal Mohammedans have held a mass meeting and passed the following resolution:—

"This meeting of Mohammedans of Natal respectfully invites the attention of the Imperial Government to the Italian operations in Arabia, even approaching the holy city of Mecca, and to the fact that these operations are calculated specially to offend the religious sentiments of the whole Mohammedan world, and hopes that the Imperial Government, being the custodian of the interests of the largest number of Mohammedans in the world, will take effective diplomatic steps to prevent Italy from carrying out her designs, and, if possible, to bring about a cessation of Italian aggression, which has been universally held to be totally unjustifiable and in defiance of all canons of civilisation."

This would be amusing if it were not so tragic. Mohammedans calling upon one Christian Power to keep another from wanton aggression and outrage on the fundamental principles of civilisation! And the worst of it is that the Christian Power thus appealed to cannot make any sort of reply.

We said last week that Glasgow is evidently in a bad way. A speaker at the Glasgow Presbytery said the position was becoming intolerable. People were crowding to cinematograph exhibitions on Sundays in their thousands. In the centre of the city they had a popular Sunday evening concert "without any pretence of religion about it." "The practice was becoming very serious, and the Church ought to take a stand. Sunday evening entertainments were becoming a menace to the religion of Christ in Glasgow." One can dimly picture the feelings and faces of this assemblage of elders as they listened to the various speakers retailing the disasters that were overtaking "the religion of Christ" in Glasgow. How they must long for the good old times when people were hauled to Church on Sunday, fined for profane enjoyment on Saturday night because it was near Sunday, and censured for the same offence on Monday morning because Sunday had only just passed. And how on earth can they expect the all-powerful, all-conquering Gospel to be proof against the attractions of a concert or a cinematograph show? Glasgow, we repeat, is in a bad way.

"God does not see us as we are in ourselves," explains Professor David Smith. This must be very gratifying intelligence to quite a number of Christians. They will get into heaven as some servants get situations—by using a character belonging to someone else. It will also relieve them from an uneasy suspicion of what would have happened had Jesus seen some of them before he died for their sakes. He might not have considered it worth the trouble.

The *Times* representative at the Thanksgiving service in St. Paul's, wrote a protest against the placing of all the representatives of the press in a position where not one of them could get "a solitary glimpse of their Majesties, or any member of the Royal party, or of the procession, except the tops of the crosses." This is sad, but we are glad to see that it did not stop a number of the newspapers publishing a detailed account of the proceedings, with a description of everything that occurred, from their representatives in the Cathedral. Perhaps, however, the descriptions were written before the ceremony took place. And it would have been a pity to waste so much copy because of a small detail like the one complained about. One of the good points of our press is that whether the thing is seen or not, "An Impression, by Our Own Correspondent," is certain to be forthcoming.

Dr. R. F. Horton has discovered a way out of the gravest of our social troubles. He says, if the wealthy classes will only say, "It is true we are rich, we have advantages, we have privileges, we have ancestral dignities, and for that our reason here is our property, here are our riches and privileges for the good of men; let the country, let us suffer," this will so "melt the heart of the country" that the poorest man in England will be anxious to deal gently with them. This is very touching, but we haven't noticed any rush of millionaires in response to the appeal of this intelligent social reformer.

Earl Spencer has resigned the Lord Chamberlainship. And no wonder. The attack on the stupid censorship of plays has become too hot for flesh and blood, not exactly in want of money, to stand it any longer. Of course Mr. Bernard Shaw was promptly interviewed on the subject. He said that the censorship was "so utterly impossible that if you appointed the Angel Gabriel as Lord Chamberlain you would have just exactly the same results as happened under Earl Spencer." This seemed to require a little qualification, and Shaw quickly provided it. "I don't mean to suggest, of course," he added, "that Lord Spencer is in any way inferior to the Angel Gabriel." Not even, we may add, if the latter uttered all the celestial talk that Milton put into his mouth in *Paradise Lost*.

Considering the attitude of the *Referee* towards "blasphemers" it is curious what we sometimes see printed in its pages. "Percival" who signs the weekly article from Paris often sails extremely near the wind, and it is perfectly obvious that he would go further if he could. Last week his column was headed "Highly Colored.—Virgins at the Odéon." He cracks a few sorry jokes, such as the venerable "chestnut" about "seeing more" of a young lady presently, and gives what he evidently thinks a witty account of the new play "Esther, Princess of Israel." Ahasuerus the king orders his wife Vashti (one has read about this story in a certain Sacred Book) to dance before his courtiers with precious little clothes on; she refuses and is killed on the spot. Then the king "cast the glad eye" at old Mordecai's niece Esther, who "receives instructions to prevent Ahasuerus from amusing himself by slaughtering the whole Jewish race" and "she succeeded all right." But the cream of "Percival's" wit is in his reference to the dancing "virgins." The word tickles this *Referee* gentleman amazingly. He says they were so good looking, so apt to "distract" the king; in fact, they would have distracted "Percival." He says so himself, and we see no reason for disbelieving him. Virgins, indeed, must be very scarce in the society in which this gentleman moves. "I wonder," he exclaims in conclusion, "where the Odéon management found all those virgins." Such is the chaste humor of the orthodox *Referee*.

The *Methodist Times* heads a leading article "The Woman's Cause a Religious Issue." We do not deny that it has often been made a religious issue, but the religious influence has been all on the wrong side. It was making the question a religious issue that set back the emancipatory movement of the old Roman Empire and set up the Church-led legislation of the Middle Ages which robbed woman of most legal rights and made a wife one of her husband's possessions. Pagan legislation never forbade a woman teaching, or ordered her to be silent in public and learn of her husband at home. This was Christian teaching. Nor did the Pagan writers ever load her with the abuse that did the early Christian writers. The religious prejudice developed by Christian teaching has, indeed, been one of the principal objects that advanced women of recent years have had to fight. We agree with the *Methodist Times* writer that "succeeding ages will look back upon this issue as the decisive battle between civilisation and barbarism." And we think they will also be inclined to use barbarism and Christianity, in this connection, as synonymous terms.

Professor A. F. Pollard, in his little book, *The History of England; A Study in Political Evolution*, administers a pretty rap to those pious politicians and professional preachers who talk of the Church as the Collective Conscience and Moral Guide of the community. He points out that, as a matter of fact, "the State has largely taken the place of the Church as the organ of the collective conscience of the community," and he points out that the Church is ill-fitted to be a reliable guide in morals. For instance, "The eighth commandment is never applied to such genteel delinquencies as making a false return of income, or defrauding a railway company, or cheating the customs, but is reserved for the graver offences which no member of the congregation is likely to have committed; and it is left to the State to provide by warning and penalty against

neglect of one's duty to one's neighbor when one's neighbor is not one individual but by the sum of all."

The statement is most true, and the sum of it is that all the duties of life are gradually being secularised. For the State, however the truth may be disguised, is the secular organ of a secular fact. And the fact of the secularisation of the State is, in itself, decisive proof of the ineffectiveness, if not the worthlessness, of religion. The State has not voluntarily grasped at functions that were once looked upon as belonging to religion. It has been forced to action by the sheer breakdown of religion. And what is true of the State is true of secular agencies that have grown up within. All the arguments of philosophers as to the independence of morals would never have displaced the Churches as moral teachers had their teaching of morals been effective. But the conclusions of scientists and philosophers were enforced by the everyday experience of thoughtful people. They saw morality narrowed and distorted by religious influence. So long as a man did not openly break the seventh commandment, and kept on a nodding acquaintance with the rest, he might still be counted a pillar of the faith. The logic of life enforced the logic of science; a real social consciousness began to develop, and, although the Churches are now striving hard to exploit this, the exclusion of religion from social life proceeds. This is really the most significant fact in all civilised countries.

The following is from the Milan correspondent of the *London Daily Chronicle* :—

"If I order an ordinary funeral, probably few will follow me to my grave, and fewer still will shed a tear; whereas if I order a merry one, a crowd of poor devils will enjoy a pleasant time."

"With these reflections Signor Ubaldo Samori, a broker who has died in Modigliana, left in his will £1,000 to the local hospital and instructions for all ecclesiastical ceremony to be dispensed with. At least 600 pints of the best wine were to be doled out to allcomers at his funeral."

"Along the processional route to the cemetery the news quickly spread, and several thousands of people flocked around the canteen wagon that followed immediately in the rear of a first-class hearse according to the deceased's wishes. The procession halted every few minutes whilst drinks were served out all round. The mourners were toasted and hurrahs were given for the departed benefactor."

"The crowd sang Neapolitan comic songs and patriotic ditties, the cortège taking a full half day to reach the burial place."

This may not be an ideal way of conducting a funeral, but it is better than the hypocrisy of grief too often displayed. The *Chronicle* correspondent adds that "merry funerals" are becoming popular in Italy. He gives other instances. One wealthy Turinese company promoter left a large sum of money for a grand banquet to the shareholders of his concerns, provided the feast took place on the night of his funeral.

The Rev. James Groat, of Kendall, deeply regrets the absence of artizans from church services. We fancy we have read somewhere that spiders also have regretted the absence of flies from their front parlors.

The Chester Diocesan Conference complains of dry rot in newly built churches. We had no notion that this was peculiar to newly built churches. We have heard complaints of it in churches that have been standing for centuries.

There is deep satire in the heading of a news paragraph in a London morning journal :—

"100 ARBORS KILLED.

"WORK OF BRITISH EXPEDITION ACCOMPLISHED."

It is perfect as it is.

General Booth has made such a success of the Colony at Boxted that he is going to start one in India. By-and-bye he may turn his attention to Mars. Perhaps the moon would be more appropriate.

Rev. C. P. S. Clarke, vicar of High Wycombe, begs all his congregation to join in the singing. Never mind the result. The Lord is long-suffering. "No one," the reverend gentleman says, "could make a worse noise than I do." We are willing to believe him on his word.

A. H. Villiers, in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, writing on behalf of the Catholic Church, admits that "the punishments inflicted by the Inquisition were cruel according to modern ideas, but not according to the criminal code of the age." Perhaps he will now explain what mark of divinity

there is about a Church which is never a whit better, and sometimes worse, than the world which surrounds it.

We have been favored with a marked copy of the *Socialist*, which seems to be the very Ishmael of Socialism, for its hand is against nearly every conspicuous man in that movement. Hyndman himself is charged with "colossal conceit." We need not be angry, therefore, at finding that "Mr. G. W. Foote, of the *Freethinker*, suffers from an enlarged head." We merely remark that this is better than suffering from no head at all.

According to a Reuter telegram from Tokio, the Vice-Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Tokonami, has issued a circular to the press suggesting that Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity, should be mixed up into a new religion. It is a very curious document, and we believe our readers will thank us for reproducing it :—

"In order to bring about an affiliation of the three religions, it is necessary to connect religion with the State more closely, so as to give it [religion] added dignity, and thus impress upon the public the necessity of attaching greater importance to religious matters. The culture of national ethics can be perfected by education combined with religion. At present moral doctrines are inculcated by education alone, but it is impossible to inculcate firmly, fair and upright ideas in the minds of the nation unless the people are brought into touch with the fundamental conception known as God, Buddha, or Heaven, as taught in the religions. It is necessary, therefore, that education and religion should go hand in hand to build up the basis of the national ethics, and it is therefore desirable that a scheme should be devised to bring education and religion into closer relations to enable them to promote the national welfare."

"All religions agree in their fundamental principles, but the present-day conceptions of morals differ according to the time and place, and according to the different points of view. It is ever evolving. It may, therefore, be necessary for Shinto and Buddhism to carry their steps towards Western countries."

"Christianity ought also to step out of the narrow circle within which it is confined, and endeavor to adapt itself to the national sentiments and customs and to conform to the national policy, in order to ensure greater achievements. Japan has adopted a progressive policy in politics and economics in order to share in the blessings of Western civilisation. It is desirable to bring Western thought and faith into harmonious relationship with Japanese thought and faith in the spiritual world."

The *Daily News* makes the ridiculous comment that Japan "has failed in attempting to inculcate morality independently of the aid of a 'revealed' religion." The great men who made Japan what she is would have laughed at this criticism. For our own part, we regard this circular as a sign that the Westernisation of Japan has already gone too far. Her present-day statesmen are beginning to wish to imitate the West in treating religion as a sort of moral police agency—to keep the mob in order.

We see by our valued Belgian exchange, *La Pensée*, that the clerical organ, *De Tijd*, of Amsterdam, is alarmed at the growth of Freethought in Holland. "We must class as a frightful fact," that journal says, "the increase in the number of persons who have declared that they belong to no religious body, or what amounts to the same thing, that they are totally without religion. In ten years their number has risen from 115,000 to nearly 291,000. If that continues—and there is, alas! no sign that the progress of scepticism is soon to be arrested, especially in the most numerous social classes—the time will come when it may be said that the people of Holland is largely composed of absolute disbelievers and persons destitute of religion." This is bad news for *De Tijd*; it is good news for the *Freethinker*. Circumstances alter cases.

From a note by Mr. J. P. Morton in the *New York Truth-seeker* we learn that "in spite of special efforts made during the past year, and an exceptionally vigorous campaign waged in the United States and Canada, the money wasted on foreign missions in 1911 showed a decrease of nearly \$200,000 for the world as a whole, and the smallest increase in North America for many years."

Terah Hooley's father must have been pious or he would never have given his child that name. Terah is pious also. He once gave a costly gold communion service to St. Paul's Cathedral. He will not miss piety in the place where he is now spending twelve months.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is trying to find the "Christian road" to social reform. When he finds it he will tell everybody. Meanwhile there is balm for his hurt mind in £15,000 a year.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements**

Sunday, February 18, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: at 3, "Milton, Byron, and Burns on the Devil"; at 6.30, "God and Humanity."

February 25, Birmingham.

March 3, Liverpool; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall; 24, Leicester.

April 14, Glasgow.

**To Correspondents.**

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 18, Queen's Hall; 25, Glasgow. March 3, Queen's Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 25, Queen's Hall. March 3, West Ham; 10, Manchester; 31, Queen's Hall. April 21, West Ham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £68 14s. 4d. Received since:—C. and H. Shepherd, 7s. 6d.; G. R. Harker, £2 2s.; Miss Harriet Baker, 10s.; Mrs. Capon, 5s.; F. Rose (Bloemfontein), 10s. 6d.; C. T. Hall, £1 10s.; A. D. Corrick, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Harden, £2 2s.; G. Hollamby, 10s.

NEMO.—You say you have read the *Freethinker* for twenty-five years with much profit. Well, go on reading it, and don't splutter savage nonsense because for once it has displeased you.

J. IRELAND.—We thank you for your letter, but it did not serve our purpose to refer to the 78th Psalm in our *Bible Romances* chapter on "The Ten Plagues." We preferred to take the Exodus story as it stood. Everybody knows of the ten plagues, which is a good reason for not making the number twelve.

C. AND H. SHEPHERD.—Accidentally omitted last week.

W. STEWART.—We have dealt with the Wood Green matter in "Acid Drops." Thanks for your services in raising the question again.

C. D.—(1) Why should it be "quoted against us for many a long day"? The "name" is not the adjective but the noun; that is, not the "obscene" but the "literature." (2) Symes was quite right in the passage, if his language be read strictly. For our part, we think "the laws of nature" is one of the most mischievous expressions ever invented. (3) Glad to see your handwriting again.

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

We told a correspondent lately that the sentence "But of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical" occurred in one of Robert Burns's letters. We now add that it occurs in the letter to Mr. Cunningham, dated September 10, 1792.

J. R. HOLMES.—We said that you quoted Ingersoll. We note that Whittier's poem, *The Preacher*, implies that Whitefield was in favor of slavery. Thanks for addresses.

G. R. HARKER.—See "Acid Drops." We are obliged.

T. G. THOMAS.—Glad you have gained two good friends through the *Freethinker*. It is wise to look with suspicion on all Christian reports of religious prospects in the East.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. TOMKINS.—We had seen it, but thanks all the same. Mrs. Besant's pamphlet we saw at the time.

A. S.—John Peck is an American Freethinker.

A. D. CORRICK.—You should not be deterred; introduce yourself the very next opportunity. With regard to telepathy, we are not aware of any thoroughly established instance. Even if there were it would not prove anything "spiritual." Thanks for your appreciation and good wishes.

R. H. W.—Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation and Legacy to Parsons* can be got cheaply. The Liberation Society's list of publications should also contain something to suit you. The great difficulty in getting at the actual figures of Church revenues lies in the opposition of the clergy to a real inquiry.

MR. AND MRS. HARDEN.—Thanks for your "best wishes for health and success."

J. T. LLOYD.—Perhaps you will send in the usual obituary notice after the funeral of our venerable friend Deane.

Some correspondence stands over unavoidably 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 Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. Foote lectures in the Secular Hall, Manchester, to-day (Feb. 18), and will doubtless have his usual large audiences there. His subjects are fresh and attractive. On the following Sunday (Feb. 25) Mr. Foote delivers two lectures in the great Birmingham Town Hall. Midland "saints" will please note.

The new course of lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall is not in full swing yet, but Mr. Foote had a good audience, and a highly appreciative one, on Sunday evening. Mr. Cohen occupies the platform this evening (Feb. 18), his subject being "Materialism and Life." Mr. Lloyd follows Mr. Cohen on Feb. 25.

Mr. W. Mann's letter in last week's *Freethinker* drew attention to the Chapter on the Inquisition which filled Parts XV. and XVI. in the original issue of *Crimes of Christianity* in monthly penny parts. Eighteen parts appeared in that form altogether. The text of the first thirteen parts was revised and included in the bound Vol. I., the only one that has been in circulation. The other numbers, revised and brought up to date, will form a portion of Vol. II., which we hope to complete when we have dropped some of the mere drudgery of our present work. Meanwhile, acting as far as possible on Mr. Mann's suggestion, we will reprint the long chapter (thirty-two pages) on the Inquisition in the *Freethinker*, beginning next week. Perhaps our friends will make this reprint an occasion for introducing the paper to their more liberal minded friends and acquaintances.

The Bethnal Green Branch is having a Tea and Social Evening on Sunday, March 3, at the King's Assembly Rooms, Mile-end-road. The tickets are one shilling each, and are obtainable of Mr. J. Neate, 385 Bethnal Green-road.

The West Ham Branch will hold a social on Saturday evening, February 24, in the Canning Town (Minor) Hall, Barking-road. A capital program has been arranged, and all Freethinkers are heartily invited. Admission is free. Doors open at 7, commence 7.30.

The "social" at Anderton's Hotel on Monday evening, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, was a distinct success. Music and readings gave pleasure to the elder Freethinkers present, and dancing added to the evening's entertainment for the younger ones. We have no room for a longer report.

We have pleasure in calling attention to Mrs. T. Billington Greig's lectures to-day (Feb. 18) for the Glasgow Branch. Her noonday subject is "Modern Woman and the Church" and her evening subject "The Present Tendency Towards Coercion." We hope "Teresa Billington" will be welcomed by large audiences.

Mr. H. S. Salt's excellent pamphlet on "The Case Against Corporal Punishment" is just published by the Humanitarian League at the price of twopence. Like all this author's productions, it is very thoughtful, well-written, and stimulating. We trust it will have a wide circulation.

We are glad to see an excellent letter in defence of Free-thought from the pen of Mr. Frederic W. Walsh in the *Leamington Chronicle*.

The annual meeting of the Rationalist Peace Society was held at 167 St. Stephen's House, Victoria Embankment, on Thursday evening, February 8. There was a good attendance, and the Report and Balance-Sheet were adopted with great cheerfulness. Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., who was not able to attend, was re-elected President, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner was reappointed Chairman of the Executive Committee, which includes H. J. Bridges, G. W. Foote, S. A. Gimson, F. J. Gould, J. F. Green, G. G. Greenwood, M.P., W. Heaford, Miss Kough, John Russell, H. Snell, and S. H. Swinny. Mr. E. G. Smith was re-elected honorary secretary. Brief speeches by Mrs. Bonner, Mr. Foote, Mr. Heaford, and Mr. Swinny, brought the meeting to an enthusiastic close. We may add that the Society has over two hundred members already, and has thus two representatives on the General Peace Council. But a large increase of members is hoped for in 1912. The subscription is only one shilling a year as a minimum. The secretary's address is 38 Cursitor-street, E.C.

## Missions.

STUDENTS of Foreign Missions, and there are many among the readers of the *Freethinker*, will be interested in learning that there is a new quarterly review for them to study and criticise.

W. T. Stead is an interesting personality and a clever journalist, but on some things he is the most hopeless obscurantist that ever spoilt a ream of paper. His obsessions in favor of Russia and Foreign Missions are as solid as his belief in Julia, and as useful to his age.

In the January number of the *Review of Reviews*, he gives a column to a notice of the first issue of the *International Review of Missions*, edited by J. H. Oldham, M.A., and published by Frowde.

He says the new review is as far as can be conceived from the sort of missionary paper which delighted or bored our infancy.

That is something to be thankful for. It suggests that missionaries and missionary societies have, if no more honesty than of old, something of a reasonable fear of the press of to-day, which is able in the remotest parts of the world to get on to, and nail down, the bald, audacious lying with which children were dosed, thirty, forty, and fifty years ago.

He (W. T. Stead) says that—

"Even the most cynical scoffer at foreign missions would profit by a dogged perusal of this first number. He would find that the problems before the world involved in the endeavor to evangelise it, demand the most strenuous application and will, as well as the driving power of the religious heart."

There is no good in mincing words over this; the statement thus made is simply clotted bosh. The "heart" is not religious; it is a stupid figure of speech which simply tends to fog people, and will not in any way appease the cynical scoffer at foreign missions, who denies, sans phrase, the right of mischief-breeding evangelisers to involve us in trouble, expense, and war, to solve problems which never should, never would, arise but from their most mischievous and most idle work.

There are plenty of Bourbons to day, people who never forget and never learn, and the latest proof of the old axiom is in the review-article itself, to say nothing of at least a dozen passages which can be quoted from other pages of the *Review of Reviews*.

Reference is made to one—an article by the Right Hon. James Bryce (p. 58)—and all one can say is, after reading the column and a half notice and extracts, that the Christian humanitarian who can gather any satisfaction from Mr. Bryce, by way of defence, must be a supreme optimist or an astounding hypocrite. It is as complete an indiotment, in its way, of white men and white methods, as is a passage given on p. 15; a "Progress of the World" note, which has as its marginal "A Threatened Outrage on Humanity," deals with a passage in a recent issue of the *Transvaal Leader*.

In that, the writer is regretting the shortage of labor, and suggests a plentiful supply of liquor; "give him liquor, and he will soon sink down to his original savagery," on which, says Mr. Stead, "A more damnable doctrine was never enunciated in Hell." Mr. Stead apparently does not see that the Right Hon. J. Bryce says much the same thing in the new missionary review itself; only he takes more words to say it.

The Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner deals with "Christianity and Islam," and draws comparisons, of course, most favorable to the Christian cult, "but at the same time has to dwell on the absolute importance of insistence on 'Monotheism.'" Is this another blow at the three incomprehensibles? If not, why "dwell"?

President Tasuka Harada, of Kyoto, deals with "Christianity in Japan," and we are glad to note what this authority admits. He declares—

"that Japan is far from being a Christian nation; in some respects she is more anti-Christian than ever since 1873. Then there was unreasoning antipathy.

Now there is a reasoned opposition. The victory or defeat of Christianity in Japan will largely determine the future of Christianity in the whole of the Far East."\*

We are quite open to accept that gage, and feel pretty confident as to the result.

Miss Agnes de Sélinecourt deals with the women question in the national movements of the East. We need only look to France to feel how that influence will finally work out.

We have not yet had a chance to have a "dogged perusal" of the first number, but we surely will, and other sweaters of the home labor market may be satisfied at what comes out of it; certainly no one with a grain of logic, common sense, or honesty can shut up the *Review of Reviews* for January, 1912, with any very hopeful feeling as to the survival of Christianity.

T. SHORE.

## Madame Blavatsky.—II.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

Sub-Editor of the "*Freethinker*" and Author of the "*Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*," etc.

(Concluded from p. 92.)

THE path to the possession of Mahatmaship was confessedly a hard one. Few members of the Theosophical Society could boast that their lives had been completely chaste, even in dreams, or that they had never taken alcoholic liquors, never touched animals, never partaken of animal food, and never worn the product of the sacred cow, all of which things, and far more, was necessary for the blossoming of this "efflorescence of the human race." No wonder gentlemen like Mr. Sinnett preferred the shorter cut of pumping the Hindu adepts, Madame Blavatsky being the channel of communication with the blessed occult brothers. The letters of the Mahatma, Koot Hoomi, were certified by experts as being in the handwriting of Madame Blavatsky. On many points an outsider could judge as well as an expert. Thus H. P. B. wrote: "Olcott says you speak very well English"; K. H. wrote: "One who understands tolerably well English." She wrote: "thiefs," so did K. H.; "defense," so did K. H. She wrote: "So more the pity for those"; he, "So more the pity for him," etc. One of Koot Hoomi's letters, giving out original revelations, was almost word for word a plagiarism from a speech delivered by Mr. H. Kiddle, some months previously, at a spiritist camp meeting at Lake Pleasant, in America, and reported in the *Banner of Light*, which exchanged with H. P. B.'s *Theosophist*. Her explanation, that the astral spirit of Koot Hoomi had been at Mount Pleasant, only made matters worse.

To meet the demand for occult teaching, a new edition of *Isis Unveiled* was promised. I have before me the *Philosophic Inquirer*, Madras, February 17, 1884, in which is advertised "*The Secret Doctrine*, a new version of *Isis Unveiled*, with a new arrangement of the matter, large and important additions and copious notes and commentaries by H. P. Blavatsky, assisted by T. R. Subba Row Garu, B.A., B.L., F.T.S." Mr. Subba Row subsequently discovered H. P. B.'s fraud, and withdrew from the Society. *The Secret Doctrine* proved to contain a totally different doctrine from that in *Isis Unveiled*, and one which was even more a work of imagination.

The new religion was heralded by signs and wonders. The power of adepts to recreate matter was shown by the reproduction of broken saucers and vases in the occult shrine at the headquarters, Adyar. The shrine was simply that familiar device of conjurers, the "trick cabinet." It had three sliding panels in the back. This Madame admitted; they were "for convenience of packing in case of removal." It was fixed against the wall of her bedroom, and just

\* Just while correcting this comes news of a proposition to make a new soup for silly sinners, composed of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

behind it was a recess in the wall lightly boarded over, which had once been a window. On the other side, in Madame Blavatsky's room, was a sideboard with a false back. There was a hole in the boarding big enough to admit a person into the recess, and a hole in the boarding, on the shrine side, big enough to let an arm through to manipulate the sliding panels. All this, when discovered, it was said, was made after H. P. B. had left, in order to defame her. For the revelations of her fraud by an accomplice, Madame Coulomb, at length compelled her to leave India. These revelations were accompanied by proof in the shape of letters. The letters were afterwards denied as forgeries. If so, they were the most clever and purposeless forgeries ever perpetrated. But they, too, were certified by experts to be in H. P. B.'s writing, and they were corroborated by Mr. Hodgson, who was sent out by the Psychical Research Society, of London, to investigate the occult phenomena alleged to have taken place at Adyar. One instance must suffice.

On May 26, 1883, Colonel Olcott writes: "Fine phenomenon. Got pair of tortoise-shell and lacquer vases, with flowers, in a cabinet, a moment before empty." When the sorceress was confronted with the statement that Madame Coulomb had herself purchased these vases, and that the Mahatmas had nothing to do with sending them by occult agency, she replied that Madame Coulomb had tried to obtain vases like them, but failed; and that she (Madame C.) had purchased one pair of vases afterwards, and that they differed in shape, etc., from those received by Colonel Olcott. Mr. Hodgson, however, discovered who was lying by going to the establishment where Madame Coulomb said she had purchased them. He was shown the entries in the books of the firm, and writes: "Madame Coulomb therefore purchased the vases on May 25; Colonel Olcott received them on May 26." Comment is unnecessary.

Mr. Hodgson, who investigated the whole business in India with great care, came to the conclusion that "her real object had been the furtherance of Russian interests." He first noticed "her sudden and curious excitement at the news of the recent Russian movement upon the Afghan frontier," and he says: "Madame Blavatsky's momentary emotional betrayal of her sympathies in the onset of her excitement was not rendered less significant by the too strongly-impressed 'afterstroke' of a quite uncalled-for vituperation of the Russians, who, she said, would be the death-blow of the Society if they got into India." Mrs. Besant curiously defended H. P. B. from the charge of being a Russian agent by stating in the *Chronicle* of September 25, 1891, that "many Indian Theosophists, by Madame Blavatsky's advice, enrolled for service, if needed, to repel a Russian invasion during Afghan troubles." This was letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. The Russian lady used her secret society in Bombay and Madras to repel an invasion on the Afghan frontier. These were truly extraordinary precautions against Russian invasion. It was doubtless with a similar object Madame Blavatsky wrote continually to Russia. A facsimile of a fragment which came into the hands of Mr. Hodgson is given in the third volume of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. It reads as follows:—

"Military men, more than any other, must remember that the approaching act of the Eastern drama is to be the last and the decisive one; that it will require all our efforts, every sacrifice on our part, and requires more careful preparation in every direction than did the last war. They must remember that to sit idle now, when everyone has to be busily preparing, is the highest of crimes, a treason to Rus, their country, and their Czar. He who hath ears to ear let him....."

In the facsimile it may be noticed that the word "Rus" is crossed out, and the word "Czar" written so that it might be taken for "God."

Mr. Hodgson quotes another letter, which begins: "Is our friend a Sikh? If so, the fact that he should be, as you say, very much pleased to learn the object

of our Society, is not at all strange. For his ancestors have for centuries been—until their efforts were paralysed by British domination, that curse of every land it fastens itself upon—battling for the divine truths against external theologies....." The letter concludes: "Could you not hook out for your Bombay Branch either Gwalior (Scindia) or the Holkar of Indore—those most faithful and loyal friends of the British (?)."

It was the discovery of her impostures, and not her political work, which forced Madame to fly from India. She had been watched in a most bungling fashion. Mr. Sinnett says he pitied the unhappy police-officer who was employed to watch her. He observes:—

"She pursued this officer with sarcasms all the while that he, in the performance of his irksome duty, pursued her in her vague and erratic wanderings. She would offer him bags or letters to examine, and address him condolences on the miserable fate that condemned him to play the part of a *mouchard*. I suspect, from what I heard at Simla at the time, that the Bombay Government must have been treated by the superior authorities to remarks that were anything but complimentary on the manner in which they conducted this business."

No wonder this officer was ordered to be withdrawn; but we may be quite sure the Government fully appreciated her inducing Theosophists to enrol for service, if needed, to repel Russian invasion.

Professor Coues gives the following description of Madame Blavatsky as she appeared on her return from Europe: "Except for being immensely obese, in consequence of her gross habits, she was not a particularly ill-favored old witch when I met her in 1884. Remarkably small, pretty hands and feet for such a corporosity, though with long, dirty nails; suspicion of pug in the saucy nose; pale, restless eyes; flossy, yellow hair, tending to kink; Tartar face with high cheek bones, fat chops, and a dewlap, the latter always hidden by hand or fan in her photographs; stature medium; weight, perhaps, 250 pounds; harsh, strident voice; conversation profane and witty; temper abominable; odor of tobacco abiding; dress, a sort of a compromise between the robes of a Norma and a *robe de nuit*. Such is the general impression she made upon me in 1884, when she was about fifty-three."

The same writer goes on to say: "The ingredients of a successful charlatan are: no conscience, some brains, much courage, great industry, the corrosive sublimate of selfishness, vainglorious ambition, vivid imagination, good address, ready resources, monumental mendacity, and a pious, living faith in the love of mankind for being humbugged."

H. P. B. was a born romancer, and delighted in fooling the "flapdoodles," as she called those she swindled and despised. Mabel Collins, who for over a year co-edited *Lucifer* with her, said: "She taught me one great lesson: I learned from her how foolish, how 'gullible,' how easily flattered human beings are, taken *en masse*. Her contempt for her kind was on the same gigantic scale as everything else about her, except her marvellously delicate taper fingers. In all else she was a big woman; she had a greater power over the weak and credulous, a greater capacity for making black appear white, a larger waist, a more voracious appetite, a more confirmed passion for tobacco, a more ceaseless and insatiable hatred for those whom she thought to be her enemies, a greater disrespect for *les convenances*, a worse temper, a greater command of bad language, and a greater contempt for the intelligence of her fellow beings than I had ever supposed possible to be contained in one person."

Her lies were incessant. Thus she wrote in the *New York Graphic*, November 13, 1874: "When I was sixteen years of age they married me to M. Blavatsky. Fancy! He was seventy-three and I sixteen." She died at the age of sixty in 1891, and M. Blavatsky survives her. She says she lived with him three years at Tiflis, about 1863. As M. Solovyoff says: "It was always very easy to catch her lying, as she used constantly to forget her own words, assertions, and depositions (*Modern Priestess*, p. 110). With this gentleman, who, as her countryman, she

said, was sacred to her, and who, as a journalist, she was desirous to spread her fame in Russia, she appears to have been particularly unfortunate. Some clumsy tricks made him watchful of phenomena. Bavaji, her Hindu attendant, who knew no Russian, confessed that, at her instigation, he *drew* for his edification the words in Russian: "Blessed are they that believe, as said the Great Adept." But, omitting some letters, it read: "Blessed are they that lie." One day her famous "silver bell" was heard, when suddenly something fell beside her on the ground. He says: "I hurried to pick it up, and found in my hands a pretty little piece of silver, delicately worked and strangely shaped. Helena Petrovna changed countenance, and snatched the object from me. I coughed significantly, smiled, and turned the conversation to indifferent matters."

"Another time I said that I should like to have some of the real essence of roses made in India.

"I am so sorry," she said, "I have none with me. I do not like strong scents in general, and do not keep them. But I will not guarantee that you may not receive some essence of roses from India, such as you speak of, and that very soon."

"Watching her from this moment, I distinctly saw her open one of the drawers of her table and take something out. Then, some half-hour later, after having walked round me, she very gently and cautiously slipped some little object into my pocket. If I had not watched her every movement, and had not guessed why it was that she kept passing round me, I should probably not have noticed anything.

"However, I immediately produced from my pocket a little flat flask, opened it, smelt, and said: 'This is not essence of roses, Helena Petrovna, but oil of oranges; your "master" has made a mistake.'

"Eh, devil take it!" she exclaimed, unable to restrain herself."

She even permitted him to discover the Chinese envelopes, in which the elect used to receive the letters of the Mahatmas by "astral post." Taxed with it, he says: "She tried in vain to speak; she could only writhe helplessly in her great arm-chair." Asked to put an end to the comedy, she exclaimed: "But, then, if you think I do nothing but take in all the world, you must despise me!" "Why so?" he replied. "There is deceit and deceit, and there is trickery and trickery! To play the part you play, to make crowds follow you, to interest the learned, to found societies in distant lands, to start an entire movement—good gracious! Why, it is so out of the common that I am enraptured at you against my will. In all my life I have never met so extraordinary a woman as you, and I am sure I shall never meet another." In great excitement she exclaimed: "Yes, you have a very warm heart, and a very cool head; and it was not for nothing that we met"; and, after calling Olcott an ass and a blockhead, "If you will only come to my aid, we will astonish the world between us; we shall have everything in our hands."

"What is one to do," she said, "when in order to rule men it is necessary to deceive them, when in order to persuade them to let themselves be driven where you will you must promise them and show them playthings? Why, suppose my books and the *Theosophist* had been a thousand times more interesting and more serious, do you imagine I should have had any sort of success anywhere, if behind all that there had not been the "phenomena"? I should have done simply nothing. I should have long ago starved to death. They would have crushed me, and it would never have even occurred to anyone to think that I too was a living creature, that I too must eat and drink. But I have long, long since learnt to understand these dear people, and their stupidity sometimes affords me unbounded satisfaction. Why you are "not satisfied" with my phenomena; but do you know that almost invariably the more simple, the more silly, and the more gross the "phenomenon," the more likely it is to succeed! I may tell you such stories about this some day as will split your sides with laughter, indeed they will. The vast majority of people who are reckoned clever by themselves and others are inconceivably silly. If you only knew how many lions and eagles in every quarter of the globe have turned into asses at my whistle, and obediently wagged their great ears in time as I piped the tune!"

Reminded that she had been caught sometimes, and of her own carelessness and inattention, Helena Petrovna said:—

"Yes, I certainly am careless and inattentive; but others, with very, very rare exceptions, are far more inattentive than I am; they are just so many sleepy owls, so many blind men, and never observe anything at all. Would you believe that all this time, before and after the Theosophical Society's foundation, I have not met more than two or three men who knew how to observe and see and remark what was going on around them? It is simply amazing. At least nine out of ten people are entirely devoid of the capacity of observation, and of the power of remembering accurately what took place even a few hours before. How often it has happened that, under my direction and revision, minutes of various occurrences and phenomena have been drawn up; lo, the most innocent and conscientious people, even sceptics, even those who actually suspected me, have signed *en toutes lettres* as witnesses at the foot of the minutes. And all the time I knew that what had happened was not in the least what was stated in the minutes. Yes, my dear sir, I venture to assure you that in history, even the best attested, there is far more fancy than truth."

In such observations we may see not only the woman of the world, but the thinker, who was able to dupe even those with pretensions to culture and science.

Solovyoff asked her: "Are you alone the author of Koot Hoomi's letters, philosophical and otherwise?" "No; chelas used sometimes to help me—Damodar and Subba Rao and Mohini." "And Sinnett?" "Sinnett won't invent gunpowder; but he has a beautiful style, he is splendid at editing." "And Olcott?" "Olcott is not bad at editing either, when he understands what he is talking about. But one has always to chew everything for him till one is sick."

She showed Solovyoff the magic bell which he had already discovered. "Yes," she confessed, "that is my occult telegraph, through which I communicate with the 'master.'" She then asked him to prepare the ground for her to work in Russia. "Write more, louder, about the Theosophical Society; rouse their interest, and 'create' Koot Hoomi Russian letters. I will give you all the materials for them." Instead of answering, Solovyoff fairly ran away. She immediately sent Bavaji after him with a note, in which she showed her whole hand, telling him that, if he would only trust her, and see in her a résumé of all the so-called, imaginary, many masters, "then you, as a patriot, would perform an immense service to Russia also." Solovyoff interpreted this as an attempt to cover up her self-revealed exposure of fraud with a new mystification. He had previously deprecated the view of Mr. Hodgson that she was a Russian spy, "not," he is careful to say, "because I believe her incapable of playing such a part, but because, in the autumn of 1885, she was extremely anxious to become a secret agent of the Russian Government in India." "If she wished to become," he says, "it is plain that, up to that time, she was not." How naïve! Had M. Solovyoff known her American and Indian career, he might have seen a little further. Of course, having had to fly from India, Helena Petrovna was in disgrace with the controllers of the Secret Service, and wished to utilise Solovyoff to get reinstated.

This is how he reports what she said:—

"Look here, this is what it is," she began; "you are soon going to St. Petersburg; now do undertake a very important business of the greatest benefit to Russia. I wish to propose myself as a secret agent of the Russian Government in India. To promote the triumph of my country over those vile English I am capable of anything. I hate the English Government in India, with the missionaries; they are all my personal enemies, thirsting for my destruction. That alone is reason enough why I should throw my whole soul into the struggle with them. And that I can do them immense harm in India is certain; and I alone can do it, no one else is capable of the task. My influence on the Hindus is enormous; of that I can easily produce as much evidence as you will. At a sign from me, millions of Hindus would follow me. I can easily organise a gigantic rebellion. I will guarantee that in a year's

time the whole of India would be in Russian hands. Only they must give me the pecuniary means—I don't want much. You know how I am in this respect. And they must put it in my power to penetrate into India through Russia—for I can't go back there any other way since this affair of the Coulombs and the missionaries—and I will bring about one of the greatest events in history. I proposed the same thing before, some years ago, when Timasheff was still minister; but I did not receive any answer. But now, now it is much easier for me; I can arrange the whole thing in a year."

She thus confessed that she had years before offered her services as a secret agent to the Russian Government. It would have been unlike herself had she betrayed that the real purpose of the society was to spread in India a society with signs and pass words, and with the esoteric doctrine of the brotherhood of man, and the esoteric teaching, as expounded in the Introduction to the *Secret Doctrine*, p. xlv.: "We have not long to wait, and many of us will witness the Dawn of the New Cycle, at the end of which not a few accounts will be settled and squared between the races."

When the right moment came messages from the Mahatmas would have appeared, proclaiming a general rising. This is the established way in which political movements have been carried on in the East from time immemorial. Those have at best an imperfect comprehension of the Bible who do not recognise how much its prophecies were intended to bring about their own fulfilment.

M. Solovyoff admits that, in some respects, Madame Blavatsky appeared to be a subordinate. From his own book an impression is derived that she was something beyond the lying, fraudulent impostor which he nonetheless thoroughly proves her to have been. Despite her woeful failings, she was a woman of Titanic power, whose contempt for the mass of mankind was equalled by her own determination to make history. She has achieved a place beside her occult heroes, Cagliostro and St. Germain, and we can leave her with the charitable hope that, if her life could be seen from start to finish, she would be found more sinned against than sinning.

### Discordant Heresy.

*Discords*, by George Egerton. John Lane.

MANY readers of this journal will agree that strong meat in the literary world is seldom to be found. The hypocritical taste of book readers has to be tickled, and the British public either cries out aloud for extreme respectability or downright trash. Whilst browsing in the somewhat barren fields of the six-shilling novel, it was my good fortune to discover a book which might have been written by a Freethinker. It had an arresting title, and, although the final chapter is a glorious burst of harmony, *Discords*, for its name, was not ill-chosen.

The author, in an easy and lucid style, presents a few vignettes of life—not life in pleasant places, by any means—but to the orthodox reader they present conclusions which must inevitably blur even the eye of faith.

"Why did God make us when he knew we'd be wicked?" asks the little child of its mother, is one of the pertinent questions in the beginning of this unconventional novel. The mother soothes the little one with the answer that she must trust God; but the reply is weaker than the question coming from the child mind, as yet untouched by shallow sophistries.

The next scene is a German village, where a country fair is taking place.

To this a company of young girls have come from an adjacent *pensionnat* to enjoy themselves in the charge of "sisters." In describing one, Isabel, our author (the liberty will be pardoned) says:—

"The girl is a tall, anæmic-looking thing, but she carries her head well, and steps along like a thoroughbred filly. The sister stands and waits with her satel-

lites on each side; but her eyes stay with the girl. The latter is too sharp-tongued, too keen-eyed, too intolerant of meanness to be a favorite with her classmates—too independent a thinker, with too dangerous an influence over weaker souls, to find favor with the nuns."

This girl notices an idiot lad who is forced to grind out music for the roundabouts, and these labors cause his face to assume hideous aspects; and she asks herself if this misshapen wretch was truly made in the image of its Maker. Her mind revolts against the idea of the poor luckless creature grinding out music for the world to dance to and enjoy. The sight sickens her, and she runs away from the charge of the nuns and throws herself down at the foot of a great tree. "God, I tell you, you needn't have made him," she exclaims; and then follows a fierce denunciation of Him, which must cause great pain to those who believe that "He doeth all things well."

The nuns, sombre-robed and machine-like, are admirably sketched with the pen of this artist, who sees nothing laudable in their perverse life of self-sacrifice.

Jeremy Bentham crystallises man's heavenly ambitions when he says, "Stretching his hands out to catch the stars, man forgets the flowers at his feet." So it is with these; woman was ever the dupe of priests.

I shall be pardoned for giving one more extract from this virile book, coming as an oasis in the desert. "No Russian peasant bows more humbly to his ikon than does the average man and woman to the mangy idols of respectability, social distinctions, mediocre talent, with its self-advertisement and cheap popularity." The hungry parasites who live on the Cross, and pass for men and women of letters, ought to appreciate this. Through the floodgates of the press the annual output of writers of this class must be enormous.

I am digressing; our author relentlessly drives his points home. He sketches us tragedies which all conclude in giving the lie to God's beneficence.

In treating the theme of the fallen woman, his breadth and depth almost equal that of Shelley. The whole book is splendidly constructed. In the beginning we have unwholesome slices of life, the moral of which is always antagonistic to the reconciliation of man with God.

In the final chapter we have a perfect chord. It is left to the vagabond poet to point to the beauties of life, bereft of spiritual and false meaning. He castigates the jugglers with religion, priests shrieking from pulpits, and cardinals with their processions and trappings worth a king's ransom. "Do good for good's sake, without hope of heaven or fear of hell," is the poet's creed; this is but the echo of Thomas Paine. It is the creed which finds its lodging in the heart of every true Freethinker who has discarded Christian mummeries for earthly deeds, and who lives to make the best of his life. To the cosy legislators of piety and humility he will give no quarter or expect any.

This marvellous book closes with a carnival of roses, and one puts it down with the feeling that the author has girded at religion, and that quite successfully. He or she, for the identity is doubtful, has only skirmished on the edge of a battle-field where all good Freethinkers fight; but it is refreshing to know that the six-shilling novel is not completely monopolised by semi-religious charlatans.

J. W. REPTON.

### UNEXAMPLED COURAGE.

He was the small son of a bishop, and his mother was teaching him the meaning of courage.

"Supposing," she said, "there were twelve boys in one bedroom, and eleven got into bed at once, while the other knelt down to say his prayers, that boy would show true courage."

"Oh!" said the young hopeful, "I know something that would be more courageous than that! Supposing there were twelve bishops in one bedroom, and one got into bed without saying his prayers!"

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

**LONDON**  
INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Materialism and Life."  
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil."  
WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Gospels: Their Authenticity and Credibility."

**COUNTRY.**  
INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Clifford Williams, "Noah's Flood."  
GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. T. Billington Greig, 12 noon, "Modern Woman and the Church"; 6.30, "The Present Tendency Towards Coercion."  
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, C. J. Bond, F.R.C.S., "Socialism and Individualism from a Biological Standpoint."  
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. E. Killip, "What is the Bible Worth?"  
MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "Milton, Byron, and Burns on the Devil"; 6.30, "God and Humanity." Tea at 5.

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