

THE Freethinker

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Superstition is the child of ignorance and the mother of misery.—INGERSOLL.

Orthodox Nonsense.

IT is extraordinary what nonsense religious people will talk in praise of their own faith and in condemnation of "heresy" and "infidelity." We have been favored with a marked copy of the March number of the *Musical Observer*, containing an article on "Musical Aesthetics" by Robert Machardy. This gentleman writes as follows:—

"There is not a more hopeless phase of the character of a musical aspirant than an atheistic tendency. Atheistic characteristics kill the powers of immortal composition, deaden inspiration, and however cleverly written and mathematically correct the workmanship may be of compositions which are the product of an atheistic mind, the living faith of a Christian soul with its resplendent life and sublime repose will be absent from such compositions. Atheistic works are dead creations of a moribund mind."

Has this gentleman never heard of Beethoven and Wagner? Other names might be mentioned, but these two are enough to destroy his pious theory. Beethoven and Wagner are great names; most people, perhaps, would say the very greatest. Sir George Macfarren, in the *Dictionary of Universal Biography*, calls Beethoven a "Freethinker." Sir George Grove, in the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, says: "Formal religion he apparently had none" and "the Bible does not appear to have been one of his favorite books." At the end of his arrangement of "Fidelio" Moscheles had written, "Fine. With God's help." To this Beethoven added, "O man, help thyself." Wagner is well known to have been a disciple of Schopenhauer; and to discover his "Christian soul" is worse than solving the hardest Chinese puzzle.

Some people talk about sacred music. There is no such thing. Music is music—and that is an end of the matter. Music may, of course, be applied to religious subjects, just as painting may be applied to religious subjects. But that does not make the music or the painting religious. Let us put the case more in the concrete. Raphael was a consummate artist; he painted the loveliest Madonnas,—he also painted his mistress La Fornarina. He was Raphael all the time—his art was his art all the time; he and it were not religious on one day and secular on another. The distinction simply concerns the direction of his genius—the objects that called forth its application. One might say the same of Michael Angelo, sculpturing Moses to-day and painting Leda to-morrow—and both with the same splendid power.

The "resplendent life" of the "Christian soul" as compared with the "moribund mind" of the Atheist is as easily shown to be ridiculous in relation to poetry. Shakespeare was not a Christian,—Milton was; and which was the greater poet? Shelley was an Atheist; is there less "resplendent life" in his poems than in those of Wordsworth? Swinburne was an Atheist,—he called himself an Anti-Theist; is there less "resplendent life" in his poems than in those of Tennyson?

We advise Mr. Machardy to think the matter over again. At present he hardly seems to understand

what he is talking about. We admit, however, that he has fallen into a widespread and time-honored fallacy. And we hope he will find that second thoughts are best.

Some very different, but just as stupid, religious nonsense was uttered on Monday by Bishop Boyd-Carpenter in addressing a meeting of the Clergy Union for London on "The Christian Outlook on the World." Listen to this, for instance—taken from the report in the *Daily News*:—

"He referred to the diminishing birth-rate in Europe, the citadel of Christian civilisation. This would mean, he said, that the proportion of Christian to heathen people would tend to decline, and in the decline of that prestige over the people of the East, which came from vital strength of population, there was a very real danger."

Not a word about God's help or the intrinsic advantages of Christianity! The question is treated as one of human resources. Europe is to go on breeding as fast as possible in order that her population may match that of Asia; which, of course, she never could do, even if she multiplied her slums and her misery. Happily there is no likelihood of her taking Bishop Boyd-Carpenter's advice. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," may be sensible advice to a single pair of human beings in an otherwise empty world, but it is very unwise advice in countries where the streets already swarm with children.

What really gave Europe her domination over Asia? Not Christianity, not population, but science. Gladstone argued that the Christian nations dominating the globe was a proof of the divinity of Christianity. We pointed out, as far back as August, 1896, that the argument, like the dominance, was purely temporary. There was a time when the Christian nations did not dominate the world; on the contrary, they were once in constant terror of a Mohammedan invasion, and they were certainly inferior then in civilisation to the followers of the "false prophet." "The real truth," we went on to say, "is that the Christian nations got the first start with modern science. They did not welcome it; they cursed it. They did not honor its pioneers; they burnt them. Nevertheless, they profited by it, in their own despite. Science gave them guns and rifles, industrial machinery, railways, and ocean steamers; and with these they conquered the world. Christianity had nothing to do with the process. The Bible had as much to do with it as the story of Jack the Giant-Killer. The weakness of Europe four hundred years ago was consistent with a pretty long past of well-organised Christianity. Her strength has been derived from another factor, and that factor is science." England herself, we pointed out, in her quarrels with the far-off heathen, had "been able to dictate her own conditions by virtue of the superior powers of destruction which science had placed at her command." But she would not be able to do this perpetually. The awakening of China meant "a fresh and mighty factor in the problem of civilisation." We saw it then. Everybody sees it now. Bishop Boyd-Carpenter is very anxious about it. It will be "God help us all" if we do not supply China with "Christian ideals" before she realises her power. Missions have failed, and the remedy is more missionaries!

G. W. FOOTE.

Stocktaking.

THE Rev. J. Scott Lidgett is of opinion that it is time the Churches made a serious attempt at a kind of stocktaking. Things are not as they should be with the faithful. Outsiders show no inclination to come into the Churches, and insiders tend to become outsiders. No one seems sure as to what ought to be believed, and a growing number solve the difficulty by not believing anything at all. Ministers are as confused as their congregations. Some would like to have more latitude in the matter of belief, and many have ceased to believe in much that they are compelled to profess. A decided uncertainty and a suspected insincerity is everywhere, and above this is the unquestionable fact that the Churches are not holding their own. So at the Cheltenham Free Church meetings Dr. Lidgett moved a resolution affirming that, "In view of the increasing demands of the age on the Christian Church, and the growing conviction that the whole range of Christian liability needs to be re-examined and restated in the light of prevailing conditions," the Council should appoint a body to try and find out what really is the matter. The inquiry, if thorough, should be interesting. But to be thorough the Commission should comprise one or two Freethinkers. For our own part, we should be quite willing to sit on the Commission and help these reverend gentlemen to a correct appreciation of affairs. Anyway, Dr. Lidgett may take what follows as our contribution to the inquiry.

To begin with, the Commission should bear in mind that the age only makes one serious demand upon the Churches, and that is that they be sincere. The best life of the age simply demands that the clergy shall be honest, and what Dr. Lidgett proposes is that a Commission shall be appointed to decide whether this is a profitable policy or not. People know, in a general indefinite kind of way, that religious teachings do not stand where they did. They see that invariably the truth about religion is told outside the Churches, and that the clergy admit it with reluctance. They also see that when a clergyman of standing—as in the case of Rev. R. J. Campbell with his *New Theology*—breaks out, there are numbers of clergymen ready to follow; and seeing this, they cannot avoid the inference that the weakness of the old position has been seen all along, but there was lacking the courage of expression. And the further question cannot be avoided, How many of the clergy really believe all they are supposed to believe? How many would be on the side of the heretics if conditions were favorable for plain and open speech? And that is the last thing that any Commission of Clergymen is likely to advise.

Dr. Lidgett himself offered proof of this. The inquiry, he said, "must be searching," but, "above all, it must represent not restless and sceptical discontent, but that measured optimism, that sense of the boundless resources which they had in God and the Gospel of his Grace." In plain English, the Commission must decide upon its verdict before it commences its inquiry, and put on one side the very things it most needs to study. For the "restless and sceptical discontent" of the age lies at the root of the Church's trouble. And you cannot crush scepticism by ignoring it. This is, of course, the stock policy of every Church, but it is a policy that is both cowardly and dishonorable. The more intelligent see all that the policy involves and indicates, and quietly leave the Churches altogether. The less intelligent are deluded—at any rate, for a time—with the result that the mental calibre of the Churches sinks lower and lower. The clergy, pandered to by a certain number of vote-catching politicians, because of their influence with a particular class, are ignored by the best of the nation's intelligence. Great national issues are discussed and decided without reference to the Churches, and without anyone suggesting that they ought to be consulted. The Churches will have nothing to do

with sceptical discontent with religious teaching, which is one of the great features of the present age, and the age has less and less to do with the Churches.

A Commission composed of men really desirous of getting at the truth would have to take note of the profound change that has come over people's minds in relation to fundamental religious questions. Quite apart from the development of Biblical criticism, which has quite destroyed views of the Bible that were current only half a century ago, the growth of sociology and the enormous development of science, theoretical and applied, have combined to produce a frame of mind quite alien to fundamental religious ideas. And how blind religious leaders are to these developments was shown by the reception given to a paper read at the Congress by Sir William Ramsay. The essay cheered and delighted its hearers by its plea for the early authenticity of the Gospel of Luke. But it is a matter of quite subordinate importance whether Luke was written at an early or at a late date. The fact of men writing, as occurring in their own time, of miraculously born, miracle-working, resurrected saviors, carries nowadays no evidence whatever of the reality of these events. It only proves that they believed these stories. On this point the belief of Dr. Lidgett is quite as good evidence as the belief of Luke or Paul. Beliefs in such events were quite common twenty years ago, and they no more prove that they were well founded than the testimony of great men at a later date proves that witches once existed. Such beliefs are not evidences of fact, but of the existence of a mental atmosphere, the manifestation of a certain phase of intellectual development. Put the age of the New Testament documents as early as you please, they can only yield evidence that their writers believed as we should expect men of their class, living in that age, to believe. Speakers who pretend otherwise are only throwing dust in the eyes of their hearers.

The sociological developments have been equally important. We have not yet gained complete freedom of thought and expression, but the majority are ashamed of being credited with bigotry; and when people are ashamed of a thing the first step has been taken towards its abolition. At any rate, civil equality and political rights are no longer wholly a question of religious belief. Christians and Jews, Atheists and Deists, meet on equal terms on the platform of a common citizenship, and the barriers erected by religious differences become less effective. The other day a Church dignitary, speaking at a Woman's Suffragist meeting, said that the movement had the effect of bringing on the same platform representatives of various religions who could not be brought together otherwise. The same observation has been made by other people in other connections. But the speaker did not seem to realise the obvious inference from his remark, namely, that while social issues tend to unite, religious issues tend to divide, and the one thing upon which religions cannot agree is the one thing which they claim leads to brotherhood and good fellowship. And when it is a working principle of social life that all men, no matter what their religious opinions may be, are entitled to wield the same rights and to enjoy the same privileges, people unconsciously recognise that religious opinions are really a matter of subordinate importance, and that whether one believes in one god or a dozen gods, or in no gods at all, is not of vital importance.

Dr. Lidgett asks: "How far are the Churches producing, or even seeking to produce, national regeneration? Are they at present fitted to produce it?" The answer to these questions is that national regeneration cannot spring from a religion, since religion is essentially a conservative force. How does a religion come to power? It utilises conceptions of the supernatural already current. It modifies them here and there, but in the main it gives nothing new. It systematises the more backward tendencies among a people, consecrates much that is old and which might otherwise disappear under pressure of normal social development, and

generally seeks to keep the present and future in line with the past. Whatever improvement takes place in any society is due to the operation of secular life and opinion, not to religious belief. They who talk about religion aiding civilisation simply invert the natural order of things. It is always civilisation that forces improvement on religion. This is so obvious one marvels that it should ever be doubted or denied. Secular knowledge changes our beliefs as to the nature and origin of religion. Social and humanitarian growth forces rejection of the more barbarous religious doctrines, intellectual development makes clear the absurdity of religious teachings. Indeed, given a religion once established, there is no other source from which even religious improvement can result save the pressure of advancing secular civilisation.

The supernatural exists only for those whose minds are not developed beyond it. As people become more civilised, so they civilise their gods, and in time abandon them altogether. Man is not civilised by his gods; he civilises them. Man's gods are only the lingering ghosts of his less civilised past, and no small portion of his energies have been expended in making them acceptable to a more civilised age. It is this process that is called by religious preachers, with unconscious sarcasm, growth in religion. The description is quite inaccurate. Man does not grow in his religion, he grows out of it. His gods interfere less and less with affairs of the world. The influence of religion over life becomes weaker and weaker. The after life becomes more remote and less substantial. The history of civilisation is largely made up of the attempts of man to cast off the control of a set of beliefs that rest upon no better foundation than the crude speculations of the primitive savage.

The real fact that Dr. Lidgett and his Commission has to face is a simple one. It is not ultimately the anti-religious operations of individuals — either separately or in combination. It is the pressure of advancing civilisation on all forms of supernaturalism. The growth of knowledge, the development of social life, operates to the destruction of those conditions upon which all religions ultimately depend. People become de-religionised through no efforts of their own, and are almost unconscious of the process. Thousands of people who would never listen to an attack on religion find themselves denuded of their religious beliefs. Their religion goes, and they know not the manner of its going. An honest investigation might make a little plainer the nature of the forces at work and their mode of operation. But it is impossible to overcome the impetus of a movement which draws strength from the whole of human experience, and to which every accession of knowledge adds a new weapon or gives a sharper edge to those already in use. Mrs. Partington tried to sweep back the Atlantic with a house broom. Dr. Scott Lidgett proposes to arrest the course of civilisation with a Nonconformist Committee of Inquiry.

C. COHEN.

Natural and Supernatural.

A FEW years ago, when Mr. R. J. Campbell was publicly taunted with being nothing better than a theological amateur, he retorted by declaring that, however ignorant he might be of theology, he *did* know something of history. In a sermon on "Natural and Supernatural," published in the *Christian Commonwealth* for March 13, the reverend gentleman makes a historical allusion which betrays either ignorance or mischievous misrepresentation. His text is Romans i. 20, and he says:—

"Remember, this letter was addressed to the infant Christian Church in Rome, which city was then the mistress of civilisation, and, on the testimony of practically all contemporary historians, was a veritable morass of iniquity and moral degradation. Some of the vices practised within her borders, and which were

characteristic of all ranks of society throughout the greater portion of the empire, are literally indescribable. I dare not begin to say from this pulpit what they were, but you may get a hint of it for yourselves by reading a few of the verses which immediately follow my text, every word of which is sustained by the evidence of the great Pagan satirists of the period."

Is Mr. Campbell sufficiently daring to begin to say from the City Temple pulpit what the vices practised in London to-day are? It would take him a long time to present a descriptive enumeration of them; and the picture of London thereafter painted would be as wholly inaccurate as that of Rome in the above extract. At no period in its history was Rome "a veritable morass of iniquity and moral degradation." Surely Mr. Campbell must know how utterly unreliable and one-sided Juvenal's satires and Martial's epigrams are believed to be by scholars. As Professor Dill truly remarks (*Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 2), "if society at large had been half as corrupt as it is represented by Juvenal, it would have speedily perished from mere rottenness." Moreover, Mr. Campbell is entirely mistaken concerning "the testimony of practically all contemporary historians." As a matter of fact not one of them paints Rome as "a veritable morass of iniquity and moral degradation." Under tyrants like Caligula and Nero crimes and vices naturally abounded; but on consulting the works of Tacitus and Pliny we learn that there were people in the capital who had the moral courage to defy their immoral rulers and publicly to express disapproval of their conduct. Bad as Nero was, we must not forget that in his palace there were heroines, his noble-minded and pure-hearted wife, Octavia, and the slave-girls whose fidelity to their mistress was above praise; and the inscriptions on innumerable tombs of this period indicate that family life was characterised by "sober, honest industry, and pure affection."

Now, a little further on in his address Mr. Campbell virtually admits that his portrait of Pagan Rome, whether true or false, is, to all intents and purposes, the portrait of Christian London. Here is the passage:—

"When we come to examine what history has to tell us we are a good deal bewildered at the seemingly endless succession of gains and losses, efflorescence and decay, mighty achievement and pitiable failure, which it presents. One is sometimes inclined to question whether on the whole there has been progress at all, or whether, if there has, it has been worth the ages of agony which it has cost. As Charles de Vas points out in his *Key to the World's Progress*, it is very hard to say whether any age represents a real advance on its predecessor, for what it gains in one direction it loses in another."

Comment is needless. We are prepared to endorse what is said in this second extract, and our advice to Mr. Campbell is to settle accounts, if he can, between this statement and his avowed faith in an omnipotent Redeemer of the world, who is alleged to have been at his task for nearly two thousand years. It is curious to find a minister of the Gospel boldly acknowledging that the Gospel he preaches has been historically a gigantic failure. He affirms that "we are behaving on the whole very much as our ancestors behaved thousands of years ago, and the objects on which we are engaged are pretty much the same as theirs." We agree; and we can appreciate the force of Professor Dill's statement that during the very period in the history of Pagan Rome which Mr. Campbell so appallingly misrepresents, "there were many families living in almost puritan quietude, where the moral standard was in many respects as high as among ourselves."

Up to this point the preacher has confined himself to the natural sphere, in which he allows there has been but little, if any, progress, though he does not formally assert that Christian London, like Pagan Rome, is "a veritable morass of iniquity and moral degradation"; but the second half of the discourse is devoted to the recital of a wonderful parable. He supposes that his readers and he had spent all their lives in a coal mine, and had never seen the surface of the planet. Their occupation was digging for coal and

sending it up in cages through tiny holes to some invisible region. Occasionally, they would be startled by the tumbling down upon them of such strange objects as pieces of brick or rock, which they would look upon as priceless treasures. By and by rumors would reach them that the little holes through which the coal and their dead disappeared communicated with another world, inhabited by beings very superior to themselves. The majority would believe the rumors, and there would arise among them seers and prophets to supply them with descriptions of the unseen world and its denizens. Of course, there would also be Secularists, who would castridicnle upon such descriptions, and condemn them as freaks of the imagination. The parable extends to a column and a half; and so enamored of it is the preacher that he finds great difficulty in dropping it. He even imagines that through the little holes they would, every now and then, be able to catch glimpses of the stars, and that such a vision would engender a longing to depart and enter the larger and nobler world. He says:—

"If, when we were so moved, we looked up at the stars through the long shaft that led to the upper air, we could not but obtain some assurance of a larger, truer, grander order of being to which we more really belonged, and for which we were more fitly constituted than for the darkness and the depths. And is it not so with earth as contrasted with heaven, the temporal as over against the eternal? The divine does speak through the human; the spiritual is never silent, whatever unfaith may say to the contrary."

We now see how ineffably silly the parable is. In reality it is not a parable at all, because there is no parallel between the two cases. The relation between the coal mine and the surface of the earth and the stars is that between two different portions of the same physical Universe. There would be no Secularist in the coal mine, because everybody could peep through the shaft and have ocular demonstration of the existence of the stars. To say that it is "so with earth as contrasted with heaven, the temporal as over against the eternal," is to completely mistake the problem. There is absolutely no analogy between the two cases; and Mr. Campbell himself does not even try to show that there is. He simply dogmatizes in the absence of knowledge when he assures us that "the divine does speak through the human," and that "the spiritual is never silent, whatever unfaith may say to the contrary." That the reverend gentleman *believes* that what he says is true may be regarded as beyond doubt, but that he does not *know* is quite as incontestable. It is all very well to aver that believers accept the testimony of the best that is in them, and unbelievers that of the worst; but what is best and worst, in this connection, is purely a matter of opinion. The Secularist is profoundly convinced that he does accept the testimony of the best that is in him, which is his reason, and that the Christian is the victim of abnormal conditions induced by unverifiable beliefs. Fancy a man in his senses exclaiming,—

"O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!"

It is nothing but "a rhapsody of words," with no sense behind it, or "a wooden nutmeg without size or shape or smell." The supernatural has never yet given the slightest hint or sign that it is a reality. It is the imagination alone that endows it with existence. Not one known fact bears witness to it.

What good does it do to speak contemptuously of this world, calling it "this sombre coal mine of a world," as Mr. Campbell habitually does? Why depreciate earthly progress by speaking of it as "progress in the things of the flesh," while, in reality, earthly progress means the progress of the whole man as part and parcel of Nature? The heavenly vision eulogised by the preacher is the product of an uncontrolled and diseased imagination—a hallucination, caused by the feelings acting at the instigation of an unemancipated intellect. We need

to outgrow it; and we are slowly doing so. What we ought to cultivate is a vision of the earth, rid of all its present imperfections and drawbacks, and abounding in all that makes life serene and joyous, an earth full of justice, peace, and love. People have been setting their affection upon the imaginary things that are above for thousands of years, and have had enrapturing visions of what is called Immanuel's land, with the result that the things which are upon the earth have been lamentably neglected and are still in a woeful tangle, and the vision of an ideal state of society this side of the tomb has been lacking. It is only to-day that humanity is beginning to awake from its dreams, and to realise that this world is the only one that counts, and that its first and only duty is to set its affairs in order.

J. T. LLOYD.

Old Testament History.—II.

(Continued from p. 171.)

BEFORE proceeding further with the history contained in the Old Testament, it will be necessary to briefly refer to the earliest information we possess respecting the people of Canaan. The Bible stories of the sojourning of the Hebrew patriarchs in that country give an entirely erroneous impression of the condition of the land and its people during that period. From the narratives in Genesis it would appear that Palestine was a country almost destitute of inhabitants, and that the few that were to be found there were a quiet, primitive, law-abiding people, who stood somewhat in awe of the Jewish patriarchs. Abraham is said to have lived in that country for exactly a century. His sheep and cattle were so great in numbers as to give employment to 318 men-servants—that is to say, slaves. This patriarch is also said to have brought with him his nephew Lot, whose flocks and herds were of the same vast proportions. Abraham's son Isaac, after his father's death, lived in the country for a hundred and five years, and was in possession of all his father's sheep and cattle. Isaac's son Jacob, after burying his father, inherited all that patriarch's flocks and herds, and, with his ten grown-up sons, led them about from place to place throughout the country, eating up all the pasture land available; and finally, after another ten years, took them all down to Egypt and settled in the pasture lands of Goshen.

The three patriarchs named are represented as living in perfect security in Canaan during the whole of the period mentioned (215 years), and as leading about from one part of the country to another the immense number of sheep and cattle with which they were blessed. No one ever questioned their right to appropriate the best fields and meadow lands in any locality, nor made the slightest attempt to molest them. These patriarchs even take the liberty of giving names to places in the country, as well as changing some of the old ones, and the new names are said to be those by which the places were known in later times. In short, without pursuing the matter farther, the condition of the country and its people, as portrayed in the Bible narratives, is proved by ancient Egyptian history to be fictitious.

We will now glance at a few items of real history. The first point we learn from the inscriptions recording the chief events of the reigns of many of the kings of Egypt is that Canaan was by no means a thinly peopled country, nor were its inhabitants barbarians or savages, as implied in the Bible. The majority of its people were more civilised than were the Israelites at a much later date, and even than the Egyptians themselves of that period. They were also a brave, patriotic, and warlike people, who would not be likely to be conquered by the shepherds and cowherds of Israel.

The next point to be noticed is that from a very early date the tribes and peoples of Canaan were nominally subject to the sovereigns of Egypt, the

latter claiming the rights of suzerainty; that is to say, the chiefs and kings of Canaan were allowed complete independence provided they acknowledged the reigning Egyptian monarch as over-lord and paid to him the prescribed annual tribute. The exact period when this Egyptian domination commenced is uncertain, but we find it recorded that Thothmes I.—called by Mr. Petrie Tahutmes—of the eighteenth dynasty (about 1530 B.C.) marched with a large army through Palestine into northern Syria, and after receiving the submission of all the peoples in those districts, set up a tablet to mark the limit of his dominions in that direction.

Nearly two generations later, Thothmes III. of the same dynasty (about 1480 B.C.), in the twenty-third year of his reign, came into Canaan to suppress revolts from his authority stirred up by the Hittites, a powerful nation who had come to the assistance of the kings of that country. Thothmes first defeated a coalition of Hittites and Canaanites in the valley of Megiddo, after which he spent twenty years in again and again subjugating all the revolted provinces, gaining fifteen notable victories during that period, and forcing the Hittites to return to their own country. Amongst the list of Canaanitish towns which he compelled to submit to his arms are the following: Beeroth, Beth-anoth, Gibeah, Zaretan, Ophrah, Taanach, Megiddo, Kishon, Carmel, Dothan, Shunem, Hazor, Kadesh, Chinnereth, Merom, Laish, Sharon, Joppa, Heshbon, Hamath, Jacob-el, Joseph-el, etc. All these cities, with three exceptions, bore the same names in later times. Laish was afterwards changed to Dan (see Judg. xviii. 19); but the names Jacob-el and Joseph-el (*i.e.*, "the god Jacob," "the god Joseph") have received new appellations in order, probably, to conceal the fact that Jacob and Joseph were ancient Canaanitish gods that had worshippers in at least one city of Canaan.

Each of the before-mentioned towns appears to have been the capital city of a small state or province governed by a local king, as described in the book of Joshua. When we consider that the whole country of Canaan (both east and west of the Jordan and Dead Sea) was only about the size of Belgium or Switzerland, we shall get some idea of the extreme smallness of each of these petty kingdoms. Thothmes records that in the land adjoining Megiddo there were fields and meadows in which were found 1,900 oxen, 2,000 goats, and over 20,000 sheep—which he took possession of—and that the cornfields there he estimated to be about ten square miles in extent. The country being thus parcelled out into thirty or more miniature kingdoms, it will be obvious that every field and pastureland would be the property of one or other of these local kings, or of small tribes of shepherds or herdsmen who had inherited the land from their Canaanitish ancestors. And this being the case, the Bible stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob leading about an immense army of sheep and cattle, of their going from one pastureland to another, just as if the whole country belonged to them, and their continuing this itinerant life for a period of 215 years—these stories are on the face of them pure fiction. Had Abraham and Lot entered the land as described in Genesis, they would either have been summarily expelled, or, what is more likely, their flocks and herds would have been confiscated.

Amongst the spoils taken from the Canaanites at Megiddo were the following: 924 war-chariots, 200 coats of mail, statues of silver, ornaments and jewels, tables of cedar-wood inlaid with gold, thrones of cedar and ivory, an ark of wood overlaid with gold (containing probably an image of the god), and many other articles. Returning to Egypt, Thothmes carried away with him 2,503 captives, male and female, eighty-seven of whom were the sons of chiefs or kings. If any Israelites ever went down to that country, it was in this fashion—not as the honored guests of a king.

After the departure of the Egyptian forces, fresh revolts broke out among the Canaanites; hence Thothmes came again and again into Canaan and

Syria, and again and again reconquered the revolted cities and provinces. As already stated, this continued for twenty years, the king at the end of each campaign returning to Egypt with much booty and many captives. Moreover, after the suppression of a revolt in any city, Thothmes deposed its reigning king or chieftain, and appointed a governor. There is no mention of slaughtering the inhabitants after submission, as described in the fictitious narratives in the book of Joshua.

At the end of his second campaign Thothmes records the various tributes received from the peoples of Canaan and Syria. The record commences: "The tributes of the chiefs of the Ruten in the twenty-fourth year: Tribute of the chief of Assur, 10½ lbs. of real and good lazuli, and vases very many." The only question here is the identity of "the chief of Assur." Some Egyptologists tell us that the reference is to the king of Assyria; but this is ridiculous. The kings of Egypt never led an army to so distant a place as Assyria. Thothmes I., during his campaign in Syria, went as far N.E. as the Euphrates; but there he stopped, and set up a tablet marking the frontier boundary of his conquests. The nearest point of Assyria was 200 miles further to the N.E. Moreover, three reigns later than Thothmes III. we find a letter from the king of Assyria to the king of Egypt, showing that the first mentioned monarch was an independent sovereign, though disposed to be friendly. Furthermore, the name "Assur" does not represent Assyria; this should be "Asshur."

Who, then, was "the chief of Assur" that paid tribute to the Egyptian king? This, I think, can be no one else than the head-man or leader of the Israelitish tribe of Asher, which tribe (as we know from the Song of Deborah) was one of those that "came not to the help of Yahveh" in the battle of Megiddo. Thothmes had, therefore, no need to depose this chief, more especially since the tribe had quietly submitted to his yoke and had paid the required tribute. Moreover, the Ruten, as we learn from Mr. Petrie—who is an authority on Egyptian inscriptions—was the Egyptian name for the hill country of Palestine, a fact which settles the question. As a rule, Thothmes only records the cities which had submitted to his arms; the various peoples of Canaan he contemptuously calls "the vile enemy." We have thus no means of identifying the tribes of Israel, though we know from Judg. v. that six of them fought against him at the battle between Taanach and Megiddo, the two cities being only a few miles apart. Of the latter fact there can be no reasonable doubt. The battle commemorated in the "Song of Deborah" was fought in the valley between Taanach and Megiddo, the "waters" mentioned being small streams or tributaries of the river Kishon. The statement that "the kings of Canaan fought" and the fact that six tribes of Israel were engaged prove that the battle described in the Song was not that recorded in Judg. iv., in which but two tribes, and no kings, fought under Barak. Finally, the "nine hundred chariots of iron" (mentioned in Judg. iv. 3 and 13) which Jabin's general Sisera is stated to have brought with him to the Kishon—and which the Egyptian king captured—place the matter beyond all doubt.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

A CLOSE HIT.

A teacher in the National School at Whittlesea asked a boy the other evening, "Which is the highest dignitary of the Church?" After looking up and down, north, east, south, and west, the boy innocently replied, "The weather-cock."

THE EXTENT OF HIS IGNORANCE.

A stranger was walking up Boylston-street and he stopped a man who looked like a native Bostonian to ask him: "Can you tell me where the Second Baptist Church is?" "No, I can't" was the reply, "I don't even know where the first one is."

Tales of Our Times.

By A CYNIC.

I.

"PROFESSOR" FRYSKISPOOKS, the great Spiritualistic medium, had much cause for satisfaction when Sir Chlorophyll Green, one of the most eminent scientists of the day, began to take a serious interest in his "manifestations." For the Professor well knew that there is no one so gullible in all things outside his own special field of research as your eminent scientist, and he very soon discovered that Sir Chlorophyll, though he was one of the profoundest living physicists and mathematicians, was as innocent as a child regarding cabinets with sealed doors, caskets with false bottoms, and all the other little devices of the modern necromancer. The depth of his knowledge concerning radium emanations, cathode rays, and Hertzian waves was no greater than the depth of his ignorance concerning the varied uses of phosphorus, in association with white drapery, for producing "spirit forms," or the undoubted utility of "magnetic chalk" and "sympathetic ink" in obtaining written communications from the spirit world.

Thus all would have been well had Sir Chlorophyll been permanently content to rest his belief in Spiritualism on such ordinary "manifestations" as Professor Fryskispoons was always ready to provide in abundance. But with the scientist's overmastering desire for the attainment of real truth and new knowledge, he presently began to tire of the somewhat puerile performances indulged in and the stupid communications vouchsafed by the denizens of the spirit world, and of their unaccountable reticence regarding subjects on which they might have shed so much welcome light. Besides, Sir Chlorophyll's brother scientists and the more thoughtful section of the unscientific public, were beginning to make disturbing remarks about the disappointing results of occultism as an avenue of knowledge. Thus, one day, while conversing with Professor Fryskispoons on these matters, Sir Chlorophyll said:

"So you see, Professor, how much it would be to the advantage of the cause you have at heart, and how effectually it would silence unbelievers, if we could produce a genuine communication of *real scientific value* from the other side. A medium gifted with such powers as you possess, and so closely *en rapport* with the occult world as you undoubtedly are, should experience little difficulty in getting into communication with the spirit of some scientist who has passed away from us, and of obtaining from him a definite communication regarding some unsolved problem of nature. Alas, there are but too many still awaiting an answer!"

But the Professor looked dubious. "It is a difficult matter, Sir Chlorophyll, to get into communication with any individual spirit except such as are voluntarily present at a séance," he said solemnly. "The laws governing our communications with those beyond the veil are of such a complex nature that I have not yet been able completely to unravel them, and, notwithstanding my experience, I am yet but as a child groping in the dark—depending on the guiding hands of those I cannot see. However, I admit the force of your contention and will do what I can. Whose spirit would you wish to communicate with?"

"Well," said Sir Chlorophyll, "perhaps it would be best to select one who was eminent in my own line of inquiry; and I can think of no greater name than Isaac Newton."

"So be it," replied the Professor. "I will do my best, but remember it may be a long while—some months, perhaps—before I succeed in establishing the communication, even if I succeed at all."

"I quite understand," said Sir Chlorophyll. "I am content to wait. When you are able to announce that there is a possibility of communicating with the spirit of Isaac Newton I shall be prepared with a question—one only—a satisfactory answer to which will, I feel sure, do more to confirm my own belief and induce that of the whole scientific world than all the evidences you and other mediums have hitherto furnished."

About a month passed, during which Professor Fryskispoons seemed so ill at ease that he could scarcely give proper attention to his professional duties. He was sometimes on the point of telling Sir Chlorophyll Green bluntly that the spirit of Sir Isaac Newton had an insuperable objection to being interviewed; but, on the other hand, he felt that no effort should be spared to reinforce Sir Chlorophyll's evidently waning faith. So he finally resolved to trust to luck and that quick resourcefulness which had hitherto never deserted him in an emergency, and informed Sir Chlorophyll solemnly one day that the required "communication" had been established.

A special séance was arranged at which a few believers were present, including Sir Chlorophyll Green. When

Professor Fryskispoons had got comfortably into his "trance" and announced that the spirit of Sir Isaac Newton was present, Sir Chlorophyll handed him a half sheet of note paper on which these words were clearly and openly written: "What is the cause of Gravitation?"

The simple straightforwardness of this proceeding seemed to take the Professor rather aback. The only trickery needed here was to peep at the words on the paper under his closed eyelids. This he accordingly did, and after the usual short pause of rapt expectancy proceeded to move his pencil over the paper in that slightly hesitating and spasmodic manner which is supposed to indicate the extraneous influence operative in "automatic writing." But no trickery has ever availed or will ever avail for the discovery of a truth which lies beyond the existing scope of human knowledge, so it was with a feeling of keen disappointment that Sir Chlorophyll read the following "message": "Gravitation is caused by a force immanent in matter, the law of which I am not permitted to reveal to mankind."

When, at the conclusion of the séance, and after the others had departed, Professor Fryskispoons asked Sir Chlorophyll Green the purport of the mystic message, the scientist placed the paper before him and said, "I find it impossible to believe, Professor, that this message could have come from the spirit of Sir Isaac Newton, seeing that he himself had discovered the law he refers to, and had revealed it to mankind with the greatest clearness."

Professor Fryskispoons was never able to smooth away this little difficulty—due to one of those unfortunate slips of the pen to which even automatic writing is sometimes liable—while Sir Chlorophyll Green has ceased to look for scientific enlightenment from "beyond the veil," and confines himself to his old methods of patient and laborious research.

II.

Old Dame Europa's school was becoming so badly behaved and unruly that it was beginning to be looked upon as a disgrace to the village. John and Fritz, the two biggest boys in the school, instead of setting a good example to the others, as they might have been expected to do, were the worst conducted of them all, and were constantly saying unpleasant things to each other and threatening a fight. Their chief amusement was sailing toy ships in the village duck-pond—an innocent enough pastime when peaceably indulged in, but not so harmless when it became the source of such constant ill-feeling and jealous rivalry as it did in the case of these two bad tempered boys. It was John's ambition always to have twice as many toy ships (which they called *Dreadnoughts*) on the pond as Fritz had; so whenever Fritz brought down a new ship and launched it, John would think it necessary to launch two. This would make Fritz wild, and they would shake their fists in each other's faces and call each other nasty names all the afternoon. Besides, these toy ships couldn't be got for nothing, and their purchase made quite a heavy drain on John's and Fritz's pocket money, of which they had about an equal supply. So when John's pocket money began to run low, and he began to find some difficulty in putting two ships on the pond for every one of Fritz's, things became still more unpleasant. Yet John's pride would not allow him to give up this expensive contest, and so they went on shaking their fists at each other threateningly, while they continued this ridiculous rivalry till the duck pond grew so crowded with their *Dreadnoughts* that there was hardly room for the ducks.

Of course, with the two leading boys in the school setting such an example of turbulence and ill feeling, the behavior of the others was far from satisfactory. Some of the smaller boys took to sneaky ways and tried to steal each other's possessions, and it is not so long ago that there happened that disgraceful affair when a big, hulking bully named Nicholas got a sound thrashing from one of the village boys about half his size, and came back with two black eyes, a cut lip, and a swollen nose. Of course, it served him right, but it did not add to the credit or dignity of Dame Europa's school.

Indeed, the whole tone of the school seems to be going from bad to worse, and there is a general feeling that it is time Dame Europa employed a firm, strong head master who would insist on the maintenance of discipline. Some have even suggested the appointment of a certain energetic and resolute young fellow named Social Democracy, who would be willing to take the job, but Dame Europa has a strong prejudice against him, so it will probably be many years yet before he takes charge of her crowd of naughty boys.

WHERE IT BEGAN.

Eve: "See here, Adam! I've been the making of you! Some women would have taken every rib you had!"

Acid Drops.

During the second week of the coal strike the Archbishop of Canterbury resolved to make another effort to stir up his Deity. He induced the Archbishop of York to join him in issuing a letter authorising the observance of the following Sunday (March 17) as a special day of prayer and intercession. Special lessons and psalms, and papers containing the suggested order of service, including special Litany, were prepared. Rev. F. B. Meyer, secretary of the Free Church Council, was not to be left behind in such a competition, and issued a similar appeal to Nonconformists. No doubt these clerical charlatans thought the moment very opportune from a business point of view. Mr. Asquith was just then conferring again with miners' leaders and the owners, and was apparently making some headway in bringing them amicably together again. If the Premier brought the strike to an end the fresh day of intercession would give the clergy a look in as contributors to the happy issue; and if he failed no harm would be done, for it is always open to them to argue that "God" was too displeased about something to vouchsafe a favorable reply. In this way the clergy are always able to play the game of "heads we win, tails you lose."

The new day of prayer and intercession is over, and it has done as much good as the first one—as all sensible people expected.

Several newspapers announced the fact that the Bishop of Durham had written a hymn for miners—to comfort them, we presume, during the strike. The public were treated to two of the six verses of this wonderful production. They ran as follows:—

"O Christ, Thine eyes of light and love
With Christians always go,
Alike on earth's green fields above
And in the caves below.

Thou with the miner in the dark
Dost down the shaft descend;
Thou, while he plies his venturous work,
Art with him as his Friend."

"Caves" is a romantic word for coal mine passages. It suggests a haunt of smugglers rather than a workplace of colliers. But that is nothing in comparison with the statement that Christ—who, being God, is everywhere at once—goes up and down pit shafts. We say *up* as well as *down*, since we suppose the poet did not intend to leave Christ "down amongst the coals." Of course it is very pleasant for the miner to have that eminent personage's company—and as a personal friend too—down in the pit; but it does not appear that the eminent personage's company is any protection against the accidents that beset the digger-out of coals in the bowels of the earth. And perhaps the episcopal poet will kindly tell us, if he can, what becomes of the "friend" when the miner is blown to pieces in an explosion. And just a word in conclusion. It seems a very strained expression, that of the miner plying his venturous work. What he plies is his pick. And the plying and the working are the same thing. But allowances, no doubt, must be made for minor poets, who might say more truthfully than Iago did—

"My invention
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frize,—
It plucks out brains and all."

"Honest Iago!"

Frederick Henry Seddon, found guilty by the jury of murdering Miss Barrow by administering arsenic, declared "before the Great Architect of the Universe" that he was innocent of the crime. The Great Architect of the Universe says nothing.

When the Pope heard of the attempted assassination of the King of Italy he exclaimed, "These are the consequences of the irreligion of our times." Father Sarto evidently doesn't know, or doesn't remember, that nearly all assassins have been religious. We may also observe that assassination went on merrily in the Middle Ages under the Catholic Church. Moreover, the two well-known assassinations in the Bible were committed by a pious lady and a pious gentleman. Jael's dastardly assassination of Sisera was praised in song by Deborah the prophetess, and Ehud's "message from God" to King Eglon was delivered in the form of a dagger to the monarch's abdomen. The less Christians say about the "irreligion" of assassins the better.

Signor Giolitti, the Italian Premier, spoke just as foolishly as the Pope. "Happily for Italy," he said in the Chamber of Deputies, "God was pleased to preserve the life of our well-beloved sovereigns." Of course the royal escort had nothing to do with the King's safety. Neither had Major Lang, who received the bullet intended for Victor Emmanuel. God's part in the affair, if he interfered at all, was not very sensibly planned and executed. It would have been wiser and more merciful to deal with the intending assassin, either by reforming his brain or paralysing his arm.

The Rev. Joseph Hocking propounded a conundrum at Bishopgate Chapel the other day. He asked the congregation: "If all the Churches had closed fifty years ago, should we have had old age pensions to-day?" The intended inference was, of course, that we should not, and that old age pensions exist because of the activity of the Churches. We might well reply to the question with another. If an Old Age Pension Act is due to the influence of the Churches, how comes it that this legislation was only achieved at a time when Churches admittedly and notoriously have less influence than at any other time in the history of Christianity? Of course, old age pensions has no more to do with the Churches than it has to do with the man in the moon. The first European country to consider seriously the case of the aged as one of the duties of the State was revolutionary France at the close of the eighteenth century. The first English writer to propound a clear scheme of old age pensions was Thomas Paine. And the real force responsible for realising it, in fact, is the weakening of religious interests and the strengthening of social ones. Had the Churches been abolished fifty years ago, the public would then have been left free to face social issues and social responsibilities, and by this time we might have had, not merely old age pensions, but many other desirable reforms. The Churches now are simply playing the old game of claiming credit for a good they have done little to produce. This policy succeeds with the unthinking, and unfortunately the unthinking is still a majority in the nation.

"For over forty years," says the *Christian World*, "we have been building up a system that keeps the parson out of the people's schools, and he must be kept out to the end." Technically, this may be true. Substantially, it is false. For over forty years we have been maintaining a system that places a representative of the parson in every one of the people's schools, and the *Christian World* hopes to keep him there to the end. As things are, every teacher is made a representative of all the clergy. True, the teacher does not give "definite dogmatic religious instruction"; but that is because the clergy cannot agree upon the point. It is made as dogmatic as is consonant with a general support from the clergy, and these gentlemen with the extremely tender conscience are not above plundering the rest of the community when they can agree upon a division of the spoils. The *Christian World* also says that if right of entry were granted teachers would refuse to give denominational instruction. This may be correct; and it is also true that a very large number would decline to give any kind of religious instruction if they could do so without seriously prejudicing their prospects. Their choice lies between the tyranny of the Church and the tyranny of the Chapel. The *Christian World* supports the latter in the name of freedom.

The *Church Times* has discovered why Churchmen do not get more of their own way in the matter of State education. "We are not sufficiently aggressive," it says. One would hardly have thought it. For years the Church—as also the Chapel—has been plundering the general ratepayer in the name of morality and religion. It has done all it could in this direction, and has never ceased to fight for more, and now it discovers that the Church has not been sufficiently aggressive. It has been too meek, and patient, and forgiving! And it proceeds to give an example of its meekness. We are told that a County Council has no right to meddle with religious matters. It ought neither to control nor direct religious teaching. Well, that is our position, and if the *Church Times* meant this, and this only, we should be pleased to join it in the fight. But what it wants, apparently, is either that Church schools shall be maintained by public money, or that definite religious dogmas shall be taught in Council schools, without Councils either directing or controlling such religious instruction. The public is to do all the paying, and the Church is to do all the directing. It is to make every arrangement for the teaching, and then meekly step on one side and give the school over to the parson or his representative. Yet the Church party is not an aggressive party. It is full of meekness—Christian meekness.

Mr. Birrell has been telling the Nonconformists at a Westminster Palace Hotel luncheon that they will have to make up their minds what it is they want in relation to national education. The following passage is a notable one:

"If we Nonconformists want to take the part we ought to take in the settlement of this question, we really must make up our minds what it is we want. Do you want your politicians to amend the law which presses so heavily on us in many parts of the country, as quickly as we can and as we best can, or are you rather resolved, leaving the probabilities and the possibilities and political contingences on one side, to promulgate the solution you believe to be the true one and risk the consequences? This is a very awkward question to put to anyone after lunch—(laughter)—nevertheless, it is a question which I think you ought, in fairness to the politicians whom you support generally, to put to yourselves. Do you want us to get the best we can out of the scramble, or do you want to have the satisfaction of maintaining something which you believe to be the true solution, but not to rest upon your chances of getting it? Now, if you adopt the latter course you must take care that your solution, whatever it may be, is at any rate the same all round. (Hear, hear.) You must not offer to the Church of Rome what you are not prepared to offer to the Church of England. Nor must you reserve to yourselves what you want without being content to give to others what they want."

This was a very plain warning to Nonconformists of any sagacity. But some of them—most of them, we believe—have been misled by Dr. Clifford so long that they have lost their wits on this topic. They seem quite unable to recognise that the religious teaching which they happen to approve ought no more to be paid for by the State than the religious teaching of the Church of England or the Church of Rome. A judicial blindness has fallen upon them. They are fighting for what all other religionists and no-religionists are firmly opposed to; in other words, they are fighting a partisan battle. Yet they either cannot see it or refuse to see it.

Dr. Clifford only took a few minutes to give his answer to Mr. Birrell's question—and it was characteristic of the man who, when he was put to the test by an invitation to join the Secular Education League, showed that his professions of love for the "secular solution" were all gabble. He replied that he could not accept the League's program. When he said that he was for Secular Education he meant "Secular Education *plus* the Bible." Which is like being for Teetotalism *plus* Whisky. It was a scandalous reply, and would have ruined his reputation almost anywhere but in England and amongst Nonconformists. Dr. Clifford told Mr. Birrell that his position was this—that "clericalism is to be put out of State education completely." This hollow utterance elicited loud applause. But its only conceivable meaning is that putting out clericalism from the schools means putting out the Archbishop of Canterbury and installing Archbishop Clifford in the vacancy. It is lamentable to see a big party, with two hundred members in the House of Commons, being led into such transparent imbecility by this hopeless old mountebank.

The cost of "protecting the right of free speech" when Mr. Churchill went to Belfast was £2,730, which Mr. W. T. Stead reckons as 15s. for each word in the right honorable gentleman's speech. "It would, of course," Mr. Stead sarcastically observes, "have been right to spend ten times that sum to maintain liberty of speech, and it is to be hoped that Mr. McKenna and London police magistrates will remember that truth when next they have to deal with rowdy mobs of students and fish-porters who desire to vindicate orthodox Christianity by dipping a Freethought lecturer in the pond of a London park."

The Vicar of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, says that for Agnostics the current morality is a survival, a prejudice, an inconsistency. So far as *some* of the current morality is concerned, we should honestly endorse the statement. But what the vicar means is that morality, in the better sense of the term, is to the Agnostic an anachronism. And the remark shows how much stupidity—or worse—can go along with a position in the Church. The man who can picture society without a morality has achieved the impossible. And the man who can imagine that morality to be such as is not determined by the history, the traditions, the general environment, shows that he has not mastered the elements of the subject on which he is speaking. The vicar, Mr. Boyd, speaks scornfully of those who point out how the forms of morality are determined by geographical and similar circumstances. There seems to us no room for dissent here—except from a parson. One need only observe to see that conduct that rouses indignation in one part of the world calls up approval in another part. The moral idea may be substantially the same, but its form shows infinite variations.

Mr. Boyd says that morality means "a far too heavy weight of self repression, of denial and sacrifice, to be rested safely on such flimsy foundations" as are offered by science. Well, that is a really Christian expression. Morality is a self-repression, a sacrifice, a denial. Of what? What is it that the moral man denies himself? Is it the pleasure of stealing? Or of murder? Or of other forms of vice? It is difficult to get it out of a Christian's head that the man who behaves himself is missing a good time on earth, and so deserves extra reward when he gets better. The poor Agnostic knows different from that. He knows that morality—real morality—is not a matter of repression, but of expression. Not a matter of sacrifice, but of development. We don't wonder that vice becomes rather attractive to some people when morality is preached by such men as the vicar of Kensington. They are apt to give people the impression that the only men who have a really good time are those who ought to be in the hands of the police.

Rev. Robert Benjamin Clark, who shot himself in the smoke-room of the Bell Hotel, Saxmundham, was found by the coroner's jury to have committed suicide while of unsound mind. A brother clergyman testified that he was of a very neurotic disposition, and was troubled with insomnia. He also feared blindness. Poor gentleman! It is difficult to see what use his religion was to him in his extremity.

The *Daily Mirror* published the portrait of the Rev. C. H. Grundy, vicar of St. Peter's, Brockley, who "says he is ready to keep a list of young ladies who are willing to take husbands who possess certain incomes." But it appears that "the Brockley young women place sentiment before expediency and eugenics." They think marriage depends upon who the man is. This doesn't appear to have entered into the reverend gentleman's calculations. We are afraid he has been reading the Church of England marriage service too sedulously.

What we have been saying for more years than we care to count is now stated by the *Schoolmaster*. "We are strongly of the opinion," that journal says, "that the existing version of the Old Testament is unsuitable for school use." The existing version, of course, is the Old Testament. Our contemporary wants to see an expurgated version for the use of children. But that would not be the Old Testament. Would it not be better to be thoroughly honest and straightforward and put the Bible out of the schools altogether?

The Eton Mission Club, Hackney Wick, held its "Annual Open Amateur Boxing Competitions" on Monday, March 11, with prizes from one to five guineas, and seats from one to three shillings. Rather a funny entertainment for a *Mission*—wasn't it? But modern Christianity is full of new developments.

Justice publishes a letter from H. Bolloc on the Ferrer case. He denies that Ferrer's innocence has been established by a Spanish Court. But when he comes to evidence all he can say is "as I am informed." Mr. Bolloc is hopeless. He is an interesting writer, a ridiculous politician, and as a Roman Catholic a devoted bigot. He appears to believe that Ferrer was a wicked man, capable of any infamy, because he was filled with "hatred of the Catholic Church." It does not occur to Mr. Bolloc that millions of people hate the Catholic Church, and that so common a sentiment must have something more than a fantastic explanation. Mr. Bolloc thinks he has reason for loving his Church; millions of other people think they have good reasons for hating it. And they know what they are talking about as well as he does—perhaps better; for Mr. Bolloc's notions of evidence are as elementary as a schoolgirl's.

Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., chairman of the Labor party, seems to be quite anxious about the Church. He calls upon it to choose whom it will serve—God or Mammon; God, apparently, being the masses, and Mammon the classes. It is rather a crude classification, but why should Mr. Macdonald trouble his head about the Church at all? A Church is a religious organisation, and every religion rests upon its doctrines; and we fancy Mr. Macdonald knows as well as we do that the foundation ideas of Christianity are dead and done for, without the slightest hope of resurrection, in the minds of educated thoughtful men and women.

Mr. Macdonald has also been singing the praises of Puritanism lately,—no doubt to please the Nonconformists. But he carefully hides his personal religious beliefs. "J. R. M." is clever.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, March 24, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester :
at 6.30 p.m., "Thomas Hardy on 'God's Funeral.'"

April 14, Glasgow ; 21 and 28, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 31, Queen's Hall, April 21, West Ham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £103 9s. 11d. Received since:—Mrs. H. T. C., £1 1s.; H. T. C., £1 1s.; A. B. C., £2; W. P. M., 10s. 6d.; P. Morrison, 2s.; S. C., 4s.

A. B. C., subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I have only recently become a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, which I very much admire. I think your work deserves encouragement."

G. THOMAS.—We have already written a paragraph on the Bishop of Durham's amazing effort. Thanks all the same. As to the other point, we do not resent our readers writing to us; on the contrary, we are always pleased to hear from them.

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

T. H. PERKINS, of Devonshire, well known in South Wales, journeyed up from the provinces to "hear Mr. Foote's delightful lecture on Sunday evening," and was "pleased to hear Mr. Foote say that he hoped before long to finish the long promised book on Shakespeare."

W. P. M.—Sorry the acknowledgment was overlooked. Accept our apology for the delay. We trust subscribers who see no acknowledgment of their remittances will always communicate with us on the subject. Accidents will happen, and we have to do all the work of the paper alone, without a sub-editor, a secretary, or a clerk.

A CORRESPONDENT tells us that Mark Twain's *What Is Man?* was withdrawn by the English publishers as a breach of copyright. We know nothing about the matter ourselves.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear Mr. Morris Young had a good audience at Birmingham and "created a very favorable impression."

JAMES COATES.—Sorry we are unable to put work in your way. Our business relations are confined to our publishing office. You do not "inconvenience" us in any way by writing. We wish we could help you.

H. T. C.—Thanks also for the good wishes.

H. M. REID.—Sending as desired. Thanks.

MANCHESTER "SAINT."—You will see it was of use.

S. C. (Aintree).—We put your pleasant letter aside to be answered in another way, and thus it got into our arrears of correspondence. Your and your father's good wishes, so discriminately expressed, are much appreciated.

J. TOMKINS.—Tuesday is too late for anything not absolutely urgent. Next week. Thanks.

H. SMALLWOOD.—Pleased to have your highly favorable view of Mr. Morris Young.

J. P.—Glad to hear from a twenty-year schoolmaster reader of the *Freethinker*. We had already received a marked copy of the paper you mention; still, we thank you for your trouble. See "Acid Drops."

R. A. GRANT.—We know nothing about it, and the pamphlet, which we have seen before, doesn't tempt us to investigation.

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.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers his second lecture (this season) at the Leicester Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, this evening (March 24). His subject is "Thomas Hardy on 'God's Funeral.'"

In spite of the rain Mr. Foote had a fine audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "William Shakespeare and Jesus Christ," which lasted an hour and a half, was listened to with wonderful attention and enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Silverstein, who occupied the chair, made a further reference to Mr. Foote's long-promised book on Shakespeare, and expressed a hope that it might soon be in course of publication,—which many of the audience loudly cheered.

Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner occupies the Queen's Hall platform this evening (March 24), her subject being "Charles Bradlaugh: and the Myth Makers." Such a lecture by Bradlaugh's daughter should be very interesting. We hope to hear of a good audience.

The Queen's Hall course of lectures will terminate with the last Sunday in April. There will be no meeting on Easter Sunday. Mr. Cohen will lecture on the following Sunday, and Mr. Foote will wind up the course with two special lectures which will be duly announced.

We are not in love with birthday books, but they are in fashion, and there may as well be an Ingersoll Birthday Book as any other. A very handsome volume with that title reaches us from the "Truthseeker Company," New York. The selections are "arranged by Grace L. Macdonald," wife of George Macdonald, editor of the *Truthseeker*. The decorations are by Paul F. Berdanier, including, we suppose, the excellent portrait of Ingersoll fronting the title-page. Finally, there is a Preface by Eva Ingersoll-Brown, which is admirably as well as enthusiastically written. The only fault we find with it is the insistence on Ingersoll's being "a religious man." Of course he was, if religion means "a large capacity for lofty thoughts, for loving words, for brave and generous deeds." But religion never has meant this. And, after all, none of us can run a dictionary of his (or her) own. A dictionary is a social production; it records existing words with their common connotations in present usage. We hold, therefore, that Ingersoll was not a religious man. But we cordially agree that he was everything else which Eva Ingersoll-Brown says he was. And more.

There are some good things about Labouchere in Mr. G. W. E. Russell's article in the *Cornhill*. A letter written by "Labby" at the end of 1906 contains the following—which will certainly be of interest to our readers:—

"As for the Education Bill, I do not love Bishops, but I hate far more the Noncon. Popes. Either you must have pure Secularism in public schools, or teach religion of some sort; and, altho' I personally am an Agnostic, I don't see how Xtianity is to be taught free from all dogma, and entirely creedless, by teachers who do not believe in it. This is the play of *Hamlet* without *Hamlet*, and acted by persons of his philosophic doubt."

This is "Labby" all over. He was born to hate "Noncon. Popes." We share his detestation of these underhand tyrants who are always prating about freedom.

A concert was held at Turriff, Aberdeen, on behalf of the widows and fatherless children of fishermen who lost their lives in the last great storm. One of the recitations was delivered by our old friend Dr. Mortimer, whose meritorious performance was specially noticed in the *Banffshire Journal*, which said that his "elocutionary ability quite surprised the audience, and it was with difficulty that he was allowed to resume his seat." Dr. Mortimer, whose Atheism is well known in the district, chose his recitation from the *Freethinker* of March 7, 1897. It was entitled "A Po'erfu' Preacher." It is not flattering to Christianity, but it made the most orthodox hearers laugh; which we believe it would not have done when it appeared in our columns. We are also pleased to see a biographical notice of Dr. Mortimer in the *Turriff School Magazine*, which is a very interesting periodical, and much above the run of such publications.

Orders can now be executed again for Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. A number of copies of the volume in sheets have turned up, wrongly labelled, in the basement. They are in the binder's hands and a supply should be ready in a few days.

Modern Materialism.

"The arguments by which Materialism is defended are among the most subtle in the whole range of theology and natural science; and without a knowledge of the latter they can neither be apprehended nor refuted. The mere metaphysical abstractions by which they are usually met excite only the contempt of the acute physiologist who is a Materialist."—REV. PROFESSOR HITCHCOCK, *The Religion of Geology*, p. 8.

"But, ah, the power of this material philosophy in the present age! The amazing progress of the sciences of matter, the absorption of the energies of the best and most progressive minds in the philosophy founded on sense and sensuous experience, have created a current of thought, a tide of philosophy, which sweeps us along with such breathless speed that we have no time to think of the claims of spirit. The mind of the age is absorbed in new and startling discoveries in science. Everything must be expressed in terms of matter and sense, in the formulæ of a material philosophy. But, alas, spirit eludes sense and immortality transcends experience. Therefore this philosophy will none of it, cannot believe in it."—PROFESSOR LE CONTE, *Religion and Science*, pp. 251-2.

"The whole of the inorganic sciences have become purely mechanical, and at the same time purely atheistic."—PROFESSOR HAECKEL, *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 266.

"The decline of the belief in the Christian God, the victory of scientific atheism."—NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 357.

THERE are two definitions of Materialism—the first meaning the doctrine which declares that the so-called spiritual phenomena, such as life and mind, are the result of the organisation of matter; the second meaning the tendency to give undue importance to material interests, to neglect culture for the sake of riches or sensuality. And—as it has often been pointed out in these pages—the pious delight to use the word indiscriminately and confuse the two meanings together.

For the purpose of this article the first meaning is, of course, the sense we use it in.

We are continually being assured, from the pulpit and the religious press, and not infrequently by the daily press, always ready to kowtow to the majority, that Materialism—generally qualified by the adverbs "crude," "blank," or "blatant"—is dead; that science has finally discarded it in theory and practice.

It is true these oracles never condescended to explain when and where this happened, or what the working theory of science is. They just leave it to be inferred that scientists, as a body, have discarded Materialism and returned to a belief in God, soul, and spirit. If asked for proof, they point to Sir Oliver Lodge, Lord Kelvin, and Alfred Russel Wallace as opponents of Materialism.

It is true that these three scientists repudiated Materialism, but they do not represent the majority of scientists in this matter. Sir Oliver Lodge—who would be only too pleased to bear witness to the return of the scientists to the religious fold—is perfectly candid upon this point. In his *Man and the Universe* (p. 6) he says:—

"Orthodox modern science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything beyond or above itself, the general trend and outline of it known; nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves being conceived possible."

Of the supernatural being, or beings, of which religion teaches, Sir Oliver declares "such beings are to the average scientific man purely imaginary" (p. 10).

Dr. Wallace is still more explicit. When he was interviewed on behalf of the *Christian Commonwealth* in December, 1903, in answer to the question if he did not think science is less dogmatic and materialistic to-day than it was a generation ago, he answered:—

"I cannot see it. For instance, take the recent correspondence in the *Times*. When Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge expressed their belief in some outside power, some external cause, leading scientific men went dead against them. They seem to think, and to like to think, that the whole phenomena of life will one day be reduced to terms of matter and motion, and that every vegetable, animal, and human product will be

explained, and may some day be artificially produced by chemical action."*

So that the very witnesses called upon to give evidence as to the decline and death of Materialism are the very ones who testify to its prevalence and power.

It should be noted here that although these three scientists are agreed in opposing Materialism, directly it comes to a positive belief in religion or supernaturalism we find them in absolute opposition to one another. Lord Kelvin, for instance, looked upon Spiritualism—in which Sir Oliver and Dr. Wallace are believers—with contempt. His biographer tells us that—

"Lord Kelvin had a whole-hearted detestation of spiritualism and all that pertains to it; and would often go out of his way to denounce 'that wretched superstition.'"[†]

While Dr. Wallace looked with equal contempt upon the Christianity professed by Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge. To the interviewer already cited, Dr. Wallace declared himself as "quite unable to accept current religious doctrines," and declines to call himself a Christian. In his Autobiography he goes further, declaring "the orthodox religion of the day was degrading and hideous."[‡] Moreover, Dr. Wallace is not one of those who explain everything they do not understand by the word "God"; as he observed to his interviewer—

"The idea of a Supreme Being does not, of course, explain the mystery of the universe. The child's questions as to when God began and where he came from still remain unanswered. The fundamental problem is, Why does anything exist at all? Why was there not absolute negation—nothing but empty space? Infinite time or space or matter alike are unthinkable by us."

And, we may add, an infinite God is equally unthinkable too.

There is a curious passage in Sylvanus Thompson's *Life of Lord Kelvin*. Sir Edward Fry tells us that once, when Lord Kelvin had expounded to him the evolution of "the whole starry universe" from simple matter, he finished by saying: "I do not often mention it, for it sounds atheistic, and I am a firm believer in Design."[§]

Lord Kelvin's religion was based upon faith, not upon science. He knew, and feared, the strength of the atheistic position. He should have pondered the saying of Herbert Spencer, "The profoundest of all infidelity is the fear lest the truth be bad."

If it were not for fear of the Atheism to which it surely leads, Materialism would be the accepted theory as it most assuredly is the accepted practice of science. Many men of science are not too candid in dealing with Materialism, especially when addressing a public audience. Then they make light of it, as if it were not worth serious attention; but when they are addressing the educated and intellectual they adopt very different language.

We were struck with this discrepancy in the case of Sir James Crichton-Browne. When answering an application for a testimonial to religion, he abjured the applicant to "give no heed to the ravings of vain and foolish Secularists," observing that, although some men of science had denied the inspiration of the Scriptures, "the great Masters of Science have been, for the most part, truly devout and full of faith."^{||} So that the pious believer who sees, with dismay, the havoc wrought among religious beliefs by the advance of modern evolutionary science, may rest assured that there is nothing to fear. In the words of Browning, "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world."

But when Sir James has shut the door upon the public, and is addressing the medical students at Owen's College, Manchester, he has a very different tale to tell. Then we get the plain unvarnished

* See *Freethinker*, December 20, 1903, pp. 802-4-6.

† S. P. Thompson, *Life of William Thompson (Baron Kelvin)*, 1910, p. 1104.

‡ A. R. Wallace, *My Life*, 1908, p. 46.

§ *Life of William Thompson*, p. 1095.

|| A. H. Tabrum, *Religious Beliefs of Scientists*, p. 43.

truth of the matter, and as we have arrived at a similar conclusion ourselves, and we always like to prove our case out of the mouth of our opponent when possible, we cannot do better than give a lengthy extract from Sir James's lecture. He warns his students that:—

"If your local teachers supply you with no antidote to the Materialistic virus, the great catholic teachers, to whom all who are interested in medical and biological science are obliged, sooner or later, to turn, will inject it into your veins with tenfold virulence. Herbert Spencer is certainly responsible for a wide-spread diffusion of Materialism. The splendid cogency of his argument, that the whole procession of phenomena in the universe, the vast array of nebula and star, of sun and planet, of rock and crystal, of plant and animal, is deducible as a physical and mathematical corollary from the simple fact that the quantity of force in the universe is fixed and unchanging, and that it exists under the antagonistic forms of attraction and repulsion, dazzles the intellect and disposes to the purblind acceptance of his deliverances on all other subjects. And thus it is, perhaps, that his theories as to the evolution of mind, which, notwithstanding his admission of an Unknowable as a necessary datum of consciousness, are pure and undiluted Materialism, have obtained such ready currency. He insists that mind arises out of the molecular vibrations of matter, just as do light, heat, and electricity, and that the only difference between the commonest sensation and the most transcendent emotion lies in the number and complexity of the molecular vibrations of nerve substance. He does this with a subtlety and ingenuity that almost inevitably command for his propositions the assent of those whose daily experiences impress them with the constant and intimate connection between brain states and mental manifestations, and so his philosophy has dashed to pieces the ideals of many medical postulants. But if Herbert Spencer has done much to scatter broadcast Materialistic ideas in medical circles, Huxley has done more, for, in spite of his repudiation of the title 'Materialist' as a reflection on his Agnostic allegiance, there are few recent writers who have better deserved the designation. He invariably leans towards the primacy of the physical side in phenomena. He has said that the history of science has 'in all ages meant, and now means more than ever, the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment from the region of thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity.' He has taught that molecular changes in the brain are the causes of all states of consciousness. Volitions, he affirms, do not enter into the chain of causation at all, voluntary acts being as purely mechanical as reflex action. High thinking, in his alembic, turns out to be merely increased resistance and friction in certain nerve circuits. He has reduced our species to conscious automata. Consciousness, according to him, is a collateral product of the working of the organism, and cannot under any circumstances, in man or brutes, be the cause of any change in the motion of the matter of the organism. With a matchless power of lucid exposition, with relentless logic, he has pressed home these views, and the weight of his authority as a scientific investigator, added to the charm of their simplicity and completeness, have given them potency and popularity, and helped them to swell that great tide of Materialistic thought which surges through our medical schools to-day, and sweeps away many precious and ennobling ideals."*

With the exception of the statement that Materialism "sweeps away many precious and ennobling ideals," and the omission of the names of Tyndall and Clifford, who, in the realms of physics and ethics, helped to place Materialism upon a firm and scientific basis, we can find no fault with Sir James's statement, which also agrees with Sir Oliver Lodge's view of modern science, and Dr. Wallace's assertion as to the Materialistic tendencies of the leaders of modern scientific thought.

So far, indeed, is Materialism from being dead; it is, as we shall demonstrate, victorious in every department of science. It has swept the gods and spirits out of the universe.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Genesis and Geology.

THE downfall of Roman civilisation and culture dealt a shattering blow to literary progress and to rational interest in natural phenomena. The Church metaphysicians bewildered themselves with "logical" niceties and fantastic revaluations of mystical doctrines. The Christian world was consequently shut out from direct observation of nature. From A.D. 800 to A.D. 1800 the Arabians were the only torchbearers of the ancient Pagan culture. They gathered and treasured all obtainable manuscripts of the classical works of antiquity, translated them into Arabic, and their caliphs welcomed to their courts all the known scholars of their period. They were thus enabled to bequeath to succeeding ages large numbers of the most valuable records of ancient culture and to materially contribute to the knowledge of astronomy, alchemy, mathematics, medicine, and natural history. But the study of the earth's surface and underlying rocks, with all their wonderful fossil treasures, remained to them a sealed book.

With the advent of the fifteenth century commenced that lengthy quarrel over the reality of organic remains which was destined to cover more than three hundred years. Astonishment was aroused by the discovery of shells in rocks far distant from the sea. In Pagan antiquity fossil shells had previously attracted attention, and their organic nature had been generally recognised. Thinking men came to the conclusion that they proved that the ocean had formerly overspread the earth.

This view was also favored with the revival of learning in Christian Europe. But the power of the Church was too great to permit the promulgation of any opinion which in any way invalidated the orthodox theology.

"If therefore an observer who found abundant sea-shells imbedded in the rocks forming the heart of a mountain chain ventured to promulgate his conclusion that these fossils prove the mountains to consist of materials that were accumulated under the sea, after living creatures appeared upon the earth, he ran imminent risk of prosecution for heresy, inasmuch as according to Holy Writ land and sea were separated on the third day of creation, but animal life did not begin until the fifth day. Again, the overwhelming force of the evidence from organic remains that the fossiliferous rocks must have taken a long period of time for their accumulation could not fail to impress the minds of those who studied the subject. But to teach that the world must be many thousands of years old was plainly to contradict the received interpretation of Scripture that not more than 6,000 years had elapsed since the time of the creation."*

Martyrs being in those days nearly as rare as in our own, various devices were employed for the purpose of reconciling the Book of Nature with the Hebrew mythology. Some of these subterfuges may have been honest enough, but it appears utterly incredible that all the reconcilers were really sincere. Many denied that the accumulating fossil remains ever formed part of living animals and plants. A force resident in the earth—a *vis plastica*—was invoked by some to explain these deceptive mimics of living creatures. Others alleged that fossils were mere illusory sports of Nature. And when their organic origin was seen to be unquestionable, they were explained as animal and vegetable relics deposited by the Flood of Noah, or some similar catastrophe, in the strata which now contained them. But numerous cautious and conservative observers endeavored to account for them as the outcome of the starry influences, or explained them "as exquisitely designed but deceptive pieces of mineral matter, with no apparent object unless to puzzle and disconcert the mind of frail humanity."

Having no other alternative, owing to the deadly antagonism of the Church, the few progressive spirits either pretended to accept these preposterous mystical theories, or, as a last resource, they fell back upon the Biblical Flood. To those least acquainted

* Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., *The Quest of the Ideal*. Introductory address to the session in the Department of Medicine at Owen's College, October 2, 1899.

* Sir Archibald Geikie, *Founders of Geology*, pp. 43, 44.

with the facts this appeared a reasonable explanation. They little realised the absurdity of the supposition that all the vast masses of fossil-bearing rocks were accumulated within the one hundred and fifty days allotted by the Bible for the prevalence of the Deluge. As a consequence, Noah's Flood became the chief stumbling-block in the path of geological advance.

As the years rolled on, the more thoughtful and inquiring were forced to the conclusion that such a transient downpour failed, even in a minor degree, to account for large material deposits crowded with organic remains. Some observers were greatly impressed by the rapidity with which detrital masses were deposited on the earth's surface through the operations of active volcanoes. This was notably the case in Italy, where volcanic eruptions were an everyday occurrence. At Monte Nuovo, in 1588, a hill nearly 500 feet in height was piled up in two days around a volcanic vent, and this phenomenon lent strong support to the view that volcanic agencies could quite easily have laid down all fossiliferous formations during the preceding six thousand years. No one then knew that volcanic rocks are entirely different both in nature and origin to the fossil-bearing formations of the earth's crust. A lengthy period was destined to pass before careful observation and comparison made clear the truth that the fossiliferous rocks, thousands of feet thick, bear in their bosom a mighty record of past changes in the geographical features of our globe, together with a marvellous procession of organic forms which demand vast vistas of time for their evolution.

A man of essentially modern cast was the celebrated painter, architect, engineer, and sculptor, Leonardo da Vinci. As a young man he had been employed as an engineer in constructing canals in Northern Italy, and had seen fossils in their natural position in the rocks. He formed opinions concerning them which were strikingly clear and correct. He was convinced that the shells he saw had once lived on the sea-floor, and had been entombed in the silt won by the waves from the neighboring land. He laughed to scorn the suggestion that they owed their origin to the influences of the stars, and he inquired why the stellar bodies no longer created them. And he remarked upon the curious circumstance that, in addition to the shells, the cuttings displayed at various heights, layers of gravel made up of materials that had obviously been rounded and collected by the agency of moving water.

In 1517 Fracastoro, an Italian philosopher, gave expression to opinions of a kindred character. During the repairing of the citadel of San Felice at Verona, the workmen engaged were astonished at the wealth and variety of the fossils contained in the blocks of stone they were using. Among the various authorities consulted, Fracastoro was included. He scouted the idea that they were begotten by the "plastic force" of the earth, and he smiled at those who attributed fossils to the effects wrought by the Great Flood. This, he shrewdly observed, was too transient. Moreover, in the nature of things it would have left marine, and not fresh-water organisms as its memorial, and, assuming that the shells had been transported from the sea to the land by the Deluge, their remains would have been distributed on the surface of the soil, and not deposited so deeply in the earth. He insisted that the mountains from which these fossiliferous stones were quarried once formed their watery home, and had since been uplifted above the level of the sea.

But Da Vinci, Fracastoro, and their disciples were but a tiny minority. Even the eminent anatomist Falloppio, when shown the teeth of sharks, remains of elephants, shells, and other fossils, dismissed them as earthy concretions, simply because of the improbability of the waters of the Deluge having extended so far as Italy. He even doubted the human origin of the earthen vessels, discovered at Rome, and thought them natural growths of the soil. Although a valuable mineral collection, which

included numerous fossils, was housed in the Vatican by Pope Sixtus V., and described and illustrated by Mercati, this able man, with all the evidence to the contrary before him, ignored their real nature, and regarded them as curious stones fashioned by the influences of the celestial orbs. Some years later, a similar collection was formed at Verona, and Olivi, who described it, also regarded its fossils as freaks of Nature.

During the seventeenth century, Steno made valuable contributions to geological theory, and his work was continued into the eighteenth by those gifted Italians, Vallisneri and Moro. But all these scientists were sadly handicapped by theological prejudice. Throughout the seventeenth century, a large number of cosmogonical systems appeared. In these, "the only common basis of speculation was the effort to account for the origin of our globe and of our universe, in harmony with the teaching of the Church."

Curiously enough, the English-speaking peoples, who have since produced such geological giants as Hutton, Lyell, the Geikies, and Judd were once responsible for such monstrous theorists as Burnet and Whiston. In 1581 Burnet edified mankind with his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*. This monument of human folly was patronised by that moral monarch, Charles II. It impressed the public immensely; presumably, because it was intended as a buttress to religion against the scepticism engendered by a growing knowledge of the earth's secrets. Of course, Burnet made the Deluge one of the outstanding events of the earth's history. Previous to that disastrous occurrence, perpetual spring gladdened the earth, but during the Deluge the rays of the sun fissured the crust of the earth, and permitted the internal ocean to rush through and desolate the populated lands.

Whiston's *New Theory of the Earth* was published in 1696. His powers of imagination almost transcended those of Burnet. Whiston declares that at the Creation our globe had no axial rotation; but with man's disobedience and fall this rotation began. All then went well until the days of Noah, when a comet, on November 18, 2349 B.C., sent its tail over the equator, and this led to the drowning of the world's sinful inhabitants. The "chaotic sediment of the flood" thus fully explained the stratified formations of our planet.

If such vagaries as these were not paralleled in so many other departments of human inquiry, grave astonishment would be justified by the fact that, down to the middle of the eighteenth century, numerous writers tenaciously clung to such idiotic ideas. What Professor Karl von Zittel terms "a semi-tragic, semi-comic event," brought most of this literature to an end. J. B. Beringer, a teacher in one of the German universities had a passion for collecting fossils, and in 1726 he published an illustrated work upon his treasures. He unsuspectingly figured celestial bodies and other wonderful "fossils" which formed part of his collections. He was usually accompanied by his students on his fossil-hunting expeditions, and these playful youths dropped various grotesque "figured stones" in the quarries where they led the learned doctor to discover them. When, however, in addition to Hebrew letters, he found his own name figured in stone, he began to realise that he had been hoaxed. He spared no efforts to buy up the entire edition of his book "in which so many of the tricks had been unsuspectingly figured and described." But a few copies still survive, and specimens of these concocted "fossils" may be seen by visitors in the Munich and Würzburg Museums.

If a tithe of the misplaced ingenuity which, in this one branch of science alone has been devoted to the reconciliation of old fable with new fact, had been dedicated to the sole service of truth, what triumphs would long since have been recorded in realms where the workers of many generations to come, are still doomed to wrestle with titanic tasks.

T. F. PALMER.

The International Congress at Munich.

THE Organising Committee at Brussels have now issued to the Freethought party throughout the world the program of the first International Freethought Congress yet held in Germany. Subjoined is their Appeal:—

"The International Freethought Federation, which, with its seat at Brussels, links together the most important Freethought organisation of the world, has decided to hold its sixteenth Congress at Munich (Bavaria), September 1, 2, and 3, 1912.

"Since its foundation (Congress of Brussels, 1880), the Federation has held successive Congresses at London (1882), Amsterdam (1883), Antwerp (1885), London (1887), Paris (1889), Madrid (1892), Brussels (1895), Paris (1900), Geneva (1902), Rome (1904), Paris (1905), Buenos Aires (1906), Prague (1907), Brussels (1910).

"The Congresses were widely discussed the world over. The coming one at Munich—the first which the Federation will have held in Germany—is already an assured success, thanks to the co-operation of the masters of human thought who will participate in these important sittings.

"The invitation to take part in the Munich Congress includes the national federations of the various countries, whether affiliated or not with the International Freethought Federation; all Rationalist societies, Masonic lodges, universities, and educational institutions; popular universities; free religious communities; Ethical Culture societies; circles for philosophic, political, and social study; Positivist societies; societies of anti-clerical students; Liberal, Republican, Socialist committees; in a word, all groups which recognise the wrongdoing of the Churches and defend the principle of liberty of conscience. The Freethinkers who belong to no group, and who can nevertheless bring support useful to Freethought, are likewise admitted to participation in the Munich Congress.

"The program is as follows:—

"Saturday, August 31, during the evening, will be held a preparatory and private session.

"On September 1, 2, and 3, the following questions will be discussed:—

"1. The Aims and Objects of the International Freethought Federation.

"2. The Separation of Church and State.

"3. Education and Freethought.

"A private session, reserved for delegates of federations and societies affiliated with the International Federation, will be devoted to the revision of the statutes of the Federation and to other administrative questions.

"This program is issued for the General Council, which consists of:—

"President: Professor Hector Denis, former rector of the Free University of Brussels, member of the Chamber of Representatives.

"General Secretary: Eugène Hins, editor-in-chief of *La Pensée*, 350 Ch. de Boendal, Brussels.

"Secretary-Treasurer: Jean Dons, general secretary of the National Federation of Belgian Freethinkers (155 Rue St. Bernard, Brussels).

"Vice-Presidents: Leon Furnemont, member of the Chamber of Representatives and Communal Councillor of Brussels; Georges Lorand, member of the Chamber of Representatives.

"Members of the General Council are: Melanie Janssens, inspectress and vice-president of the Rationalist Orphan Asylum; Houzeau de Lohaie, senator; Eugène Monsour, professor of the Free University of Brussels; Emile Royer, member of the Chamber of Representatives; Modeste Terwagne, doctor of medicine, member of the Chamber of Representatives."

In addition to what is said in the foregoing translation, which is taken from the pages of the *New York Truthseeker*, whose representatives, with other representatives of Transatlantic Freethought, will greet the English delegates, I would like to say that the forthcoming Congress will give us all the opportunity of meeting the venerated personality of Dr. Ernst Haeckel.

I was present at Brussels, as the delegate of the N. S. S. when the above program was sketched and the subjects of discussion fixed. The organisers wished me to say how anxious they are that every Freethought Society and all kindred bodies should

make it a matter of duty to send delegates to the Congress, and that the delegates should arrive at Munich well in time—if possible a day or two in advance—in order to take part at the important preliminary meeting which has been fixed for August 31.

I have no doubt the N. S. S. will send representatives to Munich this year. The feeling, however, is strong that that representation will be defective without the presence of Mr. Foote. Besides the N. S. S. delegates, there should be, at least, a sprinkling of delegates from the local Branches.

On the Continent, Freethought Societies take these gatherings very seriously and prepare for them a long way ahead. Subscriptions are gathered week by week and individual contributions levied towards the fixed minimum sum which each projected individual delegation will cost. In that way the various Societies abroad manage to put in a decent attendance, both as regards numbers and quality of their delegates, at these great international gatherings. The hint may be useful, not only to individuals in England who intend, as on other similar occasions, to participate in the Congress, but also to local Societies which have now about five months in which to mature their arrangements.

Many Freethinkers in England go abroad for their holidays. To them I would say, why not wend your way to Munich this year and so swell the representation of English Freethought on this unique occasion?

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

King Edward was very fond of his eldest grandson, and liked talking to him. When the little Prince was eleven his grandfather asked him what he was studying in his history lesson, and he was told "Oh, all about Perkin Warbeck."

The King asked "Who was Perkin Warbeck?" And the lad replied, "He pretended that he was the son of a king. But he wasn't; he was the son of respectable parents."

Obituary.

It is with deep regret we have to record the death of Mrs. Algernon Collins (a member of the Failsforth Secular Sunday School) on Sunday, March 3, aged thirty-three years. Her remains were interred in the Failsforth Cemetery on Thursday, March 7. The Funeral Service was read by one of the Superintendents of the School. Much sympathy is felt for Mr. Collins and an only son in their sad bereavement.

We also regret to record the death of Mr. Thomas Hayes, which took place on March 7, in his eighty-fourth year. His remains were cremated at the Manchester Crematorium on Monday, March 11. Mr. F. J. Gould conducted the Funeral Service. Mr. Hayes had been connected with the Failsforth Secular School for about sixty years. He had been chairman of the trustees forty-three years. In his younger days Mr. Hayes was an active teacher in the School, but his removal to Manchester many years ago, to take the management of the Co-operative Wholesale Society's Biscuit Works, brought to an end his work as a teacher, though his interest and support to the School have been maintained to the end of his long and useful life. During the last few years of his life Mr. Hayes had given a library of books to the School which now forms one of the most complete Freethought libraries in the country.—JOHN POLLITT.

It is with great regret that I report the death of one of the staunchest Freethinkers in the movement—Mr. John Scott, of 60 Bridge-street, Bolton, and Manchester—which occurred on Thursday, March 14, 1912. Fearless in the expression of his thoughts, generous and kind to all in trouble, he was respected by all who knew him. He died, as he lived, an Atheist. The last words he wrote were: "An ounce of humanity is worth a ton of religion." His body was cremated on Monday, March 18, at Manchester Crematorium. The Secular Burial Service was read over his body by his friend and comrade, Harry Ball.—E. M. M.

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, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Charles Bradlaugh and the Myth Makers."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, Mrs. E. Boyce, "Feed my lambs."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, J. Hecht, "Modern Inventions and Supernaturalism."

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Ethic of the Gospels"; 6.30, "Life in Other Worlds." Lantern illustrations.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, G. W. Foote, "Thomas Hardy on 'God's Funeral.'"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, F. G. Jones, "Rome or Reason?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "What is Christianity? A Challenge to the Bishops."

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